

POLITICAL PROCESS, ACTIVISM, AND HEALTH

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By

Anne E. Haas, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Vincent Roscigno, Advisor

Professor Timothy Curry

Professor Steven Lopez

Approved by

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Sociology Graduate Program

## ABSTRACT

Conventional women are saturated with mass media images depicting very thin, attractive women. These images impose ideals that are impossible for most women to meet in a healthy way. This study examines the substantive issue of women's body appearance, aging, and related health outcomes, including eating disorders, and how these might be mediated and improved by activist political process. Concepts from social movements and social-psychological perspectives are integrated into what I call the political process model—a model that delineates how activists become socialized and immersed in alternative political networks that influence subsequent activities, ideas, and identities. I use this model to test the ability of activists to sustain commitment to their causes, including those that relate to women's bodies, over time. The process that connects the concepts in this model (i.e., pivotal events, collective identity, pivotal departures, empowerment, and health) provides the conceptual framework to which my analytic strategy derives.

I address four research expectations using triangulated quantitative and qualitative methods, and draw original data sources. Original survey data on female activists and non-activists are used to test whether the two groups differ in their politics, daily routines, and several dimensions of health (e.g., use of conventional versus non-conventional medical care, eating habits, etc.). Secondly, I relate political

process, collective identity and health by intertwining two qualitative research methods. These include qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) of variables from the survey data, and interpretive analysis of open-ended interviews. QCA results reveal unique configurations of attributes affecting aspects of activists' daily routines and health. Combined with interview materials, findings relate how political processes build personal and collective identities and shape health related behaviors and outcomes. The third part of my analytic strategy relies on interpretive analysis of activists' interviews to assess how networks and the community rituals matter. The interview and participant observation data support the expectation that women activists' experiences at various "pivotal" life course stages hold positive implications for health.

In sum, the linking of QCA and interpretive analyses demonstrates the importance of the processes through which community membership matters. The political process model is supported by findings based on the cross-methodologies used. Substantively, I find that political process is related to women's sustained, positive body image and aging health. Activist commitment is bolstered by social networks that support conventional, non-institutional, and political/cultural behaviors, such as avoiding harmful mass media images. I also advance broad theoretical goals by articulating the interrelatedness of the three processes of collective identity formative, and by elaborating on the social-psychological impact of social movements and social movement membership.

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## VITA

February 9, 1971.....Born—Akron, Ohio  
1993.....B.A. Sociology, Kent State University  
1998.....M.A. Sociology, Kent State University  
1998-2005.....Graduate Teaching and Administrative  
Associate, The Ohio State University

## PUBLICATIONS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

I have long been interested in the specific issue of women's negative body and appearance esteem and, consequently, eating disorders. Moreover, I have a strong interest in health as it is experienced uniquely by women throughout their gendered life course (Moen, Robison, and Dempster-McClain 1995; Settersten and Mayer 1997), and moderated by political process (Taylor 1996). Poor body image and eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, are serious mental and physical health problems suffered disproportionately by women (Siegel et al. 1999), especially those in certain life course stages or phases (Erikson 1968, 1980). These notoriously include adolescence (Brumberg 2000), young adulthood (Thompson et al. 1999), and the college experience (Hesse-Biber, Marino, and Watts-Roy 1999). Several studies reveal the incidence of eating disorders on college campuses

(Hesse-Biber et al. 1999; Pyle et al. 1991) as ranging between 4 and 9 percent of female students that meet clinically-based criteria for anorexia nervosa and bulimia.<sup>1</sup> Yet the prime value ascribed to young, thin, fertile women's bodies and their functions renders the entirety of women's life course vulnerable to health, esteem, and identity issues (Woodward 1999).

Women constitute 85-95% of persons with anorexia and bulimia (as reviewed in National Institute of Mental Health 2001), which must direct our attention to broad and time-sensitive social forces (Brumberg 2000, for excellent review, especially pages 11-42 and notes 13-15, pages 282-283). Although these problems have multiple and interactive causes, women's health is undermined, in particular, by narrow cultural norms that heighten the importance of physical attractiveness, thereby fostering intense body concern (Bordo 1992, 1993; Brumberg 2000; Stice and Shaw 1994). The media-imposed "ideal" for women is very thin and fit in comparison to average women's bodies (Furnham, Dias, and McClelland 1998). Evidence shows that this ideal lowers body esteem and health (Siegel et al. 1999) by increasing dieting practices among adolescents (Johnson et al. 1989), distorting body part sizes after viewing "ideal" images (Myers and Biocca 1992), fearing fatness (Chernin 1981), overestimating actual weight (*Glamour*

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<sup>1</sup> Clinically-based criteria linked to body image disturbance—a "necessary feature for the diagnosis of anorexia nervosa" (Thompson et al. 1999: 6)—is presented in several editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (reviewed in Thompson et al. 1999). Anorexia nervosa criteria include (1) extreme fear of fatness or gaining weight, even though underweight, (2) the disturbed experience of weight or shape, (3) self-evaluation as unduly influenced by weight or shape, and (4) denial of severe underweight. Revised editions of the *DSM* added body image criterion needed to diagnose bulimia nervosa, in which sufferers are intensely dissatisfied with their appearance, or they overestimate "size perception accuracy" (Thompson et al. 1999: 11). However, because body image disturbance is frequently present among women not meeting criteria for eating disorders, it must be viewed on a continuum, "with levels of disturbance ranging from none to extreme and most people falling near the middle of the range, experiencing mild—moderate concern, distress, or dissatisfaction" (Thompson et al. 1999: 7). Research finds that 60 to 80 percent of college women admit to binge eating and other abnormal behaviors—criteria that do not meet clinical standards (Gray and Ford 1985; Hesse-Biber 1989).

1984), vomiting, and using weight loss drugs (Bordo (1992). The outcome is a heightened incidence of, and mortality from, eating disorders (Myers and Biocca 1992; Sullivan 1995). A long term social and health problem, the mortality rate among anorexics was recently estimated at 5.6 percent per decade (cited in National Institute of Mental Health 2001), although estimates reach as high as 10%.

The role of culture, in conjunction with women's body esteem issues, is typically viewed negatively as an agent of health and social problems (Thompson et al. 1999). For example, much attention has been paid to the role of hegemonic culture in socializing people into stereotyped gender roles, the effects of which include youthful attractiveness as a core identity component for women (Connell 1987; Kilbourne 1994). Yet, from a more dynamic, agentic perspective, as influenced by recent work in symbolic-interactionism (e.g. Stryker, Owens, and White 2000), we know comparatively little about the capacity and potential of women to employ culture to resist gender-related health problems (for exceptions, see Taylor 1996, 1999). In the pages to follow, I argue that we can view alternative enactments and interpretations of culture from a *health-positive perspective* (Cunningham-Burley and Backett-Milburn 2002) when applied to women's efforts to solve poor body image and eating disorders. Broadly speaking, there is much to uncover about how empowered individuals transform and sustain their health, thus filling a gap.

In this dissertation, my goal is to address and fill what appear to be unrelated conceptual gaps in several literatures, including women's health and social movements. Surveying these literatures reveals a lack of systematic treatment of the *links* between (1) the practical role of human agency in promoting health (Giddens 1984, 1991; Sewell

1992; Stryker 1994), (2) interaction processes in social movements with possible implications for women, esteem, and health (Klandermans 1997; Sherkat and Blocker 1997; Snow et al. 1986), and (3) the ability of activists to maintain counter hegemonic ideas and actions over time (Whittier 1997). More specifically, we know little about if and how women solve poor body image and eating disorders. It may in fact be the case, as I suggest momentarily, that there may be some capacity for actors to empower themselves to transform and sustain health over time.

### Theoretical Gaps And Goals

#### *Gaps in Political Generations Theory*

In recent years, the social movements literature has elucidated findings about the biographical and historical consequences of activism on political generations, particularly baby boomers. This literature indicates certain periods of time are characterized by increased mobilization (Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1981; VanDyke 1998) while others see a closure of political opportunities (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1982) and social activism in abeyance (Rupp and Taylor 1987; Taylor 1989, 1996). For example, the 1980s are sometimes stereotyped as a period of political apathy during which former activists flocked toward mainstream goals, seemingly putting aside their insurgent pasts. For instance, the 1983 film “The Big Chill” portrayed former New Left activists as supposedly trading their bleeding hearts for money, status, and accumulation. It is true that the Reagan and Bush (senior) administrations cut funding for social programs that had formerly benefited from them in the 1970s (Jencks 1994; Whittier 1995; Wilson 1996) while, at the same time, gave the wealthy large tax cuts (e.g., Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Instigated by federal policy, scholars note that one effect for

progressive, 1960s social movements, notably the women's movement, was a generalized backlash against further gains (Faludi 1991; Taylor and Whittier 1992, Whittier 1995).

For instance, that feminists in general weren't overt in their continued quest for equality and justice and did, in fact, decline in size and influence, was misinterpreted as abandoned political commitment (as in Hoff Summers 1994) or individuals fighting over ideology (Echols 1989; Ryan 1992). However, Whittier (1995, 1997) traced incremental changes in the women's movement between 1970-1982 as it grew, peaked, and declined. She understands that conflicts are part of movement evolution rather than a problem with activists.<sup>2</sup>

Several studies have supplied rich empirical evidence supporting the stability of biographical consequences of social movement activism on participants (McAdam 1986, 1988, 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992; VanDyke, McAdam and Wilhelm 2000; Whittier 1995, 1997). This is notably the case for "hi-risk" activists, or those whose activism puts their health, careers (Taylor and Raeburn 1995), and even their lives at risk (McAdam 1986). Scholars have repeatedly described civil rights activists as exemplars of "hi-risk" (Marwell, Aiken and Demerath 1987; McAdam 1986; Whalen and Flacks 1989), although other 1960s movements that include what Sherkat and Blocker (1997) call "run of the mill," or less committed activists, have also supplied participants who have maintained progressive ideology or practice over time as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Further, there can be variations *within* a given political generation. These include race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, and sexual orientation, and also includes when activists enter a movement. Such variations lead to gradual transitions and contextualize that group of activists. Whittier (1995, 1997) applies the term micro-cohorts to explain shifts in a social movement's direction and within the political generations that emerge in distinct phases of the movement. They are linked by networks and shared experiences yet undergirded by structural factors, such as the political opportunity structure (McAdam 1982) and resources (Jenkins 1983), at the time and in interaction with the movement.



Also from the burgeoning social movements literature, various formulations of political generations theory claim activist commitment both continues and changes over time due to aging, political climate, goal replacement, and other factors (Berger 1971; McAdam 1986). Generational theory is a variant that argues political commitment, identities, ideas, and actions are sustained throughout the lifecycle (Whittier 1997). Generational theory places high importance on life-shaping political and cultural events (Braungart and Braungart 1993; Mannheim 1952), especially if they are experienced in face-to-face encounters (Gamson 1992), and occur during the formative years of adolescence and young adulthood (Erikson 1968, 1985; Mannheim 1952; Schuman and Scott 1989) because they remain with activists in their collective memory. Problematic, or viewed as a gap, generational theory does not systematically treat the effects of transitions linked to *aging*, dealt with by another perspective, lifecycle theory (Braungart and Braungart 1993; Kiecolt 1987).

Life cycle is a term used in multiple ways in sociology to denote temporality, metaphor (e.g. as process of social movement organizations), and developmental and generational processes in populations that go beyond a single lifetime of an individual (O'Rand and Krecker 1990: 242). Rooted in biology, properties of the life cycle are said to include (a) successive forms (stages) (b) irreversible development (maturation) and (c) reproduction of form (i.e. generations).<sup>3</sup> Applied herein, maturation and adult integration (Ladd and Lipset 1972; Parsons 1964) or a social movement's defeat hastens

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<sup>3</sup> O'Rand and Krecker (1990) in an *Annual Review of Sociology* are critical that life cycle is extended rather loosely due to theoretic linguistic economy (242-247) to cover processes in psychology (Erikson 1968), anthropology (Leibowitz 1969), life history (Elder 1978), deviance (Erikson 1985), economics, (Becker 1964). Life cycle models have, in the past, tended toward simplicity, unidirectionality, linearity and structural determination while noting time shapes how past, present, and future events are perceived. Life cycle models continue to cover many areas, with emphases on organizations, individual aging, and family, including gender somewhat in terms of marriage and work transitions (Rossi 1980).

political moderation and conventional ideas and actions over time, which betrays the functionalist influence of this approach. However, Whittier (1995) discredits life cycle approaches that treat aging as a transition between goals for incorrectly implying activists outgrow commitments and replace them with materialist interests.

Multidisciplinary work on the life course fills some of the gaps linked to life cycle approaches (e.g., Riley 1987). For instance, two constructs—career and life cycle<sup>4</sup>—that were later updated in life course work, tended not to obscure individuals *in history*, even though both clearly invoke sequences (Abbott 1995). Rooted in Chicago School studies of child development (e.g., Thomas 1951), this work strongly conveys the importance of *historical context* in people's lives (Elder 1994). Key events (i.e., birth year of parents and children; education, first job, work life, military service) occur that shape life course outcomes (see Phelps, Furstenberg and Colby 2002 for panoramic review). Drawing upon the seminal work of C. Wright Mills (1959), Glen Elder (2002: 202), in particular, has produced prolific theoretical work on the life course of individuals that is “embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetimes.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Several scholars note limitations to both career and life cycle that focus on how both have been treated in narrow ways (Abbott 1992, 1995; Abrams 1982; Elder 2002). Both constructs have extensive uses in social science. Career implies an evolving activity, such as work life, criminal enterprise, and moral deviance (a recent review of the careers literature found in Rosenfeld [1992], see also Becker 1953). Applied to my research, women with eating disorders may be described as having deviant careers in terms of the process of labeling, which can have self-fulfilling effects (see McLorg and Taub 1987). One problem with the way career has been used is that it tends to oversimplify people in one role when really they have multiple roles at the same time (see Abrams [1982] for a good discussion. Life cycle does provide full information about the context of individual lives through relationships and processes, including socialization and social control (see review by Duncan [2002]; Elder [1974, 2002]; Furstenberg [1999]; Hill and Foote [1970]). However, life cycle tends to focus narrowly on birth and parenting. Further, life cycle cannot fully represent how family, work, civic and leisure roles and activities overlap; people typically occupy and manage multiple roles simultaneously. So, too, social roles tend not to be linked to age, thus making it unclear when transitions occur. For instance, stages of parenting can occur across a wide span of life course.

<sup>5</sup> Elder's seminal study in life course is *Children of the Great Depression* (1979, 1999). In it, he compared two birth cohorts—an older one from Oakland, CA and a younger cohort from Berkeley, CA. One interesting finding of the study was that the Berkeley boys, who were children during the Depression, were

Life course is readily applied to social movements in the recognition each individual occupies a precise historical location—important when studying *multiple generations*—as does this study. This approach renders important *age-based distinctions* of life stage, birth cohort, and timing of life events (Riley 1987; Rutter and Madge 1976; Ryder 1965). It acknowledges, too, the *importance of significant others* who are typically defined as family, peers, and networks (Elder 1999; Furstenberg et al. 1999), although not as much *networks accrued during political process* (some treatment in Klatch 1999). I argue the latter may be very important to life course outcomes such as health, success, and competence. This reveals a principle of linked lives from a tradition of relationship theories—role theory, social networks, and the life cycle of successive generations (see Elder, Caspi, and Downey 1986)—since “lives are lived interdependently, and social historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships” (Elder 1992: 204).

A third or “period” perspective is concerned with variation in the time or context of social or *political opportunities*, unrest, or change (Fendrich and Turner 1989; Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978), or what Tilly (1983) refers to as “moments of madness.” The 1960s, for instance, combined both the “political opportunities” of systemic openness and economic prosperity, yet a felt impatience from “rising expectations,” that catalyzed mobilization (McAdam 1982). The period perspective, in its focus on social context as shaping political commitment over time, fails to highlight the

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negatively impacted by hardship. The now longitudinal study looked at gender and midlife, and is one of relatively few that do (for notable exceptions, see review in Furstenberg [2002]). Elder found that Berkeley women had relatively high emotional stability, an aspect of mental health, and self-confidence compared with Berkeley cohort women from non-deprived homes (during the Depression). Deprivation forced women to be resourceful, and the advantage persisted into their middle years. Such positive esteem was explained as women receiving strong social support and nurturance from moms who played multiple, instrumental roles during those times.

*lived importance of aging to context.* Aging may be very important contextually when applied to women's activist issues. In sum, the generational and period perspectives, in their broad focus on time and context, ignore the micro-level, personal and collective experience of aging while lifecycle approaches address aging in narrowly defined ways, although this problem is to some extent addressed by work in the life course.

The idea of aging as a *transition between interests* from lifecycle perspectives reveals several problems when applied to women. First, we know relatively little about how gender affects women's political, cultural or life course outcomes over time. While gender has been shown to impact women's later family choices and careers (McAdam 1992; VanDyke et al. 2000; Whittier 1997), it remains unclear specifically what body, beauty and age-related issues and actions linked to earlier activism are sustained over time. Women's aging concerns are very likely structured by gender and age as interactive social locations (Schuman and Scott 1989). The feminist dictum "The personal is the political," reflects how private experiences, like those concerning women's bodies, are arenas worthy of public attention and activism.

Second, defining aging by chronological time makes seem objective what is also subjectively described as a meaning-making process of contextual interpretation (Friedan 1993; Smith 2001; Taetsche 1995; Woodward 1999). This is directly related to a third problem, that medical research on women is scant relative to men (Ballard, Kuh, and Wadsworth 2001). Consequently, women's body-specific issues and aging-related events, transitions, and interpretations need attention. While aging has been noted as a fluid concept embodying both objective and subjective elements (Glaser and Strauss 1971; Taetzsch 1995), we introduce the idea of *bodies, themselves, as simultaneously*

*real yet subjective events* (e.g. menopause as journey). Women's bodies undergo objective transitional markers or events, such as menstruation, childbirth and menopause, that are linked to aging and also reflexive periods. Such markers are the foci of what can be called *pivotal departures*.

### *Pivotal Departures*

As noted above, newer work on the life course illuminates the salience of *key events* in the lives of individuals—what Elder (2002) calls *turning points* and Hogan and Astone (1986) call *pathways*. Key events such as births, education, and work at least imply aging or age stages. While early work in life course, as exemplified by the Chicago school's W.I. Thomas (Thomas and Volkart 1951), concentrates mostly on the development of children to young adulthood, later and longitudinally-based research, notably the PSID (Duncan 2002), took some account of middle age and beyond. (reviews by Elder and Furstenberg, both [2002]; Young, Savola and Phelps 1991). Yet a problem of much of the newer life course research is that analysis is restricted to portions of the total life course. A full rendering of the multitude of key events, turning points, pathways, or what can be termed *pivotal departures*, requires contextualization by many factors. A factor I argue scholars must consider if we are to take seriously women's unique health experiences and outcomes is political process and specifically the activist support networks found therein.

The idea of pivotal departures can be envisaged as a metaphor of an old tree with uneven branches, made so by decay, weathering, trauma, and age. The pivot is the point where groups make a choice on how to handle what is often experienced as an age-related trauma or transition. The path of least resistance is the idea that some choices fit

conventional values or norms, and are, thus, easier to make. The departure is the choice for individuals or groups to make alternative and, likely, negatively sanctioned choices for coping with age markers. Although it is easier due to potent cultural norms to seek the path of least resistance, all social choices have costs. Important to this research, political or cultural activist networks—a vital part of political process (for support, see Edelman 2001)—may steer some people down alternative and potentially empowering paths or departures despite social or other costs and risks.

Interpreting empowerment from activist affiliation over time requires considering aging effects, their meanings, and the choices they encourage, since body understandings may be tied to age-related changes (e.g. pregnancy, menopause). This implies that some dimension(s) or process(es) may link activism, political generations (Gamson 1992), status passages (Glaser and Strauss 1971), and events or transitions in women's life course trajectories. Hence, these dimensions or processes connect aspects, and, therefore, gaps, in social movements, theory, and women's health literatures. I suspect that *social interaction* is an essential mediator between life course stages and aging, and their interpretations, thereby helping women cope with or solve serious health problems (Sewell 1992; Taylor 1996).

### *Links Between Symbolic-Interactionism and Social Movements*

Gender socialization theories (Chafetz 1999) consider the indoctrinating power of institutions, notably mass media, in teaching men and women positively and negatively sanctioned gender roles. Idealized images, for instance, the felt cultural importance of women's physical attractiveness, even promote and at least partly determine damaging mental and physical health outcomes (Brumberg 2000). However, interactionist theories emphasize that doing gender expectations is *mutable*, and gender, race, class, and other statuses are *accomplished in social interaction*. (West and Zimmerman 1987,1995). Frequent interaction in supportive contexts with others who are similarly situated, or going through similar experiences (Francis 1997; Greenberg et al. 1997; Sutor, Pillemer and Keeton 1995) promotes mental health benefits (McLorg and Taub 1987; Taylor 1996; Taylor and VanWilligan 1996), particularly *coping* (for a recent review of a vast social support and coping literature, see Thoits [1995]) by personally and collectively empowering groups to reject harmful stereotypes. Yet we don't know about the effects of such support on beauty and body norms, especially over time. The concept of collective identity may help explain such support and is an important link between feminist symbolic interactionist and social movement theories (Melucci 1989; Taylor 2000).

Social movement theory since the mid-1970s has been dominated by the related resource mobilization (RM) and political process perspectives (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Morris 1984). The central concerns of these perspectives, respectively, include that, (1) social movements pursue well-defined, rational objectives, usually through social movement organizations

(SMOs), and (2) their activities are part of overt political processes (Gamson 1990; Morris 1984). They emphasize available resources, political openness, rational action, or the benefits and costs of movement participation perceived by members, and otherwise explain how social movements *develop* rather than address movement *impacts*. Yet psychological conditions, such as grievances and group beliefs, and the salience of grassroots activity (Giri 1992) are skirted by RM and political process perspectives.

New social movement theory was initially framed by European scholars (Touraine 1985; Castells 1996, 1997; Habermas 1984; Melucci 1989, 1994). It focuses on smaller localities of collective action, grassroots activities, and expressing political or cultural discontent and resistance through everyday life practices (Giri 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Missing from rational perspectives are the ways that informal networks recast movement members into political participants (Taylor and Whittier 1992). Struggles may not be isolated strictly in a sociopolitical context, for some of the focus is translated to creating new, collective identities. That is, subjective ability to resist oppressive systems comes from the *realm of culture*. New social movements effectively address cultural hegemony at a more proximate, micro-level (Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Larana, Johnston and Gusfield 1994), having integrated cultural questions and processes from the collective behavior tradition (Blumer 1969; Turner and Killian 1972; Weller and Quarantelli 1974).

Yet cultural questions are enriched by RM and political process theories in that political openings, strategic action, and organization further movement goals (Taylor and Whittier 1995; Whittier 1997). For example, the National Organization for Women (NOW) continually meets goals because membership draws from women who combine



insights on building both cultural community and strategic organization (Reger 1997).

From my discussion above, the “period” political generations perspective, in its emphasis on systemic openness or closure, and the subsequent resources that can be generated as a result, is drawn directly from both RM and political process theories (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998).

The notion of collective identity is an important component of new social movement theory (Cohen 1985; Melucci 1989; Taylor and Raeburn 1995). Articulating the process of collective identity is critical to this research because cultural acts of resistance, undergirded by a subversive collective identity, may ultimately be linked to adopting positive health outcomes. It is thus imperative to show how collective identity fosters the solidarity needed to resist oppressive cultural aspects. Melucci (1989) defines collective identity as an interactive, shared meaning and an ongoing process of symbol making and sharing produced by groups that is channeled into action. It consists of “shared definitions of a group that are derived from members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarity” (Taylor and Whittier 1992: 105). The interactive process of sharing and symbol making is important to marginalized groups in shaping identity politics (Whittier 1997). Scholars, especially Taylor and Raeburn (1995: 254), further elaborate that through collective identities, groups “enact their emotional and political commitments more as empowered individuals than as members of formal groups.” This illustrates the importance of subjective links and understandings to mobilization derived from both new social movements and symbolic-interactionist variants of the collective behavior tradition.

Collective identity is an ongoing process of meaning-making in interaction composed of three dimensions (Taylor and Whittier 1992): (1) *boundaries* that define group insiders and outsiders, (2) *group consciousness* that offers participants' accounts of injustices, goals, and action strategies, and (3) *personalized political strategies*, or actions that promote empowerment by resisting dominant ideas and rules. The process of collective identity implies that *alternative* ideas and behaviors derived from interaction with like others can ameliorate dominant cultural influence.

It is yet unclear the extent to which *alternative* ideas and behaviors derived from social bonds in interaction with like others can ameliorate dominant cultural influence. There is some evidence that African-American (Patillo-McCoy 1998) and lesbian feminist (Taylor and Whittier 1992) women resist body image problems by redefining the meaning of beauty and channeling their energies elsewhere. In various life course stages, people are confronted with identity crises that require negotiation and that, if unresolved, lead to an imbalance between autonomy and relationships.

### Theoretical Summary and Expectations

I am interested in extending the aforementioned ideas to understanding how individuals resist cultural hegemony and replace it with protective behaviors, thereby developing and sustaining better mental and physical health. I apply collective identity to explain how progressive women activists, as a case in point, and oppressed groups, more generally, develop and maintain a sense of empowerment over time. My broad theoretical goal is to show that various gaps in divergent yet overlapping literatures can be synthesized and understood systematically. By doing so, we will more clearly see

how important social movement processes, interaction, political commitment, and pivotal departures linked to aging all connect to activism.

In sum, new social movements perspectives illustrate that aggrieved groups, in general, can resist cultural pressures by formulating alternatives. My theoretical reasoning emphasizes how the lifeblood of some alternative cultures may be rooted in collective identity that encourages consciousness of kind. From a health-positive view, I expect alternative affiliations and values can ameliorate broader cultural tendencies toward mental and physical distress. As a case in point, progressive activist women hold values and practice norms born out of New Left activism (Epstein 1991; McAdam 1988; Nimen 1997) that I expect protect against cultural dominance and appearance-linked pathologies suffered by conventional women. How new social movement theory informs alternative cultures is made vivid from both historical continuity and change in the New Left movement. I briefly narrate this history in Chapter 2, followed by a description of the values that inform today's progressive movement. The modern progressive movement, as a case in point, may illustrate how women who *actively avoid* dominant culture, defined as values and norms that are accepted and practiced by the mainstream, and endorsed through societal institutions (Gramsci 1971), may be able to resist mental and physical harm related to adopting idealized feminine images. Hence, alternative groups, or those who are separated either partially or substantially from hegemonic culture, are likely to be less exposed to societal institutions that promote cultural ideals, such as mass media and advertising.

Furthermore, I expect the more that women are embedded within mainstream culture, the more they will subscribe to narrowly-defined and media-imposed body and

appearance norms that emphasize femininity. Emphasized femininity (Connell 1987; Smith 1990) captures Western cultural assumptions about gender that define as "ideal" feminine values and norms that correspond to traditional female roles and highlights the salience of women's physical attractiveness and "doing" beauty norms (West and Zimmerman 1987), such as dieting, wearing make-up, and shaving, that promote attractiveness. Therefore, the less identification with emphasized femininity, the less alternative-affiliated women will succumb to poor body image, or negative feelings about one's body or appearance that reflect shame for, guilt over, and discomfort with, the material figure (Thompson 1996).

Three noted processes of collective identity include boundaries, collective consciousness, and personalized political strategies, which were defined above. Since three general propositions regarding these processes apply to new social movements in the abstract, my case in point should show (1) boundaries are established as both a response to and a protection from hegemonic structure or culture, (2) movements develop interpretive frameworks, or collective consciousness, to redefine structure or culture as unjust or to seek remedies for social change, and (3) movements apply personalized political strategies through everyday life actions to challenge politics and/or culture.

I seek to fill theoretical gaps and contribute fresh ideas to an emergent area within social movements that has yet to systematically specify precisely the role of interaction in building personal and collective identity (Stryker et al. 2000). We know interaction is necessary in building and sustaining solidarity (Taylor 2000), as well as contextual, but also scripted in that people know certain gender, race, class, sexual, and other role repertoires from socialization (Snyder 2001; West and Fenstermaker 1995). A static

collective identity is unlikely, since group members interact inside *and outside* of solidarity networks. Plus newer activist cohorts bring fresh ideas and interpretations of issues or grievances, thereby reformulating collective identities (Whittier 1997). As I have noted, what is yet unknown is precisely how activist experiences in life course stages impact the solidity of collective and personal identities. I expect this gap can be filled in part by taking the strengths of generational (idea that commitment is in fact sustained over time) and life cycle perspectives (the importance of aging effects) and demonstrate their compatibility

Yet aging should capture how individuals perceive and socially construct chronological time, discrete political events, *and* biological changes. I argue that this is important because women's body understandings are tied to age-related changes like pregnancy and menopause. If we are to understand empowered approaches from interaction and collective identity over time regarding women's looks, we must look at the effects of physical aging, their meanings, and their (re) interpretations. Also, the lifecycle approaches must be extended to focus more on older or middle-aged members, not just youths (Mannheim 1952). The older periods have significant events, or pivotal departures, that could promote activism. For instance, retirement can mean an activist has more time for commitments put on hold during earlier life cycle phases (Rupp 2001).

In sum, I expect that political-process derived interaction bolsters control and empowerment through pivotal departures in choices and behaviors, thereby helping women solve serious health problems like poor appearance esteem and eating disorders. Since only limited research links resisting dominant culture to oppositional collective identity (Taylor 1996, 1999), our understanding of social movements, gender, and health

will benefit from this analysis. The modern progressive movement is an excellent case to examine this question due to its history, continuity, changes, and grievances as they relate to culturally-imposed harm.

### Chapter Outline

The organization of this dissertation follows a strategy derived from both deductive and inductive logics. I begin this chapter by following a conventional social-scientific, deductive logic (e.g., Kiser and Hechter 1991). That is, I spell out general and overlapping issues concerning conceptual gaps in several literatures. The inductive portion of my work, which is executed in later chapters, seeks to theoretically fill these gaps in diffuse and generalized ways. My expectations are thus stated specifically to apply to the case, and generally so as to apply to general interaction, life course events, and processes in social movements.

Then, Chapter 2 roots contemporary progressive activism to earlier New Left activism. I explain how New Left movements were shaped by postmodern intellectual, social, economic, and political reactions to modernity in ways that spawned consequent progressive mobilization (Epstein 1991; Meyer and Whittier 1994). This discussion of history provides a context and foci that illuminates the general types of features of new social movements, thereby addressing my broader theoretical goals (Brown and Boswell 1995). Chapter 3 interweaves history and theory (Abrams 1982) and specifies how both contribute to our understanding of women's progressive activism. Here, I elaborate on my expectations that (1) progressive women activists constitute a group of collective individuals who are unique in a cultural-political sense; (2) interaction processes build personal and collective identity (Stryker et al. 2000); and, (3) women's activist

experiences in life course stages impact continuity and change in these identities, with implications for health related outcomes.

Chapter 4 presents an analytic strategy that links these three expectations to the methodological objectives of this project. The chapter lays out how I operationalize the three expectations above. Because I gather data from life histories, I employ methods related to both interpretive and qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin 1987), or QCA, that can identify general patterns from narrative text, as derived from interviews. I use other data as well that includes surveys and participant observation. These are constructed from a base of concepts and processes extracted from social movement, generational, life course, feminist, and structuration theories.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are each devoted to the analysis of results. Chapter 5 applies bivariate, associational, and regression tests to measure differences between progressive women activists and conventional women on specified cultural and political dimensions. Chapter 6 verifies the relevance of interaction and network processes highlighted in new social movements literature to the case in point, aided by QCA and interpretive analysis of the life histories of interviewed activists. Chapter 7 uncovers what may be unique about women's life course experiences, and how these are linked to aging, body image, activism and the choices, or "pivots" these constrain and enable. The overall aim of my project is to build general yet conditional theory, presented in Chapter 8. I believe my carefully acquired data will enable the filling of theoretical gaps in ideas concerning: (1) what constitutes a positive women's body image, (2) formation and perseverance of that image, (3) positive mental and physical health as promoted through involvement in

activism, (4) body image changes over time linked to biological life course changes, and (5) activism as general response to social problems

Beyond the straightforward theoretical questions I am attempting to answer, this project has applied significance, possibly in the domain of public policy. I evaluate in the concluding chapter my ability to construct a framework for studying the contribution of alternative ideas and actions to positive mental and physical health *in a generalized way*. Findings, complex as I expect them to be, will be made available to policy-makers and educators with the goal to ameliorate a significant social problem for women.



## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL ROOTS OF CONTEMPORARY PROGRESSIVE ACTIVISM

This chapter provides historical grounding that contextualizes our understanding of progressive women's activism today. Further, as described by Brown and Boswell (1995), a given case in point should instantiate a "crucial test" of a theory. Progressive women's activism as a case in point displays features—elements, concepts and specified conditions—that illustrate new social movement theory (Buechler 2000; Melucci 1994). In turn, new social movement theory draws interpretive meaning from postmodern history and poststructuralist ideas (Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Edelman 2001). To locate progressive activism today focuses our attention on the conjuncture of events, social forces, and ideas shaping political and cultural mobilization (della Porta and Diani 1999). Moreover, this historical treatment answers recent calls toward theoretical synthesis (see especially Jasper and Goodwin 1999; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 1998). These synthetic projects, by default in their implications, reveal the importance of context and detail, since mobilization is mediated by political opportunities and closures through time (Tarrow 1998; Taylor 1989).

I seek to accomplish two goals in what follows. The first is to provide a general sense of who comprises as diffuse a group as activist women. My intention here is not to provide detailed treatment of my sample; that is covered in Chapter 4. Instead, I

introduce the case of modern women's activism—activism best described as a compilation of people and ideas drawn from a broad, historical context. Indeed, this case is best understood as having arrived from a conflation of ideas, issues, and events incorporated by, yet altered and extended from, the Southern Black freedom movement, the New Left movement, and the women's movement, all with multiple derivatives. The post 1965, second-wave feminist movement, especially, assumed many directions—some moderate but others radical—that influenced the range of issues subject to political and cultural scrutiny (Echols 1989; Evans 1980; Freeman 1975; Rupp and Taylor 1987). Notably, overlapping issues addressed the sexual objectification of, violence toward, and misinformation about women's bodies. Of special importance to the work at hand are issues and ideas surrounding activist women's bodies (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1992, 1993), especially as these are meaningfully experienced in various and negotiated life course stages (Elder 1998a; Taetzshe 1995; Woodward 1999).

The second and more extensive goal is to provide a detailed, narrative account of American progressive women's activism because it led some participants to the social spaces they currently occupy. Further, the many ideas and events post World War II, but particularly since the middle to late 1960s, partly shape the worldview of younger movement generations and cohorts (Whittier 1997). This account is also meant to contextualize the theoretical arguments I later develop.

### Women Activists of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Women who are activists mostly, but not exclusively, for progressive causes serve as the illustrative vehicle to which theoretical ideas are tested, contextualized, and built in this research. The labeling of the case is necessarily left widely diffuse. In fact, negative

reaction to labeling is one marker of women who identify or participate in what are arguably described as the “new politics” of postmodern society (for recent critiques of supposedly new politics and the theories they invoke, see Calhoun [1993] and Pichardo [1997]). Therefore, activists will vary on a number of demographic dimensions (e.g., age, ideologies). Even the rather vague description of “poststructuralist feminist” fails to capture the defining features of the group, since some participants’ reject variants of feminist ideas or activities. Based on several, comparative national surveys, Somma and Tolleson-Rinehart (1997) find that mass publics often endorse attitudes and behaviors that indicate support for general ideologies or orientations, like feminism and pro-environmentalism, without accepting or even fully understanding labels. For instance, relatively few people, even college-educated women, recognize the term “ecofeminist” and apply it to their identities (Gaard 1993). This is especially true for those who are less formally educated and lower income, yet they have personal interests in political or cultural issues (see, for example, O’Connor and Bord [1994]).

Today’s activist women are also quite diverse on demographic dimensions, such as *age*. Little research has been conducted on women’s activist experiences and commitment in terms of how these might be mediated by life course events or micro-cohort dynamics, both of which are probably linked to *gendered aging processes*. Hence, women’s age-related bodily and social experiences are likely to be interpreted as meaningful. Further, these overlapping complexities and contingencies are likely patterned in probabilistic ways rather than noisy and random. Activist women born between 1946-1964 are part of the single largest birth cohort to date in American history, known famously as the “baby boom” generation (McAdam 1988). These women have

been shaped by their experiences with the second wave feminist movement. As was found to be the case by VanDyke et al. (2000), women's movement participation is or was linked to involvement in other movements and, in particular, Black civil rights, the counterculture, and the peace movement. Today's younger activists are also involved in many causes, as influenced by their exposure to postmodern values and diversity.

Meyer and Whittier (1994: 277) explain the impact of one movement on another as "social movement spillover." They find the feminist movement is continuous in the sense that it has lent to the U.S. peace movement ideological frames, tactical innovations, women in leadership positions, and democratic process. More broadly, using a population ecology model of organizational behavior, Minkoff (1997) finds expanded numbers of SMO's (social movement organizations) as a whole impact protest cycles (Tilly 1983). In a synthetic effort to overcome the rigidity of structural social movement theory, Jasper and Goodwin (1999) point out what should be more obvious, that nearly all movements contain both informal networks and formal organizations and that the two share considerable overlap.

Linked to this "spillover" research, today's older activists, their issues, and their movements, taken separately and together, have impacted younger activists, and vice versa. For instance, the postmodern condition, marked by relativity, contingency, diversity, less emphasis on materialism, and the growth in influence of what appear to be personal facets, such as one's identity (Buechler [2000] and della Porta and Diani [1999] offer concise overviews), has been acknowledged by older activists. A modern realm of concern is the power of media to transmit cultural values. The media as information filter tells stories about the *importance of women's bodies*—through various issues that have

ignited feminist consciousness in the recent past and right now (Burns 1990; Findlen 1995; Price and Shildrick 1999; Walker 1995). Abortion, rape, and violence, popular feminist issues since the early 1970s, collectively tell society pregnancy, sex, fertility, birth control, proper safety precautions, and mothering—all body and age-related experiences—are politically and culturally important. Further, the feminist case against, but also for, types of pornography clearly reveals the value of ideally-defined sexuality, youthful maturity, and limited feminine gender roles (Bordo 1993). This is related to stereotypical gender portrayals across contexts, especially as these relate to women's ideal beauty standards (Stice and Shaw 1994; Wolf 1991).

Other issues related to women's bodies that concern today's activists, particularly as these relate to aging, health, and life course transitions, have historically been under-examined in both popular and specialized media. This includes, until relatively recently, minimal attention to: scientific research on women's health (Auerbach and Figert 1995), women's exposure to health hazards (e.g., toxic waste and workplace hazards [Brown and Ferguson {1995}]), breastfeeding, sociocultural treatment of women's eating disorders (Hesse-Biber et al. 1999; Macsween 1993), birthing, including revisiting medicalized childbirth (Dilley 1998; Maguire 2002), micropolitics in adult caregiving relationships, women's subjective experiences with aging (Woodward 1999), and women's use of self-help as health enhancer (Simonds 1992; Taylor 1996).

The women's health movement that absorbs these many issues was spawned by the second-wave feminist movement (Echols 1989; Freeman 1975; Taylor 1996) and translates theory into practice by challenging women to embrace their own health challenges, including in natural ways when possible. Moreover, features such as personal

relationships, unpaid work, rigid family roles, and, important to this work, varied body experiences linked to beauty and aging, are seen by activists as having personal (health) and political implications.

Critics of a personal as political agenda (i.e., Boggs [1998] but also Echols [1989]) argue that prefigurative politics, cultural behaviors, emotion-building work, such as consciousness raising, and personalized political strategies are retreats from direct action. This complaint is sometimes directed to new social movements generally (refer to *Sociological Forum* [1999] debate between James Jasper and Jeff Goodwin, a.k.a. “Jaswin” versus Charles Tilly). However, many movements that have been called “new,” such as the gay and lesbian (J. Gamson 1997; Rupp 1999), environmental, peace (Jasper 1997), anti-nuclear (Brown and Brutoco 1997; Epstein 1991), organic food and farming (Bromfield 1948; Sparks and Shepherd 1992), back-to-the-land (Jasper 2001), and the animal rights movements (Finsen and Finsen 1994; Einwohner 1999), in fact span a wide continuum of ideologies, tactics, strategies, and politico-cultural behaviors. The emergence of new social movements is contextualized by its evolution from, yet difference to, civil rights movements, in general. In the next section, I explain the theoretical context for new social movements that is followed by recent history that led to that context.

## The Context of New Social Movements

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was said to be a new kind of social movement that was differentiated from and critical of Marxist models of conflict, especially in Europe (see della Porta and Diani 1999). It was arguable whether the capital-labor conflict was still paramount in comparison to other, newer types of conflict. Women with roots in New Left activism, many of whom received higher education (Staggenborg 1998) and entered the labor force (Sernau 2001), revealed new, gendered structures of conflict. “Newly” recognized forms of social stratification, such as gender, were not entirely based on control of economic means of production. Further, postmodern society saw the rise of the tertiary sector and the decline of industry, making the nature of the working class substantively different. Marxian economic deterministic models were rejected in favor of diffuse, Weberian logics (Touraine 1985) with multiple concerns, or what orthodox Marxists call factions (Margolis in Blee 1998). These concerns are based on identities that transcend social class, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. Hence, movements cannot be represented as homogeneous actors.

Trends within postmodern society are targets for activist discontent that transcend ideology.<sup>6</sup> New social movements still mobilize within political contexts, but also do so *in light of cultural innovation* (Rupp and Taylor 1987; Scott 1990; Taylor 1989). There is debate over the new, central conflict of post-industrial society (Touraine 1985). New

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<sup>6</sup> About 200 prior years of modernity, linked to the rise of industrial capitalism, were characterized by central features that have changed markedly over the past 50 years (Tarnas 1993: 392-410). First was a focus on privately owned means of production mass produced through a Fordist accumulation model. Second was the rise of the liberal, democratic state, bolstered by ideas such as the sanctity of individuals and citizens. Third was the decline of religion and faith ceded to the ascendancy of secular discourse and scientific rationality. Fourth was the premium value imputed to progress to improve human conditions. Fifth, rather than a unit of production, the family became specialized for consumption and emotional needs, which has fostered a separate spheres gender ideology (see Cherlin 1983) that has provoked inequality.

activists largely are no longer the industrial working class of European history (Kriesi et al. 1995). They have some status and clout, which is true of today's civil rights, feminist, and gay activists (della porta and Diani 1999). Minority groups like these lack power in comparison to "default" Americans (Marger 2002). Those factors, plus work that may be focused on discourse and the reinterpretation of text, examples of cultural work, may turn activists inward or culturally; it is not that they do not seek to change mainstream political institutions.

It can be said the critique is now broader, or a "fundamental, metapolitical critique of the social order and of representative democracy, challenging institutional assumptions regarding conventional ways of 'doing politics', in the name of a radical democracy" (della Porta and Diani 1999: 12). Activists prefer decentralized participation, and focus on the local, interpersonal solidarity over huge bureaucracies, or reclaiming space (Jasper 1997; Taylor and Whittier 1992). What is sought is a truer social rather than economic transformation and an end to the colonization of life worlds (Habermas 1984; Melucci (1996). The focus on cultural or identity-oriented work is partly a function of *available political opportunities* (McAdam 1982).<sup>7</sup> New social movement participants work within a context that varies over time that may include the loss of social and individual control. While this seems structurally determined, such movements also stress the innovative capacities of actors (Taylor 1989). In threatening climates, movements are sometimes forced to modify organizational structures and tactics

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<sup>7</sup> External factors that shape ability of social movements to pursue goals include: (1) elite support; (2) political alignments and cleavages, or unity and disunity; (3) government structure, which means how open the system is to contending groups, ability to stifle conflict and realize policy, also stability (see Tarrow 1988, 1998). For example, the civil rights movement aligned with the Democratic Federal government in the 1960s (Morris 1981, 1984; McAdam 1982) and led to subsequent gains.



just to sustain themselves, or to foster solidarity in networks or abeyance structures (Taylor 1989; Rupp and Taylor 1987), and this is not necessarily a choice. The civil rights and new left movements were in this predicament by the late 1960s.

### American Women Activists: An Abbreviated History

The history that propelled women in this research to their current social space grew out of a largely white New Left. The origins of the New Left, namely of the 10-year history of its leading organization, SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) are explored in painstaking detail by Kirkpatrick Sale (1974). The issues that provoked the New Left to act must be understood as having arisen from the post-war political economic structure—the juncture dividing modern and postmodern values. The year 1945 marked the end of World War II, a pivotal event forever etched in the collective memories of individual survivors. Soldiers returned home and found plentiful jobs in a booming economy fueled and facilitated by wartime production and a proliferating defense system. That brings us to the origins of what was truly a historically novel group, known today as the baby boom generation (McAdam 1988). Perhaps the 76 million children born between 1946-1964 received lavish attention due to their sheer size. Yet everyone from the media to politicians, notably the late John F. Kennedy, agreed this population was specially endowed. News of their exploits—their fads, music, attitudes and, particularly, their political coming-of-age in the 1960s—was widely diffuse (McAdam 1988). While all decades are typically reduced to those elements that yield sensationalism in media (Burns 1990; Gamson 1990; Gitlin 1987), the 1960s stands out as a time of rebellion, social change, cultural innovation, and notable yet limited progress.

Karl Mannheim (1952) applied the term “Zeitgeist” to members of society who share at least some common experiences and understandings of the world despite other differences. Both New Left and conservative youth (for instance, the Young Americans for Freedom, or YAF) movement participants were privileged by the affluent, post-war economy (Klatch 1999). Regardless of ideological orientation, these largely white, middle and upper class youth learned a collective sense of mastery—a “can do” spirit buttressed by American political and economic dominance of the globe. It is important to note, as revealed in a longitudinal study by Rebecca Klatch (1999), that many activists, both on the left and right, inherited their ideological orienting principles from parents, other kin, and significant role models. This is counterintuitive to some accounts of 1960s activism that de-politicize participants, instead reducing their activity to psychology, deviance, or youthful exuberance, or that render conservative activists part of the “silent majority.”

Women who participated in activist causes on both the New Left and the New Right and places in between, such as libertarianism, faced both considerable limitations and agentic opportunities. From interviews with former SDS and YAF female activists, Klatch (1999) noted over half in SDS grew up with mothers who worked outside the home while only one-fourth in YAF did. While working mothers did not explicitly preach feminist ideas to daughters, they did model self-sufficiency and role expansion more generally (further discussion of women’s roles post World War II is found in Breines [1992] and Cherlin [1983]). Daughters from homes espousing liberal, progressive, or reform-oriented ideologies grew to value equality, social justice, democracy, humanism, and government intervention where necessary.

A youthful generation committed to the full and unfettered realization of liberal goals came to understand that all was not rosy. During the staunchly anti-communist Cold War, young people witnessed the proliferation of technologies, including weapons of mass destruction and electronic media, to name two, and observed the older generation become “slaves” to a mass consumerism promoted by clever advertising (Judd 1985). Educated at some of the most elite colleges across the country (VanDyke 1998), New Leftists, as student liberals came to be called after 1960, contemplated the status of society and critiqued some in their parents’ generation for their indulgent materialism (Epstein 1991; Flacks 1972; Nimen 1997). They became disillusioned with the hypocrisy of “rights” and equality “guaranteed” in the constitution when racial minorities lacked basic civil rights, a noted subject of propaganda for United States political enemies (McAdam 1982).

Concern over racial inequality prompted Northern white college students in SDS to join Southern Black activists from SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) in segregated Mississippi during the summer of 1964 (McAdam 1986, 1988, 1992). The purpose of what became known as "Freedom Summer" was to register Black voters and to teach in Freedom Schools in an effort to extend Black civil rights. This endeavor included many young women. Both Black and white women had been involved in the cause of Black freedom since the anti-abolition {of slavery} movement took shape in the 1830s. They shared some standpoint of relative marginality in a society that privileged white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant men (Blee 1991, 1998), yet purportedly exemplified liberty and justice for all (McAdam 1982, 1988).

Freedom Summer was a time of radical transformation for many of the white students, both men and women because of varied dramatic experiences. Witnessing burning churches and homes, violence, and death prompted activists to further pursue what they considered high moral purposes in their lives, which often meant moving "left" in politics and in practice. Although Civil Rights were no longer defined as America's primary concern by 1965 (McAdam 1982), white as well as many Black activists later channeled their activism into the anti-Vietnam movement. They questioned basic structural arrangements when their peers were recruited to die in Vietnam for the purpose of aborting the "evils" of communism (Flacks 1972; Sale 1974).

The Black civil rights movement lent to subsequent movements strategies, tactics, and modes of organization and leadership. This was particularly true for both the liberal and radical wings of the resurgent women's movement (Burns 1990; Echols 1999; Morris 1984). SDS was modeled as a white counterpart to SNCC, the latter of which was a Southern, decentralized, Black student organization (Sale 1974). As such, SDS, emulating SNCC, tried to model true democracy, equality, and self-determination. Although, for both groups, these were ideals never fully met in practice.

White women were active not only in the Black civil rights movement, but also in subsequent issues taken up by the New Left movement. From the early 1960s, this included the student movement that sought free speech and greater voice on college campuses (Flacks 1972; Whalen and Flacks 1989). Also included were the later anti-Vietnam and related anti-draft movements (Karnow 1983; Maclear 1981)—all organized instrumentally but not exclusively by SDS. For instance, another leading group on the

West Coast, the Resistance, propelled considerable anti-war activism (brief history of which is found in Burns 1990).

Women participating in both SNCC and SDS noted in various position papers what they considered serious inequities between men and women members and organizers (but note that in Klatch's work [1999], interpretations of ill-treatment by gender were not acknowledged by all women). Women in SDS, such as Casey Hayden and Mary King, questioned why it was that competent, experienced women were very often assigned to stereotypically feminine work: typing, filing, telephone duty, cooking, and general assisting. While there were notable exceptions, namely Bettina Aptheker (instrumental in Berkeley's 1964 free speech movement and 1966 antiwar protest) and Bernardine Dorhn (elected interorganizational secretary of SDS in 1968 but later [1970] on the FBI's most-wanted list for activities in post-1970 radical SDS splinter, the Weather Underground), few women were spotlighted as leaders or given equal decision-making. In addition, they took issue with men's irresponsibility, as well as dominance, both within and outside the movement. For instance, women's supposed freedom to have limitless sex—a bounty co-opted from the emerging countercultural movement—translated in real terms to men gaining playtime while women assumed more burdens (Brake 1985).

The complaints of their sex-caste status within these organizations were met with hostility by many men, both Black and white, in SDS and other groups but also by some Black women. Dissenters claimed the women's concerns were secondary to the “greater causes” of dismantling unfettered racism, imperialism, or capitalism (Freeman 1975). Plus, “the women question” purportedly caused factions that could undermine broad-

based coalition building (a good discussion is found in Klatch [1999], chapter six). The SDS held a 1965 “rethinking conference” where papers and ideas were circulated, including those intended to repair trouble with black “sisters.” Because attending men tried to stifle discussion about women’s alleged subordinate status in SDS, white women then organized separate workshops on both national and local levels intended to address their unique issues and build solidarity.

Women were able to organize effectively with one another. They drew upon a vast toolkit of organization and leadership skills they had acquired in the civil rights and New Left movements—a recognized positive despite some noted negative experiences. A second wave feminist movement with inklings for two branches was rooted by 1967 (Freeman 1975). Despite initial differences in ideas and tactics, the liberal and radical branches both attempted to address patriarchy—the conferred, institutional dominance of men (and the hegemonic masculine value set that defines it [Connell 1987]) as a major source of oppression (Epstein 1991; Katzenstein and Mueller 1989; Rupp and Taylor 1987).

The liberal branch drew breath from findings delivered at a 1963 national commission on the status of women set up by President Kennedy. There, a report documented vast discrimination against women in the workplace—a well-known reality to many women working inside Washington bureaucracies. These women were instrumental in getting sex included in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that barred job discrimination by race, color, religion, and national origin. However, the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) that was set up to enforce the act, as well as address discrimination complaints, largely ignored women. Flabbergasted that a

resolution on EEOC enforcement was stymied at a later Washington conference, proponents sought the aid of Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan's book struck a loud chord among white, middle-class, and typically well-educated housewives who viewed their lives as stunted, evasive, and dependent. She responded, with the help of other women, by forming NOW, the National Organization for Women, that was officially recognized in 1966. Hierarchically-organized NOW stressed moderate, legal reform borrowing tactics from the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). It was watchdog of the EEOC and proponent of the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment).

Yet many, younger women, some of whom felt forced to lock the fact they were lesbian in the closet, were less than satisfied with liberal NOW's attempts. Dubbed "radical" by the liberal wing, they found Friedan's advice—to go out and start a career—elitist and individualistic. Only educated, middle-class and, by default, largely white women could take viable advantage of opportunities thwarted by having many children, particularly if single. This was not to mention structural barriers resulting in the triple ugly of racism, classism, and sexism. Yet later, even radical feminists were confronted with accusations of classism and racism (Echols 1999; Whittier 1995) that have been taken up more fully by third wave feminists (Gilmore 2001).

Further, the fact that NOW had top-down leadership was interpreted as women buying into male power models, as opening the gates for a more inclusive class of oppressors rather than eliminating oppression. Their strategy that emphasized digging to the roots of oppression meant indicting family roles that created uni-dimensional, gendered beings. It was perfectly expressed in the feminist dictum "the personal is

political” (Evans 1980; Taylor and Whittier 1992). That is, features that on the surface seem individual, private, or even trivial, are microcosms of power that, when aggregated as interactional enactments, have enormous political consequences.

A truly independent movement for women resulted from an angry 1967 conference in Chicago, the purpose of which was to forge a Black-white alliance in efforts to undermine racism. An attendee named Shulamith Firestone was, in a most patronizing manner, blocked from reading a statement on women’s oppression (“Sit down, Little Girl, today we deal with the more important problem of racism” as described in Freeman [1975]). Firestone responded by forming New York Radical Women. The group held a march at Arlington National Cemetery where they “buried” traditional womanhood. Participants at the march later went home to places all over the United States and forged numerous collectives that were women-only spaces. These were comparable to later, more militant phases of Black civil rights when groups sought to organize on their own behalf (Gamson 1975; Haines 1984; McAdam 1982).

Moreover, efforts were made to share participation and facilitate consensus building through democratic process. This was done, in part, through consciousness raising (CR) used prior by both civil rights and the New Left, as well as in the blossoming counterculture, but also later channeled in other new social movements into different strategic forms (Epstein 1991; Jasper 1997; Meyer and Whittier 1994). Yet CR was employed in a uniquely radical feminist way, to draw out of women an anger in self-discovery they hoped would eradicate all oppressive systems. It was used as a recruitment tool to frame (Snow et al. 1986) or process politics and ideology. A CR group, itself, was a microcosm of egalitarian community that prefigured a utopian,



feminist society (an excellent discussion is found in Charlotte Bunch's *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* [1987]). Radical feminists found unique ways to engage in direct action as well, some of which were borrowed from the counterculture, discussed below, such as guerrilla theatre.

Both wings of the women's movement shared a love-hate relationship with the media, which is important to note in this research. That is, it is understood that media transmits hegemonic symbols (W. Gamson 1992; Kahan 1999), including those depicting idealized gender, to viewers, yet, at the same time, it can be used agentically to reshape images and ideas or resisted altogether. The media can be said to have facilitated feminism through extensive coverage of issues, including the myriad having some connection to women's bodies (i.e., abortion, pornography, rape, health care and lack, thereof), as well as its willingness to at least partially accommodate feminist demands. For instance, more women were hired at papers to work as journalists covering major news, in part because feminists, who were aware they were being watched, spoke only to female reporters as policy (Burns 1990). Feminists created mainstream and alternative media, such as *off our backs*—the first feminist newspaper—and also *Quest*, *Signs*, and *Ms*.

Working in organizational forms like NOW, aided by the spread of feminist consciousness facilitated by the more radical branch, and partially helped by mass media, the women's movement made substantial gains. These included the inclusion and eventual enforcement of sex discrimination in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the 1972 passage (but eventually 1982 defeat) of the Equal Rights Amendment by Congress, legalized abortion in 1973, influence within the Democratic Party, and Carter

Administration availability of federal funding for feminist projects like rape crisis and battered women's shelters (Freeman 1989).

Addressing multiple issues, the women's health movement grew out of the second-wave feminist movement (concise review of women's exclusion relative to men within dominant medicine is found in Auerbach and Figert 1995). It was ignited with the publication of the seminal work *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, written by the Boston Women's Health Collective (1971), which has been revised numerous times (1973, 1984, 1992, 1998). The book empowers women to learn as much as possible about their unique health challenges in the context of institutional gender inequality, notably in medicine. "The personal is the political" is the translation of theory into practice as it relates to women's capacity to address their own health challenges.

It would be wholly incomplete to deny the salience of the youth counterculture that was both connected to, and separate from, the civil rights, New Left, and women's movements, although Schulman (1999) asserts the former has received little historical treatment. When the counterculture is brought into evaluations of 1960s histories, it is typically portrayed negatively as having little impact in a political sense. Between 1968-1969, the cultural and political components of the sixties began to diverge, but the lessons of Freedom Summer, discussed above, linked both by suggesting to activists that the personal was indeed political. Actions such as mode of presentation, including speech and dress, sexual relations, and living arrangements became defined as politically inspired. After the hiatus of political activism during the middle and latter 1960s (VanDyke 1998), former politicians sought to reproduce in the North and West liberating ways of life and identities they had absorbed beginning in Mississippi. Many discovered

from these experiences "a powerful sociological truth: the most satisfying selves we will ever know are those that attach to communities and purposes outside of ourselves" (McAdam 1988: 138). Countercultures were thus established that facilitated communal living, sexual freedom, spirituality, and simplicity (Flacks 1972). Others remained strictly or mainly political, helping to expand activist consciousness in a burgeoning array of groups and organizations, most especially SDS.

Alternative philosophies and drug experimentation in the middle and late 1960s, but informed by earlier ideas, also impacted the adoption of countercultural principles. The "Beats," a group of 1940's and 1950's intellectuals, exemplars of which included Alan Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Ken Kesey, and Jack Kerouac, and 1960s free-spirited characters, such as "Cowboy Neil" Cassidy, were largely influential. The Beat subculture adopted from modern jazz the idea of creative improvisation in interaction. An improvisational life included spontaneity, travel, freedom, and living in the moment. Furthermore, experimenting youth discovered the intensity of communitase, partially from taking LSD, at the Ken Kesey "Trips Festival" in January of 1966 (Smith, Luce and Dernburg 1970). Dr. Tim Leary, who popularized LSD, advised youth to "tune in, turn on, and drop out" of the bureaucratic rat-race (Bjork and Twigg, 1995). Locating themselves as a group in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco in 1966-7, the counterculture adopted a unique, utopian lifestyle (Bjork and Twigg, 1995).

Conventional Americans responded unfavorably to the counterculture, partially because some behaviors, such as drug use and open sexuality, were seen as threatening to the status quo (Brake 1985; Butt and Signori 1976; Judd 1985). Contradictions within the movement forced some members to question their loyalty to the group. For example, New Left and, later, feminist women, through consciousness-raising, took issue with men's irresponsible and dominant behavior both within and outside the movement. As noted above, women's "freedom" to have limitless sex meant their bodies were free territories for men to violate (Brake 1985). Instead, the feminist movement had related goals and ideologies, but attempted to address patriarchy as well as capitalism as a source of inequality (Katzenstein and Mueller 1989; Whittier 1997; VanDyke et al. 2000).

Yet, despite the contradictions and negative response of mainstream Americans to the movement, which was, in a vein similar to the New York Radical Women's "burial" of traditional womanhood, given a funeral in 1970 by disenchanted hippies, the counterculture shaped a new lifestyle from existing paradigms and themes in American thought. The alternative lifestyles, emphasis on natural living, CR work, broad definitions of family, and politico-cultural sensibility—informative of what are today called personalized political strategies—hold continued salience for progressive activist women (Taylor and Whittier 1995).

The 1980's are sometimes characterized by a conservative, callous disregard for human problems and a return to self-glorification (Epstein 1991; Judd 1985). An increasingly hostile political opportunity structure (POS) in the 1980s and 1990s made it very difficult for groups, such as former New Left activists turned feminists, to continue limited gains they won mainly in the 1970s. Ronald Reagan (president from 1981-1989)

and George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) opposed political and cultural gains of 1960s and 1970s social movements. The Reagan administration opposed the ERA and general women's liberation, endorsed prayer in public schools, strategized to restrict access to abortion, deregulated businesses, namely utilities and financial institutions, appointed conservative judges to the Supreme court, and eliminated many of the government social programs that provided funding for socially marginalized groups (Mansbridge 1986), including women. Congressional support of feminist legislation dwindled; bills not faring well included child care and family leave. Conservative organizing was even said to be blatantly anti-feminist—a backlash according to Faludi (1991).

Many people, both nationally and globally, responded to the cold, 1980s climate by adopting personal philosophies similar to those endorsed by the New Left counterculture (*Deadheads: An American Subculture* 1993; Pearson 1987). This may or may not mean that contemporary activists, who continue to be attracted to alternative ideas and actions, avoid institutional politics as a feature of their activism (Taylor and Whittier 1992). Progressive and contemporary activists hold core values of their 1960s predecessors and include both newer and more seasoned cohort members, who provide continuity, and new members, who bring change (Gusfield 1981; McAdam 1986; VanDyke et al. 2000; Whittier 1995). Thus, that movements contain both continuity from older members and dynamics from new life must be understood as being impacted by POS (Jenkins 1983; Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982), even and perhaps especially work imbued with a cultural flavor (Jasper and Goodwin 1999).

Newest participants in the women's movement are referred to as the third wave (Findlen 1995; Gilmore 2001; Walker 1995; Whittier 1997). They are attracted to the

movement from the influence of second generation role models, such as mothers. They also arrive at feminist understandings independently from a host of politicizing life experiences. The most obvious of these is educational recruitment in college and, increasingly, high school settings (Gilmore 2001). Articulated within the academy as standpoint theory (Hill Collins 1990; Smith 1990), the lay translation is seeing the connection between what may appear to be unique forms of oppression, especially as these come together in the lived experiences of overlapping discrimination. That is, while a Black woman experiences oppression by race and by gender, her interpretive “standpoint” is filtered through both social locations (for a good discussion of how persons are held accountable to social locations contextually, see work of Candace West and colleagues [West and Zimmerman {1987}; West and Fenstermaker {1993,1995}]). The importance of valuing their multiple identities, including ones stigmatized by others, such as homosexuality or bisexuality, is a fundamental right to young activists, who may identify more with the term activist than feminist.

### Summary

In sum, women did not abandon political commitment when the New Left dwindled after about 1970. They shifted their focus to the burgeoning second wave women’s movement, as detailed above. They were, in many cases, readily able to do so because varied types of organizational structures were in place. Women were concentrated in sex segregated occupations and departments within institutional bureaucracies. Some women, including the sisters, aunts, mothers, and friends of former New Left women, never quit the workforce fueled by the wartime economic boon, despite not-so-subtle pressures to conform to femininity’s mystique. The soaring

economy of the fifties and sixties propelled middle class families into higher education, including more daughters than ever. In college settings, women were recruited into liberal activism for multiple and overlapping causes. Less often discussed, college women developed solidarity networks *with other women* and experienced firsthand what possibilities other than child care and housework felt like. The overt aspects of strength in numbers in schools, workplaces, networks, and organizations, plus aggregated and concentrated grievances, facilitated activist and feminist articulation of discontent. These aspects still persist for people, younger and older, who heed the call to get involved—to act.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL MODEL: SYNTHESIS AND EXPECTATIONS

In this chapter, I outline a conceptual model that draws upon and integrates several literatures so as to address theoretical gaps posed earlier. I have especially noted a number of gaps in the various models of individual participation from the burgeoning social movements literature. My conceptual plan incorporates overlapping intellectual and social movement paradigms that each promote limited ideas about features of the social world (Buechler 2000). That is, informed by a sociology of knowledge approach, diffuse social, intellectual, economic, and political trends have had considerable impact on the concerns and direction of contemporary social movement theory (Buechler 2000; della porta and Diani 1999; Habermas 1984; McMichael 2004).

In essence, I present a model that systematically fuses ideas, sequences, and processes that illustrate salient features of new and synthetic social movement theories, but also concepts, from life course, coping, and other literatures as well. My theoretical and empirical treatment of sequential patterns in life histories answers recent calls for work in both realms (Abbott 1995; Elder 1994). Further, mine is an inductive attempt to build generalizable yet conditional theory (Boswell and Brown 1991; Brown and Boswell 1995; Roscigno and Hodson 2004). The story that connects the six essential pieces in this model—*pivotal events*, *political process*, *collective identity*, *pivotal departures*,



*empowerment*, and *health*--provides a conceptual sense to which my analytic strategy derives.

A sociology of knowledge foundation connects history to social ideas and social movements. That is, at given historical points, certain questions are posed and features are considered whereas others fail to receive theoretical attention (Buechler 2000; Mills 1959; Rule 1997). This is influenced greatly by the broad climate cast over mobilization at any historical moment (Abrams 1982; Mannheim 1952). The model outlined in this chapter strongly invokes the explanatory potential of *new social movements theory* at the nadir of the 21st century (Edelman 2001; Guigni 2002; Olzak and Uhlig 2001; Zald and McCarthy 2002). At the same time, it shares with other recent work an attempt to build and refine social movement theory through synthesis (Cohen 1985; Tarrow 1998; McAdam et al. 2001). New social movements theory is, in particular, synthetic due to its integration of concepts and processes found to be robust across movements from collective behavior, resource mobilization, and political opportunity theories (Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Taylor and Whittier 1995).

Social movements theory has tended to follow ideological trends in general academia. It first embraced conservatism, with the functionalist-inspired collective behavior tradition (Geschwender 1962; Kornhauser 1959; Merton 1963), followed and then significantly replaced by liberalism. The latter set of ideas prompted social reform reflected in two political process approaches: first a resource mobilization (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; McCarthy and Zald 1977) and, later, a political opportunity tradition (Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1982, 1999; Morris 1984; Tilly 1978). The field of social movements, and the theories that advance it, is currently in a state of flux. While the

dominant political process theories enjoy continual explanatory power, the cases used to apply them have arguably shifted in consequential ways (Buechler 2000; Castells 1996, 1997; Kriesi et al. 1995; Melucci 1989, 1994; Taylor and Whittier 1992). We may now speak of new social movements, such as progressive women's activism, as those cases that share many postmodern features explained by new social movements theory (see especially Smith 1990 for review).<sup>8</sup>

Articulated from the earliest moments of European theory and, later, from the 1940s through early 1970s in American academia, were *social constructivist features*, including the importance of *grievance interpretation* and *expressive* facets of *network* building at a *micro-level* (Turner and Killian 1972, 1987). These earlier ideas have played an integral role in building and sustaining new social movements theory (Buechler 1997, 2000; Larana et al. 1994; Taylor and Whittier 1995). Of course these features are no longer necessarily considered irrational but, instead, function to recruit members (Jasper 1997) and fill emotional gaps (Taylor 2000). Social constructivism offers to social movements the salience of *interaction* as a unit of analysis and process that aids in the interpretation of *symbols*. Symbols cover a broad range of ideas, from meanings to interpretations and from definitions to identities. Symbolic-interactionism suggests that

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<sup>8</sup> The term postmodern is derived from a French-origin literary movement (Kellner 1990; Green and Troup 1999; Lemert 1990) popularized by the works of Foucault, Derrida, Levi-Strauss, Saussure, Lacan, and others. Terms used to describe it, namely postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, are somewhat synonymous, yet they have unique meanings. A poststructuralist rendering posits, if all text has *multiple meanings* and interpretations, then this multiplicity must be deconstructed or liberated for a variety of relativistic meanings to be heard (Green and Troup 1999; Kellner 1990). Hence, for those marginalized due to class, race, gender, age, sexuality, or ideas, deconstruction is a cultural and political strategy to gain voice (Foucault 1979). Having voice is a step in giving a group control over others' perceptions of that group's *identity*—the basis of how a group is constituted and perceived. It is in a group's political and cultural best interests to have control over its identity. This is a focus of contemporary mobilization for diverse groups, such as many women in my sample. Further, ideology and what is said about it, or *discourse*, is variable.

all aspects of collective action are interactive, symbolically defined, and negotiated processes among participants, opponents, and bystanders.

In sum, and in retrospect, all social movements require micro-foundations that function to transform individuals into collective actors (Jasper and Goodwin 1999). These include recruitment, mobilization, solidarity, and grassroots organizations. New social movements theory illuminates a micro focus with a new twist by suggesting that *local areas*--in this case, women's bodies--are themselves sources of grievances and yet also agentic sites of framing, or re-interpretation, and resistance (Jasper 1997). Further, a poststructuralist intellectual tradition gives to new social movements stress on (1) the importance of culture and discourse, (2) their relativity, and (3) the typically unseen rules of discipline groups are now fighting to uncover, especially to enhance more positive identities. All of these features have helped contribute *ideas* that are now important to progressive women activists, in particular, and to any social movement activists, more generally. These features I incorporate into my theoretical model, which I explain shortly.

Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of a social movement's ability to garner resources and support from usually well-heeled political and economic elites to realize goals (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Zald and McCarthy 2002). Doing so facilitates progress at a quicker rate and to a more extensive degree. Having even glimpses of success increases activists *feelings of efficacy*, which then promotes *interpretive or framing work* about future strategy, a process described as *cognitive liberation* (Piven and Cloward 1977; McAdam 1982). Cognitive liberation is a roughly parallel concept to framing, the latter of which is used extensively in new social

movements theory (Snow et al. [1986] produced a seminal piece that later spawned prolific work in refining the concept). Both terms imply turning dissatisfactions into well-defined grievances. The extent of these grievances, coupled with success, compel yet more people to join or support a movement. However, framing broadens cognitive liberation by appealing to a sense of *collective efficacy* for many different kinds of actors besides the poor or the working class (della Porta and Diani 1999; J. Gamson 1997). From political process approaches I incorporate cognitive liberation and the types of action that are possible due to the political opportunity structure into my theoretical model.

### Theoretical Model

I begin discussion of my theoretical model with *culture*—a feature of ultimate importance in all societies due to its reciprocal determination of other institutions. Culture is indicated by ideas and material and non-material objects, including images. The notion of cultural dominance or *hegemony* as articulated in poststructuralist critiques, connects culture, power, and ideology. An effective way to maintain the status quo is through latent shaping of ideas or rules using consent rather than force (Foucault 1979; Gramsci 1971; Lenski 1984). Consent operates at a level of common sense through taken-for-granted values, and such knowledge reflects deeply held cultural beliefs. It is sought through mass culture transposed to the realm of everyday life. Societal members are indoctrinated to accept social reality through institutions such as education, religion, and the media--sites that reproduce disciplined obedience to societal values and norms (Habermas 1984; Mills 1959). Applied to this research, progressive activists assert that eating disorders may signify indoctrinated “consent” to a narrow femininity—a role,

which is a cultural product (Brumberg 1988; Price-Shildrick 1999; Thompson 1994; Weitz 1999).

Yet despite its cultural embeddedness, hegemony maintenance is a *dynamic* process (Collins 1981; Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992), since actors have at least some agency resisting oppression (Roscigno and Hodson 2004; Taylor 1996; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Thorne 1993). That is, culture is a human product reconstituted continuously and innumerable in interaction (Giddens 1984; Sewell 1992), which implies the dynamics of change. By stating and modeling the reciprocal determination of other institutions to culture, I recognize culture is certainly affected by other *social institutions*, notably the economy. These other institutions can be viewed as transmitters of cultural values and ideas, plus the proper behaviors that put such ideas into practice. I model these as the mass media, the economy, and primary and secondary agents of socialization. Socialization agents include the family, religion (churches, synagogues and temples), schools, peer groups, work groups and other social networks that exert normative or alternative influence on people. Plus media, the economy and socialization agents influence one another, noting especially the influence of the economy on media, through advertising, and family, who tend to rear youngsters to accept the dominant ways of their society. I take it as granted that people are socialized continuously over the entire life course.

Cultural ideas, carried by and filtered through societal institutions, especially media, are very profitable within advanced capitalism. For instance, I note that if women are to be highly attractive, a central *role expectation* of idealized or emphasized femininity (Connell 1987), then this goal can certainly be enhanced through the purchase

of beauty and diet aids, clothing, fragrance, fitness equipment and memberships, and countless other commodities.

We can regard culture as a social fact; we can regard our physical bodies as material essences having both objective and subjective elements attached to them. For the most part, our bodies have an identifiable, biological sex that undergoes a process of biological aging. Undergirded by a vast and growing body of life course literature (Elder 1999), that bodies undergo growth, maturation, puberty, fertility, decline, and eventual death are objective facts that are experienced in contextualized ways depending at least, in part, on the cultural role expectations for both age and gender. As shown in my model, I propose viewing the body as precursor to *pivotal life events*, or even as a metaphor for an event, itself! This implies I believe the body is a concept that may transcend classification as a material object. Women's bodies, most certainly facilitate many biological age-related events. It is these events that bring women to pivotal decision-making crossroads, which are explained shortly.

Culture directly effects *ideal or normative role expectations* in society, and it is from culture that differences are constructed on the basis of socially relevant categories or groupings, such as sex, gender and age. Role expectations are a cultural product, a set of ideas and behaviors, that can change over time, albeit slowly. While the influence of culture is filtered through media, the economy, and socialization agents, expectations feed back, in turn, to influence each of the other institutions. To embody cultural ideas and transform them substantively into practices, people act and give them shape by performing role obedient behaviors.

People are motivated to behave according to normative societal standards so as to be considered culturally competent and receive shares of that society's social rewards, material and immaterial. People come to understand that certain cultural products are expected or idealized in their members. Some of these products are expected of all members while others are more specific to categories or groups of people, such as women, or the elderly. Idealized ways of performing culturally-relevant statuses, such as man, worker, adolescent, heterosexual, and African-American, are denoted as roles (West and Fenstermaker 1995). Those who obey roles are rewarded with features deemed desirable as per society.

One of the immaterial products that motivates people to perform ideal role behaviors is social acceptance given and received in social interactions. Classical theorist Emile Durkheim (1951) recognized that individuals and groups who were denied the integration and regulation provided by consistent social bonds, were at increased risk for suicide. To be social and to use the symbols of a culture in ways that pass scrutiny is a reward few people are willing to compromise. Thus, people are often aware that their behavior will be interpreted by others, our social networks and agents of socialization, in *interaction*. This is linked to a tension that demands resolution, as least as that applies to young, white, college-educated women, if they are to recover substantially from eating disorders (Hesse-Biber et al. 1999). This is a tension similar to the generalized tension undergone by adolescents and explored by famous psychologist Erik Erikson (1968, 1985). Young people must solve a huge identity crisis—the problem of negotiating the pull between autonomy and relationships. On the one hand, young people need to find ways to be independent, to establish interests, and find avenues to fulfill these interests.

Autonomy implies that people and, notably, young women, need to take on multiple roles beyond the traditionally confining ones that define emphasized femininity.

But no woman is an island. The importance of social interaction to our lives is integral, and young women need plenty of supportive friends and family, found in a variety of settings and networks, if they are to develop healthy senses of self-esteem. What requires negotiation is finding a balance between autonomy and relationships. Consistent support throughout a woman's life is needed to help resolve this tension, which I also expect must be addressed at other life phases or stages beyond adolescence. Erikson (1980) does note that people in various age-related stages do have tensions to resolve, but the autonomy versus relationships is pretty specific to his young cycle. Returning to the pivotal life events related to changes in women's bodies, I propose that it is these events that reintroduce identity and other conflicts into women's lives. This occurs at several aging-related stages throughout the life cycle—at middle and older ages as well as younger ones.

Consistent and deep social support can be done in the context of normative role expectations and behaviors, as depicted in the *normative model*. My model draws on Erikson's normative crisis model (1985), but extends it in the sense that women's unique gender and age-related roles are given special attention. In my normative model, support and how it is channeled in interaction to bolster the ability to resolve pivotal life events and conflicts, including those that are age and body related, can lead to health or recovery if women have sufficient control. I emphasize that recovery as an outcome of eating disorders, specifically, and poor health, more generally, is taken seriously as a potential policy implication of this research.



Going beyond the normative model, since it is apparent many women of all ages experience poor health outcomes resulting from a complex interplay of forces, the idea that *political process* can steer women down different paths is an important focal point of this research. The paths it can lead women to and through I expect lead to some beneficial outcomes related to health. The importance of sustaining activism, as a vehicle of political process, over time is crucial. That is, it can be used as a resource to address the pivotal life events, including those that are body, age, and gender-filtered, and the choices these evoke. The foci of interest—activism in political process and bodies as experienced in biological, social, and cultural ways, makes this a life course study (Elder 1999; Furstenberg et al. 1999). Within social movements, life course outcomes of participants are conceptualized in several political generations models outlined succinctly in Whittier (1997). I synthesize elements from several variants in my model of events, political process, collective identity, pivotal departures, and health. It is through these influences that activist ideas and actions prompt women to choose different, alternative, and even empowering paths.

What I am calling the *political process model* depicts how activism takes shape, changes women in fundamental ways, and leads to alternative choices and negotiations that, I argue, can ultimately, lead to health. Again, culture both effects and is affected by other societal institutions. The recognition that culture directly effects normative or ideal role expectations in a society is agentially known, understood, and criticized by individuals and groups, including social movement networks and communities (Buechler 1997). It is especially understood by marginalized persons that differences constructed on the basis of what appear to be socially or otherwise relevant categories are actually

constructed to serve the interests of hegemonic groups, such as whites, men, or "working-aged" people.<sup>9</sup> They note that media, the economy and family influence one another, plus they are concerned about the increasingly concentrated influence of the economy on media and family. Armed with such knowledge, activists, academics, and alternative people are more likely than "Jill Normal" to rear youngsters that reject at least some of the dominant ways of their society (some support for this claim found in Klatch's remarkable book about 1960s activists on both the left and right).

As similarly depicted in the normative model, in the political process model, the body can be viewed as a *pivotal event* or event facilitator due to its link to many age-related biological stages, phases, or potential crises. That these events bring women to decision-making crossroads and, likely, *pivotal departures*, brings me to the central purpose of this research.

If we consider *role expectations* for societal statuses such as gender and sex, we again see that to embody cultural ideas and transform them substantively, people act and give them shape by performing *role behaviors*. What defines a minority group is a systemic lack of access to power and the resources that accrue from that power as experienced per group. Compared at the group level to men and idealized hegemonic masculinity, women and *all* performances or expressions of femininity, but particularly culturally denigrated femininities, suffer a devalued status (as discussed by Connell

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<sup>9</sup> Control of discourse is the power to impose hegemonic rules, an insight of critical theorists like Antonio Gramsci (1971) and Michel Foucault (1979, 1982). Foucault asserted that people wanting change must uncover rules of idea structures—how they emerge and are reproduced as discourses, a subtle form of power. It is important to note that "programmed" power works diffusely and locally rather than from a single source, like a central government. It is manifested when people are locally disciplined, as is the case with women's bodies (Cunningham and Backett-Milburn 2001), which applies to this research. Gender norms of appearance, particularly those that define idealized, emphasized femininity for women (Connell 1987), require discipline of women's bodies in terms of time and constant attention.

1987). Similarly, age confers more power to working-aged, productive persons than to children and the aged, who are dependent on the former. But the value of age, too, is moderated by gender, with men being granted wider access to rewards for a longer and more varied period of time (Taetzshe 1995).

Thus, in regards to role expectations and the actions that embody them, those denied full access to the rewards that motivate compliance to norms may make alternative choices. Or, those who feel a sense of social consciousness, likely transmitted to them from formative agents of socialization, may also be inspired to make alternative choices. I wish to note that I take a symbolic-interactionist view of socialization (Risman 1987, 1998) that sees early socialization as formative and not static. That is, socialization is ongoing, lifelong, variable, dynamic, and changeable. It is also contextual in that people are continuously held accountable to proper role expression (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). This is important herein because women may have social interactions in alternative contexts, such as in activist networks, at any point in their lives. Considering these caveats, I see no urgency to retire “tired” theories of socialization, as suggested by others (Elder 2002).

However, the points at which women may be exposed to alternative ideas I argue are related to objective and subjective body-related pivotal events or phases. Importantly, many of these events are those of the middle and late life rather than adolescence or young adulthood that have received more theoretical and empirical treatment.

People that are motivated to think and act in alternative ways—to make pivotal departures—to dominant societal standards are *at risk* of receiving fewer shares of that societies social rewards, material and immaterial. Their critical stance and behavior may

elude social acceptance given and received in social interaction. As was demonstrated in the case of protest against the Vietnam War (Gitlin 1991), activists are typically a numerical minority while the rest are part of the "silent majority." Denial of social rewards, which can lead to negative outcomes in the future, such as economic and social marginality (Klatch 1999; McAdam 1988), is a reality few people are willing to compromise. Thus, people are typically aware that their behavior will be interpreted by others in interaction.

The tension between negotiating relationships and autonomy has already been noted in the normative model, and work done in supportive networks may help people resolve the tension more readily and in empowering ways. Social networks constituted solely of women or that endorse activist or feminist ideas are viewed as a network or agent of socialization that does a great deal of interpersonal work. Collective identity that is an active component of political process, can have a fundamental effect on the *ideas* of participants in terms of *reframing* ideas, addressing and *validating emotions*, offering supportive *relationships*, shaping an *empowered consciousness*, and encouraging *diffuse roles* for women, which addresses needs for *autonomy* (deBeauvoir 1963). That balance has been found to foster a healthy sense of self-esteem in women recovering from eating disorders (Hesse-Biber et al. 1999), although this work has not accounted for political process.

Adopting a sense of empowered consciousness from interaction in social networks and, particularly, activist networks, can give women the strength to resist culturally idealized role expectations and, instead, endorse alternative role expectations for their multiple and interactive statuses. I expect that this addresses the interaction

between gender and age and how, through normative expectations, women come to learn they must be attractive, thin, and as youthful as possible. This is something that, due to the constant energy and attention required to sustain it, thwarts doing alternative femininities and causes competition among women that may undermine mutual support. Thus, the attractiveness requirement of emphasized femininity may contribute to women's inability to successfully negotiate the tension between autonomy and relationships. Furthermore, obeying gendered and other role behaviors then reifies those expectations and makes them seem more normalized and natural—something "out there" rather than autonomous choices that are subjected to agentic interpretation and reinterpretation.

Doing gender in an alternative way, which I am defining as activist, feminist, and post-structuralist, involves both *ideas* (alternative role expectations), or a sense of *group consciousness* (Taylor and Whittier 1992) and *actions* (alternative behaviors), which have also been described as *personalized political strategies*, or PPS (Taylor and Raeburn 1994). Group consciousness and PPS are two of the three processes that aid a group in establishing a collective identity (Melucci 1989). The other process is erecting *boundaries* that define a group and separate it in terms of ideas and actions from the dominant norm structure. In my model, boundaries are modeled as being erected after the process of personalized political strategies, although they likely are part of the framing process (who we are and who we are not) as well. The reason for my placement in the model is that a sense of self may be more fully solidified once people have taken actual action in support of their framed or reframed consciousness. It is like saying, "I did, therefore, I am." I also believe this sense of action is a contributor to sustained

actions and ideas over time.” I have noted above my goals to produce synthetic theory, which includes mapping similar terms from different theories together. It appears that pivotal departures, as actualized choices, are alternative behaviors that, if politically inspired, are also personalized political strategies.

Pivotal events related to changes in women's bodies, can be framed as opportunities where alternative thinking, undergirded or supported in agentic interaction, alters the ideas and actions that contribute to doing gender and age. Pivotal body events may lead women to pivotal departures if they can be convinced that being socially sanctioned in some regards is less costly than the outcomes of normative enactment. As an example, young women in college may join activist groups instead of sororities. If they had joined the sorority, that can be seen as the choice that follows the *path of least resistance*. As a member of a traditional sorority, young women will be expected to host parties, join fraternities in numerous social activities, and, of course, look attractive in the process. The immediate rewards are many—dates, normative social networks, prestige, activities, an item on a vitae, and a good chance for marriage and, by default, children in the future. But there can be negative outcomes associated with this choice as well. Young women may not qualify at initiation or be able to continue in the sorority if they are unattractive, which may mean not thin as well. They may engage in dangerous eating behaviors, such as vomiting food or starving, or exhaustive exercise, to meet thinness norms.

On the alternative path, *the road not as often taken*, a young, reasonably attractive woman could join numerous social activist organizations while at college, or she can choose a major, such as women's studies, which will expose her constantly to alternative

ideas and actions. Her choices are also weighed, using both rational choice (Olson 1965) and emotive (Taylor 2000) models, in part, in terms of future and present costs and benefits. She may be unjustly labeled by her peers as pushy, extremist, one-sided, man-hating, ecoterrorist, and lesbian, most especially if she presents her supposed differences in overt bodily ways. For example, she might choose not to shave the underarms and legs or wear multiple body and face piercings. Such views would affect dating prospects, networking in normative social milieu, and other. Plus, researchers have only recently began exploring the longer term consequences of social movement participation, finding such outcomes as economic marginality and higher divorce rates (e.g., VanDyke et al. 2000). However, activism also gives young women a chance to contribute to something they consider moral, something larger than themselves, and to be shapers of history—to live and embody the true meaning of the American dream.

College is related to bodies because being attractive is such an integral role expectation of young women seeking careers and marriage. Millions of young men and women are brought together in a competitive arena where the best prospects fall to the most attractive. Other body-related events and phases include gender socialization, related to physical and mental development of young children, puberty, menstruation, fertility, first sexual experiences, dating, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation. Then comes aging bodies, energy loss, infertility increasing, divorce related to men's adultery and other possible body issues, menopause, bone loss, skin decline, increase in health conditions, retirement, caregiving and finally, preparing for death.

All of these events are linked to biological changes in women's bodies where meaningful interpretation is filtered through socially constructed culture. Not only are

they biological, the stages and events have the chance of creating an imbalance between autonomy and relationship, where the loss of one or the other, but notably relationships, is often perceived as traumatic. The stages are multiple and overlapping, and specific to women's health, aging, and gender experiences. They are points where pivotal departures can be made, with empowering contexts giving women the strength to make alternative choices that, although they have benefits, also have risks, costs and sanctions, some of which may be severe.

For normative socialization, consistent, meaningful support can be done in the context of typical role expectations and behaviors. In this sense, social support positively affects health indirectly through women's sense of control because of the work done in highly supportive contexts to augment the salience of close relationships, but also diffuse women's roles. In the political process model, it is more likely to occur in alternative settings due to activists' overt criticism of gender and age oppression. This support and how it is channeled in interaction bolsters the ability to resolve pivotal life conflicts, including those that are age and body related, can then lead to positive physical and mental health, or recovery.

The way that support from alternative social networks leads to positive health is indirect. The group consciousness that develops allows women to formulate alternative expectations which then have an effect on the way bodily-related events, and the pivotal departures that may result from critically thinking about them, play out. Whittier (1995) suggests that the core of a particular micro-cohort may form due to a salient transformative experience as uncovered through *consciousness-raising*. This is the type of work I have been discussing that shapes a collective identity, which, in turn, is part of



political process. Making pivotal departures implies enacting a non-normative behavior set, the personalized political strategies as noted above, that can lead to boundaries both being erected to criticize the dominant ways, but also the response of dominant groups to political and cultural activist expression. They, in turn, may erect boundaries against incorporating activists as a way of maintaining the status quo.

This chapter has provided a brief history of social movement theory concepts, features, and processes to provide a foundation and sense of purpose and relevance to my conceptual model. What I have called a political process model traces the hopeful outcome of my interests, women's health, through a path that includes many contextual features, but most essentially pivotal events, political process, collective identity, pivotal departures, and sustained empowerment.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA, METHODS, AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

Earlier, I elaborated four research expectations, stated as (1) women activists constitute a group of collective individuals who are unique in a political-cultural sense; (2) interaction processes build personal and collective identity (Stryker et al., 2000); (3) women's activist experiences in life course stages reflect continuity and change in their identities, politics, and circumstances (Whittier 1997); and (4) women's activist experiences lead to positive health outcomes. I have specified, from theory, many factors that lead to these outcomes, and yet I expect that my data will reveal other elements or processes from which general theory may be induced. Chapter 4 lays out how I gather data and measure what can be operationalized from my expectations. It then presents an analytic strategy that links this study's expectations to unique methods used to address them. My analysis of the life course of women activists considers that body image and its relationship to aging and gender are complex and sensitive issues that change with interaction processes over time.

#### Data

I use multiple data sources, including extensive notes on life histories, derived from open-ended interviews (n=38), a set-response survey instrument (n=75), and participant observation. The survey and interview instruments are constructed from a

base of concepts and processes extracted from social movement, generational, life course feminist, and structuration theories. The notes and survey are subjected to the three part analytic strategy described above that corresponds to the organization of results in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 using innovative techniques that can treat life history data.

I first conducted indepth and open-ended interviews with 38 women, ages 18-88, who are either currently or formerly involved in activism spanning many realms. The activists I interviewed vary on a number of dimensions: age, life experiences, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, health, degree of activist involvement and commitment, ideologies, and ties to academia and the ideas articulated therein. The sample of women in this study is also necessarily diverse to meet my research objectives. This is most markedly so in reference to *age*. Little research has been conducted on women's activist experiences and commitment in terms of how these might be mediated by life course events or micro-cohort dynamics, both of which are probably linked to *gendered aging processes*. Interviewing women between ages 18-88 thus ensures that the various, age-related bodily and social experiences can be identified by activists as meaningful. It means overlapping complexities and contingencies are brought to the case that are, at the same time, likely patterned in probabilistic ways.

About half the women in the sample are between ages 40-60; only three participants are older (ages 63, 68, and 88). Of these women, all have had at least some experiences with the women's movement as sympathizers, supporters, members or participants at varying degrees of intensity. They note that gender has been and, for some, still consciously remains, an integral organizing principle in their lives. Further, their involvement is or was often linked to work in other movements. For the women in

my sample, this includes: rural education, Black civil rights, the counterculture, student, free speech, AIDS, anti-military (against, for instance, the ongoing war in Iraq), gay and lesbian civil rights, home-schooling, midwifery, organic food and farming, ecological spirituality, and natural living, health, and mothering, which can include extended breastfeeding. It was common for middle-aged participants to express involvement in three or four of these progressive movements, including the women's movement.

The second, younger half of my sample, are ages 18-39.<sup>10</sup> They, too, are involved in activism on many dimensions. But somewhat differently than the older activists, and parallel to recent attempts to characterize new social movements (Darnovsky, Epstein and Flacks 1995; Edelman 2001; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Klandermans 1997; Kriesi et al. 1995; Morris and Mueller 1992; Stryker et al. 2000), younger participants grew up with exposure to postmodern values and enhanced diversity. This diversity impacts their personal and collective identities, which are multiple, additive, contextual, and reflexive (good discussion of cross-cutting and multiple identities found in Ryan [2002]). It also makes it difficult to label their activism beyond the issues to which they are involved. Contentious issues are similar to middle-aged participants, with even more emphasis on anti-militarism, anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and counterculturalism. Most accept designation as third wave feminists (an introduction to the complexities of this found in Gilmore 2001). Important to my research, young participants, especially, identify

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<sup>10</sup> Marc Edelman (2001), in a recent *Annual Review of Anthropology* noted synthetic and other developments in social movement theory that account for changing paradigms and forms of politics. He suggests based on a survey of literature on the origins of the women's movement that the newer participants, typically called "third wave" feminists, are "generally born after 1963 and active in the 1990s and after" that "take cultural production and sexual politics as key sites of struggle, seeking to fuel micropolitical struggles outside of formal institutional channels" (p. 295). This explains my choice to consider as younger activists women under age 40—those born from 1964.

resistance to cultural institutions, such as mass media and its limited gender presentations, as an important part of their activism. While doing so may appear personal rather than political, they assert such work is both (as similarly understood in Taylor and Whittier [1992]; also see Carr [1998]).

Then, of the 38 interviewed mature and younger activists, 32 agreed to complete a survey instrument that captured the themes discussed in their interviews condensed to variables amenable to numeric coding. How activist women are politically and culturally different can be illuminated by comparing them to a sample of non-activist women who, by default, believe and act in conventional ways.

Therefore, a comparison group of conventional women was obtained randomly using a complete list of all available telephone numbers in the greater Franklin County area. Franklin County contains almost 1, 089,000 people (51.4% female) living in nearly 490,000 households, and about 75% are over age 18. Of course, such a list is limited because certain numbers, such as those that are unlisted or disconnected, are unavailable. This limitation unduly impacts lower class households, who are, therefore, less likely to be equally represented. However, since racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to be living in poverty than non-Hispanic whites, their greater proportions in Franklin county, compared to the entire Ohio and United States populations, would partly control for unavailable telephone numbers linked to low SES.

I made every effort to employ systematic sampling. As such, I randomly selected, as the first case, a phone number for a last name beginning with N from the 2004-5 telephone book (Columbus, Ohio and vicinity). There was no discernible ethnic pattern to N names, therefore, I was not concerned about over-sampling women based on

ethnicity. Thereafter, every 54<sup>th</sup> number was selected and called, until several women responded to the same survey given earlier to the activist sample. It was necessary to contact many more people than those who responded for several reasons. These included: households did not contain women between the ages of 18-70, women refused to participate even when demographic criteria were met, businesses were sometimes contacted where men typically worked, and about half the households had voice mail or answering machines. Messages I left on such devices that concerned the details of the study were, in general, not returned. In sum, I was able to generate an approximately random sample of women in the greater Franklin County area who were each agreeable to being surveyed for 15 minutes over the phone.

Besides these telephone methods, I also employed some theoretical sampling to recruit participants. In an effort to attract minority and working class women, I distributed surveys in several locations at a local community college. In this setting, I also recruited random women to complete the survey. In an effort to attract educated, professional, and somewhat older women, I distributed surveys to offices, classrooms, and mailboxes at my home university as well. Plus, in both locations, I recruited random women to fill out the survey in public, outdoor settings. I also visited some local offices and businesses and, upon obtaining permission, I distributed copies of the survey. As a result of doing the random telephone surveys, coupled with my efforts to obtain participants more directly in convenient settings in Greater Franklin County, I was able to obtain a non-activist sample of 42 women.

Data gathered for a total number of 74 survey participants (32 identified activists; 42 non-activist women) can be described and tested. I next explain how I measure the

variables in the survey that establish differences between activists and non-activists. I assume, by definition, that an activist is someone who is, in a broad sense, politically active in non-institutionalized ways (Della porta and Diani 1999; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998). Yet, I have argued that there are probably other social and cultural facets and processes that differentiate activists from conventional women. These features, then, can have a positive impact on women's body image and, ultimately, their holistic health. The variables included in the survey measure demographic characteristics and political and cultural attitudes and behaviors (see Appendix A for full survey instrument). There were a total of 31 questions, some with multiple parts, that measured categoric, ordered, scale, and numeric variables.

### Survey Measures

#### Variables

The primary purpose of the survey is to show how activists in my study are different on various outcomes than women who are conventional in a political and cultural sense. The survey allows basic comparisons of the activists and non-activists in terms of 1) political attitudes and behaviors, (2) daily routines, and 3) health issues and problems. These outcomes evoke the theoretical interests of this project, as articulated in Chapter 3. I do not suggest that survey results, alone, indicate causality in a conclusive way, although they can show association following logical relationships. Evidence in support of what I call the political process model comes from a triangulation of methods, notably qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and interpretive analysis, which are discussed shortly.

Survey results can suggest how political variables affect women's work, marriage, divorce, education, dieting behaviors, worry about weight and aging, and choices related to children. Conversely, marriage, divorce, work, education, ethnicity, various cultural behaviors, children, and social support may affect politics. Politics is gauged by political party identification, participation in many new left social movements (to instantiate non-institutional political participation), normal and expected political behaviors (e.g., voting, campaign contributions) abortion attitudes, and civic and religious volunteering. What may be considered cultural behaviors include types of doctors visited, how much and what types of TV and magazines viewed, news consumed, where food is purchased, dieting, meat and dairy intake, and clothing and makeup worn. What may be considered cultural attitudes includes appearance satisfaction, worry about weight and aging, and abortion attitudes. The survey can also suggest how the political and cultural variables detailed above, body variables, and social support affect body image. Finally, the survey can be used to bolster the argument that cultural variables are associated with political variables in a way that can lead to the assertion that the cultural *is* political.

I assume many of the differences between the activist and randomly selected samples can be described using basic statistics such as frequencies, measures of central tendency (e.g., means, medians, modes), and dispersion (e.g., ranges, standard deviations). Descriptive statistics are useful for easy comparison of categorical variables (e.g., ethnicity, occupation category, relationship status, political party affiliation, participation in certain social movements), variables with discernable gradations (e.g., paid work status, how much make-up worn, degree of importance of female support, frequency of viewing types of media and programming, dieting frequency, degree of



worry about weight and aging, highest education degree obtained, appearance satisfaction, meat and dairy intake), and scaled or numeric variables (e.g., height and weight, body image scale, number of children, numbers of volunteer hours).

Other differences, some of which are presented as outcomes in my Chapter 3 theoretical model, are subjected to hypothesis testing and measures of association. Tests used will be based on the level of measurement of the variables. In essence, the hypothesis tests discern if socioeconomic, relationship, body image, political and cultural outcomes are dependent on certain variables. Table 4.1 presents variables used in basic comparisons between activists and non-activists in terms of their political activism, daily routine, and health issues. It also includes basic demographic variables, such as age and ethnicity. There is some overlap in the way the variables can be categorized. For instance, “type of doctor” can be viewed as both a cultural and health-related choice.

I will also be using some tests that measure association between variables. These tests will quantify the strength and direction of relationships. I acknowledge that while statistical associations lend evidence for potential causal relationships, they do not directly attribute cause. Yet they can ultimately trace causal relationships, especially when used in conjunction with other methods that clarify convergent validity. I explain how qualitative comparative analysis and interpretive analysis can do this shortly.

In sum, Chapter 5 lays out what it is about activist women that differentiates them from non-activist women. I argued earlier in Chapter 3 that collective identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992) is an essential construct that can be applied to explain and understand

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**Political variables**

political party affiliation	side on abortion issue
civic and religious hours volunteered	
participation in list of social movements: (civil rights, anti-Vietnam, free speech/student, women's, environmental, peace, animal rights, gay, anti-globalization, anti-apartheid, anti-intervention)	
participation in normal politics: (voting, wrote letters, lobbied, organized a political campaign, helped others vote, discussed issues door-to-door, Internet, educate others, picketed, sat-in, organized protest, boycotted, volunteered)	

**Cultural variables (daily routine)<sup>a</sup>**

type of doctor	type of news media read
type of food store frequented	where clothing purchased
ever wear make-up	amount of TV watched in average day
frequency reading fashion magazines	frequency reading home/garden magazines
meat intake	dairy intake
amount of makeup worn	time taken to apply
Frequency of watching programs: (dramas, soaps, law, comedy, talk shows, news, entertainment, sports, home and garden)	

**Health-related variables**

type of doctor	any diet aids taken
reasons to diet	social support from whom
social support around which issues	gender of social support
importance of female social support	ever diet
ever take diet aids	frequency of dieting
degree of worry about weight	degree of worry about aging
appearance satisfaction	respondent's height and weight
Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale	

**Demographic variables**

racial or ethnic identity	occupation category
relationship status	ever divorced
paid employment	full or part-time employment
have children	highest degree of education attained
how many kids	age
region raised	

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<sup>a</sup> Complete operational definitions of all variables given in Appendix A.

Table 4.1: Survey Variables.

individual and group differences. We know that collective identity contains three mutually reinforcing processes—boundaries, group consciousness, and personalized political strategies. These processes invoke the ideas and values, behavior, and lines of demarcation that define groups, and the individuals within that group, as living counter to social, political or cultural norms. Such social-psychological processes in social movements are important because they influence life stages and transitions and filter how pivotal events are interpreted. The intertwining of two qualitative methodologies—QCA and interpretive analysis—are used in Chapters 6 and 7 to discern how processes of transition work in relation to political and cultural activism. This next section explains how I apply interpretive analysis of extensive data gathered from interviews with activists, which is made systematic by employing QCA (Roscigno and Hodson 2004).

### Interpretive Analysis

My survey sample of activists (n=32) was derived from an earlier sample of interviewed women (n=38). The women were recruited largely through snowball sampling or from notices posted at locales, such as organic food cooperatives and vegetarian restaurants, that cater to activist women, broadly defined. All interviews lasted from two to four hours, and they were tape-recorded and transcribed in full. Inspired by feminist ways of knowing (Bordo 1992; Harding 1987; Simonds 1992), I asked the women interview questions that would allow the complexity of their life experiences to unfold. Furthermore, supportive interaction, which I predict is sufficiently empowering to sustain collective identity over time, calls for theory into practice on my part (Oakley 1981).

### *Coding Data*

The questions used in the interviews are derived from new social movement, feminist, generational, postmodern, and network theory concepts, especially collective identity. These theories contain concepts that I operationalized as relevant interview questions. These theory-based questions then form analytic codes that guide my interpretive analysis.

For example, postmodern cultural hegemony theory purports that cultural consent (e.g., of “ideal” gender roles; what is physically attractive) is best achieved when institutions like mass media appear normative and legitimate. From theory, I constructed interview questions that fit under several general rubrics of activist and other group experiences, socialization in institutions and networks, and cultural attitudes and behaviors. The rubrics and questions invoke processes of transition, informed by interpretation of pivotal events, that channel activist women down different paths than mainstream women.

Interview questions seek to address my substantive interest in activist women’s overall health, but their body and appearance esteem and norms, in particular. Thus, theory-driven interview topics gauge many appearance-related factors (body image, dieting and weight, use of makeup, shaving practices, clothing, hairstyles).

Interview questions also address the process of collective identity and its three constituent parts: group consciousness, personalized political strategies, and boundaries (Taylor and Whittier 1992). Rubrics such as entertainment, clothing, media behaviors, group experiences, formal and informal politics, ways of living, political orientations tap these processes. Other topics, such as medical preferences and experiences, birthing

experiences, and coping with depression illuminate how boundaries are set, consciousness is framed, and political practices are implemented. Central to understandings and actions that reject gendered norms of appearance may be a feminist orientation that informs such practice. Drawing on Weems's (1995) feminist work that assesses divergent discourses on the body as a site of political protest, I asked women if and how feminism informed their political and cultural experiences.

Table 4.2 below defines the three elements of collective identity within new social movements and operationalizes boundaries, group consciousness, and personalized political strategies in relation to two aspects. The first aspect is concerned with linking activist politics and culture to body esteem and health. The second aspect establishes general analytic codes that can inform processes of transition beyond this case in point . To assess how boundaries operate for activists, I questioned how body and other practices separate them especially from mainstream networks and institutions (e.g. not shaving). Beyond what is presented in Table 4.2, boundaries are determined by various political and cultural behaviors (e.g., shopping, food, media consumption).

From Table 4.2, the way group consciousness operates for activists is also assessed. I asked the women questions about any discontent they felt concerning gendered standards of appearance, specifically, and culture or politics, more generally. This informs a broad goal of my research, which is to assess the process of sustaining and yet changing collective identity, as mediated by contextual interaction. To revisit Chapter 3, I explained how an evolutionary process may shape a group's consciousness. Therefore, I inquired of the women how their bodies were re-evaluated over different

Analytic Codes	Definitions	Body Codes	Activist Codes
Boundaries	Any social, psychological, or physical structures that establish differences between groups.	Body practices that separate groups (e.g. not shaving).	Institutions and networks avoided by groups. Avoiding mainstream media and replacing with alternative media. Ideologies that foster any separation. Any localities (physical, mental social) where a group is
group consciousness	Interpretive frameworks that emerge from a group's struggle to define and realize interests that contest those of a dominant group.	Emphasis on ideas and attitudes about body/beauty practices Is natural beautiful? Beauty as activist Feminism and the body Beauty and health Health practices Eating and dieting	What values, in general? Informal groups and networks Formal groups and networks Political attitudes Ideologies Oppositional identities
personalized political strategies	Ways a group resists structures, values, behaviors, and meaning imposed by a dominant group.	Norms and actual behaviors Dieting (refusal) Shaving (refusal) Clothing (where purchased, what is worn) Hair and make-up	Activist behaviors Viewing and interpreting media Instruct others how to act Let others know of discontent with mainstream institutions

Table 4.2: Analytic Codes for Processes of Collective Identity.

stages of the life course and pivotal events, as well as if relationships with others in interaction lead to such outcomes.

My interpretation of data seeks to make overt the distinction between "being" and "doing", which invokes personalized political strategies. From Table 4.2, codes for my analysis are derived theoretically that describe everyday political and cultural activist experiences, particularly as these apply to self-presentation, to show how the personal is political. The process of collective identity is a central part of activist political process, and it probably has consequences for women's health.

The transcribed interviews yielded, in total, 1,200 pages of rich and detailed answers to my questions. These include questions that asked women to determine the approximate order of events and experiences that led them down activist paths. For instance, if parents were activists, did this influence their own activist beginnings? I have noted that mine is a study that assumes theory will also be induced by the data. That could mean concepts have dimensions that have not yet been articulated or ordered, and activist political processes may reveal such dimensions. Furthermore, gender theory may be extended by revealing a unique approach to being feminist, especially since young feminists see the world in different ways than their mothers.

My interpretive analysis of the processes of transition is lent convergent validity by incorporation, in Chapter 6, with the systematic method known as qualitative comparative analysis. Several of the political, daily routine, and health variables from the 74 participants' surveys (activists and non-activists) can be further reduced to combinations of quantifiable elements that allow deductive theory to be verified and replicated (Ragin 1987). By using variants of Boolean algebra, QCA has two essential

steps. The first is constructing theoretically specified truth tables based on variable dichotomies, while the second is using algorithms to associate elements in the table (Boswell and Brown 1999). Variable configurations, or constellations of several possible independent variables examined simultaneously, are made that invoke theoretical assumptions, and so it formalizes the research questions and design. This, then, bolsters, but does not prove, claims that causal sequences lead to outcomes.

QCA thus links inductive and deductive approaches and is, therefore, effective when linked to other methods, such as traditional statistical analysis (Boswell and Brown 1999; Roscigno and Hodson 2004). Basically, QCA applies a comparative logic between cases of various sizes (Skocpol 1979). In this instance, the cases I compare are composed of the political, cultural, and health data of all of the 74 activist and non-activist survey participants. I specify scope conditions that allow me to assess the predictive capacity of my theory and, at the same time, inform any inductive conclusions. The search for similar cases and analogous situations leads to parsimony and greater confidence in my interpretive analysis. Ultimately, QCA can build a complex theoretical model that can explain contradictory cases and include contributing causes. It is likely that my deductive presumptions will need revision to fit actual cases. In that instance, I will expand my original truth table using additional variables that may mediate interactions.

I explain in Chapter 6 how I coded various survey questions that were informed by my political process model into ones or zeros. A coding of one usually means the presence of something, while zero denotes its absence (Ragin 1987). Several variables or elements from my truth table will be associated, following the theory that was elaborated in Chapter 3. Political and cultural variables will be related to socioeconomic and



relationship outcomes. They will also be related to body image. Conversely, relationships variables, socioeconomic variables, cultural variables, which are also part of collective identity, and social support are related to political attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, cultural variables and can be related to political variables to bolster the assertion that the cultural, like the personal, is political.

Additionally, I will compliment QCA with interpretive analysis and supplementary participant observation notes obtained when I travel and by attending concerts, festivals, and gatherings (Adams 1998; Lofland and Lofland 1995). This data also promotes indepth understanding of community celebration and the meaning of activist identity and actions. Ultimately, my use of multiple methods should enable discerning broad continuity and change in activists' ideas concerning what constitutes a positive women's body image, formation and perseverance of that image, positive holistic health as promoted through political process, body image changes over time linked to pivotal biological and life course events, and activism as general response to social problems.

### Analytic Strategy

The analytic strategy I apply thus follows a logic of devoting one chapter each—Chapters 5, 6, and 7—to addressing, in order, my first three research expectations. The first research expectation that is assessed in Chapter 5 is that activist women constitute a group of collective individuals who are unique in a political and cultural sense. Survey data is used to assess how a sample of activists that I interviewed at an earlier point are different in these and other ways from a sample of non-activist women. Results from this

data can be presented descriptively and then subjected to inferential testing. This is a necessary first step in my analytic strategy—to define the group of interest so further specific and general theoretical conclusions are validated.

The second part of my analytic strategy, presented in Chapter 6, attempts to grapple with the relations between political process, collective identity and health. Doing so relies on the strengths of two qualitative research methods. The systematic, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) derived from survey data, coupled with the interpretive analysis of interview data, address how political processes build personal and collective identity, as related to health. Assessment of this second research expectation, using QCA and supplemented with narrative interview data, is presented in Chapter 6.

The third part of my analytic strategy, which is presented in Chapter 7, relies on extensive analysis of the activists' narrative data. In it, I assess the theme of the process of transition by looking at sequences, community, and pivotal events in the lives of activists. More specifically, Chapter 7 addresses whether women's activist experiences in life course stages reflect continuity and/or change in their identities, politics, and circumstances. Chapter 7 also considers how community celebration, broadly defined, can be viewed as an arena where shifts in identity and pivotal events are made meaningful, in which case participant observation lends yet more data. Finally, Chapter 7, in particular, will treat the link between women's activist experiences and their holistic health outcomes, which is my fourth research expectation.

## CHAPTER 5

### POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND HEALTH DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACTIVISTS AND NON-ACTIVISTS

Chapter 5 assesses the first research expectation that activist women constitute a group of collective individuals who are unique in a political and cultural sense. Survey data is used to assess how most of the previously interviewed sample of activists are different on three essential outcomes, which are *politics*, *daily routine*, and *health issues*, from a sample of non-activist women. Results from this data are presented descriptively and then subjected to various inferential tests. This is a necessary first step in my analytic strategy. That is, I define the group of interest so further specific and general theoretical conclusions are validated. I do not suggest that survey results indicate direct causality; rather they can show association following logical relationships. Evidence that supports the political process model comes from a triangulation of methods, notably qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and interpretive analysis, which are discussed in later chapters.

#### Variables

Many of the differences between the activist and non-activist samples can be described using basic statistics, such as frequencies, measures of central tendency (e.g., means, medians, modes), and dispersion (e.g., ranges, standard deviations). Descriptive

statistics are useful for ready comparison of categorical variables (e.g., ethnicity, occupation category, relationship status, political party affiliation, participation in certain social movements), variables with discernable gradations (e.g., paid work status, how much make-up is worn, degree of importance of female support, frequency of viewing types of media and programming, dieting frequency, degree of worry about weight and aging, highest education degree obtained, appearance satisfaction, meat and dairy intake), and scaled or numeric variables (e.g., height and weight, body image scale, number of children, numbers of volunteer hours).

From Chapter 4, Table 4.1 presents variables used in basic comparisons between activists and non-activists in terms of their political activism, daily routine, and health issues. It also includes basic demographic variables, such as age and ethnicity. There is some overlap in the way the variables can be categorized. For instance, “type of doctor” can be viewed as both a cultural and health-related choice. I organize these comparisons of activists and non-activists into themes that reflect my theoretical interests, in an order that invokes processes discussed in Chapter 3. That is, I first compare activist and non-activist women on demographic variables. I then present descriptive statistics and inferential tests based on political, cultural, and health variables and outcomes, in that order. As shown in Table 4.1, the demographic variables include racial or ethnic identity, occupation category, relationship status, divorce, paid employment, full or part-time employment, number of children, educational attainment, and age.

Table 5.1 presents descriptive data for these demographic variables for the activist women sample. Because most of the variables were measured as discrete or ordered categories, I present the mode as a measure of central tendency. For age and number of

children, since they are numeric variables, I present the mean and standard deviation. As shown in Table 5.1, most of the activists are white or European-American, they hold paid jobs, and the jobs they work tend to be part-time rather than full-time. The occupation category that is most widely held is that of a professional or manager, which is reflective of the high educational attainment of the average activist. That is, the activist sample is well-educated, as instantiated by their modal category, which is Master's degree and beyond. Married is the most common relationship status among activist participants, although almost one out of three of the women has been divorced at least once. Finally, the activist sample is more likely than not to have children, and the mean number of children is one, albeit considerable variation ( $SD=1.17$ ). The activist women's mean age is 41 (with considerable variation;  $SD=14$ ). About half of the activists ( $n=16$ ) are between ages 40-60, three participants are over age 60, and 19 are under age 40.

Table 5.2 presents descriptive data for the same demographic variables for the non-activist sample ( $n=42$ ). Either the modes or means, as measures of central tendency, are presented for the demographic variables, depending on their level of measurement. As shown in Table 5.2, most of the non-activists are white or European-American ( $n=28$ ), but there is more variation in this sample than the activist sample. Specifically, among the non-activists, nine are African-American, while three are multiracial.

Another difference between the activist and non-activist samples is that the non-activists hold paid jobs less frequently (79% of non-activists compared to 91% of the activists hold paid jobs), and yet the jobs they work tend to be full-time rather than part-time. Furthermore, although the occupation category that is most widely held is

Variable	Description	Frequency or Metric	Mode or Mean
Race or Ethnicity	Preferred racial or ethnic category of the respondent.	white=26 African-American=1 multiracial=3	white <sup>a</sup>
Paid Employment	If the respondent holds a paid job.	yes=29 no <sup>b</sup> =3	paid job
Employment Hours	The type or amount of hours worked within a paid job.	none=3 part-time=17 full-time=11	part-time
Occupation	The occupation category of the respondent's paid job.	service=7 skilled=4 clerical=1 professional <sup>c</sup> =16	mng/prof
Relationship	The current relationship status of the respondent.	married <sup>d</sup> =12 divorced=6 never married=8 partnered <sup>e</sup> =6	married
Divorced	If the respondent has ever gotten divorced.	yes=10 no=22	no
Education	The highest education category obtained by the respondent.	Associate/ 2-year=2 some college=6 Bachelor's Degree=9 Master's/ beyond <sup>f</sup> =13	master's/ beyond
Children	If the respondent has children.	yes=17 no=15	yes
How many Children	Mean number of children	0=lowest score 3=highest score	<i>M</i> =1.09 <i>SD</i> =1.17
Age	Mean age of respondent.	20=lowest score 88=highest score	<i>M</i> =41.06 <i>SD</i> =14

<sup>a</sup> I report frequencies and modes for nominal variables and metrics, means, and standard deviations for interval variables.

<sup>b</sup> The number of cases varies for each characteristic due to some missing data.

<sup>c</sup> The occupation category Professional also includes Managerial.

<sup>d</sup> The relationship category Married also contains Widowed.

<sup>e</sup> For activists but not non-activists, there is a relationship category Partnered that contains cohabiting heterosexual couples and lesbian domestic partners.

<sup>f</sup> The education category Master's degree or beyond also includes any professional degrees obtained.

Table 5.1: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Demographic Variables: Activists (n=32).

Variable	Description	Frequency or Metric	Mode or Mean
Race or Ethnicity	Preferred racial or ethnic category of the respondent.	white=28 African-American=9 multiracial=3	white
Paid Employment	If the respondent holds a paid job.	yes=33 no=9	paid job
Employment Hours	The type or amount of hours worked within a paid job.	none=8 part-time=13 full-time=20	full-time
Occupation	The occupation category of the respondent's paid job.	service=8 unskilled=1 skilled=6 sales=4 Clerical=5 Professional <sup>a</sup> =9	mng/prof
Relationship	The current relationship status of the respondent.	married=10 divorced=6 separated=1 never married=25	never married
Divorced	If the respondent has ever gotten divorced.	yes=7 no=35	no
Education	The highest education category obtained by the respondent.	high School/GED=3 Associate/ 2-year=6 some college=23 Bachelor's Degree=5 Master's or beyond=3	some college
Children	If the respondent has children.	yes=24 no=18	yes
How many Children	Mean number of children	0=lowest score 4=highest score	$M=1.15$ $SD=1.33$
Age	Mean age of respondent.	19=lowest score 72=highest score	$M=30.76$ $SD=11.43$

<sup>a</sup> For non-activists, but not activists, the occupation category Professional also includes Managerial.

Table 5.2: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Demographic Variables: Non-Activists (n=42).

professional, non-activists hold a wider range of careers, particularly in service, skilled work, and clerical work. This is reflective of the lower overall educational attainment of non-activists compared to activists. The non-activist sample varies considerably on educational attainment, with the average at some college. I point out that 13.3 years of education, or some college, is also the mean figure for the entire population of Americans. The non-activist sample is most frequently unmarried and has not been divorced. Finally, the non-activist sample, like the activists, is more likely than not to have children, and the mean number of children is one ( $M=1.15$ ), albeit there is considerable variation ( $SD=1.33$ ). The activist women's mean age is 31 (with considerable variation;  $SD=11.43$ ), although several of the participants ( $n=16$ ) are over the age of 40.

I next present Table 5.3 that summarizes the comparisons between the activist and non-activist samples on essential demographic features. As seen in Table 5.3, both samples are composed of mostly white, employed women, the mode of which work in managerial and professional occupations. More than half of the women in both samples have children, and the mean for both is one child. Yet we also see some important differences. That non-activists tend to be employed full-time, whereas activists tend to be employed part-time, suggests that activists, who are older, are, in some instances, retired, working fewer hours by chance and by choice, and reliant financially upon a spouse or partner. The younger, non-activist sample is working out of necessity and, in some instances, to save money for futures that will include expenses, such as weddings, homes, and children.



Variable	Activist Mode or Mean	Non-Activist Mode or Mean
Race or Ethnicity	White	white
Paid Employment	paid work	paid work
Employment Hours	part-time	full-time
Occupation	managerial or professional	managerial or professional
Relationship	married	never married
Divorced	never divorced	never divorced
Education <sup>a</sup>	Master's degree and beyond (6.13) <sup>b</sup>	some college (4.97)
Children	have children	have children
How many Children	$M=1.09$ ; $SD=1.17$	$M=1.15$ ; $SD=1.33$
Age	$M=41.06$ ; $SD=14$	$M=30.76$ ; $SD=11.43$

<sup>a</sup> Education is measured at the ordinal level, in which high school=1 to doctorate=8. Its ordered, numeric properties allow mean comparison using t-tests.

<sup>b</sup> Education differences are significant at the .001 level, two-tailed.

Table 5.3: Central Tendency Comparison of Demographic Variables by Group: Activists and Non-Activists.

The non-activist sample appears less educated than the activist sample, although many are currently working on associate or bachelor's degrees. In this instance, paying for higher education requires hours of employment. A *t*-test was used to assess differences between the activist and non-activist samples on educational attainment (table not presented). Indeed, I found significant differences between activists ( $M=6.13$ ,  $SD=1.10$ , two-tailed<sup>11</sup>) and non-activists ( $M=4.97$ ,  $SD=.95$ ),  $t=4.88$ ,  $p<.001$ ) in the predicted direction. That is, activists are more highly educated than non-activists. That

<sup>11</sup> Using a conservative approach, I employ two-tailed testing, since mine is a relatively small sample. This is despite the fact that most of my hypotheses are directional, which would make one-tailed testing appropriate. Because the cut-off scores are more extreme for two-tailed tests, one is less likely to obtain significant results. Hence, if significant results are obtained, then conclusions can be drawn with enhanced confidence.

activists are well-educated corroborates results found in other research (Whittier 1995, 1997). The demographic differences between the activist and non-activist samples, as presented in Table 5.3, foreshadow many other political, cultural and health-related differences. Descriptive data and inferential tests of variable associations pertaining to these differences are presented next.

### Political Differences

I assume, by definition, that an activist is someone who is, in a broad sense, politically active in non-institutionalized ways (Della porta and Diani 1999; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998). How activist women are politically and culturally different can be illuminated by comparing them to non-activist women. Table 5.4 presents descriptive data for activists on various political attitudes and behaviors. Again, either the mode or mean is presented for variables depending on their level of measurement. Discrete or ordered variables that invoke normal or everyday politics include political party, abortion stance, and whether or not activists have voted, written letters to politicians, lobbied, organized campaigns, helped others vote, explained issues door-to-door, participated in Internet politics, educated others, or volunteered. Institutional variables that are numeric include the number of hours volunteered per month for civic and religious events. The remaining variables in Table 5.4 are discrete, and they invoke non-institutionalized political activities. These include whether or not activists have picketed, done sit-ins, protested, or boycotted products or events.

As shown in Table 5.4, the modal category that activists claim as their political party affiliation is “other,” and that includes, among others, Green, Libertarian, and

Variable	Description	Frequency or Metric	Mode or Mean
Political party	The respondent's political party affiliation.	republican=2 democrat=6 independent=7 other=15	other, e.g., green, libertarian
Abortion Stance	The respondent's stance on abortion.	pro-life=4 pro-choice=27	pro-choice
Civic hours volunteered per month	The average number of hours per week that the respondent volunteers for civic events.	0=least hours 120=most hours	$M=14.38$ $SD=28.84$
Religious hours volunteered per month	The average number of hours per week that the respondent volunteers for religious events.	0=least hours 24=most hours	$M=2.69$ $SD=6.21$
Voting	If the respondent has ever voted.	yes=30 no=0	yes
Writing letters	If the respondent has ever written letters to a politician.	yes=25 no=3	yes
Lobbying	If the respondent has ever lobbied for any issue.	yes=14 no=15	no
Campaign organizing	If the respondent has ever organized a political campaign.	yes=11 no=18	no
Helping others vote	If the respondent has ever helped others to vote.	yes=15 no=13	yes
Door-to-door	If the respondent has ever explained issues door-to-door.	yes=15 no=14	yes
Internet activism	If the respondent has ever done any Internet activism.	yes=23 no=7	yes
Educate others	If the respondent has ever educated others about politics.	yes=28 no=4	yes
Volunteering	If the respondent has ever volunteered.	yes=31 no=0	yes
Picketing	If the respondent has ever picketed for any reason.	yes=20 no=9	yes
Sit-ins	If the respondent has ever done a sit-in for any reason.	yes=12 no=16	no
Protesting	If the respondent has ever protested a political issue.	yes=22 no=7	yes
Boycotting	If the respondent has ever boycotted a product.	yes=29 no=1	yes

Table 5.4: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Political Variables: Activists (n=33).

Socialist. Not surprisingly, the majority of activists (87%) take a pro-choice abortion stance, although those who are pro-life (13%) feel strongly against abortion and incorporate this view into their activism. A paired comparison t-test (table not presented) was used to show that activists volunteer significantly more civic ( $M=14.38$ ,  $SD=28.84$ , two-tailed) than religious ( $M=2.69$ ,  $SD=6.21$ ),  $t=2.30$ ,  $p=.03$ ) hours of their time per month, although there is a strong correlation ( $r=.54$ ) between the two variables. Activists have been very involved in normal political activities. As seen in Table 5.4, all of those who responded to the questions of whether or not they have voted or volunteered indicated yes. A majority indicate they have written letters, educated others, and participated in Internet activism on any issue. About half of the activists indicate that they have lobbied, helped others to vote, or gone door-to-door to explain issues. The only normal political activity that considerably more than half the activists have *not* done is campaign organizing (62%). This result is probably definitional. Activism, according to Tarrow (1998) and McAdam (1982), is the domain of political challengers who lack money and clout; money and clout are needed to organize a viable campaign.

Table 5.4 shows that activists have partaken in many political behaviors that are considered non-institutional. Non-institutional means that authorities, including current decision-makers and any law enforcers, do not have set responses to activist demands. This is because they are being challenged to share economic, cultural, and political power. A majority of activists have picketed, protested, or boycotted while slightly more than half (57%) have *not* done a sit-in. The low response to sit-ins may be due to activists viewing or including it as a protest or picketing activity.

Variable	Description	Frequency or Metric	Mode or Mean
Political party	The respondent's political party affiliation.	republican=6 democrat=21 independent=8 other=5	democrat
Abortion Stance	The respondent's stance on abortion.	pro-life=22 pro-choice=20	pro-life
Civic hours volunteered per month	The average number of hours per month that the respondent volunteers for civic events.	0=least hours 32=most hours	$M=4.36$ $SD=7.46$
Religious hours volunteered per month	The average number of hours per month that the respondent volunteers for religious events.	0=least hours 20=most hours	$M=4.55$ $SD=12.27$
Voting	If the respondent has ever voted.	yes=39 no=3	yes
Writing letters	If the respondent has ever written letters to a politician.	yes=18 no=24	no
Lobbying	If the respondent has ever lobbied for any issue.	yes=4 no=38	no
Campaign organizing	If the respondent has ever organized a political campaign.	yes=6 no=36	no
Helping others vote	If the respondent has ever helped others to vote.	yes=27 no=15	yes
Door-to-door	If the respondent has ever explained issues door-to-door.	yes=8 no=34	no
Internet activism	If the respondent has ever done any Internet activism.	yes=6 no=36	no
Educate others	If the respondent has ever educated others about politics.	yes=19 no=23	no
Volunteering	If the respondent has ever volunteered.	yes=24 no=18	yes
Picketing	If the respondent has ever picketed for any reason.	yes=5 no=37	no
Sit-ins	If the respondent has ever done a sit-in for any reason.	yes=6 no=36	no
Protesting	If the respondent has ever protested a political issue.	yes=13 no=29	no
Boycotting	If the respondent has ever boycotted a product.	yes=18 no=24	no

Table 5.5: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Political Variables: Non-Activists (n=42).

Table 5.5 shows that non-activist women have political attitudes and behaviors that are quite different than activists. In contrast to activists, the modal category that non-activists claim as their political party affiliation is Democrat. Although it is nearly split in half, the majority of non-activists (55%) take a pro-life abortion stance. Interestingly, in the comparatively few instances where non-activists are active, the pro-life movement is often mentioned. And unlike activists, non-activists show no significant differences among themselves in the number of hours per month spent volunteering for civic and religious events. Besides voting and helping others to vote, non-activists have not even been very involved in normal political activities. Fewer than half have written letters to politicians for any reason, educated others, and volunteered. Far fewer than half have lobbied, organized a campaign, gone door-to-door, or done Internet activism.

Table 5.5 also shows that non-activists have overwhelmingly *not* partaken in many political behaviors that are considered non-institutional. A majority of non-activists have never picketed, protested, or done a sit-in. Yet close to half (43%) have boycotted at least one product or event. These political differences suggest that activists are a unique group, and that the sample of non-activist women is robust enough to indicate these differences.

Table 5.6 summarizes the comparisons between the activist and non-activist samples on the political variables discussed above. As seen in Table 5.6, the activist sample is clearly more political than the non-activist sample, and this difference is reflected in both institutional and non-institutional politics. A majority of the activists have done most of the listed political behaviors, while the majority of non-activists have not. There are some exceptions to this. Less than a majority of activists have lobbied,

Variable	Activist Mode or Mean	Non-Activist Mode or Mean
Political party	Other	democrat
Abortion Stance	pro-choice	pro-life
Civic hours	$M=14.61$	$M=4.36$
volunteered per week	$SD=27.84$	$SD=7.46$
Religious hours	$M=3.21$	$M=4.55$
volunteered per week	$SD=6.84$	$SD=12.27$
Voting	Yes	yes
Writing letters	Yes	no
Lobbying	No	no
Campaign organizing	No	no
Helping others vote	Yes	yes
Door-to-door	Yes	no
Internet activism	Yes	no
Educate others	Yes	no
Volunteering	Yes	yes
Picketing	Yes	no
Sit-ins	No	no
Protesting	Yes	no
Boycotting	Yes	no

Table 5.6: Central Tendency Comparison of Political Variables by Group: Activists and Non-Activists.

organized a campaign, or done a sit-in. And a majority of non-activists have voted, helped others to vote or volunteered, particularly in a religious capacity. Voting and volunteering can be seen as among the most typical and accessible forms of political behavior (Verba et al. 1995), and so its presence in the non-activist sample makes sense.

I used a *t*-test to assess differences between the activist and non-activist samples on the number of religious and civic hours volunteered (table not presented). Significant differences were only found between activists ( $M=14.61$ ,  $SD=27.84$ , two-tailed) and non-activists ( $M=4.36$ ,  $SD=7.46$ ),  $t=2.20$ ,  $p=.032$ ) for civic hours, in the predicted direction. The story behind this difference is explained in Chapter 7 that uses detailed narrative data to bolster quantitative findings in this and the next chapter.

The high level of non-institutional political participation of activists foreshadows their extensive participation in many progressive and other social movements. Table 5.7 below presents descriptive data for the activist sample on social movement participation. Only modes are presented because all the variables are measured categorically as having participated or not in ten different social movements. These movements include Black civil rights, the Vietnam war, free speech, women's, environmental, peace, animal rights, gay rights, AIDS, anti-globalization, anti-military, anti-apartheid, and other. "Other" offered participants the chance to fill in a blank for any movement to which they have participated, yet was not indicated as a categorical response. In this regard, it is important to note that a vocal minority of activists are deeply involved in religiously-inspired issues and movements, such as pro-life and Christian missionary work. Details such as this are presented in depth in Chapter 7.

The data shown in Table 5.7 must be understood as indicating social movement participation for a sample divided purposefully by age. That is, because I made efforts to recruit both younger and older activists, how they participate will be a function of age. As such, the negative modes shown in column 4 can partly be explained by, for instance, the Vietnam War preceding the life course of younger activists. Of the older activists in the sample, all have had some experience with the women's movement as sympathizers, supporters, members, or participants. The younger activists in my sample are also involved in activism on many dimensions, in part



Variable	Description	Frequency	Mode
Civil Rights	If respondent took part in the civil rights movement.	yes=13 no=16	no
Vietnam War	If respondent took part in the anti-Vietnam War movement.	yes=9 no=20	no
Free Speech	If respondent took part in the free speech movement.	yes=8 no=21	no
Women's	If respondent took part in the women's movement.	yes=23 no=7	yes
Environment	If respondent took part in the environmental movement.	yes=25 no=6	yes
Peace	If respondent took part in the peace movement.	yes=25 no=4	yes
Animal Rights	If respondent took part in the animal rights movement.	yes=14 no=16	no
Gay Rights	If respondent took part in the gay rights movement.	yes=18 no=12	yes
AIDs	If respondent took part in the AIDs movement.	yes=13 no=16	no
Anti-globalization	If respondent took part in the anti-globalization movement.	yes=15 no=15	tie
Anti-apartheid	If respondent took part in the anti-apartheid movement.	yes=5 no=24	no
Anti-military	If respondent took part in the anti-military movement.	yes=22 no=7	yes
Other	If respondent took part in any other movement.	yes=22 no=8	yes

Table 5.7: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Modes for Social Movement Participation Variables: Activists (n=33).

from their exposure to postmodern diversity. In particular, they are involved in anti-militarism, anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and counterculturalism.

With this caveat, as shown in Table 5.7, positive modal categories are obtained for participation in the women's, environmental, peace, gay rights, anti-military, and other movements. It deserves mention that, except for gay rights, a substantial majority of activists participated in the movements in which the mode is positive. Negative modal categories are shown for the Black civil rights, Vietnam War, free speech, animal rights, AIDS, and anti-apartheid movements. Even so, close to half of the activists have some involvement in civil rights, AIDS, and animal rights. An equal number of activists have participated in the anti-globalization movement as those who have not. Further, activists have worked extensively in other social movements, including rural education, the counterculture, anti-Iraq War, transgender rights, home-schooling, midwifery, organic food and farming, ecological spirituality, and natural living, health, and mothering. In contrast to activists, the low level of non-institutional political behavior of non-activists is reflected in their limited participation in social movements.

Table 5.8 presents descriptive data for the non-activist sample on social movement participation. The social movements considered are the same as those presented in Table 5.7 for activists. The category of "other" social movement was meant to invoke a range of possible activism, such as any informed by conservative ideas. However, relatively few non-activists indicated even some other participation (27%). When they did, it did tend to be for religiously-inspired issues and movements, but also education issues. For all of the other listed social movements, the modal category was negative, which matches my predictions. In fairness, non-activists have participated to

Variable	Description	Frequency	Mode
Civil Rights	If respondent took part in the civil rights movement.	yes=6 no=36	no
Vietnam War	If respondent took part in the anti-Vietnam War movement.	yes=2 no=40	no
Free Speech	If respondent took part in the free speech movement.	yes=4 no=38	no
Women's	If respondent took part in the women's movement.	yes=6 no=36	no
Environment	If respondent took part in the environmental movement.	yes=12 no=30	no
Peace	If respondent took part in the peace movement.	yes=8 no=34	no
Animal Rights	If respondent took part in the animal rights movement.	yes=7 no=35	no
Gay Rights	If respondent took part in the gay rights movement.	yes=11 no=31	no
AIDs	If respondent took part in the AIDs movement.	yes=6 no=36	no
Anti-globalization	If respondent took part in the anti-globalization movement.	yes=0 no=42	no
Anti-apartheid	If respondent took part in the anti-apartheid movement.	yes=2 no=40	no
Anti-military	If respondent took part in the anti-military movement.	yes=0 no=42	no
Other	If respondent took part in any other movement.	yes=9 no=33	no

Table 5.8: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Modes for Social Movement Participation Variables: Non-Activists (n=42)..

some extent in the environmental (40%), gay rights (35%), and peace (24%) movements, respectively. Few non-activists indicated participating in the animal rights (20%), civil rights, women's, AIDS (all just under 17%), free speech (almost 11%), anti-Vietnam War and anti-apartheid (5%) movements. None of the non-activists have participated in the anti-globalization or anti-military movements.

It is useful when comparing the activist and non-activist samples to discuss three additional political variables recoded from variables presented in Tables 5.4-5.8. These recoded variables are scales that are composed of normal political behaviors, non-institutional political behaviors, and the social movement participation total. These scaled variables are subjected to *t* tests in Table 5.9 to substantiate predictions that activists have higher levels of the political behaviors considered than non-activists. The first of these recoded variables I call "normal." It is a scale ranging from 0-9 that includes the sum of positive responses to nine standard political behaviors. That is, it is the sum total of yes responses to voting, writing letters, lobbying, organizing campaigns, going door-to-door, helping others vote, educating others, doing Internet politics, and volunteering. As shown in Table 5.9, significant differences were found between activists ( $M=6.52$ ,  $SD=1.60$ , two-tailed) and non-activists ( $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=1.81$ ),  $t=7.03$ ,  $p<.001$ ) for the total number of normal political behaviors, in the predicted direction.

The second recoded variable is named "noninstitutional," and it is a scale ranging from 0-4 that includes the sum of positive responses to four non-institutional political behaviors. These behaviors include picketing, protesting, doing sit-ins, and boycotting. Table 5.9 shows that significant differences were found between activists ( $M=2.82$ ,

Variable	Activist Mean	Non-Activist Mean
Normal	6.52	3.60
Non-institutional	2.82	1.00
Total social movements	6.93	1.74

<sup>a</sup>The ordered, numeric properties of all of the above recoded variables allow mean comparison using *t*-tests.

<sup>b</sup>All differences are significant at the .001 level, two-tailed tests.

Table 5.9: Means Comparison of Recoded Political Variables by Group: Activists and Non-Activists.

$SD=1.12$ , two-tailed) and non-activists ( $M=1.00$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ),  $t=6.85$ ,  $p<.001$ ) for the total number of non-institutional political behaviors, in the predicted direction.

It was common for the mature women in the activist sample to express involvement in four or more social movements, notably the women's movement. Therefore, I wanted to see if there was a significant difference in the total number of movements to which activists and non-activists have been involved. I created a third recoded variable named "total social movements," and it is a scale ranging from 0-13. Table 5.9 shows that significant differences were found between activists ( $M=6.93$ ,  $SD=3.11$ , two-tailed) and non-activists ( $M=1.74$ ,  $SD=1.98$ ),  $t=8.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ) for their social movement participation totals, in the predicted direction.

### Cultural Differences in Daily Routine

Political processes were modeled in Chapter 3 as being causally prior to cultural and health-related variables, such as media consumption, body image, dieting behaviors, and worry about weight and aging. I have demonstrated statistically in the prior section that activists and non-activists are considerably different in their normal and non-

institutional political behaviors, as well as in their degree of participation in social movements. Yet, I have argued that there are probably other social and cultural facets and processes that differentiate activists from conventional women. These features, then, can have a positive impact on women's body image and, ultimately, their holistic health. What may be considered cultural behaviors include types of doctors visited, how much

Variable	Description	Mode or mean
Type of doctor	Preferred type of doctor	general practitioner
Daily TV	How much TV watched in a typical day.	none
Type of news	Source of written news.	alternative
Food shopping	Where food is typically purchased.	organic or cooperative
Dramas	Frequency of watching dramas.	infrequently
Soap operas	Frequency of watching soap operas.	infrequently
Law-detective	Frequency of watching law or detective shows.	infrequently
Sit-coms	Frequency of watching sit-coms.	infrequently
Talk shows	Frequency of watching talk shows.	never
News	Frequency of watching news.	infrequently
Entertainment	Frequency of watching entertainment.	never
Sports	Frequency of watching sports.	never
Home & garden	Frequency of watching home and garden TV.	never
Fashion magazines	Frequency of reading fashion magazines.	never
Family magazines	Frequency of reading family magazines.	never
Eating meat	Frequency of eating meat.	never
Eating dairy	Frequency of eating dairy.	infrequently and frequently
Clothing	Where clothing is typically purchased.	thrift stores
Makeup typical	If makeup is worn on a typical day.	no
Time applying makeup	Average amount of minutes to apply makeup.	$M=2.59$ $SD=3.78$
Amount of makeup	Typical amount of makeup worn.	none

Table 5.10: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Cultural Variables: Activists (n=33).

and what types of TV, movies, and magazines viewed, news consumed, where food is purchased, dieting, meat and dairy intake, and clothing and makeup worn.

As shown in Table 5.10, the modal category for type of doctor preferred by activists is general practitioner. However, there were a number of categories of doctor types that can be considered alternative. These would include holistic practitioners, chiropractors, others, (e.g., doctors of osteopathy), and alternative specialists (e.g., acupuncturist). Summing these alternative categories, then, yields 19 activists, or 59% of the sample (frequencies for Table 5.10 not presented). Although 12 (38%) activists buy their food at chain grocery stores, such as Kroger or Meyer's, the majority (63%) choose organic foods from cooperative stores, local farms, and farmer's markets. From their food shopping, they regularly consume dairy products, but they often make the choice to eat little (53%, or the sum of infrequently and occasionally) or no (31%) meat. Activists most often purchase their clothing from thrift stores (72%) because doing so is both an environmentally conscious choice and an economic necessity. More often than not, activists choose not to wear any makeup (57%), even for special occasions. Even when they do, they wear a light amount (86% of the sample wears light to no makeup) that only takes an average of two-and-a-half minutes to apply.

Activists' media consumption behaviors are of particular importance to my study. More than 1/3 of the activists (34%) watch *no* daily television, which I have explained is probably an important precursor to heightened self-esteem and body image. An additional 47% of the activists watch less than two hours of daily television, and much of this is news. Activists stressed to me the importance of varying their news media sources, and, in this vein, they often preferred the written word. From Table 5.10, 20



activists (63%) read alternative newspapers rather than standard daily and business papers. The many categories of television programming, and the frequency of which they are watched, is obviously low. Activists typically watch only infrequent amounts of dramas, soap operas, law programs, and situation comedies. A majority of activists never watch entertainment shows, talk shows, sports, and home and garden television. These latter types of programs can be viewed as especially mainstream, with their emphasis on material products, celebrities, sensationalism, and somewhat rigid gender norms.

Activists are also likely to avoid reading or purchasing fashion and family/home magazines, which idealize women's sexual attractiveness and adhering to traditional family obligations. More specifically, 94% and 97% of activists, respectively, never or infrequently view fashion and family magazines. In sum, activists tend to avoid many forms and types of mainstream media, in particular, those that glorify rigid definitions of femininity.

Table 5.11 below describes and details the cultural behaviors of non-activists. The modal category for type of doctor preferred by non-activists is overwhelming a general practitioner (78%; frequencies for Table 5.11 not presented). Very few non-activists see practitioners from the categories of doctor types that can be considered alternative. Summing these alternative categories yields only four activists, or about 10% of the sample. Five non-activists chose specialists, but these were mainstream doctors that specialized in heart or internal medicine or that treated cancer. Only four activists buy organic foods from cooperative stores or farmer's markets; the large majority purchase their food at chain grocery stores (over 90%). From their food shopping, they

Variable	Description	Mode or Mean
Type of doctor	Preferred type of doctor	general practitioner
Daily TV	How much TV watched in a typical day.	1 to 2 hours
Type of news	Typical source of news.	daily paper
Food shopping	Where food is typically purchased.	chain grocery
Dramas	Frequency of watching dramas.	occasionally
Soap operas	Frequency of watching soap operas.	never
Law-detective	Frequency of watching law or detective shows.	occasionally
Sit-coms	Frequency of watching sit-coms.	occasionally
Talk shows	Frequency of watching talk shows.	tie for never, infrequently, and occasionally
News	Frequency of watching news.	infrequently
Entertainment	Frequency of watching entertainment.	occasionally
Sports	Frequency of watching sports.	occasionally
Home & garden	Frequency of watching home and garden TV.	occasionally
Fashion magazines	Frequency of reading fashion magazines.	infrequently
Family magazines	Frequency of reading family magazines.	infrequently
Eating meat	Frequency of eating meat.	frequently
Eating dairy	Frequency of eating dairy.	frequently
Clothing	Where clothing is typically purchased.	chain stores
Makeup typical	If makeup is worn on a typical day.	yes
Time applying makeup	Average amount of minutes to apply makeup.	$M=5.49$ $SD=6.03$
Amount of makeup	Typical amount of makeup worn.	none

Table 5.11: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Cultural Variables: Non-Activists (n=42).

regularly consume both dairy products and meat (69% and 73%, respectively, eat dairy and meat either often or frequently). Few of the non-activists choose not to eat meat or to do so only infrequently (12%), and that percentage is only 7% for dairy. Activists most often purchase their clothing from large chain stores, such as Walmart, Target, or Sears (71%) because it is convenient and affordable. More often than not, activists choose to wear makeup (63%) on a daily basis, although many do not. When they do, they are likely to wear a light amount that takes an average of five-and-a-half minutes to apply.

As far as media consumption behaviors, only two of the non-activists do not watch any daily television. The mode for daily viewing time is between one and two hours. From Table 5.11, 32 non-activists read standard daily and business papers (80%), while only 20% read an alternative paper. Non-activists typically watch occasional amounts of most of the types of television programs. While the majority of non-activists indicated that they never watch soap operas, several explained that their work hours made such viewing impossible. This implies that they would view such shows if they had the time to do so. Many of the programs that are watched convey mainstream values and norms, including those for gender. Non-activists will read and purchase fashion and family/home magazines, although the mode for both is infrequently. In sum, non-activists consume many forms and types of mainstream media that depict images of traditional femininity.

Table 5.12 summarizes the comparisons between the activist and non-activist samples on the cultural variables discussed above. As seen in Table 5.12, the activist sample is different overall in their cultural choices of daily routine than the non-activist sample. Comparisons of these differences can be seen in two basic rubrics. The first

rubric is concerned with the consumption of products and services, while the second rubric is media consumption behaviors.

Starting with the first rubric, both samples see general practitioners in a modal sense, but activists, if we add together many alternative practitioners, most often choose the latter. The same cannot be said for non-activists. Activists prefer and actually shop most often at organic shops and markets. Non-activists do their food shopping at large, chain grocery stores. Activists do eat meat and dairy products, but they are less likely to do either than non-activists. In fact, the activists' mode for eating meat is never, which I believe is linked to participation in social movements, especially animal rights, peace, and the environmental movement. While activists purchase recycled clothing at thrift stores, non-activists frequent large chain retailers. Activists are less likely to wear makeup and also spend less time applying it than their non-activist counterparts. Significant differences were found between activists ( $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=3.78$ , two-tailed) and non-activists ( $M=5.59$ ,  $SD=6.03$ ),  $t=-2.292$ ,  $p=.025$ ) for the time spent applying makeup, in the predicted direction.

Variable	Activist Mode or Mean	Non-Activist Mode or Mean
Type of doctor	general practitioner	general practitioner
Daily TV	None	1 to 2 hours
Type of news	Alternative	daily paper
Food shopping	organic or cooperative	chain grocery
Dramas	Infrequently	occasionally
Soap operas	Infrequently	never
Law-detective	Infrequently	occasionally
Sit-coms	Infrequently	occasionally
Talk shows	Never	tie for never, infrequently, and occasionally
News	Infrequently	Infrequently
Entertainment	Never	occasionally
Sports	Never	occasionally
Home & garden	Never	occasionally
Fashion magazines	Never	infrequently
Family magazines	Never	infrequently
Eating meat	Never	frequently
Eating dairy	infrequently and frequently	frequently
Clothing	thrift stores	chain stores
Makeup typical	No	yes
Time applying makeup	$M=2.59$ ; $SD=3.78$	$M=5.49$ ; $SD=6.03$
Amount of makeup	None	none

Table 5.12: Central Tendency Comparison of Cultural Variables by Group: Activists and Non-Activists.

Proceeding to the second rubric, activists exhibit less media consumption than non-activists. They watch fewer hours of daily television and limit their viewing to a smaller range of programs than non-activists. Table 5.12 shows that activists have common modes of never and infrequently for most program types, while, for non-activists, the common modes include infrequently and occasionally. It is likely that activists' established frequent patterns of normal and non-institutional politics, as well as social movement participation, have altered their values and norms, and these are appearing as differences in daily routine. Below, I perform ordinary least squares

regression of three cultural variables on several mostly political independent variables that suggest their causal links.

Table 5.13 presents regression coefficients for three cultural variables. Two of these variables, eating meat and time spent applying makeup, are entered into the regression equations in the ways they were initially measured. The third dependent variable, feminine images, is a recoded scale created from summing the values of two media consumption variables that were presented in Tables 5.10 and 5.11. These include the values for the frequency of viewing soap operas plus entertainment shows. Both soap operas and entertainment programs emphasize thin, young, beautiful celebrities. I believe that activists come to see such images as a source of gender inequality, and so making alternative media consumption choices is probably a consequence of political activity.

Eating meat is regressed on four independent variables that are related to politics and activism. Three of these variables, peace movement participation, animal rights movement participation, and voting, are dichotomous dummy variables in which yes is the reference category. The fourth independent variable is the number of civic hours volunteered in an average month. Controlling for the other three independent variables, participating in the peace movement is associated with a more than one point drop on a frequency of eating meat scale. Similarly, participation in animal rights leads to a reduction in meat intake of almost one point. A one hour increase in civic hours volunteered will slightly reduce meat intake. Participation in the two movements and civic hours volunteered are statistically significant, all in the predicted directions. The adjusted  $R^2$  reveals a model with strong predictive capacity. About 41% of the variation in eating meat can be explained by this combination of political independent variables.

	Eating Meat	Feminine Images	Time for Makeup
In peace movement (yes=1)	-1.224 (.284)***		
In animal rights movement (yes=1)	-.922 (.31)**		
Voting (yes=1)	1.007 (.64)		
Civic hours volunteered	-.017 (.007)*		
In environmental movement (yes=1)		-.983 (.383)*	
In some other movement (yes=1)		-.888 (.353)*	
Boycotting (yes=1)		-.994 (.419)*	
Abortion stance (pro-choice=1)		.883 (.35)*	
Reading fashion magazines		.398 (.162)*	
Lower white collar worker=1			4.818 (1.708)**
Often see ideal media			1.100 (.363)**
Non-institutional politics			1.783 (.555)**
In peace movement (yes=1)			-4.263 (1.484)**
Anxious about chin			1.601 (.618)*
Intercept	2.112	2.544	-.678
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.413	.457	.283

<sup>a</sup>Metric coefficients (standard errors).

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

Table 5.13: Regression Coefficients of Eating Meat, Viewing Ideal Feminine Images, and Time Applying Makeup on Predictor Variables: Activists and Non-Activists.<sup>a</sup>

In the next equation, feminine images is regressed on five independent variables that are related to aspects of politics and daily routine. Three of these variables, environmental movement participation, other movement participation, and boycotting, are dichotomous dummy variables in which yes is the reference category. Abortion stance is also a dichotomous dummy where pro-choice is the reference category. The fifth variable is the frequency of viewing fashion magazines. Controlling for the other independent variables, participating in the environmental movement, participating in some other movement, and boycotting are all associated with close to a one point drop on the recoded frequency of feminine images scale. Interestingly, being pro-choice is linked to nearly a one point *increase* in viewing feminine images. More frequent viewing of fashion magazines is linked to a nearly half point increase in viewing idealizes images, as depicted in soap operas and entertainment programming. All five independent variables are statistically significant in the predicted directions, with the exception of being pro-choice. I believe being pro-choice is not the exclusive realm of women who articulate a feminist worldview, plus the majority of women in both samples chose a pro-choice abortion stance. It may be that many of the mainstream feminist messages about issues, such as abortion, are shown in the many and varied mediums consumed by the non-activist sample, in particular. The adjusted  $R^2$  indicates that about 45% of the variation in feminine images can be explained by this particular combination of independent variables.

In the last equation, the time spent applying makeup is regressed on five independent variables. Peace movement participation is a two category dummy variable in which yes is the reference category. Occupation is a polychotomous dummy variable



where lower white collar worker is the reference category. The recoded feminine images scale serves as an independent variable in this equation. The recoded non-institutional politics scale (see Table 5.9) serves as the fourth independent variable. Fifth is anxiety about a facial feature, in this case, the chin, as a reason to use more makeup. Controlling for the other variables, being a lower white collar worker, such as clerk, increases the amount of time spent applying makeup by almost five minutes. It could be that such workers are routinely in the eye of customers and fellow employees. Plus, many more of the non-activists are in this occupational category compared to professional activists, many of whom opt to skip makeup entirely. Frequently viewing feminine images, doing non-institutional politics, and facial feature anxiety all increase the time spent applying makeup between one and two minutes. Participating in the peace movement decreases the time spent with makeup by more than two minutes. In this model, all of the variables are statistically significant in the predicted directions, except for doing non-institutional politics. It may be that such activists also hold paid jobs, including work for activist issues. Being in the public eye may thus motivate women to use makeup in those contexts. The adjusted  $R^2$  reveals another model with good predictive capacity in that 28% of the variation in time applying makeup is explained by this combination of independent variables.

### Differences on Health Issues and Outcomes

It has been shown that political processes precede cultural variables, such as media consumption and the purchase of services and products. Political process is probably also causally linked to health-related variables, such as body image, dieting

behaviors, social support, and worry about weight and aging. I assert, then, that there are probably health-related attitudes and behaviors that differentiate activists from conventional women. What may be considered health-related attitudes include worry about weight and aging, appearance satisfaction, body image, and the importance of female social support. Health-related behaviors include aspects of dieting, as well as consuming products and services, that can affect health. These variables, such as choice of doctor, where food is purchased, and how much meat and dairy are consumed, were presented in the section on cultural behaviors (see Tables 5.10-5.11). That is, I recognize the links between cultural choices and health.

As shown in Table 5.14, the modal category for whether activists have ever dieted is no (63%; metrics only shown for scaled variables), but when they do, the mode is only infrequently (54%). The great majority of activists have never taken diet aids (92%), such as diet pills. This does not mean that activists *never* worry about their weight; most express such worry infrequently or sometimes (33% for both), although only five women worry often or frequently. Infrequently and sometimes (37% for both) are also the activist modes for worry about aging. This relative lack of worry about weight and aging translates into a mode of very satisfied (35%) for activists' appearance satisfaction. Only five activist women are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (16%) with their appearance. Those who expressed appearance discontent tended to be very overweight. The average weight and height for activists was about 143 pounds and between five feet four and five inches, respectively. I used the Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale (Thompson 1996: 80) to measure body image. It is a scale composed of

Variable	Description	Metric	Mode or Mean
Ever diet	If the respondent has ever dieted		no
How often diet	How often the respondent diets		never
Ever take diet aids	If the respondent has ever taken diet aids		no
Worry about weight	How often the respondent worries about her weight		infrequently and sometimes
Worry about aging	How often the respondent worries about aging		infrequently and sometimes
Satisfaction with appearance	The degree of satisfaction with overall appearance		very satisfied
Height	Height in inches	0 to 72 actual inches	$M=64.78$ $SD=1.656$
Weight	Weight in pounds	94 to 305 actual pounds	$M=142.52$ $SD=31.463$
Body Image	The Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale composed of degree of worry about 10 body parts or conditions	0 to 42 actual on scale	$M=13.45$ $SD=8.162$
Who gives social support	Relationship status with main source of social support		friends
Gender of the social support	The gender of the main source of social support		equally both
Female social support	Importance of women as the main source of social support		very important

<sup>a</sup> Variable cases are different due to some missing data.

<sup>b</sup> For non-activists, but not activists, the occupation category Professional also includes Managerial.

<sup>c</sup> The education category Master's degree or beyond also includes any professional degrees obtained.

Table 5.14: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Health-Related Variables: Activists (n=32).

the extent of worry about 10 body parts or conditions (i.e., weight) with a range of zero to an actual high score of 42 for the sample. However, the mean of the sample was much lower, or 13.45. The activist mode for who gives social support is friends (43%) who are, modally speaking, equally likely to be both men and women (41%). Having strong female social support was generally considered very important (70%).

As shown in Table 5.15, there are notable differences between non-activists and activists on these numerous health-related variables. The modal category for whether non-activists have ever dieted is yes (56%; metrics only shown for scaled variables), although a sizable number of the women claim they never diet (43%). Only 55% (23) of the non-activists answered the question about taking diet aids. Among those who did, 15 (65%) said they have taken diet aids.

It appears that non-activists worry about their weight more than activists. In particular, 76% say they are sometimes, often, or frequently worried about their weight. And yet the mode for worry about aging is only infrequently, but this is probably because the non-activist sample is fairly young.<sup>12</sup> However, the non-activist sample has lower appearance satisfaction than activists. Specifically, 55% are neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with their appearances. Like the activist sample ( $SD=31.46$ ), there were a few outliers in the non-activist sample for weight ( $SD=51.28$ ), with a few women weighing over 250 pounds and so, again, those who expressed appearance discontent tended to be *very* overweight. The average weight and height for non-activists was about

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<sup>12</sup> The mean of the non-activist sample for age is 30.76 years of age. A *t*-test comparing the sample age with the population statistic for Franklin County (32.5 years) finds support for the null hypothesis of no difference ( $t=.98$ , two-tailed) (Decennial Census Data. 2000. United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census).

Variable	Description	Frequency or Metric	Mode or Mean
Ever diet	If the respondent has ever dieted		yes
How often diet	How often the respondent diets		never
Ever take diet aids	If the respondent has ever taken diet aids		yes
Worry about weight	How often the respondent worries about her weight		sometimes
Worry about aging	How often the respondent worries about aging		infrequently
Satisfaction with appearance	The degree of satisfaction with overall appearance		somewhat satisfied
Height	Height in inches	0 to 72 actual inches	$M=64.76$ $SD=2.748$
Weight	Weight in pounds	94 to 305 actual pounds	$M=159.88$ $SD=51.276$
Body Image	Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale	0 to 42 actual on scale	$M=19.60$ $SD=9.728$
Who gives social support	Relationship status with main source of social support		other family
Gender of the social support	The gender of the main source of social support		women
Female social support	Importance of women as the main source of social support		somewhat important

Table 5.15: Descriptions, Frequencies, and Central Tendencies for Health-Related Variables: Non-Activists (n=42).

160 pounds and between five feet four and five inches, respectively. The mean of the non-activist sample for body image appears higher than that of activists, or 19.60. The non-activist mode for who gives social support is other family (55%) who are, modally speaking, more likely to be women than men (50%). Having strong female social support was generally considered somewhat important.

Table 5.16 summarizes the comparisons between the activist and non-activist samples on the health variables discussed above. As seen in Table 5.16, the activist sample is different overall in their health attitudes and behaviors than the non-activist sample. Activists are less likely to diet and take diet aids than non-activists. It is interesting that, for both the activist and non-activist samples, it was people other than spouses or partners who provided the most social support. While getting social support from women is at least somewhat important to both samples, activists get more social support from men than non-activists do. Activists are less likely than non-activists to be worried about their weight, while non-activists are less worried about aging. I argue that activists decreased concern with weight is a consequence of the alternative values and norms they have acquired through political process. This also translates into activists expressing heightened appearance satisfaction. Then, too, significant differences were found between activists ( $M=13.45$ ,  $SD=8.16$ , two-tailed) and non-activists ( $M=19.60$ ,  $SD=9.73$ ),  $t=-2.882$ ,  $p=.005$ .) for body image, as I expected, in the predicted direction.

Variable	Activist Mode or Mean	Non-Activist Mode or Mean
Ever diet	No	yes
How often diet	Never	never
Ever take diet aids	No	yes
Worry about weight	infrequently and sometimes	sometimes
Worry about aging	infrequently and sometimes	infrequently
Appearance satisfaction	very satisfied	somewhat satisfied
Height	$M=64.78; SD=1.656$	$M=64.76; SD=2.748$
Weight	$M=142.52; SD=31.46$	$M=159.88; SD=51.28$
Body Image	$M=13.45; SD=8.16$	$M=19.60; SD=9.73$
Who gives social support	Friends	other family
Gender of the social support	equally both	women
Female social support	very important	somewhat important

Table 5.16: Central Tendency Comparison of Health Variables by Group: Activists and Non-Activists.

Table 5.17 presents regression coefficients for body image as a dependent variable. I believe that good body image indicates an acceptance of aging, change, and relativity. If activists come to see media-imposed, feminized images as a source of gender inequality, and, therefore, make alternative media choices, this probably also leads to better body image. Body image is regressed on four relevant independent variables. Race or ethnicity is recoded into a dichotomous dummy variable in which white is the reference category. The second variable is the frequency of viewing fashion magazines. The third independent variable is body weight in pounds, which serves here as a control, since there are several heavy women in both samples. The fourth variable is a recoded political variable scale composed of the sum of the values of participation in the women's movement, voting and writing letters.

Controlling for the other three independent variables, regularly viewing idealized feminine images in fashion magazines increases the body image score by nearly five

	Body Image
Frequency of reading fashion magazines	4.636 (2.155)*
Race or ethnicity (white=1)	13.181 (3.01)***
Political behavior scale	-5.044 (1.31)***
Body weight in pounds	.079 (.025)**
Intercept	2.769
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.399

<sup>a</sup>Metric coefficients (standard errors).

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed test)

Table 5.17.: Regression Coefficients of Body Image on Predictor Variables: Activists and Non-Activists.<sup>a</sup>

points. It must be understood here that higher scores on the body image scale mean a woman has indicated heightened worry about aspects of her body. Of even more importance theoretically, being white is linked to a more than *13 point jump* on the body image scale! This corroborates prior research showing that minority women and, in particular, African-American women, allow and embrace a larger body size than white women (Hesse-Biber et al. 1999). I believe this is due to their history of relative deprivation and the luxury of whites to consider food, gender, and body size. Higher body weight is associated with a nearly one point increase on the body image scale. Higher values on the recoded political behavior scale, which includes aspects of both normal politics and activism, decrease by more than five points the score on the body



image scale. Thus, all of the independent variables are statistically significant in the predicted directions. The adjusted  $R^2$  reveals a model with strong predictive capacity. About 40% of the variation in body image can be explained by this combination of independent variables.

### Summary

In sum, Chapter 5 has laid out what it is about activist women that differentiates them from non-activist women. Earlier, Chapter 3 presented a theory whereby the social movement construct of collective identity can be applied to explain and understand individual and group differences. Collective identity contains three mutually reinforcing processes—boundaries, group consciousness, and personalized political strategies. These processes invoke the ideas and values, behavior, and lines of demarcation that define groups, and the individuals within that group, as living counter to social, political or cultural norms. Such social-psychological processes in social movements are important because they influence life stages and transitions and filter how pivotal events are interpreted. The intertwining of two methodologies—qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and interpretive analysis—are used next in the two chapters that follow to discern how processes of transition work in relation to political and cultural activism.

## CHAPTER 6

### POLITICAL PROCESS, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, AND HEALTH

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to relate differences in participants' politics, daily routine, and health in order to evaluate the political process model. Doing so relies on the strengths of two qualitative research methods—qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) of the survey data and interpretive analysis of the interview data—to suggest how political processes build personal and collective identity, as related to health. That is, activism contributes to, and contains within it, elements that generate collective identity processes that are related to feelings and behaviors surrounding the body. In particular, the 38 interviewed activists answered questions that were coded to invoke framing group consciousness, doing personalized political strategies, and erecting boundaries (Taylor and Whittier 1992). In addition, I interviewed three of the survey participants to generate comparative data that is useful in illustrating variable configurations, which I explain shortly.

To assess how boundaries operate among activists, the 41 women (38 activists, 3 non-activists) were asked many consumption-related questions. That is, I asked where they shop for various appearance-related items, food, etc., and what kinds of media and entertainment they viewed, read or avoided. Furthermore, I inquired about feminist views and female social support networks that might serve to separate men and women or

bridge them together. To assess group consciousness, I asked if women felt discontent over various political and cultural variables within American society. Addressed in Chapter 7, I asked the women if and how bodies, linked to pivotal events, are re-evaluated over different stages of the life course and if relationships with others are a factor. Other questions gauged formal and informal group participation.

Then, because I seek to make overt the distinction between being activist and doing activism, or personalized political strategies, questions were coded to describe women's everyday political and cultural experiences, especially as applied to self-presentation and appearance. Additionally, my data builds political process and collective identity theories by invoking how boundaries, group consciousness, and personal resistance are contextual and shifting and that the divisions between the concepts are permeable. Qualitative comparative analysis of varying aspects of politics, daily routine, and health can model this context. Further, a plethora of narrative data illustrates how variations in life experiences lend obvious convergent validity to variable configurations in outcomes, such as body image. Ultimately, my data shows how political process leads to women's enhanced, holistic health.

#### Women's Differences, QCA, and Interpretive Analysis

As shown in Chapter 5, there were many political, cultural, and health-related differences between activist and non-activist women. Differences are apparent in political activities, especially informal, "new social movement" activity. In terms of cultural differences in daily routine, non-activist women watch more mainstream and entertainment-based television programs that tend to depict "ideal" feminine images of

beauty and thinness. They also view fashion and beauty magazines more frequently than activists, which exposes them to similar "ideal" images, such as Victoria's Secret models, that objectify and sexualize femininity. Shopping is a favorite activity for non-activists, who shop frequently for clothes and other appearance related items at a wide variety of stores, often in mega shopping malls. Non-activist women are not very political, with comparatively few in the sample doing much more than voting. They are more likely to volunteer for religious than for civic activities and events. Only a few non-activists have participated in social movements. As far as appearance and body image, non-activists also exhibited differences in comparison to the activists, which will be discussed in more detail shortly.

However, these differences are not just *between* the two samples. Within the two samples, or *among* activists and non-activists, differences can also be discerned. As noted above, I interviewed three non-activist women to compare and contextualize differences between and among the two samples on variables that are amenable to qualitative analysis. In particular, QCA is effective at discerning how variables can be combined for a wide array of samples to produce outcomes, such as workplace strikes (Roscigno and Hodson 2004) or national revolutions (Ragin 1987). In this capacity, I employ QCA at an individual level to examine nuances in the way constellations of variables, specified from my political process model, combine to form political, cultural, and health outcomes.

Below, I examine five outcomes that include consuming alternative media, valuing women's social support, regularly eating meat, seeing alternative health practitioners, and expressing body image anxiety. These outcomes suggest how the three

processes of collective identity—group consciousness, personalized political strategies, and boundaries—operate, overlap, and feedback to one another. The next three sections are organized by these overlapping processes.

### Group Consciousness

Activist women are extensively involved in both normal and non-institutional politics. When they vote, it is often, but not always, for alternative parties, platforms and issues, such as ending the drug war. They have engaged in political protests for the environment, animal rights, women's rights, and both sides of the abortion debate, just to name a few. Activist women, themselves, recognize that their political activities are sometimes personal in nature, and these activities tend to be informed by an *overarching set of alternative values* that helps in framing activist identities. According to 32 year-old Jean, "I am unhappy with everything. I don't consider myself to fit the culture." Values that are salient to activist women include loving the earth, spirituality that may or may not be linked to organized religion, freedom to live within the bounds of justice to others, naturally-derived material comfort, the importance of animals, healthful eating or vegetarianism, individual rights (such as the right to worship or to use drugs), cooperativeness, community, truth, inner beauty, and an obligation to spread the "word" (activism, peace, Christianity, etc.).

Activists tend to greatly value women and women's natural and socially-imposed experiences. All of the values outlined above are viewed as representing things that women cherish and opposite of masculine, individualist, hierarchically-based values. Mothering, breastfeeding, caring for children, and the many realms of women's work are

all held in high esteem because they are activities that care for, sustain, and nourish life that women, in some instances, are endowed by nature to do. Thus, feminism—when that word is used or understood—is an activist value, although the way it is ideally put into practice varies considerably. For most of the activists, their understanding of feminism has an environmental component to it as well. As Allyson, a 22 year-old eco-feminist asserts, "I recognize that environmental and gender issues are inextricably tied. You can't solve problems in one area without addressing the problems in the other area."

As part of their group identity, activists tend to define a consciousness of kind that may be articulated as a state of mind or feeling that one is connected spiritually, philosophically, or meta-physically, to use some of their terms, with others. Also, especially the progressive activists in the sample understand that others who are similarly situated support a body of alternative values. These include beliefs that capitalism, meritocracy, and technological development harm people, animals, and the environment. Further, nearly all the activist women desire to find community in daily living. They feel that group connectedness is not only attainable but necessary for even the most occupied of persons.

Alternative ideas and values such as these are not found in everyday, mainstream media. As a way to find and sustain an alternative group consciousness, activists usually divorce themselves from the mass consumption of media, particularly television news, which is seen as a violent, sensationalist, and least common denominator form of infotainment. Instead, they feel that truth in news reporting is better found in alternative outlets, such as *The Free Press*, *Mother Jones*, *The Onion*, *The Utne Reader*, and *AdBusters*, and over the Internet. QCA, supplemented with narrative data, is next

employed to show how causal configurations of political variables affect how the full sample of 74 participants consume alternative news media.

QCA requires theoretical clarity in the selection of variables used to build configurations (Ragin 2000). From my theoretical model, alternative political ideas and actions are posited to affect cultural outcomes, such as media consumption behaviors, which will, in turn, affect politics by providing an arena to sustain differences. Four variables—peace movement participation, picketing, any other social movement participation, and sample group—from the survey instrument were selected for combining into configurations. Since these variables were initially coded as dichotomies, no additional recoding was needed. Sample group was coded one if the participant is an activist and zero if non-activist. For the other three variables, one equals yes while zero equals no to the activity, such as participation in the peace movement. One is also the outcome of yes as to whether the participant consumes alternative news media, while zero means the outcome of no.

### *Alternative News Media*

Table 6.1 below shows the positive, negative, and contradictory associations of political variables and consuming alternative news media as these relate to theoretical expectations. A QCA computer routine (see *Fuzzy Set/QCA* by Ragin 2000) reduced 16 theoretically possible configurations (2 multiplied exponentially by the number of causal variables, in this case, four variables) to four, all of which contain three elements. All configurations showcase the presence or the absence of activist politics in affecting the choice to consume alternative news. The first two configurations reported

(*other\*pickets\*groups* and *peace\*pickets\*groups*) indicate non-activist individuals who have never picketed for any reason and who have not participated in some other social movement or the peace movement, respectively. Of the 28 and the 31 individuals that hold all three elements, notably *zero percent* read alternative news. This is made more meaningful by comparing these cases to other cases in the full sample that do not have these configurational elements. This is shown in column five mean ratios, obtained by dividing the configuration mean by the mean of cases not captured by the configuration. In the first and second configurations, 41% and 45% of participants, respectively, not in the configurations *do* read alternative media. As shown in Table 6.1, *t* test results reveal large, significant differences beyond the .001 level in reading alternative news by whether individuals are in the first and second configurations or not.

The remaining two configurations (PEACE\*OTHER\*GROUPS and PEACE\*PICKETS\*GROUPS) associate elements that are directly opposite to the first two. The third configuration indicates activists who have participated in the peace movement and some other movement. Of the 22 individuals that hold all three elements, 12 (55percent) read alternative news. The ratio of 4.58 suggests that activist peace and other movement participants are more than four and a half times more likely than non-configuration participants to read alternative news. The fourth configuration indicates activists who have picketed—a typical activist behavior—and who have participated in the peace movement. Of the 19 individuals that hold all three elements, 11 (58percent) read alternative news. The ratio of 4.83 suggests that picketing, activist peace movement participants are almost five times more likely than non-configuration participants to read



Configurations	Total cases	# of zeros	# of ones	Consuming alternative media in the configuration (%)	Mean ratio (configuration to non-configuration)	Example interviews
other*pickets* groups	28	28	0	0%	.00/.41=0***	
peace*pickets*groups	31	31	0	0%	.00/.45=0***	
PEACE*OTHER*GROUPS	22	10	12	55%	.55/.12=4.58***	Allyson Queena
PEACE*PICKETS*GROUPS	19	8	11	58%	.58/.12=4.83***	
S						

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed test): denotes significant difference between configuration mean and mean of cases not in configuration.

Table 6.1: Reduced Configurations and Variations in Consuming Alternative News Media.

alternative news! The *t* test results for both the third and fourth configurations, again, reveal large, significant differences beyond the .001 level. The effect of being an activist participant in several, overlapping social movements on consuming alternative news is noted, in particular, in the third configuration but, really, by logic, in all four. Allyson, age 22, is an anti-war activist and social worker who assists at-risk, substance abusing teenagers. Because of her criticisms of mainstream media, she has switched, instead, to alternative media in many forms, as revealed in the following:

I don't like action movies. Usually there's like this skinny little blond-haired chick that the main character is dating. And I don't like—lately there's all kinds of war propaganda films...in one...the main character had like a big puffy jacket with an American flag on it and with a shaved head—very militaristic type outfits. It was definitely war propaganda; they were fighting against these evil aliens. They were Americans; it was ridiculous. Where I work at, I work with teenagers, and sometimes they have them (magazines). And it angers me to look at them. When I look at them I just am totally criticizing them the entire time, and I don't want to do that in front of them, because that's what they like. So I have trouble...I can't believe people fall for this! But sometimes it just amazes me to the point of humor. Sometimes I get really angry, but sometimes I can't do anything but laugh about it because it's so ridiculous—especially the ads. They're full of ads. I started college in 1997. I gave up TV at that point. I hear from people rather than hear from corporations. And I read the *Free Press*, which I think has more to offer than looking at newspapers. I look at the front pages whenever they are in the little dispensers on the street. I

listen to NPR all the time. That helps...my friends, when they come over, they know we'll talk. We will actually talk about stuff. We'll listen to music. So it can be hard to have people who aren't good with conversation. And if I go somewhere, and there's a whole room full of people, and there's a television on, and they're all staring at the television, it drives me insane. Like I will sometimes just get up in the middle of a place; it doesn't matter if it is a public place, or at home, and shut the TV off and see what happens. Because it's just like, people are so normalized to it. I own a very small TV with a VCR in the bottom, but I keep it in the closet and take it out only when I want to watch movies.

Another activist, 21 year old Queena, is a Christian missionary attending a Mennonite bible college that serves students of conservative, Protestant traditions. Like Allyson, Queena is involved in many political activities, although hers stem from her strong Christian upbringing. Although Queena and Allyson span opposite poles of the political spectrum, their configurations of political attributes on media consumption reveal similar patterns. The following quote suggests how the narrative data provides convergent validity to the QCA results presented in Table 6.1:

Like, I'm trying to know how to say this, because I don't want to sound judgmental (about avoiding television and getting news from non-mainstream sources). I really don't see that everybody in my tradition does it at all, but I just found my time to be Godful to me. And I want to put good things in my mind. I find that sitting down to a book is more rewarding than sitting down to a couple of hours of television. I really have little patience for television. So I don't watch much television at all. *At all*. Maybe an hour every two months. It's very limited. And I don't read fashion magazines. It would be like (religious) magazines. Like they have a magazine rack and they have that at the library. And newspapers. And some people listen to NPR.

In regards to mass media consumption, the overwhelming pattern in my data is activists being critical of idealized mass media images of women's roles and bodies, particularly as seen in advertisements. Activists are clearly convinced that messages in media will influence the way that people think. This is explained in more detail later in a section on body image.

It is noted that many women in the full sample highly value the relationships and social support networks they have with other women. Women discuss with one another their challenges with relationships, family, aging, and balancing multiple roles. In

Chapter 5, it was shown that there was not a statistically significant difference between activists and non-activists in the extent to which they value the social support they get from women. However, there may still be variable configurations that can help explain, as an outcome using QCA, the valuing of women's social support.

### *The Importance of Women's Social Support*

Table 6.2 shows the positive, negative, and contradictory associations of four demographic variables and valuing women's social support. The QCA routine reduced the logically possible configurations to four, two of which contain two elements and two with three elements. The configurations highlight the presence or the absence of holding a paid job (1=yes; 0=no), being married (1=yes; 0=no), having children (1=yes; 0=no), and worrying about aging (recoded from ordinal scale where 2-4, or somewhat to extremely worried=1 and 0-1, or never/not often worried=0) in affecting the value women place on female social support networks (recoded from ordinal scale where 2-4, or somewhat to extremely important=1 and 0-1, or never/not important=0). The first configuration (WORKPAY\*married) indicates married individuals who work for pay. Of the 46 individuals that hold these two elements, 33 (72%) consider female support networks important. Comparing these cases to other cases in the full sample that do not have these configurational elements, the ratio of 1.33 suggests that married, paid workers are almost one and a half times more likely than non-configuration participants to value such networks, even though this result is not statistically significant.

The remaining three configurations (AGING\*CHILDREN, *aging\*married\*children* and *aging\*WORKPAY\*children*) associate elements in

Configurations	Total cases	# of zeros	# of ones	Women's social support important in the configuration (%)	Mean ratio (configuration to non-configuration)	Example interviews
WORKPAY*	46	13	33	72%	.72/.54=1.33	Doris
Married						
AGING*	37	13	24	65%	.65/.67=.97	Patrice
CHILDREN						
aging*married	10	3	7	70%	.70/.65=1.08	
*children						
aging*	9	3	6	67%	.67/.66=1.02	Lou
WORKPAY*						
Children						

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed test): denotes significant difference between configuration mean and mean of cases not in configuration.

Table 6.2: Reduced Configurations and Variations in Importance of Women's Social Support.

different combinations. Those who are worried about aging and who have children are just slightly less likely to value female support networks than those not in this configuration. Those who are not married, childless, and unconcerned about aging (third configuration) and childless, paid workers who are also unconcerned about aging (fourth configuration) are both slightly more likely to value female support networks than those not in these configurations.

While the QCA results did not show statistically significant effects for any of the configurations, this does not mean participants do not value female social support networks. Instead, results suggest that women in very diverse circumstances, in terms of their demographic and political characteristics, rely on women networks. For example, 62 year old yoga instructor, Traeger practitioner (form of gentle, spiritually-oriented body movement) and vegan chef, Koryn has many friends through Simply Living, an informal

activist group. Koryn discusses how her female social networks flow into one another in the following:

Um, well Marilyn Welker, (a major local activist) I consider one of my best friends. She has been a great inspiration in my life. Yeah. So I have quite a few friends in Simply Living. Gwen and Judy. These two are close friends. It was through Judy that I got interested in Traeger and am now a Traeger practitioner. We are in several groups together.

Interestingly, the three non-activists I interviewed rely much more on spouses and boyfriends than they do on women friends. In Chapter 7, I discuss how these women express concern about aging. They take many precautions, such as establishing close relationships with supportive male others, namely lovers and spouses, who boost their feelings of self-worth. For example, 35 year old mother Patrice is comforted because "I'll always be his young, sexy thing. This is very reassuring."

Lou, a 51 year old massage therapist who is openly lesbian, considers networks consisting of all-women to foster a communion that would be unobtainable otherwise. These networks value women for what they can accomplish and share with one another, which de-emphasizes looks and youth. Lou illustrates the third configuration consisting of paid workers without children who, because of the love they receive from supportive others, fear aging less. That scenario is captured nicely in the following:

**Me: What makes groups with women special?**

Lou: Um, because I don't think there is competition, I don't think there is judgment or...power over that is experienced in mixed company. I had gone to the Michigan Womyn's Festival two years prior to working there...I didn't have a real job...so I thought, oh, I can go work there and...do that for two or three weeks. They needed somebody on carpentry. And it wasn't like...we'll teach ya, and ya come and ya help, and it was built...Here is this stage we are putting together and you get six or eight women. All of us would get down, and on the count of three, pick it up, carry it over, put it in place, and then another group would put down some plywood. And we were done and we were like, whoa, we built that! I didn't even know anything about what I was doing. And look what I was able to do? And so, there was no judgment, no I'm better than you because I've been doing this. Or, I know more than you. It's very like, it's community, it's working together. It's creating together, which is very empowering. To be able to go in when there was absolutely nothing there and little by little you see women sledging these tent stakes and women driving. Now with some of the bigger equipment, like they have to build the towers to

have the lights on. But there was a woman driving the crane to build the towers. The whole sound system, and all the lighting, and everything that goes with the night stage. All these women are up there putting it together. Doing the sound. Doing the lights. And I made friends with somebody who was running the lights from the tower. During the concert, come up on the tower with me!

However, not all of the activists I interviewed felt a sense of camaraderie with women, especially if they were viewed as dogmatic and uncompromising. For instance, Doris, age 50, is wary of cultural feminists and identity politics, more generally. Doris works at an insecure job for which she is over-qualified, has financial issues, and has never been married. She expresses her hesitations toward women-only groups in the following:

People were pushing for more, and I became somewhat disillusioned...during a time where it would have been helpful to consolidate (cold political climate of the Reagan years). They needed a power base. It is good in the sense that people's interests are out there, as it is necessary to point out that groups have been discriminated against. It makes the larger society aware that changes are needed. But because people have the capacity to think things through, they can take a more moderate and inclusive stance. It can be counterproductive to say I am a woman, therefore...

Yet regardless of how they feel about the gender of their support networks, activists are seeking *community*. The notion of a community appears to mean a place where a trusting, self-sustaining, collectively engaging and environmentally kind people live in and work, in the absence of boundaries from one another. The goal of community building and living is an extremely salient part of a neocountercultural group consciousness. Its importance is reflected in the words of two activists:

(Lauren, age 35): Well, as unrealistic as it may seem, I would really like to live on a piece of land...in the middle of nowhere with a small group of people that could live together as a family and, as a group, be as self-sufficient as possible. Every person has a talent that they really enjoy and can be really useful. That's what I mean by being self-sufficient as a group. It would be hard to be self-sufficient as one small family...there's got to be other people who want to do it.

(Jean, age 32): For the future I would like to get to a point where I'm living among a community of people who share the value of self-sufficiency- not having work per se as much as activities to function as a group and beautification of the land and people.

Activists recognize themselves as being oppositional both in values and in practice with dominant society, and this illustrates the *interconnectedness of the elements of collective identity* (here, group consciousness and personalized political strategies link). Although not always the case, being critical of mainstream ideas and actions very often gets translated into practice. The following accounts illustrate how activists contend with mainstream norms on a variety of issues from food to unfettered materialism that often leads to confrontational behavior:

(Amy, age 27)- I started working there...and it was still hot, but I never wore shorts because all the women shaved their legs. And I knew that they liked to gossip, and I just didn't feel like, and I knew that they would talk about the fact that I didn't, and it really bothered me enough that, should I just start shaving? And I thought, no! It's growing there all by itself, and I don't want to have the hassle of having to shave it everyday. It's really nice to be rid of having to do that, although I am aware that I can get really uncomfortable about what...other people are thinking of that.

(Lauren, age 35)- I had to stay at the hospital for 24 hours so insurance would pay (birth of baby). The hospital staff and I were glad to see each other part. They came in and said they needed to do Nathaniel's footprint. I said, "No, you don't." "Yeah, we do, and it's for your own protection and baby." But I said, "If he never leaves me, there's no chance of him getting mixed up. So I had to sign a paper saying I refused the footprinting. I went with them to go weigh him across the hall. So he never left me at all. They thought I was a pain in the butt, and I just wanted to take care of my baby myself.

(Sabrina, age 42)-I think marketing as a way to maintain eternal youth is disgusting. Why make lifestyle changes in your diet if you can just get liposuction?

(Jean, age 32)- I refuse to watch movies that insult my intelligence. We (self and partner) will just walk out of movies and demand our money back if they are insulting or dull (for example, *The Mummy* sucked).

Additionally, Jean put a copy of Naomi Wolf's book *The Beauty Myth* on top of a stack of fashion magazines at a family member's home. She refers to such magazines as "horrible brain candy."

### Personalized Political Strategies

The examples above illustrate oppositional identities and how they get translated into oppositional actions. Activist women get involved with their critical discourse of American society by demonstrating their discontent in direct, personal ways. Jean sums this up by asserting, "I am a living, breathing example, and I will transmit my values to my children. I negotiate and communicate meanings with those that I know. Maybe it's just optimistic hopefulness that there is a very vibrant alternative world view that is going in the manure of advanced capitalist society." Avoidance activities may be regarded as attempts at resistance, and may include not watching television, staying away from medical doctors, muting television commercials, refusing to eat unhealthy food, and refusal to partake in mass consumerism by "thinking globally and acting locally."

The flip side of this would be doing alternative activities, such as sending children to alternative schools (e.g., Waldorf), shopping at food cooperatives specializing in organic, pesticide-free produce and purchasing products made by "kind" companies, such as Annie's cheesy noodles, and self-medicating rather than relying on prescription drugs.

### *Regularly Eating Meat*

Table 6.3 below shows associations of political and cultural variables and regularly eating meat. The QCA routine reduced all logically possible configurations to four, two of which contain two elements and two with three elements. The configurations highlight the presence or the absence of participating in the animal rights and peace movements (1=yes; 0=no), eating organic food (1=yes; 0=no), and participating in several social movements (recoded from interval scale where mean=3, or



4 or more movements=1 and 3 or fewer movements=0) in affecting if a participant regularly eats meat (recoded from ordinal scale where 3-4, or often to frequently eat meat=1 and 0-2, or never to only sometimes=0). The first configuration (*animal\*organic*) indicates people who are *not* animal rights activists and who *do not* eat organic food. Of the 36 individuals that hold these two elements, 33 (92%) regularly eat meat. Comparing these cases to other cases in the full sample that do not have these configurational elements, the ratio of 1.96 tells us that people who are *not* animal rights activists and who *do not* eat organic food are two times more likely than non-configuration participants to regularly eat meat. As shown in Table 6.3, *t* test results reveal large, significant differences beyond the .001 level.

The second configuration (PEACE\*MORE SM) indicates people who have participated in at least four social movements, including the peace movement. Of the 29 individuals that hold these two elements, 17 (59%) regularly eat meat. Comparing these cases to other cases in the full sample that do not have these configurational elements, the ratio of .78 tells us that people who have participated in at least four social movements, including the peace movement are 22% *less likely* than non-configuration participants to regularly eat meat, although this result just fails to meet the .05 level of significance.

The remaining two configurations (*peace\*more sm\*organic* and *peace\*animal\*organic*) associate these elements in difference combinations. The third configuration indicates people who have not participated in at least four social movements, including not participating in the peace movement, and who do not eat organic food. Of the 32 individuals that hold all three elements, 30 (94%) do eat meat regularly. The ratio of 1.88 suggests that participants in this configuration are almost two

Configurations	Total cases	# of zeros	# of ones	Eating meat in the configuration (%)	Mean ratio (configuration to non-configuration)	Example interviews
animal* organic	36	3	33	92%	.92/.47=1.96***	
PEACE* MORE SM	29	12	17	59%	.59/.76=.78	Koryn Allyson
peace*more sm*organic	32	2	30	94%	.94/.50=1.88***	
peace*animal* organic	31	3	28	90%	.90/.54=1.67**	

\*p<.05; \*\*p,.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed test): denotes significant difference between configuration mean and mean of cases not in configuration.

Table 6.3: Reduced Configurations and Variations in Eating Meat.

times more likely than non-configuration participants to eat meat. The fourth configuration indicates people who have not participated in the peace or animal rights movements, and who do not eat organic food. Of the 31 individuals that hold all three elements, 28 (90%) regularly eat meat. The ratio of 1.67 suggests that participants in this configuration are more than one and a half times more likely than non-configuration participants to eat meat. The *t* test results for both the third and fourth configurations reveal significant differences.

The effect of being an activist participant in several, overlapping social movements on the personalized cultural and health practice of not eating meat is noted, in particular, in the second configuration but, again, by logic, in all four. Koryn's life experiences suggest that the peace movement is very much linked to other movements for anti-globalization, simple living (anti-corporate imposed consumerist), organic food, vegetarianism, and environmental justice. She is a very healthy 62 year old vegan who says the following:

I live as simply as I can so I can live on less money...I'm putting as little money as possible into taxes...And speaking about these cooking classes, I do public speaking, I do as much as I can to let people know how we grow our food is not just for other countries. I let people know how the corporations are ruling the world and how we are losing our freedom.

Allyson also expresses how her choice to eat vegetarian is a form of personalized resistance that is motivated by a number of salient philosophical and practical issues.

That is:

Been one (vegetarian) since I started working at Aardvarks's (former vegetarian restaurant in Columbus)...I learned things you could do (cooking) that don't include meat, so I started using that. People have stereotypes of vegetarian—oh, you mean you eat carrots and peas? You eat some lettuce? People don't know. I'm vegetarian for health...political...environmental and humanitarian and spiritual reasons...I anticipate being vegetarian reasons for a long time—I'll never eat meat again, that's for sure. I'm trying to be vegan, but that's very hard. I mean, especially going out to eat is almost impossible sometimes. Even if they tell you things are, they might not be...I don't buy food for my house that isn't vegan, but when I go out to eat with friends or go to work, and they get pizza, I'll eat it, but I don't buy it for my house. My roommate actually eats meat, but he doesn't buy it for the house. I've never seen meat here, and I think that may be because of me. Like he is worried that it might offend me, and it doesn't offend me. Also, I think he is trying to be better to himself. He doesn't treat himself very well. So, I've noticed that when he does buy food, like he bought tofu and tofu dogs, and he bought fake cheese, and that surprised me. He seems to be wanting to better his body.

The analysis of sometimes different body practices of activists is relevant, too, because the body is used as an agent of protest to challenge ideals of beauty and thinness, as well as environmental issues. Some, but not all, activists do not wear makeup, they have their hair cut very infrequently, they wear old, used, thrift store clothing that does not keep up with culturally imposed style standards. Others choose not to shave or bathe daily, and they will sometimes not wear deodorant, considering body odor a natural rather than a bad smell. Additionally, activist women who are not overweight, which is a health risk, tend not to diet. Plus, diet does not typically mean weight loss like it does to non-activists. Instead, diet means putting the healthiest, most nutritious food into a body and reaping the benefits that good eating affords.

### *Seeing Alternative Practitioners*

Yet another form of personalized resistance that is motivated by overlapping activist issues is the choice to see alternative practitioners rather than medical doctors. Table 6.4 below shows associations of political variables and seeing alternative practitioners. The QCA routine reduced the possible configurations to four, three of which contain two elements and one with three elements. The configurations highlight the presence or the absence of participating in the anti-military movement (1=yes; 0=no), eating organic food (1=yes; 0=no), ever picketing (a non-institutional political behavior; 1=yes; 0=no) and not voting Republican (tends to mean activist or member of alternative political party; 1=yes; 0=no) in affecting whether a participant sees alternative practitioners (1=yes; 0=no).

The first configuration (*anti-military\*organic*) indicates people who have *not* participated in the anti-military movement and who *do not* eat organic food. Of the 40 individuals that hold these two elements, only 2 (5%) see alternative practitioners. Comparing these cases to other cases in the full sample that do not have these configurational elements, the ratio of .1 tells us that people who have *not* participated in the anti-military movement and who *do not* eat organic food are 90% *less likely* than non-configuration participants to see alternative practitioners. As shown in Table 6.4, *t* test results reveal a large, significant difference beyond the .001 level.

The second configuration (PICKETS\*NOT REPUB) indicates non-Republicans who have picketed on behalf of any issue. Of the 23 individuals that hold these two elements, 12 (52%) see alternative practitioners. Comparing these cases to other cases in the full sample that do not have these configurational elements, the ratio of 4.73 indicates

Configurations	Total cases	# of zeros	# of ones	Seeing alternative practitioner in the configuration (%)	Mean ratio (configuration to non-configuration)	Example interviews
anti-military* organic PICKETS*	40	38	2	5%	.05/.50=.1***	Doris
NOT REPUB NOT REPUB*	23	11	12	52%	.52/.11=4.73***	
ORGANIC ANTI-MILITARY*	20	8	12	60%	.60/.10=6***	Koryn
PICKETS* ORGANIC	7	2	5	71%	.71/.19=3.74*	

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed test): denotes significant difference between configuration mean and mean of cases not in configuration.

Table 6.4: Reduced Configurations and Variations in Seeing Alternative Practitioners.

that non-Republicans who have picketed on behalf of any issue are almost five times more likely than non-configuration participants to see alternative practitioners. Then, the third configuration (NOT REPUB\*ORGANIC) represents non-Republicans who eat organic food. Of the 20 individuals that hold these two elements, 12 (60%) see alternative practitioners. Comparing to cases not having these configurational elements, the ratio of six indicates that non-Republicans who eat organic food are six times more likely than non-configuration participants to see alternative practitioners. *T* test results for the second and third configurations show large, significant differences that exceed the .001 level.

The last configuration (ANTI-MILITARY\*PICKETS\*ORGANIC) represents people who have participated in the anti-military movement, have picketed, and who eat organic food. Of the only seven individuals that hold all three elements, 5 (71%) see an alternative practitioner. The ratio of 3.74 suggests that participants in this configuration

are almost four times more likely than non-configuration participants to do so, and the result is statistically significant.

The effect of being an activist who has moved away from mainstream politics and has made other alternative choices of daily routine, such as only eating organic, is noted, especially, in the third configuration. To illustrate, it is useful to look at Koryn's life experiences, which include an episode with cancer. Her history suggests why she has chosen alternative medical paths and practitioners:

During my cooking classes, it comes up...because I use organic foods...and I tell them why I don't use microwaves...The last time I was to a regular doctor was in '82, which was right before my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. And he tore up my chart because I went for a diagnosis—I went to my gyn. I was training for a marathon, and I urinated a blood clot. I made an appointment, and they saw me immediately. He diagnosed it as cystitis. And he started to write a prescription. I said, "I don't want a prescription, just the diagnosis. I will treat it myself herbally." And he tore up my chart. Handed it to me...and that was the last time. I got thrown out of an oral surgeon's office, too, some years later. So I'm real picky. So the cancer was always a gift. It was just such a gift for me! Because it, I was already vegetarian, I was already doing yoga. That's what brought it to the surface. I was diagnosed through oriental medicine. I was already way far away from Western medicine. So the hardest changes I had already been making.

Yet another configuration that is illustrated by my data is the combination of not being a participant in the anti-military movement, which is akin to not accepting radical politics, coupled with not eating organic food, on making other alternative choices. We can consider Doris, a former member of the counterculture and feminist movements of the early 1970s. Financially strapped Doris would be grateful for *any* type of health insurance and, as such, she feels beggars cannot be choosers. Her thinking goes beyond the issue of medicine to other alternative choices she claims are readily available only to the economically viable. Claiming her friends call her a "lukewarm liberal," Doris eats meat to feel full and non-organic food because it is cheaper than organic. According to Doris:

I feel the Democratic party is the best thing available, and I have mixed feelings about third parties. I do recognize that it is all necessary in that it is good to have your hard core members who get ideas out there. Yet they may scare the other side.

Personalized practices tend to have the effect of making the activist women more content about eating and socializing, especially when they are among other activists or members of any support network, regardless of gender. Lauren, who used to be anorexic and bulimic in high school, proclaims that:

My new values give me happiness. I think being closer to things that are natural feels more real. This might be an example. I remember in high school I always wore make-up. I wouldn't go anywhere without it. I was afraid people would stop by after I had washed my face for the night. Then one day, I didn't have time to put on my make-up before I left for school. I brought it with me, and I'd thought I would run into the bathroom and put it on. Didn't have time. All these people came up to me and told me I looked really pretty. I was probably 18. I stopped wearing it after that point. At the very least, it was the beginning of not wearing it.

This is not to say that activists never get depressed about their looks or their bodies. But they tend to have a more *realistic view of themselves as whole persons* compared to non-activists, as have more philosophic matters to attend to. Body image is discussed more fully as an outcome resulting from politics below in the section on boundaries.

### Boundaries

The element of boundaries is also tied to the other elements of collective identity. Activists who engage in politicized personal strategies, such as shopping only at organic food cooperatives (e.g. Clintonville Community Market) and thrift stores, or avoiding many other locations and people, are also setting up boundaries that physically and socially remove them, in part, from mainstream society. In general, it is the capitalist mentality, and the many actions that are carried out in the name of capitalism, that motivates activists to bound themselves and avoid its grip. Many of these only need to be reiterated: uncaring, for-profit doctors who operate under a medical rather than a holistic

model, television and popular magazines, advertisements and commercials for useless and wasteful products, profiteering corporations, hegemonic femininity, institutionalized religion if it perceived to be dogmatic, Hollywood movies, and mass shopping malls. As expressed by Jean and Lauren:

(Jean): I find malls depressing. I know malls are set up to make you feel relative deprivation. Most of the clothes there are made of synthetic materials, and I'm even starting to distrust 100% cotton material. Plastic is sometimes being put in to cotton even though they say it's cotton. Plastic makes the fabric stretch, and I know that cotton doesn't stretch! I also get bummed out because I know these items are being made overseas and that the marked up price is huge amounts of profit for these companies and not for the people who made them. I don't like to contribute to that. It's this big existential spiraling!

(Lauren): Uh, uh, to malls and to commercialism. There's too many things that I just don't feel...I mean, again, these are things that bring you away from what I feel is real and what is important.

Activist women also employ boundaries in regards to their appearance. For example, some opt not to shave their legs and/or underarm hair. In other cases, some activists wear long dreadlocks in hair for an extended period of time. Although many women in the full sample do not wear make-up, activists avoid it for clarified cultural and political reasons. Thus, the body and appearance set up boundaries for some activist women, as they sometimes respond by avoiding others with values or practices different from theirs.

### *Body Image and Appearance*

Table 6.5 below shows associations of demographic, political, and cultural variables and anxiety about body image. Three configurations emerged from the QCA routine, one of which contains just one element, one with two elements and one with three elements. The three configurations showcase the presence or the absence of being white (1=white; 0=non-white), participating in the women's movement (1=yes; 0=no),



watching television (recoded ordinal variable where 2-4, or watch television sometimes, often or frequently changed to 1=yes; 0-1, or never or infrequently watch changed to 0=no) and worrying about weight (recoded ordinal variable where 2-4, or sometimes, often or frequently worry about weight changed to 1=yes; 0-1, or never or infrequently worry about weight changed to 0) in affecting whether a participant expresses high anxiety about body image (recoded to high=1 or >15 on body image scale and low=0 or 1-15 on the body image scale; mean was 15 on that scale).

The first configuration (WHITE) represents respondents who chose white or European-American as their ancestry. Of the 53 white women, 31 (58%) have poor body image. Comparing these cases to non-white women, the ratio of 1.45 means that white women are nearly one and a half times *more likely* than non-white women to express body image angst. However, this difference just misses the .05 level of significance.

The second configuration (women\*HEAVY TV) indicates non-participants in the women's movement who also watch television regularly. Of the 32 individuals that hold these two elements, 22 (69%) have poor body image. The ratio of 1.5 indicates that non-participants in the women's movement who also watch television regularly are one and a half times more likely than non-configuration participants to have poor body image, albeit the difference is not significant. The third configuration (WOMEN\*heavy tv\*weight) represents women's movement activists who are neither concerned about their weight nor watch much television. Of the 14 individuals that hold these three elements, only 2 (14%) have poor body image. Compared to cases not having these configurational elements, the ratio of .21 indicates these women are 79% less likely than non-

Configurations	Total cases	# of zeros	# of ones	Poor body image in the configuration (%)	Mean ratio (configuration to non-configuration)	Example interviews
WHITE	53	22	31	58%	.58/.40=1.45	Megan, Sandy, Patrice, Kelly, Queena
women*	32	10	22	69%	.69/.46=1.5	
HEAVY TV						
WOMEN*	14	12	2	14%	.14/.67=.21***	Corina
heavy tv*						
weight						

\*p<.05; \*\*p,.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (two-tailed test): denotes significant difference between configuration mean and mean of cases not in configuration.

Table 6.5: Reduced Configurations and Variations in Poor Body Image.

configuration participants to be anxious about their bodies. The *t* test results for this third configuration shows a large, significant difference beyond the .001 level.

I noted in Chapter 5 that white women have poorer body image in comparison to women of color, which is, again, suggested from QCA. While none of the women that I interviewed discussed race and, specifically, being white as a cause of poor body image, it is suggested, nonetheless, because white standards of thinness are stringent (Hesse-Biber et al. 1999). The three interviews I did with the non-activists, all of whom are white, instantiate the feelings of failure that I feel are linked to privilege (e.g, white, middle class, educated). The three women all have poor body image, all of them diet to either lose or maintain weight, and have all memorized the fat and calorie contents of foods to limit intake. Kelly is a recovering anorexic, and Megan cannot forget that, 10 years ago, she “had to” lose 30 pounds. They complain about excess fat and flab, compare themselves to skinny, beautiful women, and berate themselves for not having the same look. The following comments reflect the fear and depression surrounding the issue of body size for the three non-activists:

(Patrice): The latest issue of *Shape* came in yesterday, and we all were just depressed because this girl was just so tiny. Just everything was tiny and perfect and slender...she looked like most of us looked when we were 12, and, we all thought, how could anyone look like that? It seems like the impossible dream. I sort of feel like my life is a constant diet, but not really a diet to lose weight. It's more like a diet to maintain or a diet to avoid getting heavier, so I try to watch what I eat, try to regulate how many calories.

(Megan): I think I'm very self-conscious. I have a very bad body image. When I was fat, it's hard to let that go. I let myself go. I ate badly and didn't exercise, and all my friends ate that way. Even though I lost a lot of weight, I still feel bad. My butt is so big and flabby.

(Kelly): All extra weight goes to my stomach. I wish I could put the extra weight in my chest, calves, and shoulders. Also, I don't like my thighs, butt, or stomach. I think this is an area that all women hate. I cry if someone says my butt is too big. I asked my boyfriend Mike (name changed) if I was skinny, fat, or thick. I went into hysterics when he said thick (means broad and muscular).

Another woman who admits harboring poor body image is from my activist sample which, again, instantiates the logic of QCA to pull out configurations in diverse samples that affect outcomes. However, 48 year old Sandy is a peace activist, artist and writer, but not a participant in the women's movement, and she watches heavy television. Her comments reflect her guilt and shame over body image:

He (husband Michael) is always sweet about how I look, but my mother—you should be a size 8. She does it by self-denial. Watching what she eats. She is a vain woman; she's real cute for her age. She has less gray than I do...I'll occasionally diet just because I hate what I see when I look in the mirror...I've taken Dexatrim and enzymes-type. A natural type of thing, and laxatives and diuretics...there were occasions where I would binge eat, then take a laxative...My mother is weird. In some ways, she is a very strong woman. Very self-willed. She is highly motivated and...knows how to make things happen, but her values—what she puts this energy into just makes me cringe...decorating the home. And shopping. And buying things...and having the right towels. I'm very dissatisfied with my appearance, my weight, I mean, I have no chin. And what chin I have is doubled. And that's genetic. You can see it in Daddy, too.

Then, to instantiate the third configuration, there is Corina, age 53, who is a women's movement supporter who chooses not to watch television and is, therefore, rarely exposed to feminine images that provoke anxiety about weight. Corina, who is very fulfilled with her job and life, in general, as a middle-aged woman, notes:

My learning curve has shot up. I love being a nurse. Nursing is a varied career...many ways you can do nursing...In addition to...the professional piece where I'm learning new skills, and I am actually getting to do more teaching, which is what I love to do the most, because clearly I love to talk! But personally, I have really come in to living in my own life. It has really been a long, long journey from the mythologies I grew up, and the imagery of the way women were supposed to be...to find fulfillment in certain ways. And that is hard for anybody now who lives in a world where women can be soccer players and...secretaries of state. I mean, Madeline Albright was a mind blower to me. When I looked at her, I thought, we've gotten there finally, finally! I was so amazed that my world had finally embraced women as powerful entities. Not Margaret Thatcher or men with tits, like a men's mentality superimposed on a female body—no. But an actual women's mentality operating. But that was a piece of my transitioning and an awareness that this isn't about pretty. Being a woman isn't about being a decoration or an ornament. Lots and lots of money is made in our culture behind the concept that women are ornamental...As kind of a theatrical person or having grown up in that world, I appreciate putting on makeup, putting on costumes, but that isn't who I am. That's play. Or it is a role. It can be. But for me, it's playful. I mean some days I'm in jeans and someday I want to wear a sequin dress. I am comfortable with a diverse gender expression. Oh, gosh, yes. And I think more women feel that way and certainly more women feel that way then when I was growing up. And more women as they get older seem to be at ease with not being married. If you ever go to NCL cafeteria, you see a whole lot of older women, but you don't see a lot of older men. So, by virtue of just that, of surviving, you have to be able to make peace with your life as yours, not in tandem with anyone. Not somebody's daughter, somebody's wife, somebody's mother, but as oneself. Believe me, it's really hard to shake that stuff.

Further, non-activist interviewees wear more makeup than activists, not wanting to be seen in public unless they look their best. Ideal standards of beauty fit into tighter, more culturally imposed norms. As far as the body, tall and thin with nice musculature is best while the face should have a well-sculpted bone structure with classic, even features, larger lips, big, round eyes, and perfect skin. Conventional body practices, such as shaving and using deodorant, are essential. Not doing these things is defined as unsanitary or strange, as reflected in the following comments by non-activists:

(Megan): When someone smells like they don't bathe, then I think there's germs.

(Patrice): I feel like a testosterone-ridden woman (uses a men's deodorant). Body odor is a stinky, offensive thing. The smell of body odor makes me think of being trapped with no air at an amusement park with people running, screaming, and sweating all day.

(Kelly)- It's a good idea (women shaving) because it's our norm.

Some of the activist women discussed times when their choosing not to shave really set up uncomfortable boundaries in public settings, as, for instance, when students laugh or point while an unshaved instructor taught a class. This example probably

demonstrates that the concept of boundaries is reciprocal. That is, activists both create and are punished by socially imposed boundaries (Taylor and Raeburn 1995). To use the example of choosing not to shave, the practice is informed by environmental concern and the desire to be an unadulterated woman. This results in the personalized political resistance strategy of not shaving. This, in turn, results in boundaries being erected by others who are threatened by the looks of people who are different. In this instance, they are different than the norm of hairless women who appear more different than men than they actually are. Further, activists sometimes knowingly try to break up what they perceive to be unhealthy and unnecessary boundaries. For example, most do not want totally separate spheres for men and women but, rather, a true, equitable community. The notion of a community is a physical and a psychological space where a trusted people live, ideally, absent of boundaries from one another.

### Conclusion

The QCA and narrative data indicate the interrelatedness of the three elements of collective identity. Group consciousness, for most of the activists in the study, is informed by an alternative constellation of values. Values are thought to inform behaviors, but, as confirmed in studies of prejudice and discrimination (Merton 1963), ideas and actions do not always correspond. Yet is likely that activist values and behaviors share a reciprocal influence. It would also appear that personalized political resistances result in consequences or boundaries. Evidence presented in this chapter shows that activists establish group consciousness, enact personalized political discontent, and, consequently, set up physical and psychological boundaries from

mainstream society. Through this discussion of the collective identity process, activist values about body image and appearance seem to affect both in a positive way.

## CHAPTER 7

### PIVOTAL EVENTS, PROCESSES OF TRANSITION, AND HOLISTIC HEALTH

Chapter 7 continues to relate aspects of political process, collective identity and health. In this capacity, I rely on interpretive analysis of interview data to address how political processes build personal and collective identity that positively affects health. The central purpose of Chapter 7 is to assess the theme of the process of transition by looking at socialization, ritual, and pivotal events in the lives of activists. In it, I examine whether women's activist experiences in life course stages reflect continuity and/or change in their identities, politics, and circumstances, particularly as these pertain to women's bodies and aging. Chapter 7 also considers how rituals in community celebrations function to sustain activists' collective identity and filter the meaning of pivotal events, in which case participant observation lends the data. That is, I compliment interpretive analysis with participant observation notes obtained when I travel and attend concerts, festivals, and gatherings (Adams 1998; Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Finally, Chapter 7, in particular, will treat the link between women's activist experiences and their holistic health outcomes, which is my fourth research expectation. That is, political process leads to enhanced health. Ultimately, my use of multiple methods should enable discerning broad continuity and change in activists' ideas,

including what constitutes a positive women's body image. Through the interpersonal way in which I interviewed participants, I felt I was able to give something back to activists who have shared their life stories with me. Feminist research methods make important the ability of the researcher to connect and empathize with study participants (Fonow and Cook 1991; Harding 1987). Through constant and interactive feedback, a certain synchronized understanding is reached, and any ambiguities are clarified. For instance, the following excerpt from this emotional interview instantiates how communication convergence (e.g., Haas and Gregory 2005) can be attained:

**(Interviewer in bold) Do you have any close friends?**

Diana: Not any more. I mean at work, but I don't really consider—they are work friends.

**Do you socialize with them out of work?**

No. I don't socialize at all any more. I hate to say that, but, I could never believe—like if it was years ago and I was looking at myself—I would never believe that. But I don't.

**Do you see yourself getting back into a more people mode when you get out of this stressful job?**

Yeah. Yeah. I think I probably could, yeah. I think I could. I mean, it isn't that I dislike people at all. It is nothing like that.

**No. it sounds like your job is very much a life defining entity that you really have to work with.**

Well, you know, it's curious hearing you say it, because I've tried to describe that to people, and, you know, my son in California...he talks to me a lot, and I think he thinks sometimes that...I find all kinds of excuses. And maybe I do to a point. But I just don't think people know—unless you've been in the situation—you just don't know how controlling a job could be.

**Oh, I understand completely!**

Do you really?

**Yeah!**

You see, I don't really think most people really understand that. That's why I don't really say a whole lot, because it just sounds like an excuse.

**I don't think it sounds like an excuse. I think when you don't have someone else to depend on, like a husband or a partner, and as a woman, we know there is discrimination, and we know that, statistically, on the average, women make less. That puts a lot of stress on us, as single women, to make job a priority in our lives.**

Oh, it has to be!



As I proceed, my strategy is to briefly reiterate, in parts where they apply, the processes that constitute my theoretical argument and then compare this to evidence from narrative data. In this way, it is seen that, at many points, the data supports the theory. Yet the data also suggests theoretical shortcomings or ideas that need expansion or further specification. For example, my data suggests that it is aspects of the quality of relationships in social interaction that are essential ingredients to the process of collective identity. This is more generalized than the aspects I felt would become manifest in women-exclusive social interactions. The order in this chapter flows through the life course histories of activists, beginning with childhood, proceeding into young adulthood, and moving into later adulthood for mature interviewees. Hence, we need to start where life histories begin for activists: learning culture in interaction from early socialization experiences.

### Early Socialization

#### *Parents*

Societal institutions, including family, economy, religion, schools, peer groups, and other social networks transmit cultural values and ideas, plus the proper behaviors that put such ideas into practice, to new members. Socialization agents, then, exert normative or alternative influence on people. The first instances of socialization take place in the family, when especially parents teach children what to value and how to behave. Some of the activists in this study experienced conventional early socialization, yet, for the majority, the seeds that would sprout later activism were typically planted when they were young children. Activists' mothers were identified, in particular, as

being influential, including to their political development. Most consider their mothers to be role models, whether or not they were defined as feminist or simply strong women.

That is, mothers may not have understood terms that were being used after about 1970 to articulate women's gender oppression. And yet they are still described as being strong women. Sabrina, age 43, describes her high school educated mother as a very strong woman who worked long hours at a factory and had to appease her manic depressive, alcoholic, and abusive husband. Says Sabrina, "She managed her way through all that. I really have to hand it to her having been through that." Fifty-five year old Janet reports her stay-at-home mother greatly respected others and was very compassionate. According to Lou, a mature massage therapist who credits her mother for putting family first,

I think of my mother as being a very strong woman, but...she is also very traditional. I don't think of her as being a strong feminist. She went along with my dad, but I also think that their values were the same. Like sometimes my friends joke with me about it...we'll be talking about our families, and I'll say, well, I didn't experience that. And somebody will go...you were with Ward and June Cleaver.

Other mothers described as strong were college educated, worked paid jobs and held political views informed by their own learning. Gwen, age 50, grew up in a close, loving, two-parent family where both parents were Lutheran, conservative Republicans, and, although her family practiced traditional gender roles, her mother, an accountant, always had input. She remembers her crafty and creative mother as helpful to Gwen and neighborhood kids, encouraging them to put together a local newspaper. Fifty-three year old Doris' mother, since she was critical of mainstream media, almost never watched television. A staunchly Democratic and even socialist leaning family, Doris' father helped organize a labor union to which her mother was also involved.

Yet other mothers made clear their feminist views or activism. These mothers are or were often considered best friends and influential role models to daughters. They taught their children political values and behaviors, such as always voting, fighting to gain maintain abortion rights and staying informed of both domestic and global issues. These mothers also modeled alternative cultural practices, such as eating whole or organic foods, preventing health problems rather than treating symptoms, and rejecting feminine standards of appearance, like the norm of wearing makeup. Connie, age 56, recalls the importance of modeling activism in her mother's life:

I remember my mother...and the women in the neighborhood would have a little coffee. My mother was like, I haven't got time to sit around and make small talk. When I was 11 or 12 years old, my mother decided she had her four kids...at that point all in school and she wanted to be a teacher. And so she went to college at Central State University. Very early on—we had sometimes black graduate students who were living with us, and we had a Korean girl live with us for a year. And these people were *family*. They were family with us. I was often the only white person in a black group, and I...by 12, I had been in my first civil rights demonstration. So my mother and father basically trained me that this life was for doing something with it. Not for just making small talk.

Ritchey, age 60, recalls how intelligent and important the women in her large, New York apartment complex found her mother, who was an avid reader and life-long learner:

And ah, my mother was very interested in politics and she was a member of Great Books...started at the University of Chicago introducing the masses to the classics...that was always a discussion at the table, what she was reading. In the neighborhood we were coming from, it was solidly ethnic Jewish, Italian, Irish, and education was stressed. She was probably the brightest woman in our apartment complex. I noticed at a very early age that all of the women would come to my mother for counseling. Not that she had a degree in counseling. She was empathetic, but she also gave good advise. She was a natural therapist. That is the only thing I can call her. Because she would listen to people's problems, and she would suggest solutions, and if they didn't work, she would try to come up with something else. So, there was always a knock on the door 24 hours a day. And they seemed to think she had her life together. They could just trust her to think more rationally than they were thinking.

A few of the women I interviewed sadly explained how their very conventional mothers primarily valued keeping up appearances. That their daughters were marginal in ways—jean-wearing tomboys, bookish girls, and early critics—was identified as a source

of embarrassment and something to change for these mothers. Julianna's mother has not spoken to her since Julianna came out as a lesbian over 10 years ago. However, such activists expressed forgiving tones, now having a much greater appreciation for their limited life circumstances. This idea is nicely expressed by Dora, a 35 year old holistic counselor who recognizes, "Certain choices in her life took strength. And the things that I would have judged before as being weak, I would now recognize, if I was in the same context, I'm not sure if I would have done much different." In sum, many of the activists saw their mothers, in some way, as positive role models who also appear to have had greater political influence in their daughters' lives than fathers.

More than half of the women said their fathers did not play a big role in their early lives, politically or otherwise. This was a source of sadness and disillusionment. Divorce and abandonment, sometimes caused by fathers' drug and alcohol abuse, were common, in which case the women lived with mothers. The financial viability of families post-divorce was precarious, at best, and only fueled troubles. About five women remember being sexually abused as children by fathers or stepfathers. Relevant to the present study, research shows that early sexual abuse is a cause of disordered eating among girls and women (Hesse-Biber et al. 1999). Fathers who stayed were often described as more conservative and Republican than mothers, with notable exceptions. Yet a few fathers, because of the activist nature of their occupations or their efforts to raise strong daughters, are recollected with love and fondness. I note that more of the younger interviewees tell of these positive experiences that affected aspects of their activism.

For example, Lou lovingly notes that both of her parents only had high school educations, yet her dad felt like his five children should have college educations. He made special efforts to make Lou feel equal and included:

Dad was a tool and die maker...and really treated us all very equal. I remember when I was little, that there was this group called the Indian Guides that my brother was a part of. And my brother and my dad would go do this stuff...and I was, I cried, and my dad was like, he started, tried to start a group with Indian Princesses. Girls couldn't be in Indian Guides. It was all dads and their sons. And yet when they were making something, like they made these headdresses—I would always help him make it. I was never discouraged or told, girls don't do that. We'd go camping, I'd fish, if I was better than my brother at it, that was fine. And so I think that it fostered a stronger personality, probably. And I think just my parents, they are very strong. And my dad is very self-sufficient. And I think that is where I got a lot of it too. It was always encouragement.

Further, twenty-seven year old Amy's dad was outspoken about feminism, especially within the United Methodist Church, where he is a pastor. She recalls him, and her mother as well, as always being strongly in favor of ordaining women as pastors within that church and being willing to speak out for them. And Allyson, age 24, discerns that the positive body image she now has was fostered by her father's attempts at everyday empowerment, as is clear in the following example:

It was just, love yourself. I can remember being really young and my Dad, every time he would take me out of the bathtub, every time we had a bath, he would wrap me up in a towel and take my over to the mirror and say, who's the most beautiful person in the world? That was like a normal, ritual, routine thing every time we got out of the bathtub. He was really big on that.

### *Early Political Socialization*

Other individuals in the women's lives also served as role models. Strong women include grandmothers, aunts, siblings, cousins, teachers, church leaders and members, and family friends. They are described as independent, intelligent, and caring toward community members in need of support. Karen, age 53, was positively influenced by the mother of a friend of hers from church. As Karen explains, "I really admired her a lot because she was an activist, and very involved in the civil rights movement at that

time, while still being a housewife and mother. I thought that was a good role model to have back in those days.” What Karen means is that the woman remained politically active despite the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles. Gwen recalls her experiences with a church youth group as being pivotal to her activist career. The leader of this youth group was a young woman who was vocally anti-war and gender egalitarian. She stressed to Gwen the importance of women having careers and income earning potential, since life offers no guarantees.

Most of the women grew up in families that endorsed some variant of organized religion. They note that their churches and synagogues often did mission work to distribute food and clothing to the poor, and their assisting with that was an early step into activism. However, being affiliated with organized faith was not common to all the activists. For instance, Richey’s parents were, as she recalls, “Eye to eye on being against organized religion.” While today, most of my sample is critical of organized religion, some religious activities are honored, especially if they have connections to political activist groups. One such group, Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity, or BREAD, whose members are drawn from 13 area churches, acts for social justice by organizing on issues that include health insurance and fair housing.

Rebecca Klatch (1999), in her research on former SDS and YAF activists, found that a sizable minority of young people rebelled against conservative upbringing—a pattern I find in my own data. Diana, age 63, grew up in Thornville, a small town that is southeast of Columbus. She describes Thornville as all white, very conservative Republican. According to Diana, “I started my foray into politics with JFK, when he came out. And I’ve always liked politics.” This is an interest she shared with her

family, albeit they were unreceptive of Kennedy. Also like Klatch, I find that most of the activists, regardless of the political or religious ideology of their families, participated in everyday politics, such as dinner table discussions. For instance, Karen was raised in a religious Presbyterian and Republican household in which politics were frequently discussed.

Others, like Ritchey, experienced liberal activism firsthand. Both of her parents were educated and involved in several political issues. Ritchey explains:

My father was an activist...involved in labor issues, and my first protest was when the Rosenberg's were executed. He took me up to Sing Sing to protest their execution. It's a very famous—they were communists, and they were charged with giving secrets to the Russians about our atomic—well, right after the war (WWII). And I think I was 7-8 when they were executed. This was pre-McCarthyism. And my father was convinced that probably certainly the husband had done it. He felt the wife was innocent. But the fact that they were being executed he thought was immoral because the Russians were our allies. And technically this was not treason. We were already not trusting the Russians; the cold war had began...So that was my first protest. Plus, my father, who is of British heritage, dual passport, was upset that, knowing communists were selling secrets to the Russians, were running around Washington DC and no one was arresting them.. He thought there was some anti-Semitism involved here, because these people weren't well-connected like the Brits were, they were going to lose their lives because of it.

She concludes that her parents' continual attention to injustice was a spark for her own later passion for animal rights and other social movements to which it is tied, such as the peace and environmental movements.

As important as adult role models were to the political socialization of the activists, other players, such as peer groups, and factors were also involved. One very solid pattern in my data is that most of the activists grew up marginalized or different from others in some way. For some, it meant recognizing at an early age that girls lead restricted lives in comparison to boys and, for others, that being bookish and intellectual are not the ingredients for popularity. Some of the women recollected that, although they were popular as kids, they were never really understood by their families or friends,

which created stress. Most of the activists were intellectually gifted girls who felt the sting of isolation by elementary school or junior high. In particular, they learned the harsh reality of stratification in junior high and high school subcultures. This, then, was a first or early taste of hierarchy and power that they perceived as unjust and was a catalyst that ignited later activism. By high school, many activists flocked to alternative groups, such as hippies, neo-countercultures, skaters, punks, Goths, geeks, intellectuals, gay and lesbian teens, and theatre kids, where sometimes, but not always, drug use and rebellion became manifest.

There were several illustrative examples in my data that invoke the various ways girls felt marginalized. Alexa, age 23, grew up agnostic yet culturally Jewish in an all-white, Christian rural town in Mississippi. She believes these conditions prompted her becoming a socially conscious kid who chose the difficult path of putting others first. Feeling that she knew how it felt to be transient, Alexa recalls giving hot chocolate to area homeless people and picking up trash in her neighborhood. Anne, age 25, attributes her social consciousness to her activist mother, whom she fondly recalls below:

My mom and I are best friends...she probably is my number one role model. My parents got divorced when I was six. So she is very independent and...very feminist, leftist, and active. Well, she was at Kent State and the 1968 democratic convention. And she was very active in the anti-Vietnam movement and civil rights. But mostly just at a college like SDS, not federal, but an educated view of the issues. I was eight years old when Bush was running against Dukakis. And I remember that my mom had never gotten mad at me before in my life. And I was at an elementary school when we had like a pseudo vote or something. And everyone was voting for Bush because I lived in Indiana, and all my friends were voting for him, so I did, too. I didn't know what was going on. And I came home, and they gave us a Bush sticker...it was on my backpack. And I remember walking in the door. And that was like the first day that my mom ever expressed to me anything. And she was so angry at me for doing that. And since then, she has been very vocal with me about how I should be in my life. So, yeah, she is very educated, very left. But not educated like social theory wide, but more like basic political knowledge.

What is interesting to me is that the activists overtly recognize that experiences with difference, inequality, or identity crises lead people to hold marginalized or activist



views. Plus, these views may be specific to the inequality one suffers personally, such as racism, sexism, or homophobia (See Kaminski 1997 for review of the social construction of, particularly, lesbian identity). Ritchey, who became active in animal rights, admits that she did not see society as patriarchal because she was a beautiful young woman who was valued because of that. That is:

My cousin Laura, who is seven years my junior was an activist years before I was. She was getting involved in all kinds of interesting things, like gender. When she was trying to engage me, I was not blowing her off, it wasn't something I was particularly interested in, and probably because I didn't identify with women in trouble. I wasn't. I was kind of sailing through. I really didn't have problems. Logically, you could sit down with me and we could talk about, you know, there are women out there suffering. And I would acknowledge that. But, I didn't feel it in my gut. And so I wasn't moved to join her and give up everything and become a radical feminist, which is what she did.

Laura's urging was asking a good deal of Ritchey, because she could be penalized at work, in the family, and in relationships. Motivation for activism depends on being "moved" by an issue and, for Ritchey, that was the abuse she saw being inflicted, firsthand, on animals; that was a cause that touched her.

Lezlie, age 41, had a more difficult time putting terms to her felt oppression, and she channeled her frustration into a rebellion that included drug abuse. A teenager in the middle 1970s, Lezlie felt that the political arena for youth was largely untapped, as the excerpt below suggests:

I was pretty much instantly jaded and cynical and thought, you know, what a bunch of crap. I've been lied to all along. And as a teenager, with my rebellious gang of teenagers, it was kind of us versus them...the system versus us. And we didn't have, unfortunately, any role models that were using rebellion in a constructive, positive way. We went to drugs. That was our sex drugs and rock and roll—our way of rebelling. I think our main political awareness was rock and roll. That was the only thing that opened us up to the fact there was a bigger world. Like there were musicians from like another country, and some of that stuff was political. I think of it as our political instincts, that we are rebelling against this artificial world we were being forced to live in. But in our conversations, we didn't have a focus. It was more the, well, the system really sucks, and we're going to rebel. We listened to John Lennon's *Imagine*, and were able to relate to the peace, and there was a lot of the oh, yes, love is the answer. There were a lot of the idealistic beginnings of I think activism. But as far as an understanding, a path to take to pursue that or create that world in a healthy way it didn't exist at all for us.

Becky, age 21, was a little better off than Lezlie in that her friends did have political views and they did talk, and yet she felt different than her peers. Becky notes she had an edge to her, and she did not prioritize doing frivolous things like her hair. Some people even accused her of *thinking too much*. Audra, a 32 year old mother of two boys, recalls being an introverted loner by the vulnerable age of 14. Because few people could relate to her growing social consciousness, Audra wrote her thoughts in a journal, which helped her come to grips with her increasingly complex learning about the world.

Audra's example parallels the experiences of most of the activists in that they recognize how crucial reading widely, especially in history and politics, has been to their activist careers. As Sabrina recalls, "I was a huge reader, even as a kid I got in trouble for reading—I laugh about it now, it was in the adult section of the library. I don't think they have such a thing anymore. So it was funny. I got kicked out of the bookmobile, which was heartbreaking for me." Karen, also an avid reader, had fewer but closer friends, and she enjoyed them best as dyadic relationships. She says, "I was very much not a group person in high school. I really objected to being labeled. I felt like there was always that pressure to be associated with a clique, and I worked not to be!

Further, several women point to a depression and negative identity they felt growing up in upper middle class suburbs with money, prestige hierarchies and stereotypic gender roles. Growing up having to be competitive with girls, including sisters and friends, never felt affirming and destroyed what should have been intimate social relationships. This situation is expressed poignantly by Laura, age 32, below:

There was a small group of us. We were kind of the misfits...my high school was a very snobbish, very conservative, very judgmental group of people who grew up privileged and rich. And I never felt like I really fit in. Now, my sister, on the other hand, spent all her money on

clothes so she could try to fit in, and it worked for her. I wasn't in to that. It was like, no way. I liked to read. I played softball. I ran track. I did some different things. Ellen (sister) was a cheerleader.

Activists' marginal statuses caused many of them to experience depression. For women, that can become manifest in the body as immediate, localized ways—notably substance abuse and eating disorders (also see Kaminski 1997)—to control feelings and events, starting is adolescence. Laura's example shows that the gender role messages girls learn are especially important in adolescence. Cultural ideas about ideal femininity, in particular, and as filtered through societal institutions, are a central component of women's lives. Whether or not they agree with it, all of the activists learned that sexual attractiveness, a central *role expectation* of idealized or emphasized femininity, is made to seem enhanced through consuming trendy clothing, cosmetics, and diet products.

Activists remember learning, directly and indirectly, that girls are not as important as boys, but this pattern is more pronounced for mature women. For instance, Holly, age 55, notes that after her brother was born, most of the family resources, such as for travel and activities, were spent on him. The message they received in school was, in general, be quiet, neat, ladylike, and do not ask too many or controversial questions. Wanda, age 63, was reprimanded by a religious elder in her church for her continued probing about evolution. She was told that such explorations could only mean she was losing her faith. The women did not appreciate being required to wear skirts, dresses, and makeup to places like school, work, church, social events, and job interviews. In fact, Lou was told by an ex-boss to not bother showing up for a job interview if she was minus a skirt, heels, lipstick, and rouge. Finally, there were very few opportunities for the mature women, when they were girls, to play sports.

Younger activists did not identify such overt messages as having an influence on their gendered learning. In fact, many of them were raised by women, like those in my mature sample, who advocated diversity, equality, and open gender roles. Allyson received liberal values from an open-minded religious socialization.

We were going to all these different churches just so my parents could find something that we maybe might like. And we ended up going to this Presbyterian church...the reason they liked it was there was a woman reverend. She was amazing—very genuine...at the end of each church session, whatever you want to call them, she would have all the children come up and sit in the front and she would do a little story-sermon just for them. And it wasn't all preachy—it was just a story. You know what I mean? And that's what they liked about it, was the church was very kid-centered. And they didn't talk above kids.

We see, too, that Allyson's example suggests that an empowered identity tied to early activist learning also relates to women having better body image, as indicated next.

I can never remember not loving my body and what I look like...and...I think all of my friends are beautiful. They are all very different people. Like I have my friend, Victoria. Like she has really long dreds down her back...She is absolutely beautiful. And my friend Debbie...is very thin, very solemn, melancholy, really pale skin, and has really short, choppy hair, longer right here and dyed. They all look different, but are beautiful.

However, the requirement that women be and always remain sexually attractive, which is a component of the newer "superwoman" gender role, was identified as unrealistic and oppressive. That is, a superwoman is a woman with a great career, a huge, suburban, clean home, neat and well-mannered children, *and* a perfect face and body. Sabrina mourns her having to adjust from a relatively free childhood to the demureness and passivity of traditional femininity.

I think it was when my friends and I started reaching puberty. And I realized that all of the sudden we were different on certain issues and how I behaved. I was used to running wild (a tomboy). I had a horse, ran wild. Do whatever. We were expected to calm down a little bit. Yeah. And I refused to. No. My dad asked me about it. Not harshly. Like, you'll never get a husband acting like that. I was like, I don't want one anyway.

Sabrina attributes her depression about expected gender roles as facilitating her use of hallucinogenic drugs. In sum, the early role models of older and younger activists

imparted some political learning, with activist input continued later in life. It appears that early and progressive activism spawns positive identity with application to health outcomes, which I continue to address in this chapter.

It is pivotal life events that present identity and other conflicts in women's lives, such as the gender conflicts just noted. Gender is intimately linked to women's bodies that are both objective and subjective; most people have a discrete sex that undergoes aging processes, yet this is experienced contextually through age and gender role expectations. That is, the body precedes, is part of, and is a metaphor for *pivotal life events*. Women experience many age-related events that bring them to decision-making crossroads and, sometimes, *pivotal departures*, which are alternative values and behaviors. In the numerous examples above that pertain to activists' political and cultural experiences, they are aware that normal behavior is rewarded. Being accepted in social interactions is highly motivating, as with the example of Ritchey not wanting to subscribe to radical feminism. They are aware that their behavior will be interpreted by individuals and social networks in interaction. Women need consistent support throughout their lives for optimal holistic health, at events or periods in and beyond adolescence.

As I describe shortly, normative gender expectations promote poor health outcomes, such as eating disorders, as a result of a complex interplay of forces. Yet *political process* has guided activists down alternative and, ultimately, healthier paths. Political process and, in particular, sustained activism, is a resource used to address pivotal body, age, and gendered life events. It is events during adolescence and young adulthood that lead activists more fully to pivotal departures.

## Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Advanced education is a pivotal event due to its link to women's careers and marriage. In college and, in some cases, high school, activists are exposed to mind-opening social science courses, including sociology, political science, anthropology, history, and women's studies. Going to college frees activists from the shelter of family and its sometimes conflicting values. Some activists come to realize that they are no longer misfits, particularly when they meet other activists.

Alexa recalls loving her introductory sociology course because it put a context and terms to felt experiences. Sociology as an empirical enterprise provided her ways to gather facts that could validate theories. She learned to read statistics, which enabled her to better discern what is true. Her learning was empowering yet overwhelming; her foundations were shaken. She cried, not knowing how to act or what to do. Sociology for Alexa was truly a pivotal event that led her to a pivotal departure because, although it was a burden, she felt forever responsible to *change* the world.

Becky shared a similar experience in a women's studies class. The class made her feel empowered as a woman and also smarter and better informed. It also enabled her to see oppression from the vantage point of other groups, such as people of color, gays, and lesbians. Before she took the class, Becky considered other women to be competitive threats. A book entitled *Women's Inhumanity to Women* by Phyllis Chesler (2003) altered Becky's perception so that she now values women as sisters and acts politically in support of gender issues.

Christine, age 32, was a high school cheerleader, which she explains is a leadership opportunity for young women, and she also served on student council. She

developed the skills to put herself in the public eye and not be embarrassed. Being a popular leader connects now to her ability to be an activist in support of multicultural education and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights. Before coming out as transgender, Christine was marginal in that her family had little money and her father was alcoholic and abusive toward her mother.

Doris, age 53, worked on a bachelor's degree in journalism and anthropology from 1970-1975. She was an activist during this time in the Akron area who remembers the May 4 shootings at Kent State and the subsequent memorials, protests, and counterculture. Members of hippie countercultures that used drugs, Doris and several others believe drug use kept them away from more direct political activism. Plus, there was a fear during that time that people defined as radical could be subjected to government scrutiny or framing.

Another pivotal event for some of the women was travel, from which activists saw remote parts of the United States and the rest of the world, they learned to speak foreign languages, they served as ambassadors, and they came to view others from a perspective of cultural relativism. Karen served as a junior ambassador in South Korea. Part of her duties included, upon her return, to serve in an educational role by teaching others about South Korea to promote tolerance. As Karen explains:

I just did a lot of speaking to small local groups about my experience. For the most part, people were very interested. I got a need for more awareness of how we impact other countries in the world. It just always kind of blew me away after that experience how little we know about other countries and other cultures in our country. And how much other countries and cultures know about us.

This pivotal event became a pivotal departure for Karen because it encouraged her to keep learning about other cultures and pushed her into anti-globalization activism.

## *Eating disorders*

I recognize that women may have been drawn to my study by the topic and their past experiences with body image and eating disorders. But that, today, the pattern in my data is positive body image for both younger and mature activists only illustrates my theoretical points. Some activists contacted me because they felt they had some insight about the problems that cause disordered eating based on their own personal experiences. They seem to feel that eating disorders are rooted in depression. We discussed periods in high school or college when women were depressed, did not eat enough, and then they lost weight, in some cases, large amounts. Below, Laura and I discuss the connections between stress, depression, gender role expectations, her eating disorder, and activist responses to the problem:

I started to get interested in boys. There were all these pretty girls, and the guys are all looking at them. I felt dumpy and heavy and compared myself to my sister. And my mom played a component. My sister was cute and petite, and my mom would say, don't eat until you are full-always stop well before you are full. And I'm like, okay. I thought you were supposed to eat until you felt satisfied? But okay, I'll just eat less and start exercising more. And I found the more I exercised, the less hungry I was, then the less I would eat. And it sort of snowballed. And I was playing sports. And so I practiced, and I would get home late. And then I could skip dinner without mom noticing, and little things like that started to happen. As I lost weight, people made comments. You look really good. Have you been working out? And it kicked the whole thing around. And so in times of stress, I find my stomach gets upset, and so if I miss a couple meals, my clothes are fitting loose, and I start feeling good about that. It's real easy for me to slip into some of those old behaviors. So I have to be on the watch for it all the time.

### **Did you ever got help?**

I was hospitalized several times for pretty low weight. To the point where I now have to have my heart checked out in a couple weeks. I have been having some issues, and it might be related to that. I never was bulimic. Mine might be more just because I've done it so many times over so many key periods of development.

### **Do you feel that you've conquered your eating disorder?**

Um, I think it is always going to be knocking at the door. And I'm just, more aware of what kicks it in and know what to do when I start noticing a few little ways of, oh, I won't eat lunch today. I'm not that hungry. Once I recognize I'm in there, I either talk to my holistic coach about it or a good friend about it. Or, I just sit down and come up with a meal plan for the next week, go to the store, and that's it. I have to get myself onto a routine, because if I just go lucy lucy with the eating, I "forgot" to eat again....But I'm not always conscious that it's conscious. I get myself into a routine so the habit doesn't become what it used to be.



**Does your art therapy and spirituality help?**

They do, and yoga helped with the connection between mind and body. I would get to the point where I was so dissociated from my body that I didn't know I was hungry. I didn't think I needed food because I wasn't feeling hungry, everything's fine, and I do better when I'm not eating! I think more clearly! I would talk myself into these things. But, doing anything where I have to connect my mind, body and spirit, and realize that my body is just a home for my spirit, my soul, and I need to take care of it, because it's allowing me to do the work I was meant to do, and, this is a waste of my time. Does my body—is it really that important from a looks standpoint? I'm not interested in a relationship right now. It's not like I'm out to impress anybody. I always get stuck though, when I spend time with my sister, and I compare. And I think she's what I should be looking like because we're twins, and I've tried to break free from that, but every once in a while, it kicks back in, and I have to recognize, you know what, that's that mindset.

Laura defines herself as activist in personal and cultural ways, both through her line of work, where she does counseling and art therapy, and through spiritual practices, such as yoga, that promote body empowerment. Like Alexa and others, Laura believes the media plays a big part in the increase in women's eating disorders. They are horrified that nearly all of the models in most print media are skinny to an unhealthy extent. Upon consideration, all of the women who admitted having anorexia, bulimia, or even disordered eating attribute part of the problems to mass media images.

Dora, a holistic health counselor, has gained insight into the causes of eating disorders from her work. She has had many sessions involving young women with eating issues. They uncover how eating disorders reflect how women see themselves. These problems often manifest in women who are struggling with their identity, their sense of self, and their confidence. As Donna further explains:

There are a lot of comparisons to what they see in the media, on TV, and what they see as beautiful. And confusing inner beauty and outer beauty. The eating issues end up becoming a way to mirror something that's unobtainable and to try to be happy. And so, I've done some work with people to help them differentiate between what's real and what's not real in the media. And to look at strengths, and to go inward in terms of looking at their identity. And sometimes its like accepting the aging process like for an older woman. So, helping to accept beauty in the aging process and accept what is in front of them as opposed to stop what is happening. So a lot of it is about finding personal acceptance to find strength within the self. So that those external things don't hold as much weight or aren't as powerful. The other issue that comes up is control and power; they get tied together. It's about helping people understand where their sense of control and power can come internally without needing to use their relationship with food to exercise that. I help them set appropriate boundaries in their lives and their relationships and things along those

lines. Helping them create situations where they feel more empowered. And so recognizing that their need to have control is valid and helping them find a more appropriate way to get that met.

An interesting insight to add to this is Alexa's recognition that women may be attracted to vegetarianism or organic food because of the assumption that it is very clean and would, therefore, fit the requisite of control and purity so important to women with eating disorders.

Pivotal departures on paths leading away from mainstream socialization and institutions that encourage eating disorders do not just come from internal empowerment. From my sample, it was the women who were raised in traditional or conservative homes that developed poor body image, and this is probably due to rigid identities shown in other work to harm health (e.g. Kaminski 1997). For example, Lisa, age 35, who grew up in a typical, white, conservative suburb, developed an eating disorder also linked to pleasing boys, which is an expectation of emphasized femininity. Lisa reflects,

At that time, when I started (eating disorder), this guy I had been going out with...had broken up with me. I had to like figure out on my own why...I remember one thing that my boyfriend's mother had always worried about me and thought I was very thin. I figured they must have not been overly worried about me. So, in a way, it was conscious. I was suicidal...It was just that I was very depressed and it was mainly about they world. I was interested in political issues back then. Just looking around the world. The greatest fear is bringing a child into this world. I figured that I could never have a baby because I could never hate a person so much to bring him into this world.

Instead, political activism in numerous groups and organizations, even if the major issues are peripheral to gender and body image, give women a chance to associate with sympathizers. From the example above, after Lisa became involved with Native American rights, which included her living on a reservation for a period of years, and the Waldorf education movements, her body image improved dramatically. Lisa saw

hardship on the reservation, which made her call into question her own privilege. She recalls, “I was living on a reservation. I was maybe 21 and I remember saying wow, for the first time since I was anorexic, I don’t care if my stomach sticks out. I just don’t care!” Believing and acting in concert with others defines collective identity, which is suggested in my data to bolster health. This theme is continued in sections that illustrate processes of collective identity.

### Processes of Collective Identity

Collective identity is an active component of political process. Gaining an empowered consciousness from interaction in social networks gives women the strength to resist normative expectations and, instead, adopt alternative expectations as activists. Socialization is dynamic and contextual in that people can always learn new things. This is important herein because women have social interactions in activist contexts at all points in their lives. Collective identity is composed of ideas about a group’s normative expectations, or group consciousness, actions described as personalized political strategies, and boundaries that separate a group, in terms of ideas and actions, from the dominant group.

My data clearly show that the process of collective identity is continually at work for activists. All three of the processes of collective identity are forged in the context of interaction in social networks. Group consciousness comes to activists from both their socialized pasts, in which case, values and ideas about morality, culture, and politics are *continued*, and internalization of newer ideas that come at pivotal life events and cause

*change*. In this next section on group consciousness, I discuss the pivotal events, rituals, and processes that reinforce or give rise to activist ideas.

### Group Consciousness

#### *Spirituality*

Robust findings in my data are that activists similarly describe how spirituality affects their activist values and feelings about issues, yet they tend to reject institutionalized religion. They are very wary of religious fundamentalists, especially Christians, for their perceived hatred and intolerance of certain people, namely gays, and their political agenda to merge church and state in numerous ways. Diana explains, “Anytime someone tells me what a good Christian they are, oh, they are immediately suspect.” Most women believe that organized religion is an easier choice for people than a thinking spirituality because religion can suggest that, by following a form and a doctrine, that is enough to be a moral person. Yet this is viewed as only the outer shell of a spiritual connection. Then, there is the tendency for organized religion to define who is saved and who is not from an absolutist approach.

Instead, the women tend to recognize that everybody is on a different path, and all paths are valid. Their spirituality is holistic because it sees connections between all things. For example, healing energy transfers from one life force to another. God is found in nature in every living thing that has evolved over time, from one single cell. Evolution tends to be accepted and not found to be in conflict with any religion. It is possible that empirical knowledge and spirituality can blend in a greater consciousness.

Some of the spiritual women are also religious and/or Christian. One of my favorite interviews was with Queena, a 21 year old Mennonite who was attending a bible college in greater Columbus. Although her faith was very conservative, she made room for spirituality in her daily life through nature walks, journaling, and meditation. Most of the other activists that attend religious services are Unitarian, Unity and United Church of Christ members. All of these ecumenical churches encourage learning and activism, they follow principles rather than dogmas, and the ministers speak for themselves.

Ecumenical refers to the possibility that all people can be one faith; people from all denominations can still belong to their regular faith.

#### *Media Consumption and Avoidance*

Yet another arena that informs activist ideas about interpreting pivotal events and political issues is media, in its many forms. The overwhelming pattern is the women want intelligent media that objectively explains what is going on. They enjoy an eclectic mix of music genres: what they called roots music (blues, bluegrass, jazz, Celtic, African-American spiritual), world music (reggae, African drumming), free form improvisational (Grateful Dead derivative bands, Phish), live, ambient, especially for meditation, and women, such as Ani DeFranco and Bitch & Animal. All of these genres have in common that they are often, directly or indirectly, political with socially conscious themes.

Then, the activists tend to avoid formulaic Hollywood movies, specifically those that glorify gratuitous violence. Instead, activists seek out independently released movies, in particular, documentaries. They love Michael Moore for keeping them abreast of world events, like outsourcing, in an entertaining way. Several women liked Bill

Moyers' activist show NOW on PBS, although he officially retired in January, 2005.

Moyers tackled controversial issues such as America's low minimum wage, its prejudice toward Arabs, and its use of under-researched chemicals.

Desired print media is not funded by any advertising, such as *Ms.* and *The Sun*, which leads to more objective and independent reporting. Such sources invoke the importance of context, that interests will vary depending on race, class, gender, culture and education, natural living and healing (e.g., *Mothering*, *Yoga Journal*, *Sage Woman*), living with difference (e.g., Christine likes *Ann's Baby*, a magazine about GLBT parenting), current events (e.g., *The Utne Reader*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*), or that have a clever writing style, like *Vanity Fair*. In general, the activists seek out news from alternative sources that do not leave out the history and context that are essential to grasp world events holistically. As Liz explains, we might see ravage fighting in Somalia, but we need to understand that that is explained by a history of colonialism where artificial state borders were imposed on unique ethnic groups. Activists also get news from reproductions of articles sent by friends in their networks, e mails, university lectures, and the Internet. Popular cites include the Environmental Defense website, Ohio Green.org, moveon, common cause, and truth out.

Most of the activists are well-educated, and with that comes an awareness of psychological manipulation in advertisements and campaigns that has become a fine science that applies psychology against consumers. Mainstream media, such as fashion magazines, tend not to offer information relevant to activists lives. They are especially disgusted by infotainment that mixes blurbs of economic or political events with, for example, how many contestants remain on *Survivor*. This is, according to Lezlie, instead

of reporting important world events. She recalls contacting *The Dispatch* to complain that a huge anti-war rally in Europe, where over one million people marched against US foreign policy, was not reported. Finally, it is dangerous that the media is owned by a handful of mega corporations, which will thwart democracy.

### *Activist Issues*

The ideas that activists derive from their exposure to spirituality and mass media directly influence the issues they act upon. Their group consciousness of shared values is also derived from interaction in formal and informal social networks. This next section notes many formal and informal networks that do instrumental and expressive activities in the context of ritual gatherings and celebrations. There is not a clear boundary between formal and informal activist networks. Formal groups may be said to hold organized meetings for direct political purposes while informal groups function more expressively by providing activists social support. However, some groups organize explicitly political activities and nurture social relationships. Many of the churches to which the women are members do both kinds of activities, most especially the Unitarian church, that participates, for example, in BREAD. Wanda is motivated by her Unitarian church not just for its social justice network, but for the wide array of activities, from vegetarian meals to yoga, that have encouraged deep and lasting friendships over the years.

The Humane Society and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) rally against cruelty to animals in many domains, such as using animals to test products or medicines and animal neglect and abuse. Formally, activists donate money, time, and

expertise to the cause. Ritchey serves also on the board of PETA's office in France, plus, her many resources facilitate connections to the Humane Society in the United States. Then, there are issues that link animal rights to the environment: the health of humans and animals raised in dirty or chemically perverted conditions, the destruction of local economies from the agribusiness meat industry, the dependence on globalized trade, over-consumption, and animal suffering. These issues and the resistance they invoke link several new social movements, including animal rights, peace, fair trade, third world, feminism, and ecology.

Activists like Lou belong to Coop America that provides resources, like the Green Pages, where consumers can check the environmental and human rights records of companies. For example, a consumer can find a company that will build a house using sustainable methods and resources. Amy belongs to the Ohio Ecological Farmers Association that helps farmers wanting to use organic methods to get started. Related to this is community supported agriculture, or CSA, whose actions are based on the idea that food production interacts with every aspect of community life. Informal groups, such as Simply Living, schedule sessions that educate members and friends about crop biodiversity and how this affects the culture of local peoples, peasant property rights in developing countries, the effects of cattle grazing, farm pollution, and animal diseases. Activists can then participate more formally in Ohio Citizen Action projects involving the environment. Queena, a Mennonite missionary, points out that Christian stewardship is a value found in the bible. She thinks Christians, drawing on other traditions, such as those of Native Americans, should do a better job as stewards of the earth much better than is currently the case.



Related to ecology, some activists belong to the Earth Institute, a national organization that offers courses on environmental awareness and voluntary simplicity. More informally, there are collectives of people in Athens, Ohio and Athens, Georgia that live sustainably as an intentional community as much as they can. Some own property together, they attend and help with births and childcare, and farm using organic methods. Some women who are not currently living collectively wish to do so in the future. Several activists both who live in these collectives and outside of them hold potlucks meals. Local food coops-such as the Daily Grocery, will often arrange potlucks where current events and activist ideas, as well as food, are shared with like others.

These attempts at community instantiate that people are interdependent on one another. Activist values about community reflect the reciprocal expectation of giving and sharing. Like many others, Amy is critical of the selfish individualism in this culture that really means, "I take care of myself and nobody else, and that's not realistic. Having a kid especially made me realize that. You need people to help you and you need to be willing to help other people because we are humans, not amoebas." Activists view American culture as lazy in our avoidance of real work, such as growing or even cooking our own food. The American work ethic is essentially doing a bureaucratic desk job, often for more than 50 hours per week, that is not actually helpful to society. Activists recognize that most people in the world live much simpler and work much harder, as far as physical labor, than Americans do.

A concern with the way that others live also undergirds issues in the peace movement. Several activists in Columbus are involved in Central Ohioans for Peace, an

educational organization concerned about American foreign policy. Others, like Allyson, belong to Not In Our Name, a group whose mission is to convey that “We do not agree with what’s happening (in Iraq) and we are not going to contribute...this war is not in our name.” Connie abhors the US foreign policy of invading other countries and, instead, we need to change our thinking about what we owe to our world. Connie adds, “You do that at home where you are, make it better from where you are. You don’t need to go across the world to try to force democracy down somebody’s throat. Which by definition—you have to choose democracy. People have to participate in it. It’s an oxymoron. Yet, Amy asserts, the US allows other regimes, like in Saudi Arabia, “To stay in power as long as they are doing what our leaders and the people who pay them want them to do, no matter how violent their regime.” The US has trained and financed violent regimes, such as the anti-communist mujahadeen in Afghanistan, who are now linked to global terrorism.

More informally, activists read and discuss with friends their concerns about American attempts at world hegemony. Lezlie, who recently read *Non-Violent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg (2002), explains that:

His premise is that all violence stems from an inability to communicate. If we can learn to communicate in ways that are non-threatening and non-violent, that we will get our needs met, because violence is always a result of someone not having their needs met. And if we can communicate in ways where we get our needs met, then we don’t need to resort to violence. Even having a negative, violent, angry thought contributes to the violence in the world. It is a whole new realm of activism for me to be able to control my own thoughts, and to believe that my thoughts, themselves, have consequences on the world, whether I act on them or not.

The peace movement is more than about stopping war; it is about creating communities where children can thrive, and people can be healthy. In essence, the value that informs progressive activism for peace is that partnership is better than domination.

That partnership requires making room for all people to have a voice, especially African-Americans, who, until recently, did not get to interpret their own history. Activists take issue with the growing complaint that they don't want history rewritten. They point out that some voices have never been heard at all. Instead of rewriting history, we are just writing some of it for the first time. There is a freedom to being included, just as there is our second amendment freedom to bear arms. This issue tends to present moral and logistic difficulty for the women who value their constitutional right to own and use a gun, especially to protect themselves. On the other hand, Connie points out:

I don't know why the hell everybody needs a Tech 9 or an AK47...mass destruction weapons. When something shoots as many rounds as these guns...you have no control over what you hit. And there is no earthly reason why you need that in an urban setting. *Bowling for Columbine* did a decent examination of that. In it, you see that Canada and other countries have far more guns that we do. And yet they have dramatically fewer incidents with them. So what really is the issue here? It's still people that are using those guns incorrectly. And it's still something about our society that has a very machismo, very macho, very arrogant and really divisive nature. Democrats and Republicans alike really use the divide and conquer theory really well. We also have tremendous visibility of our haves and have-nots. I know they are trying to gate themselves off more and more. But the truth is that people, whether they are processing that in a rational way, that sends them into political action—no, they're not doing that. But they're processing the fact that they don't have anything here. Nobody cares about their education, and they just keep raising the prices on it, and you know, to go to college. There aren't any jobs for them except for menial, low-pay jobs and they argue about a minimum wage that's criminal right now.

Connie articulates the connection between many social problems in this excerpt. She suggests, and others in the study agree, that crime is severely exacerbated in a society that contains extreme economic inequality.

Activists are also concerned that medicine in the United States reinforces race, class and gender inequality because it is controlled by special interests. This prevents us from looking at health holistically by more fully considering prevention of disease and alternative treatments, such as chiropractic, acupuncture, Traeger, and art therapy. Donna

was diagnosed with breast cancer about five years ago, and she decided to treat the illness naturally and forgo the standard chemotherapy and radiation that were imposed on her. If she had done what is standard, then her health insurance would have paid for everything. Because she went a different path, Donna paid a deductible and her insurance only paid for some of her doctor visits and the vitamin drips and not the costly special supplements her doctor prescribed. Now very healthy, full of energy, and cancer-free, Donna feels that the way she chose to heal will probably prevent her from getting cancer again in the long run. Plus, it could save the insurance company money in the long run. Yet, the medical and pharmaceutical companies have such a grip on healthcare that it effectively prevents alternative care for most sick people.

Julianna is concerned about this and other, interrelated health issues. That is, there is still a dearth of research on women's health. There is unacknowledged homophobia within the medical community. She takes issue, along with many of the activists, about the medicalization of women's bodies. This is particularly true for childbirth, which has been treated as a disease that requires intervention rather than a natural process. Instead, midwifery is very holistic in scope. Midwifery is about more than birthing babies; it brings women's spirits back into their bodies, which affirms their knowledge and power. Spirituality is a valued part of the women's group consciousness, and it is reaffirmed in gatherings of pagans, poets, witches, and musicians.

It is important to convey a sense of how important informal and friendship networks are for activists; they serve as a haven in a heartless world. They take classes and socialize with people that share interests. One is a women's health group and another is women discussing the benefits of herbs. Several women are in writing and editing

groups, book discussion clubs, crafting guilds, or yoga. Some of the women go to Alcoholics-Anonymous and other 12 step groups, and Donna is part of a women's cancer support group. These groups, although they have instrumental foci, are as much about social support. Parenting is another topic that informs informal groups. In these groups, parents discuss single and alternative parenting, which might include extended breastfeeding, expressing feelings and emotions, especially for male children, and raising children in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered homes.

In particular, the younger activists tend to be students who are involved in college activism. They share group consciousness with older activists, but there are also some differences. There is a large concern with the cultural politics of identity and breaking and transcending boundaries. They are aware of marginality created by their sometimes unique statuses. For example, negotiating the roles of an African-American lesbian or a biracial transgender creates contextualized ways of knowing that demand a voice.

#### Gender Issues, Feminism, and Boundaries

A large part of the women's activism stems from their experiences with gender inequality. These shared experiences lead most of the activists to acknowledge group consciousness with other women, although their ideas about gender, feminism, and solutions to problems differ. They recognize that being women and expressing femininity puts them at a disadvantage in many contexts. Diana suffered for years in a hostile work environment that was eventually ruled as a case of gender discrimination. She was able to prove that her superiors constantly set her up for failure in efforts to get

rid of her. This humiliating experience prompted Diana to activism; she is now an active member of both NOW and the Ms. Foundation.

Younger activists identified compulsory heterosexuality, which is a product of forced binaries and fundamentalism, as an issue that hurts women. They tend to feel that it is normal to play with energies of masculine and feminine and in variations.

Immersion in women's culture as a solution is seen by some activists as helpful in getting women to arrive at this understanding, but there are constraints and boundaries even within that. For instance, Christine feels that the Michigan Womyn's Festival has discriminatory transgender policies because, to attend, one has to be a woman born woman. Many transgendered people feel like it is not a choice to be so; transgender *is* their gender. They could be affirming to the community and values the group is trying to create, and, in response, Christine does not attend the event.

Nearly all the activists consider mass media depictions of gender to be extremely harmful to women. There are many aspects of images that invoke criticism. Participants feel little derived is positive, the models seem plastic, and their values are not affirming. Images tend to be peripheral—that is, over-sexualized—to what is actually for sale. There is a weight bias in the media, with models only getting smaller over time. Images are touched up, and many body parts have been cosmetically changed, which violates the women's value that beauty is best natural. Magazines like *Cosmo* will put in token articles about feminism that are really not at all. Further, the media typically depict feminism in a poor light. For example, Wanda recalls the media made it seem that feminists in the early 1970s constantly burned their bras. That actually happened only one time when some women protested a Miss America pageant. Protesters put into the

fire many things they thought were binding to women; only one was a bra. In sum, media depictions of gender and feminism leave the participants with bad feelings.

Instead the activists had no problem explaining to me what feminism ideally is or what it should do to fix problems. To most, feminism is about supporting feminine energy and creating a balance in the world between masculinity and femininity. Power should come from within people, and with others, rather than power over them. And that ties into the ecosystem, spirituality, and boundaries besides gender, such as race, that are imposed by society. According to Janet:

I am a feminist, but I am also a masculinist if you want to call it that, in that we are all equal and that nobody should have power over another as it relates to subservience. Whatever special gifts that women have because of their femininity or because of their womanhood, that should be honored as well as the special gifts that men have because of their manhood and that we all need to just merge together and respect that. So I am a feminist from the standpoint that I would never be at the mercy of a man.

Connie, too, has an empowered view of women, their strengths, and feminism. Her view gives women considerable room for diversity:

Feminism is a celebration of the female and the feminine. Now, does that mean that we aren't tough, strong, bitches? That's exactly what we are. That is feminine! I mean anybody that thinks a shrinking violet is feminine doesn't know women. We take care of the world. And we live longer. We're built tough. And I think that we need to own that. I think that I celebrate everything about women. We're beautiful, our bodies are wonderful, we're strong, we're also very sensitive, and able to be empathetic more easily. So, for me, being a feminist is all of that.

Activists report a range of solutions to gender inequality issues. Most believe that women need ways to be empowered about their own sexuality. Some do volunteer counseling at sexual assault crisis centers, women's health centers, and Planned Parenthood. In this capacity, they may link sexual abuse to rigid gender roles that offer few options out if things get bad and the poor self-esteem that ensues. Several activists are instructors at various grade levels, and so they educate students about gender and other forms of inequality. For example, Christine shows a film called *It's Elementary*

about addressing GLBT issues in elementary school, for teachers, regardless of their views, will still have to meet diverse families and provide for them a welcoming environment.

Doris disapproves of both separatist solutions and women catering to a world that was created by men for men because, “Turning the tables and have women become like men is not what equality is supposed to be about. Everyone needs to do something more productive with aggression, men and well as women.” Connie agrees with Doris, “Because I hear it from men all the time—well, you guys don’t do any better. And look at Margaret Thatcher and...okay, I’ll give that to you, but I’m going to tell you that’s about a larger environment that you have created.” That is, having a few women in power means they still have to cater to men’s norms, which would not be the case if there was equal gender representation.

Boundaries are another component in the process of collective identity. They are the abstract and practical structures that separate activist ideas and actions from those in the mainstream. Applied to gender and feminism, women-only contexts and spaces do reify differences between men and women. Boundaries can also be troubling for activists who, in the spirit of postmodernism, seek to deconstruct binaries and unite with all in the human family. Boundaries are also tricky because using them to see how political issues are unique (e.g, social issues like workfare, economic issues like NAFTA, moral issues like abortion) can promote relativistic, contextual thinking. And yet, as the activists have pointed out in innumerable examples, all issues affect others, privilege some at the expense of others, and are, therefore, linked. Although there are differences among the women, especially in regards to feminist solutions, which may or may not erect



boundaries, they do tend to agree solutions should enhance empowerment but not power over others.

### Activist Support from Women and Men

Although it is not desirable to most of my respondents, social networks of only women seem to foster unique interpersonal communication. This is likely because gendered culture means most women share some common experiences. Gwen, who interacts often with women from Simply Living notes:

There is a feminine energy together and support and nurturing that is really empowering and enabling. It helped me to change and to get in touch with myself. Younger, I wasn't as in touch with my feminine energy. Now I feel very supported by women. We get energy with drumming, different in all women's groups. Women tend to listen more and it's more gentle and a more flowing type of rhythm. Men are more into the action. With women, it touches a deeper space for me, their creations have intention. I feel safety and trust to express whatever you need to express. The kindred spirit, the sisters, the sisterhood is more.

Julianna and others in my study also agree that women need to feel safety, which is met in the community of women with each other, as well as opportunities to mend relationships with women. She agrees with Pat Hill-Collins that Black women have a sacredness of sisterhood not found as readily in the white community. My results in chapters five and six suggest that the supportive interaction enjoyed by Black women bolsters their self-esteem and body image. Alexa, who was pregnant at her interview, had what is called a blessing way celebration for her baby. This is a ritual in which women and mothers of different ages gather with the expectant mother to sing songs, impart wisdom, light candles, rub her with oils, and wash her feet in rosewater. She was overjoyed at the support she received and felt embraced by a community—not isolated like many of today's mothers.

A clear pattern in my data is that most of the activists have valued social support from men in their lives. Men that provide good support have expressive qualities found more often in women because of culture. Liz notes that her male partner *never* watches TV, which I feel is very significant. He is less exposed to a ritual of messages that make men individualistic, domineering and patriarchal. Relationships and friendships that work are between men and women that share politics. Alexa sees signs that her body is aging, like getting silver hair, but she is leaving it because she has a supportive male partner. Many of the women are married and, although sometimes husbands are involved in aspects of the activism, it is typically to a lesser extent than the women. Or, their support may be ideological, but not put into practice. According to Janet, “I think I need human support, and so I’ll take it from wherever I get it, and I’ll give it to whomever needs it, and it could be a male and it could be a female, so I just look at it together and I think, yeah sure, women have unique perspectives on certain things.” Hence, for most of the women in my sample it is hegemonic masculinity and not men that are a problem.

### Social Networks and Community Rituals

Social networks are thus of integral importance to activism. They are the people in formal and informal activist settings who articulate and foster collective identity.

Lezlie discusses the importance of getting to know people on different activist paths. A pivotal event for her occurred when she met a man who inspired her to get involved in other activist issues:

I worked in animal rights for quite a while. And I founded the chapter of POET at the Ohio State University. It stands for Protect Our Earths’ Treasures...and...is still intact. And I went to a protest with them once in Illinois, and I met this...incredible, amazing activist. He had a really big perspective, and he’s an artist, and he’s a vegan, and he has this bus that he takes around like an educational bus, educating people about...ecosystems. He made some comments to me about

rainforests...how overwhelming the whole environmental destruction thing is, and how an acre of rainforest every second is gone. I remember...thinking, oh, he must have made a mistake. I called him, and we started talking about rainforests, and he said, no, that is not a mistake. That is how fast it is being chopped down. And so I ended up, because of this conversation with him, and this awareness of this other group called the Rainforest Action Network in San Francisco, I started a local chapter of RAN. And my focus became a little more environmental.

Gwen and others note the importance of activist role models to their life transitions. Drawing on the common experience and encouragement of an activist friend, she quit a lucrative yet morally bankrupt corporate job to become a massage therapist. Both of them felt it was important to have a good balance between work and family. Gwen used to find that the recognition she would get from her supervisors at work was motivating. But now, she is able to pull out that motivation from within herself. Her trust in her activist friend, herself, and the universe enabled her to become healthy and happy again.

The world view of the activists in my study is fostered by their spirituality, what they choose to ingest from media, and interaction in activist networks. The way they look at political issues and their solutions recognizes that all living things are valuable and intimately connected. In that regard, everything and everyone is vitally important, has rights, and must be treated justly. The activists see their collective identity as shared political and cultural views with others. They are people that are concerned with sustainability, environmental awareness, and living simply and responsibly because we are interdependent. There is an attempt to feel equally connected to all people and understand that even thinking people put up boundaries. There is a free will component to being an activist in their choice to acknowledge and deconstruct boundaries and serve society, despite structure.

I note that over the course of my study, I was witness to several types of community celebrations that serve important reinforcement functions for activists. These are realms in which rituals linked to collective identity are formulated, enacted, and reinforced. One gets a clear sense, along the familiar paths of tents and booths at Comfest, the crowded urban streets at the July 4 Doo Dah festival, going strong for 30 years, and the hidden hillside of the Athens Bluegrass Festival, visible only by the firelight flickering through the trees, of the values and causes, inspired by the New Left, that define progressive activism.

Several of the activists regularly serve as educators and entertainers at these events, especially Comfest, an annual summer celebration in Columbus of progressive causes and the values they invoke. To me, the most striking theme at Comfest is recognition of diversity that goes beyond mere acceptance. It is more like a joyful affirmation of the world rainbow of continuums that includes race, religion, region, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and economic circumstance. This idea is nicely captured in a favorite tee shirt slogan, “citizen of the world.”

Freedom to live and love in an environment of security and peace is essential to both the Central Ohioans for Peace and the Briar Rose Children’s Center, a Waldorf alternative school that teaches young children to be caring members of the global community. Humans are free until they would violate the rights of others. Hence, it is necessary to study other cultures so as to understand their food, worship, and production norms and avoid their violation. Yet, if people understand, for example, clothing norms (women are officially permitted to go topless in Columbus, which some women do at Comfest), affection norms (people of any sexual orientation or gender may hold hands

or kiss), and drug use norms (people have a right to control their minds and bodies, but must do so responsibly), than that gives a wide latitude of freedoms. The collective good is of central importance, and freedom can only be understood in the context of what benefits all. Connie, who has volunteered for years at Comfest, believes the festival is tremendous for Columbus. According to Connie, even Mayor Coleman has said, “This is the greatest festival in the country. I think that is making strides regarding tolerance.”

### Personalized Political Strategies

To embody cultural values and transform them substantively, activists, as noted by Dora, “walk their talk” by performing a repertoire of *role behaviors*. This is the part of the process of collective identity known as personalized political strategies (PPS). For the majority of the activists, this means living according to guiding principles, which, as stated succinctly by Lezlie, are, “Harm none, only put out what I want back at least three times, and know that I have consequences.” PPS can be broken down into political and cultural actions, although there is considerable overlap, as evident in the dictum, “The personal is the political.”

Providing the public with information about causes at festivals, gatherings, live entertainment, and parades is a key action that instantiates values. Activists prefer tabling at venues that have no corporate sponsors. At Comfest are tables that educate people about organic agriculture, peace, living simply, home childbirth, Native American spirituality and crafts, third world movements, gender and sexuality issues, and much more. Friendly activists at colorful, eye-catching, and well-presented tables are eager to

share knowledge about the issues. I had an engaging discussion with a woman at the Choice midwifery table, who is a regular volunteer at Comfest and other venues. She explained to me that around 20 states, but not Ohio, recognize that certification in midwifery is a real licensure. She is thus working to change Ohio law to protect midwives.

Activists firmly believe that, in a democracy, societal decision makers must be held accountable to the people they represent at all times; constituents, too, must make their demands known at all times. Demanding a say politically is an essential democratic ritual. At Comfest, activists educate festival-goers about the constant need to work for change and provide them tools to do so. One tool is an accessible list of the phone numbers and office and e mail addresses of local and state legislators for ready contact. Activists explain how to pass this information along to people's networks, which is made easier by computer technology. Connie has all this information plugged into her phone on speed dial so she never misses a chance to vocalize her concerns. Another PPS is to research and secure funding for issues from diverse sources that do not have an agenda, and examples include the Threshold Foundation and the Foundation for a Compassionate Society. Also, activists assert the need for diversity services and multicultural centers and training for work and school departments to create awareness of differences. In classes, activists make it known if categories of people are being oppressed or ignored.

All of the activists vote and view voting as a necessary political ritual. Voting for parties can be difficult if it is perceived the candidates do not represent activist values and issues. Some activists vote Democratic, especially if they are voting against somebody

for the lesser of two evil choices. Some vote Republican because of the typically conservative stance on abortion, and yet Republican activists say they usually vote their conscience. For example, Janet, a Republican, explains, “If there is a Democrat who is better on behalf of peace and justice, then they will get the votes.” More than half of the activists vote for alternative, such as Green, or Independent candidates. This is because they feel real change will never ensue unless people are willing to be different. I saw a wealth of paraphernalia at Comfest and the Doo Dah parade urging voters to consider third parties or issues, such real campaign finance reform, that are central to the Green party, for example. Recognizing their fortune, activists are as generous as they can be with what they have; some have next to nothing while others are very comfortable. They tend to give to non-profit organizations. A few of the activists give, as Christmas gifts, various farm animals for communities in impoverished countries, or the heifer project.

Some of the behaviors I notice at Comfest from year to year—I have attended for over five years—are akin to personalized political strategies. I notice that in situations where two men or two women are holding hands or otherwise being affectionate, that they are able to do so freely and without harassment from others. I also witness many people sitting down with complete strangers to talk and sometimes yell about political or religious issues. What is interesting here is that, in the same conversation, the speakers could argue loudly, stop and clarify differences in opinion, and then have a group hug. Democracy in action is only possible in a society with civil rights.

Similarly, at the July 4 Doo Dah festival, activists march in parade that is a satiric expose of American domestic and foreign policy. They clearly exude the spirit of democracy that July 4 is commemorated to represent. It was interesting to see the

protesters who are simultaneously fearful of their government, yet joyful at their freedom of speech. Finally, many performers at the Athens Bluegrass Festival sang common stories of hardship and hope with their American experiences, thereby spreading history to listening ears. The scenery of the soulful music was provided, behind gently swaying trees, by a family that was teaching others how, step by step, to build a log cabin. Surrounding them were spinners, a woman dying wool, children making bead necklaces, and parents walking babies. The entire feeling of the event was that community is something that is built, step by step, in ritual process, by people listening to one another, doing their parts, and putting in real work.

Living simply considers others and builds community. The choice to do so, for some activists, has meant making a transition from corporate work, where ethical dilemmas are common, to work that is viewed as socially beneficial. Gwen was a middle-level manager at a large communication company in the process of massive downsizing. She says the way she was asked to fire people, by telling them that firing decisions were based on performance issues when they were not, was dishonest, and Gwen would not cooperate. She is now nearly ready to begin practice as a massage therapist, which is reaffirming work. Others have downsized their space and possessions and live on less. Families may own and drive only one car to encourage active travel to places. Prioritizing also enables activists to simplify their busy lives. For example, if Janet has one free hour and, with it, she could clean house or attend a peace rally, she would choose the peace rally and not worry about the house.

My participants choose to shop very infrequently and only for things they need, like work clothes. When they do shop, it is at local stores. Dora explains that she very



infrequently goes to shopping malls. Her reasons include they enhance suburban sprawl, over-stimulate the consumer, and create want for things that, just prior, were not known to exist. Shopping choices as PPS also means being a consumer advocate. For instance, Wanda calls stores when food looks unsanitary or restrooms need attention. Concerning food choice PPS, several activists do not eat meat and fewer avoid dairy. If they do eat meat, they prefer that it is free range and purchased, along with other food, at organic or health markets. Most of the women recognize that choices to act or not have much to do with economic reality. Food can sometimes be overpriced at coops where privileged people can shop.

The activists, in general, prefer to do at least some alternative medical care.

Donna, who used alternative treatments to cure breast cancer, has documented what she did in a pamphlet and makes that available to women needing information. One thing she explains is the difference between mammograms and thermograms. A thermogram:

Uses a thermal imaging camera and it shows ,when cancer is growing, the tissue around the cancer needs lots of nutrients, and so its pulling in nutrients to help it grow, and it causes temperature to rise, and that shows up as bright colors. Looks like a geography temperature map. Mammograms have a risk. If a breast is compressed really tight, it is painful. If you have a lump, they have a tendency to encapsulate themselves and they may not grow as long as they are encapsulated. Just kind of stay, but once you press that and then you burst it, then it can spread. If you have cancer, you need to get it out as fast as possible. Very few people know this.

Other activists promote midwifery through its study or practice, and several of the women have opted for homebirths, under conditions that they control. Finally, most do research about health issues on their own. Holistic health relates to aspects of spirituality. In this regard, it is essential to think positively, because illness is related to stress. The activists note that they regularly ask the universe and God for guidance with health.

All of the activists wish for a peaceful life, and that is facilitated by the ritual of rarely or never watching television. When there is nothing in the background, whether messages, lights, or noise, people must then talk to one another. If they do watch television, most turn off commercials or relocate while they are on. It is helpful not to subscribe to cable television and to be surrounded by networks who share media viewing habits. In particular, Dora restricts her child's television viewing. As Dora recalls:

I saw her ability to play on her own, her interest to play outside, her creativity, her ability to entertain herself, diminish the more TV she watched and the longer period of time that went away. When we took the TV away for the summer, we had two weeks of fits, and then the kid never thought twice about it. She played on her own. She played outside, she played independently, her aggression went down, the entitlement went down.

A proactive approach to media may mean getting news from word of mouth, which requires activists to carry on meaningful conversations with others. Some activists view or look at adversarial press to know what the other side is doing. Then, there is being a part of living news through travel. For instance, Connie became aware from a trip to Cuba, that many, though not all, Cuban people feel the Castro regime is better than the Batista dictatorship. It is talking to real people and not relying on mass media that we can understand how people's struggles exist everywhere.

Activists also recognize that everyday, ritual actions are meaningful, like using language, because they are so taken-for-granted. They are aware of everyday experiences of inequality that can evoke gender consciousness. Sabrina is often reminded that mainstream society views being a single woman over 40 as a problem, and, in response, she replies:

Living well is the best revenge. I live my life the way I like it. And I am a single woman. I live by myself. I bought a home because it is the house I like. I'm not gonna live in some apartment and wait to get married. And I hike, and if I have someone to go with me, fine. If not, I'll go by myself.

It is essential that women can be squeaky wheels because of everyday slights. With this comes the constant ritual of demanding respect to ensure that needs are met. It means, for example, having to pay close attention to interaction norms that disadvantage women. Men may not take women seriously who smiling frequently with co-workers or customers, since this is not a normative way for men to interact. Everyday awareness extends beyond gendered action. Lezlie recalls Howard Zinn (2003), the author of *The People's History of the United States*. In a recent speech, Zinn said, as paraphrased by Lezlie:

The thing people can do the most for peace is document history as they are seeing it. To not put it off on the so-called professionals to document it, but really document what you are seeing. That's what he said he did. That's how his book came into being. He just wrote down what he learned was happening and did happen. The whole of it.

In turn, Lezlie does photography that is her documentation of what she has seen in the peace movement. This point also emphasizes a theme in my data, which is activists are not always political in a formal sense. Everyday things make living in the world as a marginalized person difficult, and so this presents an arena for action.

Some of the key types of actions that make personal, political statements about who they are as empowered women are related to presentation of self. Body and appearance norms are PPS that reveal group, as well as personal, consciousness about overlapping issues. Most of the activists exhibit a natural, casual and relatively unadorned style. Looking sexually attractive is about motive; what is essential is that a woman's appearance is self-defined and its expression is affirming. This easy style maximizes a woman's capacity to fully experience every adventure. Since they are relatively unconcerned about what happens to their looks in the course of living, activists infrequently go shopping, can avoid trends, and maintain their own, unique style. This is

possible with recycled clothing from thrift stores and items that are made, bought and sold according to activist values, such as fair trade. Some occasionally wear makeup, typically lightly applied, as a personal treat or for special occasions. However, others, like Anne in the excerpt below, never do.

**Do you ever wear lipstick or eyeliner or mascara ever even for occasions that are really dressy?**

(Anne) No. Not even for my wedding. I think it is something that I don't want to do, but I think it was informed by a political source, like my mom. Her reasons are that she is beautiful without it. And my reason is that it is just something that I didn't do earlier. And plus I don't want to. You spend time. Like, my mom doesn't have any. So I never had any around to play with...not like I wanted to. I don't shave. I don't think that I should have to. That is funny now that I think about it. I was in Las Vegas last year and someone said something to me about my not shaving. Because I do wear shorts and stuff. And I don't care, but people will sometimes say stuff. Like people ask me if I am from Europe all the time. Or people just look at your weird. They were like confronting me. And I thought that was really weird. We were swimming in a pool at the time, and I was by myself. But I felt like whoa, these people are crazy at this point. But see I have this activist on the one side, but I have a pacifist on the other. And I tend not to fight back. I usually just say something like you should fill your day with love instead of hurting people.

From this example, it is evident that Anne's activist mother transmitted her value for natural beauty and PPS of never wearing makeup to her. Anne, as well as other women, feel mainstream women's body norms, like shaving, are impractical and burdensome. Others feel they function oppressively to exaggerate what are really minimal differences between men's and women's bodies. Activist body norms are also informed by their concern for the environment. That is, shaving cream, perfumed soaps, make-up, hair products, wax, etc...all end up in water, which we all use collectively, so the less of all of these used, the less harm is done. Activists avoid media with idealized gender images due to perceived harm to body image. Yet these ideals are still known and difficult not to value. Dora explains, "I think sometimes women, men, anybody...have a certain style that's very appealing. Or a certain energy about them that's very appealing.

And it's attractive. And it's not so much that you want their style or their energy, but you want to have a similar kind of presence." Self-confidence is attractive to activists.

Janet recalls a pivotal event in her life that is related to mainstream appearance norms. At Janet's wedding, her mother wanted to make sure that the dress she was choosing was not more beautiful than the dress the mother-in-law would be wearing. She thought, "My god, that was just so wonderful that my mother, in choosing her dress, would think of the future mother-in-law. That was that equality thing. This experience prompted a pivotal departure for Janet that it is sometimes okay and socially healthy to blend in instead of always trying to beat others. Janet explains, "Nobody's better than anybody else, we're all different and we all need an equal start. We all move at different places and have different talents...so that was a pivotal thing there."

In sum, spending undue time on appearance rituals, due to the constant energy and attention, exacerbates competition among women that may undermine mutual support. Furthermore, obeying gendered and other role behaviors then reifies those expectations and makes them seem more normalized and natural.

One of the best expressions of activist PPS is the paid and unpaid work that they do. In sum, their work fits their social ideals and does not compromise their typically progressive values. They are willing and wanting to engage in work that may not be highly paid but that produces collective good. Some work two or more part-time jobs, in various business, sales, and consultation venues, often to free up more time to volunteer. Yet others are self-employed, which allows movement out of a traditional 40 hour per week structure. Several women work in the holistic health field, where a root in patients' spirituality is anchored to prompt healing the mind, body, and soul. The

activists are art therapists, body movement workers, nurses, caregivers, chemical dependency counselors, massage therapists, doulas, midwives, and nutrition counselors. Others are educators spanning all age ranges and levels. Dora is as a holistic counselor who often works with teen girls and women who are in transition. Dora explains:

I do a summer retreat for women around personal rejuvenation and kind of creating a healthier lifestyle for themselves. And I do a lot of other public education around mind, body, spirit and through psychology. This helps the women to flow through pivotal events. Through divorces, having children, mental health issues, in any event where a sense of identity is thrown into chaos.

What Dora does is help women to redefine identity, which is a pivotal departure, that stems from pivotal, transitional events. Their ability to do this is bolstered by social support, and taking on a group consciousness that can then lead to empowerment.

Finally, activists see great hope in raising children who are politically conscious and who have the values and the strength to stand up to oppression. Therefore, parenting, teaching, and socializing children in any way is a form of activism. They feel that children need to be introduced to political issues very early so they can understand their connections to others and think critically.

### Consequences of Activism: Political Process and Health

Some pivotal events, such as childbirth and menopause, are linked to biological changes in women's bodies that are subject to cultural interpretation. These events that are filtered through political process and gender have the potential to affect happiness and health. They are points where pivotal departures can be made that have costs and sanctions, but also benefits. Making pivotal departures implies interpreting ideas and behaving—the personalized political strategies above—differently. As a result, activists may set boundaries to avoid what is mainstream, and society may, in turn, erect

boundaries intended to maintain the status quo. Because activists are socialized continuously over the life course, any new learning includes how to cope with pivotal events. Alternative spirituality, media, and social networks encourage activism and subsequent pivotal departures that have effects on aging, depression and health.

Being pregnant, giving birth, and raising children are identified by all the women to whom these experiences are relevant, as amazing and wonderful. Having given birth tended to improve the activists' body image. What appears to be key to their interpretation is loving social support. This is evident in Christine's excerpt below:

I love the stretch marks because they are a reminder of the beauty of birth. I am so proud that my body did this. I will never have a flat stomach, but I have something much better instead. I love my scars and stretchmarks. My partner suggests, since they are so beautiful, to get the stretch marks tattooed so, that way, they will never fade. She tells me, like, if I am down about my body, to go have more ice cream because I need more curves. She is just great with support.

Audra, a young mother, has learned to love who she is, but it is something she is still working towards. It helps with her body image that she has learned about the goddess tradition and history of the gods. Audra explains that this tradition is, "About women reclaiming their bodies and what they do, their rituals like the monthly cycle. None of the old goddess images were skinny but big, nurturing women, so bringing a balance back." Supportive networks, including activist networks, help mothers celebrate the big changes their bodies go through and help them define these changes as beautiful.

Aging is a pivotal period for women that is marked transitions and pivotal events, namely menopause. Aging women experience many events and processes, some of which are related to their bodies. These may include energy loss, decreased fertility, increased risk of divorce, loss of bone mass, skin decline, increase in health conditions, retirement, and elder care responsibilities. There are status losses as well, as power is

conferred to the working-aged, while the aging become dependent. Then, age interacts with gender, with men being granted wider access to rewards for a longer and more varied period of time. About half of the mature women in my study report having less energy than when they were younger, coupled with aches and pains. This is compounded by working a 40 hour or longer week in a bureaucratic setting. The biggest fears among the aging in the sample are body function failure and deaths of loved ones. Finances are a big problem, which is circumstantial. Diana, Wanda, and Theresa have already lost their husbands, and Wanda has also lost several close others due to tragedy. Issues of aging are exacerbated if women lack financial and job security.

Another issue that causes depression as a woman ages is being overburdened with caregiving responsibilities, particularly if the care is for someone with a chronic and debilitating condition, such as Alzheimer's. Elder caregivers, similar to mothers, note that the social isolation is one of the most painful aspects of the roles. The activists love those they care for, but the time that it takes means they have less for reading, thinking, and formal activism. Then, being trapped in a terrible job, which activists define as long, set hours per week, 50 weeks per year, corporate, corrupt, and in danger of downsizing, fuels aging-related depression. Lezlie links the model bureaucratic American life to women's depression, in particular, below:

You know, like my whole thing with depression is that partly women, especially, are depressed because we are trying to make ourselves fit into this society that is actually really sick and dysfunctional, and we don't fit in, because we still have a shred of healthy instincts left. But we condemn ourselves, and it turns into depression. So it is hard for me to really get a grip on what is physical and what was from my family, conditioning and patterns, and all that, and what is cultural.

However, on a more positive note, all of the mature activists say they have grown more comfortable with themselves and free to express different ideas. They continue to



desire sexual activity and feel sexually attractive. Several identified turning age 50 to be a pivotal event. Fond memories of turning 50 are expressed by Connie below:

I had a party with hundreds of people. People still talk about my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party. We had people who were parking cars and driving people home and everything, if they got too drunk. People came from near and far. People called from a great distance. I really made it a huge event. It was wonderful. It was just, you know. It really made me feel good about the whole process. To celebrate it instead of going, oh shit, 50!

Yet all of the women recognize that aging is gendered. Mainstream culture tells aging women that they will be ugly, depressed, infirm, have no life and will want their empty nests filled once again. This view does not reflect the reality of the mature activists. Instead, an aging woman can remain happy if she continues to be healthy. Aging is a freeing experience if women can take it the right way. Holly, who is in her early 50s, says she spends less time now on her appearance, which she finds is freeing, since she invests the times in other pursuits, like reading the newspaper everyday. Holly is empowered when she says, “We earned the right to be whatever we want to be! And we can worry about whatever we want to worry about. Why waste time, because there is not that much time left. And do what we want to do, and groove!”

Connie acknowledges that being older changes the way especially men size up women. But that has its good points, as she states in the following:

Certainly we come to grips with passing that stage where everybody is looking at you sexually. And women do like...people to be attracted to us. People are attracted to other attractive people and they listen to you a little better. So when you pass that age, and your rib cage moves out a little bit and you are thicker this way. And suddenly there are things I just don't look good in. And you notice the little lines starting. And some women really feel shut down by that and experience a lot of depression. But for me, it was sort of liberating to think, well now, everybody isn't particularly viewing me that way. And you can be taken even more seriously. And I don't have to worry. I go down to the store in my jammy pants! I just don't feel as encumbered by all of those things that we have going on when we are younger. Particularly women of my age who grew up during a time when, you were really just more the little woman. I was in the phase of feminism as it came back around after we had our early sisters who let us in. And it was a tough struggle. And so I think that I I'm enjoying it...to take a moment to realize the things I love in the world...My kids are grown now, I have my own life again, and I kind of dig that.

I think another important point expressed here is that an aging woman who is experiencing heightened marginality for the first time—that is her loss of the mainstream identity as a sexually attractive woman—will have a more difficult time of it than an activist woman. This is probably due to the fact that activist women have felt the sting of isolation at earlier periods of their lives, including if becoming activist was counter to early socialization. A similar view that is empowering for women and akin to the way indigenous cultures view aging and status, is Doris' who observes:

As women's hormones thin, the similarities that we share with men become more apparent. The differences between men and women are the most pronounced when women are in the fertility period, or 15-45. Relationships, especially sexual relationships, make you polarized, and the differences get magnified. Kids' bodies are the same, but then they diverge at puberty. But we reconverge around 45 or 50. This can be seen as a positive thing. If we are more like men, they will be less likely to hit on you. It is not just about attractiveness, but difference. Less different is empowering. You can then understand the opposite sex better. It is an advantage to understand. People have a reason to come to their viewpoints, and so you can listen to them without getting angry.

That is, women can come to feminism when they are older because they are equipped, and this may have cognitive, emotional, maturational, and physical components. Being older, it is a relief to not get hit on when simply occupying public spaces.

The women in my study who have gone through menopause did so with grace. There is a trend among the women to avoid or use sparingly the hormone replacement therapy that is widely promoted to baby boomers in American culture. Karen says of her experience with menopause, "It's been fine. I feel like its okay. I guess I just consider it a normal part of life and I don't worry about it too much. I would not be on hormone replacement therapy even if I had health insurance. Number one, my mom was on it and she was told that that was the reason for her breast cancer. Plus, I don't do chemical medications if I can at all avoid it. I always go for the natural and herbal." The women

tend to want to age naturally, but they are also concerned about newer evidence that HRT increases the risk of health problems, namely breast cancer and heart disease. This evidence has not been widely publicized, unlike the mass marketing of HRT to relieve immediate menopausal symptoms (McPherson 2004).

### Social Networks and Health

Activists note how helpful it is, in coping with aging issues, to have social networks that support them, specifically, with aspects of health decline. They draw upon networks for both personal and collective goals. Some of the women have older role models who are activist with women's health issues, such as breast cancer. Others consider themselves to be role models to women seeking spiritually-connected, holistic health solutions. Dora, a holistic health counselor who helps women with their life transitions, explains:

It's like accepting the aging process for an older woman. So, helping to accept beauty in the aging process and accept what is in front of them as opposed to stop what is happening. So a lot of it is about finding personal acceptance to find strength within the self. So that those external things don't hold as much weight or aren't as powerful.

Finding strength within themselves is also something women work on collectively at retreats, many of which have a spiritual focus. Older women typically lead retreats because they are valued for their wisdom gained from life experiences. Derived from Native American perspectives of the changing woman, older women are totally available to others because they are coming into their heart wisdom. Gwen explains, "The blood during childbearing is flowing...down to the uterus to bear children, and as you go through menopause, that changes to be focused back on your heart. The blood being

channeled back to your heart and, hence, coming into the heart wisdom. This process describes what she and others have encountered so far on their journey through aging.

Women in transition can also find great support from women of all ages at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Lou describes her experience there below:

It is so beautiful, and so to see these women who, there are women who are probably really self-conscious or get derisive statements or something, and when you are there, everybody is so beautiful! It doesn't matter. It's like, we're all different, and we don't have to look like these images in these magazines. And no one there you know, really tries to. So it is a totally different—it's just from society, it is such an alternative space. It's like, whoever you are and want to be, if you want to be somebody different for that week, fine. Make up a name, wear wild stuff if you want to. Don't wear anything if you don't want to. Nobody cares. It's very freeing.

The importance of women and women's groups to activists in transition is clear, but quality, loving support from men is not only possible, it is highly desirable.

### *Coping with Aging Bodies*

Whatever age-related changes happen to women's bodies, they are much better accepted with support from social networks. What seems to worry women is the loss of muscle tone and weight gain. It is clear, even to women that avoid media, that American culture has defined what is a perfect body; it is slender, well-toned, has a flat stomach, and is perfectly proportioned. While the women are somewhat troubled that extra weight looks unattractive, their concern is namely that it affects easy movement. Lou makes this clear below:

I think I worry about not just aging in itself, but about not being as physical, as vital as I am now. Having the energy. Having the physical ability to—last week I helped friends of mine to paint a barn. And I joked about it. Because it was a couple of women. They were afraid to get up on the ladder. And I got up on the tallest ladder. And I'm painting away. And they were freaked out by it. But being able to do that, to be really strong. What I feel like, I feel like I feel good about my body. Yeah, I need to lose a few pounds or something, but not because I want to look like a model, like a magazine. More because of the health implications.

Women in my sample who are overweight but not grossly obese tend to have a good body image. Some of this comes from the knowledge gained from reading and higher education. Julianna, who is about 30 pounds overweight, explains the connections between social support, body acceptance, women's spirituality, and culture in the following:

I have a bone structure that can handle it. My weight has been large, but it has never been something I couldn't maneuver. I have a connection to goddesses as an element of spiritual embodiment and also that type of corpulence and softness and that historically women have been that way and could get through famines. Our bodies have lost weight and they have gained weight. There has been value historically in the Rubinesque figure. It has been society that has changed that...I had a younger lover who felt I was incredibly beautiful and resilient. This was reinforcement in a very deep way. It is through a relationship that we gain the total access to our core. A good book...is *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* from Carter Hayward, on relationships that empower and that build our connection to our divinity. Chosen relationships move us the farthest. Your physical body is not something that can be discounted. It is your only container, keeping your spirit, interacting with this planet.

Being physically fit, often in the context of exercising or training with other women, is identified as helpful in counteracting big weight gains and energy loss. Preparing for a specific physical challenge that requires great exertion, like Janet is for an upcoming marathon, proves that aging bodies still demonstrate high capabilities.

### Activism and Depression

Activists have noted honestly that the values or behaviors that come with activism have, at times, been costly and burdensome. There are a few common patterns to the negatives activism has for women over the life course. Not seeing changes despite considerable efforts can bring activists to pessimistic feelings of apathy. Espousing activist views in politically stagnant areas can bring negative repercussions to family or friends. For instance, a few women felt guilty that their children suffered teasing and social isolation from their activism. Some of the activists admitted doing things that

others would consider alternative actually caused them problems and exacerbated depression. For example, Alexa, who was sexually abused by her step-father as a child, attended counseling and, through this, she found that she shared behaviors with other women. For example, because the women felt unclean from their pasts, they drank exorbitant amounts of water and ate only vegan diets. Sadly, activists' choices to only work part-time or to make unpaid or low paid activism their careers are feeling the results now in the forms of economic and social marginality. In sum, all of these troubles are reflected in Lezlie's comments:

I don't think activists are supported like they should be. Like I really think activists should be paid. And honored as valid paths. You know, a thing that the community supports because they are doing things that benefit the whole community, yet you really have to go against the grain to be a hardcore activist.

### Activism, Happiness, and Health

Despite the admitted difficulties that activism casts upon the women's lives, they overwhelmingly agree that it is a major source of happiness and health. The happiness from activism is obtained proactively in both personal and collective ways. Some activists make lists that they continuously update about the conditions they want to experience everyday. A typical list includes community, the ability to pay bills, doing work that helps and heals people within values, health; dancing and drumming. Putting goals out there, then, makes them happen. Everyday kindnesses like greeting a bus driver and thanking him when the ride is complete are considered essential.

Having resources enables women to age gracefully, as well as overcome aspects of depression, and make plans for a fruitful future. A good life to activists involves having constant access to learning. Many of the mature women hope to finish a college

degree, which because of traditional expectations for women, may have been halted years ago. This learning would include a special focus on social sciences to continue broadening cultural perspectives of others.

Spiritual practice comes into play in activists' desire to be in nature around things that are growing. It could be people, plants, or animals that are growing, and creating and observing ritual maturation processes is identified as awe-inspiring. Nature is a constant reminder of love and connections with others. This is reflected in Gwen's words below:

I just feel like that's what I have to give and any relationship that's just love, caring for whoever the person is, or the creature, even as I sit and think about the plants and the oxygen they get. I love ritual. I love connecting with cycles, like the seasons, the wheel of life, marked by the solstices and equinoxes.

Body arts and practices that empower, such as martial arts, yoga, and Traeger heal the body and soul and connect activists' energy to one another. Linking energies is better understood in Oriental than in Western medicine. Oriental medicine is more about the inside out rather than the outside in. Meridians that correspond to physicality are what allow for the free flow of chi. Keeping them free to flow allows the body to optimally function and connect to others. Doris has practiced martial arts with feminist friends who find it empowering as a forum to be confrontational, if need be. Gwen is taking a belly dancing class with women of all ages, shapes, and sizes that has improved her body image—a very important health outcome. In regards to the positives of belly dancing, Gwen says, "It makes you love yourself and makes you feel strong when you go out and interact with the world. Very empowering."

Nearly all the activists in my study practice forms of yoga, the benefits of which are innumerable. Dora, who teaches yoga, explains that yoga:

Helps with depression, increased my awareness of my body and put me into another level of being present. And kind of being out of my head, but being completely aware of my own physical being, which I think translates into, I think the more we can be aware of our own, physical being, *the more we can make more conscious choices*. Not just over what kind of chair I use at my desk, but of my emotional world, how I'm going to interact with other people? It's about being more conscious and aware...The other thing that yoga and time in nature both do to me, is they put me in a sense of being more connected to everything that's around me. Rather than feeling like I'm working out of a place of strong ego, or working independently...kind of me against the world, I've got, if I feel that personally about anything, then I'm going to have a stronger reason to feel defensive or resistant. But if I have a stronger connection through breath work and yoga,...I feel a part of something much bigger, and understanding how everything is interconnected.

Activists' spiritual beliefs and practices are often experienced personally. Yet their spirituality, in general, is collective by default. This is because it emphasizes so strongly people's sacred connections to everything else. And so acting in various spiritual ways is a form of activism because it honors the links among all. That is, Dora's example clearly shows that the personal is political since ritual practice leads to compassion that gets translated into political action.

Plus, activists' spirituality is sometimes connected to their religious practices. For instance, as Wanda notes, "Just being a Unitarian makes you an activist. I mean, social justice is a huge part, I mean true democracy, how the church is run, as well as how the country ought to be run. So there are lots of social justice activities." For others, like Christine, their teaching is a form of activism that makes them happy. About her teaching, Christine says, "I am proud of it, I feel proud to tell people when they ask me what I do. I feel like it is a socially important job."

The many activists in health fields feel their work is rewarding because it contributes to people's holistic health. In this regard, the process of the care patients receive heals and empowers them as complete persons. Gwen is a health rhythms facilitator, which is a protocol for working with different types of at-risk populations. These would include prisoners, cancer patients, geriatric patients, abused women, and



the disabled. The methods she uses to affect health touch people at a spiritual, emotional, and physical level. Gwen explains:

I practice the protocol, it's very specific, and it's not about drumming, but you use drums. It's all about helping people heal and feel better based on the fact that drumming, they show that there's been scientific studies that show drumming will boost your immune system. This is like t cell count and blood counts before and after drumming, and it probably has to do with the rhythm. Also the participation in this type of protocol creates a safe group environment and supports each other. It's about...creating that group space that supports and nurtures each other through the process.

This shows that the work Gwen does, which is a part of her activism, directly contributes to health. Patients who are supported in this way by a loving social network, are enabled and empowered, and, therefore, in a space to heal. When activists work in such capacities, supported by like others, it sparks, bolsters, and sustains a consciousness.

Activism is a choice that is sometimes difficult for participants, but a choice that ultimately nurtures their well-being. Lezlie conveys this meaning below:

Overall, I can't imagine being in the world in any other way. I mean, because the only other alternative is to be completely cynical or to be in denial. And I would rather look the pain and the suffering straight in the face and hold that space with people when it's necessary and for myself when it's necessary, and then get out and find some hope and joy. Maybe you are not going to fix the whole problem, but, it's certainly going to feel a lot better.

The giving of time, attention, and intention to others, in loving service and in the hopes of creating a just society, is the meaning of activism. In sum, activist values and behaviors that instantiate walking lightly on the earth connect so strongly with nature, spirituality and healing.

## Conclusion

Meaningful social support that affects health can be given in the context of conventional interactions to believe and do what is mainstream. This social support can come from both women and men; it is the quality of relationships that is important.

However, my narrative analysis of the political process model has lent evidence that suggests that women's empowerment and health are more likely derived in alternative interactions. This is because activist social networks build and sustain a collective identity that is critical, in particular, of gendered appearance and aging norms. This support and how it is channeled in interaction bolsters activists' ability to make pivotal departures from norms and, ultimately, establish health and happiness, as understood holistically.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary and Substantive Findings

In this dissertation, I sought to answer several substantive and theoretical questions. I began by delineating my concern for the growing problem of women's poor body image and eating disorders that sometimes accompany it. Cultural ideals for normative attitudes, identities, and behaviors were posited to contribute to the body and aging issues experienced by women as they go through a gendered life course. I then grounded the solution to this problem in aspects of activism in what I call the political process model. I explained that the political process model borrows ideas and concepts from several overlapping theories from diverse literatures. Substantively, I wanted to link positive and negative body issues to the cultural repertoire available to women from their individual, collective, and generational socialization. Since the political process model that explains how collective identity leads to well-being derives from social movements (Taylor 1996), social constructionism (Klandermans 1997), historical political generations (Whittier 1997), and health (Mirowsky and Ross 1989) literatures, my project is ripe for theoretical induction.

Hence, a goal of this project is an inductive attempt to build generalizable yet conditional theory (Boswell and Brown 1991; Brown and Boswell 1995). I attempt this

by using data that fills gaps in our understanding of how diverse concepts from seemingly unrelated work can be systematically linked. I have argued that a contextual understanding of bodies and aging, filtered through women's own interpretations, can add to our understanding of micromobilization processes that impact activists and add to the body of literature on biographical consequences of activism (e.g. Van Dyke et al. 2000). The story that connects the essential pieces in the political process model—pivotal events, collective identity, pivotal departures, empowerment, and health—provides the conceptual sense to which my analytic strategy derives.

The analytic strategy I applied allowed me to address my research expectations using multiple data sources, each of which were appropriate to some of the specific questions posed. The methods I used enhance convergent validity of causal claims because they serve to cross-check one another, thereby lending the findings a comparative angle. The first research expectation, which also meets a substantive goal of my project, is that activist women are a group of collective individuals who are unique in a political and cultural sense. Survey data was thus used to assess how a sample of 32 activists that I interviewed at an earlier point are different in their politics, daily routines, and aspects of health from a sample of 42 non-activist women. This was a necessary first step in my analytic strategy—to define the group of interest to validate substantive conclusions.

The second part of my analytic strategy attempted to further both substantive and broader theoretical goals by relating political process, collective identity and health. Substantively, health includes detailed analysis and presentation of results on body image as dependent on aspects of political process. I intertwined two qualitative research

methods, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) of variables from the survey data, and interpretive analysis of the interview data to meet these goals. In addition, I interviewed three non-activist women to compare and contextualize differences found using QCA between and among the activist and non-activist samples on, especially, health-related variables.

Lately, there has been a well-spring of studies that demonstrate the efficacy of QCA (see Roscigno and Hodson for review 2004) in tandem with other, better known methods. I wanted, in using the QCA, to show the reader how unique configurations of variable attributes, for instance, being a member of the peace and animal rights movement and eating organic food, in concert, would affect the amount of meat eaten (e.g, Roscigno and Hodson 2004). In sum, the combination of methods used gives a clear picture of how political processes build personal and collective identity (Stryker et al. 2000), which is the second expectation.

The third part of my analytic strategy relied on extensive analysis of the activists' narrative data (e.g, Ragin 1994). The feminist-inspired interview methods I used give a voice to activist women, who I have shown are a somewhat marginalized group. Also important, the narrative analysis specifies and explains causal processes using concepts that are complicated. In this sense, the interpretive analysis bolsters QCA findings because it can capture nuances. That is, QCA removes at least some information by collapsing concepts and processes into variables having a minimal number of categories. In sum, the linking of QCA and interpretive analysis demonstrate the importance of the processes through which membership matters.

Hence, I relied on interpretive analysis of activists' interviews to assess the theme of the process of transition by looking at social networks, community rituals, and pivotal events in their lives. Then, I considered how community celebrations, broadly defined, function as spaces where shifts in identity and pivotal events are made meaningful, in which case participant observation lent the data. The interview and participant observation data, with their unique methodological strengths, treat how women's activist experiences in life course stages impact continuity and change in these identities, the third expectation (e.g., Whittier 1995), with implications for health related outcomes, which was the fourth research expectation.

I explained in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 how my many findings speak to the specific substantive questions posed. Some of these questions have broader theoretical implications that will be addressed in the final sections of this conclusion. In Chapter 5, I attempted to answer the question based on the research expectation that activist women are a group of collective individuals who are unique in a political and cultural sense.

I demonstrated statistically, in many descriptive and inferential tests, that activists and non-activists are considerably different in their normal and non-institutional political behaviors, as well as in their degree of participation in social movements. That is, activists do significantly more of all three of these political behaviors. I also compared activists and non-activists on cultural behaviors, or items that invoke daily routine, and facets of health. I was especially interested in differences in cultural media consumption behaviors and body image, social support, and aging aspects of health due to their centrality in the political process model. I found that activists consume significantly less mainstream media and, instead, replace it with alternative media in comparison to non-

activists. Both samples consider the social support they receive from women to be somewhat important. Activists have better body image, but worry more about aging than the non-activists. Activists are less likely than non-activists to be worried about their weight, while non-activists are less worried about aging. Results suggest that not only are activists a unique group in a political and cultural sense, but that these differences impact health in a positive way, as predicted.

Then, in Chapters 6 and 7, I subjected my wealth of survey and narrative data to QCA and interpretive analysis to answer the question of how activist political processes build collective identity that can be linked to cultural and health outcomes, especially positive body image. For the QCA, I examined how unique configurations of variables impacted five different cultural and health outcomes. These included valuing women's social support, regularly eating meat, seeing alternative practitioners, watching television, and body image. This analysis shows that it is not being an activist per se that influences the outcomes of interest, but, rather, how the presence and /or absence of variables in combination, affect these outcomes. Doing this kind of relating can then show differences among a sample when variables do not fall in concert.

Results from the QCA indicate, for example, that women in very diverse circumstances, in terms of their demographic and political characteristics, rely on women networks, which explains why most variable configurations do not find an effect. However, the special strength of the interpretive analysis captures nuances in motivations that can explain when activists prefer women-only networks. The interweaved QCA and narrative data indicate the interrelatedness of the three elements of collective identity. It is clear that, for most of the activists in this study, group consciousness is informed by

alternative values. The data in this and the next chapter suggest that activist values and behaviors share a reciprocal influence. It seems, too, that personalized political resistances result in consequences or boundaries. Through this discussion of the processes of collective identity, activist values about body image and appearance seem to enhance activists' appreciation of both.

I continued the analysis in Chapter 7, where I presented a detailed, narrative account of how women's activist experiences in life course stages impact continuity and change in their identities. At many different periods over the life course, which also marked the passing of pivotal events, I found that meaningful social support that affects health can be given in the context of conventional interactions, from mainstream socialization, to believe and do what is normal. This social support can come from both women and men; it is the quality of relationships that is important. However, my narrative analysis of the political process model lends robust evidence suggesting, instead, that women's empowerment and health are more likely derived in alternative interactions. This is because activist social networks build and sustain a collective identity that is critical, in particular, of gendered appearance and aging norms. This support and how it is channeled in interaction rituals of diverse community gatherings bolsters activists' ability to make pivotal departures from norms and, ultimately, establish health and happiness, as understood integratively.

Also in Chapter 7, I extended upon the theme of continuity and change in activist identity over life course stages for health related outcomes. Of special interest to me, recalling my original concern about women's body image problems, are women's interpretations of their own body image, eating disorders, and aging. From the cross-



check of the multiple methods used in this study, it is evident that what is done during the course of activist political process clearly benefits women's reported well-being. I was able to show in many examples that activists with former body image, eating, and/or aging issues felt much better about themselves on these same aspects once they had an established collective identity. The implications of this are salient and parallel other work (Kaminski 1997; Taylor and VanWilligen 1997; Taylor 1996) that links aspects of activism to aspects of health. I explain how my work contributes to this larger body below in the final sections on the broad, theoretical implications of the study.

### Theoretical Implications and Extensions

In this dissertation, I have made some theoretical extensions that will further our knowledge of new social movement theory, political generations theory, and the role of interaction in both of these. This study has implications not only for the substantive question of interest, or the role of political process on body image and related behaviors, but also to broader debates in social movements, social-psychology, and health. That is, there are broader theoretical questions that my results speak to.

One question that has ongoing relevance to scholars in social movements is the relative importance of macro and micro features and processes to what may be considered successful outcomes (Gamson 1990). While past research has tended to focus on aggregate political outcomes (see review in McAdam et al. 2000), this study shows that micro-mobilization processes that have individual and social psychological outcomes are very important (see Jasper and Goodwin 1999 for review). I am asking that we look seriously at social movements as a precursor to health and that health should be

considered a successful social movement outcome. Social interaction in the context of alternative culture allows people to consider the taken-for-granted aspects of normal ideas and behaviors. However, even those who are critical of dominant culture must confront it frequently, and so the work of being healthy, promoted through social networks, is ongoing. These networks and communities have rituals that invoke how the process of collective identity is practiced.

I suggest that the general concept of political opportunity structure (POS) that has been applied to structural openings and closures for groups (McAdam 1999/1982) also applies to the lives of individuals who are also members of generations. The interpretation of pivotal events and periods is influenced by the POS. In this study, the younger feminists can critique culture as a key goal of their feminism rather than feel that doing so is apolitical in a sense. Mothers' struggles in the early phases of the second wave feminist movement made that possible (Whittier 1995). While the women's movement can be said to be in abeyance (Rupp and Taylor 1987; Taylor 1989), the possibility of considering culture, or personal as political things, a viable arena of concern was not a part of respected mainstream feminist organizing years prior.

Aspects of POS can perhaps be open and closed simultaneously. What may be considered another opening is the rise in the number of people claiming diverse categorical identities (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). It makes sense that, in years past, there was less concern for overlapping identities, since fewer claimed them. Today, for instance, about 4% of young people under age 18 are reported to be biracial. The body image of the younger women, who make meaningful their diverse identities, in my sample is better, in general, than when the older activists were their age. These younger

women acknowledge the work of older activists, mothers, and some fathers in imparting to the young how harmful media images can be.

Thus, variations on an existing collective identity, as experienced by participants both between and within generations, (as in Whittier 1995, 1997), may exhibit with openings and closures in the POS (Meyer and Whittier 1994). This idea can be related, as well, to the sociological imagination, where individuals become aware that they have personal biographies that are lived within social- historical contexts (Mills 1959). It is shown in this study that participants' marginal personal biographies that are lived, in particular, during tumultuous historical times appear to ignite alternative consciousness of individuals and groups. Mills recognized that being different is a catalyst to spark the use of the sociological imagination, but I seek to point out that this realization can be applied systematically to participation in social movements. The motivation to be activist is recognized as imparted from socialization in alternative interactions, making its expression both individual and shared.

Aging is a period where pivotal events and marginal identity come to the fore for women. For the activists in this study, their marginal identities appeared well before middle adulthood, and so they had an early introduction to oppression in varying realms. Hence, this may have given activists an early ability to cope with inequality, particularly gender inequality, or unhappy times. Mainstream women may, as they age, encounter deflated identity to a heightened degree for the first time. Related to what I am arguing about marginality, Mirowsky and Ross (1989) find that alienation predicts poor psychological health. Thus, what happens to mainstream women during aging may thus

be comparably more transitional and depressing. This is something that requires further exploration in future research.

My results add to a growing body of research that empirically substantiates that activism leads to well-being (Kaminski 1997; Van Willigen 1996; Taylor 1996). These studies have shown that aspects of activism helped change negative identities to committed or empowered identities. Kaminski found that lesbians who became politically involved in gay, lesbian or feminist organizations helped them embrace their sexual identities. Yet while these groups have aspects of social connectedness, and they encourage formal and PPS to resist normative heterosexuality, the study does not present a *systematic rendering of collective identity*. Plus, lesbians' oppositional consciousness to homosexual discrimination applies specifically to that group. Taylor demonstrates that the self help and women's movements improve the well-being of sufferers of post-partum depression. And Van Willigen (1997) find that activism in support groups specific to breast cancer increases the well-being of survivors. The present study has *wide application to diffuse groups*. That is, it is not essential to hold a specific kind of activist identity (e.g. lesbian, ecofeminist) to better interpret body image and aging experiences. Further, my findings extend theories linking activism to health by applying to a more universal population and for wide dimensions of health. I show that activism affects *holistic health* that includes the integration of spiritual well-being, health ideas and behaviors, body image, and interpreting aging. Finally, this study has examined many health outcomes *over the life course*, which links and informs political generations, social movements, and health.

The findings in this study also speak to the continued relevance of collective identity theory (Melucci 1989; Taylor and Whittier 1992). The activists I interviewed mostly participate in what are considered new social movements (Beuchler 2000, della Porta and Diani 1999). Collective identity that is an active component of political process is shown to have a fundamental effect on the ideas and actions of participants. It can foster a healthy sense of body esteem in women coping with gendered body issues, although *work on eating disorders has not accounted for political process as a solution*. The empowerment women get to solve their body issues suggests the feedback of the three elements of collective identity, which is another way I contribute to broader theoretical understandings.

It is logically assumed that ideas and values lead to actions. There were several instances where activists, committed to the value of participatory democracy, acted on this by calling newspapers and representatives, organizing voting drives, and operating booths at festivals. In particular, the community celebrations I witnessed as a participant observer clearly displayed how values are tied to actions. The values of choice and autonomy translate to helping women have their babies at home; the value of diversity means a rainbow of human differences are seen and embraced.

Yet plenty of other data indicate that personal actions are political, since practice leads to compassion and hence a political response. For instance, many activists do yoga not just for the manifest function, which is physical exercise, but to promote and fulfill spiritual and political goals. That is, doing yoga reinforces to activists that, if one is connected to all other perfect, living things, than one is politically obligated to act on

their behalf. Thus, *actions shape ideas, which has not yet been expressly noted in collective identity theory.*

It also appears from my data that boundaries appear both to be planted after doing personalized political strategies and before the framing of group consciousness. An example of the former is avoiding television, which contributes to better body image, and then deciding to socialize as exclusively as possible with others who would rather talk than gaze. Putting up boundaries then reinforces the oppositional consciousness that women should come in all shapes, ages, and colors and the PPS of avoiding television. I believe identity is greater solidified once people have taken actual action in support of their framed or reframed consciousness. My view is supported by other research linking activism to health (e.g., Kaminski 1997). Then, in terms of conceptual similarity, it appears that pivotal departures, as actualized choices, are alternative behaviors that, if politically inspired, are also personalized political strategies.

The findings suggest how activist experiences in life course stages impact the solidity of collective and personal identities. Borrowing from generational theory, I find that activist commitment to collective identity and self-empowerment is in fact sustained over time. Also, derived from life cycle perspectives, my data invokes the importance of aging effects in biological, cultural, and generational ways. In supporting both of these ideas, my study demonstrates the compatibility of different political generations approaches. How empowerment is gained from interaction and collective identity *over time* regarding aspects of women's bodies is informed by my data that show effects of physical aging, their meanings, and their interpretations. Also, as I suggested earlier, lifecycle approaches are extended by focusing on all stages of the life course, not just

youths (Mannheim 1952). The older periods certainly have significant events, such as menopause, that lead to activist pivotal departures. Pivotal events related to changes in women's bodies, are sometimes framed as socially-inspired opportunities that alter ideas and actions that contribute to doing gender and age.

Most of the parts of the political process model are supported by my data, yet there is some room for revision. This comes in with my argument that women's social networks best promote collective identity that can lead to pivotal departures and health. That the support comes from women is only contextually important. Women's social support is found, in some instances, to be relevant to women's politicization because of women's shared experiences, but that is gender from culture and not biology. Barbara Risman's famous study (1987) shows, in support of interaction theories of gender, that men can parent effectively *if the situation demands it*, which it does in the case of single fatherhood. It is the context of the situation that is crucial; by empirical extension, men are shown in my data to nurture women and help them traverse through pivotal events in an empowered way. In sum, it is the quality of the interaction that is important and not sex.

It is obvious, from my study, that aspects of social-psychology greatly contribute to social movements (Klandermans 1997). Beyond the more obvious premise that social interaction renders socialization continually possible and ongoing, social psychology lends to social movements an appreciation for the salience of human agency and contextualized meaning of many things, including bodies. This study finds that personal agency, mediated through social interaction, is a result of making pivotal departures from what is normal. This points to the fluid nature of what is also structural. Postmodern

scholars recognize that bodies are a site of debate in late modernity (Cunningham and Backett-Milburn 2001). My research, too, shows that PPS linked to the body illustrate an emancipatory politics of collective identity that links personal and public mobilization (Taylor and Whittier 1992). It may seem counterintuitive that aging or imperfect bodies can be viewed as sources of agency and freedom, yet for most of the women in my sample, they are.

My research also suggests that bodies are instruments through which interaction is filtered and meaning is made. This is a form of empowerment through overcoming extreme difficulty, as well as part of the feminist project that allows women to redefine the rules by which they live. Women acknowledge that their bodies will decline, and yet collective identity imparts to them wisdom, peace of mind and the ability to move past body concerns that wreck the self-esteem of mainstream women. In sum, that social-psychology affects culture is evidence for the salience of micro-level features of social movements (Stryker et al. 2000). Findings that political process positively affects women's health, especially in regards to improved body image, is certainly important. However, the costs activists have paid to arrive at their understandings are likely to be perceived as inordinately high to mainstream women and to a society that makes money off of social problems.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Open-ended interview guide**

#### **Questions on body image, culture, and political attitudes and behaviors**

##### **Entertainment**

What kinds of music do you like?

How often do you go to concerts, movies, or other entertainment?

Do you go to movies? What kinds of movies do you like?

##### **Clothes**

Can you describe a person whom you would personally consider to be dressed in an ideal way?

How often do you go shopping for clothes

Describe your style.

Where do you get your clothing?

##### **Media**

Do you read fashion magazines? How often?

Why or why not?

Do you avoid media and, if so, why?

Do you watch TV? How often and which shows? Any regulars?

Do you wish you looked like people you see in magazines or TV or commercials?

##### **Group experiences**

Do you share viewpoints or politics with any formal, organized groups?

How about informal groups?

What are some of the shared characteristics of this (these) groups?

Do you interact or participate frequently with any of these groups?

Are you religious (formally)?

What were your religious experiences growing up?

Are you spiritual? How do you currently celebrate religion or spirituality?

##### **Ways of living**

Describe a typical day.

How much leisure time do you have and how do you spend it?

Do you take vacations where you travel?

Where do you go, what kind of accommodation do you have?

Are you unhappy with any elements of American society or culture?

If so, what aspects?

What are your goals for the future?  
How would you attain these goals?

### **Politics**

Are you a member of a political party?  
Do you vote? Why or why not?  
What are the most important issues to you (political or specific to group(s))?  
What is your degree of involvement in these issues?  
Have you to do you engage in political protests?  
Are you a part of any social movement activity?

### **Values**

Values are preferences people share about what is good or bad or right or wrong about society. I am going to name some more typically identifies American values. I want to know if these values are important to you or if you agree with them.

- Material comfort
- individualism
- conformity
- efficiency (doing work quickly, use of machines)
- science and rationality
- nationalism and patriotism
- progress
- work ethic

Do you have or believe in values that are different?  
Do you consider yourself more similar to to different than typical Americans?  
If considered different, how are you different?

### **Eating and dieting habits/ body control**

*Many people do things to improve their looks*

Do you exercise? What do you do and how often?  
Have you ever dieted, fasted, or thrown up to lose weight?  
Are you currently dieting?  
Do you currently restrict how much you eat to control your weight?  
In the past, were your friends concerned about weight? What about now?  
What does food and eating mean to you?  
Do you ever eat to calm or comfort yourself?  
Do you worry about how much you eat? Do you currently have any eating problems?  
Are you vegetarian? Vegan?  
Where do you buy food? Why do you buy it there?

### **Medical**

Describe the ideal doctor. What kinds of doctors do you visit?  
Birthing experiences. Do you engage in any alternative forms of medicine?

### **Depression**

Have you ever been depressed?

Are you currently depressed?

Do your eating habits change when you are depressed? When happy?

Does your attitude about or satisfaction with your body change when you feel depressed?

### **Shopping**

Where do you do general shopping?

Do you like shopping at malls? How often do you go shopping?

Do you buy designer clothing? Would you buy more if unlimited income?

### **General appearance**

Can you describe what you would personally consider to be the ideal female body?

Do you feel that you are attractive?

How much time do you spend getting ready daily? What is your routine?

Describe how you think a typical American woman looks in terms of her appearance (clothes, make-up, hair, shoes, etc).

How do you feel about cosmetic surgery?

How do you feel about conventional body practices such as wearing deodorant and shaving?

Are you influenced by what others think about your looks?

Can you describe what you would personally consider to be the ideal female face?

Do you worry about getting older? Does this worry have to do with fear of becoming less attractive?

### **The face**

Describe the ideal female face. What age or age range is the most attractive to you?

How do you feel about your face, features, is it attractive?

Do you feel self-conscious about any of your facial features? Which?

Do you wear make-up? For certain occasions?

Why do you choose to wear or not wear make-up?

If subject wears make-up, where do they get it, what brands used and how often buy?

Do you think women look better with make-up?

Do others wear make-up at your workplace?

Is there pressure to wear make-up in your work or other settings?

### **The body**

Now, I want you to think about your own body.

How would you describe your body?

Has your body changed since you were a teenager?

How has it changed?

How do you feel about your body?

How do you feel about your weight?

The distribution of your weight?

Has the way you feel about your body changed since you were a teen?

What do you like about your body- dislike?  
Any body features you would change if you had a choice?  
Typically, how have people you've dated felt about your body?  
Why do you think that is?  
Are you currently involved in a relationship?  
How do you think your family feels about your body?  
Do they or anyone else ever make jokes, comments or nicknames related to your body/  
weight/ or shape?

### **Hair**

Describe the ideal appearance of hair to you personally. Do you have your hair cut frequently? Where?  
What kinds of products do you use, anything you won't use? Where do you get hair products?  
Ideally, how often should hair be washed per week?  
Is it important to have a fashionable hairstyle? Why or why not?  
Do you or would you use curling irons, curlers, or other appliances regularly or ever?

### **General issues**

What do you think about communal living?  
Is this a living arrangement you would consider or have done?  
Have you or would you collectively own or share goods with others?  
Do you consider yourself a feminist? What is feminism to you- your version?  
Are you concerned about the environment? An issue? Degree of involvement, recycling.  
Opinions about drug use. Hard, marijuana, medicinal, legality.

**Appendix B**  
**Research Survey**  
**Anne E. Haas**  
**Ohio State University**  
**Political Process, Activism, and Health**

**Instructions:** Below is a survey that has been approved by Ohio State University for dissertation research. In it, I look at how things people believe and do are related to various aspects of health. Please answer each question as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. Most of the answers can be circled. Pick the *best choice* for each answer if you are stuck between choices.

**1. Paid employment status** \_\_\_\_\_

*Do you hold a paid job?*

- 1) no
- 2) yes

If yes, go to questions 1a and 1b

If no, go to question 2 below

**1a. Full-time or part-time job**

*Are you employed full-time or part-time?*

- 1) part-time
- 2) full-time

**1b. Type of occupation**

*Which of the following categories best describes your paid occupation? Select your **MAJOR** occupation if you hold more than one paid job.*

- 1) farm
- 2) service
- 3) unskilled
- 4) assembly
- 5) skilled
- 6) sales
- 7) clerical
- 8) managerial
- 9) professional

## 2. Education

*Please indicate your total education attainment.*

- 1) less than high school
- 2) some high school
- 3) high school graduate/GED
- 4) associate or technical degree
- 5) some college
- 6) bachelors degree
- 7) masters or professional degree
- 8) doctorate

## 3. Preferred racial or ethnic identity

*What race or ethnicity do you consider yourself?*

- 1) African-American or Black
- 2) European-American or white
- 3) Native American, Indigenous, Alaskan or Eskimo
- 4) Asian-American
- 5) Hispanic or Latino
- 6) Multiracial or Other

3a. If you select Multiracial or Other, please tell me up to two racial or ethnic categories

that best describe your identity.

*List (write in) two racial or ethnic categories.*

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Preferred type of doctor

*The type of doctor you see most frequently see is a:*

- 1) general practitioner (with MD degree)
- 2) specialist (e.g. cardiologist) with MD degree
- 3) wholistic practitioner (e.g. homeopath)
- 4) chiropractor
- 5) alternative (e.g. acupuncturist)
- 6) other (write in \_\_\_\_\_)

## 5. Hours of TV in average day

*In an average day, about how much TV do you watch?*

- 1) none
- 2) less than 1 hour
- 3) 1-2 hours
- 4) 2-3 hours
- 5) 3-5 hours
- 6) more than 5 hours

6. News media read

*What kind of printed news media do you read or prefer?*

- 1) daily local or national newspapers or magazines (e.g. Columbus Dispatch; Time)
- 2) progressive or alternative papers or magazines (e.g. Mother Jones; The Utne Reader)
- 3) business papers or magazines (e.g. The Wall Street Journal; Forbes)

7. Type of food store you shop at

*You do the biggest portion of your food shopping at a:*

- 1) large or chain grocery store (e.g. Kroger; Big Bear)
- 2) gourmet or specialty markets
- 3) organic/natural food cooperative
- 4) local/ farmers' markets (non-organic)
- 5) local/ farmer's markets (organic)

8. Relationship status

*Are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?*

- 1) married
- 2) widowed
- 3) divorced
- 4) separated
- 5) never married
- 6) live with partner

8a. Ever divorced?

*Have you ever been divorced or legally separated?*

- 1) yes
- 2) no

9. Frequency of watching types of TV programs

*Below is a series of different program types, such as dramas and sports. I would like to know **about how often** you view these types of programs. Please choose from a range of options from "never watch" to "frequently watch."*

9a. dramas

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

9b. soap operas

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

9c. law or detective

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

9d. comedy or sitcom

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently

9e. talk shows

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently

9f. news

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently

- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

9g. *entertainment*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

9h. *sports*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

9i. *home and garden*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

10. Frequency reading women's fashion magazines

*I would like to know about how often you read, look at, or buy women's fashion magazines. The options go from "never" (1) to "frequently" (5).*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

11. Frequency reading home/family magazines

*How often do you read, look at or buy women's home and family magazines on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently).*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) occasionally
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

12. Body image

The statements listed below are to be used to describe how anxious, tense, or nervous you feel in general (i.e. usually) about your body or specific parts of your body. For each statement, what feeling best indicates the extent to which it is true for you. The choices are never, seldom, sometimes, often, and always. There are no right or wrong answers.

<i>In general, I feel anxious, tense, or nervous about:</i>	<b>never</b>	<b>seldom</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>often</b>	<b>always</b>
1) <i>the extent to which I look overweight</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2) <i>my thighs</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3) <i>my buttocks</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4) <i>my hips</i>	1	2	3	4	5
5) <i>my stomach</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6) <i>my legs</i>	1	2	3	4	5
7) <i>my waist</i>	1	2	3	4	5
8) <i>my muscle tone</i>	1	2	3	4	5
9) <i>my ears</i>	1	2	3	4	5
10) <i>my lips</i>	1	2	3	4	5



11) <i>my wrists</i>	1	2	3	4	5
12) <i>my hands</i>	1	2	3	4	5
13) <i>my forehead</i>	1	2	3	4	5
14) <i>my neck</i>	1	2	3	4	5
15) <i>my chin</i>	1	2	3	4	5
16) <i>my feet</i>	1	2	3	4	5

13. Your height

*Please tell me your height.* If you are five feet three inches, you can say five feet three inches or 63 inches.

(write in exact response\_\_\_\_\_).

14. Your weight

*Please estimate your current weight in pounds.*

(write in exact response\_\_\_\_\_).

15. Does respondent ever diet

a. Your age in years\_\_\_\_\_

*Do you ever diet?*

1) no

2) yes

If **yes**, proceed to questions 15a and 15b.

If **no**, skip to question 16.

15a. Frequency of dieting

*How often do you diet?*

1) never

2) infrequently

3) sometimes

4) often

5) frequently

15b. Reasons to diet

*Why do you diet?* Please select one primary answer, but you may choose a second or third choice. Write in the response if the answer is "other."

1) doctor's advice

2) partner's suggestion

3) others' suggestion

4) personal choice

5) other (write in\_\_\_\_\_).

15c. Taking diet aids

*Have you ever taken diet aids to help you lose weight?*

1) no

2) yes

If **yes**, proceed to question 15d.

If **no**, skip to question 16.

15d. Diet aids taken

*What kind(s) of diet aid(s) have you taken?*

- 1) over-the-counter diet pills
- 2) prescription diet pills
- 3) laxatives
- 4) diuretics
- 5) other (write in\_\_\_\_\_).

Note: "Other" can include any products or services designed for weight loss (e.g. rubber suits; stomach stapling, etc...).

16. How often worry about weight

*About how often do you worry about your weight?*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) sometimes
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

17. Worry about aging

*About how often do you worry about aging?*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) sometimes
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

18. Overall appearance satisfaction

*In general, about how satisfied are you with your overall appearance?*

- 1) very dissatisfied
- 2) somewhat dissatisfied
- 3) neutral
- 4) somewhat satisfied
- 5) very satisfied

19. Political party affiliation

*Which political party best matches your ideas about government?*

- 1) Republican
- 2) Democrat
- 3) Independent
- 4) Green
- 5) Other (write in\_\_\_\_\_).

20. Side on abortion issue

*Considering the abortion issue, do you consider yourself pro-life, pro-choice, or neither?*

- 1) pro-life
- 2) pro-choice
- 3) neither

21. Eating meat

*Considering your diet, how often do you eat meat?*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) sometimes
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

22. Eating dairy

*Considering your diet, about how often do you consume dairy products?*

- 1) never
- 2) infrequently
- 3) sometimes
- 4) often
- 5) frequently

23. Where clothing is purchased

*When shopping for clothes, you do most of your buying at:*

- 1) chain stores (e.g The Gap; Sears; Walmart)
- 2) thrift stores
- 3) designer stores (e.g. Ann Taylor; Sax Fifth Ave)
- 4) local (organic cotton; Guatemalan woven)
- 5) make own clothes
- 6) other (write in\_\_\_\_\_).

24. Wearing make-up

*On a typical day, do you wear make-up?*

- 1) no
- 2) yes

If **yes**, proceed to 24a and 24b.

If **no**, skip to question 25.

24a. Time taken to apply makeup

*About how long does it take you to put on your makeup?*

(Write out in minutes\_\_\_\_\_).

24b. Amount of makeup worn

*You would describe the amount of makeup you wear on a typical day as heavy, moderate, light, or hardly noticeable?*

- 1) heavy
- 2) moderate
- 3) light
- 4) hardly noticeable

25. Does respondent have children

*Do you have any children?*

- 1) no
- 2) yes

If **yes**, proceed to question 25a.

If **no**, skip to question 26.

25a. How many kids

*How many children do you have?*

(Write exact number \_\_\_\_\_).

26. Social support from whom

*Considering your social support network, would you say most of that support comes from your spouse or partner, other family, formal groups, informal groups, or friends?*

- 1) spouse or partner
- 2) other family
- 3) formal group
- 4) informal group
- 5) friends

26a. Is your social support female

*Considering your social support network, are the persons mostly men, women, or equally both?*

- 1) men
- 2) women
- 3) equally both

26b. Is female support important

*How important is it to you that women provide social support to you?*

- 1) very unimportant
- 2) somewhat unimportant
- 3) neutral
- 4) somewhat important
- 5) very important

26c. Support around which issues

*Considering the social support provided by your **female** family, friends, or groups, what are the topics or issues around which they support you?*

(Write down the issues) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

27. I would now like to know about your involvement in recent or present social movements. I will name several movements. Please tell me whether you participated or did not participate in each one.

	yes	no
27a. Did you participate in civil rights?	1	2
27b. Did you participate in anti-Vietnam?	1	2
27c. Did you participate in the free speech/student mvt?	1	2
27d. Did you participate in the Women's mvt?	1	2
27e. Did you participate in the Environmental mvt?	1	2
27f. Did you participate in the Peace mvt?	1	2
27g. Did you participate in the Animal rights mvt?	1	2
27h. Did you participate in the Gay Liberation mvt?	1	2
27i. Did you participate in the AIDS mvt?	1	2
27j. Did you participate in the Anti-globalization mvt?	1	2
27k. Did you participate in the Anti-apartheid mvt?	1	2
27l. Did you participate in the Anti-military mvt?	1	2

28. List other social movement participation

Please name any other movements that you have or currently do participate in.  
 (Write in \_\_\_\_\_).

29. I would now like to know what forms of political activity you have engaged in. I will read a series of political activities, and I will ask you to please indicate whether you have or have not done that particular activity.

	yes	no
29a. Have you ever voted?	1	2
29b.		

<i>Have you ever written letters to politicians?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29c.		
<i>Have you ever lobbied for issues?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29d.		
<i>Have you ever helped organize a political campaign?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29e.		
<i>Have you ever helped others to vote?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29f.		
<i>Have you ever explained issues door-to-door?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29g.		
<i>Are you a participant in any Internet social movements?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29h.		
<i>Have you ever helped educate others about politics?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29i.		
<i>Have you ever picketed for any reason?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29j.		
<i>Have you ever done a sit-in?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29k.		
<i>Have you ever participated in a protest?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29l.		
<i>Have you ever boycotted a product or event?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
29m.		
<i>Have you ever volunteered for civic/community events?</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>

30. Civic hours volunteered

*About how many hours per month do you volunteer for civic or community organizations?*

(Write in\_\_\_\_\_).

31. Religious hours volunteered

*About how many hours per month do you volunteer for religious organizations?*

(Write in\_\_\_\_\_).

32. Region

*What kind of region did you grow up in?*

- 1) rural area
- 2) small town
- 3) suburb
- 4) large city

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