

**GEOGRAPHIES OF OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE:
CONTESTING THE REPRODUCTION OF THE HETEROSEXUAL REGIME**

By

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CONTESTING THE REPRODUCTION OF THE HETEROSEXUAL REGIME

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I offer a specifically lesbian and geographic analysis of particular struggles for social change in Hamilton, Canada. Through an investigation of the deployment of the political regime of heterosexuality in the regulation and containment of local anti-violence activism in the 1990s, I build on emerging work in feminist, and lesbian and gay geographies on the institution of heterosexuality as regulatory.

Through an exploration of both the struggles over the development of spaces of political resistance, and the importance of gender, sexuality, and "difference" in local urban politics, I suggest that "unnaturalizing" categories such as Woman\Man can offer insights to the processes of identity formation in place. Through employing a politically engaged methodology and constructing this research as part of local struggles for social change, I offer local activists critical analyses of political strategies and processes of institutionalization in Hamilton, as well as challenging the ongoing invisibility of lesbians in geography and beyond.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

...many women participate uneasily in the academy. I didn't find a voice of my own when I was a student, and at university I felt a fraud much of the time, never quite as good as the confident bourgeois men (and often women) I studied with.

Gillian Rose (1993a: 16)

1.1 Introduction

The words of Gillian Rose resonate profoundly for many females in academia. Marginalized by interlocking systems of sexism, classism and heterosexism, in a discipline that has, at times, seemed impermeable to the onslaught of feminist theory and practice, I am not alone in rarely having felt part of "the project" (Chouinard and Grant 1995; Christopherson 1989; McDowell 1992). However, it is precisely from that place of marginalization, from my geographical and political location as a radical lesbian involved in local, progressive, political struggles that the focus of this thesis came. That is, my "out-of-placeness" in academia was countered by my experiences as a white, non-disabled, feminist activist, very much "at home" in the loosely defined and ever-shifting communities of lesbian and feminist political resistance. My involvement in local anti-violence activism repeatedly raised the question of why systemic change in the area of men's violence against females¹, has been so difficult to effect. As an activist academic I saw the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing process of answering this, and related strategic questions, through my particular skills as a researcher.

In the processes of challenging the dominant discourses and practices of "the women's movement" as a marginalized "other," and of being challenged on my own privileges (afforded me as a non-disabled, formally-educated, white female), I recognized that my political objectives, and the knowledge I produced would be locally situated, that is, historically, culturally and spatially specific. Thus I chose to research those struggles for social change that were most clearly part of my own experiences: those of white, feminist, anti-violence activists. This is consistent with a move by feminist geographers, "away from the construction of generalizations about women as an undifferentiated category towards more particular understandings of the historically specific processes that produced the particular range of gender relations in a range of places" (McDowell 1993b: 308). Early feminist, and other social change, activists argued that one should "start from where you're at". It is undoubtedly from my location as a white, non-disabled, formally-educated lesbian, that I decided to focus my analysis on the ways in which the political regime of heterosexuality (Wittig 1992), is implicated in the regulation of feminist activism and is, in turn, resisted and contested. I did this through an investigation of the political struggles of white, feminist anti-violence activists in the city of Hamilton, Canada over the period mid-1991 to mid-1993. Through interviews with 25 local activists and my own participation in local feminist politics, I explored the importance of particular spaces of political resistance for identity formation and for the development of collective capacities for contesting oppression, as well as recent struggles over the nature of those spaces.

Feminist researchers situated differently would view other sets of oppressive relations as most critical to be mapped. As cultural theorist Judith Butler (1990: 35) notes:

As feminism has sought to become integrally related to struggles against racial and colonialist oppression, it has become increasingly important to resist the colonizing epistemological strategy that would subordinate different configurations of domination under the rubric of a transcultural notion of patriarchy.

By trying to always be aware that my analysis emerges from a particular location and that the latter is only one of many from which theory is made, I hope to have resisted that epistemological strategy and been part of a trend in feminist geography to "contextualise and localise feminist theorising within the discipline" (Lerner 1995: 177). I am not sure that I have been entirely successful. My aims, however, in both choosing this particular area of study and in researching it the way I did were:

- (1) to build on recently emerging work in feminist, and lesbian and gay geographies on the institution of heterosexuality as *regulatory*, through an investigation of the deployment of the political regime of heterosexuality in the regulation and containment of local feminist activism;
- (2) to expand our knowledge of the importance of gender and sexuality in local urban politics through an exploration of the development of, and struggles over, spaces of political resistance;
- (3) (and related to (2)), to investigate the differences found *within* categories, at a time of fragmentation by "difference" of a supposedly previously united "women's movement"; that is, to explore the politics of identity formation, and to do this from a specifically lesbian place;
- (4) to attempt to provide local activists with a useful, critical analysis of strategies for change, processes of state institutionalization of "the movement" and associated feminist resistance to that incorporation; and

- (5) through employing a politically engaged methodology, to clearly locate myself, as an academic researcher, in the realm of the political and, as a lesbian researcher, to challenge the reproduction of the political regime of heterosexuality in academia and the associated invisibility of lesbians in that environment.

These aims are detailed below.

1.2 Feminist geographies and geographies of sexuality

Feminist geography has matured significantly from the need to make women visible in the 1970s and early 1980s (for example, Bowlby, Foord and Mackenzie 1981; Hayford 1974; Tivers 1978), to more recent theoretical sophistication, recognition of difference and diversity, and analyses of the patriarchal bases of male power (Bondi 1990; Christopherson 1989; Foord and Gregson 1986; Johnson 1987; Massey 1991; McDowell 1993a; Pain 1991; Rose 1993b; Valentine, 1993a). However, despite our recognition of "the importance of spatial structure in the production and reproduction of masculinist societies" (Rose 1993a:17), feminist geographers have, until recently, been relatively quiet on two of the most critical and interrelated sets of oppressive processes through which male power is established and maintained: men's violence against females and the political regime of heterosexuality.

The little work which has been done on the former has been critical in bringing this issue to the attention of geographers. However, much of it has been couched in terms of relationships between women and environments; for example, women's lack of freedom of movement in public space and the spatial expression of violence in the social control

of women (Grant 1988; Pain 1991; Valentine 1989; Whitzman 1988). What I want to add to this work is an emphasis on the *connections* between a compulsory and normative system of heterosexuality and men's violence against females. That is, although it has been important to illustrate the ways in which public space in advanced industrial cities in the West is most often male and at times, largely inaccessible to females, it is equally important to illustrate that most women are in fact *at greater risk when they enter into a heterosexual relationship*, than when they go for a walk in a badly designed plaza.

The critical investigation of heterosexual hegemony has, however, come relatively late to the discipline of geography. Early lesbian and gay geographies emerged in various attempts to map "gay ghettos" (Weightman 1981; Winchester and White 1988), and in detailed work on the impact of lesbians and gays on the socio-spatial (re) structuring of the city (Knopp 1987, 1990; Lauria and Knopp 1985). In the 1990s, however, there has been a proliferation of research and writing which clearly makes the connections between power, sexuality, identity and performance; for example, work on the mutual constitution of sexualities and spaces, on ritualized performance of sexual identities, on the regulatory force of the heterosexual imperative and on the body as a site of oppression and resistance (Bell and Valentine 1995a, 1995b; Cream 1995a; Johnston and Valentine 1995; Longhurst 1995; McDowell and Court 1994; Murray 1995; Valentine 1993a, 1993b, 1993c).

This work provides critical opportunities for those connections - between men's violence against females and a regulatory and normative heterosexuality - to be made. Although David Bell and Gill Valentine (1995a: 12) note that "A big absence from

geographies of sexualities is, ironically, the dominant sexuality within contemporary societies - heterosexuality", they argue that feminist geography is in fact in need of a "divorce" from the emerging work on sexualities. This is based on the common linking of sexuality with gender, at conferences for example, which I agree is problematic (since feminism, and lesbian and gay theory and politics are not always compatible). However, although sexuality and gender may often automatically be tagged on to each other, I want to suggest that the *connections* between the two areas are not necessarily being made. That is, I disagree on the need for separation when it comes to *lesbian* geographies specifically, since there has yet to be a "marriage". Historically, feminist geography has paid little attention to the relationship between sexist oppression and the heterosexual imperative; what Louise Johnson (1994: 110) has called, the "ongoing non-examination of compulsory heterosexuality in geography". As feminist geography has expanded to investigate the interconnections of race, class and gender in women's subordination, the role that heterosexuality plays has not similarly been moved from periphery to centre. There has been little explicit recognition that the categories of gender - men and women - are in fact heterosexual ones. As lesbian theorist Cheshire Calhoun (1995: 8) notes, with regard to feminist theorizing in general:

Outside of literature whose specific topic is lesbianism, lesbians do not make an appearance in feminist writing except via an occasional linguistic bow in their direction executed through the words "lesbian", "sexual orientation", or "sexualities". Race and class do not similarly remain systematically in the ghostly closet of referring terms.

Part of my aim in this thesis, then, is to forge some very concrete links between feminist and lesbian geographies. In illustrating, empirically and theoretically, ways in which the (interconnected) regulatory systems of sex, gender and sexuality are used to maintain gender hierarchy, I hope to suggest ways forward in understanding processes of oppression in place, and possibilities for political resistance.

In approaching specific geographies of oppression and resistance, I am not only drawing on feminist analyses, but on radical lesbianism, which "does not define itself as a feminist analysis" (Durocher 1990: 13), and in which, heterosexuality is analyzed as a social system (Wittig 1992). As Louise Turcotte (1996: 118) describes it:

Radical lesbianism is then a theory about the appropriation of women that differs from feminism because of the difference in its analysis of heterosexuality. According to radical lesbianism, heterosexual sexual relationships should be questioned more on the "why" and less on the "how". This means, in other words, that even if sexual relationships can change in their individual forms, their underlying social goal is first and foremost a means to maintain women in their state of appropriation, be it by bribe, rape, or the ideological hegemony of heterosexuality.

Thus, I hope to illustrate ways in which "unnaturalizing" heterosexuality and the heterosexual categories man/women has theoretical and practical implications beyond lesbian geographies.

1.3 Gender, sexuality and "difference" in local urban politics

A further aim was to expand current knowledge of gender as an organizing base in local urban politics. Given the importance of everyday environments as the spatial

structures through which oppressive gender relations are produced and reproduced, it is important to know more about the ways in which females, individually and collectively, have attempted to contest and transform those structures. There is a need for this work in geography: as feminist geographers Fincher and McQuillen (1989: 604) argued in their review of Anglo - North American literature in this area, "little attention has been paid to the presence or activities of women," and further that, "our knowledge of urban social movements might usefully be extended by analyses of the gendered nature of those movements". Historically, what has often been understood as "political" in local urban politics have been those struggles which are waged either through the state or at the workplace (Brownill and Halford 1990; Peake 1994). This has had implications for women since much of women's experience, for example men's violence against females, has, until relatively recently, been kept off the public\political agenda. However, the growth of the second wave of "the women's movement" has resulted in what Dobash and Dobash (1987: 170) call "an explosion of activity". The most important organizing in this area has taken place at the local level resulting in a proliferation of women's shelters, rape crisis centres and other organizations.

Despite over two decades of this organizing, men's violence against females remains a huge problem. Statistics Canada recently confirmed what anti-violence activists had been arguing for years - that one out of every two women in this country have experienced some form of male violence in their lifetime (Statistics Canada 1993a.). The magnitude of the problem persists despite at least the *appearance* of substantial changes:

for example, in raised public awareness of the issue, in involvement of all levels of government in the area, and in the treatment of the issues by health, education and legal systems. Feminists, amongst other social activists, are losing ground; for example, "post-feminism" is an oft-cited expression. It often seems, then, that everything and nothing has changed. In approaching this contradictory situation, I was interested in what Linda Briskin (1991: 25) calls that "ongoing invisibility of the more radical vision of women's liberation which would entail major social and economic transformation". Why after more than two decades of impressive mobilization has so little changed? As Adamson *et al* (1988: 166) argued in their analysis of feminist organizing in Canada:

Indeed, despite the increased skills and knowledge of activists, it often seems that we are still back at square one when it comes to answering the basic question of what constitutes an effective practice for change.

This thesis tackles that basic question and investigates the spaces of political resistance in which strategies for change have been developed. I do this from my place of marginalization as a lesbian, suggesting that from that particular political and geographical location (beyond the category of sex, beyond the women\man dualism) I am able to map some of the ways in which the regulatory institution of heterosexuality acts both as a barrier to collective action based on gender in these spaces of political resistance, *and* reduces women's capacities to contest the reproduction of the system of men's violence against females. Lesbian geographers have illustrated some of the ways in which the term "dyke" is used to control all women's behaviours (for example, Valentine 1993c); in this thesis I attempt to illustrate this further, as well as the ways in which the term "woman"

is also used, to reduce the possibilities for women's political organizing, whether heterosexual *or* lesbian.

Further, the power of gender as an effective mobilizing base has come into question as western feminism has been forced to recognize its subject as a white, middle-class, non-disabled, heterosexual one. The notion of *a* women's movement has given way to a recognition of the importance of "difference". Lesbians, women of colour, immigrant women, first nations women, poor women and women with disabilities have insisted on the recognition that organized feminism has often excluded them *and* neglected to recognize that heterosexism, racism, classism and ableism have been as important in structuring their oppression as sexism has been. As Linda McDowell (1993b: 309) points out, "How to theorize difference while holding on to some notion both of gender as a central analytical category in feminist scholarship and as a focus of political organization is now a central issue in feminist work". In this thesis, I suggest that gender can be retained as a central analytical category through an investigation of the ways it has been used as a "regulatory fiction" (Butler 1990) to delimit the contours of acceptable female behaviours, desires, attitudes and political organizing. Further, in approaching the question of "difference" and "the women's movement", I problematize the group "white feminists", arguing that this is not the uncomplicated category that has been suggested in some discussions on difference. That is, in recent public discourse (and often discussions within "the movement") "fragmentation" of the women's movement is presented as, in part, the responsibility of historically marginalized groups (see Barker and Wright 1992; Canadian

Press 1992; Freedman 1993). This suggests the existence of a previously *unified* "women's movement" and a relatively uncomplicated connection between gender and politics. As lesbian theorist Shane Phelan (1994: 101) argues, this "hegemonic assumption":

assigns difference to the underprivileged side of what is actually a relation of difference. Instead of noting that both sides of an opposition are "different" from one another, the hegemony works to render the relation invisible and to describe difference as something inherent in one side.

Thus, previously marginalized women are thought of as "different" from the rarely problematized central group: "white feminists". By investigating the differences found *within* this category (in terms of politics and practices), and local activists' understandings both of these differences and of the connections between gender and politics, my aim is to contribute to recent moves away from essentialist notions of difference and identity. Further, in providing concrete examples of the pitfalls of traditional identity politics I also aim to suggest possibilities for moving towards more effective coalitional organizing for social change.

In attempting to understand both the persistence of men's violence against females in the face of decades of feminist political mobilizing, and the changes taking place in local geographies of oppression and resistance, a further aim was to provide local activists with a useful, critical analysis of strategies for change in this area. Initial discussions with local activists, in addition to my own experiences of activism, pointed to the expanding relationship between the state and organized anti-violence activism as critical in any

analysis of processes of political resistance and incorporation. This is discussed in the following section.

1.4 Politics of resistance and state regulation: public patriarchy or contested terrain?

As I noted above, organized feminist activism has been responsible for much social change over the last two decades. Through negotiation and conflict, gender inequality has been challenged in a multitude of arenas. In the area of men's violence against females, manifestations of this can be seen in the development of rape crisis centres and women's shelters, in the increase in public awareness of the issue, and in the "recognition" of its prevalence from all levels of government. The state has increasingly been involved in this issue through arenas such as the legal system, policing, education and health systems (Barnsley 1988, 1995; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Findlay 1988; Randall 1988; Walker 1990). However, as also noted above, despite changes in these institutions, many feminist theorists and activists argue that male power continues to be wielded in and through them.

The "state" is a term that is commonly used by feminist (and other social change) activists, although its meaning is variable. Jane Ursel (1994) argues that there are basically two schools of thought when it comes to the anti-violence movement and the state: one that sees the state as irretrievably part of male power, and the other that sees it as contested terrain. Through a detailed investigation of feminist activists' understandings and experiences of state relations my aim is to employ a more nuanced,

less dichotomous approach to the problematic of the state and political struggles. Activists have lobbied the state intensely for changes in laws and policing, and importantly, for the funding necessary to provide services. There is an abundance of evidence to suggest that one result of this successful lobbying has been that organized feminist activism has become institutionalized through state regulation. However, there is a need for clearly situated, partial and local investigations of specific instances of these incorporating processes. What have these expanded relationships meant for activists' subjection and resistance to state regulation? How exactly have spaces of resistance become spaces of incorporation? In what ways can resistance to these processes be improved in feminist organizing? Why have some political strategies been more effective in changing state relations than others? In attempting to answer these questions my aim is to provide activists with further insights as to whether incorporation of feminist struggles by the state is always inevitable or, in fact, contestable.

My final aim concerns the process of *doing* research from the margins. This is discussed below.

1.5 Being an ally: disruptive practices and the importance of visibility

In employing a politically engaged methodology I attempted to locate myself firmly within particular communities of resistance, as part of political struggles for social change. I also recognised that as an academic with privilege, in working from the margins we are never fully apart from the centre (Rose 1993a). Despite being "off the map", I

could visit the places within the dominant practices of geographical knowledge construction to ensure that this research take up its space in the academy. It was my responsibility, however, not to run from the risks associated with being disruptive and challenging to hegemonic practices of academic research. That is, as a white lesbian I could choose to pass, to slip from the margin to the centre if needed. It is that privilege which insisted that I must be out in academia, identified, visible and thus able to be in coalition with those who cannot or will not pass against multiple and interlocking systems of oppression. Despite a relative explosion in recent years of work on sexualities in geography and beyond, there is an absence of lesbian bodies, on the ground, so to speak. There are still many reasons for not "coming out" in this discipline. Lesbian geographer Gill Valentine (1993b.: 246) notes that "within the academic community the lack of 'out' gay [*sic*] geography students, researchers and staff suggests that many departments are as intolerant of difference as other employers". This situation is exacerbated by lesbians and lesbian studies being lost in queer space, when "queer", on the way to indicating a very broad set of post-modern political and philosophical positions, has lost so much of its earlier political punch, as well as clouding the particular challenges that lesbian praxis continues to pose to gender and other hierarchies.

Further, in doing research from the margins, in a politically engaged way, I gained a particular insight into the critical importance of location in the development of counterhegemonic collective identities and practices. That is, it was in being located firmly in particular communities of struggle, of political alliance, that I was *radicalized*;

my political identity changed during the research process. This is discussed in detail in the following chapter, and the importance of location for identity formation and possibilities for structural change is discussed throughout the thesis.

This thesis is organized in the following way. The process of conducting the research is discussed in Chapter Two. In this chapter I make a case for a politically engaged methodology, outlining some of the advantages and disadvantages to this kind of research approach. I also provide details about the local activists who participated in this study, and what themes were explored in the interviews and why. Chapter Three outlines my conceptual framework, including key arguments about gender and sexuality and political struggles over men's violence against females. The geographical context of the research is outlined in Chapter Four. Here I discuss the importance of geographical and political location in the development of identities and struggles for social change as well as presenting a brief outline of the development of organized anglo-Canadian feminism and anti-violence activism in particular. The local geographies of oppression and resistance, that is, the development and struggles over anti-violence activism in Hamilton, Ontario, are discussed in detail in this chapter. The empirical data is presented and discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, in analyses of: local processes of identity formation and political struggles in and against the heterosexual regime; local conceptualizations of, and practical approaches to, men's violence against females and the state; and processes of regulation and incorporation in place, respectively. My conclusions and their implications for present and future research are presented in the final chapter.

Chapter One endnotes

1. I use the term men's violence against females rather than the more common male violence against women for two main reasons: 1) to make explicit that in my conceptualization of it, men's violence is not a function of their maleness - but something that is manufactured; and 2) that all females, whether "women" or not, are seen as legitimate targets for this violence. This is explained in greater detail in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO. AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE POLITICAL : ACTIVIST RESEARCH

It's frightening to set off on new journeys without any maps. Perhaps the hardest bit is deciding what to hang onto and what to shed.

Sheila Rowbotham (1979: 33)

2.1 Introduction

I cannot address the purpose of doing this research without placing it in the context of knowledge as power. Feminists, amongst others, have highlighted that a particular aspect of power is the ability to define what constitutes reality, the limits within which that reality may be explained and interpreted, and the types of knowledge which will be considered valid (Cook and Fonow 1990; hooks 1988; Kirby and McKenna 1989; Stanley and Wise 1983, 1993). Since females are still very much in the minority in the discipline of geography above the undergraduate level (Rose 1993b.), there are obvious implications for the kinds of knowledge generated, since knowledge itself is a social creation. This argument has been well established elsewhere (Alcoff 1989; Cook and Fonow 1990; Harding 1987; Hartsock 1987; McCormack 1990; Oakley 1981; Rosser 1987; Smith 1987; Vickers 1989); suffice to note that in approaching this research I was cognizant of the fact that there are ramifications of my particular claims to know. As Kirby and McKenna (1989: 23) argue:

Power is used to perpetuate and extend existing inequalities. Those in positions of power are able to decide what news is fit to print or air, and what parameters are available for interpreting such news. They decide what books get published, what research is funded and what knowledge is legitimated.

Given that I was doing research which, to a certain extent, I could have a lot of control over¹, I understood that it should be research that, in the process and in the results, could be part of the political struggle for social change. The research which a researcher chooses to carry out, the way that she\he goes about her\his investigation, the methods she\he employs, and what is done with the results depends centrally upon the researcher's beliefs about the purpose of knowledge. For myself, the purpose of knowledge construction is to add to the possibilities of transforming oppressive structures of society. The aims of feminist research are an important starting point for it is from these aims that we make decisions about subject matter, methods, concepts, interpretations, inclusions and exclusions.

2.2 The purpose of feminist research

It has always been recognised that feminist research has to be much more than an academic exercise, although exactly what this entails is contestable. As stated above, my own interpretation is that the main aim of feminist research is to be part of the processes of challenging the interlocking systems of women's oppression. However, this does raise the question of which women and which systems? As McDowell (1993b: 310) recently outlined in a review of feminist geography:

The current aim within feminist geography is a move towards what Harding and Haraway have identified as 'partial' or 'situated knowledges' that recognize that the positionings of white British women in the academy, to take but one example, are not the same as other women, women from different ethnic or class backgrounds, and that this makes a difference to knowledge construction.

In researching the struggles of a particular group of white, feminist, anti-violence activists I recognize that my knowledge will be partial and incomplete, situated in a particular place and at a particular time. Within these recognized limitations, a further question is that of whether or not academic research that aims to provide insights into some women's capacities to contest the reproduction of oppressive gender relations *requires* both intellectual and political struggle. I would argue that engaging in both reduces the possibilities of academic feminism becoming further removed from activist feminism, ensuring that our theories are useful for action and that action is useful for our theories. It is in trying to bring together feminism as science and feminism as politics that questions are most strongly raised for feminist academic scholarship. As Bishop *et al* (1991: 299) point out:

While it is often fruitful for feminist academics and community activists to work together, it is also often an uneasy alliance. We cannot overcome the strains by pretending they don't exist. Activists and academics work in settings which, in quite concrete ways, produce stresses and conflicts.

With the potential for a schism between academic and activist feminism always present (Bishop *et al*, 1991; Christiansen-Ruffman 1991; hooks 1988), there is a need to remain aware that the setting of academia, despite progress, is still an elite institution of limited access to less powerful groups, that the majority of feminists who are "doing science" in

the West, are white, non-disabled, middle-class and heterosexual, and that there remains a hierarchy of knowledge. Scholarly debates between academic feminists are undoubtedly necessary and valuable, but the alarmingly common use of jargon, and of coded and inaccessible language is only one example of how some feminist academics appear to be closing the door on those females from whose experiences we need to develop and improve our theories. Pile and Thrift (1995: 371) note, for example, that, "Talk of relations of power can sometimes obscure the grinding, relentless nature of oppression and the way it forces accounts and choices which may not always be attractive to bourgeois academics". I have attempted to resist the temptation to obscure the realities of activists' lives, for example, the loss of employment and employment opportunities, and/or the danger of public vilification, in seemingly abstract discussions of regulation and resistance, fictions of gender and sexuality, complicated and unstable identities, and spaces of resistance and incorporation.

The context in which we work however, is one which operates to de-radicalize. As academics, we are tangled up in the webs of employment, career advancement and legitimacy, and it is difficult to rip out certain threads, for example, challenging discriminatory departmental practices, without unravelling the whole bundle. Further, our research does not take place in a vacuum and results do not always remain within the walls of a de-contextualized ivory tower. These results have the potential to be used to shape public policy, to shape public opinion, and to challenge or support current hegemonic ideology (Dobash and Dobash 1992; Walker 1990). Given this (that my

results could be used in myriad ways), I understood the need to act responsibly² in doing this research, and to consider the possible ramifications of both the practices and the results.

A further complication was that I was choosing to do research in an area which has a varied history in its relation to research. For example, discussing the situation in the United States, Susan Schechter (1988: 311) argued that:

Differences over research practices and ideology are only two troubling areas that researchers and battered women's activists must explore together. Ethics is a third. Reports from around the country leave many grass roots activists reluctant to cooperate with researchers. According to interview with movement activists, promises of confidentiality and guarantees of safety have been broken by researchers conducting interviews with abused women...Commitments to share or review findings have not materialized.

Recognising that research can be both an ally and adversary of social change, I was aware that although the relationship between activists and academics in this area has certainly varied across time and place (Barnsley 1995; Russell 1988; Walker 1990), what has often been at stake is: a) whose knowledge will be valued and therefore who will get to define the issues; and b) what will be the response to this issue and who will provide that response? A simple, concrete example illustrates this point well. If the issue of men's violence against females is understood as one of power and control in which men use various tactics at individual, institutional and cultural levels to establish and maintain their power, then responses will be very different than if the issue is understood to be one of the individual characteristics of individual females causing individual men's violence against them. The former obviously requires major structural change, the latter individual

therapy for millions of individual women. Whose knowledge is deemed most valid has serious implications for social change. This has been exemplified in this field of research by the work of Murray Straus and his colleagues (Gelles 1972; Gelles and Straus 1979; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz 1980). Their use of a certain measure of violence, the Conflict Tactics Scale (which amongst other things did not distinguish between offensive and defensive violence) in research on violence in the home resulted in the findings that severe "husband abuse" was in fact a more extensive problem in America than severe "wife abuse". In her foreword to the influential anthology Feminist Perspectives On Wife Abuse, Diana Russell (author of Rape In Marriage) notes (1988: 8):

Since this finding contradicts all previous research, clinical experience, and gender sensitive theories of violence, one would expect these researchers to question the validity of their scale...However, despite years of debate and criticism, Straus and Gelles once again applied their Conflict Tactics Scale in a new survey and reported the same conclusions.

Since I have no front-line experience³, the potential privileging of my academic knowledge in certain environments is rightfully viewed as highly problematic by many front-line workers. Despite postmodern critiques of universalizing scientific knowledge claims, knowledge construction remains clearly hierarchically situated. Those knowledges constructed in academia are still often considered more valid than those constructed elsewhere⁴. To be always aware of this point, and to recognize our place in the hierarchy is critical, given that as pointed out above, the majority of feminists constructing knowledge in Anglo-North American academia are white, middle class, non-disabled and heterosexual.

Within these contexts I had the opportunity to do work from the margins, to move beyond the boundaries of accepted masculinist knowledge and practices; that is, within the larger confines of academia, I had a relatively large degree of control over content and process. This was not research directly funded or guided by the state, as is so much research on men's violence against females (for example, The Canadian Panel On Violence Against Women⁵). Dobash and Dobash (1992: 255) point out:

While not determining findings *per se* state funding often determines the focus of the research or particular aspects of the problem to be studied (sometimes even the research method) and these, in turn, have an impact on the findings.

Thus, the opportunity here was to engage in research that was in part directed by activists. They could tell me what kind of research, if any, could usefully inform political struggles. I was directed to do this by a passionate belief that feminist research is first and foremost *for* females and it is our reality that must be made visible, in order to enable us to change society. This involves imaginative and innovative ways of doing that research. As MacKinnon (1989: 36), points out, "one must understand that society could be other than it is in order to explain it, far less to change it".

In the sense that this research aimed to be part of these political struggles (for example, by offering activists a critical analysis of local strategies for change), I did not pursue "objectivity" as it has been traditionally (and androcentrically) defined. One could fairly argue that my research is political. However, two decades of feminist and other critiques of science has effectively illustrated that every piece of research is political in

some way or another; each researcher incorporates her\his beliefs and her\his value judgements into every part of the research process (Cook and Fonow 1990; Kirby and McKenna 1989; Stanley and Wise 1993) The critical difference is that between those researchers who recognize this and those who do not. Research that is presented as objective, that is presented as apolitical (that is, maintaining the status quo) does not offer the researcher's "conceptual baggage" (Kirby and McKenna 1989) to the reader. In assessing the research we are then left to guess what the political beliefs and objectives are. In doing this research as self-consciously political I am able to put on the table my situated politics, those constructed out of my location in the margins as a non-disabled, white, radical lesbian. How this culturally, historically, and spatially contingent conceptual baggage sets the context for the doing and interpretation of the research is then available for the reader to use in assessing my research. As Sandra Harding (1989: 29) argues, this, "[recovers] for scrutiny in the results of the research the entire research process. That is, the class, race, culture and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviours of the researcher her\himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she\he paints".

To return to the question of research practices, in choosing methods the important question was not so much whether there are any that are distinctively feminist, that is, distinct from methods used by other progressive social researchers (but see Harding 1987; MacKinnon 1982; Mies 1983; and Reinharz 1983), but the ways in which we employ them. The process of doing research in a feminist context has to be as important if not more so than the end results. Here I have to return to the aims of the research since they

informed my choice of methods. For example, in deciding the merits of unstructured versus structured interviews, participatory research as a mode of gathering information, and the dangers of being an "insider", I realized that in wanting to be part of the project of bridging the gap between feminism in the academy and feminism in the community I had little choice but to be politically engaged, and this would shape the methodology. This point is expanded below.

2.3 Being politically engaged: the case for activist research

Some of the ethical and political objectives I wanted to satisfy necessitated certain research practices. For example, I wanted the research participants to have as much control over the process as possible. I was also directed by my understanding of the fact that in this particular area, academic research has often been an adversary of feminist activists and, at a very generalized level, academics are not particularly known in activist political circles for their radical agendas for social change (Bishop *et al* 1991; Christiansen-Ruffman 1991). Further, activists have often argued that too many resources have been ploughed into research at the expense of direct services, that the issue of men's violence against females has been researched to death, and that the time for action was long ago (for example, International Women's Day Presentation by Justice for Women Coalition, 1992; Hamilton Spectator 1992a).

To summarize, these are what I came to think of as my "research directives": first, I wanted to use feminist methodology which, as previously outlined, is based on doing

research with and for females, rather than on them. Second, I would be clear about what I brought to the process as a non-disabled, white, radical lesbian with formal, post-secondary education. How these interconnected parts of my identity shape my understanding of the world and therefore how I approached the research at every step, would be offered up for analysis in the process and the product. Third, the research had to be explicitly political and have an emancipatory element to it. The fourth directive arose out of the concern expressed by various feminist theorists about the increasing distance between academic feminism and feminist activism. I wanted to be sure therefore that the research was part of the attempt to reconnect academic feminism to feminist political practice in the broader community. Finally, the product of the research had to be accessible, and in some ways useful, to those females from whose experience it had been created.

Underlying the emerging methodology was the belief that in order to do the research justice, and in order to truly meet all of the directives I had to be politically engaged in the process; that is, part of the struggles that I was researching. Hence, the methodology which evolved aimed to be consistent with Kirby and McKenna's (1989: 63) argument that, "the methods appropriate for researching from the margins are grounded in a political awareness of the need for change". By developing the research questions from women's experience, through my own experiences as an activist and through discussing research needs with other activists, the intent was that the subsequent use of the information gathered would be aimed as much at the activist as the academic end of

the continuum of struggle. The research had to be conducted with the understanding that any knowledge created remain accessible and useful to those women from whose experiences it has grown. I, as the researcher, would try to remain accountable, that is, taking direction from participants. Consistent with the above, I chose in-depth, semi-directed discussions as a way of gathering and exchanging knowledge. This was combined with an active involvement in local struggles against the reproduction of the political regime of heterosexuality. The particulars of these methods are discussed in 2.5 below.

In employing this methodology I was aware of possible limitations and advantages. For example, Ann Oakley's (1981) experience of doing research on motherhood is a classic, oft-cited example of the problems that can arise in following traditional advice on doing interviews. The ethical question here is one of *withholding* information:

...strategies recommended in the textbooks for meeting interviewee's questions...advise that such questions as "Which hole does the baby come out of?" "Does an epidural ever paralyse women?" and "Why is it dangerous to leave a small baby alone in the house?" should be met with such responses from the interviewer as "I guess I haven't thought about it to give a good answer right now," or "a head-shaking gesture which suggests that's a hard one"...Also recommended is laughing off the request with the remark that "my job at the moment is to get opinions, not to have them" (1981: 48).

In deciding that the interviews would be as interactive as possible, including the sharing of knowledge and ideas, I was aware that I would possibly be involved in influencing the thinking of some of the activists, and of course, be influenced by them. I regarded this as a positive feature of this process rather than negative. As Cook and Fonow (1990: 75) argue, "in the process of learning to perceive social, political and economic

contradictions...people are motivated to take action against the oppressive elements of reality". Although Oakley's ethical question was one of withholding evidence, there can be the equally difficult ethical question of giving it, as part of incorporating political action into research. Dilirio (1982:14, in Cook and Fonow, 1990: 78) provides a poignant example:

...they were working class women whose economic independence under present structural realities was a virtual impossibility, and whose consciousness of survival strategies saw little hope external to that of marriage. Unless I could offer a means of altering the material realities of their existence in the here and now, I wondered what was to be gained by seeking to raise their consciousness concerning the injustices of heterosexism and their personal relationships.

This is perhaps a struggle which many feminist researchers will grapple with, however, my case was rather different. The women involved in my research were "experts"; that is, they were as knowledgeable, if not more so than I on the issues of men's violence against females and feminist activism. If anything, it was more likely that it would be me, not the women involved, whose political knowledge and identity would be altered. Further, if through the process I did manage to provide any new insights, different, or imaginative angles to activists' current analyses, this would clearly be part of the emancipatory project of activist research. The actual research process is discussed below.

2.4 Doing the research: processes in place

I began the research process when I moved to Hamilton, Ontario, in late 1989 by becoming involved in local lesbian and feminist communities. My interest in men's

violence against women and struggles against it had a longer history, including, previous research in Toronto on restrictions of women's freedom of movement in public spaces, and involvement in local women's organizations (Grant 1988, 1989, 1991). Through the process of becoming involved in Hamilton activism, I was able to discuss possibilities for research with many activists and ask questions about what would be most useful to them. I combined these suggestions with my own interests and experiences and the focus of this thesis evolved⁶. It was through this involvement that I was able to ask various activists if they would be willing to participate as interviewees, and they in turn suggested other activists they thought should be interviewed.

My selection process had little traditional scientific rhyme or reason, although it did have radical rhyme and reason. As discussed briefly in Chapter One, there were several reasons for choosing a seemingly relatively homogeneous group. Although this had not initially been my intention, as I began to talk to activists it was clear that issues of homogeneity and inaccessibility of "the movement" were front and centre in practical and analytical processes of re-assessment. From my location as part of this supposedly uncomplicated grouping of "white feminists" I could investigate the differences *within* categories and add to the understandings of the pitfalls of identity politics in the struggles for change in this area. My selection criteria therefore became white,⁷ anti-violence activists who were, or had been involved in Hamilton struggles, and who would identify themselves as feminists. In attempting to find women to participate it was easier to approach women who knew or knew of me, and who, to some extent "trusted" that my

research process and my use of the results would somehow be "ethical" (that is, neither exploitative nor containing any hidden objectives).

Through my involvement in 1990 and 1991 in local feminist and lesbian communities I approached women who appeared, from discussions and/or actions, to be more "radical" than "liberal". My use of these terms is practical rather than theoretical, in that I am not using them in the same way that they have been used historically to indicate a particular theoretical strand of feminism (for example, see Jaggar and Rothenberg 1984). My use is also culturally, spatially and historically specific as well as being relative; that is, being a radical social activist in a country other than Canada may involve violence and sabotage, in another era, it may have included hunger strikes and bombings. In Hamilton, in the early 1990s, choosing anti-violence activists who were more radical than liberal meant choosing those women who were, for example, more likely to believe that men's violence against females was a tool of oppression rather than an individual dysfunction, and one that required systemic change rather than anger management classes, and were more likely to be involved in direct action than petition writing. The group was also shaped by activists' suggestions of other activists and by women's willingness and ability to participate. Out of the 25 participants, there were only seven with whom I had had no previous political interaction in the community and/or the university, prior to the interviews.

The participants varied considerably, for example in age, class history, sexuality, and length of time in "the movement". Seventeen were *from* the working classes, in that

they had grown up in working-class households but their education and employment now placed them outside of a formal definition of working-class⁸. However, many of these activists discussed their retention of working-class values and attitudes and the ways in which this had affected their experiences of a largely middle-class anglo-Canadian women's movement (discussed in Chapter Five). A further two had grown up in what they considered to be working-class families in terms of employment and income, but in very middle-class neighbourhoods, which had resulted in the confusion of growing up with middle-class values without middle-class resources. The remaining six grew up in middle- to upper-middle class homes. Only two of the women were born outside Canada, and had moved here from Europe. Twenty two of the 25 had attended university [eighteen], or college [four], making this group a more-formally-educated-than-average one.

The majority of the activists [fifteen] identified as lesbian and at the time of the interviews, twelve of those were partnered, three with dependent children. Of the seven activists who identified as heterosexual, three were partnered, one with dependent children. Of the remaining activists, one identified as bisexual, one did not define her sexuality in terms of a lesbian\straight\bisexual categorization, and one would not discuss her sexuality. The vast majority of the group were non-disabled⁹ [twenty-two].

All of the participants were, or had been, associated with one or more of the following local organizations: the Sexual Assault Centre [Hamilton and Region], Interval House of Hamilton-Wentworth, Justice For Women Coalition, Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Women's Centre of Hamilton-

Wentworth, and McMaster University's Centre for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Sexual Harassment Office. At the time of the interviews, twenty of the activists were, or had very recently been¹⁰, engaged in paid employment in women's and/or social service organizations which offered anti-violence services. The remainder were, or had recently been, engaged in volunteer work in this area, for example, as a board member. Of the former group, all 20 were, or had been, involved in other paid employment and/or volunteer work in a broad field of progressive social activism; for example, in labour, co-op housing, and lesbian and gay rights organizing, as members of local advocacy\political action groups such as Justice For Women, on organizing committees for local events such as Take Back The Night¹¹ and in provincial organizations such as the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Of the five activists who were volunteers at the time of the interview, only one had not previously been involved in women's and/or other social change organizing.

The activists ranged in age from mid-20s to late-50s. Their length of involvement in "the women's movement" ranged from one year to more than 20 years. Almost one third [seven] of the participants had more than fifteen years experience, many of those in anti-violence work specifically and only five of the activists had been involved for three years or less. The average length of involvement was just under ten years, with the median being seven years. The interviews took place during the months of March, April, May and June 1993. The majority [twelve] took place in my home, six took place in the

homes of activists, five at their place of employment and the remaining were conducted in a combination of these places¹².

I approached the interview process with a mix of excitement and trepidation. From my position as a lesbian academic I sympathised with some of the prospective participants' concerns that academia and the research that emerged from it, was part of the wider system implicated in the categorizing and controlling of women's lives. Further, as a result of my lack of involvement in front-line anti-violence work, I was constantly moving between my sense of self as imposter, unsure of my right to be conducting this research, and my sense of self as useful in that I had the time, the resources, and the "right" politics. Shortly before beginning to approach women in the community about my research, I attended a workshop at International Women's Day celebrations at McMaster University, where a prominent, local, anti-violence activist condemned academics for only ever wanting to talk to, or think about, abused women, when they "wanted a few more letters after their names". This did nothing to allay my fear.

Nonetheless, by early 1993, 25 women had agreed to be interviewed and overall they constituted an experienced, informed group of feminist activists. All of the women signed a consent form, the content of which allowed some control over the process and products of their involvement, such as withdrawing from the process at any time, and viewing any quotations that would be used. Everyone allowed their interviews to be taped and the interviews lasted between one and a half and six hours, with the average length being three hours. Given that the interviews were carried out during a period when many

local women's organizations were in turmoil and there was much public and private conflict within "the women's community", many of the women approached the interviews cautiously. Concerns that were voiced included my political and/or personal alliances as an activist in the community, confidentiality of the interviews, and usefulness of the time spent. It was fascinating, if painful, to observe my own perceived and actual political location shift during the research period from a researcher to whom 25 activists on many different "sides" of the issues would talk to, to a political actor, clearly "inside" the struggles. The advantages and limitations of my approach are discussed more fully in Section 2.5 below.

Despite the tumultuous times, the interviews, on the whole, were engaging, interactive and productive. I used a guideline (see Appendix A), which I had developed from discussions with participants, and my own observations. The women were quite free to negotiate the content of the interview, but from the flow of the majority of the interviews, the themes and their order appeared to make sense. There were five main sections: personal/political history; anti-violence movement/political organising; the state; white feminism; ways forward/strategies for change. After a discussion of their personal and political histories and sense of their own political identity formation, the participants were asked a variety of questions concerning their analytical and strategic approaches to men's violence against females, the "anti-violence movement", and their own and other women's and social services organizations. This was followed by a set of questions on their understanding of, approach to, and experiences of, the state. Questions of organizing

on the basis of gender were then explored, including a discussion of the changes in spaces of political resistance, such as shelters and rape crisis centres, with an emphasis on difference, regulation and resistance. The interview was concluded with a discussion of the accomplishments of anti-violence activism, the greatest obstacles facing "the movement" and possibilities for change.

To ensure that the promised confidentiality was maintained, I alone transcribed all of the tapes, and coded and analyzed over 700 pages of transcripts¹³. In addition I remained actively involved in various forms of activism throughout the research period and beyond. Needless to say, as mentioned briefly above, there were both limitations and advantages to engaging in activist research. These are discussed below.

2.5 Doing the research: limitations and advantages

In approaching the research this way I had anticipated a number of difficulties. Interestingly enough, the greatest difficulty that I had anticipated, that is, activists being totally unwilling to be involved in another piece of research in the academy, did not transpire. Other problems did occur, but not ones that feminist methodology textbooks had prepared me for. There was of course an initial amount of antagonism and reluctance on the part of some activists, for the reasons discussed above: the fact that men's violence against females had been researched to death, suspicion about the motives of academic research, and doubt that the use of precious time would be worthwhile. This was partially overcome by my involvement in activism, primarily through a radical direct action group

(Justice For Women), but also more generally through day-to-day life both on and off campus. What I believe I was able to do as an activist and through engaging in a political struggle side by side with women in the community was, in essence, to "prove" myself as an academic who was "putting her money where her mouth was". This process was, and continues to be, very time-consuming, a factor to which I will return, but ultimately it played a large part in the women agreeing to participate. My focus, not on men's violence against females *per se*, but on feminist activism and its regulation, moved the research project out of the classification of "more research on abused women". Other important factors in getting women involved included spending that initial period of activism educating myself more about the issues and asking activists what kind of research would be most useful for them. Thus, the potential participants were already playing a large part in determining the direction of the research, and so in many ways had some ownership from the outset. This ensured, in my mind, that this research would be of some use to "the movement". I recognised that I had the opportunity to provide some possible insight into processes of resistance and regulation; women involved in front-line services often do not have the luxury of time for detailed reflection and analyses and/or putting them to paper.

Further, by making the interviews as interactive and open-ended as possible I attempted to break down those often artificial but importantly hierarchical boundaries between the researcher and the researched. I did have certain themes to cover but the direction of the interviews could be negotiated. Women were free to refuse to answer

questions, to ask why I was asking certain questions, and to ask questions of me, all of which they did. I gave as much control as possible over the research process and products to the women involved through the following: committing to check back with them if I intended to quote them, either anonymously or named; by giving the option of withdrawal at any point in the process with the subsequent destruction of tapes\transcripts; and by committing myself to producing an accessible community-oriented document which would be given to all participants and would also be available to anyone in the community (Grant forthcoming).

As I have outlined in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 above, these steps were necessary to satisfy my own ethics. Although I believe passionately in the need to bridge the gap between academic feminism and feminist activism, my experiences with this process have taught me that politically engaged research comes with certain costs. Although the lived relations of life as a graduate student, and\or as an activist, are not often discussed in academic work, there is a need to fully contextualize the process. Simple, everyday requirements of life have an impact on the practices of research and the aim of discussing them here is to share information on some very real limitations of doing research this way. The demands of activism and of academia are not particularly compatible at the graduate level and presumably do not get any easier beyond. This is a problem that many feminists grapple with and I do not want to suggest that there is somehow a clear dichotomy between the two spheres. As Wine and Ristock (1991: 18) point out:

Most Canadian academic feminists have been active in the feminist movement outside of academia (Eichler, 1990), as well as engaging in activism to establish and maintain women's studies in the academy; while many community activists look to academic feminism to provide theory for and documentation of their work, and frequently seek credentials through women's studies programs.

Endeavouring to do politically engaged research means balancing often conflicting demands: community meetings, lobbying, postering, demonstrating, course work, comprehensive examinations, writing papers, attending conferences, challenging the institution, networking and generally being part of the department and the community. I did not always manage to strike a particularly sensible balance between the two and view this as one of two major dilemmas associated with this methodology.

The second dilemma which arose concerned the position of the activist researcher in the community. I was not only open about what I brought to the research process in terms of privilege and oppression, that is, as a white, non-disabled, radical lesbian and academic, but as time passed I was more open about my particular politics as an activist which placed me in conflict with other activists, many of whom were participants in the research. For example, on any given day I could be the activist-researcher interviewing activist A, and on the next day find myself on different sides of an issue from her at an important meeting. Or one week I could spend a day interviewing activist B and the next week spend the evening with her and other friends at the local lesbian dance. Or perhaps activist C decides she is no longer willing to participate in the research since she read my article in the city newspaper on the deradicalization of local white feminism. These are

fictional scenarios, but close enough to my real experiences to illustrate the point that as a feminist activist researcher, I am not apart from "the community", I am of it. And there are particular problems associated with this. As mentioned above, as I became more active and more vocal in the communities I am involved in, I found myself at odds at different times with different women who had initially agreed to participate. It is interesting to note that if I were to approach the same 25 women now, I suspect that at least one third of them would not be willing to participate in research that was conducted by me.

It could of course be argued that I should have expected this, that this is exactly the kind of problem associated with being too much of an "insider". However, the critical point here is that in order to fulfil the research directives discussed above, I had no choice but to be an insider, that is, to be *engaged*. If I am an activist I cannot keep my politics a secret, I cannot stay neutral, for the sake of the research and for the sake of ensuring continued participation. Neither can I stay at home and not be an active part of the community. In the process of doing politically engaged research I was *radicalized* and as I changed so too did the ways in which I approached the research. So in doing activist or politically engaged research, it seems inevitable that the participants, the researcher and the research itself will all be affected, sometimes very negatively and sometimes very positively, in the process. If the process of research is considered as important as the result then the former may also be offered up for analysis to readers. That I affected the women who participated and that they affected me is not necessarily a negative point, as long as it is not hidden. All researchers do this; the point of course is to value this aspect

of the research and reflect on its implications. Further, as I discuss in Chapter Eight, my own experiences of being radicalized in the research process gave me particular insight into the processes of identity formation, and the creation of politicized subjects. Having outlined some of the challenges associated with this type of methodology, I would not necessarily argue for it to be done differently. My direct involvement in the struggles I was researching was invaluable in terms of learning. So in that way, despite associated difficulties, I still believe that attempting to bring activism and academia together in research will result in more insightful, meaningful, and hopefully useful research, in terms of the struggle for social change, which, as I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, is the aim of this particular research. The conceptual framework within which I approached the research is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Two endnotes

1. Compared to research, for example, that is carried out for, and directed by, another party.
2. The meaning and understanding of the term "act responsibly" will of course vary from person to person, situation to situation. Here, I understood it to mean that given that my results could be used in various ways and/or that research participants took certain risks in discussing the problems in anti-violence organizing, I would not be cavalier in my doing and subsequent use of the research.
3. By front-line work I mean working directly with service users in a sexual assault centre or a women's shelter.
4. See for example, Gillian Walker's (1990) discussion of the 1982 hearings on "wife-battering" by the Standing Committee on Social Policy Development of the Ontario Legislature.
5. The Panel on Violence Against Women was a nine-member, government appointed panel whose role was to investigate violence against women, nationally, and create a comprehensive action plan for ending violence against women. The panel encountered much criticism and resistance from women's groups, including NAC, Congress of Black Women of Canada, the DisAbled Women's

Network of Canada and the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (Hamilton Spectator 1992a.). Locally, Hamilton's Justice For Women Coalition were amongst those who challenged the panel to redirect its \$10 million funding into much-needed action.

6. The timing of the research was fortuitous in that my interests in the regulation of anti-violence activism emerged during a time in which local activists were re-assessing "the movement" and various strategies for change. In this way, there was little conflict between my interests and the suggestions of activists.
7. I am using "white" after Ruth Frankenberg (1993: 1) who argues, "Whiteness...has a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint," a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed". For those activists who identified as Jewish, their experience of whiteness obviously differed from non-Jewish activists. As one activist explained: "I do not define myself as a woman of colour, absolutely not, but I also don't define myself as white. However, when it comes to looking at privilege in that area...I don't define myself as white I define myself as Jew, which is a different category. It's not a colour but it's not white" (activist 17).
8. That is, in terms of their relationship to the means of production, or their income and employment levels, for example.
9. I am using this term rather than the more commonly-used "able-bodied", after many disabled feminist writers who argue that non-disabled more accurately describes women who are neither physically nor mentally disabled.
10. The interviews took place during an extremely tumultuous time in Hamilton and several of the participants were either fired or resigned shortly before or after their interview (although there was no connection between these two events); this period is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.
11. A Take Back The Night March is organized in hundreds of towns and cities across North America annually. Women and children march, usually without the company of men, in a symbolic reclaiming of the streets, protesting against violence against women.
12. Activists determined the location of the interview; for example, some did not want to be interviewed at their workplace and some found it convenient to be interviewed at home.
13. Confidentiality is also the reason for the activists being identified only by number. I realize this is not the most satisfactory form of identification; however, the "community" is small enough that descriptions such as "shelter worker, lesbian, mid-40s" would threaten the promised confidentiality. Activists were numbered quite simply, that is, in order of being interviewed.

CHAPTER THREE. NICE WHITE GIRLS DON'T: UNDERSTANDING THE HETEROSEXUAL REGIME

The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated.

Judith Butler (1990: 148)

3.1 Introduction

The main premise of the argument presented below is that trying to make sense of women's oppression and its resiliency in the face of feminist activism without taking the political regime of heterosexuality into account, is like "trying to explain why a marble stops rolling without taking friction into account" (Frye 1983: xi). Thus, in critically analyzing certain geographies of oppression and resistance, my point of departure from many other feminist geographers/feminist theorists is in problematizing heterosexuality, analytically and politically¹.

Both the recent engagements with post-modernism (for example Bondi 1990a; Butler 1990; Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Nicholson 1990), and critical challenges by those women who consider themselves situated outside the white, middle-class, heterosexual, and non-disabled subject, that has been, until recently, Western feminism's constituency, create exciting opportunities in feminist geography (and many other places) for this departure (Bell *et al.* 1994; Bell and Valentine 1995a.; Chouinard and Grant 1995; Duncan forthcoming; Peake 1993; and Valentine 1993a.). I view these opportunities as

creating space for a radical destabilizing of much that has been taken for granted about "sex", "gender" and "sexuality" (such as an uncomplicated connection between gender and desire). As I argue below, my situatedness as a lesbian, that is, as a runaway from my class (Wittig 1992), outside of the binary ordering opposition of man\woman, allows me to map my world quite differently.

In problematizing some of the central categories of sexist social relations (such as sex, gender, sexuality, woman, man, femininity, and masculinity), I am drawn to Kobayashi and Peake's (1994: 226) proposed political strategy of "unnatural discourse", which "provides for a dismantling of naturalized categories and the imposition of disorder upon the orderly and normative worlds of sexism and racism, in which differences are constructed, organized and naturalized". This strategy is especially appealing for a specifically lesbian analysis since, as I illustrate below, heterosexuality has been so thoroughly naturalized that a social world in the absence of this particular ordering principle is hard to even imagine (for what are Women and what are Men if they are not heterosexual categories?²).

I begin by engaging with some current feminist dilemmas over the analytical and political efficacy of central feminist categories such as "woman" and "gender", and go on, in the second section, to argue for a retention of these categories as reformulated by a radical lesbianism. Women and Men are presented as categories that only make sense within the *heterosexual regime*,³ the reproduction of which, it is argued, must be

interrupted if the material and ideological subordination of females by males is to be seriously contested.

Using the arguments presented in the first two sections, I explore various processes of sexist oppression and feminist resistance, with reference to the literature in geography and beyond. I do this with a particular emphasis on men's violence against females, the state and organized feminist anti-violence activism.

3.2 Contested categories: what's left to do?

Challenges by lesbians, women of colour, disabled women, and poor women have forced much of Western feminist thought and action to recognize their subject as a mostly white, heterosexual, middle-class, and non-disabled one. Combined with the challenges of various streams of post-structuralism and post-modernism (whether feminist or not) feminism is faced with far reaching dilemmas. As the category "woman" has been destabilized, and, "what we have seen as the unifying objects of our research dissolve before our eyes" (Gibson-Graham 1994: 206), feminism has been forced to deal with the possibility that gender may not have the analytical or mobilizing power once thought. It is as a lesbian that these challenges are particularly welcome, for several reasons. As Jane Flax argues (1990: 41), they "seek to distance us from and make us sceptical about the beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary Western culture". This scepticism was obviously less problematic when, as feminist academics, we were

challenging androcentric metanarratives, rather than our own; nonetheless, the destabilizing of some of our taken-for-granted central categories hardly sounds the death-knell for feminist political analyses. In unnaturalizing the category Woman, it does not necessarily follow that there is no longer such a body; rather, that what that body is should no longer be assumed. Historically, the use of the category of gender as basic in all women's experiences has minimized the differences amongst us and the category Woman has tended to be developed from the experiences of only a small group of females. Thus many of us who differ from the white, heterosexual, middle-class, non-disabled model have found ourselves ill-served by such a conception. However, rather than throw these categories out as oppressive and silencing fictions, they can be used to investigate some of the ways in which these fictions have been central to sexist (and racist, and classist, and ableist) oppression. That is, it is precisely from that place of difference, from that place of being *beyond* what women should be, that we can uncover the regulations which work to delimit Womanly roles, attitudes, behaviours, and appearances.

For example, as a lesbian geographer previously faced with the category "women" in feminist geography I would simply preface it with "heterosexual" and wonder how long it would take for the heterosexist assumptions of most of the literature to be acknowledged and rectified. I now find that rather than trying to *expand* the category to include my experiences (for example, by illustrating that not all women of child-bearing age need to consider contraception) it is more illuminating to recognize that when feminist

geographers have talked about "women" they really did mean Women. That is, in the phrase "heterosexual women", "heterosexual" is redundant because Woman = Heterosexual (and further that Woman has usually signified white and non-disabled). Thus, unnaturalizing discourse allows us to map the contours of oppression in new, not already imagined ways (Kobayashi and Peake 1994), by encouraging us to investigate the *purpose* of categories, of dualisms, and of constructions of difference. For it is in the investigation of what this fiction of Woman signifies and what it excludes that I can recognize that from where I am, the conceptual separation of sex, gender, and sexuality in mainstream feminism may in fact be *clouding* some of the central processes of sexist oppression rather than *illuminating* them. The separation of these concepts suggests sex as a "natural" categorization, and gender as a social construct. What this muddies is the fact that the category of sex (female/male) is not simply a "natural" difference upon which cultural differences are built, but is immediately, at once, also those cultural differences. In a society where heteronormative stipulations mean that females and males are hierarchically and oppositely positioned, what is the difference between the categories sex and gender? Gender formation is based on a "naturalized" sex difference: one has to be "either/or" both biologically and sexually (that is, if you are female, you will be a girl, and a woman, and all of the aspects of categorization that entails). Those of us who refuse to be "either/or" are understood (in dominant discourses) to be engaging in, for example, "unnatural acts", "unwomanly behaviour", and "an immature sexuality". As Judith Butler (1990: 17), argues:

The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist" - that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not "follow" from either sex or gender. "Follow" in this context is a political relation of entailment instituted by the cultural laws that establish and regulate the shape and meaning of sexuality. Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of "gender identities" fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. Their persistence and proliferation, however, provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix or intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender dis-order.

This scepticism, this questioning of much that has been taken for granted opens up new possibilities for assessing persistent processes of oppression and strategies of resistance. As Julia Cream (1995b.: 158) notes, "The sexes/genders/desires (and races) that make sense to us are not natural or inevitable".

Further, while these challenges are welcome in that they force us to recognize contingency, partiality, diversity and plurality, they do not necessarily mean there is no "big picture". What it does mean is that this picture can no longer be accepted as everywoman's picture, and feminist geographers are well placed to investigate the variation of the picture. Recognizing that how I experience gender (and/or contest it) as a white, non-disabled, formally-educated lesbian is different from how other females experience (and/or contest it), does not necessarily mean that the patterns created in both pictures by the processes of gender formation (in a society in which one gender is constituted as dominant and the other one as subordinate), can no longer be *mapped*. As Marilyn Frye (1992: 66) contends, "Patterns sketched in broad strokes make sense of our

experiences, but not in a single unified or uniform sense. They make our different experiences intelligible in different ways. Naming patterns is like charting the prevailing winds over a continent; there is no implication that every individual and item on the landscape is identically affected".

There have also been concerns that these multiple challenges to the category "woman" leave feminist political mobilizing without a constituency (Di Stefano 1990). However, the possibilities of mobilizing are expanded *if* these challenges force us to investigate *whose* goals are being articulated by "the movement". That is, one could perhaps argue that the most basic, agreeable-upon goal of "feminism" is to end women's oppression and yet what that means cannot be taken for granted. For white feminism, it has not historically meant the elimination of racism, a critical part of women's oppression. For many radical lesbians the political struggle against oppressions must *include* the eradication of the categories and classes Women and Men. Thus, as long as white feminists view racism as something outside of our mandate, or as long as heterosexual feminists hold onto the naturalness and inevitability of widespread female heterosexuality then different analyses and therefore different goals do exist. However, these differences should not be feared but engaged with. For it is in the spaces of difference that we might find stronger bases for effective political mobilizing than gender has been. I am arguing then that allowing for multiple feminisms does not necessarily lead down the slippery slope into the relativist quagmire. Multiple feminisms and "the big picture" can exist in a creative, albeit difficult, relationship. As Susan Bordo (1990:151) argues:

If generalization is only permitted in the *absence* of multiple inflections or interpretive possibilities, then cultural generalizations of *any* sort - about race, about class, about historical eras - are ruled out. What remains is a universe composed entirely of counterexamples, in which the way men and women see the world is purely as *particular individuals*, shaped by the unique configurations that form that particularity.

From the place of a particularly lesbian analysis I am suspicious of the argument that generalizations are *in principle* essentialist precisely because this disallows us, prevents us, from mapping those processes which create the heterosexual categories of Women and Men. These processes are discussed in greater detail below.

3.3 Manufacturing the sex classes

Monique Wittig (1992: 27) argues that:

although it has been accepted in recent years that there is no such thing as nature, that everything is culture, there remains within that culture a core of nature which resists examination, a relationship excluded from the social in the analysis - a relationship whose characteristic is ineluctability in culture, as well as in nature, and which is the heterosexual relationship.

Although the level of *acceptance* of this notion, that everything is culture, is debatable, her point is a critical one. Why has this "core of nature" resisted examination? Here I will argue that it has resisted examination because it is the political regime through which females are subordinated to males, and that for this regime to be reproduced, and for it to be reproduced with the least resistance, the relationship must appear natural, inevitable, the way it was and the way it always will be⁴. That is, in white, Western society, the political regime of heterosexuality is the system whereby humans are categorized as either

female or male and these two categories, and bodies, must be sexually attracted to each other, clearly different from each other, and must display certain behaviours and desires.

Thus, women are *taught* from a very early age, through institutions such as the family, the media, and health, education, and legal systems, *how to be a woman*. We learn that as females, we should be good girls, then good women, then good wives and good mothers. We learn that we should not get angry, we should be self-sacrificing, and pleasing to men. We are socialized into horizontal hostility where we are taught not to view each other as allies, but as competition. Heterosexuality divides females from females literally and figuratively, bonding us individually with members of the oppressive group. Females in white western culture are taught all these lessons very young and learn quickly about the critical importance of the approval of men and that securing a man may be a more important goal than excelling at sports, obtaining a thorough education, or securing employment⁵. These messages congeal to become part and parcel of what a Woman is. These desires that we are taught to have, then become what defines a Woman. Judith Butler (1990: 140) argues that "gender is...a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions - and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction "compels" our belief in its necessity and its naturalness". This includes corporeality.⁶

We are also taught that by "doing gender right" we may in fact mitigate our oppression by squeezing into the boundaries of this regulatory fiction - that as long as we

are all of these things then we may avoid the displeasure of men, individually or collectively, and it is when we transgress those boundaries that we are punished. This is illustrated in commonplace institutional messages such as "lock your doors", "stay off the streets", "dress modestly", "don't expect to work in men's jobs", and "be sure to communicate clearly on dates". That this system is in fact a *system*, or regime, is masked through its naturalization and through the characterization of transgressions, such as lesbian existence, as unnatural and abnormal. What women are *taught* to be, then, simply becomes what women *are*. A coherent and stable relationship between sex, gender, sexuality, and desire is manufactured. As lesbian theorist Marilyn Frye (1983: 34) argues: "For efficient subordination, what's wanted is that structure not appear to be a cultural artifact kept in place by human decision or custom, but that it appear *natural* - that it appear to be a quite direct consequence of the facts about the beast that are beyond the scope of human manipulation or revision".

What I am arguing then is that as females, we are *manufactured* into Women, and that this process is critical for the working of sexist oppression. For in order that males dominate females on a massive scale, they must have more or less constant access to females, and this right must seem natural. Part of "doing gender right" is being heterosexual, which for Women, entails much more than a sexual identity. The heterosexual regime is the system by which the appropriation of women takes place. The oppositional categories man\woman carry with them a set of discourses, practices and

relations which operate to organize human relationships as heterosexual. As Kobayashi and Peake (1994: 227) write:

Dualistic thinking organizes the world according to oppositional categories- man/nature; culture/nature; man/woman; state/civil society; theory/practice; black/white - that order our existence. Such categories are more than a means of imposing intellectual order; they also exert and maintain political power and they almost always involve the privileging of one over the other (Collins, 1990, p.225).

The sex\gender distinction, then, sex as biological, gender as its related social construction, has not only allowed humans to believe that we can change society without eradicating the notion of essential difference (ibid.: 233-234), but has allowed much of mainstream Canadian feminism to imagine that we can end Women's subordination without the eradication of the political regime of heterosexuality. However, many lesbian theorists have challenged this notion (Bunch 1975; Butler 1990; Frye 1983, 1992; Hoagland 1988; Turcotte 1996; Wittig 1992). The processes whereby the heterosexual regime is reproduced are discussed in the following section.

3.4 Mapping the heterosexual regime

I want to suggest that one can *map* the contours of the heterosexual regime, those ideological and material processes whereby it is produced, reproduced and contested, most clearly through an investigation of spaces and struggles of resistance in and against it. This mapping is made all the more difficult by heterosexuality being, for the most part, unmarked. That is, there is little recognition (beyond critical lesbian interventions in this

area) that we are surrounded by heterosexuality as normative and regulatory; on television and radio, in films, in church, and in the assumptions of the health, legal, and social services systems. In investigating ways in which women challenge the boundaries of acceptable Womanly behaviours, desires, attitudes, activities, and employment, the power relations, practices and ideas which work to order society as heterosexual (and therefore in a gender hierarchy) are uncovered. For example, lesbians who come out risk various forms of disciplining and punishment, including loss of friends, family, credibility, employment, and housing and/or threats, harassment, ridicule, and violence. Feminists, who challenge the "place(s)" of Women, are identified as "unfeminine", "loud", "brash", "manhaters", "dykes", "unwomanly", "angry", "unladylike", "unsatisfied" and "frigid" - all beyond what Women should be. These terms illustrate the existence of rules and regulations on "doing gender right". In making and remaking ourselves through strategies of resistance, we resist the manufacturing processes of the heterosexual regime. As Monique Wittig (1992: 13) points out, the "refusal to become (or to remain) heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or a women, consciously or not. For a lesbian this goes further than the refusal of the *role* "woman." It is the refusal of the economic, ideological, and political power of a man".

We can understand this regime then as a form of ruling, and as part of that broader set of relations of ruling which maintain interlocking geographies of oppression such as racism, classism, and ableism. Discussing struggles in and against a particular form of ruling (the law), Vera Chouinard (1994: 431) argues that

legal phenomena are the outcome of multifaceted processes, in which the living of material relations in and against law is translated, through past and present experiences of being a subject of law, into particular individual and collective legal subjectivities 'in motion'. These in turn are, through interpretation and discourse, translated into particular individual and collective practices: everything from ignoring law as far as possible, to incorporation into the existing power structure of the legal system and legal struggles, to radical action aimed at opening up the system and struggles to those disadvantaged groups at 'the margins' of law.

I want to suggest that Chouinard's insistence on the embeddedness of power relations (legal or otherwise) is critical when thinking of the ways in which females are regulated (and contest this regulation) through the heterosexual regime. That is, in the conceptualization I am proposing, heterosexual ruling does not take place through discursive or conceptual processes alone. Although the power of ideological procedures of the heterosexual regime to enlist females in our own ordering cannot be overstated, other tactics are also required. This conceptualization, allows us to understand, for example, men's violence against females as one of the many material processes used to maintain a sex\gender hierarchy. This insists on the recognition that in "democratic" societies such as Canada, it is not only ideological procedures which maintain women's place. For example, Gillian Walker, in her study of the conceptual politics of particular feminist anti-violence struggles in Canada focusses on the ideological features of social organization, arguing that:

Society as we know it is not random but organized, ordered, and governed, with varying degrees of efficiency perhaps, but nonetheless structured. The form of ruling goes beyond formal governments and the notably coercive apparatus of law and order. Under such a regime, as opposed to overtly totalitarian ones we are not ruled on a day-to-day basis by terror but by

ideological procedures - ways of thinking, understanding, and acting - that enlists us in our own ordering (1990: 8).

This kind of separation of the ideological and the material masks the extent to which gender hierarchy/heterosexual rule *is* maintained by force. For example (and to use Walker's example) I would argue that Women *are* in fact ruled on a day-to-day basis by terror which may be more or less mitigated by individual and/or collective "senses of selves" (Chouinard 1994). The decisions of lesbians, for example, to identify as such in different spaces is based partly on individual and shared past and present *lived* experiences and knowledges of *material* processes of discipline and punishment: including losing custody of children, electroshock "therapy", enforced poverty as young females, police brutality, job loss, "bashing", and limited access to housing. 1,435 women in Canada were killed by male partners (husbands, common-law, boyfriends) between 1974 and 1992 (Canadian Press 1996). This kind of knowledge is added to women's direct experiences of violence in their decisions on whether or not or how to challenge their "place" in the heterosexual family. The material and ideological always interact in the social construction of reality (Frye 1983). As Wittig (1992: 25) writes:

When we use the overgeneralizing term "ideology" to designate all the discourses of the dominating group, we relegate these discourses to the domain of Irreal Ideas; we forget the material (physical) violence that they directly do to the oppressed people, a violence produced by the abstract and "scientific" discourses as well as by the discourses of the mass media.

In thinking about the ways in which individual and collective identities are created in the spaces of resistance to the reproduction of heterosexual rule, it is important to emphasize

that there is not a simple connection between *being* and *identity*. That is, in accepting Wittig's conceptualization of lesbians as runaways from the class of women, I am not attempting, in Judith Butler's terms, to replace one regulatory fiction (Woman) with another (Lesbian). Being lesbian does not automatically suggest a counter-hegemonic political identity. Identities are created and regulated, struggled over and contested. I agree with Shane Phelan (1993: 773) when she argues that "perhaps there is no single core to lesbian identity and thus...our identities rely on politics rather than ontology - indeed...ontology is itself an effect of politics". This conceptualization reflects a move within feminist politics and theory away from essentialist notions of identity formation. Historically, organizing along lines of identity - for example sexuality, class, race - has been important in providing spaces within feminism (and other social movements) for groups, especially marginalized ones, to name and interrogate difference. As feminist geographer Liz Bondi (1993: 95) notes:

This [identity politics] was crucial in order to challenge the dominant perception of women's experience. The flaw was to remain too close to liberal humanism by assuming that knowledge flowed directly from experience and that experience ensured the authenticity of knowledge. This implies that, rather than being constructed, experience has the quality of an irreducible essence, which reside in such characteristics as female-ness, middle-class-ness, white-ness and so on. It also invokes a kind of personal immunity in that to authenticate knowledge in terms of personal experience is to make one's ideas and one's being indistinguishable. Consequently, anyone who criticizes knowledge generated in this way is liable to be accused of attacking the person from whom it originated.

Essentialist notions of identity formation thus papered over differences *within* categories; within the group "women of colour", or "working-class women", or "lesbians". Here I am

arguing that it is the conscious refusal to "do gender right", the refusal to be a Woman, to do the things Women should do, behave the ways Women should behave, which constitutes a cardinal transgression in the heterosexual regime. Thus, my use of "transgression" indicates much more than symbolic changes and should not be understood as simply changing styles. Females who transgress (who may or may not be lesbians), materially and symbolically, become UnWomen. In doing this, they expose the manufactured nature of the category Women; lesbians are not intelligible within the heterosexual regime and must be denied. As Constance Durocher (1990: 16) explains:

By refusing to have sexual relationships with men, lesbians escape from an important aspect of appropriation in the private sphere: they avoid the physical and mental control that men exert on women in their private lives. If lesbians, who are part of the class women, escape from certain major forms of appropriation in their personal lives, then that means that it is indeed possible to do so. Our existence can in a sense prove that the appropriation of women results from a social relationship and not a biological fact, that the category "women" is a social construct and not a natural group.

We can conceptualize traditional sites of feminist and/or lesbian activism as spaces of political resistance in and against the heterosexual regime. The struggles over what types of activism will go on in these particular spaces and over how these spaces are regulated (externally and internally) can be understood geographically. That is, the form and outcome of these struggles *matter* for identity formation in place, and for local capacities for political mobilization. As William Carroll (1992: 10) notes, in his discussion of counter-hegemonic social movements:

By mobilizing resources and acting outside established political structures of state, parties, and interest groups, movements create independent organizational bases for advancing alternatives. By contesting the discourses of capital, patriarchy, industrialism, racism and colonialism, and heterosexism, movements destabilize the identities of compliant worker, subservient wife, or closeted queer and create new ways of thinking about ourselves and the world around us.

Activists' individual and collective experiences of resistance and subjection to heterosexual rule, and their understandings of these experiences, affect the possibilities for different types of spaces to be ones of resistance or incorporation. It affects their capacities in place, for challenging the material and ideological processes of the political regime of heterosexuality.

This conceptualisation of the political regime of heterosexuality as a set of ruling relations, practices and ideas, and of struggles over feminist activism as struggles over the form and function of particular spaces of political resistance adds to current ways of viewing men's violence against females and organized feminist resistance. This conceptualization recognizes that men's violence against females is a critical part of the processes that manufacture Women, and feminist activism can be thought of as resistance to this process; the degree and type of resistance being affected by a multitude of lived relations in particular places and times. Just what can be mapped from this particular vantage point is explored in the following sections.

3.5 Enforcing heterosexual rule: men's violence against females

Here I am arguing for a conception of men's violence against females as one set of processes involved in the manufacturing of Women. Hence, I am not so much interested in the nature of men's violence, which has been dealt with extensively elsewhere (e.g. Bart and Moran 1993; Brownmiller 1975; Clark and Lewis 1977; Dobash and Dobash 1970, 1992; Gordon and Reiger 1989; Guberman and Wolfe 1985; Hall 1985; Hanmer and Maynard 1989; MacKinnon 1989; MacLeod 1989; Schechter 1982; Smart 1989; Walker 1990; in geography, see Grant 1988; Pain 1991; Valentine 1989), but with how competing discourses on men's violence against females might be understood as concrete struggles over the reproduction of gender hierarchy. That is, dominant discourses on men's violence against females (such as those manifested in relations of law, 'mental health', the 'helping professions' and social services, and discussed in the following chapters), compete with each other and with varied feminist discourses for legitimacy. What that set of variable discourses which can be broadly labelled feminist are competing with, are a set of discourses, that although *claiming* to have moved very far from such early woman-hating, victim-blaming classics as Amir's (1971) Patterns in Forcible Rape, in which he introduced the theory of "victim-precipitated rape", *actually* remain very much informed by the "precipitation" myth. This notion, that females are the cause of men's violence, is central to the reproduction of sexist oppression. It can be seen in such commonly held societal notions as: if only she had not done that, or had not been there, or at that time, or wearing that dress, or if only she had not provoked him, or ran around

on him, or left him, or taken away his children, or.... Similarly, in legal relations, for example, the positive-outcome-rape-scenario (MacKinnon 1989), is what defence lawyers are trying to prove when sexual assault trials are based on notions of consent and force. Both MacKinnon (1989) and Carol Smart (1989) have illustrated that the treatment of rape in law is completely consistent with the treatment of female sexuality as problematic in a phallogocentric culture⁷.

These discourses (and the disjunctures between them and women's lived experiences) are extremely instructive in that they provide valuable clues as to the parameters of the social reality which is being constructed, contested and reconstructed. Various feminist approaches to men's violence against females, in attempting to deal with these disjunctures have challenged dominant discourses. For example, Jan Barnsley argues that a feminist analysis:

begins with women's experience and asserts that it is men who beat women, that they do so because they are allowed to, because the family/marriage is considered by society to be a private institution in which one must rarely, if ever, intervene; and because violence is accepted, with few exceptions, as an appropriate means of control to uphold men's authority over women. It also asserts that misogyny and women's economic dependence on men are mutually reinforcing (1988: 19).

However, this insight that recognizes violence as a "means of control to uphold men's authority over women", has both: a) often failed to be taken to its logical conclusion (that is, since heterosexuality is fully implicated in the system of men's violence against females, then heterosexuality must be challenged), and, b) lost ground, in much of mainstream feminist praxis. Feminist conceptualizations of men's violence against females

has varied over time. For example in Canada, Lorrene Clark and Deborah Lewis (1977: 28) provided a very early connection between men's violence and the reproduction of sexist oppression. They argued that :

In order to preserve and enhance male supremacy, rape must be both possible and probable; it must remind women who has power over them and keep them solidly in their place. Thus, it is hardly surprising that practices surrounding rape are what they are; to preserve the sexual *status quo*, it is not accidental, but *necessary*, that they remain so.

However, despite a continuing sophistication of feminist approaches to men's violence over the last two decades (discussed in Chapter Six), this radical notion - that men's violence is *necessary* to the reproduction of sexist oppression - has been submerged through two main trends: 1) the marginalization and silencing of explicitly *lesbian* analyses and presence in feminist anti-violence activism; and 2) the collision of the discourses of feminisms and the "ruling apparatus" (Walker, 1990) in complicated processes of incorporation.

The former has resulted in mainstream feminist analyses losing the clarity afforded by certain *locations* of resistance in and against the heterosexual regime. This loss is starkly illustrated in such work as the Dobashes' otherwise impressive study of the "battered women's movements" of the United States and Britain. In their treatment of the issue of "sexual preference", they argue that:

Within the movement, it has also been important to acknowledge the right of lesbian women to live the *private life* they choose and to combat homophobia within the movement and thus decrease the possibility that the dominant group of heterosexual women will not exclude or purge lesbians in order to satisfy external or, sometimes, internal demands that the

legitimacy of the movement be signified by the real or perceived conformity of all activists to an idealized family lifestyle. *While one's personal, sexual preference may have little direct connection to the issue, the provision of shelters, funding, legislation, running a national organization or public speaking*, it remains an issue because of public pressure to deny the existence of lesbians and gay men and to deny their achievements and contributions to community life (1992: 55) (my emphasis).

This distorted conceptualization of sexuality (as something private and unconnected to the issue) illustrates the disjunctures that can occur, in part, as a result of the conceptual separation of "sex", "gender", and "sexuality". In other words, mainstream feminism can recognize that in order to end men's violence against females then its "cause", that is, sexism, or gender inequality, must be what is challenged; however, this analysis is not taken to its logical conclusion which is that in order to eliminate sexism, or gender inequality, the political regime of heterosexuality, which orders humans into opposites and unequals, must be ended. I am arguing that mainstream feminism's conceptualizations of "sexism" or "gender inequality" are bounded by what is *mappable* from locations clearly within the heterosexual regime. Activists are variably located in and against the heterosexual regime - all the way from radical separatists to women who do not recognize that heterosexuality is anything other than an individual sexual choice - and there are differences in what is mappable from different locations. I want to re-emphasize that this goes beyond a "standpoint theory" approach in that it problematizes the relationship between experience and politics. In suppressing the ideas, experiences and practices of those females who have self-consciously transgressed the boundaries of the heterosexual

regime, who have most clearly challenged the "doing" of gender, mainstream feminism has lost a critical part of the puzzle.

The latter trend of political struggles between feminist and state discourses on this issue is critical in a myriad of ways, not least of which are that different conceptual politics and practices have a) informed mainstream feminism's increasingly complicated interactions with "the state"; and, b) affected the possibilities for the formation of radical identities, and the capacities for collective action in particular spaces. These points are explored in the next two sections.

3.6 Coming to terms with the problematic of the state

Gillian Walker (1990) noted that for feminism in Canada "the state" had been one of the most important issues of the 1980s and would continue to be in this decade. How to understand "the state" and incorporate this understanding into feminist political praxis is an ongoing problem for organized feminist anti-violence activism. That is, many feminist writers on the complex interactions of feminist anti-violence struggles and various state relations agree that evidence points to a silencing of some of the more radical messages that feminist analyses brought to competing discourses on men's violence against females, as relations between "the state" and "the anti-violence movement" have expanded (for example, Dobash and Dobash 1992; Schechter 1982; Timmins 1995; Walker 1990).

Feminism, is of course, not alone in struggling with how best to understand and interact with "the state". All counter-hegemonic struggles have to grapple, to varying degrees, with questions of strategy *vis a vis* the state. For example, whether to challenge political relations from within the system, or outside it, whether to seek state funding, and risk regulation, or avoid it and risk volunteer burnout. In the early 1980s, Catherine MacKinnon was arguing that in the face of feminist confusion *vis a vis* the state, feminists should build theory from our own experiences and that "the question for feminism, for the first time on its own terms, is: what is this state from women's point of view?" (1983: 644-645). Twenty years later I still find this question most fruitful (although MacKinnon's approach to the state has been criticized as monolithic) in that it allows us to conceptualize the state from women's experiences, that are of power relations which regulate our lives in often contradictory ways. As Wendy Brown (1992: 12) writes: "Despite the almost unavoidable tendency to speak of the state as an "it", the domain we call the state is not a thing, system or subject but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices, cohabiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relation with one another". This exemplifies more recent conceptualizations of the state, which have moved away from monolithic, grand theories of the state towards more nuanced, situated approaches which suggest the state can be thought of as relations of ruling and contested terrain (e.g. Chouinard 1994; Ng *et al* 1990; Walker 1990). These conceptualizations suggest the importance of avoiding approaches to the state which view it as always and everywhere acting

instrumentally in the interests of men (or capital, and so on) and which are unable to explain contradictory actions and experiences of the state (for example, funding sexual assault centres whilst at the same time failing to ensure "justice" for victims of men's violence).

Understanding the state as a set of relations allows us to think of the ways in which state practices, ideas, and regulations help to order society as heterosexual, and to think of ways in which these relations might be challenged. What kinds of subjects are produced by funding bodies' stipulations against certain types of feminist political practices in spaces of political resistance? What does the removal of these practices mean for identity formation and capacities for struggle in those spaces? In what ways do state relations which insist on the heterosexual family model reduce the possibilities for the formation of female identities outside of the limits of heterosexual regulation?

I want to suggest that a "contested terrain" conceptualisation is useful for understanding the role that state relations play in the reproduction of the heterosexual regime. It allows us to consider the ramifications (for feminist resistance) of male power being increasingly wielded in and through the state, rather than through individual men (Walby 1990). Wendy Brown (1992: 11-12) goes on to pose a question which, although referring to the United States, is critical to approaching the state:

Do these expanding relationships produce only "active political subjects", or do they also produce regulated, subordinated, and disciplined state subjects....Considering these questions in a more ecumenical register, in what ways might women's deepening involvement with the state entail exchanging dependence on individual men for regulation by contemporary

institutionalized processes of male domination? And how might the abstractness, the ostensible neutrality, and the lack of a body and face in the latter, help to disguise these processes, inhibiting or diluting women's consciousness of their situation qua women, thereby circumscribing prospects of substantive feminist political change?

What has been missing in some feminist anti-violence approaches to "the state" has been a thorough examination and recognition of the complex ways in which the lived relations of "the state" - as part of the heterosexual regime - affect differently located females' individual and collective capacities to contest the reproduction of these relations. I want to suggest that these processes can be better understood through an investigation of specific struggles in particular locations.

3.7 Nice white girls don't: feminist activism as UnWomanly practices

The approach outlined above can help us to conceptualize feminist activism as UnWomanly practices and anti-violence activism as a *particular* type of UnWomanly practice. That is, within the conceptual framework I have sketched, this type of activism can be understood as most directly and openly challenging the rights of Men *vis-a-vis* Women in a sexist society. Feminist anti-violence activism, as a set of practices and ideas, exposes the fact that men can use violence against their own Women (wives, daughters, nieces, lovers, domestic workers, prostitutes) with less risk of sanctions than when they use it against other Men's women (mitigated, of course by other systems of oppression) and/or other men. Thus, this type of feminist activism attempts, to greater or lesser degrees, to contest the reproduction of the heterosexual regime. It is fruitful to look at

those feminist anti-violence practices which are most explicitly punished and disciplined, in order to map those strategies which may most effectively constitute substantive challenges to the reproduction of sexist oppression. This is because the rules and regulations of the heterosexual regime operate, albeit in contradictory, complex and contestable ways, to punish and discipline certain types of practices and ideas that most clearly transgress the boundaries of what is intelligible in a society ordered on the man\woman dualism. This conceptualization can help to make sense, for example, of the ways in which certain spaces of organized feminist activism have become "de-radicalized" (see Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1990), for example it can help us understand those processes which have transformed many rape crisis centres and shelters from their previous place as *the* sites of radical organized challenges to men's violence to state-controlled centres of service provision.

This different way of imagining can allow for a mapping of feminist activism as UnWomanly Acts; illustrated, for example by the so-called "lesbian question" and "man question". That is, activities that effectively challenge the naturalness of the heterosexual regime (whether real or imagined, for example rape crisis centres "turning women into lesbians" or being "man-hating") are condemned by funding bodies and "the public". In order to maintain legitimacy, feminist organizations such as shelters and rape crisis centres must therefore illustrate what they are not: a) they must not be lesbian; and b) they must not be disloyal to men ("anti-men", "anti-police").

The lesbian threat is a classic way of controlling the limits of Women's capacities to contest the reproduction of sexist oppression. As Marilyn Frye (1992: 124-125) writes:

The connection between lesbianism and feminism has made many women nervous. Many believe that if they associate themselves with feminism they will be associated with lesbianism, and for some that is a frightening, even a disgusting thought. There is fear of being suspected of approving of lesbians or lesbianism, fear of being identified with lesbians, fear of being suspected of being a lesbian, fear of being a lesbian. And there's anger at lesbians for being present, active and assertive as feminists, and for insisting on a connection between lesbianism and feminism.

and that:

The message of these exchanges [women being called lesbians because of any number of behaviours] is clearly that a woman who is a feminist or does anything or betrays any attitude or desire which expresses her autonomy or deviance from conventional femininity is a lesbian.

Challenging the stipulation that Women must not be disloyal to Men, constitutes a cardinal transgression and is clearly illustrated, for example, by the annual furore (locally⁸ and elsewhere) over the exclusion of men from the Take Back the Night March and in less public daily struggles over the rights of Men to access services of sexual assault centres, the rights of Men to serve on Boards and staff of these centres and shelters, and the provision of counselling programmes for abusive men.

In conclusion then, I have argued that much of mainstream feminism is blocked from even imagining the possibilities of certain political praxis because of the naturalizing of female heterosexuality and with it, many relations of sexist oppression. I am suggesting that some of the most apparent disjunctures between a) lived relations of, b) mainstream feminist discourses on, and c) mainstream feminist challenges to, men's violence against

females can be better understood in light of the arguments presented above. This explicitly *lesbian* and *geographic* approach - unnaturalizing the heterosexual regime, and examining the importance of spaces of resistance, and individual and collective locations in and against it - adds an important piece to the puzzle of understanding and effecting systemic social change. This conceptualization adds to other major analyses of organized, feminist, anti-violence activism (such as Dobash and Dobash 1992; Timmins 1995; and Walker 1990) in its insistence on the importance of analyzing the role of the heterosexual regime in shaping local political struggles and experiences. The local geographies of oppression and resistance to which I applied this particular analysis, are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Three endnotes

1. As I have argued elsewhere (Chouinard and Grant 1995), the majority of the work on sexuality in both feminist and lesbian and gay geographies, has focussed on the socio-spatial aspects of lesbian and/or gay sexuality rather than on heterosexuality as a central organizing principle of women's oppression (but see Bell and Valentine 1995a; McDowell 1995; Peake 1993; and Valentine 1993c).
2. In using the terms females and males, Women and Men and using lower case for the former, upper case for the latter, I am trying to distinguish between that which is born, and that which is made. I recognize that this is not totally satisfactory since biology is dynamic rather than static and since the terms female and male are often understood to signify more than a different set of chromosomes. Still, the capitalization is intended to remind the reader I am discussing social/political categories rather than "natural" groupings.
3. I am using this term rather than *heterosexism* and/or *heterosexuality*, and am using it after radical lesbians such as Monique Wittig and Louise Turcotte. It is used interchangeably with *the political regime of heterosexuality* throughout the text. Similarly, Judith Butler draws on Wittig's notion of the *heterosexual contract* and on Adrienne Rich's notion of *compulsory heterosexuality* in developing her notion of the *heterosexual matrix*, which she uses to:

designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized [and]...to characterize a hegemonic discursive\epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (1990: 151, fn.6).

4. Of course this strategy of naturalization has also been used historically to support other systems of oppression, such as racism and classism. However, these systems, whilst at times still defended on naturalized arguments, have been clearly recognized as political\economic systems of exploitation. Heterosexuality, for the most part, has not even been recognized as a *system*, never mind one of political\economic exploitation.
5. For a fascinating discussion of the way teen magazines for young girls participate in this process see Anastasia Higginbotham (1996).
6. For example, Monique Wittig (1992: 9-10) argues that "In the case of women, ideology goes far since our bodies as well as our minds are the product of this manipulation [that women are a "natural" group]. We have been compelled in our bodies and in our minds to correspond, feature by feature with the *idea* of nature that has been established for us. Distorted to such an extent that our deformed body is what they call "natural", what is supposed to exist as such before oppression. Distorted to such an extent that in the end oppression seems to be a consequence of this "nature" within ourselves (a nature which is only an *idea*)".
7. For example, MacKinnon (1989: 172) points out that law reflects and reinforces an understanding of female sexuality as defined in Men's terms by placing penetration at the very centre of the legal understanding of rape: "The law to protect women's sexuality from forcible violation and expropriation defines that protection in male genital terms". Smart (1989: 28) notes that "Sexuality is comprehended as the pleasure of the Phallus, and by this extension the pleasure of penetration and intercourse - for men. Although this does not disallow the possibility of homosexuality, it undeniably renders lesbianism incomprehensible and pathological. Female pleasure is assumed either to coincide with the male definition or to be beyond understanding".
8. See, for example, Todd (1992) and Davy (1992f.).

CHAPTER FOUR. GEOGRAPHIES OF OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE : LOCATING THE STRUGGLES.

Recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted - there is a confusion between our claims to the white and Western eye and the woman-seeing eye, fear of losing the centrality of the one, even as we claim the other.

Adrienne Rich (1984: 219)

4.1 Introduction

I have suggested that location *matters*, for the development of political identities and for the possibilities for political struggles. Location is only one of a set of spatial metaphors which have increasingly come into use in feminist, postmodern and postcolonial writings, especially in those on questions of difference, subjectivities, identities and community. Geographers have been quick to notice this new sensitivity to place, situatedness, positionality, and space (Keith and Pile 1993; McDowell 1992; Pratt and Hanson 1994; Smith and Katz 1993). However, many have also suggested that, "spatial metaphors are problematic in so far as they presume that space is not" (Smith and Katz 1993: 75). In this chapter then, I expand on my particular usage of these metaphors and on the insights that I suggest they offer to a fuller understanding of the political regime of heterosexuality and the locational political struggles that take place in and against it. I then locate the local geographies of oppression and resistance within several broader contexts, including the development of the organized anglo-Canadian women's

movement and anti-violence mobilizing in particular. Finally, the local geographic context for the development of particular processes of oppression and resistance is discussed, through an account of the development of organized anti-violence activism in Hamilton.

4.2 Identity and the politics of location

Whilst being excited by the "spatial turn" in contemporary social and cultural theory, many geographers have also been cautious. Margin, location, position, inside, outside, mapping, and travel are some of the useful metaphors employed in exploring and capturing the workings of complex sets of power relations such as colonization, oppression, resistance and transgression. However, Keith and Pile (1993:1-2) suggest that, "Such terms are used to imply a complexity which is never directly explored or confronted...". In response, I will attempt to be clear and precise in my use of spatial metaphors, especially of location. My use of location suggests cultural, political, and physical positioning *vis-a-vis* other actors, cultures, and institutions. For example, many of the activists in this research were clearly located against the heterosexual regime in that their physical, cultural and political relationship to men, to mainstream culture and institutions is *significantly* different from that of white, heterosexual women in Canadian society in *general*. This is not to suggest locations or identities that are given or stable. It is to invoke a politics of location which Adrienne Rich (1984) argued entails a recognition of where we are in the world, in *relation* to others, and of our location within certain webs of oppressive material and ideological relations. As a self-consciously

politicized lesbian in a heterosexist society, for example, I recognize myself as never either completely inside or completely outside the heterosexual regime. I am, to an extent, always out of place, located, through a combination of choice and force, in the margins: in my production and consumption of culture; in my romantic, economic, political and sexual attachments; and in the temporary nature of my *travel* in mainstream institutions such as the university. That is, although I have learned skills which enable me to move in the centre, in for example, educational, health and judicial systems, I can only do this *comfortably* by not revealing my "difference", by not fully articulating my sexual and political identities. When I choose or am forced to be more clear about that difference, my access to these spaces is much more complicated. My identity is constructed and reconstructed in and through these particular locations. Discussing the politics of identity and the use of spatial metaphors, Liz Bondi (1993: 98-99) argues:

It seems to me that the emphasis on *where* - on position, location - is allowing questions of identity to be thought of in different ways. For example, these metaphors appear to be encouraging a concern with the relationships between different kinds of identities and therefore with the development of a politics grounded in affinities and coalitions, rather than some pristine, coherent consciousness. The move is likely to allow a politics of identity to negotiate more effectively between the opposing pulls of essentialism and anti-essentialism.

As I illustrate in the following chapters, when activists talk of "coming from the same place" it is this notion of locational politics that they are invoking. That is, they are referring to their common locations in alliances against particular sets of power relations. In this way, the bases of "community" may be a shared sense of political identity rather

than a shared physical location or biology. By focussing on the different locations of political subjects and what this might mean for their subjection to heterosexual rule and the possibilities for collective struggles against it (and other systems of oppression), we can move away from an essentialist identity politics and all of its associated dangers towards a more self-conscious coalitional politics.

The local geographies of oppression and resistance investigated in this research are located within wider webs of social relations and trends: a general swing towards the right in Canada; the organized anglo-Canadian women's movement; the increasingly high profile of violence against women in the last decade; and a recent backlash against feminist activists, especially in the area of anti-violence organizing. Although happening at seemingly different spatial scales, it will become evident that political struggles in Hamilton, such as those that took place outside of a particular courthouse in the city (constructed by activists as a space of (in)justice), were informed by, and in turn informed larger debates and struggles. As Sue Ruddick (1996: 140) notes about public spaces, "they can become at once local *and* national space for the construction, mediation, and regulation of social identities". In the following section I offer a brief discussion of the development of "second wave" feminism in English Canada, with an emphasis on anti-violence organizing, in order to provide a national context within which to interpret the development of local political struggles and their regulation.

4.3 The general context: feminism and anti-violence organizing in Canada

The "second wave" of the women's movement emerged in English Canada¹ in the midst of the radical activism that characterized the late 1960s and early 1970s in many western countries, including civil rights, student, anti-Vietnam war and peace movements. The daunting task of documenting and analyzing the complicated development of the second wave in English Canada has been undertaken in edited collections such as Adamson, Briskin and McPhail's (1988) Feminist Organizing For Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement In Canada, Backhouse and Flaherty's (1992) Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States, Carty's (1993) And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing In Contemporary Canada, and Wine and Ristock's (1991) Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada. My aim here is to provide a brief and necessarily simplified overview, and in doing so to highlight the liberal roots of the movement and its associated orientation towards the state; factors which feminist theorists have implicated in the particular situation of anti-violence activism in the 1990s (Barnsley 1995; Timmins 1995; Walker 1990).

The organized anglo-Canadian women's movement has been shaped by myriad forces arising out of a particular socio-spatial, ideological and political context. Jill Vickers (1991: 79-80) argues that, "the political culture of the indigenous English Canadian movement, with century-old roots, can be described as "radical liberalism"". This political culture oriented the movement towards the state through a belief that change could be affected from within, through mainstream political institutions. The 1967 Royal

Commission on the Status of Women, exemplified such an approach, as Wine and Ristock (1991: 5) describe it:

The RCSW [Royal Commission on the Status of Women] was created by the federal government in 1967, in response to the pressures of the Committee for Equality of Women in Canada, a group comprised largely of white, middle-class women. The recommendations of this report, completed in 1970, have served as a blueprint for the public face of feminism in Canada. The value of the report and the direction it has provided in the movement is debated amongst feminists. Those whose goals include a more radical transformation of society have been frustrated by RCSW's alignment with liberal tradition, rather than more directly challenging societal power structures (Adamson et al. 1988).

The RCSW, with its rippling effects of placing women's concerns firmly in the organized structures of federal and provincial government bodies and agencies, was pivotal in contributing to the contradictory nature of the movement. That is, the movement was at once embedded in a transformative politic, and yet closely tied to the state especially through funding at all levels of government. Linda Briskin (1991) argues that feminist practice in Canada has indeed been characterized by a mixture of disengagement and mainstreaming, where the former involves critiquing the system and working towards alternative visions, and the latter involves working within the system and attempting to appeal to a broad base of women. Compared to countries such as the United States of America, and the United Kingdom, where the state is less likely to be seen as an appropriate arena for effecting radical social change (for different reasons), activists in Canada have *historically* been much less wary of their ties to the state (Barnsley 1988; Findlay 1988; Walker 1990).

This especially characterises that part of the organized movement which has historically, and until relatively recently, been the public and liberal face of anglo-Canadian feminism: white, heterosexual, non-disabled, English-speaking, and middle-class. The concerns of groups such as lesbians, Native women, poor and working-class women, women of colour, immigrant women, and women with disabilities have been marginalized in institutionalized feminism. However, over the last ten years or so the movement has been increasingly challenged to recognize the contours of its subject, and to make itself more relevant to a broader base of women (see especially Carty 1993). As both local and national organizations (such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women - the largest group of women's organizations in the country) have been challenged to pay more than "lip service" to issues of racism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and accessibility, there has been conflict, resistance and often very public struggles over the membership and direction of organized feminism. This has certainly been true of that area of feminism to which I now turn: organized anti-violence activism.

As part of the outpouring of feminist rage in the late 1960s and the 1970s, women across Canada created safe houses, women's centres, shelters and rape crisis centres. In consciousness-raising groups, Speak Outs and forums, the isolation of men's violence against females was disrupted. Once the silence was broken, women understandably took their concerns to the state since it was often through agencies of the state (such as the police, the health and the judicial systems) that violence against females was trivialized. The anti-violence movement has always struggled with the dilemma of the critical need

to provide services for women whilst at the same time meeting the equally critical need of maintaining a political movement. As early as 1982, Susan Schechter was writing about the "battered women's movement" in the United States: "according to many women, the goal of sustaining a vision of women's liberation and building a political movement was lost in the struggle to start, fund, manage, legitimate, and maintain programs for battered women." (p.243). By this time in Ontario (early 1980s) there were over 30 interval and transition houses and approximately half that number of rape crisis centres. Both types of organizations had their provincial voices in the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (1977) and the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (1977). Funding came, and continues to come, from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the Ministry of the Solicitor General respectively, plus a variety of other sources, including fundraising and charitable organizations such as the United Way.

Gillian Walker (1990: 5) notes:

While there appear to be many similarities in the development of this 'issue' in the United States, in Canada, and in a number of European countries, the relations of the movement to the state appears to differ according to the particular conjunction of the broader women's movement, the existing formal political party configurations, and the organizational forms of the particular state.

In Canada the particular conjunction saw, for example, the release in 1980 of the first Canadian book specifically on "wife-battering": Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle (MacLeod 1980). This was the result of work carried out by the Canadian Advisory Council On The Status of Women and was followed by a national consultation on the

issue. Gillian Walker argues that, "the advisory council played a role in translating the local concerns of women activists to the national level where women's movement experts spoke for battered women in public forums designed to influence the administrative and policy-making process of the state" (1990: 56). Further lobbying at the national level also saw changes in the country's legal treatment of rape (proposed in 1978, it took until 1987 for the legislation to receive final assent by parliament). Megan Ellis (1988: 96) writes:

The early anti-rape activists, armed with little other than the fruits of their own discussions and preliminary research, issued a wide-ranging challenge to the dominant discourse on rape, highlighting the myths and truths they obscured. They embarked upon educational work, organized community rape prevention programmes, and set up rape crisis centres to provide support to women who had been raped. Listening to rape victims' stories and accompanying women through the police, medical and legal procedures, rape crisis workers gained valuable insights into the workings of the relevant institutions, providing further impetus to demands for change.

The changes that activists effected were, in theory at least, ones which moved rape into the criminal arena of *assault*: forcing the recognition of the possibility of rape in marriage, by moving beyond penetration as the defining act, and creating protection for survivors with respect to sexual history and "reputation". Both Ellis and Catherine MacKinnon argue that the results of this change were debatable; that is, in the process rape was stripped of its political context, as something that for the most, men do to women in a society based on unequal gender relations. Mackinnon (1992: 189) notes that, "the law's victim went from a woman to a person and the perpetrator was no longer necessarily a man. The law went from rape as intercourse without her consent and against her will by

a man with a woman not his wife, to sexual assault as forced sex without consent". The ongoing public debate over the realities of rape and its treatment in the justice system was inflamed in 1992 with the striking down by the Supreme Court of Canada of the so-called Rape Shield law which theoretically provided some protection to victims of rape from investigations into their sexual history. The ensuing debate over a replacement law (the so-called No-Means-No law) brought the ideological struggle over male sexual violence into stark relief. At that point, in the early 1990s, it often seemed that anti-violence activists were back at square one in combatting the extensive mythology surrounding rape.

In fact, despite over two decades of organized anti-violence activism in Canada, men's violence against females continues to be a huge problem. The issue is no longer hidden from view and is very much on the public agenda, as demonstrated by, for example, the national Violence Against Women Survey (Statistics Canada 1993a) and the cross-country consultation and research of the Canadian Panel On Violence Against Women. However, the statistics continue to speak for themselves:

- * 38 per cent of all women murdered in Canada, and 40 per cent of all women murdered in Ontario in 1992 were killed by a current or estranged male partner (Ontario Women's Directorate 1993);
- * one-half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of sixteen (Statistics Canada 1993a²);
- * one-quarter of all women have experienced violence at the hands of a current or past marital partner (includes common-law) (ibid);
- * six-in-ten Canadian women who walk alone in their own area after dark feel "very" or "somewhat" worried doing so (ibid).

Given the well-documented under-reporting of such crimes, it is fair to say that men continue to harass, intimidate, rape, brutalize and murder women on a harrowing scale.

Many feminist writers and activists argue that organized anti-violence activism has lost its earlier radical political message (that men's violence is used for a purpose and structural change is necessary to end it), and that traditional sites of resistance, such as shelters and rape crisis centres have been incorporated and institutionalized (for example, see Findlay 1988; Gold 1991; Timmins 1995; and Walker, 1990). However, there is also the recognition that, for example, state funding was a "necessary evil". Wine and Ristock (1991: 10-11) effectively sum up the dilemmas that have faced the movement vis-a-vis the state, arguing that:

many of the achievements of Canadian feminist activism would not exist had such funding not been available; and meeting women's needs is now (however inadequately) entrenched in governmental bureaucracies...On the other hand, movement ideals have been compromised: feminists working in state-funded organizations have found themselves involved in meeting the terms of government contracts (which often do not correspond to the aims of their activism) spending much of their time seeking funding, taking valuable time and energy from work necessary to the movement, and policing themselves and other feminists in terms consistent with bureaucratic directives in order to insure continued funding.

These processes have seen many of these sites of resistance go from grass-roots, informal, peer-counselling organizations to government funded "social service agencies" employing professionals. Discussing the changes in the shelter movement in Northwestern Ontario, for example, Leni Untinen (1995: 175) notes, "Workers have difficulty relating to this early period when shelters had little or no money for salaries, and activism translates

directly into volunteer, front-line work. It wasn't unusual to reach into your own cupboard and bring back as much food as you could afford to give". It also was not unusual to find lesbians front and centre in the early days; however, few of the writings on the institutionalization of anti-violence activism investigate the role that the "lesbian threat" and normative gender scripts have played in the regulation of the more radical aspects of the movement (aspects such as the articulation of systemic analyses and confrontational strategies for social change). Lesbians don't appear in Gillian Walker's otherwise impressive analysis of the "conceptual politics of struggle" between the anti-violence movement and the state (Walker 1990), they appear infrequently (outside of the discussion of lesbian abuse) in Listening to the Thunder: advocates talk about the battered women's movement, the recent collection of 20 articles put together by the Vancouver Women's Research Centre (Timmins 1995), and, as illustrated in Chapter Three, the Dobashes' analysis of the movements in Britain and the United States conceptualises lesbian sexuality as something private (Dobash and Dobash 1992).

The more recent developments in anti-violence activism, including this textual marginalization of lesbians, have to be viewed in the context of a conservative backlash against any progressive social movements. In the case of anti-violence activism, there has been a contradictory situation in which violence against women has had a high public profile during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, but anti-feminist sentiments have become a common and acceptable component of contemporary public discourse and practices in Canada. December 6th, 1989 was a defining moment in this developing discourse, in that

across Canada and Quebec, most women will remember what they were doing and where they were when they heard that an armed man, shouting that he hated *feminists*, targeted and slaughtered fourteen women at L'école Polytechnique in Montreal. As one local activist noted, "Every woman I know remembers the minute they heard about Montreal and the reaction they had...It just serves to keep us in line" (activist 14). And Ruth Roach Pierson summed up what many feminists argued in the subsequent national debate over the meaning of the violence, when she argued that the gunman's:

...targeting of fourteen young women cannot be separated from widespread and socially validated hatred and fear of women in general, that his targeting of female engineering students cannot be separated from widespread and culturally validated resentment of "uppity", "pushy" women who enter fields once monopolized by men, and...his anti-feminism cannot be separated from widespread media attacks on "strident", demanding feminists. Neither can his anti-feminism be separated from the conservative federal government's cutbacks of funding to women's shelters, women's centres and feminist publications (1990: 10).

In an article on "Fighting Back On Campus" (part of a four part Toronto Star special called The War Against Women), Debra Black (1991) discussed several high profile events on Canadian campuses which illustrated this anti-feminist trend. For example: barely one month before the massacre in Montreal, the date-rape awareness program at Queen's University in Kingston was mocked by male students who placed signs in the windows of their dorm stating "No Means Dyke", "No Means Tie Her Up", and "No Means Kick Her In The Teeth" In the fall of 1991, also at Queen's, the eight female editors of a newspaper received an anonymous death threat reading, "Here's your politically correct death notices. We're gonna rape u dykes...in fact, we will kill any and

all feminists slowly". The graffiti "Dyke Propaganda" defaced the 1991 date-rape awareness campaign posters at the University of Toronto (Black 1991). The conflation of dyke and feminist is obvious in all incidents. Debbie Wise Harris (1990), in her analysis of several of these types of acts, illustrates various ways in which the media helped to turn the focus away from the male perpetrators onto the women who, it was claimed, could not take a joke. Acts are reconstructed in this public discourse as harmless pranks which "strident feminists" then blow out of proportion. These humourless women, who, it is argued, obviously do not know that "the battle of the sexes" is over, are then seen to be provoking men's anger and/or violence. She argues that, "in a dangerous twist, or inversion, the contemporary discourse is situated in a kind of "post-feminism" where out-moded concerns of feminists rightly lead to hostility against them" (p.40). This can certainly be seen locally, for example in the events surrounding the 1992 Take Back The Night March when a Hamilton radio personality dedicated one of his call-in shows to the topic of the exclusion of men from the march, suggesting that feminists, by telling men they could not participate, were inciting them to come down to the march and be violent. Callers to the show were allowed to voice anti-feminist comments such as "the lesbians should be lined up and shot".

This anti-feminism, particularly directed at anti-violence feminism, can also be seen in several other trends. For example: the mainstream media's selection of certain "anti-feminist feminists"³ for extensive air time such as Camille Paglia, Christina Hoff Somers, and Katie Roiphe, who suggest, amongst other things, that a hysterical and

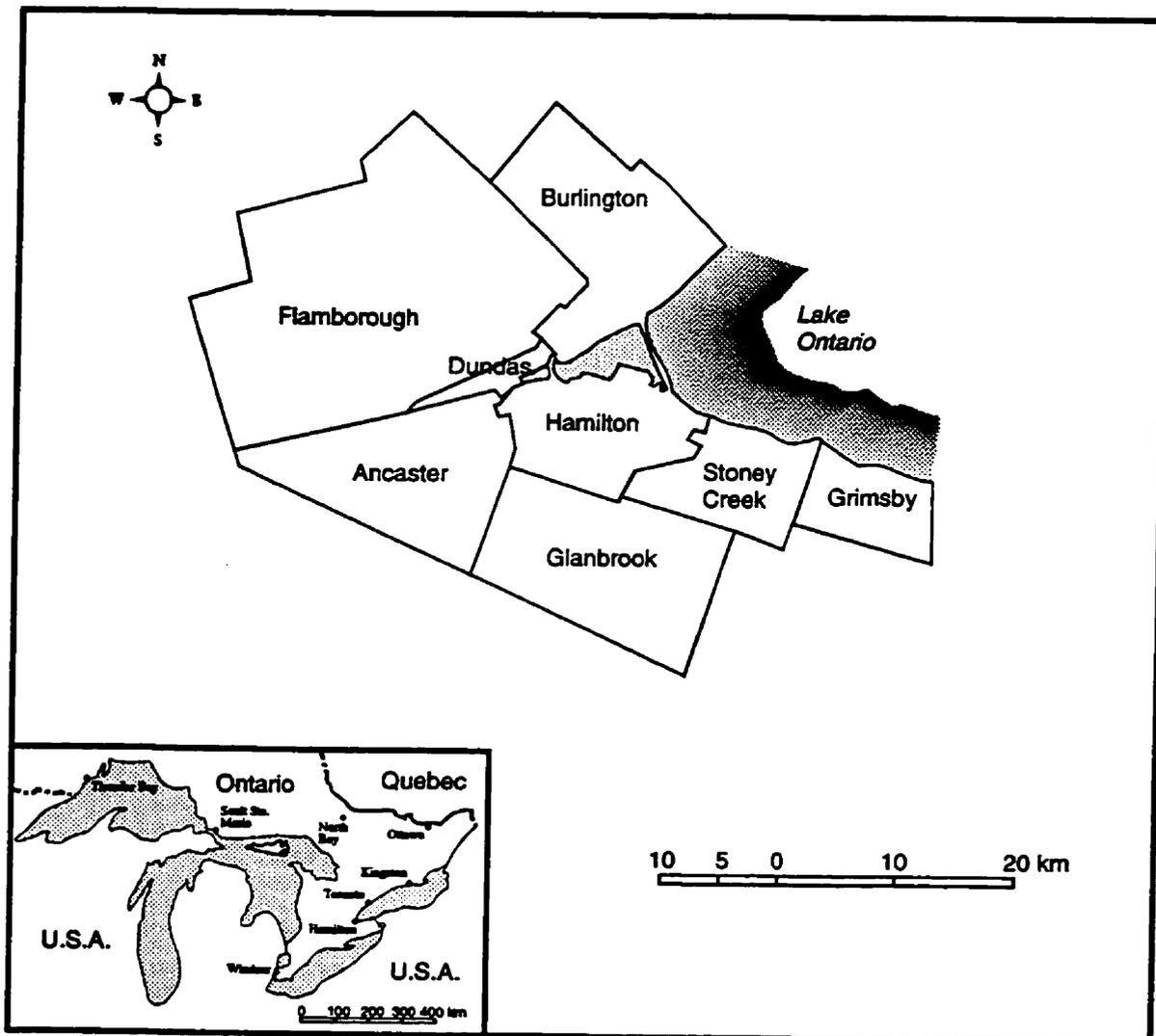
overblown concern about an epidemic of date rape has basically made women and men enemies and destroyed "romance"; the burgeoning ideology that fathers can no longer go near their children and men can no longer take women on a date, for fear that both will falsely accuse them of sexual assault; and the strength of the false memory syndrome movement which suggests that perhaps this whole notion of an epidemic of sexual abuse has all been fabricated, in fact planted in the minds of gullible people by unscrupulous therapists (Prieur 1995).

It is within the context of these trends that local geographies of oppression and resistance were investigated. That is, the struggles of anti-violence activists in Hamilton in the early 1990s were occurring within several important, overlapping contexts: the high profile of men's violence against females; the suggestions by activists and analysts that traditional feminist spaces of resistance (such as rape crisis centres and shelters) were being institutionalized; and a trend of "post-feminism/anti-feminism", where feminists, especially "radical" ones, were being constructed as legitimate targets for hostility. The local geographical and historical contexts of these particular struggles are discussed in detail in the following section.

4.4 The local context: Hamilton, Ontario

The city of Hamilton is located on the western edge of Lake Ontario, at the heart of southern Ontario's industrial region (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: The geography of Hamilton-Wentworth



With a population of over 300,000, it is the largest of the six municipalities which comprise the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth (which has a population of over 450,000) (Statistics Canada 1992a). Its rise to prominence in the late nineteenth century and subsequent emergence as the centre of the Canadian steel industry gave Hamilton its other name: Steel City (Dear *et al* 1987). The arrival in 1853 of the Great Western Railway helped Hamilton emerge as a major industrial city in Canada. By the turn of the century, it was being touted as the "Birmingham of Canada" (Eyles and Peace 1990), as the local steel industry took advantage of several locational factors including: "easy water and rail transport; cheap hydro-electricity; local government land, capital grants and tax incentives; and superior access to the country's largest steel-consuming industries in Ontario's "Golden Horseshoe"" (Livingstone 1993: 25). By the end of World War II, the city was producing 50 per cent of the country's steel, reaching a peak in the 1970s of more than 70 per cent (*ibid*).

As has been the case with other industrial centres in North America, Hamilton's manufacturing industry has experienced the depressing effects of global economic restructuring. Between 1982 and 1990 total employment in manufacturing in Hamilton-Wentworth dropped from 55,215 to 48,150. This represents a drop from one in three to less than one in four workers employed in this sector (Hamilton-Wentworth Region 1991). And although the male stronghold on steel jobs had been challenged in the late 70s and early 80s by the Women Back Into Stelco Campaign⁴ with, what Luxton and Corman (1993: 103) called, success "in a limited sense", the downturn in the local steel industry's

fortunes has meant fewer opportunities for women to make inroads into this type of employment. Reflecting national trends, Hamilton has experienced increasing employment in the service sector (with the largest increase in office and retail jobs) and declining employment in manufacturing (Hamilton-Wentworth Region 1991). Unemployment in the city in the early 1990s was running at 10.9 per cent, the highest in the Region and above the provincial rate of 8.5 per cent and the national rate of 10.2 per cent. The average income for females in full-time employment in 1991 was \$25,092 representing 69 per cent of that for males in full-time employment (Statistics Canada 1993b., 1994).

Despite the reduction in the importance of the steel industry in the city's economy, it continues to play an influential role in the image of the city within Canada, and in the city's image of itself⁶. Local geographers Eyles and Peace (1990: 74) argue that there, "seems to be two related but divergent images of Hamilton - smokestack city and cultured city", and suggest that Hamilton's image is relational, that is, in relation to Toronto, its far bigger neighbour around the lake:

Hamiltonians now view their city's relationship with Toronto in two opposing ways. The first espouses the view that the best thing about Hamilton is that it is so close to Toronto. This view focuses on the negative aspects of Hamilton, choosing to regard Toronto as an exciting modern city and a refuge from all that is bad about Hamilton. In contrast there are those who would prefer to view Hamilton as being the better place to live...Proponents of this view feel that 'big is not necessarily better' and that there is nothing inherently wrong with being a 'lunch bucket town' (1990: 84).

These relational and divergent images were certainly confirmed in my own personal geography in several ways. First, when I told friends in 1989 that I planned to move from

"the big city", around the lake to Steeltown, most were appalled and presumed that I would be returning to Toronto on a weekly basis to consume the culture which would not be available in the "lunchbucket city". Luckily, having grown up in a working class town on the West Coast of Scotland, where everyone knew someone who worked in "the factory", Hamilton did not hold the terror for me that it obviously did for some of my more "cosmopolitan" friends. Second, when listening to undergraduate geography students in tutorials discuss the merits and drawbacks of living in Hamilton, I found that it was almost always in relation to Toronto. Nonetheless I agree with Eyles and Peace (1990: 82) that, "try as it might, compare as it will, Hamilton is still Steeltown (with all its associated images)". The working class male subject is very much alive in the masculinist social, political and economic relations of a city known best for its hard hats, lunch buckets and a football team that likes to "eat them raw". And as I illustrate in the following chapters, the continuing dominance of these relations in the public discourses of the city (especially in the traditionally conservative local media and local government) affected both the development of feminist identities and practices, and their regulation and containment - aspects of which are introduced in the following section

4.5 Feminist anti-violence organizing in Hamilton

The "second wave" of the anglo-Canadian women's movement took hold in Hamilton in early consciousness-raising groups such as the Stowe-Gullen Feminists, named for the first woman in Canada to be granted a medical degree: Dr. Augusta Stowe-

Gullen.⁶ This group's success with a 1972 Women's Festival Concert held at the local YWCA (in which more than 200 women participated) encouraged them to seek funding to establish a Women's Centre in Hamilton. On the 14th of May 1973, with funds from Opportunities for Youth and the Secretary of State, the Women's Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth opened in a house on a central city residential street. The Centre was a place from which many other groups and activities were organized including a steering committee to establish a rape crisis centre. Naim Galvin, a volunteer at the Women's Centre and part of that committee, described that early period:

We had started to get calls from survivors there [at the Women's Centre]. It is interesting to reflect on how things have progressed. Think about having someone call in on a line that was just the Women's Centre, a what-do-you-want kind of line, and have someone call in and start to talk about rape and not knowing anything. We were having to educate ourselves around that...out of this came an incredible fire to do something.⁷

The committee was successful in obtaining funds to "do something" and in 1975 the Rape Crisis Centre opened its doors, becoming the third of its kind in Canada and adding to the small number of organizations in the city offering various services to women (which at the time included the Elizabeth Fry Society (1970) and the Native Women's Centre (1975)). The Women's Centre itself was in and out of existence and funding throughout the 1970s, as were several other groups and committees, including: the Women's Network, an organization for individual women to share skills, research, and ideas which met irregularly from 1977 to 1979; Persephone Press, which produced a one-off calendar in

1974; and a Women's Centre at McMaster University. This informal, in-flux nature of local activism in the 1970s reflected the trend across the country.

The next decade opened with an ambitious project aimed at developing a central training package to be used in training volunteers from various women's organisations. Representatives from the Elizabeth Fry Society, McMaster Women's Centre, the Native Women's Centre, the Rape Crisis Centre (Hamilton) and the Women's Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth worked with the Volunteer Bureau of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District. The final document produced included a profile of the five women's agencies involved and short educational pieces such as "an introduction to feminism," "socialization of women," "women and work," "rape-violence against women," "women and crime," "native women," "immigrant women", and "what is feminist counselling". Although the manual was not in fact particularly successful, in that support for, and use of it was limited, it illustrates an early attempt at "community co-ordination" which became a hallmark of the 1980s and has been reinvented as "partnership" in the 1990s (Barnsley 1995). In 1985, Renée Albrecht opened the Women's Bookstop, a women's bookstore which quickly became a focal point for women, lesbians and feminists in the community.

Although there had been a proposal for a transition house in Hamilton as early as 1974 (the proposal for Cady Stanton House was rejected by the Department of Health and Welfare due to lack of federal funding), it was not until 1986 that Interval House of Hamilton-Wentworth finally opened its doors. Interval House quickly earned the

reputation of being the "feminist" shelter in town and in 1987 its public educator Eileen Morrow was one of several activists who got together to discuss the need for organizations to co-ordinate services for abused women⁸. This small group of women discussed ways in which the response to abused women by the police and other services in the community might be improved and held a one-day symposium to which they invited members of every organization they could think of, including local shelters, women's organizations, social services, the police, the crown attorney's office, the boards of education and boards of health. They invited several speakers to present on the topic of community co-ordinating, and out of the discussions the Council on Domestic Violence was born. The intention of community co-ordinating committees is to ensure that social service and community organisations network in order to exchange information, avoid duplication of services and to identify gaps in services. Membership on the Council in Hamilton included representatives from women's organization, all the shelters, Family Services, Catholic Family Services, the Crown's office, the police department, the three school boards, the public health department, the Sexual Assault Centre and community legal clinics⁹. The Council on Domestic Violence met monthly from 1987 until early 1991 and, with funding from the province, they organized the annual Wife Assault Awareness Month in November. However, there was increasing internal conflict within the Council over its role, its usefulness, questions of diversity and representation, and even over the definition of woman abuse. In early 1991, with 42 agencies represented on the Council, members took a vote and disbanded (Davy 1991a).

By the early 1990s there was a plethora of organisations from which survivors could seek various services. The type and philosophy of services obviously varied greatly from organization to organization. This variation is illustrated in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, which provide a selected list of services available at this time, and the descriptions of these services provided in No-one deserves to be abused: A resource guide for abused women in Hamilton-Wentworth, produced in 1990 by the Council on Domestic Violence and Community Information Services of Hamilton-Wentworth, and widely distributed in the community.

Representatives from many of these agencies formed a committee in early 1991 to protest the acquittal (on the first anniversary of the Montreal Massacre) of Guy Ellul by a Hamilton jury, of a charge of first-degree murder in the death of his estranged wife Debra. The acquittal, based on self-defence, was handed down despite the fact that Ellul had stabbed Debra 21 times and left her to be found dead the following morning by her mother, Ruth Williams. Women's groups in the city were outraged and representatives formed a group to meet with then provincial Attorney General Howard Hampton and demand an appeal of the decision, as well as to discuss concerns over the justice system in general. As one of the early members, Vilma Rossi, described it:

We got together initially as a group of social service agencies who were quite horrified at the acquittal...we began meeting with Howard Hampton and some of the members of that coalition felt that we were becoming too radical, or that they couldn't speak on behalf of their agencies so they had to withdraw...some of them did come back as individual members.¹⁰

Figure 4.2: Selected services for abused women in Hamilton-Wentworth, 1990 (counselling)

Catholic Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth

Services include individual, marriage, family, and group counselling, credit\debt counselling, group counselling for women who have been abused and for abusive men. All services are non-denominational.

Elizabeth Fry Society

Court intervention and Community Support Program

- *provides individual counselling regarding battering, protection orders (restraining orders and peace bonds), separation, custody matters, support and interpersonal relationships

- *explains court procedure and terminology

- *assists in completion of Victim Impact Statement

- *provides court accompaniment for victims of domestic assault upon request

- *provides referral to transition homes, other social service agencies, Family Violence Treatment Program, Legal Aid and Upgrading Programs.

This service is available free of charge and is provided to women or men who are victims of domestic violence.

Family Violence Program (operated by the Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth Inc.)

Offers group services to perpetrators and victims of spouse abuse and to the children/adolescents who witness the abuse. Self referrals and court referrals are eligible for consideration. Fully funded by the province, this program charges no fee.

Hope Haven Homes Family Rehabilitation Centre

Counselling through the Family Binders Program available for all family members living under the impact of stress and violence provoked by the abuse of alcohol and drugs in the home environment. Component: group sessions for men and women including teenagers, individual, couple, child and family counselling, court advocacy, follow-up, and 24 hour Crisis Line.

Inasmuch House (operated by Mission Services of Hamilton)

Case management program. Each woman is assigned her own counsellor who follows her case as long as desired or necessary.

Interval House of Hamilton-Wentworth

Individual crisis counselling 24 hours a day for residents and non-residents. Group counselling for residents and ex-residents. All counsellors are professionals specializing in domestic violence against women. In person or by phone.

Sexual Assault Centre

Crisis and support counselling on sexual assault, rape and/or incestuous sexual assault.

Women's Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth

Provides peer counselling on a one-time or longer term basis, both on the telephone and one-to-one. There is no charge for this service. There are also support groups including self-esteem, assertiveness training, and separation and divorce support groups.

Figure 4.3: Selected services for abused women in Hamilton-Wentworth, 1990 (shelters)

Interval House of Hamilton-Wentworth

Safe, 24-hour emergency shelter and crisis telephone counselling seven days a week. Only for women physically, emotionally or sexually abused by their husband/partner. Children welcome. Professional counsellor and child care workers specialize in domestic violence against women. Individual and group counselling, information and referral. Accessible for disabled. Average stay six weeks. Self or professional can refer. Both house residents and non-residents served. Free emergency taxi service and collect crisis calls.

Inasmuch House

Safe accommodation for women with or without children who are victims of domestic violence or other abuse and are temporarily homeless. Individual professional counselling; support services and groups, as well as referrals to legal, medical and counselling services within the community when necessary. Children's programming available as well. Open 24 hours, seven days a week. Duration of stay dependent on each individual case.

Hope Haven Homes

Emergency shelter and drop-in centre with programs and services for the abused family of the problem drinker/drugs and other. Accommodation up to six weeks. Children accepted. Situation Awareness Program - personal rehabilitation program for men and women including teenagers.

Elizabeth Fry Group Home

This residence offers a structured environment for abused and homeless women, with or without children. Counselling and assistance in making contact with other social agencies. Open 24 hours daily.

Native Women's Centre (Hamilton-Wentworth Chapter of Native Women Inc.)

The Native Women's Centre can provide accommodation if needed to women and their children in trouble due to stress, strain, alcohol or drugs, or a crisis in the home. Counselling available according to individual need. Accommodation and counselling available 24 hours daily. Drop-in centre is open 1pm - 4 pm.

Out of that group the Justice For Women Coalition was born, a radical direct action and advocacy group with an individually-based membership of women's advocates and survivors. They stated their purpose as:

We are working to stop violence against women. This includes male violence against women, lesbian battering, rape etc. Violence happens whenever a person, group, institution or culture uses its power to control another person, group, institution or culture with lesser power.¹¹

However, the Coalition's expectations of justice in the Ellul case were dashed when one year following the acquittal, the Ontario government announced that they would not, in fact, appeal as promised. Although government lawyers had filed their intention to appeal on the grounds that the jury was not properly instructed by the judge on the law of self-defence, they had done this within the first month of the decision (as required), and had since decided against the appeal on the grounds that they could find no errors in law (Brown 1992a; Tyler 1992). Justice For Women organized a protest and support rally outside the courthouse in which they believed justice had not been served, and on January 24, 1992 they launched the Justice For Debra Campaign (Justice For Women 1992). Over the next year and a half, a red rose was lain on the statue outside the courthouse every day by a member of Justice For Women. A card attached to each rose stated, "We demand justice for Debra Ellul. Debra Ellul was murdered on February 5, 1989. Guy Ellul was acquitted of all charges December 6, 1990. Debra Ellul was stabbed by Guy Ellul 21 times. Sponsored by the Justice For Women Coalition". During the same period, Ruth Williams, Debra's mother, conducted a daily vigil outside the courthouse. Despite broad-based local, provincial and national support and publicity, which included numerous local and provincial rallies, letter-writing and petitions, Ruth Williams did not receive justice (Casella 1992; Davy 1992a; Deverell 1992; Prokaska 1993a and 1993b).

Amongst the many issues that had originally been discussed with Howard Hampton was that of counselling groups for abusive men. The committee asked the attorney general to freeze provincial funding for the controversial groups until their

effectiveness had been reviewed. They argued that groups for abusive men were dangerous in that women were remaining in relationships with the belief that abusive men would change. The provincial government refused but various activists in Hamilton kept the issue in the public eye with local, provincial and national media coverage. Counselling groups for abusive men had been held at Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth in the family violence program since 1986 but were suspended in November 1989 whilst a review of the groups' effectiveness was carried out. As pressure mounted to reinstate the counselling (from the Ministry of Community and Social Services who were providing funding for the groups) Phil Dupuis and Nick Mule, counsellors in the program, were suspended without pay for refusing to restart the groups. They argued that the men's groups were not working and that "so many men were there not to change, but to look like they were attempting to make changes" (Dupuis, in Davy 1991b). On May 22nd, Justice For Women held a press conference in support of the suspended counsellors arguing that provincial funding for the men's groups should be withdrawn from Family Services and redirected into programs for abused women and children (Davy 1991c). The counsellors were subsequently fired for their actions and in June, Justice For Women Coalition met with then Women's Issues minister Anne Swarbrick and representatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to lobby for the cancellation of all counselling groups for abusive men across the province (Davy 1991d). The Minister gave the Coalition no promises for a suspension of funding but indicated that the issue would be raised with other interested parties, such as the Ontario Association of Family Services

Agencies. Justice For Women continued to make the issue a high profile one, holding a public meeting (for women only) on June 26 1991. In an article in late 1991, reporter Denise Davy (1991e) of the Hamilton Spectator (hereafter The Spectator) noted that "The question of whether counselling can change the behaviour of abusive men is one that has polarized the counselling community". The launching of the national "White Ribbon Campaign" in late 1991 added further to the burgeoning discourse on the role that men have to play in ending male violence against women¹² (Small 1991).

On December 3rd and 4th, with funding from the provincial government (the Ontario Women's Directorate) Justice For Women organised a four-part forum, "Women Rights - Men's Responsibilities", which brought together shelter and other social service workers, abused women and other interested persons from across the province to discuss the issue of men's counselling groups. The forum however was overshadowed by events sparked by an investigative report by The Spectator on the Hamilton-Wentworth Police Department's treatment of an officer who had broken his wife's nose in an assault (Holt 1991a). Constable Larry Fodor had received a suspended sentence, probation and counselling for alcoholism and aggression, after pleading guilty to a charge of common assault against his second wife. The report outlined the policeman's checkered history and the ensuing controversy over his treatment was fuelled by Hamilton-Wentworth Police Chief Robert Middaugh's reported comments:

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Chief Robert Middaugh says he has no misgivings about Fodor handling domestic disputes. "I have no qualms about putting him back on the street," Middaugh said, noting that two

officers are sent to every domestic call and that a supervisor monitors all such incidents. Using an analogy, the chief said "Who better to send to talk to an alcoholic than another alcoholic?" (Holt 1991a: A1).

Justice For Women, with representation and support from local groups including the Hamilton Status of Women Subcommittee, the Sexual Assault Centre, McMaster University's Women's Studies Department and Women's Health Office, and several shelters, organized a press conference where they called for a review of the Hamilton-Wentworth police department by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. They argued that the "police departments and the courts colluded to protect an officer from bearing the full penalty of his crime" (Marlin 1991: A1). The coverage of the press conference the following day in The Spectator was accompanied by a photo of a workman removing spray-painted graffiti from the United Empire Loyalists statue in front of the county courthouse downtown. The slogans "Justice For Women Now!" and "Police Protect Their Own!" were being removed.

Yet again, local events were articulated at a provincial level when opposition MPPs challenged Solicitor General Allan Pilkey in the legislature to respond to the Fodor case. Although initially arguing that it was not his responsibility (Casella 1991a, 1991b), Allan Pilkey agreed that his ministry would conduct a joint review with the Hamilton-Wentworth Police Department of both the criminal and Police Act charges involved. As the case was being discussed in the provincial legislature, and the Justice For Women Coalition were holding their press conference in the United Gas building in downtown Hamilton, members of the Police Department and a witness to the spray-painting, sat

outside Union Gas watching women going in and out of the press conference. The following day, at the "Women's Rights - Men's Responsibilities" conference, Vilma Rossi, the executive director of the Sexual Assault Centre and a member of Justice For Women was arrested, charged with public mischief under \$1000, and released. The day after that, the police arrested, charged with public mischief under \$1000, and released Kristin Smith, a counsellor in the Family Violence Program of Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth, and a member of Justice For Women. Although Rossi and Smith found support in the community (for example, see Holt 1991b) for their actions, it was by no means unanimous. There were women in the community who suggested that they had put the anti-violence movement back years¹³. Nonetheless, in a flyer distributed at the first of several rallies organized by Justice For Women to support the two women, it was stated that:

Women of the Hamilton-Wentworth community are asking why police take such swift action to punish acts of resistance and protest by women while turning a blind eye to Officer Fodor's violation of his female partner's human rights to safety, security and justice.¹⁴

Similarly, Vilma Rossi asked:

How is it that police will act so quickly to charge someone with such a minor crime yet we are hearing from abused women that they can't get the police to come to their houses? (Hamilton Spectator 1991).

The alleged disparity between the police treatment of the women involved and abusive men was evident when it came to the court proceedings. That is, despite paying for the cost of the clean-up, having no previous criminal conviction and over 20 years combined

involvement in community struggles, Vilma Rossi and Kristin Smith were found guilty as charged and ordered to spend 30 days in jail or each pay a fine of \$500 (Lefaive 1992a). Eileen Morrow, of Justice For Women, noted that "the most common punishment for wife assault in this community is either a conditional discharge or a fine of \$300", pointing out that the protesters had received harsher punishments than abusive men normally do (ibid: B1).

In late December it was reported in The Spectator, however, that the Police Chief had contacted Justice For Women to discuss their concerns and demands with respect to the Fodor case. These included:

- * Constable Larry Fodor's immediate suspension, leading to dismissal
- * A detailed outline of the department's procedure for disciplining police officers charged and convicted of crimes against women
- * Public disclosure of the names of those officers
- * A review of the department by the Ministry of the Solicitor General, monitored by abused women
- * An apology and retraction by Chief Middaugh of statements he made in defence of Constable Fodor's return to active street duty
- * A mechanism to monitor how officers handle assaults against women. Abused women would be paid for consultation
- * A review by the Hamilton-Wentworth Police Services Board of the departments' hiring policies
- * A review of the department's employee assistance program to ensure proper intervention is undertaken geared to stopping violence against women.
- * An investigation by the ministries of the Solicitor General and the Attorney General into what the group describes as the "institutional coverup of Larry Fodor's abuse and his protection by the police and judges" (Holt 1991c).

In February of 1992, the joint review was presented to the Police Services Board.

Combined recommendations from the Board and the report included:

- * setting up a program of consistent discipline within the police department
- * making sure accused people, including police officers, appear for finger printing when required by law to do so
- * ensuring the media is told pro-actively of any police member charged with a criminal offence
- * a formal apology to Constable Fodor's former wife for the way in which her case was handled
- * setting up an advisory committee to change the departments' policy and procedures manual regarding domestic violence (Holt 1992a).

The police department also came under heavy criticism during a 46 day inquest into the death of Jonathan Yeo, conducted from April to August 1992. It was suspected that Yeo, who had killed himself in the parking lot of a Hamilton shopping mall during a chase by police officers, had abducted and killed McMaster University student Nina DeVilliers and a New Brunswick woman, Karen Marquis, while out on bail on charges of sexual assault (De Bono 1992). The inquest raised issues of the how the police, legal, psychiatric, and social services in the area deal with criminal offenders and victims of violence.

In June of 1992 The Spectator sponsored a public forum on violence against women. A panel of five consisting of Justice For Women's Eileen Morrow, Police Chief Robert Middaugh, assistant Crown Attorney Alexandra Paparella, Donna Plonski of McMaster University's Office of the Disabled, and Spectator Editor Rob Austin, made short presentations and then took questions from the crowd of over 250 people. The majority of the questions were directed at the legal and police systems which came under heavy fire (Bongers 1992). In The Spectator's follow-up to the forum, a special report on dealing with the violence, it was noted that a family crisis unit was being developed by the Hamilton-Wentworth Police, composed of three investigators and using new policy

language to ensure that every domestic call would be responded to by at least one officer who would be required to file a report explaining why he or she did not lay a charge, if a charge was not laid. Staff Sergeant Bob Buck, who would be heading the unit, indicated that it would monitor domestic violence cases from the outset, following them through the legal system (Bongers and Mahoney 1992).

However, Justice For Women continued to publicly criticize the police and legal systems. For example, in August 1992, they called for assistant crown attorney Toni Skarica to be removed from domestic violence cases after it had been reported in The Spectator that he had decided to clear a court backlog of bail hearings (Brown 1992b; Davy 1992b). Skarica, who had failed to win a conviction in the Ellul case, was concerned that there was a backlog due to a blanket policy of "no release" for anyone involved in a domestic violence case (that is, the police were holding more people than usual for bail hearings, instead of granting unconditional release immediately following an arrest). He was quoted as saying "I decided to hell with politics and to hell with protecting my ass. I decided to apply the Criminal Code" (Brown 1992b: A1). Skarica was temporarily removed from domestic violence cases but quickly reinstated after an internal review (Lefaive 1992b). Local women's groups were also front and centre during the summer of 1992 with reporter Denise Davy's special series on Women for Change which profiled various local women's groups, such as The Status of Women Subcommittee, the Hamilton Chapter of the Congress of Black Women, and the Justice For Women Coalition (Davy 1992c, 1992d, and 1992e).

On September 2, 1992 however, The Spectator ran an editorial critical of the Justice For Women Coalition. Entitled "A wider vision", the editorial took aim at "special interest groups" with an "axe to grind"¹⁵:

In Hamilton, recently, the Justice for Women Coalition complained bitterly about statements made by assistant Crown Attorney Toni Skarica about bail hearings. As a result, Mr. Skarica was temporarily removed from prosecuting domestic assault cases, pending an investigation which cleared him of the outrageous suggestion that he was somehow anti-woman. The fact that a lobby group was able to cause such hardship to Mr. Skarica shows an undue influence. The fact that his superiors bowed to this is equally worrisome (ibid: A8).

Late in 1992, the fortunes of the women's movement began to change. After a period where both feminist activism (especially anti-violence activism) and men's violence against females were very high profile,¹⁶ the local community entered a tumultuous period. In November of 1992 Halton Women's Place (Burlington) ran an ad for a relief and child-care worker which ended with a commonly used employment equity statement: "In keeping with our employment equity goals, applications particularly encouraged from lesbians, racial minorities, aboriginal and francophone women" (Tait 1992: B6). As a result of the inclusion of the category of "lesbian" in this list, members of Halton Rotary Clubs threatened to withdraw a pledge for \$500,000 (for a new 20-bed shelter) and joined several Halton regional councillors in demanding that Halton Women's Place explain what the word "lesbian" was doing in the ad. Burlington Councillor Doug Greenaway raised concerns over the use of public funds and a perceived "hidden agenda" at Halton Women's Place. Theresa Greer, Executive Director, quickly apologized (Sumi 1992),

calling the ad a "well-intentioned but regrettable mistake" and promising that future ads would simply read "we are an equal opportunity employer" (Tait 1992: B6). Halton Women's Place and the \$500,000 pledge survived the controversy (Longbottom 1992).

However, when an almost identical controversy erupted over Hamilton's Sexual Assault Centre's use of similar wording in an ad less than two months later, the reaction of the women's organization was very different. Councillor Dominic Agostino, chair of Hamilton-Wentworth's social services committee, suggested publicly that the Centre's Regional funding may be in danger, since the issue of "sexual orientation" "belongs in the bedroom, not when you go for a job interview" (Peters 1993a). Executive Director Vilma Rossi stated that there would be no apology, arguing that, "You don't back down from a position you feel is right because your funding is threatened", and further, that Councillor Agostino and his colleagues, "should be absolutely ashamed of themselves" (ibid: B1). The following day however, councillor John Prentice (Dundas) waded into the argument with the comments: "What would lesbians know about sexual assault? Who would be assaulting them?" (Peters 1993b). Arguments over the validity and the intentions of the ad continued throughout the month (e.g. Peters 1993c and 1993d), and in February the first of several complaints regarding the services received at the Sexual Assault Centre surfaced in the local media (Hughes 1993a). An ex-service user complained about the services she received at the Centre, in both a letter to The Spectator and in an interview with Hamilton-based CHCH Television. She was quoted as saying:

In spite of well-meaning effort...there are elements that I found concern about. They strongly discourage trust and respect in the police and there is no desire to help a woman continue dealing with men, not even her partner (ibid: B1).

Councillor Dominic Agostino who had complained bitterly about the "lesbian ad" once again entered the melee stating that he had heard from several other women regarding the Centre's services and that:

Particularly disturbing is the anti-police line that appears to be floating. I would think that a publicly funded organization should not be discouraging people to use the police for help (Hughes 1993b).

The debate continued throughout February (e.g. see Marion 1993a and 1993b), and on February 11th it was announced that the Centre had "asked" its funders, the Ministry of the Solicitor-General, the United Way of Hamilton-Burlington, and the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, for an operational review (Davy 1993a). Meanwhile, controversy had erupted surrounding events at Interval House, the feminist shelter. Early in January, two of its founders, Eileen Morrow, the public educator, and Gwen Davidson, the executive director were fired "without cause". This followed a \$50,000 organizational review, funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and carried out by Catalyst Research and Communications, an independent research organization from Ottawa, and initiated by the Board of Directors in response to grievances filed in the shelter regarding front-line working conditions. At a press conference organized to discuss her firing, Eileen Morrow, a member of Justice For Women, speculated that her high profile political activism had led to her sudden firing without explanation. She argued:

I have been made the scapegoat, the sacrifice, to elements in the community...who are more interested in their own self-serving agendas than they are in ending violence against women and children (Davy 1993b: B1).

Board members denied that political activism was implicated in the firing (Davy 1993b and 1993c; Prokaska 1993c). The community program manager of the Ministry of Community and Social Services suggested that the results of the review *would* in fact have contributed to the Board's decision (Davy 1993c). Contrary to his actions in the "lesbian ad" debate, Councillor Dominic Agostino argued that "the region has no role to play in personnel matters and we should not have a role in those matters" (Prokaska 1993c). Within the two months following the firings, a front-line counsellor, the court worker, and a part-time relief worker had resigned from Interval House to protest the firing of its public educator, and in allegedly unrelated moves, five of the six-member Board had resigned¹⁷ (Davy 1993d; Prokaska 1993d).

The controversy over the Sexual Assault Centre continued into March as four members of the Board resigned (Peters 1993e). Concerns were raised over the fact that the co-ordinator of the joint funders review (the allocations director of the United Way) was a volunteer at the centre nine years before (Peters 1993f). An ex-contract worker accused the Centre of "brainwashing" (Peters 1993g). And members of the local media accused each other of biased and/or unfair reporting (Brown 1993a). Concerns were also being expressed over the Centre's lack of accessibility to diverse cultures although Executive Director, Vilma Rossi, noted that "it is a problem of every social service

agency in town. We have acknowledged that is a problem and we're taking steps to address it" (Peters 1993h: B1). Before March was over, Choices For Abused Women, a support and advocacy group run by and for survivors, had dissolved amidst internal conflict, adding to the turmoil in the local community (Peters 1993i).

Meanwhile, the Justice For Women Coalition remained active in its support for Ruth Williams and the Sexual Assault Centre, and with projects such as a poster campaign to celebrate International Women's Day Week. On March 8, they began a week-long campaign, targeting different areas of the city with fluorescent posters carrying messages such as: "NOBODY GIVES YOU POWER. TAKE IT!", "IF YOU OBEY ALL THE RULES NOTHING CHANGES. BREAK ONE!", and "YOUR SILENCE WILL NOT PROTECT YOU. ACT NOW!". This included a series of "They say, We say" posters related to local and extra-local events. For example:

THEY SAY: "What would lesbians know about sexual assault? Who would be assaulting them?" John Prentice, Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Councillor.

WE SAY: rape is a violent attack on women's bodies, minds and souls. men rape lesbians because they hate lesbians.

and

THEY SAY: "I have to admit to you that I have never been sexually harassed. If I were I would certainly want to make it known that I had been so favoured". John Crosbie, Federal Tory Cabinet Minister.

WE SAY: sexual harassment assaults women's bodies, minds and spirits.

and

THEY SAY: feminists are anti-men.

WE SAY: feminists are pro-women.

However, after a quiet month, Spectator reporter Ken Peters (1993j) ran a full-page story on Justice For Women, titled "The Great Divide". It opened with:

They've been branded militant men-haters and bullies. Hamilton's Justice For Women Coalition is no stranger to controversy but this time its members are under attack from the people who have been its staunchest allies - other feminists (ibid: B1).

The story paints the Coalition as a mysterious organization and one which may have been the common denominator in all of the controversies discussed above. Noting the informal, grass-roots nature of the organization, Peters described it this way:

It's difficult to establish exactly what role members of the Justice For Women Coalition play in local organizations because little is known about the group. There are no offices, directors or central telephone numbers. Citing concerns about personal safety, the group also refuses to identify its members or even say how many women belong, although it's believed there are about 20 core participants (ibid: B1).

How these events, and the experiences of women involved in local political struggles over men's violence against females, might be interpreted, in light of the arguments presented in Chapter Three, is discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter Four endnotes

1. The Québécois women's movement has developed differently from that of anglo-Canadian feminism. The lack of recognition given to the movement in anglo-Canadian writing has been criticised. See for example, Michelene De Seve's (1992) piece in *Challenging Times*.
2. Between February and June of 1993, Statistics Canada conducted a national survey on male violence against women, interviewing (by telephone) approximately 12,300 women 18 years and over.
3. For a fascinating discussion of this particular phenomenon see Susan Faludi (1995).

4. In 1980 five women filed a discrimination complaint against Stelco with the provincial Human Rights Commission. The "Women Back Into Stelco Committee" also launched an extensive publicity campaign, noting that between the date of the last female hiring (1961) and 1978, that 30,000 of the 300,000 job applications received were from women. Whilst Stelco hired 33,000 men during that period, not one female was hired. The five women won their case and were hired (Luxton and Corman 1993: 103).
5. The Lakeport Brewing Company, located in the city, recently launched a new beer - Steel City Brew - with the slogan - For the People. By the People.
6. Unless otherwise specified, the following information is gathered from the following documents and with discussions with long-term local activists: *The History Of The Women's Centre* (n.d.); *Hamilton Women's Services - Volunteer Training Manual* (1981) published by the Volunteer Bureau; interviews with Nairn Galvin (18\3\93), Terri-Lee Seeley (7\4\93), Vilma Rossi (25\3\93) and Eileen Morrow (10\3\93).
7. Interview with Nairn Galvin, 18th March, 1993.
8. Personal communication with Eileen Morrow, September 1996.
9. Personal communication with Vilma Rossi and Kristin Smith, September 1996.
10. Interview with Vilma Rossi, March 25, 1993.
11. Justice For Women Coalition, information sheet, n.d.
12. The white ribbon campaign is aimed at focussing men's attention on the role they play in perpetuating male violence against women. Men, including prominent politicians, actors, and athletes, were encouraged to wear white ribbons and/or armbands from December 1st to December 6th to indicate their concern and awareness of male violence against women (e.g. see Small 1991).
13. Personal communication, Vilma Rossi. September 1996.
14. "Women Protest Injustice". Justice For Women flyer (n.d.).
15. The editorial complained: "Lobbyists are everywhere. Walk through the corridors of power - whether it be at Parliament buildings, Queen's Park or city hall - and it is impossible not to run into someone who is grinding an axe for some group" (Hamilton Spectator 1992b: A8).
16. For example, the abduction and murder of area teenagers Lesley Mahaffy in June 1991 and Kristen French in April 1992, and the subsequent investigation ensured that violence against young women became and has stayed an integral part of local (and national) public discourse.
17. The final report published by Catalyst Research and Communications (1993) was only part of the review process which involved: consultation with past and present board and staff members, residents and ex-residents, other agencies in the community and ten members of the public (as a result of an ad placed in the newspaper); workshops within the organization; and an internal

Theme Report (November 25, 1992). Unfortunately the findings of the review are discussed at greatest length and in most detail in the Theme Report rather than the Final Report. Although there are discussions in the former about the role of political activism in the construction of Interval House's image, and the problems associated with the close connections between Interval House, Justice For Women, and Choices for Abused Women, it is a confidential document which was only distributed internally. Although I obtained a copy, its confidential status obviously makes it unusable in this instance. The Final Report, which was available publicly, was published some time after the firings and contained much more general discussions and recommendations with regards to the organizational structure and workings of Interval House. Thus there is no "hard" evidence that political activism was a factor in the review (in that it wasn't stated clearly in the publicly available document) but an abundance of other types of evidence that it was (e.g. comments by board members in Ken Peters' article on Justice For Women (Peters 1993j), discussions with staff and board members, and interviews with activists). In the Final Report, Catalyst Research and Consulting explained:

Our original contract set out that we were to interview people, gather information, hold workshops and write a final report giving recommendations...Within a very short time, we realized that a final report to Interval House would not be useful because the organization was at a stage where it would have been difficult to implement any recommendations. The focus of our work then became trying to stabilize and make explicit an organizational foundation, including a mission and value base. That process led to many changes in the organization during the course of our work. The most noted transition was the changes in the people: the release of two senior staff, the departure of other staff and the turnover in the board. The changes were not a reflection of the abilities of the people who left but a reflection of the need for a common organizational mandate (Catalyst Research and Communications 1993: 1).

CHAPTER FIVE. IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF LOCATION.

Every aspect of one's life, no matter how trivial or local to oneself, is in some way (in many ways, simultaneously and not necessarily consistently) located in the currents and landscapes of politics and tends to reinforce or to alter some aspects of one's alignment and affiliation within that fluid structure.

Marilyn Frye (1992: 15-16)

5.1 Introduction

Political identities are developed, regulated and negotiated in and through space. A multitude of factors affect these processes in place, including experiences of local relations of power, regulation, contestation, and our interpretations and analyses of these. I have also suggested that our varying locations in and against the heterosexual regime influence, materially and ideologically, identity formation. Further, our interactions with others in particular spaces of resistance matter for the development of collective counterhegemonic identities. In this chapter then, I introduce the local activists, focussing on the factors involved in the development of their political identities and the importance of various types of spaces of political resistance in this process. Through this discussion I also hope to illustrate difficulties associated with organizing on the basis of gender, outlining various ways in which local activists have transgressed gender, challenging and disrupting the limits of politics and actions appropriate to "nice white girls", and how they have understood these transgressions.

5.2 Identity formation

What processes are involved in forcing us to take that step out of our place in the world, to have a sense that it is not in fact immutable, nor is the "natural" sex upon which it is supposedly based? As these activists illustrated in describing their process of getting involved in anti-violence activism, the path to political identity is not always a well-thought out, or dramatic one:

I didn't know anything about shelters. I had no overall political analysis and I would describe the politics I had as liberal but I hadn't identified the oppression that I had faced and certainly not the others that other women face (activist 1).

I was always really interested in women's issues but it was never anything that I could label, it was just sort of something that I was interested in (activist 9).

I have always had an interest in things feminist even way back - I don't know why (activist 15).

So I think it's always been there, I have always been aware of injustices particularly around women (activist 22).

The experiences of these activists point to the way in which a political identity may begin from a sense of knowing something's not quite right, but not yet self-consciously and intentionally developing a formalized politics. Although there has been a move in feminist and lesbian theorizing away from an emphasis on experience as the basis for identity, this activist points to one reason why the concept of experience should not be thrown out altogether:

I think that if you are a woman you have the consciousness anyway, I just don't think that you know what it is. You're pissed off because you're

fucking taking care of these goddamn kids and he's off fucking drinking with his buddies and I'm stuck cleaning the goddamn house. That's pretty fucking aware if you ask me (activist 9).

And other activists were clear that it had been their own experiences of oppression that had propelled them into feminist activism:

I had a very healthy response to getting raped. I didn't blame myself and I was furious so I wanted to do something with that anger and so I put it into activism (activist 17).

I always reflect back to my experiences as a teenager at about age 18, my first exposures to feminism and my real access point was around my own addiction and going for help and being told that I was the problem and being channelled into these twelve-step programs that were incredibly blaming and asked me to change myself in order to be better. This was not working and they were lying about stuff. Then, in beginning to think about my own experiences with male violence and starting to connect my behaviour in terms of my drug use and what happened to me and then listening to other women speaking as well and realising that the same connections were there. So, I can't remember the writer, but someone has described these processes sort of like peeling an onion and getting through the outside layers that are a lot of propaganda and lies and then getting inside to the truth, it has been a process of becoming true to myself and what happened to me, and understanding myself in the context of an oppressed person, rather than the way I was labelled (activist 2).

In thinking about what role experience plays in identity formation, we can retain an awareness of its importance without also presuming that similar experiences will lead to similar identities (for example, not all lesbians will have similar politics). Further, various activists indicated the importance of particular spaces of resistance for the development of political identities, articulating the notion that identities are developed in and through space. This activist described the process of developing her lesbian/feminist identity:

I can remember sitting on the floor at OISE [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education], at the break, not even at the conference, but at the break and all these women coming round and eating fruit and tofu and all that crap and yak yak yak, yak, and just sitting there and feeling like I was in a little oasis, and being aware that I'd never felt like this in my life. I'd never known such contentment. I couldn't even figure out what it was, just smiling a lot. I was so happy, you know. And everywhere I turned there were new things to learn, it was like, holy shit! It's a wonder my brain didn't get overloaded, I mean, I read everything. I listened to women's music, I'm sure I must have driven my friends nuts, it was all I listened to, all I talked about were women's issues...and then of course, it went from there to suddenly "they are having a Take Back The Night march, do you want to go" and me saying, "what's that"? Imagine saying "what's that"? Imagine not knowing!! [laughing]. So I said, "oh that sounds like fun"...and off we go and it was like wow! This was Toronto, a thousand women on the street. There they are, standing up at a microphone, actually saying they're lesbians, and actually saying they're prostitutes and I'm thinking, holy shit!..Well then we just kept going to conferences and I don't know what happened but I just kept listening to all these things and looking at all these women and thinking "wow, thank goodness, I have finally found where I belong. This is my place" (activist 23).

The important spaces in and through which this identity was formed included lesbian/feminist conferences, demonstrations, music, and books. As one activist described her feminist politic, "I caught it like a cold - this had to happen" (activist 8). Politics have to be around to catch. In communities where there are no sexual assault centres, no women's centres, no lesbian organizations *or* where these spaces have been so thoroughly incorporated as to be no different from more traditional social service organizations, there are fewer opportunities for the development of counterhegemonic identities (and movements). Sites in Hamilton, such as the Sexual Assault Centre, Interval House, and the Women's Centre, have historically (and at different times, more or less so) played an

important role in presenting these opportunities. These activists pointed to the importance of local spaces:

When I came back to Hamilton I went around town looking for a women's organization...I went everywhere except the Sexual Assault Centre and everyone kept telling me to go there, right? "That's where you go", "you go talk to -----". I thought, oh my god, this is like, unanimous, everywhere I go. So, I went (activist 15).

To me, the only places in Hamilton to be in the women's movement was to be at the Sexual Assault Centre, or the Women's Centre...(activist 13).

I slowly decided that I wanted to become involved with some more radical politics and had heard that the Hamilton rape crisis centre was an organization of women who were primarily lesbian radical feminists, and I found that really appealing. So I made contact with the women in Hamilton (activist 11).

More transient spaces of resistance are also created, outside of these more formalized sites; for example, in the development of Justice For Women, or in demonstrations such as Take Back The Night and the Montreal Memorial¹, or through the repeated inscription of the public space outside the Courthouse (Ontario, general division) during the research period. That is, the Courthouse sits at the junction of two major downtown Hamilton streets (John and Main); the daily laying of the rose by Justice For Women, the daily vigil by Ruth Williams, and the multiple support rallies and demonstrations (including the spray-painting), all reinscribed that very public space from one of "justice" to one of *injustice*. In explaining why the 1992 Take Back The Night rally was being held in front of the Courthouse instead of in its traditional site in front of city hall, committee spokeswoman Kim Paquette stated, "This is the place women go for justice, but they don't

get any" (Todd 1992: B1). The demonstrations which took place at the Courthouse exposed thousands of passersby to the issue of men's violence against females and, in the case of Ruth Williams' daily vigil, to the local lack of justice in the legal treatment of that issue. The size and make-up of the many rallies which took place in support of Ruth indicated that many women who might not normally think of themselves as anti-violence activists became involved.

Local activists also pointed to the importance of their interaction with other politicized subjects, for the development of their own identities. For example these women argued:

Look at the movement in terms of the second wave of feminism and the anti-violence against women movement, the establishment of shelters and rape crisis centres - there was a lot of consciousness-raising that preceded the establishment of those groups and I think that a lot of women who would identify themselves as political lesbians came out at a time when women were deconstructing the whole notion of sexuality (activist 11).

If I think of myself personally - in some ways identifying as a lesbian was a natural outcome of that work. In some ways if you do that work for a long time, I don't know how you can stay involved with men. So that's part of it, I think. You just more and more see the limitations of having men be involved in your life in any central way. A number of lesbian women arrive at it [that identity] through the work (activist 19).

These comments point to the fact that it is not only the existence of spaces of resistance that is important in the development of counterhegemonic identities, but also who is and is not involved in those spaces. The process of identity formation involves our interaction with others, and as Adrienne Rich and other lesbian theorists have illustrated, this point

is not lost on those who have power. Women are kept from knowing that lesbians exist or that lesbian existence is in fact a viable alternative to heterosexual existence.

Activists also argued that the material conditions of women's lives and their locations in and against the heterosexual regime, were important in enabling (or not) political activism - actually having the time, the resources, and the freedom to attempt to put knowledge into practice. When she ended her vigil outside the Courthouse on June 14th 1993, Ruth Williams noted that she was forced to do so because of poor health and exhaustion, in part as a result of a schedule that included working night-shift and looking after her three grandsons (Davy 1994). All of the activists interviewed recognized that the presence or absence of children and/or a male partner concretely affected the ways in which they participated in the movement. For example, these activists commented:

I don't have those practical kinds of constraints [children and male partner] and I think doing the work has made me very inclined not to get those kinds of constraints. I have seen, and have some first hand experience too in learning what some of those responsibilities can do in terms of impacting on your ability to do the work. Not just in a practical sense but I think there is pressure on you not to do certain things (activist 1).

As a really practical example, if there is an opening on the crisis line that needs to be filled, it's not like I have kids that I need to think about first or a partner that I may have made plans with, so I absolutely have a whole bunch more flexibility in terms of doing that kind of stuff (activist 3).

Child care is absolutely crucial and women cannot do this work if they don't have child care. They simply are not going to abandon their kids like that and you have to take that into account. And if you don't take that into account then you'll never get women involved and a lot of the time it's not our fault - we don't have the resources to take that into account and the powers that be make sure we don't. (activist 5).

These comments point to the importance of location in reducing Women's capacities for collective political action. That is, the heterosexual regime assigns work such as caring for children, housework, looking after men, and biological reproduction to Women and mystifies this necessary reproduction of the means of existence as "natural". Activists who had transgressed the limits of the category Women argued that different expectations of availability for political work were ultimately divisive:

I think it also makes a difference in terms of commitment. I think the more time you have available, the more pulled in you get and the more committed you get. And for me it seemed like there were real differences between the women who had husbands and kids and the women who didn't in terms of, it felt to me, and this may be judgemental in itself but in terms of level of commitment, degree of energy that they were going to put into it. I think this becomes problematic as well in some respects because there does develop a lack of tolerance then. A lack of tolerance for how other women live their lives and if you are not putting this many hours in or going to this many meetings or aren't this fried or whatever, then you are not as committed. I am torn about that because on one hand I think that is tremendously unfair and judgemental about how other people are living their lives and another part of me believes it (activist 18).

I do think kids give an automatic assumption of not asking women with kids to do as much as women without kids. I have a lingering resentment about that and how it wasn't recognized. It was just never spoken (activist 19).

What is beginning to surface here are the kinds of expectations that have been part of organizing based on the identity "woman". That is, what has often accompanied this seemingly unmarked grouping are the assumptions that, a) gender similarly structures all white women's lives to the extent that there would be enough in common for political

action, and b) that there is a relatively uncomplicated connection between gender and ways of being (political as well as others). These issues are discussed below.

5.3 "the problem with Women is....."

Geographers Fincher and McQuillen (1989) have illustrated the effects of gender on organizing, arguing that women experience organizing quite differently in mixed groups than in same-sex groups. Local activists confirmed this:

It is very comfortable being with a group of women, because when you talk about women's experiences, there's freedom to do that and you are understood. So there is a real validation to women's experience (activist 3).

Any time that you are working in an organization that has mixed genders, the women will have to spend some of the time either taking care of the men or challenging and educating them. And usually the agenda of the organization will be the men's agenda (activist 2).

The difference is like the difference between being heterosexual and lesbian. It is much more intense in a women's organization than it is in a mixed and you know we have had men working here before and it changes incredibly. Even the lunchtime topics change. We have a commonality here (activist 14).

However, activists argued that there were more expectations involved than just the basic one that working with women will be different than working with men. They argued that there can be huge expectations when first entering arenas of collective action, and correspondingly huge disappointments. For example:

I think one of the main differences that sticks out for me between going into a female-only organization and a male organization is that you assume that you are not, you assume some kind of protection, and you assume a non abuse of power, and you assume that it's going to be different, and

you assume that women aren't going to act and treat women in some of the same ways that men do. And you find out that it's not true and I think that there's a much more profound experience of betrayal (activist 12).

Speaking personally I thought that I had come home, I thought that this was where I belonged and other women felt the same way and that we were all of us women working together for women and that we would love each other. And of course, that was not the case and when it turned out not to be the case it was soul-searing; it is absolutely soul-destroying stuff at some level and in talking with other women I think that's their experience (activist 11).

This points to that component of the heterosexual regime which creates two groups which are marked as "different" from each other, but "the same" within the group. However, members of the oppressed group are also *divided* from each other. As discussed in Chapter Three, the powerful ideology of the heterosexual regime works to socialize females into competition and horizontal hostility, not to understand each other as allies. Heterosexuality divides females from females literally and figuratively, bonding us individually with members of the oppressive group. These activists argued:

Look at the old 50s movie when there are two women fighting over a man and they will do anything in the world to get that guy. Of course the one who gets the guy is always seen to be the lucky girl, right? And that is the epitome of how women were taught to respond to each other. And then we find feminism and we try to lose that sense of competition and I think if you've been through a CR [consciousness-raising] group, that works. But I don't know if you can ever totally get away from socialization around - you never trust a woman 'cos they're gossipy, they can't keep a secret, women can never be successful, they can't manage money so how could they ever be in a position of authority in an organization, competition around men. So with a lesbian it's, all she needs is a good lay, because she has to compete around men, or she's castrating and she hates all men. All of those images we get of women, which are patriarchal socialization, I think carry over into the workplace (activist 14).

The challenge of it though, particularly being a feminist organization is that we are trying to do things differently and when your experience has all been male-dominated, hierarchical, it's really difficult to now just let all that stuff go and work in an environment that's different. What is really frustrating about that is that when things get tough you are not really sure what process to follow or whatever, you revert back to the old style. We start to do the same things that we have always known to be right. You start to internalize sexism. So some of the stuff you do is a result of that, you buy into all that stuff. It takes a lot of time to first of all recognize yourself in that and then get rid of it, it's tough. I couldn't say right now that I am not sexist. We probably all are to a certain extent (activist 3).

We bring all of that misogyny with us and our goal is to try to create other structures to lessen the power and control, but we do, we internalize things like racism and dominance, we also internalize the patriarchal ideology so it's a constant struggle to fight against it (activist 4).

So, white feminists enter (predominantly) white feminist organizations with the expectations that they will "fit in", and that "difference" is not something that has anything to do with them; thus the assumption that there will be similarities in the women's politics and in the way they work. This is organizing on the basis of the generic "woman" who exists unmarked in her whiteness and her heterosexuality. However, it appears that white feminists who are *not* heterosexual, also enter this type of organizing with similar expectations. The majority of the activists interviewed stated that there was a statistical over-representation of lesbians in white, feminist anti-violence organizing (although not an over-representation of their issues). For example, these activists noted:

Yes, there is a disproportionate number of lesbian women, not all of whom are advocating for lesbian issues. In or out of the closet they are there (activist 11).

Yes, it is not true of *out* lesbians at my shelter but I think that, well, actually, a lot of the shelters have become quite conservative over the last

five years, in my experience, so I would expect that it's more mainstream. I would expect that there are more heterosexual women getting into it than there used to be. I think that the leadership of the movement, I think the workers, the women who slog it out and do the work and bust their asses and spend many hours of work....is predominantly lesbian feminist (activist 5).

I think in comparison to other areas of work there is a larger percentage of lesbians because it is women-focused work, and it's an attempt to confront male patriarchy and male privilege and it's pro women work. So I think because of the nature of the work, there is probably a larger percentage of lesbians. They are not visible, I mean they are not vocally visible. You know, when you walk into a room in many cases, it's the lesbians who are in the room but it is not a vocal issue. You couldn't expect the room to stand up and wave their banners for confronting homophobia (activist 9).

This last quote points to the common occurrence of lesbians emphasizing that part of their identity that is *feminist* rather than lesbian, in anti-violence organizing; that is, they are not involved in this organizing as *lesbian activists* but as *feminist activists*. I want to suggest that one component of essentialist assumptions about gender and identity has been the frequent conflation of the social change aims of "women" and "lesbians", by feminist lesbians. Thus (white) lesbians tend to assume that working for "women" involves working for themselves. Activists provided various answers as to why lesbians might be so involved in this area of activism. First, it was suggested that since lesbians are female-focussed and care about what happens to females as a group, they would be drawn to political struggles for social change in this area. For example:

I think that's the case because I think that lesbians are more committed to the concerns of women, on all levels, wherever women's lives touch an issue as women, not just the anti-violence movement, I think lesbians are more concerned about that. They care more about women, because they

care about women in all ways and heterosexual women care about men - they are taught that that's their first priority, the men; and so after all of the men's needs are taken care of then you can focus on women's needs, and support women. You consciously have to be aware that you are fighting that (activist 5).

I think that lesbians - and I don't mean to take away from heterosexuals - they have been the women who risked and bump-started things in the movement. I think they are more willing because it is more consistent with their lives, we don't have to do that heterosexual shuffle thing, maybe we don't have children, although I think that's changing, but I am thinking of women's energy and if you have a traditional het[erosexual] woman of working class who has three kids, what kind of energy does she have? I think first of all it's a social thing sometimes that lesbians often gather to do work and it's also social, it's a place to find other women, and I don't mean as a pickup thing, to find the company of other women. Maybe they feel more comfortable because it's women only (activist 14).

By far the biggest set of responses, is that of lesbians not being invested in men and therefore being freer to challenge the system of men's violence and to unsettle the limits of the category Woman. For example these activists argued:

I also think that there's something there around lesbian women being freed up enough to work on their own behalf and on behalf of other women because there is not a man in the picture with his boot to their throat - saying "oh you can't do that". A lot of straight women can't participate outside their families in any community-oriented way because they've got to take care of the man at home. I think that lesbian women who are not living with men have some freedom to do that (activist 11).

I think that the fact that I am a lesbian gives me rather a vantage point from which to view oppression (activist 4).

I also think that a lot of lesbians are involved with setting up the whole anti-violence movement, setting up shelters and rape crisis centres because I think that particularly, well let's call them "out proud dykes", are in a much better position to tell the truth about what men do and what men want to do to women and kids. And so, because we don't have an emotional and financial attachment to men, and because we are on the

margins, we have particular insights to what it is they are doing, compared to if you have to live with them and be emotionally dependent and involved with them. I think because, when I say out and proud, that means that we are also willing to talk about it. I think that there are women who see but are not willing to talk about it. I think the most likely females who are willing to name it have been lesbians. And that does not mean that there have not been many heterosexual feminists who are able to name it, but the honesty and the voice with which it gets described by a lesbian is different (activist 12).

I think that since most of us don't owe men anything or aren't seeking to please men or whatever else, that its much easier to see the power dynamic and get pissed off and want to lay them bare, somehow...And, I just think we come to it with more clarity, and so that's why we're there (activist 21).

Finally, it was argued that, that despite heterosexism, anti-violence activism is actually a relatively good place for lesbians to be, for example:

I think that along with the analysis around violence against women comes the analysis around heterosexism as being part of violence against women. So I think that whether it is real or not, many women have felt comfortable gravitating towards women's services and feminist activities, because, again rightfully or wrongfully there is a sense that they will be more accepted, more able to be themselves. There is an analysis there that allows them to have a voice around heterosexism (activist 11).

However, what white lesbians have found in "women's" organizations is that their "difference" does in fact matter. They have discovered this when they fail to "do gender right", that is, when they most clearly contest the boundaries of the generic Woman. Further, local activists argued that there are many other ways in which women can fail to be "nice white girls". As illustrated in Chapter Three, Women are manufactured to exhibit behaviours, desires, and actions which fit within the boundaries of a certain category. This is confirmed in the common sense, day-to-day understanding of what is

meant by terms such as "unladylike", "unwomanly", and "unfeminine". Activists' experiences of moving beyond these limits are discussed below.

5.4 Beyond nice white girls: UnWomanly acts

In Canada, a country still dominated by the societal values of a white, male, heterosexual, non-disabled, middle-class culture, the contours of the acceptable Woman are very different from those which are constructed in other cultures and groups both within and outside of this particular location. I want to reiterate that when I discuss UnWomanly Acts, what the constitutive behaviours and/or actions are transgressing, are the boundaries of a culturally and otherwise contingent, politically and socially constructed category. The dominant one in Canada is that of "nice white girls". There are several ways that activists within this group of "white feminists" have moved beyond the limits of that category. First, through a transgressive sexuality; for example these (lesbian) activists describe their experiences:

They [straight feminists] like you more if you're more like them. Going out and doing workshops with women, lesbians who were from a feminist lesbian identity - so they wore their [lesbian] sexuality more strongly than perhaps I do - women who could not pass for example, and having people listen to me more or feel more comfortable around me and feeling that there were conditions put on that, that I would be listened to as long as I was like these people but as soon as my voice changed and I sounded different from them in terms of what I was saying or expressing my sexuality differently, or as soon as I had different perspectives it was rooted in my identity as a lesbian, my ways of being, my ways of dressing. I felt like as long as I stayed looking and acting and speaking like them, they were ready to champion my rights, but as soon as my being a lesbian

evidenced that I was very different from them, then I became wrong, I was the one who needed to change (activist 24).

And then my experience...in which I had been hired as a lesbian and then went out in the community and was told that as a lesbian I was ramming things down people's throats, flaunting it [her sexuality], that I was too aggressive, that I was a bitch, too angry, too much of a man-hater (activist 2).

I also think it is very threatening for a lot of middle class lesbians because they are not out, for lesbians to be out, because it reminds them what they are not doing. Especially lesbians with privilege, they should be the ones who are out...I also think that it is a responsibility, ethically, of lesbians to be out because most [white] lesbians can pass. I mean unless you insist to tell the world that you are a lesbian, most people even if you look like, what I would say look like a lesbian, people will choose not to acknowledge that 'cos they are so uncomfortable with us. And I think that to be political friends, or to be allies with women of colour that we need to be and should be out as lesbians (activist 12).

There are, of course, less obvious ways in which females don't do gender right, since gender is always and everywhere inscribed with other markers of oppression such as class, ability and race. Many of the activists understood their transgressions as having something to do with class, which, as a component of identity, was articulated as meaning much more than income level, profession and/or relation to the means of production. As these comments suggest:

So you're in the awkward position of being at odds with most other people with a university education and also being at odds with your own background. I find it constantly confusing, am I middle-class or am I working-class? Sometimes feeling a bit like I'm trying to over-identify with the oppression by identifying by the oppression; but by identifying as middle-class, I don't really belong there either. So class is a complicated one, for sure (activist 19).

I don't think that class is associated necessarily with money, I think that it's a whole value system in terms of the way that you think and I think that what the misconception around classism is, is that it's fluid, and that you can move from being working-class into upper-middle-class and I think that economically you maybe could do that...but I think that the value base that establishes your class remains there (activist 9).

The naïvete around class is that certain women think that class is only about how much money you make or how much money you have and then there is this incredible huge pressure to conform which means passing. There's this pressure to pretend that you are just like they are, to pretend or act like middle-class (activist 12).

Several activists argued that their experiences within a largely middle-class movement included punitive consequences of transgressions which seemed to be class-based; that is, they were experienced when activists were not, or refused to be, polite, indirect, non-confrontational and nice. As one activist argued:

Well, I think that it's been a problem, there is a problem with being working-class in the white, middle-class, heterosexual feminist movement. I think it's really an insidious problem. Because I have a certain level of education that takes me from the working-class I can look like I am middle-class and I can talk like that sometimes - you know, I have an education that has taught me to use language in a certain way and I have studied the politics of feminism and I have had access to literature and to film and theatre and writing and scholarly stuff that you get trained to read in university and get information from. That has allowed me to look like I am middle-class, but there is always a point at which they "find out" kind of thing, that I am not like them and then I get punished. The logical question is "what's that point"? And I think the point is, the point at which that happens, is when there is conflict, because then things get more direct and the more conflict there is and the more risks you begin to take in sorting out your positions or in taking a stand or in using certain kinds of strategies, the more the layers begin to be peeled away - the layers that have been put there by the education and by the language and all that kind of stuff, and the basic person is revealed, and that basic person is working-class...(activist 5).

However, other activists questioned what they saw as a somewhat tenuous connection between class and certain behaviours, for example:

But sometimes it's also, like I have gotten onto this thing where I think to be more sort of direct and honest and loud or something is more working-class and I don't know, is that true? I am beginning to think that's not true....I am not so sure that direct honesty is a working-class virtue. When I look back now at my life - I mean my father was a truck driver you know, there's no doubt about where anyone is going to put me - there was no direct honesty in my family and at one point I shifted and started to define honesty as a working-class trait or attribute, and the middle-class was more, well, slimy is probably a good description for it. But I am not sure that being honest is working-class, I am not sure it is a class issue. I think, I think I have some major contradictions here [laughing]...in terms of women with other women, we are just fucking destroying each other, and none of it is done in the name of honesty....you see I think it's more about gender. I mean, women I don't think are very good with, we still don't know what to do with power and we don't even recognize it, informal power in particular. Formal power we do, but not informal. We don't know what to do with anger, we don't know what the fuck to do with it so we screw up a lot I think. I see those things as more gender issues than class issues (activist 18).

I want to suggest that what is being articulated here is that we are *always* classed and gendered (and raced and so forth) simultaneously. So that part of the processes which operate within organized feminism to police female behaviour *is* about class but *never* in the absence of gender. As one woman recognized:

It's hard to work out what privilege affects what, to break it down, but for instance, although I always identify myself as a radical I often find myself slipping towards liberalism, and I am sure that is really influenced by my class privilege (activist 6).

It *is* hard to work it out, and in fact it is counter-productive to attempt to break oppression into discrete categories. So those women who experience punishment and sanctions based

on their being loud, aggressive, confrontational and/or direct, experienced it as class-based but it is always based on a *gendered class* or a *classed gender*, that is, based on the rules and regulations for acceptable Womanly behaviour in a society whose hegemonic ideology is one that is male, white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied. For example, these activists note:

I speak from the heart and often the way that it gets interpreted is anywhere from arrogant to abusive (activist 12).

People have talked about me being loud, aggressive, they use "assertive" for themselves when they are angry, they use "aggressive" for me. Loud, aggressive, blunt (activist 5).

My own experience is that the moment there is a woman who talks too loudly or gets too angry or too aggressive or assertive, the other women will want to take her down a peg and make sure that she stays within the frame of being a "good girl". So I see that unless it's a group of women who are really conscious of that and actually celebrate being disruptive, aggressive bitches - and for me that is the kind of group of women that I want to work with - the kinds of women who get rewards are the kinds of women who bow to the images that patriarchy has of women. Women who resist that will get punished (activist 2).

Activists argued that there were ways in which the limits of the category Woman could be stayed within, and that, if necessary, the application of consequences to transgression could be mitigated, to a certain extent. For example, these women noted:

I've also learned the language of speaking appropriately, not being too harsh in the way I present things, in some ways being a "good women", not being too aggressive in my views so that I will be taken seriously. Which in some ways, may mean that I am not taken seriously (activist 7).

My experience in the feminist movement and in the world is that I have the privilege of being the dominant, a very physical feeling of being the dominant culture, of being safe against these attacks and knowing even

though there's all this lesbian-baiting going on and she [board member] is obviously implying that all of us were lesbians, that it doesn't matter, because in the end I am not lesbian and she can't prove it. And I in fact can say, "that's not true"; if at any given point I want to save myself I *can*. And that just makes all the difference in the world. So it doesn't matter whether I say, "well I refuse to tell you what my sexual orientation is", that's not the issue, that not the point - the point is that I am choosing to do that and if it gets hot enough I can always save myself (activist 5).

I have been called a man-hater. So I'm certainly aware that what I say may be discounted because they see me as a man hater or as a feminist, but if I was calling myself a lesbian it would be discounted even more. I think there are a lot more risks that lesbians take when they speak out or that what they say gets discounted and gets personalized (activist 22).

White lesbians experience and/or contest their oppression as white lesbians, never as just lesbians; black lesbians experience their oppression as black lesbians, never as just lesbians; and white, middle-class, non-disabled, heterosexual women experience their oppression and their privilege as white, middle-class, non-disabled, heterosexual women, never as an isolated part of that.

What I have illustrated in this chapter then are several ways in which "difference" is manifested and experienced *within* categories, often at the point where females fail to "do gender right". Further, I have argued that the potential for the formation of certain individual and collective political identities varies from place to place: the presence or absence of particular spaces of political resistance *and* the political subjects within them, are important. The connections between political identity and being, however, are not simple ones; organizing based on the notion of the generic "woman" has led to presumptions about how feminist activists, both lesbian and heterosexual, might behave

politically. In the following chapter, I further illustrate the variations between the activists in terms of their analyses and actions on men's violence against females and on the state.

Chapter Five endnotes

1. A memorial is held annually in Hamilton (and other towns and cities across the country) to remember the fourteen women massacred in Montreal on December 6th 1989, and to protest violence against women.

CHAPTER SIX. UNWOMANLY PRAXIS: CONTESTING THE HETEROSEXUAL REGIME.

If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. Even when gender seems to congeal onto the most reified forms, the "congealing" is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means.

Judith Butler (1990: 33)

6.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter Three, I am conceptualizing men's violence against females as one of many tools that are used to enforce and reproduce the heterosexual regime. This conceptualization is one of many which compete for legitimacy in concrete struggles over how this violence will be understood and therefore how it will be contested (if at all). I have suggested that too much commonality of analysis and practice has been presumed of the group "white feminists". Below, I present the analyses of the 25 activists interviewed and in doing so highlight particular, specific understandings of political processes that produce and maintain this system. I also discuss the realities and practicalities of feminist activism and sexist oppression, within a particular place and time, with the aim of providing a more nuanced explanation of why sexist oppression remains so pervasive in the face of protracted activism. As this activist wryly noted: "If I had to wait for the perfect analysis I'd never do anything" (activist 5).

6.2 Competing analyses - men's violence against females

As discussed briefly in Chapter One, feminist geography has only recently turned its attention to the processes of men's violence against females and the importance of sexuality in the reproduction of the subordinated position of women (Bell and Valentine 1995a; Chouinard and Grant 1995; Pain 1991; Peake 1993; McDowell and Court 1994; Valentine 1993a, 1993b, 1993c). However, the critical importance of this system in the oppression of women has long been recognised by feminist activists and especially by that theoretical area of feminism historically labelled "radical feminism". As far back as 1977, Susan Griffin argued that, "the fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home. Keeps women passive and modest for fear that they be thought provocative". What this early feminist analysis was competing with were various conceptualizations which understood men's violence against females as, "an offence against property, not as an offence against the person on whom the act was perpetrated" (Clark and Lewis 1977: 116). Females were viewed as men's property and this view allowed marital rape and other forms of woman abuse to remain in the sphere of domestic occurrences rather than that of criminal and political acts. However, in consciousness raising groups across Canada (and elsewhere) the political and systemic nature of these acts were being recognized and political mobilizing created speak-outs, safe houses and, by the early 1970s, rape crisis centres and shelters for "battered women" (Adamson *et al* 1988; Wine and Ristock 1991). Pence *et al* (1987: 5) noted that:

The battered women's movement has, since its earliest days, identified battering not as an individual woman's problem, but as a societal problem linked to the oppression of all women in our society. While institutions in our communities were engaging in practices that blamed women for being beaten, early organizers in the movement challenged mental health centers who claimed women were sick, police who charged women were provocative, courts that refused to acknowledge that women's bruises were the result of criminal behaviour, and churches that implored women to stay in violent relationships as part of their Christian duty. We understood from the earliest days of the movement that women were trapped in violent relationships not because they had poor self-images or were in some way defective, but because of an economic system and a community that over and over again reinforced batterers' power over women.

Men's violence against females quickly became a central issue of the so-called "second wave" of organized feminist activism and analysis (e.g. Brownmiller 1975; Clark and Lewis 1977; Griffin 1977; Gordon and Reiger 1989; Guberman and Wolfe 1985; Hall 1985; Hanmer and Maynard 1989; MacLeod 1989; MacKinnon 1989; Russell 1975, 1982; Schechter 1982; and Yllö and Bograd 1988). Edwards (1989: 15) suggests that there was a major shift in feminist conceptualization of male violence from the 1970s to the 1980s, in that it, "moved from separate accounts of specific types of violence to an appreciation of male violence overall as being at some level a unitary phenomenon". This conceptualization is unlike that of many of the early feminist writers (e.g. Firestone 1971; Millet 1970; and Mitchell 1971) who, in their theories of male dominance, saw violence as almost unnecessary to men's power over women which was maintained so well through other institutions¹.

Over the last ten to fifteen years, analyses have been developed from feminist theorizing and activism which argue that men's violence against females is used

intentionally as a tool in the reproduction of oppressive gender relations. These approaches have become more sophisticated and complex to both broaden the definition of violence and turn attention to less obvious institutions through which male violence is perpetuated, for example, the state and the institution of heterosexuality. For example Adrienne Rich (1980) in her now classic *Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence*, argued that heterosexuality should be recognized as an institution, and that feminist analyses needed to move from seeing it as naturalised and normal, towards a recognition of the way it operates to allow men (collectively and individually) to control women's sexuality, women's labour and women's reproductive freedom. Also, challenges from women of colour, women with disabilities, and poor and working class women have combined with this increasing complexity to broaden feminist conceptualizations of violence to recognize the violence done to women by systems of racism, ableism, classism, *and* their interconnectedness (Figure 6.1²).

Further, under relentless pressure from activists, various parts of the state apparatus have taken up these issues and in the process further affected analyses (see Walker 1990); so that the messages we receive in the public domain about men's violence against females have become a confusing mix of competing concepts including power and control, the cycle of violence, learned behaviours, and dysfunctional families (Yllö and Bograd 1988).

Figure 6.1: Relationship of sexism to other forms of oppression
(adapted from Pence *et al*, 1987: 57)

	people of colour	poor people	lesbians and gays	women
isolation	red lining; lack of police & social services response to minorities	housing projects; no access to transportation	forced to stay closeted; some neighbourhoods unsafe	need a man for protection; women out alone are whores
emotional abuse	racist language; called lazy; whites deny worth of other cultures	blamed for their poverty; considered lazy	viewed as sexual perverts; public taunting	called names; treated as sex objects; called dumb
economic abuse	last hired; poor paying jobs; first laid off	welfare regulation keeps them down	discrimination in employment	low-paying jobs; paid less than men for same work
threats	police brutality	social workers threaten to end benefits	police harassment	
sexual abuse	racist pornography; seen as sex machines	less police protection	accused of child molestation	rape; incest; marital rape; pornography
privilege of status	access to school and jobs; assumption that white culture is only one that exists	middle-class values seen as most important	heterosexuality openly displayed - lesbians seen as flaunting it	subservient to men; bible used as tool to keep women in their place
using children	less investigation needed to terminate parental rights	welfare threatens to take children to gain compliance	taken away in custody battles	economic security bargained away in divorce for custody
intimidation	police stops and checks; more arrests	court systems work differently for those who can't afford a lawyer	homophobia rarely challenged publicly; AIDS = homosexual disease	police won't protect women
violence	genocide; lynching; police brutality	slum buildings burn, killing people; homeless freeze to death in the winter	lesbian and gay bashing and killing	battering; rape

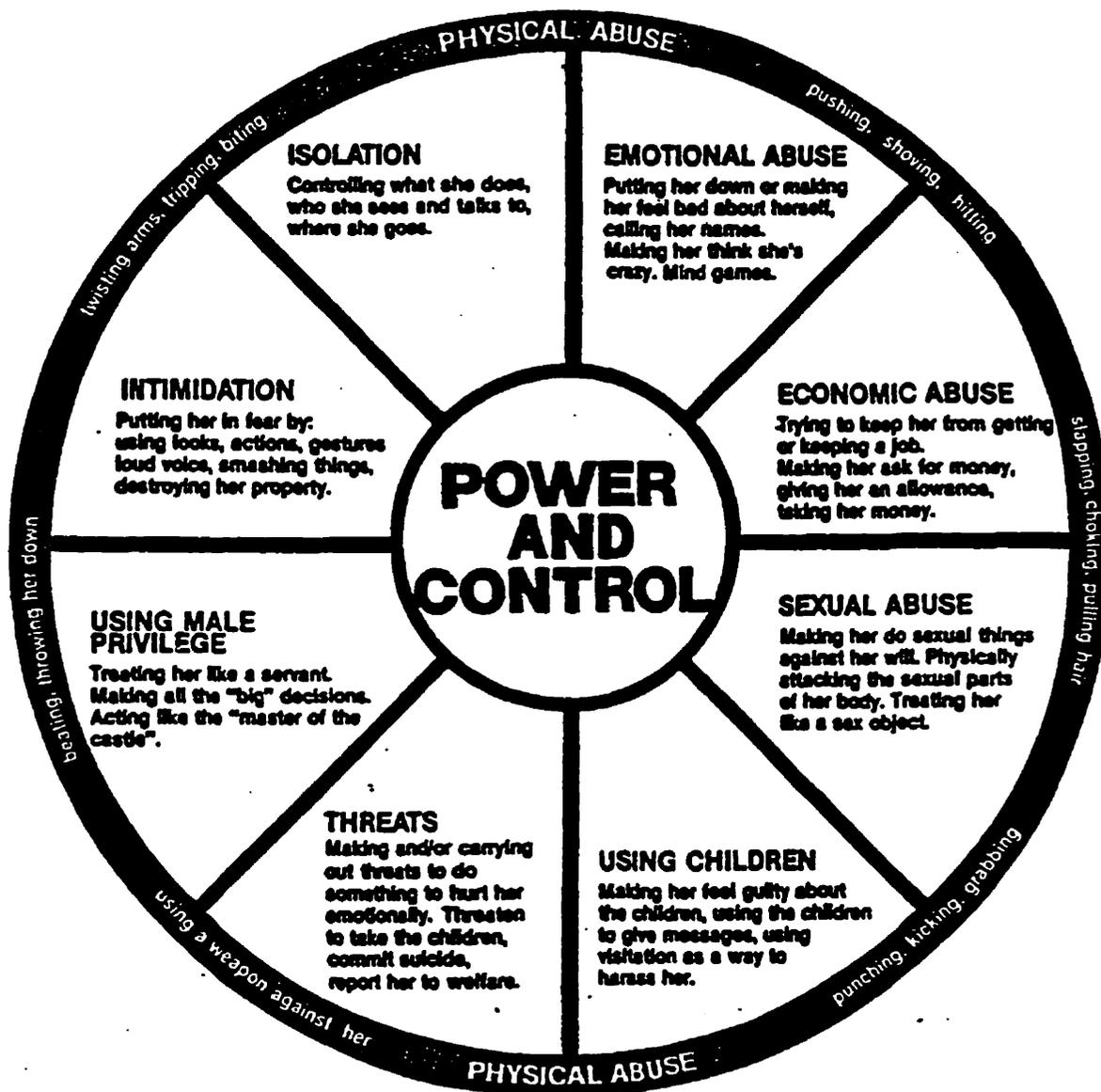
Finally, front-line feminist work has, understandably, been contaminated in places by the huge and powerful mental health industry³ (discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). It is accurate to say then that there is no one agreed-upon feminist analysis of all forms of men's violence against females and this is reflected in the analyses of the 25 women interviewed. However, it would also be fair to say that the most widely articulated feminist activist analysis is one that is informed by the concepts of power and control. Ellen Pence *et al* of the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project developed the Power and Control Wheel (Figure 6.2)⁴, as part of the women's curriculum In Our Best Interests - a handbook and other radical education materials that were distributed to women's groups across Canada and the United States.

All of the activists who articulated an analysis of men's violence against females either alluded to or specifically mentioned "power and control". This phrase has, in many ways, become part of the feminist lexicon of the 1990s and as one activist recognized, it has become a short hand way to describe an extremely complex and detailed analysis:

Of course the short answer is power and control but it's really not that simplified. I wonder if I would even have been able to give a better answer before I learned all the jargon 'cos now I don't know; I mean you almost use the jargon without that analysis and then the analysis is almost implicit without being meaningful (activist 6).

What emerged from the interviews were several themes within this "complex and detailed analysis". First, that men use violence against females because they can (culturally) and because they see it as their right. As these sexual assault workers argued:

Figure 6.2: The power and control wheel



(from Pence *et al*, 1987: 37)

Have you heard the joke, why does a dog lick its penis? Because he can. So I think that men rape women because they can. Men beat women because they can. They can physically and they can socially. Nobody stops them and nobody stops them because it's men who own the systems that would have the power to stop them. And they don't want to stop them because stopping them would mean women would be free and we might actually achieve some kind of equality which I don't think men want, because they don't feel manly enough if women are equal to them. And they don't feel manly enough because social norms state that to be a man you have to be better than women so you can't be equal and still be better. It's just like this web and everything is so linked. It just boils down to men's power to be who they are and to be the way they are and their desire to stay that way (activist 15).

And my analysis is that men use that power to keep women and children in line because they come to see that power and their right to dominate and demand compliance as the only way (activist 11).

Well, first of all I think it exists because it is allowed to exist. It exists because men get away with what they do because they are the power brokers, they're in charge of the rules and they're in charge of who pays so they allow it (activist 16).

That it happens because it can happen because men rule the world and they can do whatever they want to and they are hardly ever held accountable except perhaps when they interfere with another man's sense of his property. Like if another man's wife and children are threatened and especially if it is a white privileged man then a man might be held accountable, but it's that ownership and dominance thing (activist 24).

These activists then, in arguing that violence is used consciously and purposively by men, directly challenge those analyses which are more commonly articulated within the public domain; that is, those which reduce the obviously systemic nature of men's violence against females to the level of the individual.⁵ The latter group attribute men's violence to, for example, poor anger management, to women's provocation, to abuse as children, to alcohol, and to a bad economy. In the refusal to accept the validity of these analyses,

the activists contest the reproduction of oppressive ideological processes. Further, in highlighting the obvious discrepancy between abusive men's behaviour with their female partners, female ex-partners, and female dates, and their behaviour with male co-workers, male bosses, male friends and male relatives, feminist activists engage in a conceptual politics of struggle exposing the *choice* that men make when they use violence. For example, this shelter worker argued:

It is totally male responsibility, it is not about women provoking male violence, wanting it or deserving it. It is about choice, about men choosing to be violent in order to maintain control. It is not about them being sick or out of control or drunk or abused as a child - or all of those kinds of things. It is very difficult when you talk to people about this for them to get their heads around some of it. It is very hard when a man does something outrageous to convince people that this guy isn't sick, and I don't know how to deal with this except to point out that he manages other areas of his life just fine (activist 1).

Further, local activists argue that men use violence in order to maintain their power over women on many different levels; the violence is not an end in itself. And, that all men benefit from this and other types of violence since it upholds and enforces the present system of women's subordination⁶. Activists argued:

I think that male violence is very much a part of keeping the system that we live under, which is a white and male supremacist society. I think that male violence is very purposeful, and necessary to keeping the system intact and I think that the violence that men perpetrate against females and femaleness has been very purposefully escalated in the last few years (activist 12).

Male violence serves a purpose in maintaining the patriarchy and the power over women, to keep us procreating for mankind but at the same time keeping us in our place and I think that's the purpose that male violence serves and that's why it is so difficult for us as feminists in the

anti-violence movement to tackle that because what we are actually tackling is the ingrained structure of systems (activist 14).

These activists are articulating a radical understanding of men's violence as a tool in the reproduction of the status quo. That status quo is understood as one in which men's violence is minimized and supported, both culturally and institutionally. As one activist argued:

Male violence against women is an issue of power and control and although individual responsibility has to be taken for the crime, it's also part of a larger problem which is our patriarchal society which condones men's violence towards women and children. It's not about sex it's about control, it's about power and it's reinforced by our religious institutions, our political institutions, and the general ideology that says it's okay to beat the fuck out of your wife (activist 4).

Many of the activists articulated an expanded analysis of "violence against women", reflecting broader moves in "the movement" towards a more complex conceptualization; that is, one which would reflect the understanding that the set of power relations which men's violence against females is used to maintain, is part of, and interconnected with, a broader set of oppressive relations which includes systems such as racism, ableism and classism. As this long-term activist noted:

I mean we have a much more expanded definition of violence which includes all oppression of women when you get right down to it. This is all about power, and the nature of power is that if you are going to get it and maintain it, you have to use a lot of different, this is not my original thinking, but you have to use a number of different tactics in order to establish that particular power imbalance. You have to have financial control, I mean you have to use whichever methods a culture uses to reward and punish people and money is one of them, economic control is one of them. So, you have to control the economy of whoever it is you are oppressing, you have to control the children, you have to control the next

generation of those people, so children are usually important in some way...For example, in a racist culture you socialize the children to hate themselves, or native oppression is a very good example of that where they just literally took the children (activist 5).

Although all of the activists' analyses were informed on some level by "power and control", it would be misleading to presume that this commonality translated into simple agreement on political strategies to contest men's violence against females. As noted above, "power and control" has become a short-hand term, an integral part of the feminist lexicon of the 90s; however it tends to suggest a greater collectivity than exists. Since conceptual approaches to the issue inform practical approaches, I want to suggest that it is in investigating the latter that one can get a better sense of variations in the former (in Section 6.3 below). First, I want to briefly outline the ways in which the activists argued that men's violence is part of those processes which manufacture Women as the unequal half of the gender hierarchy.

This activist pointed to the geographical and cultural context within which men's violence is used suggesting the importance of ideological processes in the maintenance of women's subordination:

Sometimes I get to thinking that what Canadian women are fighting for is their psychological and emotional freedoms as opposed to their - well, I'm thinking here of women in general rather than those who are being held hostage and beaten on a daily basis - this is maybe the last front and it's a difficult front. Enough Canadian women are being kept sufficiently comfortable that maybe there's enough benefit in that situation for them to say, I don't need this aggravation, he's a good man, he doesn't beat me every day, so I am just gonna hang out here. The tool in this country is about colonizing women's minds and hearts and spirits and that's how it's tough to get at. Our minds are so colonized (activist 11).

This quote suggests some of the ways in which ideological processes are critical to the mystification of the realities of men's violence, in a "democratic" country such as Canada.

These activists argued:

You have to have a way of controlling emotions and thinking and so, in other words you have to be able to use propaganda and conditioning as a way of control. You have to have control of that process, and you have to use physical violence - physical sexual violence. That's across the board. And you have to use isolation and blaming and minimizing and victim-blaming - they may be part of the propaganda machine (activist 5).

I think the most powerful one [myth] especially with kids, is the ideology of the nuclear family, you know - "a bad dad is better than no dad at all"⁷ - and that comes up again and again and again and again, such that often women don't see the contradictions. Women will say, "you know it's really important that they have a dad" and this guy has never spent more than three seconds with those kids for ten years and yet, the ideology and the vision is held onto, not the reality (activist 18).

Myths about men's violence then, such as that women lie about it, exaggerate it, provoke it, and that men who perpetrate it are sick and abnormal, are very important parts of those oppressive discourses which minimize and mystify the systemic nature of the violence. Further, local activists argued that women are taught (through the media, through dominant public discourse) that men's violence is something that happens to "other" women. As this shelter worker argued:

When that [emotional abuse, threats, murder] happens to one woman, all women feel it because you watch what happens to a woman and you think "oh my god, is that going to happen to me"? So you follow the rules that they set out and they lie to you and say, "we're not doing this", they objectify and demonize that one woman - "she was a slut, well she was lazy anyway and didn't want to work, and she just stayed at home and lived off of me so I had to do that to her." Then they say that if you follow these set of rules - if you look a certain way, if you act a certain

way, if you say certain things, then this stuff won't happen to you (activist 9).

This points to another message integral to that discourse: that women who are raped, beaten, lose their children and/or their lives have *deserved* these things and that these "consequences" are usually visited upon "other" women - women of other cultures, women of other classes, women of other sexualities, and women in situations other than our own. This ideology stands in direct contradiction to even the statistical reality (which activists argue under-represent the prevalence of men's violence due to the under-reporting of these types of crimes). Further, many of the activists, both lesbian and heterosexual, argued that compulsory heterosexuality was integral to the system of men's violence, through its organization of society into oppositional and unequal genders. For example:

Well, I think it is through compulsory heterosexuality that men have access to women, whether they are actually living with women or not. You are told that to be a woman in this society there are certain things that you have to be and there are certain ways that you have to behave and we have a society that tells women that they are women in so far as they are taking care of the needs of men, and one of the ways that you take care of the needs of men is by being accessible to them sexually so to step out of line in that way is just really dangerous for women (activist 11).

We aim to please. Pleasing men is our survival. It just affects everything about us. The way we see, the way we value our bodies, some women will do the slash and burn on their bodies just so that they will fit that male defined beautiful white woman, and even black women are trying to be the beautiful white woman. It affects our behaviours around them, trying to pacify. It's so depressing when you think about it (activist 15).

Compulsory heterosexuality ensures basically that women will be held in these relationships so that the power imbalance can be maintained, and it's one of those things that also ensures that women can't coalesce, can't unify, with each other, and so it's a tactic of isolation, which of course is

essential - the people at the bottom of the triangle have to be set against each other in order to maintain the isolation from the oppressor so that the oppressor is safe and never touched. Compulsory heterosexuality does that very nicely, it isolates women from other women and it also maintains that relationship with men that ensures that individual men can be the foot soldiers of patriarchy, can inflict these powers on an individual basis and there is no option because heterosexuality is compulsory, there isn't any alternative, the alternative is demonised by the use of propaganda and conditioning, all those things - all different power tactics are used (activist 5).

What this activist is also identifying is that aspect of compulsory heterosexuality which tends to isolate individual members of the oppressed group from each other, and the way in which the nature of this particular oppression makes it extremely difficult to contest (that is since women are encouraged in white western culture to identify with their menfolk not other women). Several activists also pointed to the fact that this system of compulsory heterosexuality is not omnipotent, it is not all-determining, and that women cannot always and everywhere be absolved of all responsibility in its maintenance. This long term activist discussed her own coming to terms with that part of the perpetuation of men's violence that she had always ignored:

I used to think, when I would hear women - and I heard this often, more than once - I used to hear women say in work shops, I have been more hurt by women than I have by men, and women are their own worst enemies - those are the two things - and I guess the third message that I heard several times was, an anger and criticism by survivors of child rape of their mothers for not protecting them - and those were the three ways women had to express what I probably think of as one idea - to express the part of how male violence against women and kids is perpetuated that I used to ignore...I had to be shaken to the core of my foundation in order to make me see the part that females play in perpetuating misogyny and therefore their own, our own oppression...I am willing to now think about the rest of the story when a mother does not pay the kind of attention and

is not a protector to her daughters. In the past I was only willing to look at well, what would render those mothers, and they are the minority and I stick by that, but what would render them powerless. What would be the life experience of any woman to be in a position that she would call her daughter a liar or a slut or say, well I am going to ask your father, the father\rapist lies and then she says, how could you say such a thing about your father - the only part of that I was willing to look at was how can we help, we need her to be an advocate for her daughter so what kind of support can we give her...I think that is really important and I would continue to do it, but what I am also able to do now but wasn't willing to do before was to look at in fact sometimes there is a level of choice operating where some mothers consciously choose their husbands or their sons or their fathers over their daughters. That's hard, but it's necessary (activist 12).

This points to the importance of understanding the power of those ideological and material structures which insist that for a Woman, the partnership of a Man is critical, at any cost.

This group of activists then, articulated what can be termed a "power and control" analysis, arguing that material and ideological processes work to minimize men's violence *and* the possibilities for women to contest it. In this way, this group of activists articulated the basic political analysis of "white feminist anti-violence activists". However, it is when we move beyond this basic analysis of men's violence against females, that the differences in analysis and political strategies within this group begin to emerge. As I argued in Chapter Three, it is in investigating particular, concrete examples of political mobilizing that we might contribute to the move towards less grand, more specific theorizing in such areas as "the state", identity formation and collective mobilization, and spaces of

resistance and incorporation. In the following section, I introduce and discuss the ways in which local activists attempt to put these analyses into action.

6.3 From analysis to action

Given the overwhelming nature of sexist oppression, given that men's violence against females is supported on individual, institutional and cultural levels, and given the intimate connection between compulsory heterosexuality and male access to females, it is difficult to even *imagine* strategies which would seriously contest the system of men's violence. For example, this activist noted:

I don't know. The things I think would prevent it happening, what I think would work, if I list them I get this image of holding something here while this happens over here. I don't know how to hold all the pieces together (activist 8).

Holding all the pieces together is made difficult by the naturalization of the category of sex as a central organizing principle in this society. That is, the majority of the activists interviewed recognized that compulsory heterosexuality and the system of men's violence against females are linked, but given that widespread heterosexuality for females is naturalized as the only realistic option in our society how does one then translate that analysis into a workable strategy?⁸ Nonetheless, women do of course choose to act towards transforming this system even if new worlds have not yet been fully mapped out. For example, the connection between economic freedom and freedom from men's violence

has long been recognized: women's economic dependence on men, either individually or collectively, diminishes their choices. As one long term activist articulated:

I still believe that those two issues [economic independence and anti-violence work] are still central to women's liberation, and I mean a broad definition of violence at this point. If women had money you would have a lot less violence against women because they would simply use their money to deal with the person who is doing it to them in one way or another.....so the powerlessness comes from material conditions and not that they don't know what to do or that they are helpless (activist 5).

All of the analyses outlined above argued that men are responsible for their violence, that they make a choice to use it, and that, for the most part, men are not held accountable for that violence, with punishments being infrequent and lenient. In putting this analysis into practice, many activists argued for strategies which would directly challenge this situation.

For example, these activists argued:

Well I think we need to act on our analysis so that when I say that men are responsible then they need to be held responsible, they don't get off the hook. There needs to be a penalty that shows this is unacceptable. I think men have to be held responsible from a very early age, for example, when your male child does something sexist. Systems need to be taken on, but in terms of changing them it has to be *all* of those things, *always*, raising all of our children as non-sexist, but that's not going to happen. So how do we ever get there, I don't know (activist 1).

I said this back then [1980], what we should be building is detention homes for battering men. I mean there's a model in corrections for it, you make them live there, you make them pay the mortgage or the rent, you leave the women and the children in the home, you don't displace them, and then you supervise them, the men. You put them on electronic monitoring and until he is what you deem as better - it can't be any worse than the system we have now - you keep them there. You make them pay the bills, you keep the kids in their schools, you don't dislocate them, you don't have them living under the threat of violence. I think that's a critical error. If we could look back, what we did to respond to the problem - I

recognize that the shelters are required because we don't have anything else, the women have to be safe - that's the priority, But I think the other stuff has to be done (activist 14).

If males saw that there was going to be some kind of consequence for a crime that they committed and that this would be a consequence that would be public and that people would know, and would hurt them in some way, I think that would be a deterrent, I still believe that. I don't think it would wipe out violence but I do think that these guys would think twice about doing it, if they knew that they were going to get caught and if they knew that there was a community response to it. If the community mobilized around this guy and says this is not okay and there will be a consequence (activist 17).

Mostly, however, despite more than two decades of lobbying and action, consequences remain too few and too little. Thus, the majority of activists proposed strategies that might be thought of as "combinational", in that they combine short-term, long-term, and across-the-board strategies. And although the analyses discussed above were very similar, here we begin to see a fairly broad political spectrum. For example:

On one end of the spectrum you can kind of infiltrate and sort of play their game and do the challenge from a soft back door approach, make them think that you are one of them and then just every now and again you come out with one or two things - you try to do some education. On the other end of the spectrum you have the sort of banging on the door and saying "fuck off, stop this"! (activist 3).

Patriarchy is so encompassing that it requires all encompassing work to unravel it and I am quite liberal in the sense that I really do believe that we need to do it all. And it can't be one thing because women have different needs within the movement itself and come from different places and want to do different things and so I don't think it should ever be boiled down to one thing because it will mean by definition that it is excluding some women. So it should be a whole bunch of things (activist 18).

These are in contrast to strategies that might still be considered "combinational", but much more confrontational in a systemic way:

In a general sense I believe that these things have to be confronted, I think that the things in this community that are considered radical action are extremely quiet little mousy kind of protests, very conservative strategy and protests and I waiver between thinking we should start where people are and try to move the strategy forward to a place that they are willing to start, and just confronting it the way it is, knowing the people will freak out but the truth will be told or whatever, and people will come to grips with it in some way and people will move forward that way. And I suppose that a nice middle of the road point of view would be that we have to fight on all fronts and that all of those things have to be done, and I guess all of those things have to be done and I have to choose, I have chosen obviously, that I will be one of the people on "the edge" (activist 5).

How you do that [dismantle compulsory heterosexuality] I think, is, you go after every institution and you look at every institution like the educational institution and the medical institution and the economic and religious institutions and we need to be actively dismantling the systems of oppression at every single level. So whether that means a text book in a school system gets thrown out because it trashes lesbians and use censorship in a responsible way using social justice principles, or whether it is saying to the guy who calls himself the pope and thinks he has the right to tell people how to use their bodies, that's not appropriate, it's violating human rights. So you apply a human rights framework to every institution and then following through and making sure that you are doing what you say you are doing. So if I am an educator and I say that I am an educator who works for human rights then I do not teach a course that disappears the lives of millions of people in Canada (activist 2).

Of course there remains the question of whether activists actually put any of these proposed strategies into action. Many argue that they do, in different ways. For example, these activists note:

I think that the more conscious that I get then the more and more I do that [put analysis into practice] and I think that's why I am starting to get fired

everywhere I go and I now know that if I am not getting fired then there is something wrong (activist 2).

Definitely....oh yes, in terms of doing radical education with women (activist 6).

I absolutely do put it into practice in my work, I talk about it all the time. I actually live it, I think about it all the time, when I'm watching tv, when I read stuff, I do it all with my political glasses. I can't not see it. I sit in a restaurant and I see it. It's everywhere and when I am working with abused women I talk about it all the time and I am always making links and sometimes what I'll do is I will start talking about racism first and I never talk about their situation until I talk about these other things (activist 9).

However, activists also argued that there were many barriers, internal and external to their particular situation, which stopped them from engaging in praxis. These women gave examples:

One tries, it's a struggle all the time, because I was raised in this society just like everybody else, so for me to get my head around, for example, working collectively, when I am used to working in a hierarchy, it is very difficult (activist 3).

I try but I don't always succeed. Is there anything that stops me? Poverty stops me, having been fired, having had my work taken away from me stops me, my own role as an oppressor in many situations stops me from putting into practice what I believe, where I will behave in ways that I am not recognising until someone who is generous enough points it out to me (activist 5).

Self interest kicks in when I need to pay my rent. Economic survival is really important to all of us (activist 2).

These comments point once more to the importance of the material conditions of women's lives. Activists need to pay the rent, need to keep their jobs, need to stay alive. Females who run away from their class, who transgress the boundaries of the category Woman,

who challenge Men's right to be and who attempt to contest the power of the regulatory fiction of gender are always in the *process* of doing so. That is, these strategies for social change take place within a context of demonization, of counter-strategies, of lack of resources, and of multiple systemic and individual contradictions. As this activist illustrated:

Emmm, none of this stuff is simple, there are so many different layers, so if I were to say...I think that I am fairly integrated around some things and hopefully there's more integration around the bigger things than there are the little things. It is the little things that take me out right? There are probably more inconsistencies around the little things like shaving my legs, which I have just decided to hell with it, I can't get my head around it it takes up too much energy and says a lot about what is done to women in this society right that those are the things that we worry more about. I mean I could stand up in a meeting and condemn a man but if I were to go out and someone said "ooh god, hairy legs", I'd probably absolutely die a thousand deaths right? [laughing] So those are some of the contradictions in my life (activist 11).

One area in which activists recognize there have been important ramifications of contradictions in both analyses and actions is the state. This is explored below.

6.4 Confusing analyses - the state

As argued in Chapter Three, there is an abundance of evidence to suggest that the state in Canada has historically supported men's political, economic and social control and that men have committed many different forms of woman abuse with little or no sanctions. The state has also historically controlled women's sexuality by controlling access to abortion and to reproductive technologies in addition to legitimating

heterosexuality as the only family norm (Adamson *et al* 1988; Walby 1990; Walker 1990). Given this, it is logical that feminist activists have extensively lobbied the state for changes, such as changes in legislation and in the policies of the police and health systems in their treatment of abused women. However, activists have argued that as the state has responded to this pressure, especially over the last decade, new barriers to radical change have emerged (e.g. see Timmins 1995). That is, activists who historically were engaged in *proactive* direct political action and radical education now spend much of their time *reacting* to the outcomes of clashes between various feminist and state agendas. Many writers have argued that with funding has come regulation, control and depoliticization; in short, institutionalization⁹ of the anti-violence movement (Barnsley 1988; Dobash and Dobash 1992; Findlay 1988; Randall 1988; Smart 1989; Walby 1990; and Walker 1990).

What is obvious from discussing these issues with local activists, however, is that although the term "the state" is commonly used, it remains unclear just what these women mean when they use it and, whether or not any of us mean the same thing. In understanding the connections between analysis and action, it is important to know whether activists are thinking of the state as an "it" (or as a "he" - as one shelter worker noted, "sometimes I think you can get into a bit of a conspiracy theory trap when you talk about the state, like it's this large man in the sky" (activist 6)), as a public form of patriarchy, as a contestable terrain, or as a combination of one or more of these. Several

activists noted that in fact they had never really given the problematic of the state a great deal of *analytical* attention:

That's a good question, we throw it around and we all think we mean certain things but it is really confused, we don't even know what we think about them. It would depend on what I was talking about. I think it's a word that means all that big stuff out there that has all the power and what I mean by that would depend on the context of what I was talking about (activist 1).

Oh my god, I think I did a course on that sometime [laughing]. Oh, I don't know, legislative, education, the police; judiciary I would put on the periphery, it has some autonomy. This is totally unthought you know (activist 10).

I haven't been asked to define that in a long time. It's one of those things where you are always around a certain group of people and they all know what that means but when you are actually asked to define it, it's like oh... (activist 24).

This last quote illustrates the *presumption* that exists when we, as "white feminist activists" use terms such as "the state"; it is presumed that we all mean something similar.

This obviously matters for the development of strategies in relation to the state. Some of the activists cast a very wide net in describing what they included in their conceptions of the state, for example:

I think there is the state as we traditionally think of it, as this political and bureaucratic machine that administers legislation, laws and policies of the land, but then there's all the arms and tools of the state which include everything from education systems, classrooms, textbooks, curriculum for students, religious institutions whose doctrine supports the state, to the mass media, god, even the fashion industry! I start to think about everything that in some way controls citizen's lives. So I think the state is this machine that is fairly centralized but then there are these long arms of the state (activist 2).

The power brokers in all the different institutions whether that be the government or, or the head of the IBM, anyone who has the bucks and the say so - any body or any institution that has the bucks and the say so but also the power to make the dominant ideology. The academy is part of the state, the police system, the health care and education systems, every system [laughing] and that all filters down, we are all affected by the state. So, for instance, the individual therapist that a woman might go to, she's part of the state, although she can also be resisting the state, she can't be apart from the state - the policies by which she has to operate are part of it, and the theories she offers in terms of what she understands therapy to be, the state had also defined. It's everywhere (activist 13).

What these activists are articulating is a conceptualization of the state which encompasses all of those "relations of ruling" which order, categorize and maintain society as hierarchical. By including big business, religion and the media for example, these activists illustrate an approach which first identifies those institutions through which the oppressive structures of society are produced and maintained, and then conceptualizes these as part and parcel of the state. Obviously this is a very broad conception, one that reaches well into the realm of "civil society". The following exchange illustrates that women's organizations may then be implicated as part of the state:

Well, when I think of the state I include all of the institutions that are funded by me - education, medical, so-called justice systems, social services, housing, all of them - anything that is funded by public money I consider to be the state. Which is practically every institution.

Does that mean you think of somewhere like the Sexual Assault Centre here in Hamilton as part of the state?

Ah, interesting, you're such a clever little thing [laughing]. Hhmmmmmm, well I guess arms' length they are, aren't they? But I would see them as more arms' length. I would see them as arms' length as long as they are taking a different political line than the state, or put the state in their analysis as someone who is not a friend, as someone to confront even though they get public money. I guess I would see women's organizations as being in a situation where they may or may not be part of the state,

depending on how much they are prepared to comply with the state's agenda (activist 5).

Several activists were clearer that, by the early 1990s, spaces of political resistance had been incorporated. As these two veteran activists argued:

It [Sexual Assault Centre] is state funded, state controlled, there is no autonomy or independence and the ideas and practices that you would find in the centre are palatable to the state, to our funding bodies and if they weren't we would be shut down. It is really, really difficult right? (activist 11).

I include everything from the legislators to the institutions, so I guess it's the policy and legislation right down to the operationalization of that so that means government bureaucrats, institutions. And I like to think that we struggle with being part of that as a social service organization but I also recognize that many of us are part of that state....We have a lot of power...in women's lives (activist 14).

The implication then, that locally, women's organizations, such as the Sexual Assault Centre have been incorporated raises the question of how these spaces might be most accurately conceptualized. That is, if, within these spaces, a) women who come for service receive service that challenges the system of men's violence against females and is different from that which they would receive in a more traditional site (that is clearly part of the state) and/or b) women who work and volunteer in these spaces are radicalized and become UnWomen, then, is it most fruitful to think of these as spaces of incorporation, or spaces of resistance *in and against* the state? This question, and its answer, has implications for whether or not these spaces should be abandoned by activists in favour of new spaces of political resistance, or whether they should be maintained. This question is addressed further in Section 6.6 below.

The greater variety that exists in activists' analyses of the state (as opposed to men's violence) is understandable given that, a) the state has not historically been paid the analytical attention that other areas of women's oppression have, and b) the state is conceptually difficult to grasp. As argued in Chapter Three, the state is not an easily-identifiable, unified organization but is constituted through complex processes of regulation, bureaucracy and administration where the government, as part of the state, is that part which is elected, highly visible and regarded publicly as responsive and answerable to "us". However, as a set of relations it also includes the regulatory powers of all of those agencies which many activists identified in their discussions of the state, those which we come into contact with everyday of our lives: including schools, daycare, immigration, welfare, the legal professions, and the health-care system. As suggested in Chapter Three, it is in investigating the specific and multiple ways in which the state regulates our daily lives in particular places that the state becomes more knowable. And it is in approaching the state in this way that Hamilton activists were much more certain and exact in describing different areas of these "relations of ruling" which are most important in playing a part in men's violence against females. Of the 20 activists who were specific about which parts of the state were most relevant in this issue, nineteen named one, or both, of the social services systems and the legal\judiciary systems (including the police). This activist's comments are typical:

I think that most abused women have said that the legal system and the economic/social support system are the most lethal. That those are the two systems that are most brutal. Women can't get money, they can't get

financial support and housing and the things that go with social services, and they are victim-blamed and trashed and treated like shit and degraded when they have to ask for support from agencies, for housing from social assistance. Not only that but when they do get the money it's not enough to live on, they are very poor as a result. The other thing is the legal system, it takes their children, supports him, won't deal with his violence, is victim-blaming, puts them on trial; it's just a really powerful, brutal system (activist 5).

When thinking of the different realms of state regulation that matter most in the maintenance of men's violence, activists suggested that it is analytically difficult and not necessarily productive to separate them out, since we do not tend to *experience* them discretely. These activists argued:

Well certainly the legal system, I guess, welfare, direct service agencies. It's hard to narrow it down because it is all so interconnectedprobably the legal system is the biggie but then when I say that I immediately think the welfare system, the education system - so all of it? (activist 6).

Well, I think the funding bodies and the criminal injustice system and the media. They are probably the most important because the media which has a great influence on the culture and so the belief system and the values in the culture - the communications system, I don't just mean the news, but all of it. And I think the criminal injustice system, the mental health industry, but then I think of university campuses and where do people learn about violence against women? All of these professors are now, on university campuses, teaching about violence against women. That whole educational system, before, and after, high school very much plays a major part of socialization of people and plays a major role in perpetuating certain values that are in the interest of maintaining the state. That's what states do, they don't put themselves out of business. And they are certainly not in the business of protecting women and children (activist 12).

This has implications for political strategies. That is, it highlights the fact that activists can successfully lobby the police for example, to engage in mandatory laying of charges in "domestic assault" incidents, only to see the possible effects of that success reduced,

or even blocked by actions of another part of the state, for example in the courts. This is, of course, exactly what happened in Hamilton when assistant crown attorney Toni Skarica argued "to hell with politics" (see Section 4.5) and cleared a backlog of bail hearings which he argued had built up because of the police department's decision to oppose bail in cases of "domestic violence".

Interestingly, although activists named government as part of the state, few activists explicitly pointed to the local level of government. This is consistent with arguments of writers such as political scientist Caroline Andrew, who contends (1992: 115) that in Canada, there has been a "disjuncture between feminist organizing and municipal politics" and that it can be "explained by the role of provincial and federal government in issues of primary concern to feminists. Further, municipal government appeared not only not to be involved in these issues but also not interested in being involved". In the controversy sparked by the "lesbian ad" at the Sexual Assault Centre, although the regional grant was much smaller than the provincial grant, it was regional politicians who caused so much trouble for the Centre. That is, as outlined in Section 4.5, regional counsellors, through comments to the media were able to create a major story out of what many activists considered to be a minor incident. The lack of strong representation in local government - there were no feminist and/or "out" lesbian and gay members of council, nor was there a Safe City Committee¹⁰ - undoubtedly contributed to the ability of local politicians to make political hay out of this issue.

All of the activists were very clear that the state upholds the system of men's violence against females, in one way or another, and that by refusing to intervene, or only in the most indefensible situations, the state does allow men to abuse women on a scale that has led to popular usage of the term "sexual terrorism"¹¹. These local conceptualizations of the state need to be understood in the context of both local and "extra-local" experiences of subjection to the state. For example, discussing the case of Paul Bernardo, which came to be articulated at a national level¹² this local activist argued:

The status quo is that men have the power and they keep that power regardless and unless they go so far out - like Bernardo - then they hold them up and say this is a real bad guy and we are going to put lots of money into catching him and it detracts from any other power issues that are ingrained in our society (activist 14).

Local activists then add these experiences of "justice" to more place-specific ones, for example, that of Guy Ellul. As outlined in Chapter Four, Ellul stabbed his estranged wife 21 times with enough force to cut through bone, and left her to bleed to death on the floor of her house and to be found the following morning by her mother. This was regarded in the women's community as an "open and shut case". However, in court the defence portrayed Debra as a "slut", and as a "bad wife", calling on a local policeman to confirm this opinion. Ellul's behaviour prior to the murder was described in court as including calling his estranged wife up to ten times a day and driving past her house. In his charge to the jury Judge Walter Stayshyn asked:

Does it [Ellul's behaviour] show a vindictive man or does it show one concerned with his children and wishing to have the wife and mother home

with the children? It think it is clear that he was a loving and concerned father (in Davy 1994).

A jury of twelve believed Guy Ellul's story that Debra had tried to stab him and he had killed her in self-defence and acquitted him of all charges. This case is critical in understanding local activists' experiences of the "justice" system. The message taken from this case was that in Hamilton, abusive men were literally getting away with murder¹³.

Activists further argued that the state upheld the system of men's violence against females in myriad ways which were less obvious than failing to legally punish abusive men. For example, these activists pointed to several ways in which the state, through maintaining the heterosexual organization of society, has helped to create an environment in which men's violence is acceptable:

In the most basic sense it was the state that legislated the idea that men could legally physically assault women and that parents could physically assault children in order to keep them in line. And it was the state that denied voting rights to women, and it was the state in police services who absolutely refused to intervene in domestic disputes because that was a private issue not a public one. And if those things hadn't been in place then I am not sure that men could have continued doing what they were doing for so long, and the myths that surround women wouldn't be so engrained, that women are in fact still men's property and women are still economically dependent upon men and that's in large part based on the needs of the state. So I think that the state plays a predominant role in developing the context in which men can violate women (activist 2).

I think it [the state] plays a large part in making the choice between poverty and violence, women's access to jobs, making enough money to support themselves, not providing child care, or women not being paid for their work in the home, as not being recognised as doing real work and that kind of thing, defining the norms about what's respectable and what's not - defining what is family and het [erosexual] couples getting an income break - even welfare in terms of being a single mom if you get mother's

allowance you get stuff deducted if you have the father of the children staying with you - the assumption that you are going to be financially supported by him (activist 6).

There was recognition amongst activists that a relative lack of, and variation in, analyses of the state had led to contradictions in political approaches to the state. This activist argued:

We have gotten into some real contradictions ourselves within the movement around the state. We demand state funding and demand that the state act this way and that way and the other way and it's like, surely we know that they are not going to because they are not going to kill themselves. It's a patriarchal state, it is a capitalist state so it is not going to dismantle patriarchy or capitalism. We get so pissed off when they don't do that and it's like, well what did we think that they were going to do. I think it is a problem when we start believing it (activist 18).

These analyses, and the contradictions in them, matter for the development of political strategies for social change. Below, I discuss these strategies and attempt to identify some of the more obvious gaps between analysis and action (recognizing the relationship between them is not a purely linear process, more a dialectical one).

6.5 In and against the state

What emerges most strongly from discussions with local activists about strategies towards the state is that although the state is conceptualized as largely operating to uphold men's violence against females (that is, as public patriarchy) it is *also* understood as contested terrain, and these two approaches are not viewed as necessarily contradictory. Thus, although activists argue that they largely experience the state as reproducing the

status quo, they still regard it as an arena of struggle. This suggests ways in which feminist praxis towards the state does not have to be either/or, and that in reality there exists a much less dichotomous approach to the state. For example, these activists argued:

I think it is necessary to always struggle to try to transform everything because it is all part of the culture, the institutions are part of the culture, but I think that in order to transform them you have to oppose them, you have to confront. Just like, in order to change your mind I have to confront you with a different idea than your idea. So you say it's thus and so. In order for me to change your mind to something else, I have to say it is not thus and so, it is this way instead. We have to be in opposition, I have to confront you with a different idea, I have to present you with something else. I have to say, you are full of shit. I can't change your mind by agreeing with you. This may be very simplistic because what we are talking about is revolutionary change [laughing], it's not as simple as saying, well I disagree. But it's a nice analogy. I think that that confrontation is not happening, in the women's movement it is not happening. You don't have confrontation, you don't have attempts to transform the state (activist 5).

Well, my theoretical thing would be that it [the state] reinforces male dominance blah blah blah. My reality of it is, my experience is that you have pockets, because the state is such a broad system...So I guess individual bureaucrats have some leeway but on the whole the state hinders more than it helps, but it is not necessarily so. That's why you have to contextualize (activist 10).

Other activists argued that although in local struggles for social change, working in and against the state in various ways could not be avoided, radical social change would be resisted, not promoted from sites clearly within the state. For example:

I don't think that's [within the state] where it is going to come and I never have believed that. I think people for whom the system has worked, are much more likely to believe that. I never believed that, I don't put much faith in the state, which doesn't mean I don't have respect for some of the people who are working in the state, in a whole variety of institutions on

a whole variety of different levels to try to make it more accountable or to try to make it better for women and for kids (activist 12).

I don't think there's a place for the state [in radical social change] at all. I think that right now they are in direct opposition and I don't think that they [state institutions] have a vested interest in change. For example if you went to the schools and said "if you do not include this stuff in your curriculum - which the Ministry of Education can do - we'll cut your funding", then they would include it in their curriculum. But I don't think that would ever happen (activist 14).

No, because the whole thing has to change, it's got to come down, it's got to be reconstructed. You'll get variations on a theme but the theme is going to stay the same as long as the systems that uphold our culture stay the same. And our culture remains rooted in the same beliefs, biases and prejudices and understandings (activist 24).

Activists also argued that the issue of possibilities of social change from clearly *inside* the state had been complicated in the early 1990s because of the election to provincial office of the (relatively) left-of-centre New Democratic Party. This activist noted:

Particularly when the NDP got in, lots of activists just dumped their jobs and went to work with the government because now it was meant to be the government of the people and all this kind of shit, so just absolutely drained all of the social change movements. You'd be calling the goddamn government and you'd get people that you knew and you'd be thinking what the hell is she doing there?....Who is going to be on this side of the table if everyone is over on their side? (activist 5).

Other activists argued that the changes that feminists could make from within the state were limited by the context in which they worked for change, that is:

There is this mind-fucking experience occurring where you go to the government and they tell you how to do your radical work except that they are going to fund you in a certain way and their expectations of you are in a certain way so that you are now relating to a sister-feminist who works for government and on the surface what you would think would happen is that she would open up a window of opportunity for you to do

the work that you should be doing in your centre except someone's got a boot to her neck and she will pull in the reins as they pull in her reins (activist 11).

I have seen a couple of women with good politics go into institutions and it's killed them. Or it's eaten them up and they look like and sound like everyone else. If you look at women who go work in these places, go work for the man, how connected are they with grass roots women services? What are they doing to feed them information, what are they doing to make sure they are accountable to the women outside. And women go in and get paid really good money and they are kept very busy and it's very hard to have political lives and also I think women get caught up in thinking they are being disloyal to whoever is feeding them. And thinking that if they are aligned on the outside, I think there is a lot of pressure not to be politically active and not to be connected with the grass roots. I think it would be natural to have expectations that things are going to be different somehow when you get one of your own in there. But if it's only one or two of your own and you understand how big that monster is, then I don't think you hold out too much hope. And I think it makes it harder actually to be critical. Because not only are you critical of The Man, but of your sister and that is really hard. So it definitely has an effect (activist 12).

If activists remained somewhat mixed on how best to approach the state as a site of transformation, they were much clearer on the issue of increasing levels of state intervention and the implications for organized activism. Many activists argued that with state funding, for example, has come clear control over the type of activism in place:

I think that anytime groups of women in communities begin to get organized one of the tendencies we have is to then ask for money because we believe that money will help us get organized and one of the easiest ways to get money is from the state, but along with that comes power and the more money there has been the more the state has intervened, and along with the money have come all kinds of conditions. And in those conditions are things that effectively immobilize any kind of political activity. By funding counselling services but not funding legal advocacy services, by funding support groups but not funding political action groups (activist 2).

At first we were amazed, oh my god, all this money, we can do all these things, we can hire another counsellor and we can hire a public educator - wow - it's like giving a kid candy - well, we got fucked, that's what we got [laughing] (activist 15).

I think if the money comes from the state that you're fucked. Either earlier or later they'll get you. They give you the money and not only do they think, but in some ways they have, the right to tell you what to do. And they will, one way or another (activist 8).

And this did happen in Hamilton, as discussed in Section 4.5. For example, when there were questions raised about the "political philosophy" and services of the Sexual Assault Centre, continued state funding (from the Region and from the Ministry of the Solicitor General) was dependent upon the implementation of the recommendations¹⁴ of the organizational review.

Further, it was argued that the type of control associated with state (and other) funding is not necessarily manifested in direct intervention. There is often a process of self-censorship whereby organizations will move to try to protect what funding they have.

As these activists illustrated:

I think that women have become less radical in order to get money. It's like sitting in a meeting and saying okay we won't say that because they won't give us the money but we're not gonna take out any more of those words, and the next time you take out one more, and the next time you take one more out and I think that is what has happened and we have become less strident. It may be just my chronological age because when I was younger I didn't give a shit and I just said stuff but I find myself holding back more and it may be the position I have too in the agency but that's the effect. You get these jobs and you think you're doing all this wonderful radical work and then you look at what you've done over the last year and it's sort of really wishy washy and it's not really saying a lot of anything. So I think that's what it is. And you have women's

organizations who are trying to survive so they'll go anywhere (activist 14).

It's like journalists - it's not somebody saying "you can't print that", it's journalists saying to themselves, "I better not write this because they won't print that". So you self-censor. So I have seen this going on at the shelter....we do not know what the limits of the state are. I really believe, but again this is a theoretical belief, that the state has its limits, that there is a bottom line but we do not know what that is because we stop ourselves (activist 18).

Of course locally, many women's organizations *do* know what the limits of the state are in relation to the control that is exerted over feminist activism, and have experienced this more direct type of intervention (for example in the disputes over "lesbian ads" at Halton Women's Place and Hamilton Sexual Assault Centre). Women's groups lobbied hard for state recognition of violence as a societal issue and activists pointed out that funding for services was necessary. However, in the process of getting these funds, subjection to state rule is impossible to avoid:

Violence against women is trendy. It is ironic. I mean I look back to the lobby where sexual assault centres lobbied the government. And we got that money because of that lobby.

do you think it was a mistake?

I am not sure. I am not sure because we do need money to do this work and we could not do it on the money that we were given, but we can't do it now either (activist 4).

I don't know how you go around it [state control]. And even if you resist involvement so you are funded by independently wealthy radical lesbians, how do you then resist state involvement if what you want to do is end violence against women and to do that, one thing is you need to get men jailed and you need the state to do that. So you have to involve them one way or another (activist 6).

This points to the lack of alternative funding sources for anti-violence activists. Funding is a "necessary evil" for the provision of services and "pure" funding without strings attached is most likely a fantasy. This activist is worth quoting at length, since she points to the wider context within which the issues of state funding need to be considered:

During all of these conversations, we have had these conversations about funding, we shouldn't be tied into this shit, we're buying into this shit and people have had the argument about autonomy and how we don't want 100 per cent funding because then we won't have autonomy and I think, you're 70 or 80 per cent funded and you think you're autonomous because you raise 20 per cent of your funding? That's just basically you are fooling yourself. You think you are going to keep going if they take away your 80 per cent funding? So where do you get autonomy? At 50 per cent, at 30 per cent, at zero? Okay, then you go and you fund raise. Then you go and you put your lesbian ad in the paper and you lose 500,000 bucks just like that [referring to Halton Women's Place]. And so when are you autonomous. You are not autonomous because economic power imbalances are tactics of power and control, and it doesn't matter where they are. So in a way this focus on state funding, I have this suspicion that this is absolutely irrelevant in a way, because I think everyone is focussing on the funding is the problem, and the funding is not the problem. Economic power imbalance, economic control is the problem. It's just that the money comes from the state right now, so where they see the economic tactic of control being used is through the state, because the state is disseminating the values of heterosexism and racism and gender power imbalance and they are using economic control as a way of maintaining that power. That is how power is maintained. So we focus on this as though it was *state* money that controls, but it's all people who have economic power who control. So if you move over to the Rotary Club funding your agency, or the United Way, you think that down at the United Way, we are talking about the same people...And you don't think you have to grovel to the United Way? It's worse than going to government, you should see their fucking budget process. You go in there and they line up their goddamn committee and ask you for your 10 year plan - "I think your planning process is a little haphazard don't you think"?, so you're running around trying to come up with 5 year plans and 10 year plans, when we all know that 5 and 10 year plans are irrelevant because you do what you can get

money for.....The only funding that would be clean is funding that political women control.....(activist 5).

This points to a dilemma with regards to funding. If part of the goal of the anti-violence "movement" has been to provide safe and supportive services for women then funding is necessary. Would funding from sources other than the state be any less problematic, in that would any kind of funding be given without specification as to how it may be used? Local activists argued no, there is not really some ideal, different kind of relationship that women's organizations could have with the state if they got a chance to do it all over again knowing what they know now. The money was necessary, the services were needed. If we consider the approaches of some of the early anti-violence activists to the problem of men's violence against females - that if only we speak out, bring violence out in the open, then it will stop - it is understandable that local activists would think that *their* state would be interested in contesting men's violence against females. In an ideal world, activists argued that the state would fund organizations and devolve control to the local women's community. For example:

 Idealistically speaking I think it should be that they receive public money to do the work without the strings attached and the accountability should be to the local women's community, and the local women's community should have control over standards. So that is what it should look like but that's not going to happen (activist 2).

This comment is echoed in other activists' recognition that although ideally women's organizations would not take state funding, there was little alternative:

 I can't think of an ideal situation because ideally they'd just give us a big wad of money and fuck off. That might be ideal but you'd get the next

government in and the whole thing could change so it's much too volatile. So rather than set that up, I would not be looking for an ideal situation with the state even though I think it is possible, just because it would change too much from one situation to another - so I would be looking to diversify as much as possible the funding sources so that no one agency could pull it all. Like I wouldn't want to be in the situation of Halton Women's Place where the Rotary Club threatens to cut funding and you apologize for offending them. Neither would I want to rely solely on the state saying you can't do this and you can't do that. So I would diversify, obviously private interests, wealthy women, funeral homes - I don't know (activist 10).

I think the anti-violence movement should tell the state to go fuck themselves is what I think. I don't think you can take their money and tell them to go fuck themselves, I think that's absolutely impossible to do. I think that money is power and when we start taking it we create, that informs how we develop ourselves, so that you use the money in ways that then you have to sustain so more of your resources are directed towards ensuring the continuation of the money and it dries up your resources. I think, and again this may be an illusion, that organisations such as Rape Relief in Vancouver do promote fundraising and they at least experimented with the notion of "men of conscience" contributing in some way, financially, although there are real problems with that. ...but trying to develop ways to maintain financial independence from the state so that you can do your work and the right kind of work without the threat of having all your money taken away from you - which I think is a near impossible thing to happen in Canadian society because there is this right wing, pendulum swinging, so even if you did fundraising you would begin doing it from people whose political positions are fairly right wing and non-radical and that is the nature of Canadian society - enough of us have bought into the system that we are complacent and don't want to see dramatic change, or have some benefit or gain from the state and don't want to lose it (activist 11).

We shouldn't take any money from them, 'cos if we do, we compromise ourselves and we can't say some of the things we want to say..women would have to earn a living somewhere else and maybe there are also people who would support it financially who are not the state, who don't comprise legitimized power. I think that TRCC [Toronto Rape Crisis Centre] gets some financial support from individuals, but that means that women have to support this. We don't have much money but if everybody

could earn a living. But then that's twisted too 'cos there aren't jobs for women. But at least be able to feed yourself and your kids and whatever and then do this work on the side (activist 15).

What is evident from these discussions of the state is that variations in activists' analyses of different aspects of the state are reflected in variations in approaches to the state as a site of transformation. What is also evident is that funding is recognized as having been a "necessary evil" for anti-violence organizations which wanted to offer women an alternative to traditional social service agencies. However, activists argue that in the process, state funding has resulted in a certain level of control over what type of activism might exist in and through those formalized spaces of political resistance.

The variation in activists' analyses both of men's violence against females and the state, the variation in practices towards contesting men's violence against females and the state, and the suggestions that organized anti-violence activism has been regulated by various forms of state intervention, raises the question of whether or not there remains something that could fairly be called a "feminist anti-violence movement". This question is addressed below.

6.6 A movement?

In discussing the question of whether or not there was still something that could be called a "movement", the majority of activists suggested that there may have been more of a movement in the earlier years than there is today although it was also

recognized that there is a tendency towards romanticization of a 'heyday' that may not have existed. The following response is typical:

I think that there has been a movement both historically and presently, and I think it will continue into the future and I can say that by taking myself up and looking at a really huge group of women that share some common principles and that are moving in a direction that has some commonalities on a global scale. I mean every where in the world there are women who are working, or trying to work to create a situation where women can make wages or women don't have to live in fear or women don't have to live with being physically assaulted. So we have these common ideas that the world should be "just" for women. Now where I start to get more fuzzy is when I think of how fragmented that movement is and how all the different fragmentations seem to be going about it quite differently. So you have women who are using radical approaches, women who are using liberal approaches and then you have quite conservative women who will say all the things that need to happen but their strategies and means are quite different. So there's not a coalition that's happening, it is not a movement that is cohesive and is sharing the means but certainly I would say a movement that shares goals (activist 2).

It is in attempting to identify those goals that the logic of a question about whether or not there was/is a movement becomes apparent. In discussing parts of anti-violence activism in the United States and the United Kingdom, Dobash and Dobash argue that the goals were initially three-fold: "assisting victims, challenging male violence and changing women's position in society" (1992: 29). Activists in Hamilton identified the major goal as being to stop, or eliminate men's violence against females, with the associated immediate goal of providing safe and supportive services for women. For example this activist argues:

I think that they were twofold, one was to end male violence and I think that they [early activists] thought they could do it. Because they thought if we tell them what it is, then they'll stop. The other one was to protect

women so that they weren't killed or brutalized as much. What happened is that when it was institutionalized, we lost the ending male violence stuff and we ended up just caring for the women. All our energy was spent in building these buildings where we cared for the women and children, because of course, you want to, right? (activist 14).

This last comment points to the dilemma common to any social change movement with short and long term goals. The challenge is to hold onto the latter during the process of meeting the former. So in the case of anti-violence activism there is the challenge of maintaining the long term goal of eliminating men's violence against females while providing safe and supportive services for women. Local activists argued that the goals had changed over time and that the main goal of ending men's violence against females had been lost, or at least overshadowed by the associated goal of keeping women safe and providing better services. As this activist commented:

Somehow we went wrong with it so that it became, something happened to this movement right? Because we are not talking about, well, if we take my analysis around why there is male violence against women and that what you have to do is fight it on an economic front, and on a physical and emotional and psychological front, how we have to attack every institution in society and change it so that it is not male dominated, we don't seem to be concentrating on a lot of institutions. We seem to have moved our agenda into intimate relationships alone, so we spend a lot of time talking about families and how they are structured and the role of men in families and the role of women in families and the role of children in families without really taking the anti-violence against women movement to the plant floor where women are making 60 cents to the male dollar, although there are little pieces of that work being done. A lot of feminists seemed to have focused their energies on intimate violence against women, not spreading out and confronting all the various institutions with this issue (activist 11).

Further activists argued that what that goal - to end male violence against women - meant varied between women once you investigated what that goal actually looked like to them. That is, all feminist anti-violence activists may name that as their goal but as discussed in Chapter Five, up until recently that goal did not explicitly involve fighting other systems of oppression such as racism and ableism. As this activist continued:

I think a lot of people talk about stopping male violence against women so that men and women can live together happily in their nice little nuclear families and other people would have a more radical vision of a world in which families don't exist in the way that we presently think of them (activist 11).

This points to what has already been illustrated in the preceding sections: a simple connection between gender and politics cannot be presumed. The politics of women involved in anti-violence activism vary enormously. As this activist explained:

And it's been really clear for at least my time at the centre that women are in different stages of what they see as being a problem, and they always stay in a particular place as to where they see the problem and that defines how they approach the solution. So some women think that violence will end if we are just really nice to men, nice to police, nice to doctors, nice to all those people who aren't nice to us, and they'll realize how nice they really are and they'll stop hurting us (activist 15).

What was instructive was critically thinking about whether these identified goals (which may or may not have some common meaning) were being pursued through those institutions which had been considered the traditional sites of organized collective activism, such as shelters and rape crisis centres. Activists were asked if these goals were being pursued through local organizations. The majority, on reflection, argued that no,

these goals were not being pursued in any meaningful way, although as activists we certainly do like to think they are. For example:

I think that we are told that shelters are doing that and that sexual assault centres are doing that but then when we get in closer I don't think that is true, or it may be true on some really superficial kinds of ways.....Someone said to me once that the existence of shelters decreases the number of men that get killed by their female partners because it creates another option for women that is less violent and that in fact if we didn't have shelters then more women would make the choice to kill their partners - I had to really think about that [laughing]. I have wondered about labour movements and women's organizations that focus on economic resources for women. Part of me thinks that maybe that's fighting male violence against women more than the shelters (activist 2).

I think we like to believe that we have been. But we have been extremely limited by the hand that feeds us. So, there are some kinds of subversive things that we get in there without them really realizing it that I think have sparked some consciousness, and that's part of it, part of it is sparking consciousness for women. You can't fight a fight if you are not aware of what the hell the fight is. And forget about men fighting this fight with and for us, it's got to be women who know about it and women who decide they want to do something about it. But then I have all this hesitation about this anyway because I think we're just lambs to the slaughter anyway. Little things are getting done but we are having to sort of mask everything, surround it in the guise of direct service and public education and all these socially acceptable sorts of thing, but revolution isn't happening. We can't talk about revolution, we'd just be tossed out, we would never be called back to the schools, no-one would come back for service. So you might be saying revolution but you won't use the words. It's kind of like having an arm and a leg tied together trying to do all this stuff that we're trying to do (activist 15).

Several activists also argued that this action may in fact be taking place in spaces of resistance located *outside* of these formalized sites, for example through groups such as the Justice For Women Coalition. Further based on a broader definition of what 'ending

male violence' may entail, several activists argued that this kind of work was perhaps still present in pockets inside shelters and rape crisis centres. As this activist argued:

Well, they [shelters and rape crisis centres] do less on that, they do less on prevention. For a whole bunch of reasons you end up patching up the damage and, but they are doing some preventative work. I mean, what do you define as preventative work? Again we need to be careful about making too sharp distinctions. If a woman gets out of an abusive relationship, that's preventative work, particularly if she has kids. We know that, that's not some hokey psychological stuff, that's true - that's the reality. So that is preventative work although it's not how we often think of politically as preventative, we just see that as patch work and again I think that's an artificial distinction we are making. But in terms of the more commonly understood sort of preventative work which would be more around public education and lobbying and that, they are still doing that work. As funding decreases there is less of it because there is so much of a focus on just keeping afloat so I think that what often goes is that kind of work. Because that's not the kind of work, for the most part that gets funded so then that's the first that goes (activist 18).

This last comment points to one of the ways in which requirements of the state affect the kinds of political action that occurs in these spaces.

I raised the question above of whether these spaces should be conceptualized as ones of resistance or of incorporation. An important part of answering that question involves the latter part of the two-fold goal, that of providing safe space and supportive feminist services for women. Activists were asked if they thought that women who went to, for example, a shelter or a rape crisis centre for service in the 1990s could still expect something different from more traditional social service organizations that were more clearly part of the local state, such as Family Service agencies. Does the service provision

at least offer the possibility that women who come there may be radicalized? Local activists were divided on this question. For example, these women argued:

Absolutely [women can expect something different]. I think again because we use this analysis of power and control and an example might be that when I work with a survivor, she is the expert, at the social services agency, they are the experts, the social workers are the experts - that's a huge difference. Another way that it differs is that a mainstream social service agency will label women, particularly with mental health stuff, whereas we would try to help her see it as a coping mechanism - huge difference.....Also there's a huge difference when we *do* do political action, because other agencies do not do that (activist 3).

I think they do, I think they can. *How* different is the question. It has changed over time, well, yes, it has. It's this bizarre spiral where you get all these women who become aware of what's happened to them and they need support so they come to us and so we are going like crazy to try and give these women support, so what's different with what they get from us is that we don't try to figure out what they had to do with what happened to them. They go to psychiatrists and they get this other stuff - "maybe if you hadn't blah blah blah, this wouldn't have happened to you", or worse yet if you go to a freudian psychologist - "maybe you wanted your father to do this". We don't give them that kind of shit, or that shit about "if only you felt better about yourself, this wouldn't happen". That's the difference I think. That's what probably distinguishes us from a lot of other places although I think a lot of other places are starting to toe that line too. Telling women what they can expect from police and the courts has gotten us into a lot of trouble: telling the truth got our centre really discredited (activist 15).

However, other activists disagreed. For example, this woman argued:

No, there is no difference that I can see at the local level. There is no difference between what is going on at Interval House for instance and what is going on at the Family Violence Treatment Program over at the Family Service Agency. In fact some of the interactions over there are probably more appropriate than those going on at Interval House with abused women and their children. And that's not because of the agency that's because of the people. That's what it's all about -individuals....I think that these organizations [feminist organizations]don't examine their own,

they don't examine what they are doing on a day to day nitty gritty level to what is going on in mainstream agencies so they still operate on this illusion that they are different and that the mainstream is still far behind them (activist 5).

This disagreement suggests, to a certain extent, that the services women are receiving locally are no longer dependent upon the ostensible feminism of the organization, but on the individuals within it. Other activists were unsure as to whether one could say definitively that there were or were not still differences. They pointed out that services differed from organization to organization, and that they might depend on the politics of the individual providers. As these activists explained:

Well it's when I think of not so much sexual assault centres in general but the Hamilton Sexual Assault Centre and some of the Hamilton shelters that some of the things I say don't make sense. I mean I don't think that at the Hamilton Sexual Assault Centre a woman would be told that her problem is self-esteem, but I know that in general rape crisis centres, a lot of women do use that stuff and a lot of shelters use that stuff. If an organization has as its goal stopping male violence against women and then chooses to do therapy groups as a way of providing support to victims of male violence then there's something wrong - and that is what gets done in Hamilton and at shelters - to say this is a problem and then using this strategy is nuts. The reason we do it is that that is what we get money to do and women sure tell us that this feels good - but does it address the problem, I don't think so. If we were really serious about ending male violence then we would not just be providing that kind of support to women. I guess there's a part of me that thinks that women will get something different (activist 2).

So it's hard right, because it depends on whether those are feminists in a mainstream agency and it does make a difference just like there are some women who I would not call feminists who are working in shelters these days. But I won't get into that right now. I don't think, like I will compare: if a woman comes to Family Services or if she goes to the shelter that individual woman is not going to get anything any different which is not what we intended when we first started out. What does that mean? Does

that mean that we have lost our politics in the shelters, or does that mean that the mainstream agencies have shifted? Part of it is, of course, that probably the shelters have lost some of their politics, some of the politics of the past anyway. But I think also that mainstream agencies have done some changing. So it's not an either/or thing (activist 18).

[big pause] I don't want to just say no because, but part of me thinks no, but I don't want to shit on my work and a bunch of other women's work right, but if in order to stop male violence against women we have to work on two fronts, attitudes and behaviours or ideas and structures, that if a woman comes into a rape crisis centre she may go away knowing that she didn't cause what happened, she's not to blame for what happened, and that's good and that's really, really important. I think though that there are mainstream organizations who are doing the same thing and probably doing it better, because if there has been a change, the feminist movement has at least sent out a really clear message that women are not to blame for rape. In Family Services, the woman may get a more convoluted message where she is not to blame but if she'd had higher self-esteem it would not have happened, she wouldn't have been in that bar, so it gets a little bit more distorted. But that woman may walk out of Family Services and the rape crisis centre feeling better about herself, having developed some ways of coping with what happened to her and then she will fit back into her family, her workplace, her environment. So in any real concrete sense, what have we done that is more long lasting and works towards stopping male violence against women? Have we done anything more than the Family Service agency has and I think not. I don't think we have, other than women who leave this centre may feel better about taking up a banner at the Take Back The Night march or may in fact write a letter, but I don't know that in the long term that is something that she will continue doing (activist 11).

These comments allude to the processes through which spaces of resistance such as rape crisis centres and shelters have been incorporated, and to the experiences of those spaces which are sufficiently contradictory that activists do not agree on whether they are any different from other social service agencies. In the following chapter I discuss the main trends which activists identify as having led to this current situation.

Chapter Six endnotes

1. For example, Kate Millet (1970: 25) argued that "the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance - in short, every avenue of power within society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands".
2. Pence *et al* (1987: 56) use this chart as an exercise with groups to highlight the connections between various forms of oppression - women are asked to fill in the blanks. The original chart includes old people and children, and jewish people. It could be expanded, for example to include people with disabilities.
3. For example, Pence *et al* (1987: 5) note that:

Over the past ten years the nature of women's groups offered by shelters and battered women's programs have evolved from a cultural and social analysis of violence to a much more personal psychological approach...The turning from a political to a psychological understanding of battering is the result of the increasing influence on the battered women's movement, and on the women's movement in general, of traditional mental health therapeutic models. We must constantly be aware of the tremendous pressures to view women's oppression as a sickness rather than as a political, social and cultural condition.
4. The authors explain that, "It was developed after we interviewed many women, asking them to identify the most common tactics their abusers used to control them. At the hub of the wheel, the center, is the intention of all the tactics - to establish power and control. Each spoke of the wheel represents a particular tactic (economic abuse, emotional abuse, isolation, and so forth). The rim of the wheel, which gives it strength and holds it together, is physical abuse" (page 12).
5. For example, Barbara Hart (1988: 16) argues that, "a feminist analysis of woman-battering rejects theories that attribute the cause of violence to family dysfunction, inadequate communication skills, women's provocation, stress, chemical dependency, lack of spiritual relationship to a deity, economic hardship, class practices, racial\ethnic tolerance, or other factors These issues may be associated with battering of women but do not cause it. Removing these factors will not end men's violence against women".
6. As Barbara Hart (1988: 18) notes: "there is no man who has not enjoyed the male privilege resulting from male domination reinforced by the use of physical violence. For example, the man who is admired because he is gentle and non-violent benefits from the violence of batterers because it makes him 'special'".
7. The extent to which this ideology can be taken is illustrated in Guy Ellul's comments to Good Housekeeping about the "injustice" of his losing custody of, and being denied visitation rights with, his sons: "Why shouldn't my boys be with me? Because I killed their mother? Is that fair?" (in Davy 1994).

8. Of course this is also about the theoretical distinction between sex and gender in mainstream feminism; it allows feminists to think that one can change Women and Men but still retain these categories, that is the heterosexual organization of society.
9. Here, institutionalization is understood to be "a "short-hand" term for what happens to women's issues when the women's movement succeeds in getting the state and its various institutions to respond...and for the process whereby the state takes on women's issues, redefines them and compromises them often beyond recognition" (Barnsley 1988: 18).
10. Caroline Andrew argues (1992: 115):

There are some indications that this [disjuncture] is beginning to change and that feminist issues are emerging on the municipal agenda. Certain municipal concerns, such as housing and public transportation, are increasingly being recognized as feminist issues. New concerns, such as safety, are being thrust on the municipal agenda and articulated in a way clearly relevant to feminists. Indeed, initiatives are emerging across the country that link women's safety and municipal responsibility - METRAC and the Safe City Committee in Toronto, the Women's Safety Bureau in Ottawa-Carleton, the Task Force on Violence Against Women in Dartmouth, the "Femmes et Villes" Committee in Montreal and the Urban Safety for Women and Children Project in Winnipeg...".

Hamilton remains one of the few large urban centres in Canada without a committee of this sort.

11. For example, as Jill Radford (1989: 43) argues, what the state does is, "define the limits of violence appropriate for the control of women. The purpose is to discriminate between the violence which is 'acceptable' and that which is 'excessive' and the legitimacy or otherwise of the targets".
12. Bernardo is known to have abducted, tortured and murdered at least two young women, in and around the Hamilton CMA, and to be responsible for at least 55 sexual assaults around the Toronto CMA.
13. As part of the Justice For Debra campaign, Justice For Women wrote to several current affairs programs across Canada suggesting a storyline for their programs: "Abusive men are literally getting away with murder".
14. The final report contained 72 recommendations, obviously too many to list here (please see Avebury Research and Consulting (1993) for a detailed account of these); however, below are excerpts from several of the most relevant recommendations in terms of "mainstreaming" the organization:

"The Centres should provide a more balanced approach to informing women about their rights and options in the following areas: the hospital process and use of the Sexual Assault Kit, reporting to police, and preparing for court" (Recommendations re Police and Courts, Recommendation 1, page 41).

"The management committee and the director should designate one or two staff members to initiate and attend monthly meetings with the police and Crown Attorney's office. The immediate purpose of meetings is to share concerns and

develop an improved working relationship" (Recommendations re Police and Courts, Recommendation 3, page 41).

"The management committee should examine the Centre's community image carefully and develop a policy and process to ensure that the Centre is represented appropriately in the media" (Recommendations re Organizational Skills, Recommendation 12, page 45).

CHAPTER SEVEN. REGULATING RESISTANCE: REPRODUCING THE HETEROSEXUAL REGIME.

It is a tiresome truth of women's experience that our anger is generally not well received. Men (and sometimes women) ignore it, see it as our being "upset" or "hysterical" or see it as a craziness. Attention is turned not to what we are angry about but to the project of calming us down and to the topic of our "mental stability".

Marilyn Frye (1983: 84)

7.1 Introduction

Interviews with local activists, in combination with events in Hamilton during the early 1990s suggest several processes which have operated to change organized anti-violence activism from spaces of political resistance to spaces of incorporation. In this chapter, I outline and discuss these processes, with the hope of providing a more nuanced, specific understanding of the multiple and complex processes involved in what has been termed the "institutionalization" of organized anti-violence activism. The processes discussed are: *deradicalization*, in which the more radical analyses and activism in "the movement" (for example that men's violence is used to maintain women's subordination and that only radical structural change in the way that society is organized will alter this) have become less common in spaces of resistance such as women's organizations; *domestication*, in which interactions between anti-violence organizations and the state have helped to move organizations from "hotbeds" of radicalism to service agencies; *competition*, in which the issue of men's violence against females has been taken up by

more traditional social services and health services and redefined to fit within the framework of these institutions (for example treating abuse as a medical problem). In the process, women's organizations have been forced to compete with these organizations for legitimacy and at the same time have been infiltrated by their approaches; and *fragmentation*, in which more radical voices in organizations have been marginalized, and organizations have had difficulties in trying to address the questions of "difference". These processes are discussed in detail below.

7.2 *Deradicalization*: demonizing transgressive females and UnWomanly Acts

Both activists and local events in Hamilton suggest that the spectre of "the lesbian threat" (that any women who transgress the boundaries of Woman are lesbians and that lesbians are unnatural, abnormal, ugly, unhappy, perverted, unsatisfied man-haters) has been used locally to regulate feminist anti-violence activism. These activists argued:

In many people's eyes, I am a lesbian, or any feminist is a lesbian and as far as the media are concerned they can assassinate a whole bunch of women, lesbian or not, by just calling them that and I think that's what the media are into right now in a big way...you are a threat to the patriarchy, off with your head sort of thing (activist 15).

I made a sort of quip to someone the other day which was also very serious. We were talking about what's going on in the community around lesbianism and lesbians, and not being able to get jobs and being fired and all that and I said, "you know, our movement is seriously off track here" (and I wouldn't just say this is the movement) "as a lesbian I am safer, like a lot safer, in a mainstream fucking agency than I would be in any of the women's organizations/feminist agencies or organizations in this city" (activist 18).

I think right now that political action has gone into hiding again, and part of that is the result of the recent backlash which is lesbian backlash and feminist backlash, and that's one of the dangers of a backlash - it silences you, it's very effective (activist 3).

If I think about what's gone on in my life over the last little while in terms of being identified as anti-cop, anti-male, pro-lesbian..there is no way that I can sit down at a committee any more and have any legitimacy because you get labelled and people will be in a position of saying "oh well, that's her", and for women who may agree with me, they will have been frightened enough into line, that they would not align or side with me (activist 11).

This last comment points to the fact that "lesbian" as a regulatory term, signifies much more than a sexual identity. What these activists are articulating is the way in which "lesbian" is often used as a code word for a host of other terms which operate to reduce the legitimacy of the person at whom it is directed; the most common of which are "anti-male", or "manhating". That is, it is not women having sex with other women in and of itself that is regarded as a threat to the heterosexual regime, but the independence of females from men; this independence illustrates materially that the organization of society into Women and Men is neither "natural" nor "immutable". Since the term "lesbian" is often conflated with the term "feminist" (as we saw in the discussion of anti-feminist events at Canadian universities) feminists are often required to illustrate that they are not lesbians. This requirement is, however, not so much a requirement to illustrate that you are not having sex with women, but that you are not *those other things that lesbians are*, for example, more or less independent from men, directing energy towards women, not servicing men, and/or making men irrelevant (which, as I argued in Chapter Three,

combine to constitute a cardinal transgression of the heterosexual regime). These activists argued that although the term "lesbian" when used in a regulatory manner is often connected to "manhater", it is more the refusal to be a Woman, that is to be in the service of Men, that incurs this term:

The other thing is you know, they think that lesbians trash men, and I don't, but I hear straight women trash them all the time. Because I am not invested in their life, they are not in my home, they are not major people in my life, they are certainly not my life partners, I have brothers that I love a lot but they are not a major part of my life...I like them for Sunday dinner and then I like them to go away (activist 16).

The myth about lesbians is that we hate men, I just don't see that many lesbians putting energy into hating men, I just think they are so irrelevant to our lives, and we don't take them that seriously and it's heterosexual women who have to live with them and put up with them, that put a lot more energy into them, part of which is having to put up with them (activist 12).

As outlined in Chapter Four, the "lesbian threat" (and its associated accusations of "anti-male"), was front and centre in several of the public controversies involving anti-violence activism in and around Hamilton in the early 1990s. To recap: in an ad for a relief and child care worker, Halton Women's Place stated that "In keeping with our employment equity goals, applications particularly encouraged from lesbians, racial minorities, aboriginal and francophone women" (Tait 1992). Halton Rotary Clubs reacted to the inclusion of the category "lesbian" by threatening to withdraw their pledge of \$500,000 for a new 20-bed shelter. Further, The Spectator reported that a local councillor, "raised concerns about a perceived 'hidden agenda' among shelter administrators because of the use of the word 'lesbian' and [has] said public funding should be reconsidered" (Sumi

1992). This particular controversy was resolved when the executive director of the agency apologized to present and potential funders, admitting an error had been made and promising that future ads would simply indicate that Halton Women's Place was "an equal opportunity employer". This very public incident, which involved representatives of the local state, illustrated to other women, and women's organizations that "lesbian" was an inappropriate term to be linked to women's services. The apology from Halton Women's Place sent out the message that they agreed. Less than two months later, the Sexual Assault Centre in Hamilton reacted quite differently to an almost identical situation. That is, their ad for a volunteer co-ordinator stated, "women who are culturally\racially diverse, aboriginal, lesbian and/or disabled are strongly encouraged to apply" (Peters 1993a). A local councillor immediately suggested that a \$17,000 grant from the region of Hamilton-Wentworth (the smallest of the centre's three main funders) was in jeopardy. Under the guise of the argument that this constituted a case of reverse discrimination (despite the fact that they did not apply this argument to the other designated categories, such as aboriginal), many other local councillors became involved in this controversy through statements to the media. In contrast to the actions of the women of Halton Women's Place, women at the Sexual Assault Centre refused to apologize. The subsequent escalation of the controversy over the following months (as outlined in Section 4.5) was, in part, a response to the Centre's refusal to step back into line; that is, there were processes of discipline and punishment which eventually culminated in a full-scale review by the centre's three main funders. Although this review was ostensibly initiated as a

response to lack of public confidence in the Centre, its origins can in fact be traced back to the "lesbian ad" and the Centre's consistent refusal to back down (that is, from the moment the Centre did not apologize for the inclusion of the category "lesbian", there were questions raised about its mandate. Very soon "lesbian" was conflated with "anti-male" as several ex service users complained to the local councillors and local reporters who had been involved in the debate over the "lesbian ad"). This is not to suggest that women's complaints about service at the Centre were not justified, or that services at the Centre were not lacking. However, given that, a) these complaints were only a handful out of more than three thousand women served annually by the centre¹, and b) presumably all organizations receive complaints, a full scale, publicly discussed review appears to have been excessive. There is evidence in the final report of the review done by Avebury Research and Consulting (1993) (hereinafter know as SAC Review²), that the "lesbian-bias" of the Centre was investigated extensively through the research process. That is the question of "lesbian-bias" was investigated in focus groups with Centre staff, volunteers and management committee, in telephone interviews with former staff, volunteers, and members of the management committee, and in interviews with community groups and police services (Avebury Research and Consulting 1993: Appendix A). However, there is little discussion in the final report of the "lesbian-bias"; it remains unclear as to whether or not this accusation was substantiated in the widely thrown net of consultation.

However, activists argue that what this "demonization" of feminists and feminist organizations (as lesbian and anti-male) does do, in part, is regulate the kinds of activities

which take place in and through these spaces of resistance. The accusations and/or criticisms of particular local feminists and/or organizations being anti-men, anti-police and having a "lesbian bias" reached a wide audience through being played out in the media. The concrete consequences of UnWomanly Acts, such as organizational reviews, threatened loss of funding, loss of employment, and public vilification (for example, of Justice For Women in Peters 1993j, and of the Sexual Assault Centre throughout the controversy) all send a message to other women's organizations in the same way that incidents of men's violence against females send a clear warning message to all women (as discussed in Chapter Six). These activists discussed consequences of local events:

Women are running scared right now, and it is frightening. And I think I have a lot to lose too, we all have a lot to lose. The big one for me was [the firing of the two founding members of Interval House]. When I read that in the paper I thought, "well none of us are safe". I think that ----- is a very intelligent woman and what scared me was I thought, I mean all of us are never safe however, I thought ----- would know. So her going out and doing her activism, her reputation province wide at least, maybe across Canada, I thought she knew that she was safe. I don't know if it came as much as a surprise to her as it did to the rest of us but I thought that she would have known and would save herself. That's what I say about myself, I'm well known in the ----- community, I'm known in the women's community, I've been here for all these years, they'd never do that. Even if I made the biggest faux pas in the world. But now I know better (activist 14).

I don't think there's room any more for radical voices in rape crisis centres. I think that some of us who have attempted to work politically outside the centre and politically inside the centre will find that we can't do that, anymore (activist 11).

What actually constitutes the *political* when accusations of being "too political" are levied at women's organizations and/or "political" action is not funded by the state and other

funding bodies? One complaint lodged against the women of the Sexual Assault Centre was that their service provision was inherently "political". In the findings of the SAC Review it was noted that:

Nine women complained that the political views of Centre members had a negative impact on the counselling they received at the Centre. The example cited most often was disclosure of the counsellor/group facilitator's sexual orientation, an issue which several clients found irrelevant to their needs or which they said distracted them from their own concerns. This complaint was made by both straight and lesbian women (Avebury Research and Consulting 1993: 8-9).

It is unclear here whether the sexuality disclosed was lesbian or heterosexual. Given that heterosexual hegemony ensures the presumption of heterosexuality, it is fair to assume that the disclosure is of lesbian sexuality. Given this, it is further unclear whether the suggestion is that sexual assault workers who are lesbian should not disclose their sexuality, that is, should attempt to "pass" as heterosexuals (given that "not disclosing" and "passing" are synonymous in a culture that where women are presumed heterosexual until proven otherwise), or that lesbianism was simply interpreted as political. It is unlikely that complaints about counsellors' disclosure of their class, ability, race and/or *heterosexuality* (through for example, appearance, accents, dialect, and wearing wedding bands) would be given space in a review of this nature in a section titled *The Intrusion of Political Views*. Further the reviewers do not follow up on *how* this action by workers distracted these women from their needs. In fact, although many things "lesbian" are mentioned in the review, the reviewers consistently fail to provide any discussion of what impact these had on the quality of service provided by Hamilton's Sexual Assault Centre.

The Centre was also heavily criticized by local councillors (e.g. Hughes 1993b) and in the SAC Review, for "anti-male" and "anti-police" attitudes. Workers had explained (Hughes 1993a) that informing women about other women's experiences with the police, is part of providing safe and supportive services. This activist described her experiences of the police in Hamilton:

Women have been thrown into squad cars and arrested instead of their partners. Sorry I am sounding anti-police - that is the reality. The reason that people are anti-police is that the police have done something to make them anti-police. It's like saying "why are you anti-men"? "Oh, I don't know, I just thought it was a good idea"! (activist 5).

The point being made here then is that given that the police, for example, have been part of that system which has been identified by local activists as perpetuating men's violence against females, there is a logic to those activists providing women with a realistic picture of what they *might* experience if they report to the police and go through the legal system. The processes operating here to discipline activists for being "anti-police" and/or "anti-male" (also read: lesbian) are similar to those which operate to disallow women's very justifiable (and totally logical) anger about men's violence against females (for example, those arguments which suggest women lie about men's violence and/or exaggerate it). These discursive and political processes are part of the prescription to do gender right; which in this case is that Women must be nice, cooperative and conciliatory, in almost any context.

The recommendations contained in the SAC Review concerning the centre's relationship with the police, the crown attorney's office and other local service

organizations are in essence about being more "balanced" and "co-ordinating", and that contact with the public should be "presented in such a way that the audience can 'hear' it" (Avebury Research and Consulting 1993: 40). Just like a well-behaved Woman. In particular the reviewers conclude that:

The Centre's political activism has resulted in an increase in the community's knowledge about sexual violence against women and in some positive attitudinal change....Unfortunately this activism (although not always conducted as a Centre activity) has also strained the Centre's relationships with the police and the Crown's Attorney's office and has served to isolate the Centre from the justice system (ibid: 40 & 41).

By positing that the proper mandate of the centre ought to include "getting along with" state institutions (rather than confronting them) the findings of the review, in part, reduce this space of political resistance from one that is *in and against* the state, to one that is most clearly simply *in* the state. Since continued funding was dependent upon the implementation of recommendations such as improving relations with the police and the crown attorney's office, the opportunity for action which would clearly *confront* these institutions is reduced. The prescription that the Sexual Assault Centre get along better with state institutions in the community constitutes, in part, the institutional level of the regulatory fiction of gender.

This very concretely illustrates one of the ways in which the state operates to institutionalize counterhegemonic movements. Activists argued that interactions between the state and the anti-violence movement have unavoidably led to changes in shelters and

sexual assault centres. These changes, and the processes through which they have occurred, are discussed in the following section.

7.3 *Domestication*: from "hotbed" to service agency

Interconnected to the processes outlined above are those which have served to "legitimate" the movement, processes which are not unique to feminist activism since any counterhegemonic social movement has to offer an alternative to the status quo. Activists lobbied for funding for formalized spaces of political resistance such as shelters and sexual assault centres, and won that funding. These activists argue that with funding comes control over the way that the organization operates:

There are conditions on the money now I believe that were not there before. Just as an example - they can control our structure by the money because as a non-profit organization we must have a president, a secretary and a treasurer. So there are certain things that you have to do in order to get the money and now that we are getting more money they are saying that there are more things that we have to do to get the money. Now I don't know what would happen if we said "fuck you guys we are not going to do it", but do we want to risk that? (activist 3).

Well, I think that the more money you [the state] give, the more accountable you will assure that centre is....so I think there's more control over the agency, or a centre. What happens is that your original purpose gets lost (activist 4).

Activists argued that although state funding has led to structural and political changes in feminist organizations, some of these changes have been *unavoidable* rather than intentional on the part of state agencies. These activists discuss the process:

You see I don't think that, in the sense of the conspiracy theory, I don't see them [the state] working, conspiring to do this stuff, it's just so much a part of the way that power works that they don't have to conspire. That's just the way that institutions function, they function to maintain power, that's their role, that's why they are there, and so they don't have to conspire. They work, they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. They are fulfilling their role in the culture which is to disseminate and maintain and reinforce these values, to institutionalize the values of the culture. So they don't have to conspire to "give organizations a little bit of money so that they'll think that we are doing some work to end violence against women but meanwhile we'll just keep them all busy". I don't think that's the way it works. I don't think there's somebody sitting in a room somewhere planning it like that. But when they sit in rooms to plan, in fact that's what they do. That's their role, that is what their function is (activist 5).

And it begins to sound like it is this calculated plan and that it is this conspiracy that this bunch of bureaucrats dream up. And I don't think it is that concrete but when I begin looking at application forms for funding for instance it becomes really really clear that you have to be a certain way (activist 2).

One of the "certain ways" organizations have to be in the 1990s is "professional". That is, historically, shelters and rape crisis centres relied on women's experience and political analyses as the important credentials for involvement in the struggle against men's violence against females. However, this activist argues that there has been pressure to change that:

The work isn't about organizing in the community anymore so we are seeing a professionalization where you have professional administrators and those of us who cannot be turned into professional administrators are being ousted. Some of us will have enough skills to undergo that transformation, those of us who don't will not be here any more. So what you have is a woman whose job is to be executive director, and then this other woman's job is to be office receptionist, and this woman's job is to be the clinical person and that's happening so that you get this specialization. So women will become more professionalised and more

specialized so all women will not be doing counselling and all women will not be doing activism and there will be the "them" and the "us". So you will have the counsellor who has power by virtue of her expertise, which is real, and the survivor who is the client (activist 11).

There are several ramifications of these changes. First, as there is a division of labour within these spaces of resistance, some women are removed from front-line work and in the process, from each other. This reduces the opportunities for development of individual and collective radical identities in place. Second, since there has been an increase in funding of sexual assault centres, salaries have increased to respectable levels (that is, respectable within the poorly paid women's movement) so that it is no longer simply dedication to social change which attracts women to this type of employment. Third, as shelters and sexual assault centres have become more "legitimate" social service agencies, employment at these places can be important career "experience" for social workers and therapists, for example. As this activist noted, "now we come to the table, some of us talking radical feminist politics, some of us talking social work stuff, some of us talking crystals and healing, using alternative methods - it's a hodge podge" (activist 11).

Although there is resistance to the trend of professionalization, activists argue that it is likely to continue. For example:

They [SAC] are still going for experience and actual skills that you have learned from work in the world, but if Sol-Gen [Ministry of the Solicitor General] gets more involved I am sure that's [professional qualifications] what they will go for and ask for, which I am sure is a mistake (activist 13).

The state is obviously not omnipotent and has and will continue to be contested. However these concrete examples illustrate some of the ways in which change through interaction with the state (and other funding bodies) is almost unavoidable. Activists argued that part of becoming "legitimate" has been the requirement to illustrate that you are a qualified operation, deserving of the public money and not simply a bunch of radical women running around turning clients into lesbians. This was illustrated in the suggestions by members of municipal government and Rotary Clubs in Halton when they demanded that the executive director explain why they were encouraging applications from lesbians. By arguing that they had made an honest mistake, Halton Women's Place illustrated that they were a "legitimate" organization. Activists argue that in the process of becoming and maintaining this "legitimacy" and/or funding, women "police" other women within organizations, in particular, those women who are regarded as threatening to the stability of the organization:

It [the illusion that we have gained something] has been divisive because it pits the people who want to protect their gains from the people who are feeling that you should escalate confrontation and risk those gains in the hope that you will make more change. This whole issue about the funding, the state funding meaning state agendas get introduced, and then you get threatened and all these compromises have to be made in order to maintain and then you become established and pretty soon you've got an institution to protect and you begin to behave in the same way as all the other institutions that are trying to protect their asses, and it's all about protecting shelters rather than abused women, so that the interests are different from those of abused women right. Which is amazing, but in fact that is now true. That in many respects the interests of rape crisis centres and shelters are to protect rape crisis centres and shelters not to protect rape survivors and abused women (activist 5).

When you have the money coming in and lesbians who are basically lesbian identified and are going to open up their mouths and challenge the whole system of male violence against women and kids, and male supremacy and then you have the people worried about the funding, and they are going to lose their funding if you continue to stand up and speak. Well, in terms of who has power and authority in those systems, the connection with the affirmative action piece is are we really like hiring women who understand all those pieces and how they fit together. I don't think that's where things are at. How many lesbian directors are there? How many lesbian presidents of boards are there? Who are out there as lesbians? I am not talking about heterosexual lesbians, and god knows there are enough of them around. All these pieces are part of a puzzle that fit together for me. And there's hardly any of us left. Who are the radicals? Who are the radical lesbians or the radical feminists, we are getting wiped out and the thing is where do you draw your strength from? There are not very many of us (activist 17).

An obvious implication of the marginalization of those females who most clearly contest the boundaries of the category Woman is the reduction in the potential of these spaces of resistance to be "hotbeds" for the continued development of radical political identities and practices. A less obvious implication is that in allowing rather than resisting the power of the term "lesbian" and/or the term "Woman" to regulate what will be accepted as legitimate action within shelters and rape crisis centres, anti-violence activists help to reproduce rather than contest the political regime of heterosexuality. That is, in not challenging the regulatory power of the fiction of gender, they/we allow these terms to continue to be able to be used against females (and organizations) who transgress the limits of Woman's place(s) in society.

As these spaces of resistance have been drawn into the sphere of legitimacy (as simply one of several types of service agencies), *and* as traditional social and health

services have taken up the issue of men's violence against females, competition (for legitimacy, for provision of services) has become an issue. This is discussed below.

7.4 *Competition: "other" professionals and service agencies*

As men's violence against females has come to be viewed as an issue that needs to be addressed by social services and mental health professionals, these professionals have begun to see feminist organizations as competition, and as stepping into their area of expertise. A local example of this is provided in the final report of the review of the Sexual Assault Centre. That is, the reviewers noted:

The issue which generated the most concern from the community of therapists and service providers (except for the length of the waiting list) was the uneven nature and quality of counselling provided by Centre staff/contract workers (Avebury Research and Consulting 1993: 12).

and go on to explain that:

The type of counselling provided in sexual assault centres was developed when "rape crisis centres" were first established in Ontario. The woman-to-woman grass-roots counselling provided to women who had been sexually assaulted was, in fact, developed to counter the non-respectful and sometimes abusive approaches found in traditional therapy (*ibid*: 12).

They continue to explain that this counselling is in fact no longer adequate since most of the clients are "presenting" childhood abuse traumas and that special skills are needed; not only special training, but clinical supervision, and perhaps even therapy for the counsellors themselves. However, in an apparent contradiction to this, the reviewers found that in fact child sexual abuse survivors were more likely to be satisfied with Centre

services than were recently assaulted women and go on to explain this "anomaly" with the following leap in logic:

The Toronto therapists consulted for this report and the regional service providers who were interviewed said that this [anomaly] could be explained by the fact that survivors of child sexual abuse were grateful for the opportunity to talk about their experience and that they found some measure of relief from doing so. However, this does not mean that the help they received was appropriate or that it enabled them to "move on" in their recovery process (*ibid*: 13).

Over and above the patronizing nature of this conclusion - that is, that these women are so desperate that they will accept anything as "service" and will not be able to discern whether in fact it "helps" them or not - a more logical conclusion from these findings would be that this type of group\peer support involving a political\contextual analysis does in fact "work". What happens in this instance is that in asserting their "rights" as experts to define appropriate help, members of the mental health industry argue that this "unprofessional" approach simply could not be working.

There are several important ramifications of men's violence against females being viewed as an appropriate area for treatment by these professionals. First, by reducing organizations such as the Sexual Assault Centre to simply one of many professional organizations (as can be seen throughout the SAC Review) which could be treating this "problem", they are presented as ostensibly competing on a level playing field to offer certain services. However, in a society which embraces a hierarchical definition of knowledge and skills, it is not women's organizations which will be viewed as most able. As this activist illustrated:

The experts have all these pieces of paper hanging on the wall so if you're Jo Blo public, and you were asked, "well if your mother needed this service would you rather have her getting it from this person down in this basement grungy office, or in a nice white, clean crisp institutional setting with all these degrees and fresh cut flowers"? Of course they will chose traditional services (activist 14).

These white, clean, crisp settings are already in place. De-funding of feminist organizations does not necessarily become an issue as long as men's violence against females can be effectively reduced from a political issue to an individual and treatable one; that is, there is then seen to be a duplication of services in the community.

Describing local manifestations of this process, this activist continued:

We see that a regional sexual assault treatment centre has been opened up at McMaster and that they're starting. And their budget is five times what SAC's is, you can count on it. So discredit the SAC, discredit, discredit, discredit, and close her down and now she goes into MUMC [Mcmaster University Medical Centre] (activist 14).

This discrediting process was quite clear in the public controversy over the "lesbian ad" and the services that were being provided at the Centre. It is also apparent in the SAC Review; that is, the reviewers state:

It should be noted that complaints from the *relevant* professional community (i.e. therapists and other service providers) also mentioned the Centre's anti-male or anti-police bias *frequently* (Avebury Research and Consulting 1993: 9). [my emphasis]

Again we see that the *relevant* community indicates that the issue is being dealt with as a treatable one rather than as a political one; that is, if the issue was conceptualized as the latter, then therapists would not be the most relevant. The *frequency* of the complaints about the Centre's attitude again points to the pressures for the Centre to conform, to be

nice, to be conciliatory and co-operative, instead of being the "bad girls" in the community. Although other groups, when discussing systems of oppression, would also be pressured to present these truths in a way that "the public could hear", women, when talking about systems of male supremacy, are especially expected to be these things (that is nice, conciliatory and cooperative).

A second important ramification of men's violence against females being seen as an appropriate issue for treatment by professional mental health and social service providers is that a political issue is reduced to a mental health one. Local activists argued that this has had an affect on how anti-violence organizations provide service. For example, this activist argued:

My feeling is that over the years I have been in the movement is that the movement has busted its ass trying to get more therapeutic, trying to get credibility in the mainstream, trying to learn how to label women, running off to all these goddamn workshops, so that they can throw all this language around and talk about case management and clients (activist 5).

She is worth quoting further; here she illustrates some of the complex ways in which therapeutic ideology - which removes women (and men) from the context in which they live and reduces them to individual and abstract cases in which all of the problems they encounter (and the solutions) are located in the self - has polluted local feminist approaches to men's violence:

It's [the movement] become contaminated by therapeutic ideology, absolutely contaminated. And in the mainstream therapeutic community, where people have been trying to take over these issues as they have grown in consciousness and as they have come into the mainstream consciousness, then agencies that traditionally rejected women and didn't

want to hear what they had to say are now trying to get grants and all that kind of shit to do programs, to deal with incest and all this which they couldn't be bothered with until the feminist movement got mad and started setting up their own stuff in order to get some sort of support...so there has been sort of a crossover. It's because of, because of power imbalances, because power works this way that the mainstream community which has power, have taken the language and some of the ideas and the programs, *not* the guts of the analysis, but the expression of the analysis and service and some of the language - they talk about empowerment constantly now, empowering the women and all this kind of shit, it's all internal personal shit it's got nothing to do with changing the world or changing the material conditions for women. I mean you can't counsel somebody out of poverty right, that's a stupid idea, and you can't counsel somebody out of oppression, it just cannot be done. But what they are doing is counselling and there isn't any action attached to this at all, and they have taken the language, they have ripped off all of the best ideas and they now have reframed them into all this therapeutic shit so in a way some feminists are operating under the illusion that they have in fact affected the therapeutic community and not the other way around. They [some feminists] think they're making inroads into the mainstream because the mainstream keeps talking back at them in this language that they created. Because there's a power imbalance, that's theft and redefinition, it's not change. What is changing is the feminist organizations, they in fact are being changed and not for the best. So they in fact are being contaminated in the other direction with all these ideas and all this therapy and empowering women to get in touch with their feelings and express their rage by beating pillows, getting rid of their rage - all this kind of shit, getting in touch with the child within and comforting the child within or whatever the fuck (activist 5).

Other activists concur:

I think that the feminist movement got caught up in therapy and co-dependence and healing and very individualistic psychologising kind of way and that's become an integral part of the movement in a way that I think sort of helps us to buy into things we shouldn't be buying into. I think we, the first writings were to expose, for instance that women were sexual abuse survivors, rape survivors, but that wasn't done in a therapy kind of a way, it was like, "okay let's name this, let's bring it out in the open", but it's become a therapy kind of a thing and we've begun to put a

lot of energy towards doing that - counselling, group therapy, I mean, there so much self-help kinds of writing now, written by feminists (activist 13).

I think that we have made a critical error and...that is that we have not only professionalised but we have over-therapized women and the movement has become a healing movement rather than a political movement. So we did what we said they were doing to us. We became a self-help movement. We started saying to each other we really need to heal, we need to heal those wounds and that's our work right now so we get together and we heal and we don't go out there and say "lookit, this is not right!" (activist 14).

In part, the services that are provided at shelters and sexual assault centres depend on what women want. The issue of contamination of feminist services by therapeutic ideology is complicated by the fact that therapeutic ideas have so permeated the culture that many women are *asking* for this kind of service. This activist noted:

Although I don't use those approaches personally, if someone talks about her inner child, I am not about to tell her that there is nothing in there... I mean it's a multi-million dollar industry now you know, incest, child sexual assault work. It is so exploitive. They take your pain and they sell it back to you (activist 4).

The therapeutic industry has always concentrated more on women than on men but with the construction of "the abused woman" came the associated construction of "the abusive man". In the 1980s and into the 1990s, therapeutic approaches to the issue of violent men blossomed and this was seen in Hamilton with the development and subsequent controversy over counselling groups for abusive men in the city (see 4.5). This activist argued:

What happened around the men's stuff was therapeutic ideology. It became more treatment focused, and it shifted from being a value to an illness. And so it isn't a value base that men violate women from, it's an illness

base. It was redefining men's experiences - they can't help themselves cos they were abused as children, and they feel bad. We got into the whole therapeutic ideology and I think that we got bogged down with the individual pain of individuals as opposed to the world view. We felt bad cos these men cried. But how does that stop women getting their ribs broken? That was not acceptable to say that. Because we want so hard to believe that men don't want to be violent (activist 9).

Critics argued that, like similar approaches to women, therapeutic approaches removed men from the political\economic\social context in which they chose to use violence and instead proposed explanations such as those based on poor impulse control, poor anger management, drug and alcohol abuse and men's own experiences and/or witnessing of violence as children. The subsequent evolution of pro-feminist men's groups as both a challenge to these approaches and a response to the feminist argument that men have to work on stopping men's violence, promised much to the anti-violence movement whilst presenting it with many dilemmas. The programmes promised much in that they aimed to hold men directly accountable for their violence. Of course the various dilemmas lay in the fact that these groups developed unevenly across space and some held men more accountable than others.

Further, activists argued that therapeutic ideology has not only affected feminist service provision but also the behaviours of anti-violence activists themselves. That is, it has operated to limit UnWomanly Acts and transgressive females. For example activists argued that feminist notions of "safety" and "abuse" have been expanded to the point where they no longer have any specific meaning. For example:

Language is one of the tactics of violence that they have used against us and I think that women have bought it as well - "I feel unsafe", "I feel like you are being abusive to me" - I think that the language has gotten away from us and I think that the patriarchy has taken it away and is now using it as a tool of violence. What is the worst thing that you could be called in the violence movement? - abusive, because we know what that means (activist 9).

I think the word abusive gets used in a way that's very problematic, so that it's become this catch-all that differentiates nothing. Accusations would fly that "I'm feeling abused" and "you're abusive" and shit like that. And the result is instant paralysis without having any analysis or moving anything forward (activist 21).

What both of these comments point to is the power of accusations of "abuse" to regulate the behaviour of anti-violence activists. Historically, "unsafe" has been used by feminists to describe a situation, for example, where a woman's life is in danger; "abusive" has been used to describe men who punch, kick, rape and kill women. When anti-violence activists are confrontational, rude, challenging, and angry, should these actions be equated with the actions of men (which have also been culturally and institutionally supported)? Avebury Research and Consulting (1993) found that:

Although the Centre is strongly convinced that it promotes the creation of violence-free structures, some Centre workers, some clients and some women who work in related areas describe their interactions with the Centre in the following ways: "unsafe", "afraid of staff"; "ripped me to shreds"; "emotionally violent"; and "don't know who to trust" (p.25).

and that:

According to some interviewees whose feminist "credentials" cannot be easily questioned, the Centre has become "arrogant" in its belief that its way is the only, right way and that this attitude has resulted in some Centre workers becoming "abusive" in interactions with others (p.25).

Whilst I am not denying that the centre may have become "arrogant", or that it may be a difficult and disheartening place to work, or that there are violent females in the world, it is important to consider whether or not women are being "abusive" and creating "unsafe" situations when they transgress the boundaries of manufactured acceptable behaviour. As this activist points out:

Something has gone wrong with the women's movement where we were struggling to end violence against women and the violence was a fist in the face and now we are spending so much time talking about ourselves, not the women that we are serving and the violence looks like someone being rude, in control or aggressive (activist 11).

Are women being abusive when they transgress the boundaries of manufactured acceptable female behaviour? No, however, one result of the use of this language to discipline activists' behaviour is that, since activists who have worked in the movement for years know what abusive means, they begin to "second guess" themselves, in the same way that women have been taught to do with respect to men's violence; for example, "maybe I did bring that on myself", "maybe I did lead him on", "maybe I shouldn't have worn that skirt". As females continue to step out of place and other females try to push them back in, we think "maybe I am being insensitive", "maybe I *should* be nicer", and "maybe I *am* too assertive". These processes are one more component of the regulatory prescription to do gender right. As the activist quoted above continues:

So as an advocate, I don't think I should have the right to sit at a table and say "well you just hurt my feelings". We spend so much time processing our hurts. And maybe that's about being working class, I don't have a strong tolerance for that kind of stuff. I can do it to a certain extent then I think, "enough of this, let's deal with the woman who just got raped"...so

I move from saying let's change the material conditions that are really dramatic and then, because I am also in an area where you want to take care of women I get really confused because some days I say no, this is really important work, the fact that a woman feels intimidated in a meeting and feels scared is important, that's valid, let's focus on that and then some days I want to throw my hands up in the air and say "fuck it, take it somewhere else, that's your issue, get yourself a support group, come to work healthy, ready to work, and if I step on your toes, excuse me but in the scheme of things does it really matter"? Who knows, maybe that's just about a strong privileged woman not wanting to take care of other women. I don't know anymore. All I really know is that if we keep talking about what's going on with us, who's gonna be telling the police to stop doing what they are doing? (activist 11).

Given that activists have argued that the goal of ending men's violence against females is, on the whole, *not* being pursued through *political action* in traditional sites of political resistance, then it matters to the second goal - identified as providing safe and supportive services for women - what kind of *service provision* is going on. The hope would be that, despite the infiltration of therapeutic ideology, there is still some service provision which is to a certain extent "political". That is, I do not want to create a simplistic dichotomy of service provision and political action. Activists argue that although there has been more of a move towards service provision in feminist organizations, this does not mean that this is necessarily *not* political action. As this activist argued:

There has been more of a swing towards service because more women have been asking for more service. So, on the one hand I have a problem with that but on the other hand I don't - because if we see every woman as a potential member of this revolution, she's more likely to be able to be a part of it if she's feeling in one piece, so part of what we do is to help her feel like a human being again - so patch up that soldier eh, send them back out there into the field [laughing]. So I think it's a necessary part of

the work to help women mend themselves and feel like, "well, fuck you, I don't own this, this isn't mine" (activist 15).

I have argued that what goes on in spaces of political resistance matters for the development of political identities. Maintaining some kind of political voice in rape crisis centres and shelters is critical if there is to be a continual development of radical political subjects. What actually constitutes political action and service provision is contestable (as discussed briefly in Section 6.6). For example, if service provision takes the form of radical education then that could be more clearly classified as political action than it could be if it took the form of self-esteem classes. As one activist noted:

In some ways, service provision can be political action depending on what you are doing. So it's not that I see service provision as never being political action, that talking to a woman about her human rights and about her right to be free, one to one so called counselling and service provision can free women and materially change their lives. Women say this - it saved my life, it changed my life forever and so on and so you can't say that's irrelevant. And every activist and advocate who is politically active, at some point something made them change from going along with things to saying "I have had it". (activist 5)

The constitution of political action also varies both historically and spatially. In the context of men's violence against females being hidden, service provision (such as providing safe houses and crisis lines) *was* radical political action. Radical political action takes very different forms in a country like Canada than what it would in a country like Chile. This activist, discussing the construction of Justice For Women as "man-hating militants and bullies" (Peters 1993j.) notes:

It's frightening, the thought that laying roses on a statue and painting a sidewalk, or saying that men don't necessarily have a right to counselling that doesn't work to stop violence against women, is "the edge". It's incredible, it's incredible. And the reaction to that is so intensely hostile (activist 5).

What should be clear at this point is that local organized anti-violence activism has *always* been fragmented. This is illustrated, for example, by: the division of women by the system of gender which encourages horizontal hostility and competition; the variety of analyses of and approaches to men's violence against females and the state; and by the variation in political action and service provision, from individual to individual and from organization to organization. This fragmentation has been accentuated in recent years by the processes giving rise to the trends discussed above - deradicalization, domestication and competition. In the 1990s it has often been previously marginalized women who have been accused of fragmenting "the movement", either intentionally, or by bringing issues of diversity to the table. I explore this issue below.

7.5 *Fragmentation*: concrete and manufactured barriers.

Given that the majority of the local activists interviewed identified fragmentation as the biggest challenge facing "the movement" it is important to investigate how "white feminists" have been dealing with the question of "difference". These activists described some of their very concrete experiences of privilege:

There are really concrete things that happen, I mean if I'm at a meeting, sitting around a table with a group of women, I have some skills in terms of making my voice heard and articulating things in a certain way, things will be articulated in a way that is "socially appropriate", and I have learned lots of those tools in school, and in other work experiences to be able to command attention, even in terms of how I use my oratory, my body language etc and I watch other women round the table whom I know are working class and I know that they haven't had access to those skills and will always have that over them and there will always be a power imbalance because they haven't learned how to do that and they don't have access to those styles. I'm really really conscious of the differences (activist 2).

In my family is where I learned to be racist and that was of course reinforced by the culture. I try to be aware of it now but it's just like heterosexuality, a lot of it feels normal to me and I have to keep reminding myself of the privileges that I have because a lot of it feels....feels normal to be in a room where people speak the same language and use the same language and look like me and share the same experiences and may have gone to see the same concerts or listen to the same music - it all sounds perfectly normal to be talking about this stuff as though everyone has those experiences and not to be thinking at all that this is only one experience of the world, and it is very different from the experiences of most of the population of the planet. You are just one small group of people, and in fact a minority in the planet and the experiences of most people are not like yours (activist 5).

These activists discussed the situation of recognizing that "women" had only meant certain types of women:

I think that white women and straight women have realized, "oh my god, we haven't even noticed that these women weren't here", and I think there's a tremendous amount of "boy, were we bad", all this guilt shit going on. So what we are doing is, we are doing *anything* to make up for that and we are fucking things up all over the place (activist 15).

I have seen changes primarily in the last couple of years. I think there has been a lot of recognition of who we are all of a sudden - we're all white, we're all able-bodied, we're all heterosexual, and so on and I think that even being aware of that and accepting it and not becoming defensive, cos

that's what happens...I think that women get into this movement for a whole bunch of reasons. But being in the movement there's a high level of commitment, a high level of dedication and there's a real, well because you are always challenging so much of the status quo of the patriarchy and structures out there that you are really protective about what you are doing. So initially I think there was this kind of defensiveness - "I have put a lot of myself into this, how dare you criticize me". Which I think is the initial reaction...so then what you have to do is not personalize it or not take it personally. You have to really be able to take a hard look, intellectually, in your head rather than in your heart. That continues to be a struggle. I mean some women have gotten their heads around that more than others...I mean, who wants to say, "yes, I'm racist"? Of course you don't want to say that. Who wants to say they are homophobic. Of course you don't want to do that stuff so there's this initial defensiveness. We are starting to get by that I think and we are starting to do some education (activist 3).

However, activists argued that in attempting to move beyond that defensiveness, there has been a tendency to think about different oppressions (and therefore different groups) as being discrete and not overlapping; for example that there are *lesbians* and there are *women of colour* - the markers of culture are absent from the former, and those of sexuality from the latter. This approach to diversity in collective action (the conflation of presence of individuals with accessibility and representation) has been prevalent in trying to come to terms with the recognition of the particular contours of western feminism's subject. These activists' experiences are fairly typical of some of the mistakes which have been made:

Then there was the whole assumption if we started as white women hiring black women and native women to work in white services then we were not racist (activist 16).

Having sat on a Take Back The Night Committee in Hamilton and using language that is very exclusive, you know, talking about the speakers, like "we've covered black women and we have covered lesbians and we have

covered women in conflict with the law" etc, and seeing all of those women as outsiders - we have imported them all into *our* project. And being challenged again with the black women saying, "well fuck you", of course (activist 7).

What has happened is that women have not been able to come together. Women have been prevented from talking together and coalition building, so that you have "a group of black women". The thing is that you need to break down the dominant culture groups, so you have "white groups", white straight english speaking able bodied - right? What's happening is that people are not putting those privileges on a continuum, on a line so that if black women are straight - they have that privilege. It's like not looking at your own privilege and I think that what's happening is that there is no analysis going on. So people are looking at situations and not looking at analysis (activist 9).

I have seen bodies. I have seen lesbian bodies, I have seen black women's bodies, but I haven't really seen, well, I...think things are in the process but I don't think there have been any substantial changes (activist 4).

What essentialist assumptions about the connections between experience and politics result in then, are mistaken beliefs that any women of colour, any woman with disabilities, any lesbian, any poor woman will do; that is, that on the basis of their oppression they will *necessarily* actively contest it. Further activists argued that by treating oppressions as discrete rather than interlocking, and responding to challenges about diversity from places of "white guilt" and tokenistic liberalism, rather than from a location where an analysis of all systems of oppression, and their interconnectedness is used, a "hierarchy of oppression" approach has emerged. For example these activists comment:

Now what we are running into I think, is, there is a tendency now to put a hierarchy on oppressions, so racism for example, is somewhat visible, certainly more visible than say, heterosexism. So because it is more visible it somehow is more serious so I think many of us are still trying to get our heads around that. Now we can't do that, that's a really dangerous thing,

to start identifying which is worse in some way. We are running into that kind of stuff now (activist 3).

It was really interesting to watch what has happened at OAITH [Ontario Association of Interval and Transition houses] over the past year especially. There was a conference last year on "bridging the gap" and they were looking at all types of oppressions but there were no links made between them, and there was all kinds of racism going on at the conference and black women united and read a women of colour statement and then there was an attempt to - a group of women got together to try to do some anti-oppression work, there was anti-semitism going on and the Jewish women spoke out about it. There was heterosexism going on and the lesbians didn't speak out about it, and I thought it's more pervasive than everything else 'cos they can't even speak out about it. We formed a committee to do anti-oppression work and it quickly moved to doing anti-racism work and people were saying but that's the context and I was thinking but you are still working from a situational perspective, you're doing situational ethics here. Thinking that in doing anti-racism work that everything else will fall into place. It's the hierarchy of oppressions again (activist 9).

I do not want to suggest that if only white, non-disabled, middle-class, heterosexual females could find a way to move beyond an essentialist and discrete approach to difference and find a way to share and/or give up some of their power and privilege that they would all willingly do so. One of the processes involved in dealing with the question of "difference" has been resistance, both in terms of recognizing the problem, and doing something about it.

In Chapter Three I argued that unnaturalizing the heterosexual regime and assessing the importance of locations and spaces of resistance in and against it could add to current analyses of the persistence of the system of men's violence against females in the face of over two decades of feminist activism. In this chapter I have illustrated several

processes which have operated in the regulation and containment of this activism, locally. This Unwomanly praxis has been partially domesticated and deradicalized by internal and external forces: radical activists, those who most clearly unsettle the limits of Women's place(s) in this society, and/or their practices and ideas have been marginalized in particular spaces of resistance as "the movement" has sought to (and been forced to) become "legitimate". "Lesbian" and "anti-men", which I suggested in Chapter Three were locations beyond the acceptable limits of the category Woman, were illustrated in this chapter to have been used as effective regulatory terms in the demonization of anti-violence activists. How the combination of these various processes and their effects on local anti-violence organizing might be understood in light of the arguments presented in Chapter Three is discussed in greater detail the following chapter.

Chapter Seven endnotes

1. The Centre was informed of, but never shown, eleven anonymous complaints which had been made to Councillor Dominic Agostino, The Spectator and CHCH Television.
2. The objectives of the review, as outlined in the final report by Avebury Research and Consulting (1993: Executive Summary) were as follows:
 1. To determine the extent to which the services and practices of the Sexual Assault Centre (Hamilton and Area) meet the stated mandate of the centre in the following areas: provision of non-directed, accessible, client oriented services; provision of accessible services to the diverse communities; establishment and maintenance of relationships with other community agencies, including the police; and assurance of appropriate conduct between counsellors (staff and volunteers) and clients.
 2. To determine the extent to which the Centre's internal dynamics (i.e. relationships among staff, volunteers and the management committee) impact on service delivery.

3. To provide recommendations to the community through the agency's funders to ensure quality service now and in the future.
4. To develop an implementation plan, in collaboration with the Sexual Assault Centre and in co-ordination with the Centre's organizational review, which will improve the Centre's accountability to its clients and the community.

CHAPTER EIGHT. CONCLUSIONS: NEW LOCATIONS, NEW MAPS - (RE)NEGOTIATING, (RE)TRANSGRESSING THE BOUNDARIES

It is not only lesbian students who should be calling for a recognition of their history and presence in the world; it is *all* women who want a more accurate map of the way social relations have been and are, as they try to imagine what that might be.

Adrienne Rich (1986: 201)

8.1 Introduction

Structural change of the type imagined by early anti-violence activists has not been achieved. Local activists argued that although legal, policing, education, health, and social services systems have been put under enormous pressure to recognize and deal with issues of men's violence against females more appropriately, they are still for the most part *experienced* by women as oppressive, and as resisting rather than being part of structural change. What change *has* been effected is that which falls most clearly within the second goal of "the movement" which activists in Hamilton identified as being to provide safer and more supportive services for women. These activists described being demoralized, discouraged and exhausted by the struggle.

In conclusion I want to offer a specifically lesbian (in the Wittigian sense¹) and geographical analysis of these local geographies of oppression and resistance, suggesting explanations as to why certain strategies for social change have been more successful than others and proposing ways in which the boundaries of the political regime of heterosexuality and its associated prescription to "do gender right" might be re-negotiated

and re-transgressed on the way to mapping out new possibilities from various counterhegemonic locations of political alliance. The implications of these conclusions for feminist and lesbian geographies, for consideration of the development of political identities in place, and for local anti-violence activism are outlined.

8.2 The heterosexual regime: regulating UnWomanly Acts

I have illustrated several trends which activists suggested have been part of the "institutionalization" of organized anti-violence activism in Hamilton: deradicalization, domestication, competition and fragmentation. These trends both built upon and accentuated inherent weaknesses in "the movement" which I argued were in part due to variations in activists' analyses and actions on men's violence against females and the state, and to organizing which had been done on the basis of essentialist notions of identity including the belief in simple connections between being and politics. Both these processes and weaknesses can be better understood in light of the arguments I have presented concerning the reproduction of the political regime of heterosexuality.

That is, the processes which have worked to contain anti-violence activism can be understood as being, in part, the punitive consequences of activists not "doing gender right", individually, collectively, and/or institutionally. I argued in Chapter Three that any movement towards ending oppression must *include* an interruption of the reproduction of the heterosexual regime if the material and ideological subordination of females by males is to be seriously contested. Individually, collectively, and institutionally, differently

located activists have attempted to do this by transgressing (and ultimately disturbing) the limits of the category Woman; individually by becoming UnWomen, collectively through UnWomanly Acts, and institutionally through organizations such as Hamilton's Sexual Assault Centre and Justice For Women. During the early 1990s, radical activists, especially those involved in Justice For Women, kept both the issue of men's violence against females and the part that state institutions play in upholding this system very much in the public eye. I have argued that anti-violence activism can be thought of as UnWomanly Acts since by contesting the system of men's violence it clearly challenges Men's right to *be*, vis-a-vis Women. During this period then, these activists continuously and insistently contested the status quo through for example 1) repeated confrontations with the police system - the case of Larry Fodor, his Chief's comments, the spray-painting incident, the subsequent protest rallies and the highlighting of the disparity between the punishment of feminist activists and abusive men; and 2) repeated confrontations with the legal system - the case of Guy Ellul, the laying of the rose, multiple protest rallies and petitions, and the case of Toni Skarica and his removal from "domestic violence" cases. That Justice For Women was a space of resistance *outside* of formalized sites such as the Sexual Assault Centre and Interval House allowed it to resist the effects of regulation longer than those sites. However, individual members of Justice For Women were not beyond the reaches of regulation since many of them were punished *through* these more formalized spaces in which they also acted.

"Lesbian", "man-hating" and "anti-police" were the most common regulatory terms used to contain this activism. However, instead of *building* on the clarity and potential afforded by those subjects radically located *in and against* the heterosexual regime, organized anti-violence activism has marginalized it, silenced it, and in fact tried to distance itself from those particular locations. Halton Women's Place apologized for the "lesbian ad", the Sexual Assault Centre and Justice For Women were criticized by other feminists for being anti-male, anti-police and having a lesbian-bias. By accepting that individual activists and/or organizations should *not* be "lesbian", "anti-male" and "anti-police", "the movement" strengthened rather than weakened the boundaries of the category Woman. The power that the fiction of gender has to regulate the lives of females individually, collectively, and institutionally was shored up.

I want to re-iterate here that the power of gender does not only exist at linguistic or discursive levels but operates in a very materialist sense; it is integral to our domestic labour being unpaid, to our designation as appropriate caregivers in the home, the community, and the workplace, to our designation as appropriate targets of men's violence, and to the "naturalness" of being slotted into low-paying, low-benefits employment. It is through the heterosexual regime and its discrete genders that men individually and collectively exploit all forms of women's labour. As long as the fiction of gender has the power to enforce what Women are - including economically, sexually, and politically - then those structures which keep us subordinated will remain in place.

As the concept of "good girls" and all of its manifestations is reproduced rather than contested, certain strategies for change are less punished than others. That is, activists argued that the second goal of "the movement" had been achieved: strategies for providing safe and supportive services for women had been successful. I want to suggest that these strategies encounter less cultural and institutional opposition since they are most clearly within Women's mandate - listening, helping, caring, and servicing. In this way then, activists are in fact "doing gender right".

This is not at all to argue that these strategies are not important. The creation of safe and supportive services for women in Hamilton has saved women's lives, and has changed the lives of thousands of others. I argued that if the type of service provision that was being offered was in some way political, then perhaps organizations like sexual assault centres and shelters should be conceptualized as spaces of resistance rather than clearly spaces of incorporation. Which types of spaces they are will of course vary from place to place. This point is addressed below.

8.3 Location and spaces of political resistance

I have argued throughout this thesis that radicalization *matters*; that is, through interactions with and experiences of transgressive females, other women might develop a radical political identity and in this process, add to the possibilities for collective material and ideological challenges to the power of the fiction of gender and to the reproduction of the heterosexual regime. Since radicalization is a critical process, it is

important to consider what kinds of subjects are produced by the processes (both internal and external) of regulation, discipline, and punishment of transgressive females. Organized anti-violence activism has made an important error in not sufficiently challenging the regulatory fiction of gender. The movement has tended to purge and/or marginalize lesbians and/or other transgressive females and/or their issues in the process of trying to become more acceptable and more legitimate (internal policing has of course been paralleled by the requirements of the state and other regulatory bodies). In marginalizing UnWomanly praxis to illustrate that we are not threatening, we not only become just that - un-threatening - but we also *remove* those ideas and practices from the development of political identities in certain spaces of resistance. In this way the potential of these spaces to be "hotbeds" for the radicalization of females is effectively lost. This politicization to challenge the regulatory power of the fiction of gender is *necessary* for the interruption of the reproduction of the heterosexual regime. In Hamilton during a relatively short period, collective and institutional transgression of the boundaries of the category Woman were multiple, frequent, and public, and more females were radicalized in the process. The subsequent discipline and punishment (and the lack of sustained, organized resistance of any depth) partially depoliticized the community and this has reduced the possibilities for political development in place. The hope is that other spaces of resistance are developed *outside* of these more formalized sites, as did happen with the Courthouse as a site of protest and with the creation of Justice For Women, for example. Justice For

Women was able, for a short time, to engage in very effective UnWomanly activism. Like many other radical direct action groups however, its lifespan was relatively short.

The implications of this research for feminist and lesbian geographies are discussed below.

8.4 Making the connections: feminist and lesbian geographies

One of the main aims of this thesis was to build on the emerging work in feminist and lesbian and gay geographies on the institution of heterosexuality as regulatory and to forge some much needed concrete links between feminist and lesbian geographies. Critical lesbian interventions in geography which illustrate the substantive challenge that multiple lesbian lives might pose to the reproduction of the system of gender, offer much for the geographical investigation of specific processes of oppression, resistance, and identity formation in particular places. This thesis reveals concretely how the transformative potential of local feminist activism continues to be defused, in part, not only by the term lesbian but by the term Woman. By constructing and punishing certain types of UnWomanly Acts, regulatory bodies use discipline to force the proper doing of gender - thus stabilizing the fiction whilst simultaneously reducing the potential for these acts to reduce its regulatory power. This work adds voice to recent calls for an end to the "ongoing non-examination" of compulsory heterosexuality in geography and suggests the importance of a more widespread recognition in the discipline that the political regime of

heterosexuality is as central to the construction of women's oppression as is racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, and sexism.

Further, much contemporary social theory has been criticized for being theoretically dense and practically obtuse, in its use of elite and coded language and in its general inaccessibility. Here I have offered very concrete examples of the ways in which some of this theory (for example Judith Butler's work on the fiction of gender) can add to our understanding of the processes which create Woman as Heterosexual. As there is a move towards more self-consciously situated, embedded, and concrete feminist and/or radical geographies, what will be done with the theoretical and practical insight that the refusal to do gender right is ultimately the refusal to be a Woman (or a Man)? By illustrating some of the ways in which the deployment of categories works to regulate feminist challenges to the status quo, this thesis suggests the importance of investigating the *purpose* of the use of categories, of dualisms and of the notion of "difference". Further, with regards to the process of identity formation in place, this research illustrates several important points. First, local social relations matter for the development of urban politics. That is, several factors contributed to the particular contours of the struggles in Hamilton, including: the fact that at the time the city was one of the few large urban centres without either a Safe City Committee (or something similar) or a Lesbian and Gay Pride day/march/week (the mayor was subsequently forced by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to declare one); the lack of a large, sophisticated, and varied feminist "community" of depth (of the sort that might be found in cities such as Toronto and

Vancouver); the absence of feminist and/or "out" lesbian and gay representation on local council; and the lack of any substantial competition to the city's traditionally conservative major media (especially The Spectator). Second, political identities develop in and through place. Local activists' identities were, in part, constituted through their experiences of local justice; for example, in the Ellul case with its message that abusive men were literally getting away with murder, and in the spray-painting incident with its message that local legal systems considered women's civil disobedience a more serious breach of law than the average "domestic". Third, particular spaces of resistance are critical for the development, negotiation, and regulation of political identities. Many of the local activists illustrated the importance of these spaces in the constitution of their identities. These identities were in turn regulated in these spaces through the deployment of regulatory terms such as "lesbian" "anti-police" and "anti-male" (for example throughout the controversy over the philosophy and mandate of the Sexual Assault Centre).

Another aim of this thesis was to investigate the difference found *within* categories such as Woman, and what role these, and gender and sexuality played in local organizing. I illustrated throughout the thesis that fragmentation existed within the often unproblematized group "white feminists". Although categorization by gender works to suggest that the two groups (Women and Men) are very different from each other and very similar within each group, it simultaneously works to *divide* women from each other by, in white western culture, creating competitive, horizontally hostile subjects through

the heterosexual imperative (getting and having a man is more important than anything else).

Thus, when "white feminists" organize on the basis of gender they not only bring this mythology about women (being competitive and untrustworthy and not allies) to their organizing, they also bring *contradictory* expectations of "sameness", based on essentialist notions of identity formation. These notions have led to expectations that gender structures all white women's lives in a sufficiently similar way as to be a basis for politics. White feminists, entering (largely) white feminist organizations do so with understandably huge expectations of each other. These include presumptions that there would be similar understandings of political action and appropriate strategies for challenging men's violence against females. The eventual vilification of Justice For Women, the struggles over the merits of counselling groups for abusive men, and the criticism of the spray-painting incident all illustrated that these presumptions were mistaken. Activists argued that they experience "difference" within this supposedly relatively homogeneous group when they moved, in various ways, beyond the limits of "nice white girls". By suggesting that these transgressions and subsequent punishments had "something to do with" class and/or sexuality and/or anger, they illustrated that gender is *always* classed, sexed, raced and so forth. However, essentialist notions of the connections between being and politics also led local white feminism to deal with "other" differences in an unsatisfactory way. That is, activists argued that different oppressions (and therefore different groups) had been dealt with discretely rather than as interlocking.

I want to point out here that in critically assessing these notions of identity formation and the role of gender, sexuality and "difference" in local organizing, I do not mean to place myself apart from these processes. That is, my own journey of political identity formation over the last decade mirrors that of many of the activists interviewed. I have travelled from the excitement of first getting involved in women's struggles and feeling that I had "come home", to becoming disillusioned and a marginalized "other" in these struggles, to engaging in a more clearly separatist form of identity politics, all the way to moving towards a politics of location in which I have recognized at least the *possibilities* of a more coalitional type of struggle for social change. This leads me to the final two important areas for discussion: a) what does this research offer in terms of a critical assessment of possibilities for ways forward, and b) what are the implications of employing a politically engaged research methodology? These are addressed below.

8.5 Implications for anti-violence activism

I argued at the beginning of this thesis that a central aim of the research was to be part of political struggles for social change. So what does this analysis offer, in a concrete sense, to local organized anti-violence activism? It obviously does not offer a practical blueprint for "how to" but it does offer several important insights which might be added to the ways activists think about men's violence against females and struggles to contest it.

First, many activists argued that they felt overwhelmed by the challenge of imagining how to translate structural analyses into action and that after all these years of struggling, "big" change seemed like a fantasy, like a map they could not quite hold together in their heads. I am suggesting that *part* of this difficulty stems from the mapping of this new world to include widespread heterosexuality as the only option for females, and from this premise, being forced to think around and around in circles: well, if there is still widespread heterosexuality, then there is still gender binary, and if there is still gender binary, then there will of course still be men's violence against females (since they have argued that men's violence against females is intimately linked with compulsory heterosexuality). Thus, the continued naturalizing of female heterosexuality and its acceptance by mainstream feminism as the only realistic widespread option for females blocks "the movement" from even *imagining* certain political praxis. I am not suggesting that activists employ a new strategy of telling women to choose lesbianism but that gender as a regulatory fiction *must* be continually challenged and ultimately robbed of its power, if "big" change is to be effected. The power of the category Woman to regulate what females can be - including economically, politically and sexually - is central to the reproduction of the status quo. With this insight, it is clear that marginalizing transgressive females weakens rather than strengthens the transformative possibilities of feminist activism.

Further, activists illustrated ways in which interaction with the state unavoidably changed feminist organizations. However, it was also pointed out that although these

interactions had reduced the possibilities of these spaces to be the "hotbeds" of radicalism they once were, funding had been a "necessary evil" in the move to fulfil one of the goals of the movement - to provide safe and supportive services for women. I illustrated that these spaces may well be better conceptualized as *still* spaces of political resistance (albeit altered ones) rather than spaces of incorporation provided that the type of services offered in these spaces still constituted an alternative praxis with respect to men's violence against females. New spaces then, might be more suitable for the development of radical political activism, spaces which are located relatively *beyond* processes of regulation which are the unavoidable result of, for example state funding. These new spaces however, need to be built on a politics of location rather than on identity politics which are based on unexamined categories such as lesbian and women of colour. Justice For Women realized this at a certain point when they changed their membership criteria from gender to politics - that is to the agreement with a set of political principles.

The suggestion then is that activists use their own location to map and create different realities, to contest the power of oppressive dualisms/categories and to organize on the basis of politics rather than on identity. This process of unnaturalizing "difference" is both a material and ideological one: the regulatory forces of the fiction of gender need to be contested at *every* point they occur, individually, collectively and institutionally. This needs to be done whether it is through coalitions to: fight for greater reproductive freedom; fight against laws that continue to make females appropriate targets of men's violence; fight taxation laws, immigration laws, spouse-in-the-house regulations, and so

forth, which create heterosexual and ultimately gendered subjects; in essence to struggle against those relations which combine to insist that in order for females to try to survive, economically, politically, and sexually, they have no option but to be Women.

Finally, through employing a politically engaged research methodology my aim was to clearly locate myself, as an academic researcher, in the realm of the political and, as a lesbian researcher, to challenge the reproduction of the political regime of heterosexuality in academia and the associated invisibility of lesbians in that environment. This is discussed below.

8.6 Disruptive practices: politically engaged research

By being politically engaged in this research, I gained an important insight about the significance of *location* in the development of political identities. Both my experiences in and through particular spaces of resistance and of transgressive females in those spaces, and my experiences of regulation of these, *radicalized* me. My experiences (and interpretations of these) as a radical lesbian both inside and outside academia, illuminated various processes which worked to regulate identities (and bodies) in certain spaces. By being 'out' as a geographer in the community, I hope to have played a small part in making activists think further about space and place and the importance of these in local processes of oppression and resistance. By being 'out' as a lesbian in geography (both through my visible self and my clearly situated work) I hope to have played a small part in disrupting those processes which a) continue to maintain heterosexuality as normative

and regulatory whilst mystifying its systemic and political nature, and b) continue to deny females choices in how they live their lives in, against and beyond this system. As there has been a move towards self-consciously situated, embodied geographies and an explosion in work on identities, transgression, oppression, and resistance, there has been an associated emergence of strangely migratory, disembodied, queer geographies. It is quite difficult to find "out" lesbians in the discipline. In insisting on a presence for lesbian geographers I have hoped not only to encourage a consideration of lesbian existence as a viable option, but also a consideration of some of the ways that a normative and regulatory heterosexuality has structured our lives and of the role of categories and dualisms in creating a world which is built on the oppression and exploitation of manufactured "others".

Chapter Eight endnotes

1. That is, from a place beyond the category of sex, as a runaway from the class Women.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES.

A - HISTORY - personal\political

past employment\activities

how and why did you get to where you are today, past involvement in community organizations, political organizing and so on and name them

current employment\activities

current involvement in community organizations\political organizing and so on and name them

reasons for your involvement in the anti-violence movement current organization or group?

if not covered above

describe yourself re: power and privilege

For example, I am a white, non-disabled, lesbian who grew up in a working class family, although my experience of class has changed with a lot of formal\postsecondary education and so forth. This all affects how I am in the world and the local women's movement - class, sexuality, white skin privilege and so forth.

what kind of family did you grow up in - class background - changes over time in thinking about\experiencing class; indicators - education, income, access V the culture of class - classism in local women's movement

sexuality - privilege and access; oppression, out? - heterosexism in local women's movement; lesbians in anti-violence work?

gender relations household

household makeup - changing parental\family responsibilities

household circumstances - that affect negatively or positively ability to engage in this kind of work\political organizing?; either reconciling heterosexuality with radical feminist anti-violence work or [and] time\energy\conflicting demands

B - ANTI-VIOLENCE MOVEMENT\POLITICAL ORGANIZING*analysis of male violence against women*

e.g. causes, how does it operate, how is it perpetuated, what's the affect on women's lives at most general level, and what has to be done to end it - both short term and long term

power and control tactics, systemic, therapeutic, dysfunctional families, victim-blaming

individual\institutional\cultural

linking systems of oppression; compulsory heterosexuality

put these ideas into practice in your work political organizing?

yes - how?; no - why not\processes working against

e.g. long term: if you think compulsory heterosexuality must be dismantled, how are you working to achieve that end; short term: the state must respond in ways that increase conviction rates, how are you working to achieve that end; etc.

do you think there is, or has ever been, something that could be called a feminist anti-violence movement?

be clear that this is that "movement" dominated by white, middle-class, non-disabled heterosexuals.

a "movement" in that a basic\common objective could be identified

what were\are its goals\objectives\have these changed significantly over time\how

do they vary between organizations\places\why?

are there any organizations pursuing the goal - as identified and in what ways\
in what ways not

do these organizations differ from [what we understand as] more traditional social
service agencies \ can women still expect something different from "feminist"
organizations? in what ways?

C - THE STATE: INSTITUTIONALIZATION\INCORPORATION

when you think of the state, what do you include

e.g.government, institutions, sets of relations, or what? - as well as injustice
system, police, government does it also include social services, education, health
profession etc.? and on what levels?, local, provincial, federal etc?

*what state agencies do you see as most important in\relevant to male violence against
women?\in what ways are you aware of state intervention in your day to day struggles
against male violence against women?*

do you think that the state upholds and\or perpetuates men's violence
if so, in what ways?

do you think that the state fights men's violence in any ways?
if so, in what ways?

how do you think of the state in terms of its ability to be part of the struggle for
[radical\significant?] social change in the area of men's violence\can it be\in what
ways\why not

some personal e.g.s would be useful here and explore the contradictions if they
arise

how do you think the responses of the state (to men's violence) have changed over
the last few years

the state has become more involved in the issue through funding, directives to police, family violence programs, public service announcements, etc. In what ways do you think this has affected the anti violence movement.

have you experienced state intervention as divisive? \does it treat different organizations differently \how?

have you had to change tactics \practices because of increasing state intervention?

what have been some of your reactions to increasing state intervention - have you fought it \welcomed it \how?

what do you think of men's counselling groups?

SPECIFIC: how do you see the relationship between the state and SPECIFIC ORGANIZATION developing?

GENERAL: how do you see the relationship between the anti-violence movement and the state developing?

*IDEALLY: what do you think it should be, e.g. withdrawal; co-operative; in and against; strictly adversarial etc.? and why
again explore the contradiction*

D. WHITE FEMINISM: QUESTIONS OF DEPOLITICIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION.

do you think that working in all women (or almost all) organizations is significantly different from working in mixed groups - differences \similarities; positive and negative

how do you think that being women in a patriarchal \misogynist culture affects the ways that we organize together as women \on the basis of gender

how do you think the white feminist anti-violence movement has been dealing with issues of racism \heterosexism \classism \ableism etc? and now the backlash

how do you see this developing?

have there been changes in the kind of activities that are taking place, e.g. community outreach, political organizing?

will action rise\go underground?

changes in the kinds of services being offered to women in the community?

changes in the kind of qualifications that one needs to be working in e.g. shelters\rage crisis centres?

do you think that there is anything specific\unique about the HAMILTON situation or is it merely reflective of what is happening across the province\both - for example in terms of state intervention, organizations and or activists' responses to this etc?

E. WAYS FORWARD\STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE.

SPECIFIC: where do you see SPECIFIC ORGANIZATION going from here?

GENERAL: where do you see the anti-violence movement going from here?

Do you remain committed to the kind of work you have been doing [political action\advocacy\counselling\etc] or do you plan to use your energies in other ways in the future?

can you single out what you think is the biggest challenges facing the anti-violence movement today

how much\what do you think the feminist anti-violence movement has accomplished in the struggle to end men's violence (do you think it has accomplished anything?)

what factors have been most important in these accomplishments?

what factors have constituted the most serious obstacles?

is there anything more you would like to add?

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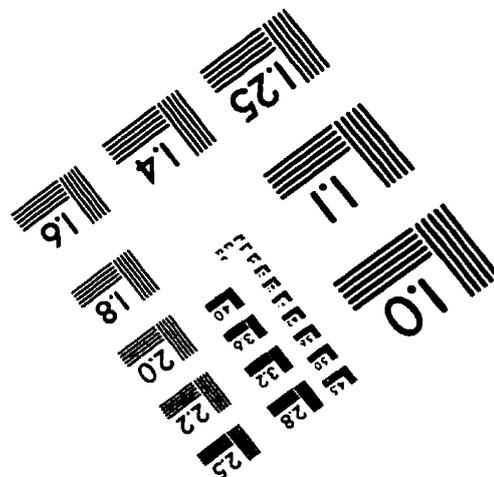
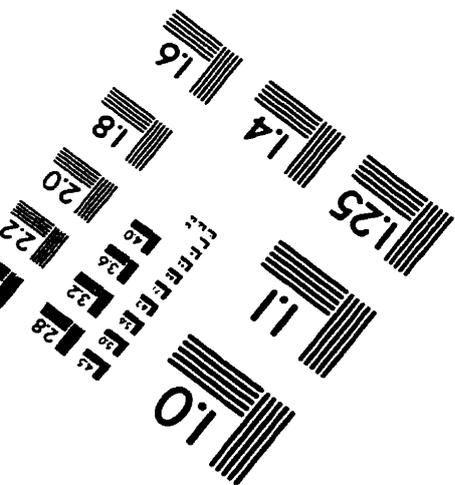
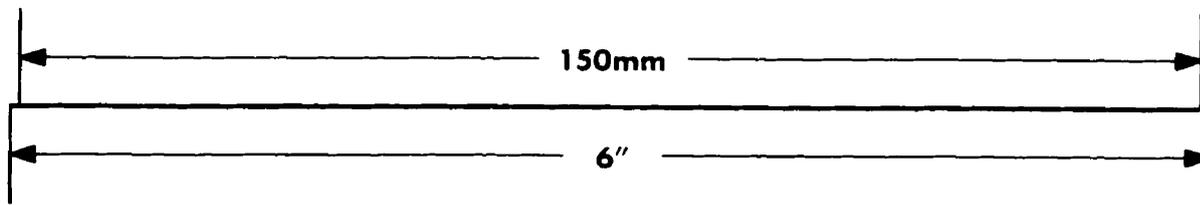
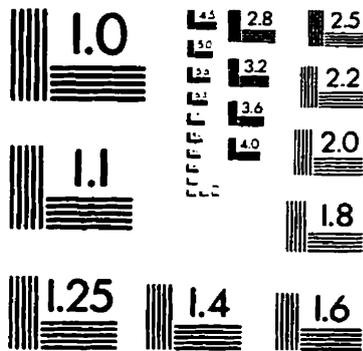
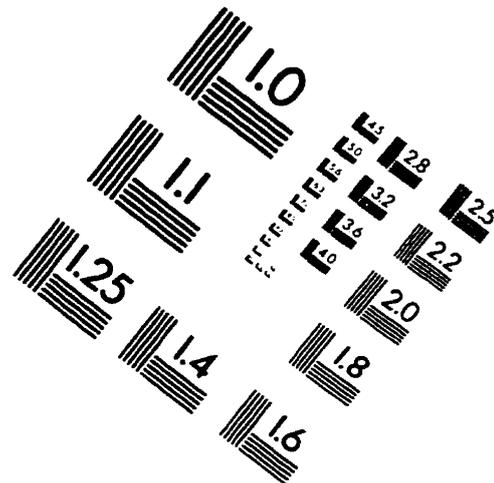
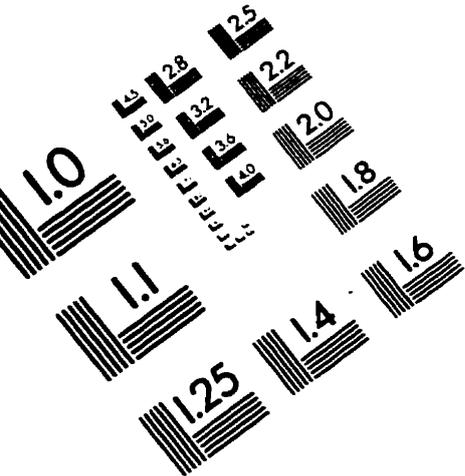
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