

## Contested Accommodation: Students Feminist at Two Catholic Campuses\*\*

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### The emergence of the feminist movement

Many historians of feminism pinpoint women's participation in the work force as an important source of the rising of feminist consciousness. Certainly, women's roles in American society changed dramatically after the Second World War, when more and more women moved permanently into the work place. With active involvement in every aspect of the economy, the consciousness of American women was drastically changed. Many women evolved into a different "person" as a result of their work; the demand to be treated as an equal person, not as a "second sex," (DeBeauvoir, 1953) "property," or simply as a "sexual object," thus became the most important idea of the women's liberation movement. As Freeman asserts:

The feminist perspective looks at the many similarities between the sexes and concludes that women and men have equal potential for individual development. Difference in the realization of that potential, therefore, must result from external imposed restraints, from the influence of social institution and values. The feminist view holds that so long as society prescribes sex roles and social penalties for those who deviate from them, no meaningful choice exists for members of either sex.

(1979: xxi, italics mine)

Aside from the pursuit of economic independence, other demands--such as access to birth control, protection by law, equal pay, reproductive rights, and personal freedom--soon became the major goals of the new feminist movement. This growing feminist awareness was

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partly reflected in the mid-seventies, when both houses of Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1973. For the next several years, the ERA campaign<sup>1</sup> became a leading goal of the liberal feminist movement (Mansbridge, 1986). Some young feminists in the sixties and early seventies also tried to direct public attention to the problems of child care, domestic violence, lesbian relationships, and, generally the image of women as perceived by the society.

### **Students and feminism**

Starting in the mid-1950s, the first post W. W. II wave of American feminism--the struggle for women's rights, grew out of the Civil Rights Movement of the African-Americans. In the heyday of the African-Americans' struggle, many women were enthusiastically involved in community organizing, voter registration, economic development projects in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and legal reform for African-Americans (Evans, 1979; Rothschild, 1979; Carson, 1981; Breines, 1989). During the famous Freedom Summer of 1964, many young women joined other student activists who worked in the Deep South to help the civil rights struggle of the African-Americans (McAdam, 1988). In the meantime, women's emancipation was intimately associated with the student movement. The bulk of activists of the fifties and sixties were students--college students.

Many women student activists were heavily involved in the two prominent student organizations of the time: the Student Nonviolent Coordinate Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Active women in the sixties, like women activists today, contributed enormously to the "Movement"<sup>2</sup>: they gave constructive input into the decision-making and implementing process; many of them actually did work in poor communities; they took on the streets and "put their bodies on the line," just as many of their male counterparts did; and, most importantly, they helped to maintain a balanced perspective in directing the flows of the various movements, by challenging male chauvinism in the "Movement" (Aronowitz, 1984: 21; Echols, 1989: 23-8).

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1. The campaign was an effort to make the ERA pass in three-fourths of all the state houses. In 1973 the Supreme Court also upheld the Roe vs. Wade decision, and thus laid the ground for legalized abortion. Three two events significantly account for the increasingly strong feminist consciousness in the seventies.

2. Unlike historian Lynd (1969:19) and Unger (1974:viii) who used the term "Movement" to designate the "New Left," I am using "Movement" to include all political mobilizations of the sixties and early seventies. This is similar to feminist political scientist Freeman's (1975a:449) and sociologist Echols'(1989: 229, note 1) usage.

According to one distinguished Civil Rights activist: "at SNCC it was mostly women who were doing the work--from making policies to actually working in the black communities."<sup>3</sup> Still, feminists in the sixties were constantly facing the male chauvinism of the New Left, and in 1968's SDS national convention, they were booed off the stage by men--when they tried to incorporate women's liberation to be a part of the organization's national agenda. It was at that point that women decided to "have a movement of their own."<sup>4</sup> Certainly it would be simple-minded to argue that sexism is the sole cause of the uprising of the feminist consciousness, because the pursuit of equality, in whatever form, has many diversified sources. Yet the male chauvinism within the "Movement" served as a crucial precipitating factor for the new feminist movement. (see, for example, Morgan, 1972: xx; Freeman, 1975a: 449)

### **Feminism and Catholicism**

Catholicism has many characteristics: it is a world-wide religion, an institution, an ideology, and an organization. The emergence of the feminist consciousness in the United States took place at almost the same time as the most important event in contemporary Catholicism--the Second Vatican Council (1960-5). In a study about the conflict and change of Catholicism and the Catholic church after the Second Vatican Council, Seidler and Meyer stated: "The fact that religious confrontations coincided with the great wave of civil revolt, urban riots, and antiwar activities seems minimally relevant. Political protest may have set the model for imitation, but the Catholic Church was undergoing a dramatic transformation of its own, with its own sources and process." (1989: 2) It is curious that Seidler and Meyer did not include "women's uprising" in "political protest;" in part because the "manifested" feminist insurgence occurred in the late sixties and early seventies. Also, many of the feminist rebellions were in reaction to the results of Vatican II--especially in the Catholic educational community.

One of the fiercest conflicts between Catholicism and feminism concerns the issue of abortion. Following the Second Vatican Council, then Pope Paul VI announced his seventh

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3. Personal conversation with Diane Nash--the third president of SNCC--2/26/91, my emphasis. The reason why she said "policy making," was because she was the third president of the student organization, the two before her (both were men) each lasted for a week.

4. In another account, the failure of The National Conference for A New Politics (1967) to address women's issues led to a walk-out and the mushrooming of nationwide feminist groups, even stretching to Canada. See Freeman (1975b:59).

encyclical, known as Humanae Vitae, which condemned abortion, sterilization, and artificial birth control. According to Seidler and Meyer, the controversy over abortion is the "root" issue concerning church transformation. Abortion touched on contested aspects of authority and other key topics, including papal power, freedom of conscience, control over laity, and the roles of expert commissions, professional theologians, and priest-confessors. (1989: 92) Even though Seidler and Meyer characterized this conflict as the tension between the "administrative" and the "professional" realms within the Catholic church,<sup>5</sup> they failed to see the more dramatic manifestation of the conflict in Catholic universities.

This research presents one dimension of such conflict, because the tension between feminism and Catholicism often manifests itself in the struggle between student feminists and the administration within the Catholic university. This is to say that, although there are different "Catholics" within "Catholicism," most administrations of Catholic universities generally follow the policy of the Pope and the Church. Therefore, Catholic universities usually align with the Catholic Church on issues such as reproductive rights and personal freedom. Feminists, on the other hand, forcefully espouse the right of self-determination of women, which includes the right to abortion and the right to the use of contraceptives.

The Second Vatican Council brought many fundamental changes to the Catholic church, including the change of language to the more easily understood vernacular, the increase of lay participation in liturgy, and the acceptance of ecumenism.<sup>6</sup> The transformation of the Catholic Church in America, according to Seidler and Meyer, is accompanied by two contradictory forces: the Church incorporated enough aspects of contemporary cultures to maintain relevance; at the same time, it retained its identity sufficiently by revitalizing itself

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5. Administrators refer to clergy including cardinals, bishops, and the pope, while professionals are mainly scholars and theologians. Seidler and Meyer see the controversy over abortion and the use of contraceptives as evolving around a "new" and "old" understanding about Catholicism. And since administrators and professionals belong to different substructures, manifested conflicts appear in varying intensities in different settings. (pp. 95-103)

6. Given the importance of the Second Vatican Council, scholars began to study its impact upon the Catholic Church, see Greeley, 1977:127, Gallop and Poling, 1980:62-9. There are many aspects of the study of Vatican II. Some focus on the differences in pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism; others emphasize the change and impact of the Council. Items under research include: The meaning of the Council (Fesquet, 1967; Rynne, 1968); the ideal church implied by the Council (Osborne, 1968: 78-86; Greeley, 1973; Murnion: 1987); de facto changes (NORC. 1972; Fichter, 1977: 154-66; Gallup and Poling, 1980: 62-9; Schoenherr and Sorensen, 1982); and predictions about the future church (Greeley, 1977: 146-50; Schoenherr and Sorensen, 1982: 23-52).

and by resisting extreme forms of accommodation. Seidler and Meyer coined the term "contested accommodation" (pp. 24-34) to describe such change, and I will use this concept to explain the tension between student activists and the administration in Catholic universities.

### **Contested accommodation**

Like any organization, Catholic universities exist in, and are influenced by, the broader society. Further, occupants of the Catholic universities belong to one of two groups: "supporters" or "challengers" of traditional "Catholicism." Although both groups consist of students, faculty, and administrators, "supporters" are overwhelmingly administrators. Their position is to conserve doctrines, laws, and Church rules that work uphold Catholic tradition. "Challengers," on the other hand, mainly refers to student activists who experience these doctrines as constraining and who attempt to modify them in their interaction with the administration.

Interactions between "challengers" and "supporters" are marked with tension, conflict, and negotiation; importantly, through this process of engaging in struggle, both parties are changed. Changes are reflected mainly on two levels: tolerance of dissenters by the administration<sup>7</sup> and alteration of policies as a result of negotiating the conflicts. Tolerance of the dissenters leads to higher levels of visibility on campus and increased participation in activities by both members of the dissenting groups and sympathizers--this gives the progressive student organizations an increasing level of "legitimacy." Essentially, the growth of the "challengers" has substantial impact upon Catholic higher educational institutions. That is, "supporters" in the administration are forced to respond to the greater presence and activism of the "challengers" whose previous efforts were easily dismissed.

Thus, "contested accommodation" is a useful concept in explaining feminist political activism on Catholic campuses. Different student organizations go through similar mobilization processes; however, the administrations at Catholic colleges treat those groups differently. In other words, student political activism gets played out in different "mechanisms" within Catholic educational systems. Administrators in Catholic academic institutions, in general, treat peace groups favorably but women's rights organizations usually clash with the adminis-

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<sup>7</sup>The creation of tolerance for different opinions is itself a change in the definition, and application of Catholicism in its mission of "Catholic education."

trations head-on. This is because most of the demands of the feminist groups are in conflict with "the Catholic teachings." Because of the incompatibility of ideologies, administrations in Catholic universities treat feminist groups rather negatively. University officers in charge of student organizations are uncooperative to women's rights groups. Further, the school administration monitors activities, demands that women's rights organizations re-write their constitutions, and occasionally even withdraws authorization for such groups. Therefore, many women's rights groups at Catholic universities are forced to adopt more "unconventional," "radical," and "confrontational" strategies. This interactional process is usually played out in a conflict and struggle manner. As a result, feminist activism characterizes the tension between Catholicism and the pursuit of women's emancipation--with heightened consciousness of women's rights, the university is forced to alter its policies as regards women.

Student activists had different ideas than administrators about the functions of a Catholic university. This difference in perception also contributes to the intensifying of the conflict between feminists and the school. As we have seen the core conflict between feminism and Catholicism is over the issue of abortion--Catholicism prohibits the use of abortion and contraceptives, while feminists espouse the right of self-determination, especially for women. In general, Catholic universities in America are facing a dilemma: they feel a certain commitment to follow Catholic doctrines or "teachings," such as to discouraging the use of contraceptives and condemning abortion. However, they must, simultaneously, realize the goal of higher education, which is to make a person well-rounded and capable of independent thinking. Some members of the Women's Center put the conflict in perspective, and Ida,<sup>8</sup> a conspicuous non-white activist in the group, made a comment quite appropriately illustrating the point:

It is true that pro-choice is "contrary to Catholic teaching" but there are many Catholics who are pro-choice. More importantly, however, university is a place to develop independent thinking, confronting different viewpoints, and encourage discussions. Sure it [X] is a Catholic university, but it is a "university" first and "Catholic" second, what do we need a university for?

(interview with Ida, 10/17/90)

It is the mentality of "a university first and Catholic second," plus the action of showing an abortion movie and distributing condoms at the literature table, that got the Women's Center and the administration of X University into a fierce bout. To fully understand this conflict, we need to look into the history of the Women's Center.

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8. All names (including schools) are pseudonyms.

With the efforts of around half a dozen women faculty, staff, and student feminists, the Women's Center at X University was established in the academic year 1978-1979. The goals of the original Women's Center were: to address relevant issues on women, to promote more study to improve gender relations, to raise the consciousness about gender inequality, and to meet women's needs in X's community.<sup>9</sup> This club met regularly for three years, but came to an impasse because core members graduated or departed. The remaining members met intermittently, and in the fall of 1983 a new group of students joined the association. Since the majority of the newcomers were students, members of the Women's Center decided to apply for recognition, and obtained official status. Since its inauguration, the Women's Center has conducted various programs including speakers, discussions, and films, besides holding bi-weekly organizational meetings.

In 1986, with the graduation of several key activists, the Women's Center again shrank to a handful of members and became less active. With the graduation of the then president, student activists in the College Socialist Organization (CSO) attempted to reactivate the Women's Center two years later, with little result. The CSO called several meetings, but few people attended; after one semester the CSO gave up. As a student group, the Women's Center was not active from 1986-1989, although there were some students with strong feminist consciousness who would occasionally get together and discuss feminist issues. This is a brief history of the Women's Center from 1979 to 1988.

In 1989 a group of women students decided to regroup the Women's Center after the Missouri case,<sup>10</sup> those women students were afraid that the decision would eventually lead to the recriminalization of abortion. For the student feminists, this case signified the resurgence of sexism; also, it implied a worsening situation of feminism in the United States. With these thoughts in mind, student activists at X decided to re-organize the group and to work on the feminist issues.

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9. According to a couple of the original members that I talked to, the Women's Center was established as a personal network association--not a formal organization (by three women teachers, two staff, and two students). Though not an official organization, the Women's Center did implement several programs between 1979 and 1982 in the women's studies, counselling, and orientation--mostly through the sociology and psychology departments.

10. In 1989 the Supreme Court of the State of Missouri reversed the previous ruling of *Roe vs Wade* (1973), which recognized that the decision for a woman to have abortion was her own freedom of choice. The Missouri Case, known as the *Webster vs Health Care Service Case*, refuted the 1973 case, and upheld that the State, within its own jurisdiction, could decide whether abortion was legal.

The administration, on the other hand, did not recognize the existence of the Women's Center because there was no organizational activity. In 1989, one administrator in the Student Life Office attempted to tighten the rules and regulations on student groups, so he rewrote the policy. One of the new rules was to require every campus student organization to register with the office at the beginning of each semester. Since at that time the Women's Center had no members, it failed to respond to the registration requirement, and the office deleted the Women's Center from the directory of student organizations.

In the wake of the Webster vs. Health Care Service case, feminists went to the Office of Student Life and requested to form a new women's student organization. Later on, Liz and a handful of women students found out about the old Women's Center and then decided to re-activate the original organization. The director of Student Life asked for a list of officers and members of the group, and a constitution. Women students filled out the paperwork, and, by using the old constitution, registered the group. After official recognition of the Women's Center, student activists showed an abortion movie and distributed condoms at their literature table. These acts annoyed the administration and led the two parties into a series of intense conflicts<sup>11</sup> known at X University as the "Free Speech Movement."

### Methodology

I chose three Catholic universities in the Midwest as the sample for this research. The criteria for inclusion were school size, geographic location, religious denomination, and resource availability. X, Y, and Z University were decided upon all considerations. It later turned out that the three schools had varying manifestations concerning feminist activities, and those variances are all related to their own characters.

Z College is a small community college with 1,500 students, while both X and Y University have close to 14,000. The student body at X University is the most diversified, in the sense that it has the highest percentage of non-white and foreign students; Z College has the most homogeneous student population. Both Y and X University are Jesuit--

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11. There are two accounts of this process. The student activists insisted that they got recognition first and then conducted the activities. It was because their activities then, that the school reversed the decision and declared that the group was suspended. The administration, on the other hand, argued that the organization was conducting inappropriate activities while still in the process of application. My personal experience convinced me that the students' account is closer to reality.



commonly considered to be the most "progressive" wing within the Catholic community--while Z College is Dominican. Geographically, Z College is located in a suburban (or "rural") community, even though it is only some twenty-odd miles from X University, which is in Chicago. Y University is in Milwaukee, a smaller metropolitan area. For all the reasons, Z College is less likely to generate the large numbers of student organizations--even if some students have radical political views. Consequently, feminist organizations could only be found at X and Y University.<sup>12</sup>

Since the study is ethnographic in nature, I employed qualitative methods. I first performed an archival study in each school, and through personal acquaintances located the initial pool of key informants.<sup>13</sup> A snow-ball technique was then used to gain thirty student activists or ex-activists who served as informants. A simple content analysis of student newspapers and relevant publications of all schools were then conducted to search for pertinent issues and special events.

I used participant observation to learn about the activities of feminist organization in each school. This was followed by individual, in-depth interview of each activist, and conversations with faculty members in the social sciences and humanities of each university. It is interesting to note that some teachers were themselves student activists in the 1960s. Conversations with them, therefore, will help bridge the gap of time, theory and practice, and many other crucial issues. Interaction with faculty members also provides a meaningful understanding in the continuity of student activism from the sixties to the nineties. I have personal friends including students, faculty members, and staff of all three universities under this study, and, in fact, several of the teachers of this researcher served as the key informants of this investigation.

In all, methods of this research include archival study, content analysis, participant observation, and interviewing. Data were collected in various forms of research notes and diary, tapes, interviewing transcripts, memos, and the like. And the final analysis involved all of the above qualitative data. Field work of this project lasted for more than three years (1989-1991); and I spent the first 2/3 of 1991 to write the findings.

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<sup>12</sup>Factors such as school size, religious denomination, core-curriculum, size of progressive faculty members, course structure, and geographic location all may contribute to student activism. The lack of feminist consciousness and activities in Z College are the subjects of another essay.

<sup>13</sup>Throughout the course of the study, conversations with other students, faculty, minister, and administrators in all three schools aided my research.

### Organizational characteristics: Membership<sup>14</sup>

One obvious organizational feature of the Women's Place (at Y University) and Women's Center (X University) is their size. Throughout the existence of both student groups, the membership was no greater than fifteen. Usually, campus student organizations at Catholic universities will have the biggest attendance at the first meeting of each semester. Also, in "crisis" situations when dramatic events have happened, any relevant group can expect a big turnout to its meetings. However, students who participate in the group's organizational meetings are not necessarily its members. Recruitment is a difficulty campus student organizations always face. To engage in constructive social change, the continuity of student groups is indispensable.

Membership in the Women's Center of X fluctuated: it started with seven in 1978, grew to around a dozen in 1983, and dissolved from 1986 to 1989. When the first meeting of re-activation was called in 1988, about fifty people attended; it also drew roughly the same number of participants to its induction meeting a year later. However, not all meeting-goers were members. Throughout 1989 and 1990, the organization retained a constant ten members. In the beginning of 1991, with a handful of main organizers graduated, the size of the group dwindled to two. The declining membership of the Women's Center made the women's history month (March) a month with almost no activity. This was in sharp contrast with the previous two years, when X campus was filled with feminist political activism.

Y's Women's Place is a strong feminist organization. Since its inauguration in 1980, though, membership has never exceeded twelve. However, probably because of its emphasis on consciousness raising, the Women's Place has never dropped from the horizon of student politics. Members of the Women's Place came from various backgrounds, but were concentrated in the social sciences and the humanities. Women's Place held weekly meetings, and these meetings often took place at a member's apartment. This reflects the structurlessness, looseness, and spontaneity of the Women's Place. Further, most meetings took the form of casual conversation, poetry reading, or informal discussion, with only occasional films and speakers. It seems that the feminist group at Y is mainly aimed at making personal changes for individual members. As such, it has effectively achieved its goal. The Women's Center at X, on the other hand, is focused on structural changes, i.e., pressing the university into al-

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14. "Member" is defined in this study as "those students who officially belong to a student organization and will consistently participate in the activities of that organization." Therefore, occasional meeting-goers or event-participants are not "members;" instead, they are "sympathizers."

tering policies concerning women students. This approach, though spectacular, seems to have had few results in the short run.

### Group structure

Both feminist groups in this study were non-formal, non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian, and non-structural. Take the Women's Center as an example: the group has several "committees," and each is responsible for a certain task. These committees include recruitment, publicity and public relations, education, literature, and ad hoc committees in extraordinary situations. There is a central steering committee over these various committees, with its members delegated from all other committees. All committees are not rigidly set, and members are free to participate in any committee. Decisions are often made by group consensus, and disagreements usually take long discussions to resolve.

This "flat" organizational structure is the most conspicuous feature of the feminist organizations. Activists often characterize such organizations as the opposite of "male" ways of organizing, which they see as usually structured, hierarchical, authoritarian, and formal (i.e., bureaucratic). Feminist groups are designed as democratic, consensual, and participatory. However, such organization presents problems. For instance, if one member neglects to fulfill her duty, then the job does not get done; or it does get done in a negative way. This is because of the smallness of the group--every member's input is vital for the entire group. There was one event at which the organization was planning to show a movie, and at the last minute the main organizer found out that the member who had promised to put up the flyers had not. That activity turned out to be an extremely poorly attended event. There were other times when members did not show up at the literature tables, which made the people who were overworked very upset. Besides such "irresponsibility" problems, discussions over disputes usually take a long time and subvert discussion of more timely, important issues.

There is another difficulty for this kind of organization: when it comes to situations where "organization" is needed--such as facing the broader society or resolving intra-organizational conflict--feminist groups usually perform relatively poorly.<sup>15</sup> For example, at the height of the "Free Speech Movement" at X University, the Women's Center attracted national media attention. However, the person who spoke for the group aroused bitter feel-

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<sup>15</sup>See, for example Echols (1989:51-101) and Freeman (1979:558-60).

ings for many other members. Molly was one of the main organizers and she explained the situation as:

When the fight of our group was on the media, there was one article in the New York Times which really pissed me off--there was like one man who was a graduate student, he was in a lot of groups and he was really out-spoken, but of all the people in the Women's Center, the New York Times sent the people to interview like one of the three men in the group, which is...(laugh)...I really didn't like this but this article showed up in the Times which looked like this MAN is our spoke person.

(interview with Molly, 9/30/90, emphasis original)

This example is interesting, because it presents a problem of the women's rights organization with a distinctive twist, namely, "male feminism." It is understandable that the few men who are concerned with and willing to work for women's issues often face the difficulty of "gender tensions." It is not unusual for male feminists to face suspicion, distrust, and sometimes out-right hostility from female feminists. It seems that sympathetic men in the women's rights groups are in a delicate situation where one has to keep the faith, be sincere and persistent, work hard, and be extremely cautious about words and deeds.<sup>16</sup> In other words, "trust has to be earned" from the oppressed people in order to forge a united force in pursuing liberation. The fact that men's participation in feminist organizations is so minimal probably demonstrates the difficulty of this task.

In all, the advantages of the feminist organizations seem to be obvious: they are democratic, cohesive, intimate, and effective in making personal changes. On the other hand, they have the problems of unclear division of labor, too much spontaneity, and ineffectiveness in dealing with inner conflict and the outside world. It is noteworthy that when national or large-scale mobilizations do occur, both the Women's Place and Women's Center participate with the national organizations. In two national demonstrations in Washington, D. C., (1989, 1990) members of both groups attended.

### **Issues of the feminist groups on Catholic campuses**

Based on the fieldwork described in the precedent section I outline the major issues

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<sup>16</sup>Being the only active man (member?) in the Women's Center (1990-1991) I find it difficult to assess the male opinion of this question. The few members who would address "male feminism" believed that sympathetic men did exist, and their comments echoed my statement.

of student feminists in religious institutions. Students in the women's rights movement usually mobilize for the issues that are directly related to their well-being. Of all the goals of the feminist movement, several issues stand out as the issues for women college students at Catholic institutions. Abortion, sexual harassment, health care services, reproductive rights, campus security, personal freedom, and women's empowerment are those issues. The core issue in the feminist movement is abortion: "more than any other issue, abortion embodied and symbolized our fundamental demand--not merely formal equality for women but genuine self-determination." (Willis, 1989: vii) Not surprisingly, this is the single most controversial issue between feminists and the administration on Catholic campuses.

In this study, health care services was a conspicuous item on the agenda of feminist struggle at Catholic universities. According to many informants, most Catholic universities do not provide contraceptives to students--even married ones. Students active in women's organizations believed that a comprehensive health care program was vital for their well-being, but that many Catholic universities provided insufficient services, not for lack of resources, but because of different ideologies. One of the purposes of feminist organizations at the Catholic institutions I studied, therefore, was to enhance and broaden the capacity of the student health center to respond to their needs for contraception and information about abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and the like. Eva, an active member of the Women's Center at X University, explains:

We were distributing condoms at our literature table and that just drives them [the university] off the wall. We did that because the health center here is terrible--even married students cannot get contraceptives. They did do exams and give you basic gynecological care but they don't offer birth control and don't give any referral as far as women were seeking, or had questions or whatever and they wouldn't tell them where to go. We felt that was really irresponsible and I was shocked because most campus that I know of, even if I hadn't attended there, did have these services and they were available.

(interview with Eva, 10/18/90)

The quest for improved health care services has thus become an indispensable demand for the women's rights organization.

Besides abortion and the improvement of health care, sexual harassment also takes the center stage of activism for many women on Catholic universities. Sexual harassment is the most direct threat to any women student, and for some students it is a common situa-

tion. Sexual harassment exists in many forms--from classroom harassment to the whole spectrum of sexual assault: minor verbal abuse such as shouting obscenities and making sexist jokes (which many women don't regard as sexual assault), verbal and physical molestation, attack, rape, gang rape, and so forth. According to my informants, these examples are by no means uncommon.<sup>17</sup>

Most universities in the United States do not publish statistics on sexual harassment, probably for fear of a "bad reputation." Lack of publicity contributes to the insensitivity of many college students concerning the seriousness of sexual harassment. Activists in feminist organizations, therefore, are enraged by the school's unwillingness to openly discuss those issues. One of the central goals of women's organizations at Catholic universities is to raise the campus awareness of sexual harassment, and to discuss the solutions of this problem. There is probably no difference between secular and religious schools concerning the ignorance of college students about sexual harassment, but, according to feminists in this study, the reaction to the attempt to raise such awareness seems stronger on Catholic campuses than on "others."

Campus security plays a vital role in preventing sexual harassment. Most women activists in the research regard their campus security as "poor." Consequently, a great amount of the energy of the women's rights groups at Catholic institutions is devoted to the improvement of campus security. Molly, one of the main leaders of the Women's Center at X University, described the on-going effort to improve campus security as:

One of the important things that we are working on is security. We really want the security to extend their boundaries...I've never seen a X security car on my street at all, and I know a lot of students live south [and]... west of [the boundaries], I mean, it's ridiculous like continuously cruising around like a four-block area. I think that they need to realize students do live outside and they do have the responsibility to protect them regardless whether they live in the dorms or not. Improving the escort services, I think we need to work on that, I mean, we pay to go into this university, it should certainly serve our needs, that's one of our goals, basically a lot of the security things.

(interview with Molly, 9/30/90)

Other women activists whom I talked to, at both X and Y university, also voiced very similar concern over the poor security of their school.

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<sup>17</sup>Though I know some stories about sexual harassment that happened to students in this research, I did not ask specifically for personal experiences--for obvious reasons.

Abortion, the fear of sexual harassment, better campus security and personal safety are all derived from the central idea of personal freedom.<sup>18</sup> Reproductive rights, an issue which includes a comprehensive health care plan and abortion rights, is probably the most important issue confronting college-aged women, because virtually all of them are of marriage and child-rearing ages. And, for sexually active women such freedom is so crucial that sometimes it will determine not only their whole educational career, but also their lives, because there is always the chance of getting pregnant. Therefore, the push for a comprehensive health care plan on campus and a legal, safe, low-cost abortion is urgent for women student activists at Catholic universities. If all the goals on abortion, health care services, sexual harassment, and personal safety can be achieved, then personal freedom can be also.

From the description above, we understand that the demands of women's liberation are somewhat different on college campuses than in broader society.<sup>19</sup> The latter may put more emphasis on domestic violence, equal pay, child care, and legal protection, among others issues, while the former focuses heavily on personal freedom. In this regard, student activists working on feminist issues in Catholic institutions are met with strong, hostile counterforces from the administration. The interaction between the two thus provides a fertile ground for investigation.

### **"Latent" and "manifested" activism**

There are two types of student activism: "latent" activism refers to the heightened consciousness of social inequality, while "manifested" activism refers to putting such consciousness to real social action. These two types of activism are usually in interaction, and tend to reinforce each other. It is interesting to note that many student feminists in this research had a long history of latent activism, in the sense that they had rather different perceptions of "reality" than their peers. For instance, Liz was among a dozen students who initiated the effort to re-activate the Women's Center at X University in 1989. She came from

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<sup>18</sup> "Personal freedom" is difficult to define; however, activists explained the term roughly as: "we should have the right to decide whether we want to get pregnant, or to have an abortion; we want to have a safe campus--if we want to go out at night, we don't have to worry about being shouted at, harassed, attacked, or raped. Basically, personal freedom is the right to do whatever we want to do --as long as we don't cause troubles for other people."

<sup>19</sup> The difference between religious and other schools is that at the former stronger opposition from the administration might arise. Since no secular institution was included, such an idea remains a speculation.

an ardent Catholic family, and had been educated in Catholic schools. Liz was very rebellious in her high school, and had a more heightened activist awareness than her peers:

I was in the Student Against Drunk Driving (SADD) and that was quite a thing among my peers because I was always into things they wouldn't into. My high school was very oppressive and very conservative and any sort of independence was not tolerated. It was just like most high schools, they want you to conform, they just want to process you through and turn out carbon copies, and I just didn't like that. I was always accused of being a communist in my class.

(interview with Liz, 10/1/90)

Another student, Molly, told me:

It was really the issue of pro-choice. I think I was always pro-choice. My mother she has always been pro-choice, like she always considers herself a Catholic but she has this duality...and she just ignores their rules on like abortion and birth control because she thinks that's stupid. I'd never been like a Catholic, like some of the people that I met at X, and they experiences and read and figured out, like going through this transformation that abortion isn't murder, but I never thought it was to begin with, it's always been really weird. I've always been brought up to believe that it's just like a basic right.

(interview with Molly, 9/30/90)

It is not surprising that both Liz and Molly were very "special students" among their peers in their respective high schools. And it was their political consciousness and parental influence (i.e., "latent activism") which lead them to the feminist movement in their college years. It is also interesting to note that both students started their activism on the issue of abortion, because Molly mentioned that, "when the Missouri case happened, it really politically motivated me, because that really affected me. I realized that something really had to be done about that." (ibid) And Liz's experience is even more intriguing:

I've always been concerned about abortion. I've been very active, for a long time in a lot of issues, and very active, at that point, for a year on the choice issue. I remember the summer of last year, 1989, when the Supreme Court--Webster decision came out, thinking maybe finally we can get something organized at X 'cause my friends and I had discussed forming a pro-choice group a year before.

(interview with Liz, 10/1/90)

Here we can see that abortion (e.g., the Missouri Case) serves as the "key" in the awaken-



ing of feminist consciousness, and subsequently as the catalyst for political mobilizations at X University. It is also clear that previous political consciousness (in high school) is important for political action in college. Liz's comments testify that, below the seemingly peaceful campus scene, feminist awareness was alive among many women students on a Catholic campus. And further, it is through the active involvement in activism that a change to the consciousness of a person can occur. This interaction process is similar to what Marx termed "praxis."

### **Another controversy--take back the night**

There are many ways to raise feminist consciousness on college campuses. The most effective and dramatic one is probably the "Take Back the Night" march, a tactic which started at the late seventies and immediately spread to many campuses. A separate, lesbian-feminist issue at the start, the "Take Back The Night" march became an activity aiming to raise awareness about violence against women. At many schools, the march is an annual event, with many sessions of films, forums, speak-outs, discussions, workshops, speakers, and panels on all aspects of sexual harassment and intimidation. The march involves mostly--sometimes exclusively--women, but increasingly men are taking part in this activity.

By the eighties, the march had been changed both in its ideology and practice. Ideologically, separatism and lesbianism no longer were fiercely insisted upon; practically, the duration of the event was shortened, the program was simplified, and more men were encouraged to participate. Both changes reflected the effort to use the event as a consciousness-raising tool, a form of political action, and a broader-based movement. Catholic educational institutions, however, did not catch the wave until the late eighties. For many Catholic universities, the "Take Back The Night" march is a one-day event with marching, chanting and slogan shouting. Though most marches include both women and men, the former often take a much larger and more conspicuous role. Y University had its first "Take Back The Night" march in early November of 1989;<sup>20</sup> a year later, X University followed suit. In both events marchers walked through campus chanting, and in both cases marchers were heckled by hostile non-participants.

The march at X was particularly controversial because as the marchers stopped at

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<sup>20</sup>I learned about Y's march in the 1990--at the time when most of the main organizers were graduated. I talked to two of the remaining old members; they said that the participants were met with mild heckling but there was no serious verbal abuse or physical assault.

a first-year student dormitory, they were faced with furious verbal and physical attack from the residents. It is meaningful to study why the march would cause unusual hostile reactions from a religious school community, and especially why male students seemed to be oppositional to this activity. According to the student newspaper:

M residents shouted obscenities and threw lit cigarettes and empty pop cans at a crowd of about seventy marchers in the alley behind the all-male dormitory during the rally. The incident prompted some members of the Women's Center, the organization sponsoring the event, to call for public reprimands of the residents who participated in the name calling. For their part, some residents who witnessed the incident said they felt as if the marchers were accusing M as being rapists. At M marchers shined flashlights into windows and shouted "men out there, show you care," and "men stop raping women." As the marchers poured into the alley, residents shouted "go home," "whores," and "let's go rape some women" at the demonstrators, who were marching to raise awareness about rape.

In some sense, this episode is very similar to what happened at Brown University when both victims of campus rape and women activists wrote the names of men whom they claimed to be perpetrators of rape in lavatories and buildings to warn other women students. Essentially, the pros and cons of the event involved debating over the purpose of the march. Participants of the march saw the event as an effort to raise consciousness about sexual harassment on campus, whereas some by-standers, and the residents of the dormitory, thought the marchers were accusing them of being rapists. It is interesting that the residents of the dorm were antagonized by the protestors, even though the participants did not at all accuse anybody of being a rapist. One student said in the student newspaper that the marchers were "entirely out to provoke something." But according to one of the organizers: "I didn't expect them to join in the march, but I was shocked and appalled by their anti-women actions. I don't think we were in anyway accusing them of being rapists."

What happened at X University is not atypical in the religious institutional context. Secular schools, on the contrary, have had few or no reported incidents involving the march. It seems that feminist activity will result in a stronger reaction within religious institutions than at other schools. Many progressive students in other campus organizations, though sympathetic to the Women's Center, thought the march was very inappropriate<sup>21</sup> because

to do a march like that on this campus and on this neighborhood, and look the

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21.I interviewed several non-participants. It is interesting to point out that it was mainly male students who opposed the march, while female students were supportive.

route of their march [which went through a predominantly poor community] and look what they shouted, it is plainly stupid, it would definitely antagonize the male students at M, not to mention people who live in the dorms.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, sympathizers, organizers, and members of the Women's Center were enraged by what had happened to the participants. Dr. Wexler, the faculty advisor of the organization, expressed her concern by saying, "I thought there should be a public reprimand of the people who were so abusive verbally." Dr. Wexler also made an effort to go through the administrative channel to inform the Dean of Residence Life, the Dean of Student Life, the Dormitory Director, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences about the incident. As a result, the office of Residence Life held a discussion with the residents of the dorm, and sent a letter to each student about prudence in their language and behavior concerning gender and racial issues.

The "Take Back The Night" march at X University raised many important questions for sympathizers to feminism in Catholic universities, such as: "Is the awareness of feminism so low on Catholic campuses that even a small rally will provoke furious hostility?" "Is it true that sexual harassment is less frequent and less serious at religious institutions than at other universities?" and "Is the 'Take Back The Night' march an appropriate approach to raise consciousness in a Catholic school community?" These are questions with no easy answers, especially the last one--which, I think, is the most difficult, yet the most important, question to feminists in Catholic institutions. Simply put: If the advocates of women's rights used suitable tactics, cooperated with potential allies, won a greater degree of sympathy from the general populace, and broadened the basis of women's liberation to a massive movement, then it would be much easier to achieve the goal of gender equality. On the other hand, the movement would not gain momentum and would eventually lose its strength if it alienated or even antagonized people.

### **Strategy and reaction from the administration**

One function of the women's rights organizations on the college campus is to bring together a group of people interested in the discussion of (and action upon) feminist issues.

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<sup>22</sup>Interview with Sid, 12/14/90. Sid was a very active student at X University, he was among the initial organizers of the College Socialist Organization (CSO), U. S. Out of the Gulf Committee (USOGC), and involved in many progressive student activities.

Since many of these issues contradict with the Catholic doctrines, conflicts often arise. In some sense, feminist groups are forced to take such positions because "many of the things that we do are 'contrary to the Catholic teachings'"--according to one active member of the Women's Center.<sup>23</sup> Despite documents which proved that the Women's Center had been in existence since 1983, the administrators in charge of student organizations insisted that the group was not official. For the administration's part, control of a student group seemed as easy as changing the rules; and, indeed, that was exactly what they did. But when the university failed to discourage feminists from organizing, the administrators simply added more rules. This is a distinctive behavior of Catholic universities in dealing with women's rights groups.

At the insistence of the university, which claimed that the Women's Center was not an official student organization, members agreed to apply for registration. In the mean time, the administration set up more rules for regulating the activities of the Women's Center. One of the new rules was that, "without recognition, the Women's Center could reserve rooms, hold meetings, and continue their political activity on campus only if a recognized student organization or an academic department 'sponsor' them." As a result, the Women's Center requested and obtained sponsorship from the Women's Studies Program. Since then, the battle field between the Women's Center and X University has been diverted to include the Women's Studies Program (WSP).

During this period of time, the university saw the Women's Center as an "arm" of the WSP, because the director of the program was also the faculty advisor of the student organization. More importantly, the WSP offered generous support for the Women's Center. Unlike other faculty advisors to student groups, who functioned more as facilitator than advocates of particular activities, the director and the WSP were seen by the administration as the promoters of radical politics. The director, however, succinctly described her motivation:

The program [of Women's Studies] had been launched in 1979 with a firm directive from the then dean to avoid engaging in controversies over abortion. Until this year [1989], the program had kept its promise. Now students were asking us for help. We believe that acting on the students' behalf might endanger Women's Studies and possibly mean its demise. But we agree that if Women's Studies did not stand up for students' right to discuss and debate reproductive freedom, the program would not be worth saving...I reaffirm our intention to protect the students until they re-

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<sup>23</sup>Interview with Eva--a very active member of the Women's Center of X University, 10/18/90. In fact, many students of the Women's Center expressed the same view.

ceived official recognition.<sup>24</sup>

Still, the director had to sign every room and public space reservation, and every speaker invitation for the Women's Center--a practice with no precedent. Another step was taken by the administrators--they removed a bulletin board used by the Women's Center which read "X Women's Center" and replaced with a sign reading "Women at X." These events were seen by the student activists, and some faculty in the WSP as a sign of petty harassment.

But then, even the process of getting the Women's Center recognized proved to be a difficult endeavor. The administration watched closely the members, officers, and especially the constitution of the group. It is not uncommon for the university to require a women's group (or any progressive organization, for that matter) to rewrite their constitution. Further, the newly recognized student organizations have to go through a year of probation in many Catholic universities. According to many informants, the rules of probation and regulation on the group's charter (constitution) are the main weapons that administrations at both Y and X University use to control student groups.

The administration will also use another method to discourage student activists--personal harassment. For example, Nancy was a very active student at Y University--she was one of the leaders of the Women's Place, one of the main organizers of the 1989 Divestment Week and was heavily involved in a lot of the progressive student groups. As a conspicuous student leader, Nancy experienced two major harassments from the administration. At one time Nancy, along with four other students, was falsely charged with theft. Though, after several months' "investigation" the university dropped the charge, many student leaders still had to go through a prolonged period of personal turmoil. Nancy was again harassed by the administration when there were allegedly some missing papers in the student newspaper office. Without any evidence, the administration sent security officers to her apartment to question her. According to Nancy, the university attempted to use harassment to prevent, or, at least, to discourage student political activism.

Ordinarily, the common activities of the women's rights groups include the conventional organizational meetings, speakers, films, discussions, and forums. It is interesting to note that feminists groups, just like other progressive student organizations at Catholic universities, developed into big organizations in unusual situations. For example, during the 1989 Free

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<sup>24</sup> Personal file.

Speech Movement, the Women's Center at X attracted virtually all progressive student groups into a joint-action in the battle with the administration. One of the major organizers described the process to me as:

We got Peace, Bread, and Justice (PBJ), and a lot of groups, groups that had never really done anything other than meet among themselves and sit around. We got the Chinese Club which I didn't even know how the word got out because I don't really know anyone in the Chinese Club, they were there. College Socialist Organization (CSO), the Anti-Apartheid, Anti-Racism Coalition was there, students from the Ad Hoc of El Salvador committee, they were there, a lot, like the American Muslim Student (AMS), like almost every student organizations, it was incredible. We had these signs and all that because we were just basically said, "Hey, even if you don't agree with us, we have the right to speak out about this issue!" and they were pretty much like, "Yeah, we don't really agree with you but sure you have the right to speak during this 'Free Speech' thing." So we had like this huge rally on the steps of the Cermak Forum and like the press was there. It was really great, all the student groups were behind us of what we acted when we asked them to.

(interview with Molly, 9/30/90)

What Molly described above was really an interesting phenomenon, because my observation confirmed that, in the dramatic events on Catholic campuses involving many student organizations, such events were rare and could only happen in what I call the "crisis" situations. Ordinarily, most student groups were concentrated on their "own" things. The struggle of the Women's Center exemplified this rule:

It was interesting, the student groups at X really have not much to do with each other but our organization really pulled them all together and joined our fight with the administration. I don't think that, before that, any two student groups attended the same event and being like on the same issues. So, anyway, they all turned out and basically X got really bad press like all over the Sun Times, the Chicago Tribune, and even in the New York Times. (ibid)

Further, in "crisis" situations the strategy of student groups tends to be more radical and confrontational, because in these situations activities of the student organizations usually take the forms of rallies, demonstrations, protests, and so forth. In other words, the level of tension between the students and the school swells to open conflict. As a result, the school will either be more coercive and oppressive in order to control the situation, or, if that fails, and the event attracts media attention, religious universities that fear publicity will

back down and make compromises to meet the students' demands.<sup>25</sup>

### Women's empowerment

The issue of "empowerment" emerged after the first wave of feminism, an issue which drastically changed the consciousness of American women. Before that time it was held that, "women are relatively inactive in politics in part because they are denied opportunities to develop the self confidence that political scientists have to found to characterize the active citizens in a democratic system." (Lynn, 1975: 364) It was through the process of actual participation in political activism that women developed a different framework to look at the world in which they live. Women's empowerment took two routes--according to Freeman:

[one] is the older branch of the movement...it began first. In addition to the National Organization for Women (NOW), this branch contains such organizations as the Women's Equity Action League, Federally Employed Women, and some fifty different organizations and caucuses of professional women. Their style of organization has tended to be traditionally formal, with numerous elected officers, board of directors, bylaws, and other trappings of democratic procedure...The other branch of the movement...it's activators were on the younger side of the generational gap...all were under 30 and had received their political education as participants in or concerned observers of the social-action projects of the preceding decade. Many came direct from the New Left and Civil Rights organizations where they had been shunted into traditional roles and faced with contradiction of working in a freedom movement but not being very free. (1975a: 449-50)

Both women's organizations of this study seem to adopt what Freeman called "the younger branch of the movement" which is characterized as the elimination of hierarchy, structure, and leadership. The major method of making change, in the younger branch of the movement, is "Consciousness Raising" (CR), which is probably the most important contribution that feminists bring to social movement. The process of consciousness raising starts with women come together in small groups (three to 12 people) to discuss their personal feelings, experiences, and problems; and from the public sharing of personal experiences, participants realize that the so-called "personal problem" is in fact common, and what was

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<sup>25</sup>Media is a sufficient (but not necessary) condition in this process, i.e., media's involvement will increase the pressure to the university and accelerate the administration to make concessions, mainly because the university desires no negative publicity.

considered a personal problem has a social cause and probably a political solution. From this "consciousness raising" comes the idea of "sisterhood"--since personal problems can be alleviated only by changing the society. Therefore, group solidarity is essential in the struggle for equity.

Both the Women's Place and the Women's Center employ this strategy, with the latter also emphasizes in making some structural changes. As indicated by Freeman (pp. 450-2), the younger branch of the movement served as a "radicalization" process for active women, which drastically changed their views about themselves and society. Essentially, the emphasis is that "personal" is "political," and that genuine, effective social change can only be obtained through day-to-day activities and through group efforts. Feminist consciousness is crucial for a broad-based, massive liberation movement. With effective political action, other people will also be affected (in a positive way)--such as the case of the Free Speech Movement.

### Conclusion

It seems that feminist consciousness and activity are somewhat different at X than at Y. Student activists at the former openly discuss abortion issues and reproductive rights, while active women at the latter concentrate on consciousness raising. The situation at X University is a result of an intensive struggle between the women's rights student organization and the administration. On the surface, it may appear that Catholic campuses are not conducive grounds for the breeding of feminist awareness, because abortion and even birth control, are "contrary to the Catholic teaching." But it is precisely the hostility of the environment that encourages many college women to become student activists, although the hostility and the conflicts it provokes between feminists and the administration sometimes will delay the development of such movement. Women activists at Catholic universities are involved in the task of making a real change of society. And as such, it is especially crucial to articulate the ideas, constraints, tactics, and the effects of their endeavors. In all, women student activists at Catholic institutions can provide invaluable lessons for the feminist movement in broader society. The Free Speech Movement, as initiated by the Women's Center at X University, provides a good example for a massive and united movement.

From analyzing the process that the Women's Center has gone through, we witness the difficulty of forming a feminist organization in religious institutions. This difficulty, it seems, does not exist in secular schools, in the sense that no incident has been reported at



those universities. Whether or not women's rights groups can be recognized eventually, the process itself will "radicalize" many student activists. Interestingly, many informants of this research revealed that it was actually in the process of getting the group started that they learned the most valuable lessons. Ida's experience was quite typical in this respect:

After the experience here, I will never consider a Catholic school for my graduate study. But, you know, sometimes I wonder if I could learn as much as here, because if I went to a public school, probably they already had a women's group and they do nothing. The process [of getting the organization recognized] is very annoying but I really learned a lot from it--and changed a lot, too.

(interview with Ida, 10/17/90)

Activists for women's liberation achieved tremendous success during the past two decades. In a real sense, treatment of women by men is better today than it was before. However, we should not be satisfied with the progress that the feminists have made, because the gains are hard-earned and are constantly facing serious setbacks. The failure of the ERA and the reversal of legalized abortion are cases in point. One of the findings of this study is that personal freedom appears to be the most significant aspect of the feminist movement on Catholic institutions. It is fair to say that, even in this regard, the situation is improving (as we witnessed the success of the Women's Center). Nevertheless, we should put forth more energy to do more to change gender inequality. In this regard, several trends are evident. First, feminist consciousness is growing significantly, more and more women sense the sexism they face in society, and more efforts are mobilized to fight for women's emancipation. Second, an increasing number of men have also heightened their awareness of gender inequity. On the societal level, the growing participation of men in the feminist movement is a case in point. Third, for people who are sympathetic and active in women's liberation, a lot more emphasis has been placed on educating unconcerned men to be aware of gender inequality, and increasingly men within the feminist movement are willing to confront their own sexism. Finally, because of their constant struggle, it has become harder for the administration in the religious setting to ignore the demands of women students. It is hopeful that many goals of the student feminists in Catholic universities will someday be met.

To envision a sexism-free society is a hard work, but, more and more people are willing to take on the task. An effective change on society and the abolishment of gender inequality has to start with women exploring their own power, understanding that power, grasping that power, and relentlessly pursuing true equality. Empowerment not only means

the change of one's consciousness, it also implies the willingness to continuously fight injustice. Empowerment is the key to end any kind of inequality, be it of gender, race, class, age, or culture. Empowerment includes both the change of consciousness and the actual engagement of political activism, and these two aspects are interacting and mutually enhancing. In so doing, one is not only able to change oneself for the better, but more important, collectively activists can actually transform the whole society.

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# 競爭式的同化：美國兩所 天主教大學校區內的學生女權主義者

王雅各 \*

## ( 中文摘要 )

本文主旨在於探討天主教大學的女權主義者所關切的議題及其與政治動員之間的關係。婦女運動基本上是在校園中紮根的。然而在眾多的學運探討文獻中，教會大學中的學生動員一直是學者比較忽略的一個領域。這個研究就是試圖部分地彌補此一缺陷。這篇論文首先從簡要的美國婦女運動史介紹開始。更確切的則是作者企圖指出在教會大學學生女權運動的主要特徵。此時，學生女權主義者的主要關切諸如墮胎、避孕措施、校內學生保健設施、性騷擾以及有關於生產的各種權益就明顯地成為學運參與者和學校當局的衝突根源。然後本文就會對教會大學的女權學生團體加以探討；重點則在於組織上之分析。文章最後則在美國整個大社會的環境情境中評估天主教大學的學生女權主義者，和她們的表現。

關鍵詞：學生婦運、天主教與女權主義

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## Contested Accommodation: Student Feminist at Two Catholic Campuses

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### (Abstract)

This paper examines the relationship between political mobilization and feminist concerns on Catholic college campuses. Feminist movement was deeply rooted in schools. Activities in religious institutions remains under-studied, however. This research attempts to partially fill such void in the realm of student insurgences. The essay begins with a brief mention on the emergence of feminist consciousness in the United States. More specifically, I will point out the main characteristics of student mobilization in the context of religious educational institutions. It will become clear that the issues of abortion, the use of contraceptives, a comprehensive health care facility, sexual harassment, and reproductive rights are the sources of conflict between the feminists and the university. Then I analyze the features of women's rights organizations in these universities. The article closes with an assessment on the feminist movement in Catholic institutions within the broader societal context.

Key Words: Catholicism and feminism \ student feminist.

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