⬡ TRANSFORMATIONS

comparative study of social transformations
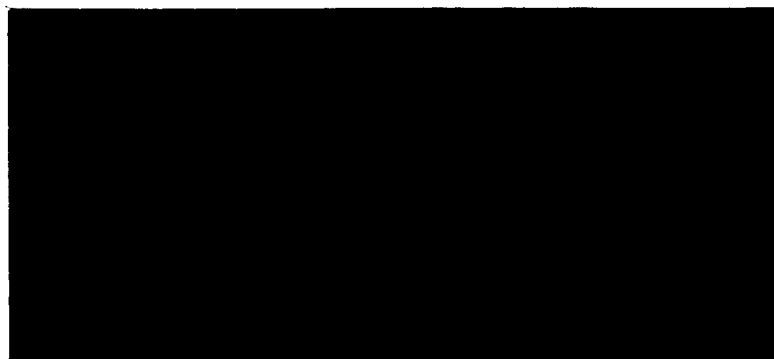
MAX WEBER MEETS FEMINISM: A RECONSIDERATION
OF CHARISMA

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Why do individuals join, participate in, and often leave social movements? This question

has perplexed both social movement theorists and practitioners. For example, in a current study

on the survival and transformation of feminist movement organizations during the Reagan years,

declining membership was the foremost concern among the activists. As the coordinator of a

feminist health center explained:

> It would be a shame if after all of the battles with the New Right, we failed to
> survive because no one cared. You see, we have not succumbed to the Right and
> all of its horrible tricks and attacks. But we can not continue if we don't get new
> blood into the movement. That, and not the New Right, is our biggest threat.[1]

Among social movement scholars, answers range in focus from irrationality and anomie to

utilitarian, cost-benefit calculi. Recent social movement literature on participation reflects

attempts to disentangle the intricate relationships between grievances, incentives, and identity

formation.[2] As yet, little consensus exists on what facilitates and sustains commitment in social

movements.

In many respects, understanding why people commit to various causes, often at great risk

to themselves and with little apparent reward (in an immediate or material sense), requires an

understanding of legitimacy and authority. Put another way, why do individuals obey certain

commands or follow certain strategies in pursuit of some vision of a better society? To this end,

Max Weber's examination of domination (authority) is particularly useful.[3] Weber argued that

"domination is ... a special case of power" in which the "positive commitment on the part of the

subordinate to the authority they obey is a cardinal feature".[4] He identified three pure or ideal

types of domination: rational-legal authority, traditional authority, and charismatic authority, and

focused his analysis on both the "organization that implements and the beliefs that sustain a given

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1. Hyde (forthcoming).
2. For example, see Snow et al (1986) on frame alignment and mobilization; McCarthy (1987) on tapping unmobilized sentiment pools; Friedman and McAdam (1988) on rational choice and network formation; Morris (1984) on the role of cultural belief systems in mobilization; Opp (1988) on grievance formation and critical events; and Cohen (1985), Elder (1985), and Offe (1985) on the formation of collective identity structures.
3. For my discussion on Weberian theory, I rely on the following works: Aron (1970), Bendix (1977), Coser (1977), Parkin (1982), Swatos (1984), Weber (1978), Zurcher and Snow (1981).
4. Parkin (1982:74).

system [of domination]".[5]   Weber was concerned with the motivations for obedience or

commitment and the organizational structures which supported different types of authority.

With respect to social movement emergence and continuance, Weber's analysis of

charismatic authority is critical. This paper examines and expands upon the Weberian definition

and application of charismatic authority. In particular it focuses on how charismatic authority is

generated and transformed when no individual leader is present. That is, the possibility of the

group being charismatic is entertained; a dynamic designated as *collective charisma*. Accounts of

the rise and fall of radical feminism during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and current research

on change in feminist movement organizations illustrate the analysis. Of specific interest is what

characterizes collective charisma, how features of collective charisma facilitate commitment, and

what the consequences are when the transformation of collective charisma occurs.

Weberian Approach to Social Movements

The emergence, sustenance and decline of charismatic authority is central to a Weberian

understanding of social movements. Weber explained:

> The term "charisma" will be applied to a certain quality of an individual
> personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as
> endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional
> powers or qualities. These are such as not accessible to the ordinary person, but
> are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the
> individual concerned is treated as a "leader". . . . What is alone important is how
> the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his
> "followers" or "disciples".[6]

Weber continues by stating that "an organized group subject to charismatic authority will be called

a charismatic community" and "is based on an emotional form of communal relationship".[7] The

charismatic leader gains allegiance because of his/her special gift in envisioning a new social order

and must continually prove him/herself. In turn, "followers commit themselves both to the belief

system and to an acknowledgement of the charisma".[8] A charismatic movement is revolutionary

in that it breaks from and repudiates the past and its accompanying traditional authority.[9]

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5. Bendix (1977:294).
6. Weber (1978:241-242).
7. Weber (1978:243).
8. Tilly (1978:37).
9. Swatos (1984).

Charisma has a highly creative but brief and unstable existence. Because it is a unique quality that resides in and is attributed to an individual, it cannot be transmitted unless dramatically altered. Weber argued that such transformation is motivated by both the ideal and material interests of followers or disciples in order to gain some degree of permanency and is most visible when the charismatic leader disappears and a successor(s) must be named. Weber designated several possible solutions for charismatic succession, all of which serve to routinize and conservatize the movement.[10]

The instability, the followers' often blind devotion, and the eventual routinization process associated with charismatically led movements have been woven into various social movement models. Collective behavior theorists, who tend to emphasize the non-routine, irrational, and unstable aspects of movement life, made greatest use of these insights.[11] However, Zald and Ash, in an article that prefigured the resource mobilization perspective, incorporated aspects of the routinization process into their discussion of change in movement organizations.[12] With the paradigmatic shift away from collective behavior and to resource mobilization, attention on charismatic leadership diminished. The newer model emphasized that social movements were routine forms social action, that participants were rational and purposeful, and that organizations played essential, facilitative roles in mobilization. Consequently, Weber's model was viewed as flawed since it offered no explanation as to why charismatic movements arose and how they were mobilized.[13] Recently, perhaps as a result of resource mobilization's virtual neglect of the passionate or emotional aspects of movement life, some scholars have reintroduced charismatic

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10. Weber (1978):246-9). Tilly (1978:38) summarizes the six solutions: "1. A search for another charismatic leader of the same type. 2. Revelation through some procedure honored by the group. 3. The old leader's personal designation of a successor, with the group's approval. 4. Ritual designation by the body of surviving leaders. 5. Reliance on kinship, with the idea that charisma is inheritable. 6. Transfer of charisma to the organization, therefore to its officials and rituals."
11. For examples see Zurcher and Snow (1981:474).
12. Zald and Ash (1987 [1966]). Regarding the replacement of charisma, they offered the following proposition: "Routinization of charisma is likely to conservatize the dominant core of the movement organization while simultaneously producing increasingly radical splinter group" (p. 136).
13. Tilly (1978:39).

leadership as one of many factors that facilitates the development of commitment in social movements.[14]

Collective Charisma

While the concerns raised about Weber's conceptualization of charismatic movements are valid, there are, nonetheless, emotional or passionate qualities embodied in the charismatic relationship that warrant further exploration. There is an emotional investment, which even may seem irrational to the outside observer, that occurs in the larger process of committing oneself to a social change endeavor. Many feminist activists, for example, described their early involvement in various groups or organizations as being "magical", "spiritual", or "intensely intimate". One participant spoke for many women as she recalled the early years in her collective:

> We would do anything for the collective. We ate, slept, drank, worked, and played with the collective. Hell, we made love to the collective.[15]

The critical aspect of this passage is the way in which she refers to the collective - it is as if it was another individual. This was not uncommon, many women interviewed spoke of their groups (typically collectives) as if they were separate entities. In such settings, it is the group that possesses authority over participants, there are no individual leaders. This is the point of departure from Weber, viewing the group *in toto* and not the individual as holding authority.

While Weber did not entertain this scenario, he did lay the foundation to explore such a possibility. Weber was concerned primarily with understanding the various forms of social action. He identified four ideals types, three of which he linked to systems of domination - affective or emotional action (charismatic authority), traditional action (traditional authority), and purposeful or goal oriented rational action (legal-rational authority). His fourth type of social action, value-oriented or substantive rational action, was not associated with an authority system.[16] Yet in their study of cooperative workplaces, Rothschild and Whitt assert:

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14. For example, see Baker (1986) on variants of charismatic authority in lesbian-feminist organizations and Morris (1984) on the role of charismatic leadership in the civil rights movement.
15. Hyde (forthcoming).
16. Coser (1977:217).

> [that the] collectivist mode of organization [does] not grant authority on the grounds of formal legal-rational justifications, nor on the basis of tradition or the charisma of leaders. *Instead they conform to a fourth basis of legitimate authority ... that of value-rationality.* They are committed first and foremost to substantive goals, to an ethic .... [I]n the alternative organizations studied here no one (ideally) has the right to command, and no one the duty to obey another. There can be no subordinates where there are no superordinates. They strive for the absence of domination. ... *In collectives, ultimate authority resides not in the individual ... but in the collectivity of worker-owner-members as a whole.*[17] [itals mine]

The ethic described here is an egalitarian ethic; the substantive goal is one of collective, democratic participation. This extension of Weberian analysis is critical for our understanding of collective charisma, for Rothschild and Whitt successfully demonstrated that authority can reside in the group rather than the individual.

Yet this insight only partially captures the phenomenon of collective charisma. Because cooperative workplaces are economic ventures, they contain a variety of procedural constructs that insure both participation and production. Organizations or groups that exhibit collective charisma, however, have not developed such routines; the charismatic nature of the authority system prevents this. Thus, the authority found within such organizations is a blend of charisma and value rationality. *Specifically, collective charisma is a combination of both the value of egalitarianism, and the devotional, inspirational, and 'magical' qualities of charisma.*[18]

Like individual charisma, collective charisma is short-lived and volatile (though not irrational, at least for those involved). Organizations guided by collective charisma experience the double burden of charismatic succession and sustained nurturance of the egalitarian ethic. Moreover, the very processes that initially support collective charisma eventually produce dynamics that undermine such authority.

Table 1 presents a simplified version of the possible forms of authority that result from the intersection of charisma and egalitarianism.

- Table 1 here -

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17. Rothschild and Whitt (1986:22).
18. Combining forms of domination is in keeping with Weberian analysis. Weber argued that authority must be understood within its social setting and that reality often reflected various combinations of domination.

Each cell essentially should be viewed as an ideal type. And, movement from one cell to another, specifically from cell one (collective charisma) to the others should be understood as a reflection of larger organizational transformation.

Groups and organizations that formed, changed, and in some cases died, during the emergence and insurgence of the women's liberation movement (late 1960s and early 1970s) provide an excellent illustration of a collectively charismatic movement - as it exists and becomes transformed. Yet before examining collective charisma in the women's liberation movement, one needs to provide a brief sketch of the tumultuous early years of the feminist movement and an overview of current trends in contemporary feminist movement organizations, the by-products of this collectively charismatic time.

The Women's Movement: 1967 - 1975

The women's movement that re-emerged in the mid 1960s seemed to surprise all but the participants. It quickly mobilized and gained momentum at a time with the significant progressive movements - New Left, civil rights, student, anti-war - were either at their apex or in decline.[19] Most observers recognized two distinct branches of the feminist movement - women's right and women's liberation.[20] What many did not understand fully was the movement's fractious and schismatic nature, particularly within the women's liberation wing, that resulted from internal dynamics and external vilification.

Under the banner "Let Us In", the women's rights wing of the movement primarily sought changes in laws and institutional procedures that would help assimilate women into the

19. This cluster of social movements is often referred to as "the Movement". I will use the capital "M" form from time to time in this paper to refer to these movements as a group. I recognize that these movements each had unique issues, strategies and structures.
20. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to indicate the two main branches as women's rights and women's liberation. There is considerable debate in the literature as to what the labels should be. For example, Freeman (1975) uses old versus new branches, Ferree and Hess (1985) use bureaucratic versus collectivist strands, and many others designate the split as reform versus revolution. There is no clear and simple division. My chosen designation captures the general trend apparent during the late 1960s and early 1970s, though the boundaries blurred as the total movement aged. In addition to those authors just cited, I rely on the movement histories written by Carden (1974) Cassell (1977), Echols (1986), and Evans (1979) for my brief portrait. I particularly am indebted to Echols, who (bravely) identifies the key schisms that existed within the women's liberation branch.

mainstream. Women's rights activists asserted that women's subordination was due to the lack of equal opportunities, and consequently did not question the fundamental values or morality of existing structures. The catalysts for this branch's emergence were the establishment of the President's Commission on the Status of Women (1961) and attendant state commissions, the publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963), and the gradual influx of white, middle class women into the paid labor force during the 1960s. The organizational mainstay is the National Organization for Women (NOW), a centralized, bureaucratic, membership organization that consciously patterned itself after the NAACP. Founded in 1966, largely the result of anger with the EEOC for its refusal to enforce sex equity laws and of frustration with the women's commission's inability to exert sufficient leverage on the agency, NOW is perhaps best known for its Equal Rights Amendment drive. NOW has focused largely on fair access to education and employment, and after pressure from women's liberation groups, also has endorsed and worked on reproductive choice and lesbian rights.

The women's liberation branch has its roots in the civil rights and New Left movements of the 1960s. In these movements, women learned about the revolutionary framing of issues, community organizing strategies, and non- or anti-bureaucratic structures. They also began to understand and analyze the contradiction within the Movement - that just treatment, liberation and freedom did not extend to women. Initially, women attempted to raise the issues within the Movement. At best their demands to be heard were ignored; though typically women were subjected to ridicule, harassment, and arguments that their claims for equality were divisive.[21] These experiences galvanized women to pursue their own means of liberation. Shared concerns,

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21. Some examples to illustrate this point. In 1964, Ruby Doris Robinson drafted a status report on the inferior position of women in SNCC, to which Stokely Carmichael responded: "The only position for women in SNCC is prone" (quoted in Carden 1974:60). At the 1967 National Conference for New Politics, after reneging on a promise to bring a women's issues resolution to the floor, William Pepper (chair) patted Shulamith Firestone (to become a leading proponent of radical feminism) on the head and told her: "Move on little girl; we have more important issues to talk about than women's liberation" (quoted in Evans 1979:198-99). At a large organizing meeting at the University of Washington, an SDS organizer stated that solidarity between middle class activists and poor males can be improved by "balling a chick together" (quoted in Freeman 1975:60). And finally, at a 1969 anti-war rally, Marilyn Salzman Webb (a co-organizer of the first national women's liberation conference in 1968) was subjected to the chant "Take her off the stage and fuck her" while she spoke (quoted in Evans 1979:224).

however, were not sufficiently unifying to prevent the emergence of differences within this budding liberation wing. Not surprisingly, most of these differences centered on the relationship of women's liberation to the New Left.

For one group of women, known as "politicos", women's liberation represented another arm of the New Left. That is, women's issues could serve as the basis for expanded mobilization. They argued that women's oppression resulted from the intersection of class and gender; that capitalism was primarily responsible. Politicos often had personal relationships with New Left leaders, were adept organizers, and were oriented to action. While frustrated with New Left's failure to understand its own sexism, they saw no need for a separate movement. Perhaps due to this allegiance, politicos were not able to sustain mobilization campaigns, and declined with the larger Left movement during the 1970s. Remnants of the politicos' work is embodied in socialist feminism, which exists primarily in the academy and not in the streets.

A second group of women, later labeled radical feminists, while sympathetic to the aims of the New Left nonetheless advocated for a distinct women's movement. Radical feminists patterned their argument for separation after the black power movement's claim for self-determination.[22] They did not, however, believe that their movement would necessarily supercede or compete with the New Left, and early on attempted to salvage a relationship with the Movement. Developing a sex-caste argument, radical feminists asserted that women were oppressed because of gender. They favored a political movement to overthrow patriarchy and developed consciousness raising as their central strategy. While some espoused strident anti-male sentiments, the majority did not deserve the male-hating tag.[23] Many of their manifestos reflect a desire to work with men on unlearning sexism. Moreover, most radical feminists did not reject the Left. Many radical feminists believed that they were expanding upon a socialist analysis,

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22. This is not surprising since radical feminists were more likely to have received training in the civil rights than in New Left organizations. They had also witnessed the purging of white radicals from various civil rights organizations (Echols 1986).
23. In fact, many radical feminists did not support lesbian-feminism when it emerged in the early 1970s. Radicals claimed that lesbianism was a personal or lifestyle solution to a political or structural problem (Echols 1986).

though they often failed to make that clear and on several occasions, radical feminists dismissed the role of capitalism in women's oppression.[24]

As the sixties drew to a close, the split widened between the radical feminists and the New Left, with politicos straddling the chasm. Antagonism tended to fuel ideological entrenchment on all sides.[25] By 1969, just two years into its development, radical feminism was the dominant thread within the entire women's movement. Radical feminists provided provocative analyses of sexuality, relationships, marriage, the family, and sexual assault, which had a "ripple effect" throughout the rest of the movement.[26] Yet as it tried to manage increasing differences inside and hostilities outside the women's movement, radical feminism unknowingly created the conditions for its own decline.

Echols argues that "by the early seventies radical feminism began to flounder, and after 1975 it was eclipsed by cultural feminism - a tendency which grew out of radical feminism, but contravened much that was fundamental to it."[27] Radical and cultural feminism, while seemingly similar, are different in the following ways:

> Most fundamentally, radical feminism was a political movement dedicated to the elimination of the sex-class system. By contrast, cultural feminism was a "countercultural movement aimed at redeeming its participants." While radical feminists were typically constructionists who wanted to eliminate gender differences, cultural feminists were generally essentialists who sought to rehabilitate femaleness. Unlike radical feminists who believed that feminism entailed an expansion of the left analysis, cultural feminists conceived of feminism as an antidote to the left. And whereas radical feminists were anti-capitalists -- if often only implicitly -- cultural feminists dismissed economic class struggle as a peculiarly male preoccupation.[28]

Simply stated, cultural feminism was more a lifestyle than political movement. Its proponents advocated the creation of a separate woman-centered culture legitimated by the natural, moral superiority of female values and attributes. They dismissed the egalitarian ethic, non-hierarchical structures, and consciousness-raising strategies (inefficient for obtaining success); features central

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24. Echols (1986).
25. Evans (1979), Hole and Levine (1971).
26. "Ripple effect" is used by Carden (1977). See also Echols (1986), and Ferree and Hess (1985).
27. Echols, p. 2. Echols provides a fascinating narrative of the rise and fall of radical feminism. This portion of my summary, largely based on her work, does not do justice to it.
28. Echols (1986:3-4). Echols has quoted from Willis (1984:91).

to radical feminism. As its influence spread, cultural feminism became the basis for many woman-centered businesses and organizations.

This shift from radical to cultural feminism is quite complex. At the risk of oversimplification, cultural feminism offered possibilities that radical feminism could not: hands on, comparably risk-free activity; support that one's lifestyle, alone, served as a political statement; sanctuary from diatribes with the New Left; and an ideological flexibility the seemed to embrace or smooth over differences among women. By default, with the ascendence of cultural feminism and the decline of radical feminism, political activism increasingly fell under the domain of the women's rights branch. The results of these developments can be seen in contemporary feminist movement organizations. Four trends (no doubt there are others), linked to the rise and dominance of cultural feminism, can be identified: emphasis on service delivery and protection rather than activism; the belief that an organization is feminist simply because it is woman centered and run; bureaucratization; and an increased use of professionals and short-term, therapeutically oriented techniques.[29] This is not meant to suggest that these organizations are not worthwhile; they are. Yet it also seems apparent that the revolutionary nature of feminism in the 1980s has been depleted.

Collective Charisma in the Women's Movement

This paper argues that the women's liberation, specifically radical feminism, was a movement with collective charisma as its basis of legitimate authority. Structures and processes that supported collective charisma initially facilitated, but later hindered sustained commitment to radical feminism. Eventually, collective charisma was replaced by a number of different authority structures found in cultural and liberal feminist organizations. It should be noted that the discussion on these developments are based on the movement, not specific organizations.

Recall that collective charisma is composed of the value of egalitarianism and the devotional, inspiration and magical qualities of charismatic authority. Both politicos and radical

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29. Hyde (forthcoming). I am not claiming the influence of cultural feminism is the sole reason for these occurrences. I do think that as an ideology, cultural feminism provides the rationale for such trends.

feminists advocated an *anti-leadership, anti-bureaucratic philosophy*; the most important legacy of prior Movement work. This ideological frame provided the foundation for an egalitarian ethic. It also provided a critical distinction between the liberationist and women's rights branches.[30] With the emergence of women's liberation came the rapid proliferation of small, unstructured groups. These groups would be the mainstay of this branch. No one group spoke for the movement, "but together they created a 'radical community' in which like-minded women continually interacted or were made aware of each other".[31]

The structure (or rather non-structure) of these groups, however, was not the only feature that reflected a commitment to egalitarianism. The *use of kinship terms* like "sister" reinforced a sense of equality. Eventually, radical feminists "gave 'hierarchy' the additional negative meaning of a basically male principle of organization in contrast to a female mode of equality, defined as 'sisterhood', that is, a horizontal rather than vertical relationship".[32] *Loose or non-existent membership criteria* also fostered a sense of egalitarianism. For example, the radical organization WITCH (a most understudied movement organization) offered these criteria:

> You are pledged to free our brothers from oppression and stereotyped sexual roles (whether they like it or not) as well as ourselves. You are a Witch by saying aloud "I am a Witch" three times, and *thinking about that*. You are a Witch by being female, untamed, angry, joyous, and immortal. [their itals][33]

This statement by WITCH suggests other group features indicative of collective charisma. The first is an *aura of mystery* or the supernatural - invoking witchcraft and immortality. The second is that membership is limited to women. Taking cues from the black power movement, liberation groups adopted *policies of male exclusion*.[34] Radical feminists, in particular, saw female separatism as necessary if women were to feel safe in exploring their own subordination and become independent of men. The norm of male exclusion heightened the mystery of these groups. It also generated ridicule from outside the movement.

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30. Bunch (1987:122), Ferree and Hess (1985:49).
31. Freeman (1975:58).
32. On kinship: Cassell (1977:109); quotation on hierarchy: Ferree and Hess (1985:65).
33. Sisterhood is Powerful (1970:540).
34. Freeman (1975:115).

These features, in turn, fostered solidarity among women. By many accounts, considerable *bonding* occurred. This is attributed to the fact that for the first time, women felt able to share their personal experiences with one another:

> The flood broke gradually and then more swiftly. We talked about our families, our mothers, our fathers, our siblings; we talked about our men; we talked about school; we talked about "the movement" (which meant new left men). For hours we talked and unburdened our souls and left feeling high and planning to meet again the following week.[35]

These bonds helped facilitate commitment to the cause of women's liberation. Many of these groups evolved into consciousness raising groups - the key social movement organization of radical feminism.

Once radical feminism split from the Left, women realized that "a social structure equivalent to the factory, the campus or the ghetto" was needed to maintain contact among women.[36] This was the primary purpose of consciousness raising (c-r) groups - to provide women with a haven within which they could "speak bitterness" or "give witness to" oppressive conditions. Pam Allen, an early proponent of c-r, described her group:

> We have defined our group as a place in which to think: to think about our lives, our society, and our potential for being creative individuals and for building a women's movement. We call this Free Space. ... I think the [c-r] group is especially suited for freeing women to affirm their own view of reality and to think independently of male-supremacist values. It is a space where women can come to understand not only the ways this society works to keep women oppressed but ways to overcome that oppression psychologically and socially.[37]

While critics referred to consciousness raising as "navel gazing", for participants it was the foundation for radicalized, informed action.

Carden identified four basic principles of these groups:

(1) self-realization - all participants shall be encouraged to develop or realize their full human potential ...;
(2) equality or anti-elitism - no person or persons shall dominate over the other group members after the fashion of the "male chauvinist" outside world;

35. Nancy Hawley, SDS member and later, a participant in the Boston Women's Health Collective; quoted in Evans (1979:205).
36. Freeman (1975:117).
37. Allen (1973 [1970]:271-272).

(3) sisterhood - the genuine attempt to understand and to establish common bonds with other women; and
(4) authority of personal experience - one's own experience, rather than the abstract formulation of some "expert", shall be the primary source of new ideas.[38]

Thus, c-r groups retained the features of male exclusion, egalitarianism, and sisterhood. Since a primary purpose of the groups was the generation of grounded revolutionary analysis, members, by virtue of their participation, had *access to special wisdom or knowledge*. This wisdom, generated by the group, is another indication of collective charisma.

Women's liberationists also took the revolution outside of these groups. Through the use of guerilla theatre and protest, they promoted a form of public consciousness raising. Women organized nude-ins against Playboy Magazine and disruptions during Bridal Fairs. The first mass mobilization of women's liberation movement was the demonstration at the 1968 Miss American Pageant, during which a sheep was crowned and various articles of female clothing (bras, girdles, high heeled shoes) were dumped into a Freedom Trash Can. Best known, however, for theatrical tactics were the WITCH Covens that formed in many cities during 1968. The Washington DC WITCH coven hexed the United Fruit Company for its oppressive policies against Third World people and home office secretaries ("Bananas and rifles, sugar and death/War for profit, tarantulas' breath - /United Fruit makes lots of loot/The CIA is in its boot"). The Chicago WITCH coven "showered the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago with hair cuttings and nail clippings after the firing of a radial feminist woman professor". Various transit authorities, marriage license bureaus, the stock market (which reportedly dropped five points the following day) and Chase Manhatten bank also were the sites of public hexing rituals.[39] The shock value of these actions further heightened *a sense of mystery or the supernatural* (particularly when done by Witches). The excitement and joy of performing cultivated bonds among women and commitment to the group. Thus, guerilla theatre also was suggestive of collective charisma.

Collective charisma both demands and fosters a high level of commitment to women's liberation. This is particularly the case among radical feminists, who devoted themselves almost

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38. Carden (1974:86).
39. Examples from Sisterhood is Powerful (1970:538-553).

exclusively to the political cause of overturning patriarchy. Opposition from the Movement bolstered this commitment, as women increasingly turned to their own groups for support, guidance and fulfillment. Yet over time, the burdens of high-level commitment, antagonisms from outside and inside the movement, and the seemingly safer and more pragmatic offerings of cultural and liberal (women's rights) feminism set into motion the transformation of collective charisma. This section concludes with consideration of the outcomes of this change process, as reflected in the overall movement.[40]

When both egalitarianism and charisma are eliminated, and no new authority structure is put into place, the result is *group death* (not reflected in Table 1). This was not uncommon in the radical feminist movement; consciousness raising groups had an average life span of nine months (indicative of the instability of collective charisma). Usually these groups disintegrated because participants could not agree on a common task or action orientation once the analytical phase of consciousness raising was completed. When agreement occurred, the structurelessness of the groups often prevented project execution.[41] In addition to a lack of direction, the high-level of energy required also fed group burnout and dissolution. Such was the case with the Furies, a lesbian feminist collective: "The Furies made important breakthroughs, but after a year, the positive intensity of our interaction threatened to deteriorate into self-destructive cannibalism... [and] we chose to disband the collective rather than continue this destructiveness."[42] With the demise of these groups, many women left the movement altogether. Those who wanted to pursue political activities often started or joined cultural or liberal feminist groups.

It is not necessarily the case that the group dissolves with the loss of charisma and egalitarianism. In theory, some forms of *traditional authority* and *legal-rational authority*, with necessary bureaucratic structures, are possible (cell 4). This is "in theory" because no evidence emerged that so dramatic a change occurred. That is not to say that bureaucratic organizations do not exist in the women's movement. It does seem, however, that organizations experience

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40. The reader may find it useful to refer again to Table 1, specifically on events in cell 2 which constitute the largest outcome possibilities.
41. Carden (1974:71).
42. Bunch (1987:10).

more gradual changes if they shift from collective charisma to bureaucratically supported authority structures.[43]

When an organization loses its charismatic attributes, but retains its commitment to egalitarianism, the result is *routinized cooperation* (cell 3). In such organizations, various routines and procedural arrangements are designated in order to insure equal access and participation for all members. These might include consensus decision making or revolving meeting chairs. The Feminists, an early radical group, devised a lot system in order to "develop knowledge and skills in all members and prevent any one member or small group from hoarding information or abilities." The meeting chair, secretary and treasure were rotating positions; assignments, from the menial to the creative, were determined by a lottery. Group support and approval were expected for all tasks.[44] The Cooperative Health Project, founded by radical feminists in the early 1970s and still functioning today, conducts a "strokes and constructive criticisms" session at the completion of every collective meeting. The intent of such sessions is to provide feedback and support to group members, and to keep lines of communication open. It fosters a sense of equal participation within the organization.[45]

The final set of changes signal the routinization of collective charisma (cell 2). As the movement lost its ability to enforce the egalitarian ethic, several outcomes materialized. Each indicates a solution to the problem of charismatic succession. In these cases, charisma is still evident, though it has lost some or all of its luster.

Despite the commitment to an anti-leadership position, leaders did emerge in the various radical feminist groups. In her classic article, "The tyranny of structurelessness", movement veteran Jo Freeman discussed the presence of an unacknowledged elite that controlled group decisions and processes through personal influence. On those occasions when a woman was

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43. I should be clear that I do not subscribe to the inevitability of bureaucracy. I am suggesting that if an organization initially exhibits collective charisma and eventually ends up bureaucratized, that this change is gradual and not a direct leap.
44. The Feminists (1973 [1969]:371-372).
45. Hyde (forthcoming). This is a pseudonym, confidentiality prevents disclosure of the clinic's name or location.

identified as a leader, she was often "trashed" by or purged from the group.[46] Such experiences

were so devastating that many women left the movement. Others sought refuge in cultural or

liberal feminist projects, neither of which subscribed to an anti-leadership viewpoint.

Consequently, radical feminism lost many talented and dedicated activists.

The rise of feminist leaders in the cultural and liberal wings of the movement set the stage

for the development of *communicable or secondary charisma*. Under this scenario, rather than

"inspiring devoted obedience" the charismatic leader "strengthens those he [sic] influences,

inspiring them to work on their own initiative".[47] Baker argues that this type of charisma is well

suited for the women's movement: "The feminist tactic of transferring confidence through 'role

modeling' resembles the interpersonal inspiration toward self-initiative employed by leaders of

black power and pentacostal groups [Gerlach and Hine 1970]".[48] When asked how they initially

became involved in feminist politics, many activists cited a specific influential person, as in this

example:

> My sister took me to hear Gloria Steinem, and Gloria just opened my eyes. I came
> back to [my town] all fired up. I went right down to city hall and registered to
> vote. I volunteered to become deputy registrar. Then I contacted the president of
> the local NOW chapter. That's when I joined the chapter.[49]

Thus, communicable charisma was fostered by pro-leadership values of cultural and liberal

feminism, and in turn, contributed to the growth of these wings.

A second form of charismatic routinization is the *manufacturing of pseudocharisma*. This

type of charisma is generated by the leaders of a rational, bureaucratic structure for the purposes

of maintaining the status quo in the organization. While pseudocharisma may seem to have the

magical, inspirational qualities of genuine charisma, it actually is the "calculated rational

construction of superficial charismatic 'signals' to maintain everyday forms."[50] NOW's

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46. Freeman (1973). See also Bunch (1987) for the consequences of trashing.
47. Gerlach and Hine (1970:39).
48. Baker (1986:150). Cassell (1977:110) offers a similar observation on communicable charisma in the women's movement. She was particularly interested in how feminist leaders motivate others to "catch fire" and commit to a movement organization.
49. Hyde (forthcoming). During the 1984 presidential election, this NOW member out-registered the rest of the democratic party in her Deep South town. She later served as president of her local NOW chapter.
50. Swatos (1984:205).

sponsorship of consciousness raising groups in the 1970s and 1980s provides an example of the manufacturing process. The organization supplied detailed manuals that guided members through often pre-determined topics of discussion. C-r group leaders were designated by chapters. And, the Los Angeles chapter ran demonstrations of mock consciousness raising sessions, no doubt to facilitate recruitment and suggest solidarity. Through this process NOW was able to inculcate its members with the preferred "frame" and mitigate intra-organizational dissension. This manufactured pseudocharisma, combined with the use of communicable charisma, helped NOW maintain its position as the most important, and most recognizable, liberal feminist institution.

The final form of charismatic routinization to be considered is captured in Kanter's discussion of commitment in utopian communities:

> Utopian communities have often been established around the figures of charismatic leaders. ... But for permanent commitments to result, persisting over longer periods of time and independent of the presence or existence of any one person, charisma throughout the corporate group is required. Charisma in this form may be called *"institutionalized awe"*. It is an extension of charisma from its original source into the organization of authority and the operation of the group, but not necessarily attached to a particular office (status) or hereditary line. The group itself is charismatic.[51] [itals mine]

This form of charisma promotes commitment by reinforcing the specialness of its members (as distinct from non-members). Members are given to believe that by virtue of their participation and devotion they are the recipients of certain wisdom and insights. Institutional awe is supported by an ideology that expresses the unique spirituality, knowledge and creativity of its members and invokes the glories of past important figures, and by a hierarchical structure that insulates, privileges, and mystifies the leaders.

Although not typically founded by charismatic leaders, cultural feminist organizations exhibit attributes similar to those found in Kanter's utopian communities. From the perspective of cultural feminism, woman-centered groups, organizations or movements often were viewed as sacred: "the merging of feeling and thought, of the personal and political in the new space being created by the second wave of feminism is a widespread spiritual event".[52] Cultural feminists

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51. Kanter (1972:113). She bases much of her analysis on the work of Shils (1965).
52. Daly (1973:153). Mary Daly is a feminist theologian and early advocate of cultural feminism.

used biologically driven arguments to specify the special, superior characteristics of women and women's culture, and referred to matriarchies and goddess worship as "proof":

> The unique consciousness or sensibility of women, the particular attributes that set feminist art apart ... all point to the idea that *female biology is the basis of women's powers*. Biology is hence the source and not the enemy of feminist revolution. The root of this idea lies perhaps in buried history. ... It seems to me that the power of the new feminist culture, the powers which were attributed to the ancient matriarchies and the inner power with which many women are beginning to feel in touch and which is the soul of feminist art, may all arise from the same source. That source is none other than female biology: the *capacity* to bear and nurture children.[53] [her itals]

> We must look to our matriarchal past for guidance in defining a culture that is a logical extension of nature. With the essence of motherhood and a sense of the preservation of life imprinted in our genes, matrilineal descent will naturally become the organization of the society we envision.[54]

And with the proliferation of women's centers, credit unions, health projects and bookstores, cultural feminists demonstrated that they could embrace hierarchical structures in the name of success.[55] For many women, these enterprises provided an outlet for concrete activity and fostered the "specialness" of participating in a venture orchestrated by and for women. As a submovement, cultural feminism succeeded in the cultivation of institutional awe and by doing gained hegemony within the women's movement.

Conclusion

This paper's original question concerned why people commit themselves to social movements. It argued that one way of approaching this question was through the examination of the legitimate authority structures that exist in movement organizations, with specific attention to how these structures facilitate and inhibit commitment. Using the early years of the contemporary women's movement as an example, the concept of collective charisma, a type of authority that resides in the group and not the individual, was defined and examined. How collective charisma existed and gets transformed also was discussed. Moreover, it was argued

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53. Alpert (1973:90-91). Jane Alpert wrote this document, "Mother Right", while hiding underground for her role in a conspiracy to bomb federal buildings. This document is generally considered to be one of the earliest and clearest delineations of cultural feminism. Alpert clearly grounded cultural feminism in the natural superiority of women. She also soundly denounced the New Left.
54. Kathleen Barry as quoted in Echols (1986:274).
55. Echols (1986:291).

that by tracing such developments, one could understand some critical phases in the women's movement, specifically the rise and fall radical feminism and the resulting dominance of cultural and liberal feminism.

Of course, understanding collective charisma does not provide the sole, or even sufficient, explanation for comprehending the early years of the contemporary women's movement. Clearly other factors were at work. Yet as Morris demonstrated in his development of an indigenous perspective to explain the origins of the civil rights movement, one must draw from many frameworks in order to capture reality.[56] Thus, collective charisma, in combination with other theoretical insights, helps in the understanding of feminist movement dynamics.

This paper has not meant to suggest that the feminist movement is the only movement to exhibit collective charisma. This is an empirical question, though one would venture a guess that early phases of other movements also could be characterized as having collectively charismatic authority. It is also a matter of future research to systematically determine how different transformation trajectories occur. This paper has merely suggested some possible outcomes.

And finally, one needs to consider whether or not a disservice has been done to Weberian theory. Swatos argues that the term charisma is used so often to explain social change phenomena that it has been rendered virtually meaningless.[57] This observation has considerable merit. Nonetheless, this paper avoids such a trap as it reasserts the rightful, social nature of charisma. The type of apparatus that supports collective charisma was one overlooked by Weber, yet it is still worthy of study. In pursing the concept of collective charisma, this paper is in keeping with the Weberian tradition. The essence of Weber's work was to understand the systems of authority and the accompanying social actions. With this formulation of collective charisma, Weber's framework has been broadened, yet his objectives remain intact.

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56. Morris (1984).
57. Swatos (1984:204).

Table 1: Types of Authority along the Dimensions of Charisma and Egalitarianism

	EGALITARIANISM	
CHARISMA	Present	Absent
Present	(1) - Collective charisma	(2) - Traditional (some forms) - Primary and communicable charisma - Manufactured charisma - Institutional awe
Absent	(3) - Value rationality - Routinized cooperation	(4) - Rational-legal - Traditional (some forms)

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