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The Decade of Origin: Resource Mobilization and Women's Rights in the 1850s

DISSEPTION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Brenda D. Phillips, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University

1985

Reading Committee:

Clyde W. Franklin II
Verta Taylor
Leila J. Rupp

Approved By

Clyde W. Franklin
Advisor
Department of Sociology
Acknowledgments

One very, very hot day last June I drove into Poughkeepsie, New York, on the first leg of my dissertation research. I was headed for the Vassar College Library and their Alma Lutz Collection on women's rights. It was a day I never thought would happen. I remember that as I drove into the town a song from a recent movie came on the radio. The song was the theme from "Flashdance". It told the story of a woman who grew up in a steel town, worked in a factory, and danced at night to fulfill her dreams. In many ways I felt like she did. I grew up in a factory town, thinking that I would never get much further in my life. The fact that this is the acknowledgment section to a doctoral dissertation seems incredible.

I have so many people to thank for where I am today, and I intend to mention every one. My parents, Frank and Mary Jane (Hoak) Phillips are the people most responsible for my education. I know that they gave me everything I ever needed whether it was someone to listen to or to "loan" me money, or whatever. Their contribution to my life has been enormous and I only hope any success I have in life will reflect back on them. There is a line in the Flashdance song that says "Take your passion and make it happen". Mom and Dad taught me that in order to reach a goal you have to work harder than you ever thought you would. When I was sitting in the Vassar Library with 95 degree heat and no air conditioning I knew they were right.

The second group of people also responsible for this dissertation and my education are my professors at Ohio State University and my dissertation committee. Dr.
Clyde W. Franklin II has guided me through both my master's and doctoral degrees. I have appreciated his support in some of the tougher times, especially with the selection of teaching assistants in the spring of 1984. Dr. Verta Taylor has been able to meet with me despite her busy schedule and many other official advisees. I especially appreciate her input on the final outline for my dissertation. Dr. Leila J. Rupp, in both history and women's studies, has really been the person most responsible for this dissertation (I hope she likes it). Dr. Rupp took the informal knowledge I possessed regarding women's history and put it into a formalized framework. I thought I knew a lot about women's history, but in the last two years I have realized just how much I have to learn. I appreciate her patience, support, and enthusiasm. Dr. Rupp has been in on this dissertation since the initial idea popped into my head. Her enthusiasm and availability for meeting with me never waned. I always knew no matter how depressed I was about this dissertation I could always talk to her and have my intellectual energies revitalized.

Both Dr. Franklin and Dr. Rupp wrote letters for the grant I received to do my dissertation research. I am grateful to the Graduate School Alumni Fund which provided dissertation support and made it possible for me to go to New England without having to sell my car. I also want to thank Dale Wimberley for serving on the graduate school committee which funded the dissertations. I appreciate his efforts in my behalf to fund my research. I especially thank you for being a colleague who saw worth in my ideas. Thanks also to Dr. Keith Kilty of the Social Work Department for serving as the graduate school representative on my dissertation defense.

I am now teaching at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. I took the position very suddenly last summer. Thanks to the faculty members who had faith in me. I want to single out my department chair Dr. Elmer Spreitzer for providing me with a schedule conducive to working on my dissertation so extensively. I also appreciate the
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Gail Baker, my dearest friend, and I have been in each other's presence for about thirteen days out of the last six years. I have never had a friend who asks so little and gives so much--a true altruist! Gail allowed me to stay at her home in Connecticut last summer in between my research trips. I can imagine few other friends who would tolerate someone appearing on their doorstep at all hours, calling from Boston totally lost (and expecting directions!), and leaving in the early morning hours for yet another library. The diner was great as were your friends, the beach was terrific until the sunburn set in, and you were a joy. Gail's parents also deserve a big thanks for inviting me to their home, serving me my first lobster, and letting me cool off my sunburn in their pool. I felt at home.

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Brenda D. Phillips
January 22, 1985
VITA

February 17, 1958 .......... Born - Mt. Gilead, Ohio

1980 ........................ B.A., Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio

1980 - 1982 .................. Teaching Associate, Sociology Department,
                           The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1982 ........................ M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1982-1983 ................. Research Associate, The Disaster Research Center,
                          Columbus, Ohio

1983 - 1984 ............... Teaching Associate, Sociology Department,
                          The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1984 - 1985 ............... Visiting Instructor, Bowling Green State
                          University, Bowling Green, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Sociology

    Studies in Social Psychology. Professor Clyde W. Franklin II
    Studies in Gender. Professor Laurel Walum Richardson
    Studies in Women's History. Professor Leila J. Rupp
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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

The longevity of the women's rights movement in the United States has far surpassed the expectations of social movement theorists. The reformers who inaugurated the women's rights movement at the 1848 Seneca Falls women's rights convention did not expect the movement to live for another one hundred and thirty-seven years. These early feminists were much too busy with the process of building a successful reform movement to be concerned with the length of the movement. The idea of sexual equality seemed so fair and so just at that time that the participants would not have imagined the need for a women's rights movement in 1985. Still, the women's rights movement is in existence over a century after it was formed. The structure and strategy of the movement has varied over time, but a movement for women's rights has been sustained through decade after decade of commitment and perseverance.

In 1850 a call went out from a group of abolitionist women to hold the first National Woman's Rights Convention. The convention was held in October 1850 and was considered highly successful by those involved. The convention's president, Paulina Wright Davis, described it as the "inauguration of the woman suffrage movement". A decade of annual conventions followed. They were pre-empted by the Civil War but resumed in 1866 when they evolved into the American Equal Rights Association. The beginnings of the women's movement are found in this mid-nineteenth century decade of reform. Relatively few studies have examined
Two major collective behavior theorists, Marx (1906) and Smelser (1962), have posited structural reasons for the emergence of social movements. Marx points out that economic conditions underlie the appearance of social movements and collective behavior. Smelser's value-added approach emphasizes six social structural conditions but depends somewhat on social psychological conditions. Recently, we have turned to social structural theories as useful in explaining the emergence of social movements. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) have developed the resource mobilization approach which emphasizes how collective control of resources are critical to social movement emergence. The resource mobilization perspective views society as providing an infrastructure which social movement organizations can utilize. Both tangible and intangible resources (Freeman, 1979) can be mobilized. The resource mobilization perspective is used in this research.

Data sources for this research are primarily archival. Nineteenth century documents including convention proceedings, personal correspondence, newspapers, diaries, histories, and biographies were used to accumulate information on the National Woman's Rights Conventions and the membership. A qualitative demographic analysis was done on the committee and officer membership (N-117) and a case study of the convention presidents was undertaken. A content analysis of The Una, the official newspaper of the National Woman's Rights Conventions, was done on all published editorials. Finally, an intensive case study on the conventions was done. This case study focused on convention structure, strategies, goals, and ideology as found in convention proceedings.

I found that the conventions were connected to prior reform movements, especially abolition. Similarities between abolition and women's rights in
The conventions also show how early debates over the direction of the women's rights movement were confronted and resolved.

The NWRCs were more than just religious debates over female spheres. The annual conventions were instrumental in developing a successful movement with great longevity. How did this movement gain its longevity? What we are interested in here is the process through which the movement was formed, the initial years of emergence. We will be looking at three interrelated issues. First, we will examine the conditions under which this social movement was able to develop. Second, we will look closely at what the NWRCs themselves. That is, how were the conventions structured? What types of strategy, goals, and ideology were formulated? Third, what were the consequences of the NWRCs? We will demonstrate here that the NWRCs produced the first steps of movement organization and provided the impetus for an independent social movement for women's rights.

The Research Problem

This time period of 1850-1860 in the women's movement has never been looked at from a social movement perspective, or even from a sociological perspective in general. Only the most recent activity in the women's movement has been the focus of such inquiry. Evans (1979), and historian, has written on the recent women's movement as it emerged out of activity in the 1960s New Left. Women in the student and civil rights movements were kept in traditional roles rather than in active statuses. Out of their own marginality they experienced a raise in consciousness concerning their own sense of oppression.

Evans' participant observation and oral history approaches were similar to those used by Cassell (1977) and Freeman (1975). Cassell's work concerned the role
of consciousness-raising groups in the early 1970s in reaching larger groups of women. None of these studies, however, apply social movement theory as clearly and as well as does that of Freeman (1975, 1983). She argues there were two initial groups in the most recent movement activity, a younger student group of women and an older, less radical group of professional women. Freeman looks at the origins of this newest women's movement by focusing on the conditions for such emergence. She includes a discussion of pre-existing communications networks that are open to the ideas of the new movement and a situation of strain or structural conduciveness as essential to social movement emergence.

These recent studies on the women's movement are all thorough and well-done studies. Freeman, a political scientist, does contribute greatly to social movement theory. In general, though, both social movement and collective behavior theories have been found lacking in their theoretical and conceptual development (Blumer, 1957; Marx and Wood, 1975; Aguirre and Quarantelli, 1983). This study seeks to explore some of the most promising theories of social movements in the area of movement emergence. This will, therefore, be both a sociological study as well as an historical study. The more predominant emphasis is on the sociological underpinnings of an historical social movement. Our goal is to achieve both description of the NWRCs and analysis of social movement origins.

The remainder of this chapter will concentrate on two areas. First we will look at the pertinent social movement literature, focusing on definitions of social movements and general and specific theories relevant to this work. The second major section will be a discussion of historical sociology. Historical problems are legitimate foci for sociological study and provide a wealth of possibilities for the
historically-inclined social movement researcher (Skocpol, 1983; Tilly, 1981). We will begin here with an overview of social movement theory.

**Social Movements: Definitions and Theories**

Social movements have been defined in several ways, but all definitions seem to embody a few similar ideas. First, classic social movement definitions such as those by Blumer (1935) and Smelser (1964) emphasize the collective action aspects of social movements. For example, Blumer (1935) sees social movements as "collective enterprises to establish a new order of life". They involve conditions of unrest and are initially unorganized. As social movements develop, they become more structured with norms, divisions of labor, and roles. Smelser (1973) points out that some of these definitions of social movements are also characteristic of collective behavior in general. Collective behavior is purposive behavior, an attempt to "reconstitute" the social order. It is uninstitutionalized behavior. What collective behavior attempts to reconstitute are values, norms, and other parts of the social structure. In essence, Smelser is saying that social movements are part of the larger framework of collective behavior, an assumption used in this study.

As instances of collective behavior, social movements also have the function of promoting or resisting social change. According to Killian (1964), this is the second characteristic that definitions of social movements have in common. Turner and Killian (1937) emphasize these two characteristics in their definition of social movements as "A collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or group of which it is a part." Likewise, Heberle (1931) sees social movements as "a collective attempt to reach a visualized goal, especially a change in certain social institutions".
Perhaps one of the most important works on definitions of social movements was by Zald and Ash (1966) who defined social movements as a "purpose and collective attempt...to change individuals or societal institutions and structures". Based on this work, and in a departure from the collective action definitions, McCarthy and Zald (1977) stated that social movements are:

a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society.

In an important conceptual distinction, several sociologists have clarified the differences between social movements and social movement organizations (Zald and Ash, 1966; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Social movements are not the same as social movement organizations. A social movement organization is defined as:

(a) complex or formal organization which identifies its goals with preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement those goals (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

Social movements are often composed of social movement organizations, which are the more formalized structures embodying a certain set of opinions and beliefs. Thus, for example, the civil rights movement was made up of multiple social movement organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Similarly, the women's rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s currently has the National Organization for Women, and the Women's Equity Action League as two social movement organizations. According to Zald and Ash (1966), the people who identify with the social movement are the potential support base for the organization. The size of this base, and the amount and direction of their interest will affect how the organizations survive and/or grow. Social movement organizations are directly tied to the social movement through the support base.
While it is relatively easy to point out illustrations of social movements and social movement organizations, the steps linking the two together have not been directly examined. The research here will do that. The NWRCs, for example, were the formative beginnings of the women's rights movement. They were loosely structured, as we shall see, but do not fit the actual criteria for social movement organizations (SMOs). Fortunately, a recent paper by Lofland and Jamison (1983) has spelled out the following set of criteria for SMOs:

1. three or more people who draw a specific boundary for the group.
2. who have regularly planned meetings.
3. who have long-term goals with no pre-planned date of extinction.
4. who have coordinated goals.
5. who have a formal name.
6. who have a place to gather and meet.
7. who have boundary personnel and means for communication both internally and externally.

What we have with the NWRCs is more of a social movement, or a collectivity in search of purposive action to bring about social change. During the decade of initial activity, the participants set about forming opinions and beliefs concerning their agenda for social change. The NWRCs were, in essence, the place where the values and ideology of the women's rights movement as a social movement were hammered out and where the groundwork was laid for a subsequent social movement organization, the American Equal Rights Association.

The NWRCs fail to meet the SMO criteria in a number of ways. First, the specific group boundaries were never really drawn. Apparently anyone could become a member of the NWRC and in fact many opponents were present at the conventions.
Second, there were regularly planned meetings but on an informal level. The annual meetings were sometimes in doubt and one in 1857 was never held. In contrast, the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) was more formalized and did hold regular meetings until the movement split in 1869 and even the two organizations which followed held regular meetings.

The NWRCs did have long-term goals but ones which evolved slowly over the decade of origin. Their goals were by no means coordinated and a wide diversity of opinions was found on all sides. There was no formal group or organization name. The members of the convention did argue over development of a national organization and decided against such a move early in the decade. The NWRCs were never held in a particular location; it was left up to convention members to decide where to gather and meet.

Finally, there were beginning attempts at establishing key mobilizing personnel in the 1830s and a means of communicating both externally and internally. Movement leaders as they emerged were the most visible signs that an informal communications network existed. It was never formally recognized that any boundary personnel or network existed. This network, informal though it was, was essential to development of the social movement in the 1850s and will be discussed in detail in a later section.

In summary, then what we are exploring is the beginning of the women's rights movement at a particular period of time. It is important to make a conceptual distinction that the movement phase we are examining is the stage in which a social movement began to move toward becoming a social movement organization. The NWRCs were the forums where the parts of the social movement such as values
(ideology), norms, and structure emerged. As a consequence of this emergence, we will be able to see the initial stages of a pre-SMO time period where the groundwork for later women's rights organizations was laid. Our analysis will depend largely on previous developments in social movement theory which will be discussed next. We will first examine two general models of social movement development and then consider some of the more recent debates in the social movement literature.

There is a myriad of ways in which to classify theories on social movements. Wood and Jackson (1982), for example, divide them up into three paradigms: the social structural, the psychological, and the social psychological. There are then two levels of theoretical application, general and middle-range theories. General theories are the more universally applicable ones such as Smelser (1962) and Marx (1906) while middle-range theories use variables which explain partial aspects of social movements (Merton, 1957).

Marx's theory of social movement origins, for example, is formed on the assumption that the economic structure underlies all behavior, including social movement and protest actions. He was concerned with explaining working class protests and placed an emphasis on historical conditions which must be right for collective actions to emerge. The conditions are right under the economic system of capitalism. In this economic system, the working class (proletariat) will be exploited by the ownership class (bourgeoisie) for their surplus labor. Put simplistically, the proletariat led by bourgeois ideologists will overthrow the ruling classes. This will come about when the proletariat's awareness of the exploitation changes from a false (unaware) consciousness to a class consciousness and awareness of their oppression. Thus, a social movement is born under a situation of social conflict.
Smelser (1962) is from a more social structural tradition but also looks at tensions between groups in the origins of social movements. Smelser's theory uses six conditions associated with the structure of society. As each condition appears within a particular historical situation, the probability of a social movement increases. Smelser calls this the "value-added approach". The first condition is structural conduciveness or the openness of society is toward reform. The more open a social structure is the more likely it is to experience reform (norm-oriented) movements. Closed structures are more likely to generate radical (value-oriented) movements. Conduciveness, more specifically then, is the prevalence of means for expressing dissatisfaction. This involves differentiation or separation of social institutions. The greater the differentiation the more likely are norm-oriented movements to appear; the less the differentiation the more likely are value-oriented movements to appear. Next, structural strain refers to tensions, conflict, or deprivations within the social structure. Strain within a society is not predictive of type of movement.

Third are generalized beliefs or major ideologies which guide and direct actions toward collective movements. Often there is a combination of both reform and radical beliefs among movement participants. Norm or reform oriented beliefs are obviously indicators of norm-oriented movements, as are radical beliefs forerunners of value-oriented movements. Fourth, precipitating factors or events which focus the strain or conduciveness toward a social movement must occur. Fifth is mobilization of people into a movement. Neither precipitating factors nor mobilization will predict type of movement. The final condition is that of social control which does predict type of movement and depends on structural openness. Social control can be experienced in two ways. First is the example of negotiation.
or the application of somewhat informal sanctions, which is more likely to occur in reform movements. The other alternative is formal or physical combat in what is more likely to be a value-oriented movement. Smelser's theory overall is useful in post hoc explanations. The most predictive variables concerning type of movement are structural conduciveness, generalized beliefs, and social control mechanisms (Wood and Jackson, 1982).

Examples of middle-range types of studies include research by Tilly (1964, 1974) which looked at such factors as the impact of urban growth and educational and economic condition on social movement development (Dunlap, 1970; Wood, 1975; Smith, 1974). Other psychological theories emphasize rational and irrational aspects of collective behavior. For those based on the irrational models of social behavior see LeBon (1960) and Feuer (1969); for the rational side, where research is more lacking, see Flacks (1967) as an example.

Other social scientists have pointed out ways to classify social movement theories, most of which center on the debate between what Wood and Jackson (1982) called the social psychological paradigm and newer theories challenging the basic assumptions of the paradigm. Skocpol (1979) criticized what she calls the aggregate-psychological or social psychological theories. These theories identify the underlying conditions for collective behavior as relative deprivation which leads to frustration and results in aggression or collective violence in Skocpol's instance. This DFA hypothesis, as it is known, has been dominant in social science research until recently (McPhail, 1971; Gurr, 1968).

One of the controversies in this area of social movement theory is embodied in a series of American Sociological Review articles leading to several criticisms of theories of relative deprivation. Davis (1962) published a theory of revolution
predicting the appearance of collective actions. According to this theory, known as the J-Curve, revolutions will occur after an extended period of economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. We would expect, then, that social movements would be most likely to appear when individuals collectively experiencing increased prosperity become suddenly aware of a situation of relative deprivation. Their discontent and frustration would be sources for impetus toward formation of a social movement to alleviate the deprivation.

Snyder and Tilly (1972), as well as other recent theorists (McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977), have taken issue with the social psychological theory of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation, by itself, can be an initiating factor in the emergence of social movements. However, it does not adequately explain other scenarios where collective behavior does not emerge. For example, what of the instances where J-curve patterns of rising and falling expectations are found but collective behavior does not occur? Many societies and groups experience deprivation and frustration but these conditions do not always lead to collective behavior or aggression. The DFA hypothesis may point to a facilitating condition for some cases of social movement emergence but does not hold up on a consistent basis. Social psychological theories have been replaced by the currently more predominant social structural perspective of resource mobilization.

Developed by McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977), resource mobilization makes use of both political sociology and economic models to explain social movement emergence. Put simply, conditions may exist for the possible appearance of collective behavior or social movements. Only those collective actions which can effectively gather and implement essential resources will become sustained social movements and subsequently SMOs. Resource mobilization does not deny the
existence of grievances but emphasizes the structural conditions that facilitate expression of grievance. The perspective looks at those conditions which affect a movement's potential for success.

McCarthy and Zald point out that the classical models of Smelser and Davies are out of date. Emphasis upon structural strain, generalized beliefs and deprivation overall ignore the ongoing "problems and strategic dilemmas of social movements". Resource mobilization examines both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. The perspective also studies the resources which must be mobilized, dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements. One emphasis of the resource mobilization perspective which will be important in this research is the role of the environment in social movement development. Traditional theories have been criticized for not examining the ways in which the environment can be used for SMO purposes.

The resource mobilization perspective views society as providing an infrastructure which social movement organizations can utilize. The parts of the mobilizable infrastructure include communication media, levels of influence, degree of access to institutional centers, preexisting networks, and occupational structure and growth. Additionally, the traditional viewpoints sees social movement leaders, for example, using bargaining or persuasion to create change. SMOs, in the new view, have more strategic tasks such as mobilizing supporters, turning the various publics into sympathizers, and so on:. Finally, social movements are not always comprised merely of "aggrieved populations". Conscience constituents, or direct supporters who do not benefit directly from the social movement, are examples of major non-aggrieved sources of support.
Availability of resources, then, is the major factor in the formation of social movements. Grievances are either structurally given or, at least in modern social movements, created as a demand of the social movement industry or social movement sector. In essence, what we will be examining in this dissertation is a social movement in the process of mobilizing toward development of an SMO. The general NWRCs in the 1850s were the larger set of opinions and beliefs which comprised a social movement—the women's movement. The process of organizational mobilization, at this point, was just beginning.

Jenkins (1983) has pointed out that little agreement exists on the type of resources which are important. This is further complicated by the historical setting we are researching. Freeman's (in McCarthy and Zald, 1979) classification of tangible and intangible resources is especially useful here. Freeman delineated some of these factors necessary for movement formation based on existing research (1975, 1983). A first resource needing to be mobilized is a preexisting communications network within the social movement. This is a "primary prerequisite" for social movement activity. The network must also be cooptable to the new ideas of the "incipient" movement. Social movements, therefore, cannot be sustained without a preexisting, mobilizable, and cooptable network in existence.

Freeman also refers to the condition of an existence of a situation of strain, what Perry and Pugh (1978) refer to as situational stress. We can apply this general concept of strain to the era we are examining, most easily seen in groups reacting to nineteenth century gender role prescriptions. What is more important, however, is to examine the structural conduciveness of the time period in question. Following resource mobilization logic, the strain or grievances experienced were probably conditions significant for social movement emergence. But resource
mobilization theorists would ask, why did a women's movement not develop earlier? Obviously, recent work in women's history has documented many kinds of female grievances and discontent throughout time. Why did the women's rights movement emerge at this particular time?

The answer lies in the structural conditions of the time preceding emergence and in the effective resource mobilization of the 1830s. The most significant resource of the 1830s was the preexisting communications network in the abolition movement. The network was cooptable to the ideas of feminism based on principles of human rights learned in the antislavery movement. The knowledge of organizing and mobilizing learned in antislavery was effectively utilized in the emergent women's movement.

This process we will explore further in the analysis. In addition, this study will show how elements of both classical and resource mobilization theory can be used to explain social movement emergence. The two are not necessarily opposed as Skocpol (1979) and Rupp and Taylor (1985) have pointed out. First, we have changes in social systems or societies which give rise to grievances or allow new potentials for collective mobilization. Second, a movement of sorts develops to promote or resist some type of change. The key to endurance is in the successful mobilization of essential resources. This summary of social movement theories provides us with the outline of our analysis. Only one point remains which needs to be discussed here before preceding, that is the place of history in sociological research, and some of our concerns for this research.
Historical Sociology

This study is perhaps interesting in the use of historical materials for a sociological source of data. Yet it is not entirely unusual within the discipline. In 1976, for example, a special issue of Social Forces was devoted to the uses of history in sociological inquiry. Historical sources have also been used by many of the classical sociologists, including Durkheim and Weber. Durkheim, for example, used historical documents in studying religion among the Australian aborigines. Weber trained in history, among other disciplines, and all of his theories are constructed from existing records, such as in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (Pitt, 1972; Barnes, 1948). In the 1960s, there was a resurgence of historical sociology including Homans's work on thirteenth century English villages and Smelser's (1959) examination of changes in the Lancashire cotton industry. The first American contribution to historical sociology was Morgan's Ancient Society.

Historians have also been interested in sociology, using similar methods and concepts and sharing a growing interest in the social relations of everyday life (see Kelly-Gadol, 1976; Gutman, 1975; Evans, 1977; for examples). The field of women's studies is an excellent example of how the interdisciplinary approach can be successful. A recent example is Ulrich's book on colonial wives (1982). Her meticulous data was collected from personal documents, gravestones, court records, and so on, and her interpretation was based on a role analysis of women's lives in early New England.

Historical sociology has not always enjoyed the popularity it does today in sociology, and the disciplines were not always as complementary as they are
currently perceived to be. Barnes (1948) even lamented sociologists' decline of interest in the area several decades ago. In order to pursue the development of the area, this section will examine the history of historical sociology and some of the current writings in the area.

Burke (1980) said that both history and sociology have in common the study of whole societies and human behavior. History emphasizes the differences between societies and the changes over time. Sociology makes generalizations about the structure of human societies whereas history may look more for the particular and the unique. Sociologists have stated that history is important for their discipline. Comte, for example, pointed out that an understanding of the social histories of large societies is necessary for sociological interpretation and explanation.

Barnes (1948) traced the interest of scholars in the history of human society back to classical times. Sociologists, according to Barnes, are discoverers of the origins of life and specifically the laws of social evolution. Rather than the descriptive work of history, sociology examines the past in a generalized search for general patterns and trends behind social development. Barnes cites the interest in social evolution as the force originally behind historical sociology. An example is in the combination of Darwinism and historical understanding which led to Social Darwinism.

Historical sociology (Tylor in Barnes, 1948) was originally the science of cultural development and was called "culturology". Kovalevsky (Barnes, 1948) said the primary task of historical sociology was estimating the similarities in cultural and institutional evolution, a necessity before identifying patterns and regularities in institutional development. Marxian theory, for example, is essentially an examination of institutional development throughout history. Sociology has always
had a connection with history. This has been most noticeable in the twentieth century. Mannheim's (1920s) sociology of knowledge was historical in its methodology. Merton studied Puritanism and science in the 1930s. In the 1940s, Homans published his work on the English villages. Sociologists and historians did begin to look more closely at each other's work in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1964, Cahnman and Boskoff initiated a move to use historical documents for social research. Historical sociology seems to have reached an unprecedented popularity in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1983 American Sociological Association meeting, for example, offered a didactic seminar on the subject.

Tilly (1981) agrees that historical sociology has reached new popularity in recent decades. Examples include the increase of social histories of everyday life, such as Jeffrey's work on frontier women (1979) and Glasco's study of ethnic life cycles (1975). The Journal of Social Science History would seem very familiar to sociologists, especially in its emphasis on quantitative methods. Social history, though, is not the same as historical sociology which has a more theoretical and generalized approach to the history of human society (Barnes, 1948). Tilly (1981) has identified two areas as major contributions from historical sociology. One is the search for general explanatory models; the second is the development of historical analyses of structural change and collective action.

Skocpol (1979) has taken Tilly's suggestion seriously in her work on social revolutions. She examined revolutions through a comparative historical method in France, Russia, and China. The comparative method was used because it was generalizable across cases and historically sensitive. It also, says Skocpol, provides an anchor for theoretical speculation including serving as a source of theoretical extension and reformulations. It should also be added that history offers cases
which are fixed in time. They are events which have occurred and which are especially conducive to sociological analysis (Tilly, 1979).

Skocpol (1983) is the leading current exponent of historical sociology. She points out that there are three research strategies in historical sociology focusing on the uses of theory, concepts, and comparisons. First, the researcher can apply a general model to explain historical instances. The purpose is to elaborate the general model or demonstrate its utility. Cases are simply chosen for purposes of illustration and, as Skocpol points out, can be seen as somewhat arbitrary. Schwartz (1976) applied a protest model to the Southern Farmers’ Alliance as one example of the first research strategy. Smelser (1959) also applied the structuralist-functionalist model to economic organizations and then to the nineteenth-century British cotton industry. This strategy is also conducive to Marxist theoretical application and demonstration.

A second strategy is the use of concepts to develop a meaningful historical interpretation. Ideal types here are clarified or defined and then used to illustrate an historical circumstance. Thompson (1964) used the concept of “class” in a work on the British working class. Starr (1982) used “authority” in examining the American medical profession. Skocpol argues that both works would have been strengthened if comparisons had been made. Both the first and second approaches are believed to be most effective when combined with the third research strategy.

The third method is to test causal hypotheses about historical problems. The procedures here is to explain selected and well-defined outcomes and patterns. The researcher either tests or develops causal hypotheses on an historical problem, with the possibility of explaining more than one case. Comparisons are used as controls and alternative theories are considered. The goal is to validate or redefine
the hypotheses offered. This strategy has as its target the hope of building good theories with broad applicability. Skocpol's (1980) work on the New Deal is an attempt to use this approach.

Skocpol (1983) also supplies us with six rules of thumb for comparative historical analysis. The first step is to read history and look for "promising problems" for research. This probably seems more obvious to historians than to sociologists. Skocpol suggests looking for surprises or puzzling patterns in both primary and secondary sources. It is then possible to formulate the research question and develop or find hypotheses about the historical problem. Second is to design and redesign the research in order to examine the research question at hand. As the research design is implemented, new ideas will develop and one should be open to modification and/or revision as the circumstances merit.

Third, Skocpol warns not to "get hung up" (Skocpol, 1983) on qualitative versus quantitative approaches. Both are applicable to historical problems. Skocpol suggests using the best of both styles to make the most of your research. Quantitative analyses can be supplemented by qualitative investigations, while qualitative studies can be sharpened by precise measurements, provided there is adequate data.

Fourth, history is not a single narrative story. Historical sociologists need to be aware of agreements and disagreements among historians on a problem. This clarifies the issues, guides the research and helps to avoid mistakes. Also, the same historical periods can be re-examined with new research questions. A fifth point is to use secondary sources but with consistency and sophistication. They are not necessarily inferior to primary sources. The use may simply be similar to reworking the results of previous surveys. Primary sources are preferable when
possible. Finally, the historical sociologist should be ready to write and rewrite findings to develop the best blend of sociological analysis and historical description. Too often initial drafts end up too descriptive. The analysis will have to be woven into the story to illustrate the hypotheses, concepts, or models.

Chirot (1976) was the first to identify thematic and methodological controversies in the use of historical materials by sociologists. He found some of the controversies that Skocpol also illustrated. The debate over qualitative versus quantitative approaches, according to Chirot, is really whether sociology and history can be expressed in mathematical terms and whether a mathematical model of society is possible.

A second debate is over the focus of each discipline. Historians have a strong tradition of historical specificity. Only unique combinations of events and structures have common elements and these perhaps can be used to express ideal types. This is almost antithetical to sociologists who look for patterns, uniformities, and regularities. Another problem is the size of the unit of analysis, whether it is a particular department of a university or an entire nation. The level of analysis may very well depend on the available data as well as the decision to make the research macro or microsociological. Chirot argues that using medium-sized units of analysis permits more comparative work. There is a larger quantity of data and the ability to control some of the variables. This also offers a higher total number of cases than a simple nation-level analysis. Finally, Chirot adds that most of us teach and historical sociology is a way to convey a sense of the past to our students.

Barnes (1948) encourages sociologists to develop a command of accurate historical methods. Human documents, or primary sources, are excellent data sources for the sociologist. Blumer's (1939) appraisal of Thomas and Znaniecki's
work on Polish peasants (1918) emphasized the specific methodological techniques they used. Human documents served as sources for examining the individual as a participant in social life. The five kinds of documents included letters, life histories, newspaper accounts, court records, and records of social agencies. An inductive procedure was used to study the peasants' lives. Blumer pointed out that these documents revealed the subjective side of culture and how individuals acted toward objects on the basis of the meaning the object has for them (see also Misztal, 1981).

Gottshalk, Kluckhohn, and Angell (1943) point out that personal documents reveal particular views of the experiences in which one is involved in. The symbolic interaction is evident here when they point out that the researcher can obtain detailed evidence about human construction of their lives through personal documents. These show how the social situation appears to actors in the situations and the meanings it has for them. Personal documents can be used in several ways: as a "means of securing conceptual hunches", suggesting "new hypotheses to your conceptual scheme", and verifying hypotheses. Personal used a great deal in sociology between 1920 and 1940, can be used to gain knowledge about persons, groups, or institutions. Dollard (1935) used the life history as a method of studying the subjective side of social existence through human documents. Dollard suggests establishing criteria to look for in the documents, a form of content analysis. Personal documents are also effective means of capturing individual and group consciousness in historical settings. Private documents, diaries, letters, newspapers of women's organizations, minutes of meetings, and so on have content through which women reveal their thoughts, experiences, feelings, dreams, and accomplishments.
Plummer's (1983) recent work on life documents is also useful here. He cites C. Wright Mills' work as an example of how a sociologist uses the triple focus of biography, history, and structure, a technique employed in the final chapters of his research. Life documents, says Plummer, are very valuable and "vastly underrated". Documents pay tribute to human subjectivity and creativity, how humans "respond to social constraints and actively assemble social worlds". One example is Thomas and Znaniecki's study of letters in five main types: ceremonial, informing, sentimental, literary, and business. Plummer suggests, however, that scientific work is taken less seriously when personal experience is a basis.

Thomas and Znaniecki showed how both individual and social factors must be taken into account:

the cause of a social or individual phenomenon is never another social or individual phenomena alone, but always a combination of a social and an individual phenomena (Plummer, 1983).

Plummer clarifies the links between Chicago sociology, symbolic interaction, and personal documents. Life is "concrete experience", an "ever-emerging relativistic perspective", "inherent marginality and the ambiguity of life". Movement toward structure in sociology leads to "unwarranted abstraction and reification". Subjective meanings found in personal documents are concrete experience. We can use documents to study the subjective definition of the situation and the objective constraints in the eyes of a processual symbolic interactionist. The Chicago school of sociology, in the 1920s though 1940s, shunned abstractions to concentrate on the "detailed, particular, and experiential". Schwartz and Jacobs (1979) however suggest caution with personal documents in trying to understand who wrote the document, why, for whom, and so on.
Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest the use of personal documents as the basis of case studies. The case study is for a wider theoretical purpose, to make and generate theory. They suggest the use of case studies on which good theory can be based, a main method used in the research presented here. Case histories give prominence to the story and to detail involved in the narrative. Both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used. The data collection, as per the Glaser and Strauss method of grounded theory, is qualitative initially and then processed into quantitative data.

In summary, this section has looked at the place of historical sociology in current academia and the controversies and methods used to study an historical problem from a sociological perspective. Historical sociologists are part of an increasingly popular "interdisciplinary community of historically oriented social scientists" (Skocpol, 1984). Within the rubric of historical sociology it is possible to combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As Skocpol says, those who engage in this type of research are asking questions about processes which occur over time and are looking intently at the effect of "temporal sequences" on the processual outcomes. Historical sociologists study both the particular and the varying aspects of social structures and social change, a method especially suited to research on social movements. We will place an emphasis here on the importance of primary sources in studying an historical problem.

The difficulties one can encounter in doing this type of research are discussed in the following chapter on methodology. Chapters three through six contain the substantive section of this research. Chapter three is an in-depth discussion of conditions prior to movement emergence in 1820 through 1860. Chapter four is the first section of this research to describe the NWRCs and look at
them analytically. This chapter looks at the three foci of structure, strategy, and goals of the conventions. The following chapter contains a discussion of the ideology of the movement, and the relationship of ideology to goals. A chapter on membership follows, with a discussion of the demographics of the movement constituency and case studies of the presidents of the conventions. A final chapter contains the analysis of the women's movement in the 1850s with an emphasis on resource mobilization theory. Problems in the current literature are pointed out. Additionally, the place of this research in sociological literature and social movement theory are presented.
Chapter Two: Methodology

This chapter examines the research design and methods used and developed to study the emergence of the women's rights movement in the United States. In historical research, methods are usually not as meticulously explained or outlined as in sociology. Conventional techniques such as surveys and questionnaires are impossible with historical figures due to much missing data. In-depth interviews are equally impossible. This historical sociologist must in actuality develop new methods to study the problem at hand, and redefine current techniques to apply to the past (Skocpol, 1984).

There were two different overall levels of analysis in this study. I examined both individuals and the national conventions in this research. First, individuals were studied for their group and demographic characteristics. The purpose was essentially to identify pre-existing communications networks and the extent that individuals were cooptable in their values and belief systems to the women's rights movement. This was accomplished through several methods including a demographic survey and biographical case studies. Second, I looked at the conventions as yearly events, emphasizing structural elements as well as the underlying elements of structure, strategy, goals, and ideology. This research included a content analysis of The Una, the first feminist newspaper and an official organ of the National Woman's Rights Conventions (NWRC).

Initially both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. I originally intended to apply quantitative approaches to the biographical data. The extent of the missing data, however, prompted me to perform the final
analysis in a qualitative manner. While some statistical correlations might be possible, it did not seem necessary to do so to support the findings. Additionally, while it was often possible to identify if a person was part of a group, it was usually not possible to identify if the person was not part of a group. For example, many of the convention members had participated in other reforms. Often I could identify whether they had been involved. For other individuals I could not identify whether they had or had not been involved.

**Demographic Data, Content Analysis, and Case Study**

Both Freeman (1973) and Rossi (1982) have indicated that it is difficult to do a composition breakdown of movement membership. Freeman found it an impossible task even with the National Organization for Women's charter membership list from the latter 1960s. Rossi was more successful in her study of recent movement participants which involved a survey of convention participants in the latter 1970s.

I designed a "survey" focused on four different data collection or thematic sampling areas. First, I looked for simple demographic information such as date of birth and death, sex, home state, and race. Most literature indicated that the women's movement was white and primarily female (Davis, 1981; and Aptheker, 1982). My findings confirmed this but indicated that males may also have played significant movement roles. Usually the only way to determine for certain if the individual was Black was if race was noted, and apparently Black membership was unusual enough that it was recorded in writings of the era. The logic behind date of birth/death and home state was to determine if any geographical or age cohort effects were present. I also looked for religion, education, and occupation
pertaining to each individual. I allowed room to code more than one religion due
to evidence that women's rights women often underwent religious crises in their
lives (Stanton, 1898). This, along with any similarities in education and
occupation were used to test for similar backgrounds, shared beliefs, and value
systems. Freeman (1973) states that movement individuals must be cooptable to
the incipient movement. Sharing such backgrounds and experiences is one way
to test this proposition. Also, Freeman states that crises occur which point out
directions for the movement and catalyze the individual to action. This seems to
have occurred both individually and collectively. Religious crises, educational
experiences, and employment problems may have been similar enough to have
been a group phenomenon. Indeed, this did prove to be the case.

The population for this study initially included all officers, committee
members, and convention members. The sample was narrowed to only known
officers and known committee members due to the available information. A list
was generated through examining the proceedings where these individuals were
recorded. A total of one hundred and seventeen individuals were then studied
using the data collection method discussed above. I did come across a few
additional committee members in later research, but was not able to find any
other information on them, suggesting they were probably peripheral members.
Fifty-one of the original one hundred and seventeen were officers (president,
vice-president, secretary or treasurer; at least once there was a finance officer)
and the rest were on committees (a steering committee and others including
business, finance, publishing, industrial, education, civil and political, and social
relations). Not all committees were recorded every year. Whether they all existed
or not on an annual basis is unknown, although it is possible to see how and why many committees developed.

Included in the demographic material was information on the individuals' spouse and parents, specifically education and occupation. This inadvertently aided in locating information on women due to learning spousal and parental surnames. Not knowing these surnames complicated the already difficult process of locating lesser-known members of the NWRCs. Some social movement literature suggests that social movements occur when there is a decline in social class or feelings of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation according to several researchers (Gusfield, 1963; Davies, 1969; and Gurr, 1970) can be a motivation for collective action. Most studies look at this in terms of social class and to see if any perceived discrepancies between classes lead to movement emergence. This may not be an appropriate way to look at the NWRC participants, however, since we are generally comparing father's status with daughter's. The two were simply not comparable in the nineteenth century. A better way to measure this might be to look at perceived relative deprivation based on sex differentiation and stratification rather than social class. In this research I did identify parental education and occupation, two of the commonly used measures of social class. Concentrating on these two did reveal a few important items such as traditions of family reform. Overall, however, looking at social class was one of the more difficult tasks and subsequently a weaker finding than others.

Second, Freeman proposes that pre-existing communications networks are essential to emergence. Keeping this in mind, I attempted to identify whether each individual was involved in previous social movements or organizational networks that were cooptable to women's rights. The movements included female
moral reform, benevolent work, temperance, dress reform, anti-slavery, health reform and an open category. The open category eventually included peace, religious, and prison reforms. Further, I tried to identify specific statuses and roles such as officer, agent, editor, lecturer, and so on in each of these movements or activities to see if any experiences learned here were useful later in the NWRCs. The most promising areas for networks and eventual cooptation were in abolition and temperance. Proceedings of abolition meetings did show some of this overlapping membership. Connections on both structural levels and personnel were found in the form of similar offices, committees and members, organizational members, speakers, representatives or agents for the movement, and work on newspapers and other publications. Additionally, strategies such as petitioning were learned in previous reform and used in the latter 1850s women's rights movement.

Third, I searched for the level of involvement in the NWRC by year and activity. This search extended throughout the 1850s although no convention was held in 1857. Level of involvement included officer, committee member/chair, speaker, letter-writer or simply member of the convention. This information was obtained almost exclusively from convention proceedings. The most consistently filled categories were officers and committee members, which I have identified as the core membership. I found only one membership list, for the 1850 convention. This automatically limited the scope of the movement membership available for study.

Finally, I examined the extent of social networks in creating and maintaining a movement, another test of Freeman's propositions on pre-existing communications networks. Ware (1981) has shown how friendship networks
were effective for New Deal women. I was able to document several significant friendship links between movements. Hersh (1978) also shows that husbands were sources of support for their wives' movement activities and were often active themselves. I therefore included spouses as one potential source of social support.

I also looked for other sources of support among parents (father, mother, and in some cases stepparents or other surrogates such as an aunt), two siblings (only in one case were there more), two friends (defined through self-identification, extensive correspondence, or identification by contemporaries), and other relatives (not used). Variables used to examine their influence were sex, previous movement activity as in the social movement section just discussed, level of that activity, NWRC participation and amount of correspondence. Level of activity was either active (an officer or similar level) or somewhat active (unknown to be an officer or listed as a member). I also distinguished between whether the individual was recruited to the movement by the network individual or recruited them. This was found to have occurred in several cases but the extent remains unknown due to lack of data to test each individual case. Active correspondence was indicated by the existence of letters and so on in various collections. Room for any other pertinent data was included after the network section.

I found sufficient information on fifty-seven individuals to provide adequate descriptions and analysis for our purposes here. I considered the level of sufficiency to be where I had found a majority of the data I tried to collect such as religion, education, occupation, parental and spousal data, previous movement activity, NWRC participation, and networks. I will be using other individuals in
addition to the fifty-seven where there are sufficient data. Other unobtrusive measures were not sufficiently reliable. For example, the NWRC newspaper The Una carried lists of subscribers and benefactors. These people were probably likely to have been members of the conventions but there is no way to be certain.

A second method used in this research involved a content analysis of The Una, the first women's rights newspaper in the United States. It was conceived of by the main organizer of the first two convention, Paulina Wright Davis, and was supported financially and substantively by NWRC participants. Content analysis is a most appropriate method to use in analyzing communication, in this case a newspaper (Babbie, 1983). This aspect of the study was originally intended to be a descriptive presentation of themes and ideological stances of the first feminist newspaper. In the course of the research, a strong connection emerged between the editorial themes in The Una and those of the conventions. The Una functioned to maintain ties, provide an outlet for ideas, spread feminism, and inform readers of convention specifics and happenings, among others. This newspaper, an official organ of the NWRC, makes it possible to analyze how ideology and goals are related. In the editorials Davis discussed the goals of the NWRC and justified them through the movements' ideology.

The unit of analysis in this content analysis was the editorial. The Una was published monthly and there were thirty-two editorials from February 1, 1853 through October 15, 1855. Davis wrote thirty, but two have been destroyed and are no longer available on microfilm; twenty-eight form the base for the content analysis. The two other editorials not by Davis were not included. I searched for overall themes on both manifest and latent levels. The editorials were categorized
according to their most manifest theme (which may not have been related to its heading).

Davis had four main areas in her editorials, which reflected concerns for the issues and actions of the first NWRC in 1850. These areas were education of women (literary, scientific, and artistic), women's avocation (industrial, commercial, and professional), women's interests (pecuniary, civil, and political) and social relations. These were also the four main goal areas which the conventions identified. Davis' editorials thus reflect not only her ideas but also the direction of the women's rights movement.

The final method used here is an intensive case study of the NWRCs and the presidents of the conventions. There were ten pre-Civil War conventions and one post-Civil War convention in 1866. I obtained full proceedings for six of the eleven conventions and partial proceedings for the remaining five. At least six of the proceedings were published as separate booklets. The other five partial proceedings were found in the History of Woman Suffrage (HWS), a documentary collection published by women leaders of the women's movement in the nineteenth century. The proceedings in the History of Woman Suffrage are extensive in some cases, however, and may actually be the full accountings for at least two of the five conventions. In all, then, I found information on each convention in the 1850s and in 1866. There was no convention in 1857. This case study is a very detailed examination of the NWRC, focusing on structure, strategy, goals, ideology, and membership. The case study of the presidents was based on biographical and autobiographical information, personal correspondence, and historical summaries written by their contemporaries. I looked for the same general patterns in the lives of the convention presidents as I did in the core
membership while remaining open to any possible deviations. In many cases the only differences were that the presidents had more intensive prior reform experience. They had served on more committees and in more offices. Otherwise the presidents were highly representative of the core membership.

The first chapter of this study will examine the conditions in the antebellum and pre-NWRC years which may have affected social movement emergence. In this chapter, I concentrate on the impact of social and cultural circumstances which affected the future core membership. Such nineteenth century experiences such as the industrial revolution and the creation of sexual "spheres" were partly responsible for the emergence of the women's rights movement. Additionally, I looked at other reform movements in the years preceding the national women's rights conventions and the controversies over women's roles in such reforms. This section is both descriptive and analytical. This chapter is based on both primary and secondary sources.

The following chapter examines structure, strategy, and goals of the conventions. The initial idea and organizers are first described. Structure includes an elaborate description of the division of labor in the NWRC. Division of labor was based on an officer hierarchy and committee structure which combined both horizontal and vertical features. The conventions were organized and led mostly by the presidents. Parliamentary procedure was used during the annual meetings. Strategies changed over the 1850s and moved from initial agitation to more concrete strategies such as petitioning legislatures. Strategies were identified through speeches and resolutions of the conventions. Finally, goals were also examined through resolutions passed at the conventions. They fell into four categories of education, employment, social relations, and civil and political
rights. The *History of Woman Suffrage* and convention proceedings were used here. The connections between prior reforms and structure, strategy, and goals are explored.

The next chapter on ideology is a continuation of part of the preceding chapter. Ideology is defined here as the belief system which explains and justifies the goals of the movement. The ideology of the women's rights movement was largely borrowed from the antislavery movement and the beliefs of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Both Biblical explanations and rationales based on nature are considered. Challenges to the ideology will be discussed. The second part of this chapter looks at the connection between goals and ideology. In this chapter some of the same sources are used including speeches in the *History of Woman Suffrage*, convention proceedings, and *The Una*.

The last chapter of substantive findings focuses on the backgrounds of the convention members. Demographic data are used here to look at similarities or uniformities among the core membership. The one hundred and seventeen officers and committee members are here examined for patterns in their backgrounds. Education, family, religion, and occupation are all looked at in order to understand the impact of social institutions on the core membership and to see their position in society. Prior reform membership and experience are included in this membership analysis. Network formation and linkages between NWRC members are exemplified through prior reform experiences. A final section examines the lives of the presidents to see how representative they were of the core membership. Once again, illustrations of connections between the presidents and other core members are used in describing links between movements and among movement constituencies and personnel. The sources used here to look at
the core membership and illustrate networks are biographies and autobiographies, obituaries, eulogies, and private documents.

Sources and Problems in Archival Research

Historical sources, especially from the nineteenth century, are not the usual sources which sociologists use. Some social scientists, however, have been successful in applying sociological theories to historical problems (Tilly, 1979). Approaching historical sources placed me in some situations unique to sociologists, but probably not to historians. I feel it is important, therefore, to address some of these problems. Webb, et al (1981) point out that the archival records, which I used, have both advantages and disadvantages. In this section I wish to explore some of them.

First, Webb et al point out that there are two major sources of bias in archival records: selective deposit and selective survival. This was indeed a problem in my research. Not all of the proceedings of the conventions, my main source, have survived over the last century. Some may not have been published, but this is difficult to ascertain. There were publication committees to ensure that a printed record was made. The History of Woman Suffrage is a very thorough collection of both state and national proceedings and this source was used extensively in combination with the proceedings. It seems probable that some of the proceedings were lost, especially given the location problems I encountered. Several issues of The Una, for example, were partially or totally destroyed.

Actually finding the proceedings was an even bigger problem. Interlibrary loan searches failed to turn up any of the proceedings and university computerized searches were also not helpful. The Gerritsen Collection of women's
history at The Ohio State University which supposedly contains all of the proceedings was missing this section. A call to the microfilm processing center revealed that this reel had not been reproduced yet. The center personnel did not know when the section would be done. I did discover one set of proceedings in the Ohio State University microfiche collection under the vague subject heading of women's rights. Two national conventions were held in Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio, but neither were at the Ohio Historical Society Library. Instead, the Ohio Historical Society had the 1852 Syracuse, New York proceedings. A visit to the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women at Radcliffe College, the major repository of documents on women's history, was somewhat more helpful. Although it was supposed to have six of the proceedings I had not located, instead, it had both of the ones I had found, plus one other I had not found. I located a fourth on a microfilm reel again labeled women's rights, 1850-1900 which was not included in the card catalog or referenced anywhere. There was nothing on the proceedings in the Alma Lutz Collection of the Vassar College library. A visit to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts provided the last two proceedings (a total of six full proceedings). As far as I have been able to ascertain these are the only proceedings which are available. Partial proceedings are contained in the History of Woman Suffrage.

Another problem according to Webb (1981) is sampling error. To reduce this problem I used all the proceedings material I could find, as well as the papers and collections of three major women's rights leaders, located at Vassar College. Webb suggests using multiple sources to reduce sampling error and to compare how various writers deal with the subject, a form of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This was the purpose behind using many autobiographies,
biographies, and newspaper articles from or relevant to the period. Selective editing is also a concern. The proceedings were actually secretarial minutes from the convention and included allegedly exact copies of written speeches and letters to the conventions. Extracts were included but we do not know what was missing. Some speakers requested that their speeches not be included due to space limitations and their wishes were granted. Only pro-convention letters were printed.

Webb cites Clark (1981) as identifying particular problems with documents such as letters, memoirs, and diaries. First, we need to know about the history of the document. What was its purpose and intent? For the most part, what I looked at were personal documents between individuals. Some were very businesslike: for example finance officer Susan B. Anthony’s letters on the financial needs of the movement to co-activists. Others were intimate, such as many letters I read addressed to Paulina Wright Davis. I also read unpublished manuscripts. How private were they and was I intrusive? Technically, they are classified as material open to the public for examination. I believe the intrusion was worth the knowledge gained and use of these sources did pass university privacy restrictions.

Also, how authentic is the document? I had the unfortunate task of informing Vassar that two diaries identified as authored by Davis were not hers. I do not believe this was a problem elsewhere. Were any documents tampered with or edited? Perhaps only selective survival is critical here. Were unpleasant items eliminated from collections? It is difficult to know. I do know the proceedings were edited and some individuals withdrew their speeches or letters and a few were inserted where the convention did not have time to read them in public, much like our Congressional Record. The proceedings do mention the existence of anti-
women's rights letters; opposing speeches were printed and accounts of both pro and con newspapers were presented.

What was the source of the information? For the most part it was an eyewitness as convention secretaries recorded the proceedings. A history of the movement was also written by Davis in 1871. She neglected to mention her own significant role, however, until Lucretia Mott, another NWRC leader, absolutely insisted. This also raises the question of how likely the authors were to tell the truth. To counter any possible bias I also used newspaper accounts and read studies by current historians and sociologists on this time period. In the NWRC condemnation of the media treatment, they were truthful. This was obvious after an examination of the newspapers. Ballou’s (1895) discussion of the Hopedale utopian community's ideology, later coopted to the women's movement, was similar to Kanter's (1972) analysis. Are there other documents which shed light on the subject? Perhaps, but those sampled here were the most readily available, the most comprehensive, and the most pertinent. I did research obituaries and family genealogies for more demographic and biographical material.

What about researcher bias? The nineteenth century writings were very eloquent and persuasive. The logic and clarity of the writings were appealing. It was tiring to read such emotional pleas. I tried to solve this dilemma by doing three different readings of the proceedings. The first time I looked for structure in the conventions, the second for specific individual detail, and the third I read the speeches and letters for overall content. I tried to concentrate on these areas as a way of avoiding bias. It was important to remain open to the emotion, however, to catch the fervor and essence of the ideology and time period. In addition, I was pleased to discover such detail as the use of humor in the
conventions. One other bias I noted and corrected on my part was the assumption that these activists were all female. I assumed for example, that A. Bronson Alcott was Abigail Bronson Alcott. Instead, it was her husband, who was quite active in several social reforms, including abolition. Much to my embarrassment, I immediately corrected my assumption and noted how prevalent males were in the NWRC.

Finally, I should note that a problem occurred in locating biographical information on women. Married names were critical in finding sources and knowing spouse's or father's names often provided the only link. Educated guesses were also useful, but sometimes deliberate examinations of all the Smith's or Brown's in archival files was necessary. I am indebted to numerous librarians who found books and information quickly and who provided expedient suggestions. It was, however, fruitless at times. I also believe that many of the one hundred and seventeen were "everyday" people, not the famous leaders such as Stanton and Anthony. The Biography File at Radcliffe, a massive filing system with information on famous women, was devoid of relevant data on the one hundred and seventeen. It did have quite a file on A. Bronson Alcott, the female, who unfortunately was not in the survey and contributed to my frustration at locating information on women participants.

Overall, the search for women's history for sociological use was both frustrating and rewarding. The frustrations occurred with dead end leads, empty files, and a broader understanding of the appalling lack of information on women in history and the importance of such work. The archives must be preserved and enriched.
The rewards were experienced in discovering how alive the past can be. The NWRC had participants who worked in the Underground Railroad which I explored in Connecticut (after library hours). There was also the time I stumbled across the Prudence Crandall museum in Canterbury, Connecticut and found volunteers dedicated to preserving the past. We talked and reaffirmed each other's ideas on the nineteenth century. Historical sources do contain a wealth of data for social scientists and are amenable to sociological analysis.
Chapter Three: Conditions for Movement Emergence

Social movements do not develop in vacuums. There is no spontaneous generation of social movements, as some of the literature would have us assume. Rather, social movements are always tied somehow to the social structure of which they are a part. As we have seen in our discussion of how social movements are defined, they are a collective action undertaken to change something within the social structure. We must, therefore, look to the social structure for the source of the grievance. Grievances alone, however, do not lead to social movement emergence. As Snyder and Tilly (1972) have pointed out so well, we must look beyond the existence of grievance. Why, for example, did a women’s rights movement gain momentum in the 1850s and not earlier? This chapter will explore that question in detail.

We will be looking at the conditions which existed in the nineteenth century prior to the emergence of the women’s rights movement. The time period will be roughly 1820-1860. There are two reasons why this time period was chosen. First, it is a time identified by historians as a period of rapid industrialization and urbanization. We will see here that the development of industrial capitalism had serious consequences for new gender role prescriptions. We will also see the ways in which those roles and ideals were challenged. One of the ways the roles and ideals were challenged was through female participation in reform, the second focus of this chapter. We will use an essay written in 1881 by Matilda Joslyn Gage, a co-editor of the History of Woman Suffrage, to guide our discussion of what she called “the preceding causes” of the women’s rights movement. Gage herself
pointed out how critical it is to observe the conditions leading to social movement emergence:

Thus over the civilized world we find the same impelling forces, and general development of society, without any individual concert of action, tending to the same general result; alike rousing the minds of men and women to the aggregated wrongs of centuries and inciting to an effort for their overthrow (HWSI: 42).

We will begin with a discussion of how the industrial revolution affected the lives of men and women in the antebellum years and how the women's rights movement was a response to the development of industrial capitalism.

The Industrial Revolution and Gender Roles

Early nineteenth century America saw the development of rigid and definitive gender roles for women and men. From the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century male and female roles became more polarized and there was an increased separation of the home and workplace (Ryan, 1979a). By the 1850s women and men had their own areas of responsibility, based on gender role prescriptions. The concept of "woman's sphere" defined how women were responsible for the home. Women were described as the "constant guardians of the homefires." Men were increasingly tied to the workplace, leaving the domestic chores to women. Male and female "spheres" were viewed as separate but complementary.

Antebellum America, or roughly the time period of 1820-1865, experienced the most rapid development of industrial production and urbanization in U.S. history. This was a critical transition period in the emergence of industrial capitalism. Accompanying this industrialization was the emergence of a new sex/gender system (Ryan, 1979a). Rapid development of the New England mill
towns showed how the family economy could be separated from the home. As the home products were increasingly separated from home and manufactured in the workplace, the home and workplace became detached. Women were no longer automatically attached to the idea of the family economy, where home and work were tied together. Women became synonymous with the private home. This segregation continued into distinctive character traits associated with each sex. The two separate spheres could complement each other but would not merge; men and women had distinct gender roles (Ryan, 1979a).

The prevailing ideology was that woman's assigned place was the home over which she reigned. The perfect American woman was one who was dedicated to her family. Welter (1966) described the ideal that developed for women in the period from 1820-1860 as the "cult of true womanhood", a concept which really only applied to the white, middle-class woman. The true woman possessed four ideal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Religion or piety were the core of woman's strength. Church activity was common for these women (Ryan, 1979a). Gage (1881) later wrote that the church and the state "fell with crushing weight on women". Theologians always opposed change, said Gage. Women were trained by the clergy to obey authority but woman's capacity was "dwarfed" by doing so (Gage, 1881). Submissiveness, obviously, was another necessary virtue the true woman exhibited in obeying such authority. Finally, domesticity, especially marriage and motherhood were to be women's true source for happiness. With men more tied to the workplace, women were increasingly left to care for and socialize the children. Mothers were responsible for raising sons for the industrialized workplace. The true woman was a calm, stabilizing influence in antebellum society. The nineteenth century cult of domesticity was
a necessary component for the emergence of industrial capitalism; it was a service performed by women on behalf of society (Ryan, 1979a).

Man's sphere was the area of business and public affairs. He was to be a good provider; in return home was his refuge. A new idea of sexuality developed out of this business ethic. The new economy was extended to an economy of the body. Males were viewed as the more passionate sex and it was woman's responsibility to teach their sons and to help their husbands to control their passions. Once again, this ideal of gender roles for the commercial age man had both a class and race bias to it. The Black male in slavery lacked any of the rights which the white middle-class male enjoyed (Pleck and Pleck, 1980).

Whether one resided in the nineteenth century mill town, urban area, or farm, however, the male work sphere did become more separated from the female home sphere. With the growth of industrial capitalism and the commercial age, males were increasingly set apart from the rest of the family. Few women made their way into specialized work roles. According to Ryan (1979a), this was a "pivotal period" in the history of American women. Women had never before been so far at the edges of production. As suggested above, however, there was a class and race bias to the idealized gender roles of women and men. The ideals developed for women and men did not take into account the "elasticity of the spheres" (Ryan, 1979a).

The cult of true womanhood ideal did not take into account the experiences of working women. For example, many women were employed before marriage. This work experience was more common to the mill towns of New England. The New England cotton textile industry which developed from 1820-1860 gave women some degree of social and economic independence. The majority of the women
came from farming families to the mill towns. Dublin (1979) reports that these women did not work only because of a financial need but also because of a strong desire to work. There is little evidence that daughters were sent to the mills by their families. Rather, the mills were an opportunity to live in an urban area, earn money, and enjoy independence from the family. Although most of these women did marry, their work experience was one way in which the cult of domesticity was challenged.

Another example of how gender roles in antebellum America were limited emerges in the research on the Black family. Compared to the nineteenth century ideology of femininity, the Black woman's role in society was that of "chattel" (Davis, 1981). The majority of Black female slaves were field workers. Slavery left them open to sexual abuse by white males and economic exploitation of their labor. Black women did not passively accept their role, however, they resisted rape, defended their families, and joined work stoppages (Davis, 1981). Likewise, the Black male slave did not possess any of the rights the white male enjoyed under industrial capitalism. The Black male could not marry, migrate, own property, sign contracts, and so on (Pleck and Pleck, 1980). Slavery was said to have emasculated the Black male, but in actuality fathers provided for their families to a great extent. The Black male was able to provide his family with food from fishing and hunting, and participated on an more egalitarian basis with household chores than what occurred in white middle-class homes (Genovese, 1980; Davis, 1982). The Black family was a challenge to the ideals inherent in the severe distinctions between white, middle-class spheres for woman and men.

One further indication of the class bias of the cult of domesticity and commercial age of men comes from the life experiences of various ethnic groups
in antebellum America. The life cycles and household structures of American ethnic groups show differences from the prescribed gender roles (Glasco, 1975). Native-born white women, for example, had different work experiences than Irish and German women. The Irish and German women left home to work earlier than native-born white women did. Both Irish and German women worked primarily as domestics. Their work experience dictated the type and size of families they would have. German women, for example, established households much earlier than Irish or native-born women. Most Irish women worked as live-in domestics and headed more households than either of the other two ethnic groups. Overall, the lives of ethnic women such as the Irish and German groups were likely to challenge the ideal of true womanhood. The gender ideal in the cult of domesticity simply did not apply to women who were employed as domestics or headed households.

In summary, the industrial revolution brought about not only economic changes but social changes. Gender roles for women and men were increasingly segregated and idealized in the nineteenth century, due to the shifts in home and workplace production created by the industrial revolution. The individual wage economy replaced the family economy. Women were responsible for the domestic side of life and males were responsible for the business or commercial side. Still, there were challenges to this ideal as seen in the female factory workers of New England, the Black family of the south, and some northern ethnic groups.

Women also went outside their sphere to lecture on inequality of the sexes and to participate in reform. This type of challenge to the idea of separate spheres was regarded as immoral by the clergy and press, as we shall soon see. The most significant challenge to the new gender roles in antebellum America was the
women's rights movement. The women's rights movement did not begin to
develop until the 1850s, but we can see the beginnings of feminism emerging out
of reform activity from 1820-1860. The activity was an implicit, often
unintentional, and sometimes overt challenge to the separation of male and
female spheres. In reform, women challenged the idea that they were to stay in
the home. Inadvertently, they laid the groundwork for the emergence of an
independent women's rights movement and learned how to organize and sustain
such a movement in their own behalf.

"Preceding Causes"

The most interesting source for looking at what nineteenth century
feminists thought were "preceding causes" of the women's rights movement is
included in the History of Woman Suffrage. "Preceding Causes" was an essay
written by Matilda Joslyn Gage (1881), and identified three "immediate causes"
which led to the demand for "equal rights for women". First was discussion in the
state legislatures on the property rights of women. Due to the high amount of
press attention married women's property rights became a topic for dinner-table
conversation. The everyday confrontation of such an important and
controversial topic encouraged women to work for property rights and then to
extend the argument further to equal rights for women (Basch, 1982). Second,
Gage pointed to the lectures of the "first feminists", Frances Wright and Ernestine
L. Rose, as two women whose public appearances caused a stir and debate over
woman's proper role. Wright and Rose questioned the role of women in society
and their oppression by a patriarchal society; they were role models for women in
the 1850s. Third, and most important according to Gage, was the antislavery
struggle. Antislavery was where the broad principles of human rights were discussed and where "women who listened learned of freedom". We will look at each of these in turn.

Basch (1982) writes that the period of 1820-1860 was a pivotal time in the American legal system. Challenges were made to the common law doctrine of marital unity. The idea of marital unity meant that legally the husband and wife were one and that one was the husband. His protection was called "coverture" and it imposed severe legal disabilities on the wife. Coverture was a carry-over from British medieval law. The drive for married women's property rights was not something which simply arose. The drive was tied into the changing structure of society and reflected the need for structural reform of the law, the need to adapt to economic change, and the need to come to terms with what was increasingly being called "the woman question". The egalitarian ideas in Jacksonian democracy were also a force behind the drive for legal reform (Basch, 1982).

The need for structural reform in the law was obviously based on the changes in the family over time. The situation in the nineteenth century U.S. was different from that of medieval England. Women and men faced new questions and altered roles from those of the time in which the idea of coverture had originally developed. The industrial revolution, as we have seen, further separated the spheres of home and work and put women and men into separate private and public spheres. The economic changes brought about by the industrial revolution, however, also gave women new legal responsibilities which the law had not yet adjusted to meet. For example, the scope and complexity of the marketplace had changed dramatically. Life insurance benefits had evolved and women's role in their husband's benefits was not clear. Credit had become more
elaborate but the legal system needed to change to incorporate female participation. The ideal did not coincide with reality. The cult of domesticity had blurred the extent to which women left home and entered the marketplace. The true woman ideal was a significant shift in the status of women and it was also a contradiction. A gap emerged between women's position in the family and their legal status. Basch (1982) points out that the drive for married women's property rights bridged the spheres of home and work and was a link between the public and private spheres. The true woman, the ideal antebellum woman, was "more elevated, more ethereal" and more remote from politics than her mother and grandmother. The true woman's power was in the home and family until "the chasm became too broad to be sustained."

Initial improvements in married woman's property rights led to demands for additional reform. Female participation in the movement increased and was the most important issue of the women's rights movement, according to Basch (1982). The issue of married women's property rights provided a focus and an organization for women's rights to develop. The opening statement from the 1832 NWRC for example said that the way for the movement was prepared by petitions from women and men of several different states asking for recognition by the state of [married women's] civil rights (Proceedings, 1852).

The married woman's property acts and the women's rights movement interacted together in the mid-nineteenth century. The early acts created an awareness of women's legal disabilities and encouraged the development of women's rights. Basch (1982) further supports this argument by pointing out that feminists exploited the "sexual politics of wife subjugation" for the rest of the century. Property rights according to Basch were the issue which created a public forum.
Property rights then became linked to more radical goals, such as suffrage. By demanding more of what legislators were already giving, a public forum was created for developing and refining more radical demands by the women's rights movement (Basch, 1982).

Gage (1881) agreed, saying that even in the family women were "robbed of the fruits of her toil." Political subjugation began in the family and property rights were an increasingly popular forum for feminist demands. The drive for married women's property rights were not the sole change which created the right structural conditions for women's rights, however. As Gage pointed out over a century ago, there were women who spoke out in public in the 1820s and 1830s. These pioneering feminists were crossing the ideals of true womanhood early in the ideal's development. The early feminists provided a challenge to the ideal, were a role model for other women, and kept the oppression of women before the public eye.

Frances Wright is consistently singled out as the first of the original group of feminist speakers. Gage (1881) said that Wright, who first spoke publicly in the 1820s, was the first female platform speaker to lecture on the sexual inequality of women in America. Wright was a well-educated British woman who was a philosopher as well as a lecturer. She captured audience attention with her eloquence and extraordinary oratorical ability. Wright was not only a phenomenon but one of the best speakers of the time. She believed that in America there existed the opportunity to examine, change, and even discard institutions if necessary. Marriage was one of the institutions she attacked, causing a great deal of controversy. Marriage was based on compulsion and inequality she said; in marriage the husband was the master and the woman was
the slave. Her main target was organized religion, and she encouraged her listeners to question religious authority. Not surprisingly, she was vilified by the clergy and press and accused of "infidelity" or atheism. Wright was "the voice of free thought and free inquiry" (Stiller, 1972). She challenged assumptions underlying sexual inequality and was the first woman in America to do so in such a public manner.

Ernestine L. Rose, also branded an infidel for her outspokenness, followed Wright's footsteps closely. Rose was also foreign-born, in a Jewish ghetto in Poland. Rose's early independence from her family, who had arranged a marriage for her, led her throughout Europe and England and finally to America. In her own life and in her travels, Rose experienced sexual discrimination and acted in ways to ameliorate sexual inequality. Upon her arrival in America she was equally appalled at the lack of women's rights. Rose's first feminist activities were to gather petitions on the New York married women's property laws. She gathered only five signatures in five months, an effort later hailed as a sign of how far women had gone and as an encouragement for other petitioners.

Rose appeared early enough in the century for female platform speakers to be considered a novelty, but she attracted large audiences with her fiery passion on the subjects of women's rights and slavery. By 1843 she was a most popular and effective speaker, able to bring her audience to tears. Rose was known as both the "Queen of the Platform" and an "infidel". In an action which was received well by her fellow-infidels, she helped to found "The Infidel Society for the Promotion of Mental Liberty" (Suhl, 1970). Rose was outspoken against injustice and oppression and later served as one of the NWRC presidents.
Wright and Rose were not alone in the work they did to advance the cause of women's rights. Girls began to enter the public school systems in the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, secondary schools for females were started by such women as Emma Willard, Mary Lyon, and Catharine Beecher. Although the schools emphasized domestic skills for women, the girls were also taught philosophy, astronomy, and other intellectual subjects. Gage singled out Willard as the woman who suggested the system of Normal Schools for teachers. Teaching was a common profession for middle-class women in the antebellum years. Many members of the NWRC had been teachers and most had experienced wage discrimination based on sex. Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony, two future NWRC presidents, both saw how male teachers were often paid twice what female teachers were paid. This type of discriminatory experience was reiterated often in later women's rights speeches (Ryan, 1979; Dorr, 1928; Bacon, 1980).

After 1840, essays and speeches rapidly proliferated on the subject of women's rights. Margaret Fuller, whom Paulina Wright Davis had hoped would lead the new women's rights movement, demanded perfect equality for women in education, industry, and politics, later the main goal areas of the NWRC. Fuller, a Transcendentalist thinker and writer, authored an essay titled "Woman in the Nineteenth Century" which was hailed by her contemporaries as the best treatise on women's rights since Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). Tragically, Fuller and her family were lost at sea prior to the first NWRC.

In 1845 Rev. Samuel J. May, later an NWRC officer, wrote on women's right to take part in political life in "The Rights and Conditions of Women". Clarina I.H. Nichols was one of several women using newspapers to write editorials and lectures on women's property disabilities. The conditions for discussing women's
rights were opening up rapidly. The criticism and controversy remained for years to come, but women and men in the nineteenth century were already paving the way for an independent women's rights movement. Middle-class white women, though ideologically tied to the home were physically able to join these activities.

Anti-Slavery

Historians generally agree that the antislavery movement throughout the first half of the nineteenth century was an important forerunner of the women's rights movement (Hersh, 1978; DuBois, 1979; Kraditor, 1967). Gage (1881) listed antislavery as the most important "preceding cause". Indeed, Hersh (1978) says that abolitionist women, especially those who followed the Garrisonian split, set precedents for women in the women's rights movement. Antislavery and women's rights were linked in several ways. First, there were certain events and controversies in antislavery which raised feminist consciousness. Second, the "feminist abolitionists" were a group whose membership spanned two movements (Hersh, 1978). Third, a basic belief in human rights was the ideological underpinning of both antislavery and women's rights (Hersh, 1978; DuBois, 1979; Kraditor, 1967). We will look at each of these in turn as we discuss the antislavery beginnings of feminism.

Matilda Joslyn Gage wrote over one hundred years ago that in antislavery, women learned the broad principles of human rights. This early discussion was an awakening. Women began to participate in the debates and associations. At this point of increasing female participation, controversy developed over women's exact role in antislavery. Middle-class women's roles in the nineteenth
century were increasingly tied to the home, as we have seen. In antislavery, women found a place where they could become active. Antislavery societies were not prepared for the "coalescing spheres" of work for women and men (Kraditor, 1967). The merging of separate spheres happened because the most interesting lecturers on antislavery were women. When the protest came, it came from the religious community in the form of a clerical protest.

The Grimke sisters, formerly from a southern slaveholding family, first focused attention on the role of women in antislavery. In the latter 1830s the Grimkes first lectured to women on the slavery issue. Their firsthand experience in a slaveholding family gave them a viewpoint unlike those of northern women. The southern sisters brought a realism and a conviction to their lectures that others had not heard before. Because of their popularity as lecturers on antislavery, the Grimke's soon moved on to audiences of both women and men. The clergy protested this step, claiming that it was not proper for women to speak to such "promiscuous assemblies". A "Pastoral Letter" was issued by the Congregationalist Clergy of Massachusetts and read from every Congregational Church in the state claiming that women were "out of their sphere".

Surprisingly, the Grimke's lecturers and the resulting controversy did not mark the entrance of women into antislavery. Women had been present in antislavery as early as 1833, and there were even separate women's clubs (see Proceedings, 1837, 1838, and 1839). The clergy's furor over the high visibility of the Grimke's, however, further raised women's consciousness about their own rights. The controversy became a dinner-table topic of conversation and began to permeate through New England antislavery societies up to the national associations. In 1837 Sarah Grimke wrote a series of "letters on the equality of the
sexes" which appeared in the New England Spectator. Her main theme was that women and men had an equal moral responsibility to work for the good of humanity (Schneir, 1972; Lerner, 1967). She responded directly to the Pastoral Letter warning women of the danger from those who have "held the reins of usurped authority" for far too long (her emphasis). Sarah Grimke encouraged women to continue to act and asked that men "take their feet from off our necks" so that women could pursue independence.

The first formal confrontation was at the New England Antislavery Convention of 1838 where women were given permission to participate. Some members responded by having their names removed from the membership roster, claiming that female participation would frighten away prospective antislavery converts. Again in January 1839 at the Massachusetts Antislavery Society a small minority tried to deprive women of the right to participate. Other splits also took place such as one in the Boston Female Antislavery Society. The controversy soon went beyond New England and spread to the national level.

In 1840 antislavery societies were increasingly torn apart by the controversy and the "woman question" was used as a weapon and a tactic by both sides. The Second Clergy Protest claimed that Garrison encouraged women to leave their sphere and was denouncing the clergy. Garrison believed simply that every human being was directly responsible to God, while the religious leaders claimed that Garrison was working for the overthrow of society. The clergy were really objecting to women and advocates of women's rights belonging to any society at all. A second position, that of the antifeminist abolitionists was based on the idea that "abolition, temperance, and other reforms were part of God's truth but equality of the sexes was not" (Kraditor, 1967). Even yet a third position said that
sex equality was acceptable but should be downplayed in order to recruit new antislavery members.

At the annual National Antislavery meeting in 1840, a formal vote was taken appointing Abby Kelley Foster, an antislavery lecturer and future NWRC leader, to a business committee. Over one hundred members approved. The clergy went through the audience, telling participants to vote against it. Foster did take her place on the business committee and two clergy asked to be excused. Women were being forced to defend their rights and confront a double standard in the antislavery ranks:

Many a man who advocated equality most eloquently for a Southern plantation, could not tolerate it at his own fireside (Gage, 1881).

The division in antislavery, based on women's rights to participate, vote, speak, and serve on committees, precipitated a crisis in London in 1840. A call was issued for an international antislavery convention to be held in London. The author of the call invited delegates from all antislavery organizations to come. Bull never expected women to attend; England was scandalized when those women who spoke before those "promiscuous assemblies" attended. Eight American women attended but were preceded by American clergymen who spread sentiment against them.

When the World Antislavery Convention opened there was heated debate and shouts of "turn out the women" from the American clergymen. Rev. Henry Grew, an American from Philadelphia said that the presence of females would be "a violation of the ordinances of Almighty God" (Gattey, 1967). The women were excluded from the convention and forced to sit behind a bar in the convention hall. and their credentials as official delegates were refused. Garrison refused to take his seat on the platform and instead joined the women. Although the women were excluded from participation in a cause they adamantly and firmly supported,
they managed—through no action of their own—to call attention to the "woman question".

The London convention was important for other reasons, too. Among the U.S. female delegates were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mott had arrived at the convention early to try and persuade the British antislavery members to reverse their decision, but did not succeed. Mott became, through her efforts, a highly desired person in London social circles. The event catapulted her into media attention and she became a recognized women's rights leader. Stanton was in London for the convention and met Mott at this time. They decided then to hold a women's rights convention when they returned from London. Eight years later they accomplished their goal and held the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention, the first women's rights meeting ever held.

Through some specific examples, we have seen how feminist consciousness was raised and how a belief in basic human equality underlay antislavery. This belief in human equality subsequently emerged as part of the feminist ideology. Additionally, Garrisonian abolitionism gave feminists a political framework within which they could develop a women's rights movement (DuBois, 1979). This political framework gave women's rights activists both a way to view the world and a theory and practice of social change. Garrisonian abolitionism also gave the women's rights movement a membership and a political alliance in their emergent years, the 1850s (Hersh, 1978; DuBois, 1979). The conflict with the clergy over women's role in antislavery gave women's rights advocates the ability to perceive entire institutions, in this case the religious institution. When they were confronted by the religious institution and told to return to their sphere, women stayed where they were—in reform. With the assumption of human
equality women did not have to justify their duties in terms of “woman’s sphere” (DuBois, 1979).

Garrisonian abolitionism also provided the women’s rights movement with a theory of social change. In order to change woman’s place in the social structure, it was necessary to change not only legal and institutional arrangements but people’s ideas as well. This theory affected the organizational structure as well (DuBois, 1979). Women’s rights advocates saw agitation as the main goal of the movement. They tried to keep the issue of women’s rights before the public as much as possible. Continuing conflict with the clergy in the 1850s helped to accomplish this goal. The women’s rights participants and leaders also decided to forego development of a national organization. Their decision according to DuBois (1979) was made in order to keep the issue before the public. Movement leaders felt that to organize on a national basis would detract from their momentum. The basic ideology and strategies of Garrisonian abolition sustained the women’s rights movement in the 1850s. By 1860 the movement had achieved a modicum of respectability. Garrisonian abolition had:

created the conditions for the women’s rights movement to assume a new set of political tasks, and therefore to move beyond Garrisonianism to a politics of their own making (DuBois, 1979).

Other Reforms

DuBois (1979) points out that it is a common error to attribute nineteenth century women’s sense of oppression solely to antislavery. The women’s rights movement, she writes, did develop an ideology and strategy for working for women’s rights. Women’s sense of oppression was not only the result of activity in antislavery. Women were involved in other activities beyond antislavery, such
as female moral reform, benevolent work, and health reform. In this section we will explore some of the other pre-women's rights activities which raised women's consciousness and helped to create their awareness of sexual oppression.

Berg (1978) claims that female voluntary associations in the early 1800s were forerunners of organized feminism. Her controversial work centers on women who joined voluntary associations in urban areas. The volunteers' work was directed toward ameliorating the depressed conditions of urban women in poverty. DuBois (1979), for one, doubts Berg's claim that the women's voluntary associations were precursors of the women's rights movement. The female associations, according to Berg, were responsible for the development of a cross-class solidarity between women. The early nineteenth century women's associations were primarily activity done by women for other women, a form of benevolence rather than movement toward female emancipation. The statement that a sisterhood of women emerged is highly debatable. The associations were directed downward, tending to reify a socially stratified society rather than uniting women in one classless sisterhood.

Berg's work fits into the framework of a different social movement, that of domestic feminism (Blair, 1980). Domestic feminism was the extension of "woman's sphere" into the community and was the rationale behind the development of women's clubs in the latter nineteenth century. Women justified their public activity by using the popular concept of moral superiority of women to support and justify work outside the home. The women's clubs were not only self-improvement types of activities but extended to such community projects as reforming mental asylums and jails and building public libraries. This was an extension of women's acceptable private role into the wider public society. Berg's
findings are more easily explained as forerunners of the women's club movement type of activity rather than of the women's rights movement.

DuBois (1979) also criticizes the idea that female moral reform societies were definitively linked with the women's rights movement. Women in female reform societies participated in a national reform throughout New England and the mid-Atlantic states in the 1830s and 1840s (Ryan, 1979b). They tried to reform sexual standards and behavior in their communities. The female moral reformers were very active publicly on behalf of their cause. Indeed, they were even controversial and went beyond the limits of "woman's sphere"—editing a journal, visiting brothels, lobbying legislatures, and managing their organization's finances (DuBois, 1979; Smith-Rosenberg, 1971). Women were involved in taking historic and powerful actions, sometimes militant, and according to some, adopting a feminist stance (DuBois, 1979). Female moral reform evolved into a charity organization in the 1840s. Most of the feminists left female moral reform by 1840, however, to work in other reforms, especially abolition.

One of the more notable reforms feminists engaged in prior to the emergence of the women's rights movement was health reform. Paulina Wright Davis, Abby Kelley Foster, Mary Gove Nichols, and Mariana Johnson were early lecturers on female anatomy and physiology. Davis recognized the importance of reproductive and sexual matters and was the leading lecturer on the subject. These early feminists who spoke to groups of women on anatomy and physiology gave women their only information on the subject. Stanton later remembered Davis' forthright move to import a female maniken from Paris in 1844. Students attending Davis' lectures were embarrassed and several fainted at the sight, but
some of Davis' pupils later went on to become the first generation of female doctors.

Temperance was also a common reform, becoming more prominent in the early 1850s, along with women's rights. Many feminists were active in temperance. Temperance as well as antislavery served as an "arena for women's rights agitation" (Buhle and Buhle, 1978). In her 1853 temperance address, Stanton spoke on women's rights in temperance. Men had previously excluded women from active participation in temperance and in 1852 women formed their own temperance societies. Offices were claimed for women alone but men were allowed to join as members, a very controversial move. One especially compelling issue in both women's rights and temperance was the right for women to divorce a drunkard husband and save their children (Stanton in HWS I: 493-97). Denouncing drink by itself was superficial, according to Stanton. Temperance, she said, was really a women's rights issue. Temperance campaigns were useful in that women gained "personal self-confidence, organizational skills, and political acumen" (Buhle and Buhle, 1978). The 1853 World Temperance Convention also excluded women from participation as had happened at the 1840 world antislavery convention in London. But women were no longer content to sit behind a bar. They gave vent to their outrage in 1853, just thirteen years after the antislavery sex segregation had taken place. This time, women organized their own temperance convention, sarcastically naming it the "Half World" convention. Shortly after 1853, however, interest in temperance dropped when momentum gathered in the women's rights movement. Interest in temperance was renewed in the 1870s, through, with a strong feminist orientation.
The most important single event prior to the national conventions of the 1850s was the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention of 1848. This first women’s rights convention was held shortly after the 1848 married women’s property bill was passed. In an atmosphere charged with heated debates over women’s rights, a group of five women decided to hold a woman’s rights convention. The group, meeting in the parlor of Mary Ann McClintock’s parlor over tea, reunited Mott and Stanton in their earlier conviction to hold such a convention. Seizing the moment, they issued a call for a convention to be held in three days, on the nineteenth and twentieth of July. Mott’s name was put on the call in the hope that she would draw a crowd. Gage reported (1881) that the women searched through records of other reforms—peace, temperance, and antislavery—to find a format for their resolutions. They finally settled on the Declaration of Independence, substituting the words “all men” for “King George”.

On the appointed day, the women went to the Wesleyan Church in Seneca Falls, New York, only to find the doors locked. A professor from Yale College climbed through a window and opened up the church, the church soon filled with spectators. Not feeling very confident in organizing and running a convention, the women asked Mott’s husband James, an abolitionist, to chair the meeting. Lucretia Mott opened the convention with a review of women’s status and the need for a movement for women’s education and elevation. Speeches and resolutions followed, a pattern also adopted in the national conventions which commenced two years later. The Declaration and resolutions, ranging from women’s participation in the public sphere to human equality to property laws, were adopted unanimously. Stanton then proceeded to turn the convention upside down with her resolution for woman suffrage. The resolution barely passed after an
impassioned speech of support from Federick Douglass, the Black abolitionist and lecturer.

Seneca Falls received a tremendous amount of publicity. Some antislavery papers stood by the women but most papers and members of the clergy scorned and ridiculed them. Stanton was shocked:

The house was crowded at every session, the speaking good, and a religious earnestness dignified all the proceeding. . .No words could express our astonishment on finding, a few days afterward, that what seemed to us so timely, so rational, and so sacred, should be a subject for sarcasm and ridicule to the entire press of the nation (Stanton, 1898).

Across the nation newspapers proclaimed that an "Insurrection Among Women!" had taken place, undoubtedly to culminate in "The Reign of the Petticoats". The organizers were said to be a group of spinsters, "crossed in love" and trying to gain revenge by making "others more miserable than themselves" (Gattey, 1967). Stanton attended a second meeting one month later which did not draw as much attention and "we had set the ball in motion" (Stanton, 1898). State conventions in Ohio, Indiana, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York followed in quick succession in the years prior to the first national convention in 1850.

Summary

We have seen how conditions in the nineteenth century made it possible for a successful women's rights movement to develop. Through the advent of industrial capitalism, new ideals emerged for male and female gender roles. The family economy of colonial America disappeared and separate "spheres" for men and women came about. Those spheres, however, were challenged. Women did work outside the home and the idea of a true womanhood did not really apply to all women. Women and men in different social classes and races challenged the myth
of separate but complementary spheres. The cult was an ideal, not the reality. The most important challenge to the notion of "spheres", and to the women's rights movement, was the high level of female participation in reform. Through reform, especially Garrisonian abolition, women learned ideology, organizational structure, and strategy to use on their own behalf. The feminist-abolitionists came to know and rely upon other members of antislavery, thus constituting a membership and potential network for their own movement. Industrialization inadvertently created the needed conditions for a woman's rights movement to develop. We will now turn to an exploration of the nineteenth century women's rights movement, focusing on the NWRCs of the 1850s. In these national conventions we can see the origins of a social movement as it takes on structure and identifies strategy and goals. These characteristics will be the basis of our next chapter.
Chapter Four: Structure, Strategy, and Goals

The Seneca Falls convention of 1848 set a precedent for conventions devoted solely to women's rights. State and local women's rights conventions followed Seneca Falls, indicating that interest in and commitment to organizing for women's rights existed. In May, 1850, a few women at a Boston antislavery meeting began to discuss the possibility of holding a national women's rights convention. A consultation was called, by an unidentified person, concerning just such an event. Nine women attended the meeting, held in a "dark, dingy room", where a committee of seven was chosen to plan the first national woman's rights convention (HWS I: 215). The work soon fell onto one person, Paulina Wright Davis, due to personal problems encountered by the others. Individuals dropped out because of illness, duty to a brother, another to abolition, professional engagements, and in one case because involvement would destroy her father. Davis, possibly with help from others, issued the call for the convention. Issuing a call for a convention was the standard procedure in the nineteenth century. Reform movements, notably antislavery, used calls to publicize convention times and featured speakers. Calls also could be used to justify the convention.

The 1850 NWRC was called to discuss "the entire question, as it now stands before the public" (Davis, 1871). The call invited women and men to discuss women's rights, duties, and relations. The sexes were intertwined, Davis wrote, and should work together. Harmony, cooperation, and unity, rather than hostility, would result in their "desired reformation". The first national convention was called to address women's rights in employment, education,
political and civil rights, and social relations (Davis, 1871). These four agenda items also served as the basis for the goals of the new movement and were used extensively throughout the 1850s and in Davis' first feminist newspaper, The Una. Calls such as these were issued annually prior to the convention and were the main way of drawing general public attention to the conventions. Eighty-nine people from six states signed the call; fifty-six of the signers were female and thirty-three were male.

Letters were sent, probably by Davis, to prominent reformers and citizens requesting that their signatures be added to the call or that they attend or speak at the convention. Some responses were "curt, reproachful, and sometimes almost insulting" and the signers refused to acknowledge the convention. Other responses were "so cheering and so excellent' that Davis included them in her history of the women's rights movement:

I doubt whether a more important movement has ever been launched, touching the destiny of the race, than this in regard to the equality of the sexes. You are at liberty to use my name (William Lloyd Garrison in Davis, 1871).

Yes, with all my heart I give my name to your noble call (Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Davis, 1871).

Some of the letters sent to Davis were read at the convention, a practice which continued until the mid-1850s when bored listeners put a stop to it.

The movement had been set in motion. Conditions in the nineteenth century were open to the emergence of the first women's rights movement. There was a constituency open to the ideas of the new movement (Freeman, 1975). This constituency had previous organizational experience in antislavery, female moral reform, and health and was able to provide a structure for the new movement. In this chapter we will be examining the structure of the first national women's
rights movement and will explore the movements’ connections to prior reforms. We will also examine the strategy and goals and their relationship to movement structure. There are two ways to approach these topics. One way is to look at the NWRCs over time, to see the chronological development of structure, strategy, and goals over time. A second way is to look at each of these topically. We will use the topical approach to look at the movement first and add chronological information where appropriate. Our goal is to look at the overall structure, strategy, and goals with openness toward temporal sequence.

Structure

The first item the 1850 NWRC attended to was the selection of officers. The offices the participants selected remained throughout the entire decade. Second, a committee structure was constructed. The committees were also retained, for the most part, throughout the 1850s. Some new committees were added as new strategies and goals were brought forward. The convention format also changed little over the decade. Convention proceedings and the History of Woman Suffrage are the best sources for understanding how convention structure developed. Newspapers from the 1850s, as well as letters between convention participants, and biographies and autobiographies are useful. In this section we will discuss three components of convention structure—officers, committees, and organizational format. In essence, we will be discussing the division of labor within the national woman’s rights movement and the framework which enabled the movement tasks to be accomplished (Killian, 1964).
The 1850 NWRC was opened by a pro tem president, Joseph C. Hathaway, who named a pro tem secretary, Phebe Goodwin. Little is known about either Hathaway or Goodwin. Neither served as officers or as committee members after 1851. The convention was initially chaired by Sarah H. Earle. Earle, an antislavery activist, served for three years on the important Central Committee, the main formal organizing committee. Earle died in 1858, thus limiting her impact on the fledgling movement. As chair of the convention, Earle appointed nine individuals, six women and three men, to the first nominating committee. This committee was empowered to draw up a list of officers to present to the convention for election. All those present were invited to participate in this and future discussions, but only those enrolled as members could vote.

The nominating committee included such well-known individuals as Garrison, Harriet K. Hunt, the first female doctor, Lucretia Mott the co-organizer of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention and future NWRC president, abolitionists Rev. Samuel J. May Jr., and Frederick Douglass, Lucy Stone an antislavery speaker, temperance activist William H. Channing, and two other relatively unknown members. The majority of the nominating committee members had worked in antislavery and were famous for their reform activism. Stone, for example, was recruited by Abby Kelley Foster to be an agent for antislavery. Rev. May had officially offered her the position and she boarded with the Garrisons in Boston. The connections here between the nominating committee members were primarily through antislavery. They had known each other and had worked with each other before the NWRC. These connections served to make the transition from antislavery to women's rights a smoother one.
This is not to say the transition was without its rough spots, though. Stone often combined both antislavery and women's rights in her speeches as a paid antislavery agent. May rebuked her, saying she should speak only on her paid work—abolition. Stone replied, saying "I was a woman before I was an abolitionist. I must speak for the women" (Hays, 1961). May, Stone, and others put aside their differences, however, to work together in the new women's rights movement. Their belief in basic human equality overrode many differences. Experience earned working together in antislavery formed a basis for mutual cooperation in women's rights.

The nominating committee reported a list of officers to the convention, and it was unanimously adopted. The slate of officers was voted on simultaneously, not individually, as a show of consensus. Convention proceedings report that there was little controversy over final votes and most officers and resolutions were adopted unanimously. The few exceptions are worth discussing and will be presented later. The slate of officers contained the positions of president, vice president and secretary.

Out of the ten years that presidents were chosen for the conventions, only seven individuals were selected. Several women were chosen twice, such as Paulina Wright Davis in 1850 and 1851. Davis was an obvious choice for the first presidency. She had written the call and invited many prominent speakers; all letters to the convention were addressed to her showing the extensive effort she had put forth. Davis's connections with antislavery, health, and married women's property rights reforms, as well as her prominent social position gave her many contacts among people she knew were receptive to women's rights. Lucretia Mott, a former female antislavery society president, was also chosen president twice, as
was her sister, Martha Coffin Wright. The others chosen as presidents included
Ernestine L. Rose, Susan B. Anthony, Frances Dana Gage, and Lucy Stone. All were
well-known for their work in antislavery, temperance, and on behalf of women's
rights. Each were leaders in one reform or the other, either on a national or a
state level. Rose, for example, had been the first woman to work for married
women's property rights. Gage, an Ohioan, was well-known in her state and
nationally as a reformer, lecturer, and author in temperance and abolition. All of
the presidents served in either other offices or on committees.

The office of the presidency was more than a figurehead. In most cases
presidents were responsible for opening conventions and seeing that they
proceeded smoothly. Presidents also presented the opening speeches. In the early
years these speeches served to set the tone of the convention, as Davis showed in
1851:

The reformation we propose in its utmost scope is radical and
universal. It is not the mere perfecting of a reform already in
motion, a detail of some established plan, but it is an epochal
movement—the emancipation of a class, the redemption of half the
world, and a conforming reorganization of all social, political, and
industrial interests and institutions (HWS I:222).

Later on in the decade, presidents were able to depict the progress the movement
had made. Lucy Stone, the president of the 1856 convention, said that the
movement had reached a day of congratulation, "never before has any
reformatory movement gained so much in such a short time" (HWS I: 632).

Presidents also had to accept responsibility for the conventions. Two of the
conventions were unruly due to audience dissension. The 1858 convention
adjourned in confusion after several speakers had been constantly interrupted by
"the rowdyism of a number of men occupying the rear part of the hall". While the
presidents were the ones publicly responsible for the tone of conventions, not all
annual meetings were difficult experiences. Mott, for example, is often singled out as a dignified and calm president who ruled amidst great admiration.

Obviously the presidents carried a considerable amount of power. They may have also been responsible for more organization and influence than others. Anthony was unable to organize the 1837 convention and successfully had the date changed to the following year. As president she was unable to pull together the convention site and organize the necessary speakers. As another illustration of presidential power, Davis wrote the call emphasizing the need to discuss women's disabilities—social, civil, and political, in education and in employment. These four aims resurfaced at the 1850 convention in the form of movement goals. A content analysis of Davis' feminist newspaper, *The Una*, reveals the same four areas in her editorials. Davis originally set not only the tone but the direction of the early movement. She was also instrumental in 1852 when an attempt to form a formal, national organization was defeated. Later on in the decade, as we shall see shortly, the conventions moved away from these four goals. Davis had in fact left the country and two other feminists, Anthony and Stanton, began to have a much stronger impact on the movement.

Two vice presidents were selected, one male and one female, in 1850. The proceedings never do clarify what the role of the vice-president was. The office may have been a figurehead for prominent reformers. Perhaps the convention hoped they would draw crowds or give legitimacy to women's rights. The vice presidents were also quite often active on committees and gave many of the convention speeches. The vice presidents may also have been chosen as representatives of different states. In total, the vice presidents represented twelve different states, mostly New England. Only one more state for a total of thirteen
can be added when looking at all of the officers. This was highly representative of the larger committee membership and 1850 membership. In following years the number of vice presidents ranged from six to ten. The practice of appointing multiple vice presidents was adopted from antislavery. The female antislavery society proceedings of their first years show the same practice, adopted from male-dominated antislavery societies (see Proceedings, 1837, 1838, 1839, and 1870). Even closer examination reveals that some of the same women served as both female antislavery society and NWRC vice presidents. Lucretia Mott and Angelina Grimke Weld, for example, were vice presidents in a female antislavery society in 1837 and for the NWRC in 1851. Mott was also president in both reform movements.

Two secretaries were also selected, one male and one female, for the purposes of reading letters to the convention and recording the proceedings. Occasionally throughout the decade a treasurer was named. Admission was charged to most conventions, usually ranging from ten to twenty-five cents. Individual donations to the cause were also made, as noted in the proceedings. The lack of information available on treasurers may be misleading. Due to the admission charge and the donations made, someone had to be responsible for handling the convention finances. The convention secretaries may have been responsible for managing the funds. There was also a finance committee which worked toward raising and possibly managing funds and paying the bills. Susan B. Anthony was a member of the finance committee four different times. I strongly suspect that Anthony was an informal treasurer. Anthony's postwar correspondence shows she was the financial backbone of the movement. She also worked to raise money for antislavery and temperance, gaining her first financial experience there.
(Anthony to Voorhees, 1854). Anyone reading Anthony’s fund-raising letters in her personal correspondence cannot fail to be impressed with her indefatigable efforts on behalf of women’s rights:

Those interested in Miss Anthony’s personal appearance long ago ceased to trust her with the purchase-money for any ornament; for, however firm her resolution to comply with their wish, the check invariably found its way to the credit column of those little cash-books as “money received for the cause” (Stanton, 1898).

Women were chosen as officers more often than men. A total of eighty individuals were chosen as officers in the 1850s, although some were elected multiple times. There is also little known about officers in 1858 and 1859. Overall, twice as many female officers (N=54) were chosen as were male officers (N=26). All of the presidents were female, indicating that activists now were ready for a woman to lead a convention and, at least symbolically, the movement. In 1848 James Mott had chaired the Seneca Falls convention because women felt inexperienced for the position. Two years later, after several state conventions with female officers and past experience of women having served as presidents in the female antislavery societies, only women were selected as NWRC presidents. In the vice presidential category, there were thirty-one women and seventeen men chosen. There were thirteen female and seven male secretaries and two men were elected as treasurers.

Overall, both women and men were chosen to be officers in a movement designed for women’s rights. Women did not exclude males as females had been excluded in the 1840 world antislavery convention or the 1853 world temperance convention. They did not exclude men from office as in the 1853 “Half-World” convention. The role of men in the women’s rights movement was always a controversial question. After the movement split in 1869 one of the main
distinguishing features of the two groups was the role of men. The American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) included men as officers, even as presidents. The more radical National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) excluded men from office saying that women should come first in these positions. The reason both women and men were prominent as NWRC officers was partly because of the belief that men and women were equal. To NWRC members that meant both women and men should hold positions of responsibility and authority.

Several speeches and letters in convention proceedings can be cited emphasizing this basic idea of equality. An L.A. Hine from Cincinnati said that "any act wrong in women is equally wrong in man". Rev. Samuel J. May wrote the first convention, saying that men were active in public life but women were denied the right. Both women and men had equal rights, responsibilities, and obligations to society. A letter from O.S. Fowler to the 1850 convention failed to recognize that both sexes were represented at the convention. Fowler supported women's rights, but criticized the convention for being conducted solely by females:

The plain fact is this: all conventions of deliberation of women without man are just as defective as the unmarried woman at fifty; just as are all deliberations of men, either political, religious, mechanical, agricultural, or whatever they may be, are exactly like a bachelor at seventy (Proceedings, 1850: 61).

Fowler was emphasizing once again the idea that men and women could only be whole when together in the role of husband and wife. The nuclear family was natural and to exclude one sex or the other was unnatural. Deviations from this norm were abnormal. A convention solely of women, therefore, was an aberration, an immoral and illegitimate form which could not be tolerated.
Much more problematic was the issue of race in the selection of NWRC officers. Only one officer can be identified as Black. Robert Purvis was a founder of the American Antislavery Society in 1833, worked on the underground railroad, and was in temperance. As early as 1832 he corresponded with Garrison (Borome, 1967; Merrill and Ruchames, 1977). In 1854 and 1860 Purvis was chosen as an NWRC vice president. Why were there so few Blacks in the NWRC? One possible answer is that there are problems in identifying race in the NWRC records. No mention was ever made of the race of any NWRC participants. Purvis was identified as a Black member because of his work in antislavery. The proceedings in antislavery record that he was a Black reformer. The reader is left to assume, however erroneously, that the other participants in the NWRCs were white.

There is no doubt that there was discrimination against Blacks in antislavery and women's rights (Davis, 1982; Aptheker, 1981). Terborg-Penn (1975) writes that the historiographical and popular view of the women's movement is that white women welcomed Black women into the cause. This was simply not the case. In some instances, Black women formed their own organizations. In female antislavery societies, white women voted as early as 1833 to include Black women. The late nineteenth century women's rights movement was increasingly racist and segregated. While the NWRC made no obvious attempt to exclude Blacks, there were not many Black members in this phase of the movement. The conventions may have functioned in a latent manner to discourage Blacks from participation. One such way this may have been done was in the perception of Black-Americans as only slaves at this time. Concern was often expressed over "our slave sisters" in the South.
An additional reason may have been that of class. In the nineteenth century a woman's social class position was based on her husband's occupational status. Defining social class in this way, we find that female NWRC members were the wives of prominent lawyers, ministers, jewelers, and politicians, for example. Many of the occupations open to the white male were closed to the Black male. The separation of home and workplace due to the industrial revolution and the well-paying occupations of white NWRC husbands enabled white middle-class women to stay at home. The white middle-class woman was also freed to perform benevolent and charitable work, an extension of her sphere. In time this became an opportunity for reform work and eventually women's rights. Due to the economic, occupational, and gender changes going on in the nineteenth century only one group of activists could in reality be represented in the women's rights conventions. They were white, middle-class women who had the discretionary time and financial support to back their reform.

These patterns of race, class, and sex were repeated in the membership of various committees. The conventions developed a committee structure which addressed many of the concerns brought up in the women's rights movement. Committees were also responsible for proposing resolutions for convention consideration. Additionally, committee members or at times the infrequently appointed committee chairs delivered major speeches to the conventions. We will now look at which committees were appointed and why. We will also look at the years in which these committees were formed. In several cases the new committees represented a significant step in the development of the women's rights movement.
The first committee appointed in the new women's rights movement was the nominating committee, which we have just discussed. The nominating committee reached its formal peak in 1830 and did not formally reappear thereafter. The same officers were elected to hold office in 1851 in order to maintain some continuity. Retaining the same members probably brought on the demise of the nominating committee. Nomination of officers was somewhat informal thereafter. In 1833, for example, Lucretia Mott reported that Frances Dana Gage had been selected as the new convention president in a preliminary meeting the night before the convention started. Gage was then "duly elected" and took the chair (HWS I: 124). The other officers of the convention were elected but no mention was made of the nominating process.

The use of informal nominating procedures did not mean there was a lack of controversy over officer selection, even though officers were almost always elected unanimously. Lucretia Mott's election to president was the only one where a dissenting vote was cast. Mott's husband, James, voted the only "no" on her presidency, out of concern for her health. Lucretia Mott had suffered from dyspepsia (stomach problems) for years. A more controversial officer selection developed behind the scenes in 1854. Ernestine L. Rose had been nominated to be president but was faced with opposition from those who thought she was too much of an "infidel". Anthony, the 1854 convention organizer, had toured extensively with Rose on antislavery and women's rights. She came to Rose's defense and won the argument. Rose was elected president of the fifth annual convention. In her opening address she attacked the violated principles of democracy. The address not only concerned women's rights but had undertones of what had occurred in the dispute over her selection:
We claim our rights on the ground of human rights. By human rights we mean natural rights, that have already been conceded by the Declaration of Independence which proclaimed 'that all men are created equal'. For is woman not included in that phrase? (Suhl, 1970).

Rose's critics were impressed. At the end of the convention a unanimous resolution was passed praising her skills and the dignity with which she had presided.

The two most important committees in the decade, the business committee and the central committee, were established in 1850. The business committee was established after Davis and Mott made opening speeches. On the motion of M.A.W. Johnson, an abolitionist and health and prison reformer, the nominating committee was appointed to report names for a business committee. The list of names they provided was approved by the convention. The business committee included Johnson, Rose, Garrison, Hunt, Mott, Stone, May, and Frederick Douglass among others. All were noted reformers and all had been active in antislavery. Some had been members of the same committees in antislavery. Johnson and Mott, for example, were both on the business committee of the 1839 Annual Antislavery Convention of American Women. This was not a coincidence, the same thing happened in other committees, also. The NWRC therefore was not starting out completely without previous reform and organizational experience both in conventions, committees, and at the national level.

Thereafter the initial formative years the business committee was responsible for bringing up the majority of the resolutions, thus setting the agenda for the conventions. The business committee's first act was to write a preamble and resolutions for the first convention to discuss. They did so within the space of a few hours, since both the preamble and the initial resolution were discussed in the afternoon of the first full convention day. This first business of
the convention was discussed by several members of the business committee and several members at large. Additional resolutions were then offered with a similar discussion following. This format continued in subsequent sessions.

In the morning session of the second day, a series of resolutions was presented which reflected what the business committee members and later the convention felt were the "next-steps". These steps were to demand and secure for women education, economic opportunity, and civil rights. We will discuss these steps and other resolutions shortly. One additional resolution that needs to be discussed first, however, is the recommendation that the convention should appoint a central committee.

The central committee was originally designed to take the leadership of the women's rights movement in enlarging the numbers of women participating in education, industry, civil and political rights, and social relations. This was a new committee designed to take those "next-steps" the convention deemed necessary in furthering women's rights. The central committee was to accomplish that task through correspondence, by holding neighborhood meetings, gathering statistics, raising funds for publications, and lecturing, writing, and speaking out on women's rights. The central committee was also authorized to call other conventions and to set the time and place when they would be held. All central committee members were to hold office for one year.

Once again, the majority of the central committee members were in abolition, thus illustrating that the antislavery constituency spanned two reform movements and provided the network necessary for movement emergence. Appointing committee members for one year was also useful for maintaining continuity over the year. The conventions were held for two or three days, and
the central committee was the formal link between conventions. This undoubtedly strengthened the movement by providing a continuing network of committed individuals. The central committee was also symbolic in nature because it represented that the continuity of the NWRCs and the women's rights movement was expected to continue. Empowering the central committee to hold further conventions was a notice to the public that women's rights was going to be an issue for a while.

Eventually many of the tasks of the central committee were divided up among other committees. In 1850, for example, committees were formed on education, industrial avocations, publications, civil and political functions, and social relations. Many individuals served on multiple committees. Mott, Rose, Stone, Foster, and Garrison, for example, each served on multiple committees in 1850. Serving on a committee was also an indication that one would continue serving on committees. All convention presidents served on committees during the 1850s. Thirteen of the twenty-nine original central committee members were later officers and twenty-eight served on additional committees.

Committee reports are found within the proceedings of the NWRC but are not reported consistently. The committees may or may not have been taken seriously. There is evidence that some committee assignments spurred members to do some research on their subjects and report them to the convention. Abby H. Price, a member of the industrial avocations committee, spoke to the 1851 convention on the "industrial redemption" of women. On behalf of the committee, she said that women should not be restricted in employment. Female occupations should be open to choice, she added. Not only society, but women themselves must be
awakened to choices. Women, said Price, were too often content in their present position.

The publications committee was obviously successful for the most part, since convention proceedings were published almost every year. Tracts on women's rights were often sold at the conventions and through The Una. The social relations committee offered a resolution in 1851 that women should be free to remain single, and that divorce should be an honorable option. This last resolution did not cause much of a stir, probably because the maintenance of the movement and goal-establishment were such a high priority. Later in the decade, the divorce resolution became quite controversial.

Both Mott and Caroline Healy Dali served on the education committee. Interestingly, this was the only committee which consistently listed committee officers such as chair and secretary. There is also evidence that these committee assignments were taken seriously. Mott was appointed to the education committee in 1853. The following year she told Rev. Higginson, an abolitionist and women's rights activist, that she had hired someone to gather statistics on women's education in Philadelphia (Bacon, 1980). Mott was alarmed by the findings but no further mention of her research was contained in the NWRC proceedings. Dali, an abolitionist and feminist author, wrote two books on the education of women during the decade. She was also concerned with women's opportunity for an equal education. Education to these feminists was one of the main keys to female emancipation.

The finance committee was added in 1852 but was rarely heard from. Anthony, as noted earlier, was the most visible member of this committee. In the same year, Davis proposed that all committees be made into standing committees to
relieve the overburdened central committee. The motion was adopted transforming what had begun as a sort of subcommittee structure into a formalized division of labor. Stone also suggested that the central committee be enlarged to include members from every state represented at the convention. This was adopted and accounts for the generally well-distributed geographic representation in the committee system.

The last committee added was in 1859 and it was the committee to memorialize legislatures. This committee marked a significant departure from the early tasks of the committees. The question had arisen over whether or not memorializing legislatures was an expedient way to gain women's rights. Memorializing involved sending a letter or "memorial", signed by committee members, to the legislatures of various states. The letter pointed out the lack of women's rights such as the right to a trial by a jury of her peers, the lack of suffrage, being taxed without representation and so on. These rights were then demanded within the memorial. The establishment of this committee signalled a change in movement strategy which we will discuss shortly.

The final aspect of structure we will examine is that of convention format. Thanks to the NWRC proceedings, we are able to see that the format of the conventions was fairly straightforward. After 1850 conventions were opened by the past president and a slate of officers was presented to the members. Quite often at this point a prayer was offered. Since there were many ministers present who were open to the cause, a member of the clergy officiated. Rev. Antoinette Blackwell opened the 1853 convention. The History of Woman Suffrage does state that in those days it was rather "presumptuous" for a woman to pray in public. Rev. Blackwell addressed the "throne of grace" and offered a "brief, but eloquent
prayer". The Cleveland Journal reported that "her voice is silvery, and her manner is pleasing". Apparently no one died of mortification at such a presumptuous event (HWS 1:124).

After adoption of the new officers, the new or reelected president made an opening speech. The length varied, from the abbreviated one of a nervous Frances Dana Gage to Davis's comments on the inauguration of the women's rights movement. It was then customary to read letters from prominent supporters who applauded the NWRC in writing. This practice of letter reading continued into the mid-1850s when bored listeners put an end to the practice through spoken dissent. Thereafter only segments of letters were read but entire portions of letters were often included in the published proceedings.

The convention lasted two to three days, with sessions in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Each session lasted two to four hours. The usual procedure was that business resolutions were presented for discussion by the members. Debates and speeches followed, sometimes heated and filled with controversy. The format did not always run as smoothly as desired. The presidents infrequently had to ask speakers to relinquish the floor, and most did as were asked. Some disruptions occurred, in several conventions such as in 1854. Only in this year, however, did the disruptions affect the convention to the point of adjournment. Quite often the rowdies were silenced, as in 1859. Wendell Phillips, an abolitionist, took the floor proclaiming that the "men in the rear are the type we seek to change". The same ordeal had been experienced thirty years before in antislavery, he said. Applause and hisses were heard throughout his speech. The supporters of his speech won, however, with cries for him to continue (Proceedings, 1859: 20). Conventions ended with votes over the business
resolutions, usually passing unanimously. Often the doxology was sung as a closing hymn.

In summary, we have looked at convention structure as it developed in the 1850s women's rights movement. One overall theme has been that a division of labor developed through election of officers and implementation of a committee structure. The format of the conventions followed an established routine throughout the decade. The conventions, although controversial, did occur on a consistent basis and were maintained through a successfully developed division of labor. The second overall theme concerned the impact of the antislavery movement on women's rights. In this section we have seen ties between officer positions, committee structure and committee members in both reform movements. In developing a new movement, the participants relied on their past experience to develop a movement structure. That structure had an impact on other parts of the movement, as I have suggested. Additionally, the NWRC structure was designed for certain needs. One of those reasons was to implement the original strategy of agitation for gaining women's rights. When the movement further matured, both structure and strategy changed, as we shall now see.

**Strategy: "Agitate! Agitate!"**

Strategy was the means by which the goals of the women's rights movement and NWRCs could be realized and the ideology could be implemented. Strategy changed somewhat over the 1850s, from fairly loosely defined actions to much more specific methods. The growth of the movement led toward increasing formalization. As the NWRC and subsequently the movement became more
formalized, strategy became increasingly definitive. In this section we will discuss what the general strategy of the NWRC was and how that strategy changed throughout the decade.

Elizur Wright, a Bostonian, said in 1850 that "your business is to launch new ideas" (Proceedings, 1850, p. 9). Indeed, the role of the NWRC was to initiate discussions of critical issues in women's rights. The conventions were designed as a strategy to keep the issues of women's rights before the public. The convention, as a form of strategy should be an "acting convention" said Elizabeth Oakes Smith, an abolitionist author and lecturer. Others concurred, saying that the convention should be the vehicle for presenting demands for women's rights. Several years after the first NWRC, Matilda Gage reaffirmed this idea, suggesting what the true nature of the convention should be to discuss the subject of women's rights and plan for the future. "Let Syracuse sustain her name for radicalism" (Proceedings, 1852).

The conventions, while described as national gatherings, did not constitute a national organization. A move toward organizing on a national level was thwarted in 1852. The original idea was sent to the Syracuse convention in a letter from Angelina Grimke Weld. She stated that such organization was natural and progressive. On the other hand, Weld added, organizations all over the world were cumbersome and oppressive to people. Weld supported the continuance of the NWRCs. A "spirited discussion" followed the reading of Weld's letter. One convention member, Mary Springstead, moved that the convention proceed to organize a National Woman's Rights Society. The majority of those who spoke thereafter on the issue were opposed to such a move. The opponents of national organization were all prominent and influential members of the convention.
Smith and Davis, for example, did not want to be "bound" by such a society. Both women recommended that State societies be formed instead. Hunt concurred, adding that spontaneity rather than stifling organization was a "law of nature". Organizations were "like Chinese bandages" said Rose. Such organizations encumbered growth. She herself had felt the oppressive bonds of religious and political organizations in a Jewish ghetto of Poland. Rose valued freedom from such stifling bodies too much to ever be placed "in the same shackles again" (HWS I: 540-541).

Lucy Stone agreed, adding that she had had enough of such "thumb-screws" and wished never to be under them again. Stone captured the tone of the moment and revealed that strategy was actually behind the controversy when she said that, "the present duty is agitation". Rev. May added that the new movement only needed "a system of action and cooperation". The controversy was eventually settled when Davis' resolution on cooperation in the nation and the world was adopted. The central committee was retained with its national representation in the membership. As such it was the only form of national organization until after the civil war (HWS I: 541-542). The lack of a national organization was conducive to agitation as a strategy. Without a constitution and formally recognized organizational structure, the feminists felt free to keep women's rights issues before the public any way they could. They also opposed national organization on an ideological basis. The new women's rights reformers, especially the women, had found all forms of organization oppressive. Political and religious bodies were responsible, they thought, for female oppression. Organization was to be avoided in part for this reason.
Conventions were also used in several ways as a strategy to build consensus. First, the resolutions themselves were presented by the business committee as a tactic to provoke debate. Presentation of resolutions provided a medium for defining the issues. There was considerable debate over many of the resolutions, but they were almost always adopted “unanimously” or “without dissent”--if only during the voting. Stanton was one of the original agitators and remained so throughout her lifetime. In 1848, Stanton was responsible for the resolution on woman suffrage which caused such a stir. She was equally involved in such a resolution in 1860 at the New York NWRC.

Stanton believed firmly in keeping women’s rights before the public and in constantly pointing out double standards in the law. Believing in this, she proposed a radical resolution granting divorce rights. Rev. Blackwell objected, pointing out an alternative theoretical viewpoint: a marriage based on equality cannot be destroyed. Marriage, the Unitarian minister explained, should be permanent. Men and women were really not fit to be married in a state of inequality. Rose pointed out that Blackwell was too ethereal. The reality, she said, was that marriage was not equal. The reality included marriages where conditions of wife abuse, willful desertion, and habitual intemperance illustrated a need for divorce. The solution was to educate women and to remove their need for financial dependency (HWS 1: 716-731).

Rose was applauded, but so was Wendell Phillips when he spoke against Stanton. His opposition was based on strategy, that divorce rights was a movement in itself and a burden to women’s rights. Stanton’s resolution was nearly swept from the platform until Garrison interceded on the basis that Stanton had the right to her views. The resolution was not part of the business committee agenda.
but was entirely Stanton's idea. The convention, after a supportive speech of Garrison's motion by Anthony, voted down Phillips' motion. The convention then moved onto business committee resolutions which were "adopted without dissent" (HWS I: 733-735). This was an important move in the convention. Consensus was now being challenged internally and the divorce debate was the most hotly contested issue in the decade. The convention had now provided for both individual expression of views within the movement as well as convention consensus.

Other forms of dissension were permitted and even encouraged early on in the conventions as a way of keeping issues before the public. The debates also served to clarify issues for women's rights supporters and opponents. The conventions were a forum for addressing controversial feminist ideas and served as a strategy in this way. Opposition was expected and even encouraged. At the 1856 New York convention a "gentleman from Virginia" took an opposing view of women's rights in general, continuing despite audience displeasure. Rev. Higginson responded to the gentleman and thanked him for his speech; the convention needed such remarks. Converting those present was the best way to spread information about women's rights (HWS I: 648-9). Encouraging dissension was also a way to foster conversion.

A final way to build consensus was through holding the conventions in different locations. Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts were chosen most often. These were logical choices since they were centrally located in the country for most members. This attempt to hold conventions in a convenient place encouraged people to attend from many different states. Each convention was represented in both officer and committee selections by most New England and
Northwest territory states. These states were also the ones where supporters were most likely to be found.

An analysis of convention membership should show whether this representation was achieved. Unfortunately, the only membership list was published in the 1850 proceedings. A total of two hundred and sixty-three people attended as convention members. Thirty-one percent were from the host city, Worcester, Massachusetts; seventy percent were from Massachusetts. Eleven states, mostly from New England, had representatives at the 1850 NWRC. Only nineteen members were not identified by state, an indication that representation was a way at least to symbolize wide geographical support and issue consensus.

Another form of strategy which was more symbolic than widespread was the protest against taxation without representation. Women were encouraged to resist such a violation of one's civil rights. The suggestion seems to have come originally from Stanton who wrote to the Syracuse convention that women should resist taxation. Much discussion followed but the idea was adopted and encouraged. We do not know how many women followed this suggestion. Stone refused to pay her taxes annually, and each year part of her property was sold for taxes (HWS I: 527; Hays, 1961). Dr. Hunt attracted attention each year from her annual protest against taxation (HWS I: 535). How far this protest extended throughout the membership is unknown but two prominent activists, Stone and Hunt, did follow Stanton's suggestion.

Communication through various forms was the main means of spreading the word. Convention members wrote their names on the back of their admission tickets in order to receive correspondence. Several convention members had access to newspapers and wrote on behalf of the movement. Clarina I.H. Nichols,
for example, wrote editorials in her husband’s Vermont newspaper. Gage contributed letters to newspapers in Missouri, but many of her commentaries were refused by editors. She also edited two farm journals in which she included women’s rights articles. One newspaper, however, was a direct extension of the NWRCs.

The Una was the first feminist newspaper in the U.S. completely devoted to women’s rights. This newspaper was started after discussion on such a move at the Syracuse convention. The 1853 convention passed a resolution to start a “National Organ” of the movement (HWS I: 378). The Una was a sixteen page, three column monthly newspaper “devoted to the elevation of woman”. Davis’ husband Thomas and fifty original subscribers provided initial funds. The Una was used for editorials, convention announcements and summaries, essays, and fund-raising. Davis and Dall served as editors of the paper but it relied heavily on Davis’s efforts. The newspaper lasted almost three years, from 1853-55 until it folded due to financial difficulties and probably Davis’s ill health. Other strategic forms of communication included writing tracts and stories to sell for funds and to spread news about women’s rights.

The final form of strategy first appeared in the married woman’s property rights movement. Many future NWRC members had participated in petition drives for property rights, and petitions on this continued throughout the 1850s (HWS I: 676). In 1854, Stanton had appeared before the New York legislature on this issue, an unusual move for a woman to make. All of these politically oriented experiences were conducive for a strategic development which occurred in 1859.

This new strategy was formulated at the New York City convention just before the end of the decade. A new committee was formed by the NWRC to
memorialize the legislatures of various states. The memorial was sent to the state legislatures, signed by all committee members. They challenged the word "male" in state laws and constitutions, suggesting that the word be expurgated. The memorial demanded that women's rights be secured for "there can be no privileged classes in a truly democratic government" (HWS I: 675). Convention proceedings indicate that the memorial received little attention due to the John Brown raid and general unrest on the eve of the civil war.

Strategies had changed, however, and the memorial symbolized that change. The movement was shifting from agitation over issues to direct confrontation with institutional authority. Conventions were still being used as a strategy but national organization was only six years away by the end of the decade. Consensus and dissension were prevalent and both were encouraged as strategies. Communication through available means provided continuity and information services to movement supporters. At the end of the decade, plans were being adopted to challenge the legal system over women's rights. Past experiences, in married women's property rights, were again useful in developing new strategies to achieve the goals of the women's rights movement.

Goals

The basic strategy of the NWRCs was to keep women's rights issues before the public. In doing so, these issues were identified largely at the conventions. We will look here at the issues of the 1850s for women's rights. The source for identifying these issues will be the series of resolutions adopted by the conventions. The issues became increasingly accepted as the goals of the
conventions. The reason for looking at goals through the resolutions is to determine which received the membership's general approval.

There were four general areas or goals which the conventions originally addressed; these were the areas the central committee was empowered to work on. General at first, the four areas of education, industrial avocations, civil and political rights, and social relations became gradually more definitive. Ideas emerged which clarified the four areas into the "next-steps", as mentioned earlier, toward equal rights.

Education was thought to be the way to elevate women from their oppression. Women had made some gains in education prior to the 1850s, but the way to a higher education was still difficult. Doctors Hunt and Blackwell were both physicians but had difficulty in opening their practices. Stone, after working to support herself through college, was denied the right to read her own graduation speech because she was a woman. These women were among the few able to obtain an education. For the majority of women, higher education was a right denied to them. For women in slavery, education was denied and it was a crime to read or write.

NWRC members believed that education was a means to improve women's status. Through a formal, higher education women would have the knowledge to enter professions and to be financially secure. Women's intellect needed to be challenged, and educational attainment was a means for that process (HWS I: 817). By 1854, the convention passed a resolution encouraging "women of every American state" to improve female education. This Philadelphia convention urged that women sign petitions to open up the educational system to women.
Educational rights would enable women and men both to fully develop their natural abilities (HWS I: 834).

Education, however, was not the only means to equal rights. The Philadelphia convention had put education in second place after working for the vote. Education was futile and a waste of women's labor until full equal rights had been achieved. As Blackwell and Stone experienced, education did little good in securing employment. As part of the overall strategy to attain women's rights, the conventions pressed for changes in sexually discriminatory employment practices.

The main goal in changing employment practices was to call for general reform in the economic and industrial sectors. This was not a call for a new economic system. What the convention members wanted was to have industry and professions be opened up to include women. Barriers keeping women from employment needed to be removed. The one experience that especially needed amelioration was the practice of paying males twice as much as females. The inequity of less pay for equal work was challenged. Many of the participants, especially former female teachers, had seen the inequity and discrimination of such a practice. Lucretia Mott had seen how a favorite female teacher was paid far less than a male teacher with far less experience (her future husband). The equal pay resolutions in the 1850s were Mott's handiwork and reflected her earlier observations (Bacon, 1980). Anthony had found a fellow male teacher paid twice her salary. These personal observations and experiences were translated into goals for the movement to achieve.

"Woman's aspirations" were to be her only limitation. As long as education and employment were denied to women, the members vowed, women's rights
agitation would continue. The convention demanded "a fair day's wages for a fair
days work" and that industries be opened to women. Women were restricted to a
few "ill-paid avocations" which kept them in poverty. The members also voiced
concern for married women who had no control over their earnings. Marriage,
or social relations, were of great concern. Gender role expectations in the
nineteenth century were still very strong. The family was held to be a place of
"beauty and sacredness". The family was also an oppressive institution. NWRC
members resolved that women should have an equal position in the family. This
did not mean that household chores would be evenly split or that men should
become more active in fathering. These were goals of a later movement in the
1970s. The 1850s were a time when woman's place was in the home and her rights
were completely ignored. The women's rights movement called for women to be
able to control their own property, have custody of their children and to have
their own legal existence.

The married woman's property rights reform was an earlier step upon which
the social relations goals were based. Property rights for women did begin slowly
to improve over the course of the decade, giving impetus to the movement.
Throughout the 1850s constant mention was made of any improvement in the
social relations of the sexes (HWS 1:821). Thorough revision in the marriage laws
was required to raise the rights of women in the family. Women were entitled to
equal control over property "gained by mutual toil and sacrifices" (HWS 1:834).

Although the family was still held to be a sacred place, woman's confinement
there was being challenged by the women's movement. Domestic life and political
life were not incompatible, as so many female reformers had shown. Being an
activist meant directly confronting the issue of civil and political rights for
women. It was one thing to work for equal opportunity in education, employment, or social relations but another to try and possess those rights on a legal basis. The key to achieving equal rights was largely through working toward civil and political change.

Women needed a bigger share in government. The Seneca Falls declaration had not been a parody but a realistic assessment of male usurpation of women’s rights. It was not surprising, then, that one of the more important goals of achieving women’s rights was to remove the word “male” from the laws and constitutions in the states and the country overall. Petition drives were encouraged by the NWRCs at the beginning of the 1850s. Toward the end of the decade the petition drives were thriving and beginning to bring pressure for change. Gage led one such petition drive in Ohio challenging the words “white” and “male” in the Ohio constitution then being drafted. Success, unfortunately, did not come easily or quickly.

The main power of the movement lay in the demand for suffrage (HWS I: 634). Suffrage was not just a goal, in other words, it was also a strategy. Stanton had turned Seneca Falls and the U.S. upside down when she called for female suffrage. Only a last minute speech from Frederick Douglass brought the suffrage resolution to minimal passage. By the 1850s, however, resolutions for the vote were commonplace. Subsequent conventions had toned down some of the initial furor over the vote issue. Many people had had the opportunity to think about “woman suffrage”. Mott had not been certain of her support for Stanton’s resolution, but was soon won over to the vote for women (Bacon, 1980). Every convention for ten years resolved that women should have the right to suffrage. General consensus was that suffrage was a right and a means toward effecting
more rapid change. The vote was not the only goal of the movement nor was it the most important. Suffrage was equally important in raising women's overall equality.

Civil and political rights, including suffrage, were the keys to women's rights. Women could not advance themselves intellectually without the stimulus of an education. Simultaneously, employment was not possible without an education. Social relations were hardly equal for women and men, with men enjoying better opportunities and rights. Women had no rights in the family, only duties, obligations, and responsibilities. The legal system needed to be challenged and changed if improvements in education, employment and social relations were to improve. The main goal in the 1850s was movement toward greater equalization of opportunity through changes in civil laws.

Summary

In this chapter we have looked at the three interrelated areas of structure, strategy, and goals. In terms of structure a division of labor involving selections of officers and committee members was made within a given format. Strategy was implemented through the division of labor and was based on the idea of agitation. Both NWRC strategy and structure had their origins within the antislavery movement. Strategies were used to build consensus and to agitate for women's rights. The goals of the movement emerged slowly over the decade. Initially, the first four to five years were spent in clarifying women's rights issues and developing a consensus through convention resolutions. Later on, as the goals were clearer, the structure and the strategy incorporated the changing goals. The four main goals of the women's movement centered on education, employment,
civil and political rights, and social relations. New committees were formed, for example, to memorialize the legislatures, and the NWRCs began to become more external in its strategy for achieving goals. Our next chapter will focus on the ideology of the movement, or its overriding belief system.
Chapter Five: Ideology

An ideology justifies and explains the belief system of those who endorse a specific form of behavior, or in this case, a form of collective action. Through the NWRCs the women’s rights movement delineated a number of goals calling for equal rights for both sexes. The ideology underlying the goals of the movement was a belief in human rights, often called natural rights. This belief system was adopted from the Garrisonian side of antislavery. Throughout the 1850s this ideology was further refined. There was a significant challenge to the ideology from the clergy during ideological construction. Religious opposition had also been behind the challenge to Garrison and his followers in the antislavery controversy over abolition and the woman question. Now that a women’s rights movement had gained momentum, the religious community targeted the NWRCs. Not all clergy were opposed to the women’s rights movement, though. Reverends Blackwell and Higginson, as well as Garrison, defended their human rights ideology and the Bible. In this chapter we will look at the ideology of human rights and its relationship to the women’s rights movement. The Biblical debate over women’s rights will then be discussed. Finally, we will examine the relationship of the goals of the movement to its ideology and the importance of a strategy emphasizing agitation.

Human Rights and Equal Rights

A basic belief in human rights was something which activists in antislavery were forced to confront. The inherent inequality of slavery illustrated that not all
men were allowed to be equal in the U.S. When women began to participate in antislavery on a visible level, their right to be there was challenged. The Grimke sisters' lectures and Abby Kelley Foster's controversial appointment to an antislavery committee position were two of the most widely known incidents which challenged male domination in antislavery. The furor over women stepping out of their "sphere" was a surprise for many antislavery reformers. Foster, the Grimkes, Mott, and Stanton, among others, were appalled at their treatment. The 1840 London antislavery convention, where female delegates were denied the right to participate, had led Mott and Stanton to organize the first women's rights convention.

Antislavery was not the only setting where sexual inequality was experienced. The temperance movement served to reinforce the notion of separate spheres and the injustice of such segregation. The married women's property acts were an early recognition of the inequality of social relations. The women who did achieve an education were usually channeled into teaching. In teaching many women recognized that equal pay for equal work was not anywhere near becoming a reality. All of these experiences were responsible for women developing a realization of the need for equal rights. Underlying this was a belief that there was no reason to deny women their rights.

This did not mean that women thought the two sexes were equal in all respects. Giving women the vote, for some, meant that there would be a feminization of the ballot box. The electoral violence that was so prevalent would be toned down by women's presence (Proceedings, 1850: 43). This is not as contradictory as it might seem, especially when looked at in the cultural context of the nineteenth century. Women were believed to be morally superior to men and
were responsible for teaching their sons to behave in decorous and appropriate ways. This ideal of True Womanhood, as we discussed earlier, was an acceptable role for the white middle-class women who were in women's rights. These feminists did question the aspects of True Womanhood which oppressed them such as piety and submissiveness. As Matilda Joslyn Gage had said in 1881, the church was an instrument of oppression which they challenged.

The feminists did not, however, question those "natural distinctions of sex" (HWS I: 834) which gave them a valued and praiseworthy role in society. Women's rights was a necessary reform and one which would enable women to make positive changes in society. Health reform was one example of how women could effect positive reform, said Dr. Hunt. Physiological lectures, and books and societies for the medical education of women, had impressed "young minds" in a beneficial way. Hunt believed "the moral character of society depends on this reform [women's rights]". Hunt was not referring solely to medical education but the ways in which women's rights would elevate women's position and the character of society in general.

Many feminists believed that a commitment to equal rights was in accordance with their religious beliefs. Not all churches had been oppressive. The Unitarian and Universalist churches of Higginson and Blackwell provided support for their beliefs and in fact ordained the first female minister. Elizabeth Wilson of Cadiz, Ohio, remarked at the first Worcester convention that men and women were equal in the eyes of God. She further implied that women must work for equal rights, since "if woman sees herself as lower in rights then she dishonors her Creator". Women were created in God's image, she said, and were
God's servants, not man's. Maria Varney of Norwalk, Connecticut agreed, saying that "women's rights are the rights of a human being" (Proceedings, 1850: 72, 74).

Elizabeth Oakes Smith, a veteran reformer, emphasized the idea that women's rights were part of a larger cause: "We plead not for ourselves alone, but for Humanity". Women's rights were a vehicle for elevation of both sexes: elevation, for men, to a moral superiority already enjoyed by the True Woman. The women who saw the rights denied to their sex and did nothing were not acting in good faith:

The woman who, seeing and feeling this, dare not maintain her rights, is the woman to hang her head and blush. We ask only for justice and equal rights--the right to vote, the right to our own earnings, equality before the law--these are the Gibraltar of our cause (Lucy Stone, HWS I: 524).

Rev. Blackwell pointed out that the sexes were different. In her explanation of the "natural distinctions of sex", the differences had led men to usurp women's rights. "Man can not represent woman. They differ in their nature and relations. The law is wholly masculine; it is created and executed by man" (HWS I: 524). Women must have control over her own rights, agreed Joseph Barker, another Unitarian minister, for "women's rights are not safe in man's keeping". "These are natural, human rights", Rose emphasized (Proceedings, 1853: 24-42).

Individual belief in an ideology of human rights is reflected in the convention resolutions. Two resolutions passed at the Cleveland convention were directly defining the ideology of human rights as a basis for women's rights:

1st. Resolved. That by Human Rights, we mean natural Rights, in contradistinction to conventional usages, and that because is a Human being, she, therefore, has Human Rights (HWS I: 817).
What this meant was that the natural state of social relations and civil relations between the sexes was believed to be based on equality. Males had usurped the natural rights of women as human beings. Further,

2d. Resolved. That because woman is a human being, and man is no more, she has, by virtue of her constitutional nature, equal rights with man; and that state of society must necessarily be wrong which does not, in its usages and institutions, afford equal opportunity for the enjoyment and protection of these Rights (HWS I: 817).

The basic sameness of being a part of humanity made men and women equal. Any violation of that equality was against the laws of nature. Goals of woman suffrage, representative taxation, equal pay, property rights, and so on, were an attempt on the part of the women's rights movement to restore natural equality and equity between the sexes. Inequality was a crime against humanity. Garrison then added a series of his own resolutions emphasizing this theme of inequality being unnatural. He posited the idea that the women's rights reformers were pursuing the "Rights of Humanity". Those individuals who went against this view of human rights "are the tyrants of history" (Proceedings, 1853: 55-57).

The 1856 convention speeches were often reflective of the success of the movement. Rose noted how public opinion had changed in the past seven years. Stone spoke of the grand designs of the movement, reaffirming the inclusive nature of their cause:

Our movement is nothing short of a claim for equality of the human race. It is not to affect women merely, it cannot by possibility be separated from the cause of humanity in general; and its success must make man and woman both more noble and perfect. The cause of woman is therefore the cause of man, and they are both bound to rise or fall together (Proceedings, 1856: 17).

The 1856 New York convention was also the scene of a serious challenge to the movement's ideology. This challenge involved members of the clergy and
questioned the fundamental assumption that men and women were equal members of humanity as well as in the eyes of God.

A "gentleman from Virginia", a theological student, rose after Stone's speech and asked Rev. Higginson whether women's rights was founded on "Nature or Revelation". Higginson responded that the foundation of women's rights was mostly an individual interpretation. Some women's rights men and women based their argument on the Bible while others did not. The NWRCs included members of many religions as well as atheists. Some individuals, claimed Higginson, used the Bible to support their views while others did not. The theology student replied that he had not been answered and proceeded to monopolize the floor. Amid cries for him to speak up or move to the platform in order to be heard, he refused and continued.

The basis for his argument was that neither Nature nor Revelation were the basis for women's rights, a direct challenge to the beliefs of the movement which claimed both. Claims for women's rights were wasted because if women were given the vote she could vote against her husband. Such action on woman's part was disobedience against her husband and the Scriptures. He proceeded to quote Scriptures against women's rights with people still calling for him to go to the platform in order to be heard. Stone responded to the theologian that the movement was founded on both Nature and Revelation (Scripture). She referred to Paul who had written that all things, including males and females, were equal in Christ as support for her beliefs (HWS I: 648-652).

Stone made a valid point about the ideology of the movement, as had Higginson. The basic belief in human rights and equal rights was arrived at from many different paths. For some, the root of women's oppression was the church
Abby Price, a member of the Hopedale utopian community, felt that religion had degraded and oppressed women. The way that religion had been an oppressor was through its interpretation of the Bible. Price proceeded to show how the Bible had been misinterpreted basing her ideas also on the words of Paul. To deprive women of representation or participation in religious bodies was against the principles of God:

> The whole arrangement of Nature in her beautiful and wise manifestations to us evinces us that the Divine order is for the sexes to mingle their different and peculiar characteristics in every relation of life. In Jesus the masculine and feminine elements of humanity were blended harmoniously (HWS I: 532).

God created men and women equal in "rights, possessions and authority", added Rev. Blackwell. She then offered a resolution that said the Bible explicitly recognized the equal rights of both sexes. This resolution and her subsequent speech touched off a debate lasting for intervals up to two days. An opposing minister questioned the convention officers as to their belief in the ultimate authority of the Bible. He claimed that all officers were thought to be infidels. President Mott, who had heard the same charge made in earlier decades against women's rights supporters, ruled the question out of order (HWS I: 535-539).

Still, the women's rights supporters would not give up on the question of religion, despite its challenge to their ideology. Foster realized the significance of the church at that time, for the pulpit had the "entire ear of the community" (HWS I: 135). The church was a powerful institution and she called for change to occur. The clergy had grown powerful and were threatened by the new women's rights movement. Women were challenging the power of the clergy through the very existence of a women's rights movement, so it was necessary for the clergy to attack the new feminist ideology. Women stepping outside of their "sphere" were
a direct threat to the clergy's domination over not only religious but social life as well. The ideology of the women's rights movement undermined religious authority.

Convention participants soon grew tired of the clergy's opposition. NWRC members felt that they had dealt with the questions of women's rights and Biblical authority in a definitive way, and continuing debate over the issue was a waste of time. Rose felt very strongly in 1853 that time was wasted on the issue. Religious disagreement had always existed and was blurring the issue of women's rights. The convention needed to move onto political questions. Biblical debates had dominated much of the Cleveland convention's agenda and no progress had been made.

At the fifth national convention the following year, Rev. Grew from Philadelphia, father of feminist Mary Grew, rose to bring up the scriptural issue again. Garrison answered him, pointing out that the Bible had been interpreted to justify many different kinds of inequality including antislavery and women's rights. Garrison's irritation showed:

> We have gone over the whole ground, and placed our cause upon the decrees of nature. We know that man and woman are equal in the sight of God. We know that texts and books are of no importance, and have no taste for the discussion of dry doctrinal points (HWS I: 382).

Garrison, Rose, and others considered the matter settled. An ideology of human rights and women's rights as natural had been developed and successfully defended. The debate soon lost its momentum and after 1856 little mention was made of the controversy. The convention began to move on to the business of gaining women's rights. In the latter years of the decade, NWRC participants moved to implement the ideology and reach the goals they had formed.
Goals and Ideology in The Una

In previous sections I have discussed both goals and ideology. The goals of the new women's rights movement, as identified by the NWRC, were centered on education, employment, civil and political rights, and social relations. Each goal had as its justification an ideology of human rights. Both women and men were equal members of humanity and deserved equal rights. Both sexes were entitled to the same right to education, for example, because of their basic human equality. The feminists of the 1850s believed they were simply implementing the laws of nature and, for some, the laws of God and the Scriptures. In the NWRC and History of Woman Suffrage proceedings we can see how these goals were each developed. The goals, through annual series of resolutions, were very clear. The ideology of natural rights is more obscured and is often implicitly assumed in the speeches from the NWRCs. There is a third alternative source for looking at goals and ideology of the movement and how the two are interrelated.

This alternative source is the national organ of the NWRCs, The Una. The Una was the first feminist newspaper in the U.S. devoted entirely to women's rights. In February 1853 Paulina Wright Davis published "the first pronounced Woman Suffrage Paper" (Davis, 1871). The Una, signifying truth and "devoted to the elevation of women" was published primarily at Davis' own expenses and served as a forum for feminist goals and ideology and for publicizing women's rights conventions. This new feminist publication assumed a "broad ground", claiming individual freedom in "State, Church, and Home" and women's equality as a natural right (Stanton, 1876).

One of the best sources for looking at the development of feminist ideology is The Una. The ideology of natural or human rights and their relationship to
women's rights goals are thoroughly discussed in Davis' editorials. During the
time The Una was in existence Davis authored twenty-eight of the editorials
contained in the paper. In her introductory editorial of 1 February 1853, Davis
announced that her editorial service would "discuss with candor and earnestness
The Rights, Relations, Duties, Destiny, and Sphere of Woman." This included
women's education (literary, scientific, and artistic), her avocation, (industrial,
commercial, and professional), and her interests (pecuniary, civil, and political).
These were the same areas that the NWRCs identified as goals. Obviously there was
a strong influence on the NWRCs by Davis and vice versa. A content analysis of
Davis's editorials provides us with a deeper understanding of ideology and goals in
the women's rights movement. The editorials are reflective both of Davis as an
individual and of the concerns of the NWRCs.

Davis highlights the four areas very clearly in her editorials. Seven of the
twenty-eight available editorials (two were destroyed) were directly or at least
indirectly on the importance of education in "elevating women" to men's status.
By selecting education and intellectual ability as a topic for one fourth of all of
her editorials, we can assume the issue was a principal concern. Her feminism
was founded on education as the integral component in the scheme to liberate
women.

Davis began the discussion of education in her second editorial of 1 April.
1853, "The Intellect of Woman" with the general argument that the sexes were
alike in essence, only varied in their physical appearance and behavior. Through
following the editorials in a chronological order, we can see the increasing
development of her ideas on education. Women were ready to take part in
creating the discoveries and inventions of the public sphere, "our prayer is let
thy kingdome come; our entreaty to our brethren is hinder us not" (Una, 1853: 120).

In May, 1854, Davis responded to a letter from a Paris correspondent from a French newspaper that women's education was not adequate. Her definition of education was a "lifelong experience or process" and included both formal and informal processes. Davis was actually referring to socialization: what Davis was protesting was gender socialization. She recognized the inequality of the sexes that it brought. Women and men needed equal socialization or, as Davis described it, "education". She was going beyond simply demanding formal schools and institutions being opened for women. Davis was implicitly questioning the unequal and in her view, the unnatural way that the sexes were made members of society.

She compared French and American education for women, suggesting that the different systems were relative to the culture. Davis was derogatory toward American men, stating that the groundwork of the wrong was men's for they were women's teachers.

If women run to millinery and frivolity, it is because men have mutilated their minds and functions (Una, 1854: 264).

I have also included the editorial "Art Reformatory" in this section, because Davis felt that artistic education was important for women. Her thoughts here centered on the pleasures of art for the human spirit and the need for women to take the lead in looking toward art in this manner. A later editorial discussed the scientific education of women, following a tour of the Coast Survey Office in Washington D.C. The scientific instruments used there were not women's inventions, but women had contributed to domestic innovations. Female inventions were not unusual, said Davis, because phrenology had shown women's
brains to be large. Phrenology was popular in the nineteenth century and was well-thought of by the early feminists, including Davis (Hersh, 1978). Here again Davis used phrenology, the study of the mind and head, to show that women and men were essentially equal in intellectual abilities (see Chambers, 1968 for a discussion of phrenology). Once women were outside their "sphere", they too would contribute more to science. The two editorials on artistic and scientific education also indicate the wide range of knowledge Davis thought women should acquire.

The most definitive editorial on education was actually a reprint of Davis' remarks from the second convention in Worcester. She used an alarming statistic, that of two hundred and fifty institutions of higher education, perhaps six admitted women. Women were thus kept in ignorance by a systematic denial of education. This exclusionary practice was extended through the withholding of "functions, post, and places" which were incentives to the pursuit of learning. Davis demanded a "due cultivation of intellectual faculties of every kind". She was keying in on the denial of female access to the process which allows one to achieve social status and be of recognized value to society. Without the proper education, a woman could not find an occupation suitable to her talents, if she could secure employment at all. She was being systematically excluded from two of the social institutions, education and the economy, which were vital to the successful functioning of society. Society was not complete without women, and Davis demanded:

...education, therefore, in every direction that can give efficiency to the intellect, light to the feelings, and harmony and dignity to the whole character; for the sake of that moral and rational liberty which depends upon the integral development of the whole being together (Una, 1854: 360).
Davis was not merely demanding rights, she was providing an ideological justification for furthering the spheres of women. Education and employment were tied together in her argument. The denial of equal opportunity to women in these areas was unnatural. To deny them was a serious action.

Government had continued to fund institutions such as West Point, but had not financially assisted women's education. Such sexual discrimination was seized upon as evidence of oppression. Davis demanded large educational provisions for her sex. Simultaneously she urged women to be conscious of their role in the rewards education offered. Graduates of West Point and other similar schools were often given the reward of a high civil office. Women followed in their wake, even helping to award the honors with "graceful, helpless dependence". Women were implicitly supporting their own oppression and must not continue to do so. Acting in complicity with the oppressors was in bad faith and a double strike against women. Such deference must cease if women were to direct their education into achieving occupational success. It was imperative that women use their education to gain employment; in this way women could truly free themselves (Una. 1855).

The first NWRC was also concerned with "industrial avocations", as based on the second resolution to demand and secure:

_Partnership_ in the labors, gains, risks, and remunerations of productive industry, with such limits only as are assigned by taste, intuitive judgement, or their measure of spiritual and physical vigor, as tested by experiment (HWS I: 823).

Five of Davis' editorials were clearly directed at the employment of women, poignantly pointing out the destitution and desperateness of her sisters:

_Poverty is essentially slavery, if not legal, yet actual. The women of the time--the women worthy of the time--must understand this, and they must go to work_ (HWS I. 1853: 136).
Women must have enlarged opportunities for work and more diversified employment. Jobs at factories, in medicine, and at the press were being pursued; dentistry, telegraphing, and daguerrotyping were examples of occupations which should be opened to women. Davis reiterated the significance of employment in broadening the sphere of women:

Children and women, till they can keep themselves, will be kept in pupilage by the same power which supports them (Una, 1853: 136).

A strong aspect of the "industry" editorials was that women must not only have equal opportunity, they must use it. Women needed to work in order continually to fight oppression. A specific example of the employment problems of women occurred when the printers struck Pittsburgh. Women were hired to replace the printers, proving they could set type as well as men. Davis wished them luck, but was not pleased with the circumstances. The female "compositors" had been hired and paid less than their male counterparts, which was wrong in principle. Women were the innocent instruments of an injustice. Additionally, if the male printers were subdued they would eventually turn women out of their jobs (Una, 1853).

In June 1854, Davis reported seeing some progress for women, such as property rights and better employment. She attributed this progress to the early feminist's agitation. She extended her thought through asking why women's work was not paid the same as similar male work. It was because women could not vote, and "does the political condition of the country not depend on the condition of the classes not represented?" (Una, 1854: 280). Female participation as part of the electorate and political arena was a key to further emancipation and opportunities for women. Once again, the four goals of women's rights were interconnected, and the vote was seen as crucial to women's equality.
The dearth of employment for women and widespread exclusionary practices led to the financial dependence and political bondage of women. These conditions were forced on women by civil law and made without women's consent, thus changing husbands into masters (Una, 1853). Married women especially needed to triumph in employment, because "a married woman is a slave in pecuniary conditions and burdened beyond any slave". Women working would free themselves from their financial dependence on men. Being financially independent from a male was a path to gaining one's rights. Davis called upon women to deliver themselves from wretchedness:

Our earnest word to you is, drop your trivialities, your pursuit of amusement, and charities, that do but make paupers, and go to work for the world, and for your own sake (Una, 1854:208).

Woman could only obtain her fair share of economic and educational opportunities through repeal and reform of biased civil and criminal laws. This concentration on garnering women's legal rights was Davis' third focus. The central committee of which she was a member was formed to work toward:

- a co-equal share in the formation and administration of law, Municipal, State, and National, through legislative assemblies, courts, and executive offices (HWS I:823).

The selection of Davis' editorials under civil and political rights are more broadly based than the prior two areas, due to the variety of issues Davis included in editorials dealing with this goal.

Davis began her treatment of legal rights in her first editorial of February, 1853. We can see here that there is considerable overlap between the area of civil/political rights and that of social relations. This may be why Davis did not recognize a fourth area as the central committee had. Social relations, such as marriage, often encompassed legal issues, such as retaining one's name and
women's property rights. In "Woman as Physically Considered", Davis criticized
the "love of the old", or the conservative element in society which leads to the
traditional opinion of the weakness and inferiority of women. She conceded that
men may be physically stronger, but that did not prove superiority. If strength
was physical power, she said, then the horse was greater than man. Women did
not contend or desire superiority, they simply claimed equal rights. "In a few
years we doubt not it will sound absurd to speak of women's rights" (Una. 1853:72).

A series of three editorials continue the theme of "The Moral Character of
Woman" (June, July, and August, 1853). Morals, she said, were just as
misunderstood as the physical and intellectual capacities of the sexes. Women
were being cruelly overruled and foolishly overpraised. Davis asked for less
flattery and adulation and more equity; for fewer compliments and more
completeness; for fewer fair words and increased, fairer treatment. The sexes
were alike in essence and mutually complemented each other. She asked for equal
opportunity for free development, equal access to advantageous positions, equal
pay for equal work, and equal rights for equal capacities. Women must have the
freedom an unlimited development demands.

To sum up the aims of this appeal, we ask to be regarded, respected, and
treated as human beings, of full age and natural abilities, as equal
fellow sinners, and not as infants or beautiful angels, to whom the
rules of civil and social justice do not apply (Una. 1853:72).

The most specific legal right to which women were entitled was suffrage.

Political repression was again on her mind in June 1855 when she lashed out
at the Know Nothings, a political party, for attempting to exclude specific
population segments from governmental representation. Native-born white
women and Black women and men, and foreign-born immigrants constituted
almost seventeen million members of the population, as compared to almost ten
million native born white males. Slaves, whom the Know Nothings wished to exclude, were a majority compared to the smaller percentage of white males. Davis used this argument to call on the "Christian world" to emancipate women and slaves:

We have been taxed, and have borne our part in silence till patience has ceased to be a virtue; till moved with a deep compassion for the helpless, the dumb, we demand to be represented in the government that now takes from us our rights, treats us as petted children at one time, and at another meets us with stern justice, punishing us for crimes with a severity equal to that meted out to men who drafted the law (Una, 1855:136).

But Davis was not advocating a radical, thorough reorganization of society. Rather, she was looking at society as a "human brotherhood", or the grand superstructure wherein each member was interlinked equally. There was a broken balance between men and women and between Black and white which must be restored by pure, simple justice. This was simply further justification of her arguments that all people were created equal. The white male had usurped the rights of others and was trying to continue his malevolent practices. After all, she wrote, you cannot be perfect as God commands under such conditions.

Social relations was not originally mentioned as an area Davis planned to address. It was identified by the 1850 convention as the fourth-ranked issue for the central committee:

4th. Such unions as may become the guardians of pure morals and honorable manners--a high court of appeal in cases of outrage which can not be, and are not touched by civil or ecclesiastical organizations, as at present existing, and a medium for expressing the highest views of justice dictated by human conscience and sanctioned by holy inspiration (HWS I:823).

There were four editorials which specifically looked at such social relations and especially marital interaction.
Davis saw marriage as the first institution to be reformed on a societal level. The importance of this issue to Davis is seen in her first editorial on marital rights. Two anniversary issues were also concerned with marriage. Davis responded twice to accusations that women were not having enough regard for home and domestic duties. She mentioned a "Mrs. S.", an eloquent, intellectual writer (Stanton) and a "Mrs. M.", a charming hostess (Mott), who were perfect homemakers. The editor, however, did not believe women’s emancipation would come while women were belittled by domestic responsibilities.

One last editorial that was social in nature covered the topic of dress reform. She criticized the use of heavy jewelry as a sign of continuing in spiritual slavery. If something was not in nature, then it was not beautiful. Inequality was not natural and it was not beautiful either. Davis emphasized that individual taste in dress was important. She and others had never taken part in the dress reform because they thought it was in good hand. Some women had adopted the "short dress" (Bloomers), and apparently Davis wore them herself. Dress reformers did not all agree on the short dress, but Davis personally hoped the outfit would encourage further modifications.

We can see from this short section on social relations, that it was not the main concern of Davis’ editorials. She most often included marital rights under civil and political reforms(s). Marriage and the family, however, was the institution in which socio-cultural change would be most difficult. Here one had to change the basic values and attitudes that centuries had ingrained into people’s behavior and thoughts.
In this chapter we have looked at the ideology of the women's rights movement and the relationship between goals and ideology. Feminist ideology in the 1850s was based on the idea that women and men were both human beings. Since both were a part of humanity, to deprive one part of their rights was unnatural. The idea of human rights was supported on both natural and scriptural grounds. Inequality was not natural and was a violation of Biblical authority. Members of the NWRCs and women's rights movement in this decade had long been aware of inequality between the sexes. Early experiences of discrimination against women in education, employment, marriage, and the legal system were incorporated into feminist ideology. Convention members called for equal rights in each of these four areas and identified them as the goals of the women's rights movement. Both the goals and the ideology of the movement were defined and constructed through interaction with an oppressive social system. Individuals came together at the NWRCs in a new movement for women's rights. Together they constructed a movement which has lasted until the present day. Up to this point we have only alluded to "convention members" and "participants" as a broad category of persons. We will now turn to an analysis of the NWRC core membership which constructed this original women's movement.
Chapter Six: Membership

Newspaper accounts of the NWRCs in the 1850s report that audiences were large, halls were packed, and there was often standing room only. Attendance patterns were strong, even during adverse conditions. During one severe thunderstorm, for example, the hall was packed as usual. In 1859 the audience was so large that President Lucretia Mott was unable to reach the platform and Susan B. Anthony opened the convention in her absence. In 1853 the Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that the convention hall contained fifteen hundred people at one of the several sessions. Just three years earlier at the first Worcester, Massachusetts convention two hundred and sixty-three people had been present. The local Cleveland paper characterized the convention as orderly compared to the Syracuse, New York convention the previous year.

Problems exist in looking at convention membership and attendance. First, there was only one membership list, published in 1850. Subsequent membership lists were not published. We also do not know how many of the fifteen hundred audience members were convention members. All members had to pay admission but that may not have been the sole criterion for membership. In order to look at some type of representative membership we will be looking at one hundred and seventeen individuals. They were the core membership of the NWRCs.

These individuals are included here because of their participation on committees or as officers of the conventions. Another reason for including them is that they will be the ones most easily researched. The sources for this demographic analysis will be mostly personal letters, diaries, biographies,
autobiographies, and newspaper accounts. The majority of the members of the audiences were anonymous or left no memoirs on the conventions. Not all members are included in each demographic category due to missing data. These demographic categories include education, occupation, religion, race, age cohorts, previous organizational affiliations, familial traditions in reform, geographical dispersion, and social class membership. A second part of the chapter will contain a case study of the NWRC presidents. To a large extent, they represent and exemplify the core membership discussed in the first part of this chapter.

The Core Membership: Demographics

Educational background was one of the most difficult items to find out about the membership. A grammar school education seems to have been most common, especially attendance at Quaker grammar schools. Sarah Pugh, for example, attended the Westtown Pennsylvania Boarding School, a Quaker educational facility. She went on to become a teacher, abolitionist, and suffragist. Compulsory education laws were not prevalent until the 1870s and boys were more likely to receive an education than girls (Stock, 1978). Secondary and higher education was not common for women in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Males were much more likely than women to have had a higher education.

In 1832, Catharine Beecher founded the American Women's Education Association to establish women's schools. Normal schools for teachers began to open. In 1837 Mary Lyon founded the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary for students sixteen years or older with preference given to teachers. The most likely opportunity for female education was in urban areas (Stock, 1978). Females in urban areas could extend their primary school education until the age of sixteen
or seventeen. Four core members, women, had some type of medical school education.

Few employment opportunities awaited educated women. The four women with medical educations were active within the medical profession, usually as doctors. A common occupation among the core membership was teaching, a predominantly female category. Teaching required at least a grammar school education and preferably beyond that. Teaching school was a fairly common occupation for middle-class women in New England. One historian estimates that one in four native-born women of Massachusetts had done some schoolteaching (Ryan, 1979a). To call schoolteaching an occupation may be a misnomer; schoolteaching was probably more of a way to fill idle time before marriage than a profession. Schoolteaching was the middle-class alternative to the mill-towns and factory work of the working class.

There were ten ministers, most of them male, among these NWRC leaders. Most had been in antislavery and had been greatly troubled by the exclusion of women in the antislavery societies and conventions. Rev. Samuel J. May had long been a supporter of human rights, and was well-known for his work in antislavery, peace, and educational reform. May supported Prudence Crandall when she was tried for educating Black women in her school in Canterbury, Connecticut in 1832 (Welch, 1983). Rev. Antoinette L. Blackwell, both an officer and a committee member, was a minister, author, and lecturer who spoke out on abolition, temperance, and women's rights.

The most common occupation was that of reformer. In many cases members self-identified themselves as reformers or were called reformers by their biographers or contemporaries. Calling oneself or being called a reformer was a
statement in itself. For women, being a reformer meant that one was not accepting the separation of home and workplace which segregated the sexes. In several cases being a reformer meant keeping in line with a family tradition. The Blackwell family, for example, was noted for their paternal as well as sibling support of reform. Three Blackwell siblings were all in women's rights and Henry Blackwell at least had been an antislavery advocate. The Blackwell father Samuel had been acquainted with Garrison. Joseph Dugdale, an antislavery reformer and a minister, was the son of an abolitionist mother.

Abolition was a strong family tradition among the women's rights leaders. Both Frances Dana Gage's mother and grandmother had been active in aiding fugitive slaves. Abby Kimber, who had been at the 1840 London antislavery convention, was the daughter of an abolitionist. At least nine of the leaders were agents on the Underground Railroad, the series of stations and transportation routes connecting escape routes from the south through New England and the midwest and ending in Canada. The home of Elizabeth Buffum Chase, who was active in at least seven different antebellum reforms, was one of the most active stations on the Underground Railroad. Three generations of her family were part of the network which ran through Central Falls, Rhode Island. As a child, Chace helped form a human barricade with other children around some escaping slaves. Neighbors then helped drive away the slave owner (American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, 1983).

Participation in antislavery activities was a common reform experience among the leaders. At least forty-one percent of the leaders were active in antislavery either through membership in antislavery societies, paid lecturing, aiding escaping slaves, and so on. Many knew Garrison and carried their
connection with him through women's rights activism. The six-volume collection of Garrison's letters contains many letters between Garrison and people who would soon move from abolition into women's rights (Merrill and Ruchames, 1971).

Temperance was the next most common previous reform experience, although it was also a movement concurrent with women's rights. At least twenty percent of the core membership was connected with temperance in some way. Anthony, for example, was originally more involved in temperance than women's rights, although she is more remembered for the latter. Anthony was not a proponent of women's rights until 1850 when one of Lucy Stone's speeches converted her to the cause.

Other reforms included health, where all four female doctors were active as well as others. Foster and Davis, as I have mentioned, lectured on anatomy and physiology. Garrison and others were active in the peace movement. Prison and welfare reform also involved a few others who concentrated mostly on ameliorating conditions and improving individual circumstances. Another type of reform involved questioning one's religious beliefs.

I was able to identify the religious faiths of forty-three members of the core membership. Fifteen were Quakers, a religion which permitted women to participate as ministers in their meeting-houses. Lucretia Mott was born in the Quaker religion, and found herself appalled when confronted with individuals who believed women to be inferior. The controversy over the "woman question" in the antislavery movement was an eye-opening experience for her concerning the oppression of women (Bacon, 1980). For others, Quakerism did not provide the freedom of expression they felt they needed. Abby H. Gibbons, a prison and
welfare reformer, left the Quaker religion. Martha Coffin Wright, a future NWRC president, married out of the faith and was declared an "infidel" by her church.

For many, Quakerism provided a route to women's rights through antislavery. Mott first learned about the institution of slavery when she attended a Quaker school. A split in the Quaker religion involved Mott in the question of antislavery. Mott had been recognized as a minister by her church in 1821, and her gifts as an orator were widely admired. During a church controversy over a man named Elias Hicks, Mott was torn by both sides. Hicks, an antislavery advocate, had questioned the power of the Philadelphia Quaker elders and called for greater democracy in the religion. After a great deal of painful soul-searching, Mott joined the Hicksite Quakers and was denounced by the orthodox group. It was a serious split for Quakers which split apart families and continued to cause problems for Mott. Most of the future NWRC members discussed here who were Quakers came from the Hicksite branch. Early on, these future women's rights leaders were questioning authority in a belief system which was closest to them. The oppression of women they encountered in their lives prompted them to continue searching for a belief system which permitted equal rights for all women and men. In antislavery activity and women's rights reforms they found such an ideology of human and natural rights. Their participation was an extension of their religious beliefs and a clarification of basic democratic principles.

Religious crises may have been a common experience for those in women's rights. Both Stanton and Davis underwent similar crises in their early childhoods. Stanton had been president of the Presbyterian Girls Club in her hometown. They collected funds for a ministerial student at a nearby seminary and presented him
with a new suit of black broadcloth, requesting only that he speak at their church. He announced as his Bible text, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence”. Stanton led her companions out of the church in protest (Stanton, 1898). Davis was raised by an aunt in a strict Presbyterian setting. She felt her repressive religious environment very strongly. One specific troubling incident occurred when she heard a church discussion on why women should keep quiet during church services (Stanton, 1876).

Ernestine L. Rose left the Jewish religion early in her life after her father, a rabbi, arranged a marriage for her and gave away her dowry (Suhl, 1970). Many people seem to have turned to Universalism and Unitarianism as a new religion. Today both denominations are united in one religion. Rev. Blackwell was a Congregationalist/Unitarian minister; Higginson was a Unitarian minister. The Universalist church was the first to ordain a female minister, Olympia Brown in 1863 and the Unitarian church soon followed this step (Hitchings, 1973).

A few people turned to spiritualism as an alternative religious institution including one of the Blackwell sisters, Chace, and Davis. Spiritualism was a way to raise one’s spirits through “good efforts”. Followers studied the inner life of human beings believing that supernatural influences would guide them. This included belief in manifestations of spirit presence tangible to the senses and “verifying the soul’s intuitive faith” (Stebbins, 1890). Some participated in seances and claimed to have experienced levitation and heard ghostly music.

A final note on religion must include the growth of the Hopedale community, founded by Adin Ballou, a Universalist minister, in 1841. Hopedale was a religious commune which appeared during a surge of such utopias and communes in the
1840s (Kanter, 1972). Ballou (1897) founded Hopedale as an attempt to establish a "human society" based on humanitarian principles. Members condemned war and opposed the current political government. Specifically they were against "competition, rivalry, self-aggrandizement, and open antagonism". The founders were Independent Restorationists and moral reformers. Ballou claimed Hopedale's membership was middle class, rank and file Americans, the same group of people who later joined the women's rights movement. There were many friendship and familial connections between Hopedale and the women's rights movement. Seven of the members of the 1850 Worcester convention were from Hopedale.

Other members represented the rest of the country as well as could be expected given north-south splits. Out of the one hundred and seventeen members analyzed here, seventeen states and three other countries were represented. Most were from New York and Massachusetts with New York leading. The majority were from New England, although Ohio and Pennsylvania were predominant membership states and were also places of strong women's rights and antislavery activity.

The most difficult item to identify in the membership was social class. I have already mentioned throughout this chapter and others that the membership was predominantly middle-class. The concept of social class is usually measured through such variables as education, occupation, income, and residence, among others. Measuring social class membership in the nineteenth century means measuring a male's education, occupation, and income. Women's status was largely dependent on their fathers or husbands. It is very likely that without either spousal or familial support and social class membership, these women would have not been members of the conventions. They would have not had the
means to do so. This declaration of middle-class membership of the NWRCs largely reflects male social class and the fact that women were dependent on their husbands in this century, exactly what the NWRC participants were protesting.

The last two demographic items to mention are race and age. There were definitely at least two Black males in the NWRC, Robert Purvis and Frederick Douglass. I do not know whether any of the members were Black females. There is sufficient information on about sixty percent of the total membership. There may very well have been other races represented besides white middle-class males and females.

The majority of the leaders were born between 1800 and 1819, and were thirty to fifty years of age during the 1850s. Most died from 1870-1889, and the average life-span of the participants was seventy-eight years. Most, then, had lived through the beginning of the industrial revolution and were very strongly affected by that experience (Ryan, 1979a).

Finally, there were seventy-five females, thirty-eight males, and four members who were identified only by their initials. The predominant membership of the NWRC was female. Men were present but were never elected to the highest office of president of the convention. Most males were spouses of the female members. James Mott, Henry Blackwell, and Joseph Dugdale were all the spouses of women active in the conventions. Women's rights was not necessarily a reform they participated in because their spouses were active. They had all gone through the same previous reforms and organizational experiences which predisposed them toward participation in women's rights. There were men who were not there directly because of spouses such as T.W. Higginson and William
Lloyd Garrison. They participated because their belief system did not allow them to deny the basic natural right to equality between the sexes.

In this section we looked at the demographic distribution of the most highly visible and active members of the NWRC. These one hundred and seventeen individuals were middle-class in their educational and occupational backgrounds. They had participated in reforms which led them to a belief in equality between the sexes. Women's rights, for these participants, was a logical extension of their belief systems. They had been questioning authority for a long time, ranging from religious authority to democratic representation to the institution of slavery. They were the people who, as Freeman (1975) suggests, were cooptable to the ideas of an incipient movement. In the next section we will look at the presidents of the conventions to look at what the common characteristics of these women and perhaps what led these six women to the presidency of the first national women's rights conventions ever held in the United States.

The Presidents of the Conventions: "Infidels and Promiscuous Assemblies"

In this section we will be looking at the lives of the presidents of the NWRC conventions. We will use their lives as representative of the larger core membership. As elected officials of the new women's rights movement they are worth studying. In their lives we will see a combination of events and experiences that led many individuals, including those discussed here, into women's rights. The sources used in this section are largely biographical studies of each woman. In several cases, however, there have been no biographies done. In those instances we will be using sketches of the women by their contemporaries, including biographies in the History of Woman Suffrage, obituaries, and
nineteenth century books and manuscripts by women's rights participants. Additionally, personal letters and papers will be used where appropriate.

I have discovered that several broad patterns or categories apply to the lives of these convention presidents and we will look at each pattern in turn. These uniform experiences include previous organizational experience, the family as a socializer of reformist and humanitarian values, the role of religion in awareness of oppression, and the impact of both education and employment on developing feminist values.

Seven women served as convention presidents: Paulina Wright Davis (1850, 1851), Lucretia Mott (1852, 1859), Frances Dana Gage (1853), Ernestine L. Rose (1854), Martha Coffin Wright (1855, 1860), Lucy Stone (1856), and Susan B. Anthony (1858). All of the convention presidents were active in prior reforms ranging from abolition to temperance, and including married women's property rights and peace. Many of the presidents were also involved with each other in these previous reforms and had established some type of contact. The prior contact and reform experience together constituted a network of individuals with similar belief systems, backgrounds, and reform interests. When the time came for a national women's rights movement to be launched, the framework for a feminist constituency was in place.

This network can be exemplified in a number of ways. The most common prior reform experience was in the abolition movement. For many future convention members their ties were through antislavery and especially through William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison also seems to have been a common denominator for the convention presidents. Like others, the Mott family formed an early association with Garrison. Lucretia Mott had previously read some of Garrison's
writings on slavery when she learned of his 1830 imprisonment for antislavery activity. Garrison was invited to the Mott home shortly after his release from prison and found much personal support in this Quaker family. At the urging of James and Lucretia Mott, Garrison founded his famous antislavery newspaper, The Liberator.

Two of the presidents, Paulina Wright Davis and Lucretia Mott, nearly had their homes destroyed by opponents of the antislavery movement. Davis' first husband was Thomas Wright, with whom she was active in an antislavery society. Together they took part in the 1835 antislavery convention in Utica, New York, one of many that was mobbed. The Wrights' home was nearly set on fire, but the arson-minded mob was swayed by the sight of female guests kneeling at their evening prayer inside the home. Eventual disillusionment with their Church's pro-slavery stance led the Wrights to withdraw from all church organizations. They concentrated during the twelve years of their marriage on reform work, specifically women's rights, temperance, and antislavery (Stanton, 1876).

Similarly, Mott's home in Philadelphia was nearly burned two years later. A mob estimated at seventeen thousand burned many abolitionist homes; the Mott's home was narrowly rescued. Still, they remained active, with Lucretia serving as an officer in the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society. James was a founder of the American Antislavery Society and a member of the Philadelphia Abolition society. He supervised a school for Black children and in 1830 converted his cotton business to the wool industry. Lucretia supported his boycott of cotton and other southern products, urging others to use "free produce". In 1833, their daughter married Edward Hopper, the son of the famous abolitionist, Isaac. The Hoppers and Motts were later active together in women's rights (Bacon, 1980).
Some of the earliest ties with other future feminists began in the abolition movement. Mott, Stanton, and five other women who were later active in the women's rights movement were all present at the 1840 London Antislavery Convention. As noted earlier, it was at this convention that the idea of a women's rights convention was first developed. Experiences such as these brought together a number of people who believed in the basic human rights of men and women. These "trials by fire" so to speak brought them together in a collective sense. They shared similar values, goals, and belief systems. Abolition provided a cooptable constituency for the NWRCs and the women's rights movement.

One way this can be clearly illustrated is in the formation of the first NWRC. The committee of seven which decided to hold a national woman's rights convention had met during an antislavery meeting, and many of them had worked together in previous reforms. Abby Kelley Foster and Davis had been lecturers on health reform; Foster and Stone had both lectured together in antislavery. Foster had in fact recruited Stone for the position of antislavery agent. The influence of these first feminists was felt in other ways. Stone's speech at the inaugural NWRC was reprinted and widely distributed. This speech supposedly converted Anthony, also a future president.

Anthony had other ties to the women's rights movement besides Stone's speech. She had originally been interested in temperance and had devoted herself to that cause. Her parents and sister had been at Seneca Falls and a cousin, Sarah Burtis Anthony had acted as the convention secretary. Anthony was amused rather than impressed by what she read. The seriousness with which her family took the Seneca Falls convention began to sway Anthony. After her
conversion by Stone's speech she, too, became an integral part of the network. Rose and Anthony toured together in 1854 on the antislavery lecture circuit.

Antislavery was not the only source of network formation prior to the NWRCs. The married women's property acts and related movement were probably the second most important previous reform experience. Rose was the first to become involved in the movement for improved marital rights. Rose had read of a New York legislator trying to improve married women's property laws and immediately set about gathering signatures on petitions. Stanton and Davis soon after began to collect signatures in western New York and slowly they all began to succeed. The bill they were working on passed into law in 1848, just before the Seneca Falls convention. Improvement in marital property laws was later a strong emphasis in the NWRCs, so many resolutions passed on such "social relations" (Suhl, 1970; Basch, 1982). Although separated from the New England women geographically, Francis Dana Gage had also become highly involved in reform in Ohio. Early reform interests for Gage included what she called the "triune cause" of abolition, temperance, and women's rights. Gage wrote for various newspapers on these reforms and lectured extensively. Gage, Jane Elizabeth Jones, and Hannah Tracy Cutler were all active in married women's property rights in Ohio and later in the NWRC as core members (Roseboom in James, 1971).

Besides the development of a network and future constituency for the women's rights movement, early reform experience provided practical lessons in the daily maintenance of a social movement. In abolition, property rights, temperance, and other reforms, the future NWRC members learned the fine arts of petitioning, lecturing, financial management, organizing, and simply spreading
the word. The movement for property rights had been one of the first experiences for petitioning as a strategy for reform. Rose had been able to gather five signatures in five months of petitioning, a seemingly pathetic effort. Her diligence and fortitude paid off in later years when she was held up as an example of how perseverance pays off. Petitioning was used throughout the 1850s with property rights and was formally incorporated into the strategy of the NWRCs with the committee to memorialize legislatures (Suhl, 1970). Mott and her daughter Anna had been members of the first national antislavery convention of American women. Part of their work involved publishing pamphlets and circulating petitions (Bacon, 1980). Davis had sold tracts and circulated petitions for a local temperance union as well as a female moral reform society (Ryan, 1979b).

Rose had firmly entrenched the tradition of women lecturing for women's rights and was called the "queen of the platform" for her efforts. She was followed in the movement for women's rights by the Grimke sisters, Mott, Stanton, and others. Experience in lecturing was mostly in the area of antislavery. As noted, earlier one of the most common occupations for NWRC core members was that of reformer. For almost all of those considered reformers, lecturing was a part of the job description. Women who chose to lecture in public in antebellum years were subjecting themselves to public ridicule and embarrassment. Rose, though eloquent and fiery, was declared an "infidel" for speaking before "promiscuous assemblies", or mixed-sex audiences. Stone's first speech was on the subject of women's rights and delivered in her brother's church in Massachusetts in 1847. Soon after she was offered a position as paid lecturer for antislavery. Her
church expelled her for her reform activities in women's rights and antislavery (Hays, 1961).

The experience in reforms prior to the 1850s was also helpful in learning how to organize conventions, societies, and movements in general. Mott, for example, was continually founding organizations or serving as an officer in one or the other. In 1833 she was instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Female Antislavery Society and served as its corresponding clerk. Anthony of course became the financial wizard of the women's movement, constantly campaigning for money to fund the cause. Her first lessons with appropriating finances for a movement was as a regularly employed agent in an antislavery society. She managed to balance the books in whichever movement she was involved with until 1863. The Woman's National Loyal League, formed by feminists during the Civil War, incurred a debt as high as five thousand dollars. Anthony assumed the debt and paid it off.

One other important reform activity involved writing for various movements. Davis had written in McDowell's Journal, a female moral reform journal as well as others prior to the 1850s. She went on to found The Una and also wrote in The Woman's Advocate and The Revolution which Stanton and Anthony founded. Gage wrote in numerous journals in Ohio and Missouri. The early writing experience paid off later in the women's rights movement. Newspapers were the main source of information and spreading the word about women's rights. The new movement needed people who were capable of writing well. Networking also paid off in this area as well. Davis, for example, had been friends with Caroline Healy Dall, an author and NWRC member. Dall took over The Una when Davis fell ill and managed to keep the paper going for almost one more year.
Most of the prominent speakers at the NWRCs, including the presidents, had their speeches reprinted in The Una or wrote other articles for publication. NWRC participants had learned early of the importance and impact of the written word on informing the public about social reform.

Participating in reform activities would have not been possible for many without strong familial support. In many instances the family acted as a socializer into reform activities. For others, the family had provided a background that was just as oppressive as society. Gage's first experience of sexual oppression came when her father ordered her away from the barrel maker she was helping and back into "her sphere", the household (Roseboom in James, 1971). Stone's father had been an authoritarian figure; her mother worked hard as a farmer's wife and lamented the fact that her child was a daughter for a woman's life was so hard. Stone herself resolved to never marry because the legal system was so unfair to married women.

Stone did eventually marry, as did most of the women and men in the core membership. Like others, her husband was active in various reforms and supported women's rights. Henry Blackwell, the man she married, finally persuaded Stone to marry him. In their wedding ceremony they omitted the word "obey" and Blackwell read a protest over the inequality of marital laws. Stone retained her "maiden" name (Hays, 1961). Mott also married a reformer as shown previously. Both of Davis' husbands were active in antislavery and women's rights. Her second husband was a congressional representative supporting both abolition and feminism.

Little has been written about Gage's husband but her children followed her into women's rights. Martha Coffin Wright's second husband was an active
supporter of her reform interests. Two of their eight children became suffragists, and a grandson was active in prison reform. Children were initially a liability to the early feminists in that they kept women at home, caring for them. Abby Kelley Foster's marriage to Stephen Foster produced a daughter. Abby left her child in the care of her husband and went on a lecture tour. She constantly worried about her daughter and longed to be reunited with her family (Hersh, 1978). Stanton had children throughout the 1840s, a main reason why the Seneca Falls convention was delayed (Stanton, 1898). Stone had a daughter in 1856 and gave up lecturing in order to care for her infant (Hays, 1961). Anthony, who remained single and had no children, was often impatient with the women who put their children and families ahead of the cause.

Other institutions beyond the family were sources of conflict for the NWRC presidents including religion, education, and employment. Since we have just discussed how these pertain to the core membership at large, we will limit our discussion here to a few pertinent illustrations. Most of the presidents eventually left their churches to join others stayed outside the confines of religious institutions completely. Stone's motivation for attending school had been due to a reaction over a religious issue. She was upset as a child over Biblical scriptures which her church interpreted to permit males to rule over females. The experience prompted her to decide on attending college. Stone was convinced that the Bible did not say such a thing and wanted to learn to translate the significant passages herself. She was convinced the accurate context had been destroyed in the translation (Hays, 1961).

All of the presidents had some grammar school and many went beyond that. At least four of the seven taught school. Rose had a different type of employment
experience. After she left Poland she traveled to Berlin. Her funds began to run low and she invented a scented wallpaper to sell. The scent diminished cooking odors and was a popular item.

In summary, all of the experiences and reform involvement in these women's lives led them in the direction of feminism. When the time came for a national woman's rights movement to be launched, they had the necessary cooptable constituency, network, ideology, and organizational experience to sustain a movement. Each of them not only served as president but was also elected to other offices and committees, often multiple times. The larger core membership also went through similar experiences with questioning the institutions and the social system they lived in which oppressed women. Most of the core membership had experience in previous reforms either through participation at conventions, or in petition drives, lecturing, writing, or serving in similar types of positions in the committee structure and officer hierarchy. The members of the NWRC were the ones who constructed the women's rights movement. The core membership used prior organizational experience from several reforms. The connections between the women's rights movement and antislavery, temperance, married women's property rights, health, and so on cannot be ignored. The beginning of the women's rights movement in the United States did not simply start with the NWRCs in the 1850s or the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. In the next and final chapter we will discuss how the origins of the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century can be explained through current social movement theory.
Chapter Seven: Analysis and Conclusion

In this study I have described the emergence of a social movement in the nineteenth century. The NWRCs represented the beginning of the women's rights movement in the United States. The decade of the 1850s was at least indirectly responsible and in many ways directly responsible for the existence of a women's rights movement today. Since the mid-nineteenth century there has always been a women's rights movement. The two studies which have examined this time period of the women's movement have done so from an historical perspective (DuBois, 1978; Hersh, 1978). Neither have directly concentrated on the role of the National Woman's Rights Conventions in the emergent women's movement. DuBois especially has emphasized the importance of the suffrage goal, often to the neglect of recognizing broader reforms.

Sociologists, with their research emphases mainly in the present, have completely ignored this time period. Recently a few sociologists have begun to examine the women's movement within past historical frameworks (Lance and Almquist, 1983) and there has been a revival in historical sociology in general (Tilly, 1978; Skocpol, 1979, 1983, 1984; Orloff and Skocpol, 1984). This study looks at the women's movement in the 1850s from a social movement perspective. In this chapter we will examine the feasibility of using resource mobilization theory to understand NWRC development. Conceptual problems will also be explored including problems arising with using historical foci for such research and how the research here clarifies some of these problems. Finally, additional agenda for
historical sociology research and social movement theory development will be pointed out. First, however, let's look at the consequences of the NWRCs.

Consequences

As suggested above, there have been some far-reaching consequences of the nineteenth century women's rights movement. The NWRCs evolved into a formal organization in 1866, the American Equal Rights Association. Three years later there was a split in the movement. Two social movement organizations resulted from this schism and repeatedly competed for legitimacy and constituencies. The two SMOs later reconciled but there was never again to be one monolithic entity such as the National Woman's Rights Conventions in the 1850s. In the early part of the twentieth century the suffrage movement split into several different organizations, with different strategies to achieve the vote (Kraditor, 1965). Again in the latter 1960s and early 1970s there were actually two different levels of activity in the more decentralized consciousness-raising groups and the centralized National Organization for Women (Cassell, 1972; Freeman, 1975). There has always been a movement and divisions have occurred leading to emergence of new branches of the movement at several points in time, but often for different reasons.

The members of the National Woman's Rights Conventions were the original American feminists, the first individuals collectively to protest sexual inequality on a widespread, organized level. The NWRCs encouraged the growth of local, state, and regional women's rights organizations. A widespread network of organizations and constituencies grew which provided the needed support to sustain the women's rights movement. Together they constructed a social
movement which extended over one hundred years beyond their lifetimes, creating an incredible legacy for their children and a significant contribution to the history of social movements in the United States. Few other social movements have had the impact on the legal system and social structure as this one did.

What benefit can the study of this women's rights movement be to the historical sociologist interested in social movement theory? Let us review for a moment what social movement theory has to say at present. There is currently a great deal of debate over conceptual and theoretical problems in the field on collective behavior and social movements (Weller and Quarantelli, 1973; Marx and Wood, 1975). One of the controversies has been over the use of the idea that strain or conflict give rise to social movements (Davies, 1962; Gurr, 1969; Oberschall, 1973; Skocpol, 1979). Others have responded that simply uncovering the existence of grievances does not alone predict whether social movements will appear and be sustained. An alternative theory focusing on resource mobilization has been posited (McCarthy and Zald, 1973 and 1977).

Resource Mobilization and the National Women's Rights Conventions

The problem in social movement theory we are facing is focused on the explanation of how social movements emerge and are sustained. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) have delineated the basic tenets of resource mobilization theory. Basically, the difference between social movements that are sustained and those which disappear is the degree to which they are successful in mobilizing social movement resources. Resource mobilization explains why social movements will be sustained or not. Movements must have effectively mobilized collective control over resources to be sustained (Snyder and Tilly, 1972; Freeman, 1979). The
general vehicle used for resource mobilization is the social movement organization.

Identifying resources is one of the conceptual problems in the field. Many things can ultimately be categorized as resources which a social movement can use to become established and successful in goal accomplishment. There is general agreement on which resources are more important. McCarthy and Zald (1977) outline four different categories of resources which must be mobilized. First money and labor must be aggregated for the collective purpose. In the case of the NWRCs we do not know as much as we would like concerning finances. Descriptions of labor, and a detailed division of labor, is more readily available. Second, a minimal form of organization, in their case the SMO, is necessary to mobilize resources. The NWRCs do not meet all of the criteria for SMOs, and we will discuss the implications of this finding shortly.

Third, there must be help from outside constituencies. Mobilization of this external support is critical to movement success. We are also able to see how this occurred in the NWRCs. Finally, McCarthy and Zald use an economic model of supply and demand to illustrate the flow of resources within and outside of a social movement. We can readily see that the flow of resources increased over the 1850s as organization and means of communication improved. We will examine each of these in detail.

First, though, we need to define more clearly these resources. Freeman (1979) provides us with a breakdown of types of resources. She divides resources into those which are either tangible or intangible. Tangible resources include such things as communication. In this case we will be discussing the extent of how communication was mobilized. A conceptual problem exists here also because
communication in the 1850s was almost an intangible item. I am including such things as newspapers, newsletters, and personal correspondence as the tangible resources Freeman is referring to. Intangible resources include such things as strategy, constituency, and the movement's relationship to the larger society, a combination of both micro and macro sociological factors. We will discuss each of these in turn, emphasizing the work of McCarthy and Zald and others where relevant.

Communication was a critical resource in the nineteenth century when involvement in a social reform was one of the main ways to learn about the movement. Communication occurred through a number of means and vehicles. Probably the most predominant form of communication was through the written word. In this case, several reform-oriented newspapers served as conduits of information. There were several newspapers which printed articles on women's rights, and one, The Una, was a direct organ of communication for the NWRCs in the 1850s. In addition, letters and editorials were written to and by many kinds of newspapers. One of the most effective ways of disseminating information was when local newspapers carried coverage of the conventions. Favorable or not, many people read these newspapers and were able to discern information about the subject of women's rights.

In the convention proceedings, as well as the History of Woman Suffrage, frequent mention was made about the press and press relations. Favorable articles were reprinted and supportive articles praised by convention members. A process of "wooing" the press definitely occurred. My own analysis shows that the press apparently became more favorable toward the movement. In addition, the speeches accusing the press of antagonistic and hostile attitudes towards the
conventions and women's rights slowed in the latter 1850s. Thus, the movement began to gain some legitimacy and respectability in the eyes of the press. In this instance, the NWRCs were effective in mobilizing favorable press opinion and using a form of communication to spread news about the movement.

Other printed information was disseminated by the members of the convention. The strategy of using tracts, stories, and other short publications was a way to spread their ideas about women's rights. The printed materials were of course supportive of the goals of the NWRCs. Quite often they pointed out the plight of women under the oppression of such an unjust society. Finally, letter-writing among active members was a fine art and a way of informing possible women's rights movement followers about the cause. Garrison's letters, for example, are contained in six volumes, many pertaining to the women's movement, and in which he mentioned attending the annual conventions. Correspondence between the core membership can also be illustrated in his letters. Likewise, the letters of Anthony are examples of movement communication. Anthony went beyond Garrison's network of core members and corresponded with anyone she thought would join or contribute to the cause.

What we have here with communication is an interesting example of how some resources are defined by the historical time period in which they are a part. Social movements today use similar resources for communicating essential information but the technological advancements make it a far easier task. In the 1960s, for example, the underground system of newspapers was extremely widespread and far-reaching. Additionally, the use of electronic media such as television, telephones, and radio made communication much more efficient. There was more extensive coverage of the movement events and the information
was available immediately. Although the information and coverage was not always accurate, there was a difference in the means of communicating.

What does this change in historical and technological circumstances say about resource mobilization? First, the possibility now exists to reach larger numbers of possible constituents. The impact of television in our homes is strong visually and emotionally. The power of a single photograph such as a scene depicting draft-card burning or murder can arouse immediate and often sustained response (Thompson, Clarke, and Dinitz, 1974; Thompson and Clarke, 1974).

Strategies also need to be examined within their historical and technological context. Strategies are linked to the available resources and develop within certain confines (Zald, 1980). Historical circumstances can and have constrained the development of strategies for social change, or what Tilly (1979) calls "repertoires of contention". Repertoires of contention are based on the idea that "particular times, places, and populations have their own repertoires of collective action". We need to look, therefore, at what type of strategies are used and what relationship they have to the larger environment of which they are a part.

Environments and historical circumstances can effectively constrain the strategy and tactics of movement members. In colonial Boston, for example, a tea party was held to protest the tea taxes. Tea was dumped over the side of merchant ships and into Boston harbor by protestors. Technology also has an impact on strategy and tactics. For example, dumping radioactive nuclear waste into a water source is not a solution today. This would simply complicate the problem as nuclear opponents see it. Attempts to scale walls at nuclear plants are largely symbolic protests rather than attempts to take over the facilities. Alinsky (1971)
has certainly suggested some non-traditional strategies for achieving social change.

Forms of collective action, or movement strategies, are learned and adapted to their settings, according to Tilly (1979). In the 1850s we can see that there were certain repertoires of collective action available to movement participants. The convention was one such strategy. The convention as a form of strategy or collective action had been a familiar format to NWRC members participating in prior social reforms. The antislavery and temperance movements, for example, had used conventions to meet and formulate goals, ideology, and strategy. The convention was a primary resource for sustaining the women's rights movement.

Where the business aspects were the main focus of the 1850s conventions, the emphasis today is on different aspects such as strategies. Conventions are also used today, although not as extensively. A typical National Organization for Women convention for example has changed since the days of the NWRC. Now there are meetings and workshops on lobbying, working with the press, homemaker rights, and so on. Today feminist ideas are also spread through other means. Technological innovations have increased the options available to develop a social movement. Electronic media is but one example of how the situation has changed. Another example where conventions are not used at all is in the grassroots citizens group movement (Phillips and Neal, 1984). This is a widespread social movement composed of citizens groups organizing around perceived or actual disaster threats to their community. Today, people who attend conventions are usually members. In the 1850s, many different types of people attended,
including the opposition. This is not the norm today. The functions have changed.

Again, Tilly emphasizes that change occurs slowly, limiting the strategy and tactics of individuals involved in a collective action. He asks whether the adoption of a particular strategy was a deliberate choice or just an adaptation of existing forms rather than new forms (Tilly, 1979). My response is that both deliberate choice and evolving new forms of strategies were used. Use of conventions and agitation as strategies were tactics used in previous reforms, and as such were part of the groups' repertoire of actions. I want to emphasize that this may not have been a conscious choice, but rather reliance on a means which was within the collective actors' frame of reference.

There were, however, new forms which evolved in the conventions. The NWRCs, to the best of my knowledge, were the first conventions which originally formed with both sexes in officer and committee positions. The furor raised over Abby Kelley Foster's appointment to an all-male anti-slavery committee structure in 1839 points this out. There were all-female organizations such as the Female Anti-Slavery Societies, but there were no males participating within the core membership there. The NWRCs were the first conventions and social reform movement to have combined both sexes into the core membership and the hierarchy. Further, they were the first conventions to have only women as presidents in mixed-sex groups. This was a startling experience for some, who were unaccustomed to such a sight. Additionally, both whites and Blacks shared the podium upon occasion, another startling event in the antebellum years. Having both races share the podium was not a new form but added to the sense of unconventionality which the NWRCs represented for many observers.
Tilly calls this type of format a "flexible repertoire". A flexible repertoire finds the collective actors strongly oriented toward the familiar means, with some limits of unfamiliarity beyond which they will not go. An all-female hierarchy was not discussed in any convention proceedings, for example. Several speeches, in fact, set boundaries beyond which the convention would not go and excluding males was one of them. NWRC officials were even criticized for the seeming lack of males in the hierarchy. The flexible repertoire includes within it room for innovation or adaptation as discussed above. Relatively unfamiliar means of action will be adopted within this framework.

Networks

Another type of resource which had to be mobilized was the membership or the constituency. The mobilization potential of a social movement is largely determined by preexisting groups organizations with "strong distinctive identities and dense interpersonal networks" (Jenkins, 1983; Tilly, 1978). These identities and networks "provide the basis for the operation of collective incentives" (Jenkins, 1983). In other words, networks are the richest source of movement recruits (Snow et al. 1980). In a recent article by Killian (1984) he argues that social networks are not always necessary for social movement emergence. For example, his work on civil rights clearly documents this idea. The networks established in anti-slavery and other reforms were invaluable in women's rights. Prior network development in abolition provided a constituency, structure, strategy, and ideology for the new movement. Davis started the movement recruitment officially when she wrote the call for the 1850 convention and launched a letter-writing campaign to her co-activists. She invited them to
speak, or at least lend their name, to the convention call. Favorable responses from the people she wrote were read at the convention; all letters were addressed to her. I can think of no better example of how the word was spread among a preexisting network of people regarding an incipient movement.

The first convention had two hundred and sixty-three members; three years later in Cleveland there was an audience of fifteen hundred. Although many were there as spectators, there was now a groundswell of support for the women's rights movement. Once the NWRCs started, in other words, there was a rapid development of movement support. The use of the conventions as a strategy obviously facilitated development of a movement constituency. Mobilization of a constituency was based primarily on the network of "cooptable" members of previous reform movements (Freeman, 1975). The network was composed of many different subgroups. I have just illustrated how one individual contacted many others to launch the first national woman's rights convention. Individuals were important to the movement but were not the total backbone of the movement. Other groups also were effective in mobilizing the constituency. For example, there were many friendship dyads and triads which formed parts of the constituency. Frances Dana Gage, Hannah Tracy Cutler, and Jane Elizabeth Jones in Ohio were one such triad. Their organizational experience and reform efforts were essential to spreading the women's rights movement beyond New England and into the midwest. These three women were behind the married women's property rights movement in Ohio for example (Basch, 1982). Additionally, lecture teams were very much responsible for spreading the women's rights movement and recruiting more of the constituency. Seeing a woman lecture in public was an unusual event in the 1850s, especially on the controversial subject
of women's rights. The lecturing teams often tied together several reforms such as anti-slavery, women's rights, and temperance. Ernestine L. Rose and Susan B. Anthony's lecture tour in 1854 concentrated on anti-slavery and women's rights. In essence they were able to combine two reforms. A person who came to hear about anti-slavery would end up hearing about women's rights as well. Tying the two reforms together was an effective way of capturing the attention of people interested in "natural rights".

Still another example of how networks provided membership and structural experience for the NWRCs is to look at participation in core membership of previous movements. The rosters of officers, committee members, and delegates to the anti-slavery conventions of American women reads like a core membership list for the National Woman's Rights Conventions. Lucretia Mott's name is everywhere in the anti-slavery proceedings, as well as that of Mary Grew, whose minister father opposed the women's rights movement of which she was a core member. It seems obvious that those who participated in the NWRC relied on the individuals whom they had met in anti-slavery. There was a transfer of expertise and actual experience from committee assignments in female anti-slavery societies into women's rights. The 1839 business committee of the third anti-slavery convention of American women had twelve members. Six of the twelve were future core members of the NWRCs. Five of the six later served on NWRC business committees (See Proceedings, 1839, and 1850-1860).

Types of Constituencies

The people we have discussed above are part of a group known in social movement literature as the beneficiary constituency (Freeman, 1979). This
beneficiary constituency includes those who will directly benefit from accomplishment of the social movement's goals but only refers to those active in the social movement or social movement organization. Women were the direct beneficiaries of the NWRCs goals, and the female core membership represents the beneficiary constituency. This resembles the "free rider" debate concerning why people might join a social movement (Walsh, 1983). Conscience adherents are those who will not benefit directly from the goal accomplishments of the social movement but are still a part of it. I believe that the men who were part of the core membership fit the definition of a conscience adherent best. Arguments were made that the women's rights movement would benefit both men and women. To raise women to men's legal status was to improve the social relations between the sexes. Some believed giving women their civil and political rights would "feminize" the ballot box. Women would be a genteel influence on the rowdies who made elections such a violent experience. Both sexes therefore had something to gain. However, it is much more logical to point out that women were the direct beneficiaries and men did not benefit directly. After all, white males at least possessed the right to vote and were represented in the political system.

The last type of constituency is the conscience constituency. These are direct supporters who may not benefit directly. This group does not necessarily belong to the social movement through a formal membership. The relationship to the social movement is through some type of support. This could be financial support, for example when so many individuals sent funds into the NWRCs. They were duly acknowledged by finance officer Anthony. Another example is the growth in the number of people who signed petitions supporting women's rights causes. People began to support the women's rights movement and increased
their support over the 1850s. Over the course of the 1850s, public opinion began to change in favor of the women's rights movement. This type of general support was essential to sustaining the movement. The NWRCs were very active in trying to mobilize this type of support and praised the change in people's attitudes in convention speeches. Also noted was the change in the attitudes of newspapers which reported on convention proceedings. The articles on the conventions began to change in tone toward neutral and sometimes almost favorable coverage toward the end of the decade.

Perhaps an even better example of a conscience constituency is the response to the NWRCs which came from Europe. The followers of women's rights in England and France wrote letters to the conventions supporting NWRC efforts and encouraging them to go forward. The feminists in Europe were direct supporters of the women's rights movement in the United States, but clearly did not benefit directly from an American social movement. The NWRC participants were delighted with the European response, realizing the significance of the letters they received: "one of the grand results of this Convention was the thought roused in England" (HWS I: 225). Besides being able to mobilize and develop public support here in the United States, European support was beginning to mobilize. This addition to the conscience constituency of the women's rights movement in the U.S. was also essential to sustaining the movement.

Finally, the macro-level relationship between the social movement and the larger society needs to be explored. The effects of the environment upon the social movement can be constraints on successful mobilization (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). The resource mobilization perspective supports the assumption that society provides the infrastructure which social movements utilize. We have
already seen how the parts of the infrastructure such as communication, preexisting networks, and other reform movements have been used. Let us look now at some of the other parts which are also important.

First of all, the tendency to say the NWRC was possible because of middle-class participation must be avoided. The assumption behind this is that a middle-class movement such as the one which existed in the nineteenth century possessed both the affluence and the leisure time to pursue social reforms. The usual approach, the one we want to avoid here, is to explain the higher rate of middle-class participation through awareness and motivation to become involved. Affluence and leisure are believed to provide the opportunity for participation. There are problems with this idea, however. As McCarthy and Zald (1973) point out, there are other ways an affluent society contributes to the creation of social movements. What I believe to be important here is the impact of changes in the social structure upon the middle-class.

In the nineteenth century, for example, large scale changes were going on in the economic system. These economic changes precipitated changes in the lives of certain groups in society. One of the groups most affected was the middle-class. I have already shown how the industrial revolution was the forerunner and cause of changes in gender roles. To reiterate briefly, the industrial revolution brought an increased separation of home and workplace. Women became increasingly tied to the home, or "woman's sphere", and men became synonymous with the commercial or business sphere. This was especially true for the middle-class. Challenges to this idea of separate spheres came from the poorer social classes who were forced to work, the institution of slavery which was in direct opposition to the separation of spheres, and women who worked before marriage.
These groups challenged the concept of separate spheres, showing that such a segregation by sex was largely a middle-class phenomenon. This finding is consistent with the argument for some type of structural strain being necessary for social movement emergence (Skocpol, 1979; Smelser, 1962; Oberschall, 1974).

The industrial revolution took much of women's traditional work such as spinning, weaving, and so forth and put it in factories. This separation of home and work for women enabled them to be able to join social reforms (as suggested by Ryan, 1979a and DuBois, 1978). The benevolent societies and female moral reform organizations were largely middle class women's associations. Women who participated in other reforms such as anti-slavery, temperance, and women's rights were also middle-class. Rather than affluence and leisure creating the conditions for increased participation by the middle-class, social structural changes precipitated the involvement of the middle-class in the women's rights movement. Furthermore, the women's rights movement was partly a response to the social structural changes.

Increased affluence gave people the opportunity to contribute to reform movements. There was also increased opportunity for reformers to arrange their time. It was not necessarily leisure time, but what social movement theorists call discretionary time (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). Time can be arranged to include activities outside of domestic and business obligations. Simply being middle-class members, as were most of the women's rights advocates, does not guarantee that one will be motivated to join. Being middle class does provide the opportunity to become involved. There is not more time but the freedom to arrange time. The separation of home and workplace in the nineteenth century contributed to this ability to arrange time. Domestic responsibilities, then the "sphere" only of
women, were flexible enough to be rearranged for social movement participation. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example, was beset with worries about children and domestic chores throughout the 1840s and 1850s. She managed continually to send off letters, speeches, and other written commentaries while largely tied to her domestic “sphere” (Stanton, 1898).

The question still remains, though, as to why the middle-class would participate at all. Why did this particular group of middle-class individuals choose to become involved in women’s rights? The answer lies largely in what Freeman (1975) calls being “cooptable” and Jenkins (1983) calls “collective identities”, a return to a social psychological theme. What both are suggesting is that a group of potential participants will be oriented toward some type of collective action. The focus of their collective action will depend on to what degree they can move into a reform, such as a cooptable network, and how much they have in common, their collective identity. An implicit assumption behind these two concepts is that there will be a group of people amenable to the ideas of social reform; they will have a great deal in common. What I would like to suggest here is that what they have in common is their relationship to the larger society.

Freeman (1975) suggests that in order for a group to be cooptable they must be “like-minded” or predisposed toward the social reform. They must possess a collective consciousness or a “collective identity” (Jenkins, 1983). This is an idea similar to that of convergence theory which suggests that people who are similarly disposed toward collective behavior would gravitate toward the incipient incident. Convergence theory has been criticized for being too simplistic an explanation (McPhail, 1971; Turner and Killian, 1972). Theorists now believe
there are different reasons why people join social movements, not one underlying factor (Stallings, 1973).

My argument here is that those who joined the women's rights movement possessed characteristics which gave them a collective sense of identity. Demographically speaking, at least, there was a collectivity or group which was most likely to join women's rights. What many of the members of the women's rights movement had in common in the 1850s beyond middle-class status were their demographic characteristics. Their relationship to the larger society went beyond social class, including education, occupation and other measures of social class. Many of the members underwent crises of faith in their religious belief systems. Most of the women had encountered strong forms of sexual discrimination and segregation in prior reforms. The majority of the women had personally been excluded from two of the major social institutions, employment and education. This particular group of social movement members in the NWRC had gone through similar experiences and possessed similar perceptions regarding women's place in society (Freeman, 1975). They possessed collective characteristics which facilitated mobilization of a membership beyond simple cooptation.

Questions about Social Movement Organizations

An assumption of social movement theory is that resource mobilization leads to social movement organization (SMO) development. The process of resource mobilization continues through the career of the SMO. The initial formation of SMOs, however, is not discussed anywhere in the literature. One must assume from the SMO literature that such organizations simply appear. A criticism of social
movement theory has been that theories have largely ignored the emergence of social movements (Killian, 1984). The criticism is that social movements must be spontaneously generated. Resource mobilization has been very helpful in explaining why and how movements can be sustained and move toward goal accomplishment. The same problem now exists in the SMO literature. Do SMOs simply appear and exist? The process of emergence from an SMO perspective has never been thoroughly explored. The SMO perspective does not deal with what the conventions actually were. In essence, the key preexisting network for the emergence of an SMO was the convention. The convention facilitated further development of the networks established in prior reforms as well as the resource mobilization process.

What we have here with the NWRCs is the initial formation of a SMO. Resource mobilization was just getting underway, and the conventions were a strategy to accomplish that purpose. Yet they were not actually SMOs. In 1852 at the Syracuse convention, the core membership was successful in fending off a move toward establishing a national organization. There was no form of formal national organization to which one could belong until after the Civil War. In order to verify that the NWRCs were not SMOs, let us review the criteria for defining a collectivity as an SMO. Lofland and Jamison (1983) have delineated the most specific criteria for defining social movement organizations:

1. three or more people who draw a specific boundary for the group.
2. who have regularly planned meetings.
3. who have long-term goals with no pre-planned date of extinction.
4. who have coordinated goals.
5. who have a formal name.
6. who have a place to gather and meet.
7. who have boundary personnel and means for communicating both internally and externally (Lofland and Jamison, 1983).

We shall look at the criteria point by point. First, there were three or more people who were a part of the group, but to what extent did they actually draw a specific boundary for the group? In every convention dissenters were encouraged not only to attend the meeting but to speak out on any issue. Both men and women were included in the group. I have found no evidence of systematic exclusion of Blacks or other social classes in the conventions. The convention members did not claim to be looking at one single issue. Many different reform movements claimed to be a part of women's rights. Temperance, married women's property rights, and health reform among others were all considered to be a part of women's rights.

Second, the conventions were held annually but there was no guarantee, however, that the conventions would be held as planned. The lack of a convention in 1857 is evidence of this. The Civil War completely interrupted the NWRCs. The third criteria is more true of the conventions. There were long-term goals with no pre-planned date of extinction. No one knew for sure how long it would be before woman suffrage was a reality. They vowed to continue the struggle until female enfranchisement was achieved. Whether or not the goals were coordinated or not is questionable. The four main goal areas in employment, education, civil and political rights, and social relations were all tied together. The key to obtaining these rights was in the vote, according to many of the NWRC
members. Women would not be free and equal until they have achieved rights in all of the four areas. Suffrage was only part of the total women’s rights movement at this time. In the latter part of the century the movement did become more of a single-issue campaign for suffrage; in the 1850s this was not the case.

The “National Woman’s Rights Conventions” was the title of an event but was not a formal name for a group. The SMO which formed after the civil war was the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). This was a formal name of an organization which increasingly and consistently met the criteria for identification as an SMO. There was no single place to gather and meet beyond the annual conventions. Neighborhood meetings which the Central Committee were to hold were not formal in any sense of the word. There was a means for communicating both internally and externally, but those means were only mobilized gradually over the 1830s. The Una was not in existence as an official organ of the NWRCs until 1853. External means of communication did not improve until later in the decade when public newspapers began to change their coverage of the conventions. The criteria for defining the conventions as SMOs cannot be met.

What we see happening in the 1850s is a group of persons mobilizing the potential to become a social movement organization. The discussion in 1852 over becoming a national organization illustrates the timing was just not right at the time. The core members and movement leaders were strongly opposed to national organization because it impeded the strategy of the NWRCs. Moving to an SMO status was felt to be a move which might potentially cause the movement to flounder. Stone replied to the discussion that “the present duty is agitation” (HWSI: 541). What she was implying was that any form of organization would not
be beneficial at that time. They simply had to keep the issue before the public. The time was not right to be expending energy on building some "stiffling organization" (HWSI: 342).

The fact remains, though, that they did move into a SMO after the Civil War. The American Equal Rights Association was formed in 1866 during the eleventh National Woman's Rights Conventions (Proceedings, 1866). The move to a national organization was made in order to incorporate the interests of both anti-slavery and women's rights reformers. Bills were pending in the Congress to secure the right of suffrage to both Blacks and women.

...it was proposed to merge the societies into one, under the name of "The American Equal Rights Association", that the same conventions, appeals, and petitions, might include both classes of disfranchised citizens (HWS II: 152-153).

Thereafter, the women's rights movement was dominated by either one SMO or a combination of SMOs.

Joining both antislavery and women's rights reforms into one national organization eventually lead to a split in the movement in 1869. A number of problems had developed within the AERA including conflicts over strategy, personalities. The split was at least superficially over the strategy of combining antislavery and woman's rights issues. Rose, for example, wanted to change the name of the American Equal Rights Association to the Woman Suffrage Association. She wanted to clarify the goal for women's rights, not abandon Blacks as the move had been interpreted by others such as Lucy Stone and Frederick Douglass (Suhl, 1970; Gurko, 1974).

Most historians agree that Stanton and Anthony had become prominent figures in the women's rights movement (Hersh, 1978; DuBois, 1978; Riegel, 1963). They were also very controversial. Their association with George Francis Train,
the benefactor of the feminist newspaper *The Revolution*, led many to view them with suspicion. *The Revolution* was a radical newspaper for its time, raising extremely controversial issues such as divorce and continuing the campaign for woman suffrage. Train eventually abandoned Stanton and Anthony with a ten thousand dollar debt and was later arrested for illegal activities in Ireland (Gurko, 1976).

Stephen Foster, spouse of Abby Kelley Foster, objected to having them serve as officers at all. Stanton offered to resign, but they were retained in office by a majority of the AERA members. Disagreement over the strategy of combining movements and the move to start a new organization had caused dismay to all. After the meeting a group of the convention members and Stanton and Anthony met in order to form an organization, the National Woman Suffrage Association, to work solely for passage of a sixteenth amendment which would give the vote to women.

Lucy Stone and others, primarily from Boston--the Stanton-Anthony group was largely from New York--felt they had been deliberately excluded. They formed a new organization centered in Boston and called the American Woman Suffrage Association. The NWSA had no male officers and a few top leaders who were empowered to make quick decisions. The AWSA admitted women and men on an equal basis but their decision-making process was slow and somewhat ineffective (Gurko, 1974). The strategy of the American organization was largely expecting the Republican party to take up the cause of woman suffrage, which they never did directly address (DuBois, 1978).

The split lasted twenty-one years until the two organizations were reunited into one single organization, The National American Woman Suffrage Association
(NAWSA). Stanton was elected president, Anthony was chosen vice-president, and Stone assumed the chair of the executive board (Riegel, 1963; Hays, 1961; Gurko, 1974; DuBois, 1974). The significance of this event is that in 1869 there were two organizations competing for the same resources to accomplish basically the same goal. Zald and McCarthy (1980) point out that there has been little systematic analysis on the interaction of SMOs. Here is an opportunity for the historical sociologist further to contribute to social movement theory. Zald and McCarthy talk about social movement industries (SMIs): a social movement industry is composed of all the social movement organizations with relatively similar goals. Going further, a social movement sector includes all the social movement industries in a society regardless of which reform they are supporting.

I believe the potential exists to study social movement organizations, social movement industries, and social movement sectors within a specific time period between 1866 and 1890. The birth of the AERA was the beginning of social movement organization within the women’s rights movement. The split in 1869 led to the beginnings of a social movement industry. Both women’s rights organizations were working toward basically the same goals but with different strategies. They were competing for a constituency and other resources. In addition to the women’s rights SMI, there were other groups working for civil rights for the recently emancipated Black population. This constitutes a social movement sector. A study of the interaction between the SMIs and within the social movement sector would make a fascinating and worthwhile contribution to historical sociology and social movement theory.

To summarize, what has been done in this research has been an in-depth case study of the origins of the NWRCs. In past chapters we have seen how
structural conditions preceding the 1850s created an awareness of women's oppression. This awareness was accompanied by several instances of social conflict in prior reforms, most notably in antislavery. To answer the "grievances" theorists, a situation did, indeed, exist where grievances were increasingly expressed. And similarly, women in this period certainly relatively deprived when compared to males. Grievance and relative deprivation, however, did not prove to be sufficient for the emergence of this social movement.

Conditions which existed prior to the emergence of the movement were also important. The industrial revolution provided a group of people, middle-class white women, who were able to participate in reform. Moving into their own reform was actually a matter of time, after a sufficient constituency had the potential of being mobilized. Prior reforms were critical to mobilizing this constituency, through the existence of a strong communications network in existence prior to the 1850s. During the decade of origin, then, resource mobilization was accomplished effectively through use of the National Woman's Rights Conventions as a strategy for mobilization.

Conclusion

This research has concentrated on a specific period of time, the 1850s. During that time a social movement began which now spans the rest of the nineteenth century and continues to the present day in the twentieth century. Few researchers have delved into this time period to try and understand how this social movement began. What we have in the 1850s is a movement in search of resources to sustain itself. The women's rights movement, through the
conventions, was able effectively to mobilize the resources needed to maintain its momentum.

The 1850s were also a time of initial formation of what might be called a pre-SMO to be exact, a necessary and essential step toward accomplishment of the goals of the movement. Achieving the right to vote for women was still decades away, but the foundation for broad reforms for women's rights had been laid. There are now more SMOs and SMIs within an incredibly complex social movement sector than ever before. Today the process of resource mobilization is even more complex and competitive than in the mid-nineteenth century.

Despite the difficulties the women's rights movement experienced in the last century, including the split in 1869 and the controversial personalities, the NWRC members built a movement which endured. As Elizabeth Cady Stanton said in 1880:

For over thirty years some people have said from time to time that I have injured the suffrage movement beyond redemption; but it still lives. Train killed it...The Revolution killed it. But with each death it put on new life...Reforms are not made of blown glass to be broken to pieces with the first adverse wind (Gurko, 1974:230).

As Skocpol (1984) said, historical sociologists are part of a growing interdisciplinary community. This study shows how two disciplines can be effectively combined to research an historical problem. In this case, the problem was explaining the origins of the women's rights movement. We can now see how those origins can be explained and understood through application of social movement theory, particularly the resource mobilization perspective. I have discovered, as Skocpol warned, that combining the two is a difficult process. In this research the sociological aspect has taken precedence over the historical.
Many historical questions still remain and are worthwhile exploring in the future.

Some of those questions concern the impact of race, class, and gender on the developing women's rights movement. Were there any Black women who were core members of the NWRCs? Or members at large? There is no indication of such a group within the membership either through proceedings, histories, or archives. Part of the problem is that only the more prominent members have had their papers preserved in our national archives. Other documents may be available but a more elaborate search was beyond the financial resources of this study. I think this aspect of the women's rights movement should be one of the first items for future research in this time period.

A related question concerns the experiences of Black women within the NWRCs. There is evidence that racism was very much a reality in the female antislavery societies and the women's rights movement in the latter part of the century (Davis, 1982; Terborg-Penn, 1975). I did not find any speeches or letters which deliberately excluded Black women. The only references in fact were to Black women under slavery in the south. Some convention members used the "woman-slave analogy" to describe the condition of white women. Others placed the position of the slave woman far above women's rights in order of priorities. Was this critical to movement emergence? I believe the question is difficult to answer as there is too much conflicting evidence both ways.

I am also curious about the role of men in the NWRCs. They were included and some made speeches suggesting that male roles should have been even stronger. I believe that the motivation behind the male involvement should be examined. While it is true that males possessed the same group characteristics,
collective identity, and cooptable ideology among others, was this enough to convince them to participate in women's rights? Was male involvement simply an extension of antislavery ideology? Would not participating in women's rights have challenged the ideology of antislavery and immediate emancipation which Garrison demanded? A careful exploration of the "woman question" in antislavery societies and later male involvement in the NWRCs would be the starting place.

Finally, a study should be made focusing on the problems of determining social class in the nineteenth century. Is it possible to examine women's social class membership without relying on their husband's status? What about single women? Were there working-class women involved at all in the women's rights movement? Some of the organizations formed in the middle of the century were for working women's rights. One such organization Anthony founded failed miserably. Such a study might use this as a starting point for looking at social class.

These are but a few of the questions still remaining on the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century. From the brief discussion outlined here it is obvious that both history and sociology can be combined effectively to look at these problems. I believe such an interdisciplinary approach would be of great benefit to sociology, history, and to women's studies. Students of social movements would have available data to work with as well as the potential of verifying current theory or pointing out gaps in our knowledge. Social movements of the past are readily accessible for theoretical and empirical research. We can use them to see not only the origins but also the outcomes of social movements. The past is not some dull, monotonous volume of archaic speeches covered with dust. The past is very much alive within the records and documents left to us by our
predecessors. Those sociologists who argue that there are conceptual and theoretical problems in the field of collective behavior and social movements can look to historical data for some of the solutions.
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