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THE POLITICS OF LESBIAN INVISIBILITY:

A Nova Scotia Study

by

Darl Wood

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts
in the Joint Women's Studies Programme

at

Mount Saint Vincent University
Dalhousie University
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, NS

27 March, 2002

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JOINT M.A. IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommended for acceptance a thesis entitled *The Politics of Lesbian Invisibility: A Nova Scotia Study* by **Darl Wood** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts.

Date: 27 March 2002

Supervisor: **Dr. Linda Christiansen-Ruffman**

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman

Committee Member: **Dr. Madine Vanderplaat**

Madine Vanderplaat

Examiner: **Dr. Shelley Davis Finson**

Shelley Davis Finson

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

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AUTHOR: Darl Wood

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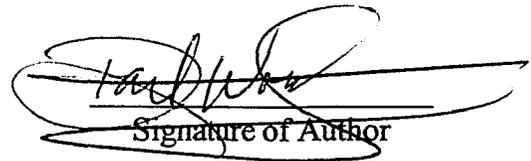
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Dedication

To my sister Cheryl MacDonald for her unconditional love, support and coffee money during this process, and in loving memory of Ginny Green.

Abstract

The Politics of Lesbian Invisibility: A Nova Scotia Study
By Darl Wood

Within the context of the Nova Scotia women's movement of the 1980s, this thesis examines the relationship between Lesbian and heterosexual women, the processes of Lesbian invisibility, and the paradox of Lesbian visibility and invisibility. From a Lesbian-feminist perspective the study offers insights into dynamics of a pattern that partially accounts for the disappearance of Lesbian sensibility in present women's studies and feminist movement. The phenomena of Lesbians acting as a buffer and scapegoat for the movement as well as the role of complicity Lesbians engaged is explored.

Methodology consisted of interviewing "second wave" feminist leaders in semi-formal and casual situations, examining gray literature of that era, and probing four grassroots organizations and groups that were prominent during that decade. The results found that relations between the two constituents on an individual-social basis were supportive. Lesbian invisibility occurred only at the apex of public identification with Lesbian concerns and identified issues. The extent that Lesbianism was consistently strategized from visibility in organizations and in feminist theory played a significant part in the disappearance of Lesbians as a force within the women's movement in Nova Scotia.

Date Submitted: 27 March 2002

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Preamble

A large part of what makes us feminist theorists and researchers goes beyond making ourselves aware of what is not included in research. Feminist researchers also must recognize the need to examine what exists and how it is portrayed. Feminist action, then, becomes a process of intentionally including what has not been present and creating a way to politicize it. Feminist research in and of itself is political.¹

As I sit looking around my study I'm struck with wonder by the mounds of information and data I have gathered for this thesis. It makes me think about what it was like coming out as a Lesbian in the early 1970s.² I scavenged bookstores, libraries and second-hand bookshops trying to find a book, any book, title or anything with Lesbian content or subject matter. I found one book and remember going to the check-out counter to buy it, my stomach clawing its way into my throat, the terrifying feeling of exposure and my stinging-hot ears that let me know that I'd turned a dozen shades of red. What I wanted was a quick and anonymous get-a-way. The book turned out to be an absolute, horror-filled representation of "the" Lesbian lifestyle.

Today as I peruse my personal library I marvel at almost thirty years of accumulated reading material. Boxes and filing cabinets filled with papers, articles and gray literature, stacks and shelves filled-to-over-flowing with Lesbian lore - literature, herstory, poetry, theory and fiction and even a row of Lesbian mystery novels. It's all very exciting.

Given this display of material changes, why am I compelled to develop a thesis on Lesbian invisibility and silence in the Nova Scotia women's movement? Am I suffering from a Lesbian form of *phantom-limb syndrome*, where things appear to have changed

and progressed to a point where Lesbians are no longer invisible, silenced and oppressed? Is it possible that I am still reacting from a personal place in time when Lesbians were invisible, silenced and oppressed? There has never been any doubt in my mind that I was, or am still being, oppressed as a Lesbian feminist, so why now after all these years do I feel the need to legitimize it in the Academy? To answer these and other relevant questions, in 1997 I undertook a content analysis of the Nova Scotia Women's Studies materials with the intent of determining any explicit or implicit reflection of heterosexist bias. The design included the reading lists, syllabi and materials from the reserve-reading library from five Women's Studies courses for the 1997/1998, curriculum. The research was based on headings; the inclusion of subject matter; and an inference that could be ascertained based on known Lesbian authorship. After reviewing one hundred and thirty-eight articles and books, I found one article with "Lesbian in the title". There were six authors I identified as Lesbian. Their articles-books, however, were not Lesbian specific and three historically identified bisexual female authors whose included writings were not Lesbian specific. Due to the small sampling base, the results are not accurate or wholly reflective of Women's Studies in Nova Scotia. However, the study indicates a pattern that I believe reveals a general trend.

The result of this exercise led me to re-examine the depths of Lesbian invisibility in still one more "wave" of feminism. From this little experiment in content analysis, and from my years of experience working within the Nova Scotia Women's Movement, I began to gain understanding into the subtlety of Lesbian invisibility and silence. I also

began to see somewhat disturbing connection to the strategies of silence and invisibility which were employed in the 1980s which has left us nearly “strategized out of existence” and most certainly marginalized in current feminist processes and feminist theory making.

Chapter I

Introduction and Methodology

What makes feminist research uniquely feminist are the motives,
concerns and knowledge brought to the research process.
Jennifer Brayton, 1997³

During the 1980s, the Nova Scotia feminist community was creating its own herstory, and the Lesbian community, I believed at the time, was an observable and vital force of agency within that movement. I returned to Nova Scotia, having spent a decade in Toronto, expecting that same vibrant participation of activism and visibility by the Lesbian community. I found fewer points of entry into feminist grass-roots activism with a specific Lesbian focus and presence. Also moving back into the milieu of academia, I encountered a surprising lack of Lesbian theoretical presence in Women's Studies materials and syllabi. This study of the Nova Scotia women's community is the result of my own need to problematize and understand the process of how heterosexism and Lesbian theorizing seems to have become a moot point within the women's movement here in Nova Scotia.

Throughout this research project, I have examined three major concepts: the relationship between Lesbian and heterosexual women; the processes of Lesbian invisibility within the women's movement (in particular Nova Scotia); and the paradox of Lesbian visibility and invisibility. The undertaking to investigate Nova Scotia "Second Wave" Lesbian and heterosexual feminist activists who were leaders in the decade of the 1980s and who are still, to some degree, a central presence within the current women's

community, has not only been intellectually provocative but also personally challenging. The focus is an exploration of the relationship between Lesbian and heterosexual women – women who have worked both together and separately for feminist change. I anticipated that by determining what the important issues were for feminists, (and what feminists were actively involved with over the years) and by comparing how the two constituencies dealt with various issues as they arose - I would be able to gain some insight into the dynamics of a pattern that might account for the disappearance of Lesbian sensibility.

Outline of Chapters

In the first chapter I present the methodology I have engaged to explore the research question: How can we, as feminists, understand the process of apparent invisibility of Lesbian feminists within the Nova Scotia women's movement? I had hoped to realize a research project in which the process would take on as much significance and empowerment as the outcome by using the methods of individual interviews and a focus group. I describe my methodology by relating the development of the project and the difficulties I encountered while creating my proposed design, and why it became too difficult to engage in the type of participatory, community-based, grounded theory approach that I had wanted. It is my intent to explore some of the key concerns that pertained to my plan of research while attempting to address the dilemmas that appear to be inherent in the work itself.

The second chapter starts by looking briefly at the Nova Scotia Women's

Movement within the context of the Canadian Movement. By herstorically defining separate spheres and maternal feminism, I discuss the effects these approaches and beliefs may have had in the creation of Lesbian invisibility in current movements. In a loosely formulated chronological order, I trace the Nova Scotia and Canadian women's movements to the present. I approach the notion of a radical timeline or an herstorical thread of Lesbian and heterosexual women, whose conscious radical intent was to deconstruct the system of patriarchy and recognize sexism as being the root of women's oppression. Radical women also advocated for change while challenging the notion that structural reform is the primary way to bring about liberation for women.

The feminist movement is explored within social movement theory by looking at the fluidity and the definitions of the women's movement and movement organizations. By differentiating feminism as a movement from the movement organizations generated as a result of movement activities, it helps to clarify the need to examine the lack of Lesbian visibility based on movement participation. For many reasons the notion of a Lesbian feminist community is obscure, and it is that indistinctness which renders Lesbians dependent on feminist organizations to advocate changes in the greater Nova Scotia and Canadian secular communities. My thoughts, based on Suzanne Straggenborg's (1998) work on community clusters, attempt to untangle that obscurity of Lesbian presence in women's movement organizations. The examination of social movement theory here also helps to lay the groundwork for theorizing Lesbian visibility/invisibility in the final chapter, which theorize the research.

Chapter III, “Radical Women and Feminist Radicals” looks at the grass-roots peace organization “Voice of Women” (VOW) as a *Lesbian tolerant* space, and a partial journey into my own personal observations and experiences as a Lesbian involved with the Nova Scotia women’s movement. I explore the vital role that VOW has played in the development of the Nova Scotia feminist community from the early 1960s to the present.

That women can act in extraordinarily radical ways without a radical-feminist analysis of sexism is a bit of an enigma, yet the Voice of Women continues to be a prominent force in concert with a global movement for peace. Acting locally while thinking globally has become a model of action for groups such as the Voice of Women. Included in this section is a brief herstory of the women’s peace movement in order to create a continuity and context in which to explore the effects of what might be called maternal feminist thought on Lesbian invisibility/visibility within the women’s movement.

Central to my focus on the Nova Scotia Voice of Women is the influential personage of Muriel Duckworth. She has for decades connected women from all cluster communities, integrating feminist leadership in Nova Scotia by her presence.

Duckworth’s authority has been instrumental in aiding women to transcend generations, race, class and heterosexism for the past four decades. To some extent her presence has allowed factions to move through differences in order to do the work of the feminist movement, from whatever direction women enter. Important in the context of this research project is the relationship particular Lesbian peace activists have had with the

Voice of Women, and the dynamics of silence which both has added to and has taken away from Lesbian visibility over the years.

In the fourth chapter, “Resisting and Re-sistering: The Thin Lavender Line,” I view the heart of my research with Nova Scotia feminist leaders. In conjunction with the data I collected of individual women’s experiences and the exploration of the Voice of Women, the findings were framed and applied within the context of three other separate groups or organizations within the women’s community: “Women’s Health Education Network,” “Wild Womyn Don’t Get the Blues,” and the feminist periodical “*Pandora*”. These particular groups were ideal for bringing together Lesbian and heterosexual women in a social and political milieu that allowed me to gain a certain understanding of the dynamics of the 1980s. This permitted an interpretation of what relations between Lesbians and non-Lesbians meant in terms of Lesbian invisibility and visibility. All three groups were women-only spaces and significant entry points for much of the feminist activism in those years.

Creating safe women-only, Lesbian spaces became of utmost importance to Lesbians working in movement communities: *Lesbian-friendly* spaces such as in the Women's Health Education Network, *Lesbian-focused* spaces such as Wild Womyn Don’t Get the Blues, and *Lesbian-tolerant* spaces like the Voice of Women. *Pandora* offered a *Lesbian-led, social* as well as *written space* for Lesbians to be able to express their politics and examine issues that concerned them within the Nova Scotia women’s community. All four organizations were *women-only*, Lesbian tolerant and Lesbian

friendly spaces. With the exception of Wild Womyn, and to a lesser degree *Pandora* they were silent political spaces where Lesbians were welcomed as individuals but without their political agenda.

I chose the Women's Health Education Network, a *Lesbian-friendly* space, as a point of convergence because it represented one of the best examples of how relationships between Lesbian and heterosexual women functioned well in a semi-public forum. The organization was primarily heterosexual but fairly accepting of Lesbian women and an excellent vehicle to explore the subtle relationships between the two groups of women.

In keeping with the theme of the process of visibility and invisibility of Lesbians in Nova Scotia, I offer some insight into a forum in which Lesbian feminists developed and processed their own politics. The planning of the yearly music-camping festival "Wild Womyn Don't Get the Blues" during the winter months became an unique opportunity for Lesbians to enter into a consciousness-raising mode. It was a process in which at least part of the Lesbian-feminist community was able to develop collectively their own politics and theory around issues of heterosexism, of heterosexism in the women's community and of Lesbian oppression generally. This organization was especially important for Lesbian feminists in the 1980s because it was one of the very few *Lesbian focused* spaces in which they could process their politics and work through thoughts, responses and feelings around issues that affected them as individuals and as a community.

Although Nova Scotia feminists were extremely active during the period of the 1980s, few pieces of formal documentation were retained. One of a few exceptions was the self-identified feminist newspaper “*Pandora*” published out of Halifax.⁴ I discuss the importance of “*Pandora*” to the Nova Scotia Lesbian community, as it became a vital testament to the women’s movement for the last half of the 1980s into the early 1990s. I also observe the ways in which *Pandora* played a role in making Lesbians of Nova Scotia more visible than did most other venues of agency within the movement. Particular attention is focused on an article by Deborah Mathers and Magen Ardyche, in which they present the results of a content analysis of the newspaper, from the first edition through to December 1987. This section on *Pandora* is significant in its exploration of other levels of Lesbian invisibility/visibility in a forum of communication important to the women’s community as a whole. By observing the subtle and overt dynamics of the “perception” of Lesbian presence within the women’s community, I was able to gain further insight and understanding of the effects of invisibility/visibility on Lesbians.

The pulse of the field research is the interviews. I present the data and interpret the findings. In this stage of the research, I was able to develop a number of points that revealed themselves during the course of transcription of the interview tapes. The themes that overlapped consistently are presented, as well as issues that touch on relationships and dynamics between the Lesbian section of the women’s community and various feminist organizations and groups.

Of particular note is the personal support Lesbians in the study felt from heterosexual women with whom they worked and socialized. The data is consistent with the notion of the personal and political spheres that affect Lesbian visibility and invisibility within the women's movement here in Nova Scotia. The subtle nature of invisibility is also present as an important piece in discerning the process.

In the fifth chapter "Lesbian Politics and the Politics of Invisibility," Lesbianism is connected to feminism while grounding it in an herstorical context of Lesbian and Nova Scotia Lesbian herstory. The public perception of Lesbianism is discussed together with the effects of negative public imagery on Lesbians. I briefly examine the notion of Lesbian "community" in this section, linking it to the chapter on the "Movement of Feminists." Based on the writings in early feminist text I theorize how Lesbianism continues to act as both a buffer and a scapegoat for the current women's movement.

The assumption that a significant part of Lesbian invisibility in the Nova Scotia women's movement is due to Lesbians being nearly strategized "out of existence" is in keeping with my research findings in Chapter IV. The process of silencing Lesbians for the expediency of "more important" issues and for the "ultimate good" of the movement is suggested. Lesbian invisibility is also shown to be institutionalized within the policies of women's groups, centres and other movement organizations. How Lesbians themselves have been implicated in their own silencing is scrutinized while discussing some of the dilemmas Lesbian feminists face being "out" in the movement.

The sixth chapter “Lesbian Theorizing and the Paradox of Lesbian Theory” will factor in both the findings from previous chapters and a textual examination of the theoretical aspects of the research. In this segment I investigate the paradox of Lesbian theorizing in praxis and examine the various forms of Lesbian invisibility, namely, the erasure and silencing of Lesbians within the structures of feminist theories, studies and movements. I set the framework for the textual data by employing components of Radicalesbianfeminist analysis and Lesbian standpoint theory. In addition, I theorize the ways in which Lesbians exist within the rupture of heterosexist conceptions of women’s oppression. The process of dislocating Lesbian theory within the micro, social-order approaches of post-modernity and identity politics is discussed, as well as why those particular models may have caused some Lesbian feminists to explore a means of separating Lesbian theory from feminist theory.

Methodological Practice

The feminist methodological approach that I engage for this research is based on the combination of both an empirical inquiry and theoretical inquiry to gain a better understanding of Nova Scotia Lesbian herstory, and to explore three specific features of Lesbian experiences. The exploration interweaves primary and secondary empirical descriptions of Nova Scotia individuals, organizations and herstory with theoretical questions. I adapt this approach to shed light on the relationship between Lesbian and heterosexual women; the processes of Lesbian invisibility within the Nova Scotia

women's movement; and the paradox of Lesbian visibility and invisibility. Thus, unlike some studies that rely either on inductive or deductive approaches to develop new concepts or to measure specific variables to test hypotheses, respectively, this more wholistic feminist methodological approach attempts to develop an analytic understanding of social processes in Nova Scotia by combining both theoretical and methodological insights.

The most empirical part of the project is based on interviews with feminist activists who were leaders of the Nova Scotia women's movement in the 1980s and remain in that position today. For the purpose of this undertaking, I define a feminist activist-leader as a woman who is a feminist and politically aware of her oppression, as a woman. She is also known for her activities in the women's community. I will discuss both the topic of the project, and the difficulties of creating my original proposal of a participatory community-based approach based on interviews and focus groups, and why I chose to abandon the focus groups. It is my intention to explore some of the key methodological issues of feminist research that pertain to my research while attempting to address dilemmas that appear to be inherent in the work.

Originally the research focus was the relation of theory and praxis of long-time Nova Scotia feminist leaders who are, as a cohort group, entering their menopausal years. I had been politically active in social movements in both Halifax and Toronto for many years and had recently come to recognize the changing life pattern within an influential group of aging activists with whom I had worked in the past. I noticed changes such as women being less

politically active and concentrating more on personal careers. There seemed to be an increased concern for economic security that led women to prepare for retirement with less energy for meetings, demonstrations and marches. Moreover the backlash of reactionary social changes and the conservative economic recoil of the 1980s had emerged to strain a population of already over-worked, aging, feminist activists in 2001. I assumed that as these feminist leaders moved along their life path, and their interest and energy levels changed, it would have repercussions on feminist projects and programs. Grassroots services have to compete for fewer allocated dollars. Feminist energy has also turned towards damage control and maintaining those gains we accrued during the 1970s and the early part of the 1980s. Had the face of feminism in Nova Scotia also changed? No one had focused research on this particular influential group of women, much less to study the effects of these women's life changes on the women's community.

Gauging by the way my proposed venture was received (with much encouragement and excitement) when it was posed to women in the Women's Studies Program, and to many individual women, I believed that my work had the potential to be an important piece of research.. However, as I moved deeper into the project, feelings of guilt shadowed the process for me, creating a discomfort with the premise of the proposed research. Here I was - a fairly well known Lesbian-feminist and political activist of many years' standing in both the women's community in Halifax and in Toronto, owning a strong background in Women's Studies, therapy and women's health issues, yet I hesitated to focus my thesis on lesbianism or issues directly affecting Lesbians. I feared

that if I were overtly assertive about my sexual orientation in my application to graduate school, I would not have been taken seriously for a scholarship. This irrational fear, of course, is rooted in years of living with lesbophobia inside and outside of the women's movement.

What surprised me the most was that at this stage of my life, I could allow myself to be drawn into this pernicious frame of thinking; it speaks to the insidiousness of heterosexism, within and outside of the world of the Academy. Ellen Lewin (1995: 332) suggests that as researchers we:

strive to examine ourselves as candidly as possible, but our descriptions themselves are the product of a part of our intellectual identities that cannot help but cast a shadow on all the other dimensions that make up our vision of ourselves.

In a graphic way this research process has helped to reinforce for me the feminist principle that as researchers we cannot stand back and assume methodological objectivity; at a very rudimentary level, our subjectivity informs our research.

I experienced an "a-ha" moment of insight at a colloquium presentation by Patricia Doyle-Bedwell, which helped to change the focus of my project.⁵ She shared with us an elder rule within the Native Mi'kmaq Community, "only speak about what you know, and you can't assume to know." Doyle-Bedwell reminded us that we must bring passion to the research, as does Sarah Lucia Hoagland (1992: 187) who says, "choice is between making one judgment or internalizing a different one. And these choices, affecting our energy, involve different transformations of consciousness." This is what Barbara Dubois refers to as "passionate scholarship." Passion for our choice of research

projects becomes our bedmate for the duration; my passion for this particular one comes from my anger at lesbophobia and my love of feminism.

Engaged Participatory Research

Feminist participatory research, which is grounded in the women's community, suggests a framework that is particularly suited to exploring the principles of doing feminist research. The process of the research, in and of itself, is one of the most important elements of the research. The early feminist tenet, "the personal is political," and "social engagement" moves to the heart of identifying what constitutes feminist principles, assumptions, goals and politics of feminist theory and research.⁶ Patricia Maguire (1987:256) in her innovative work on feminist participatory research,

Participatory Research: A feminist Approach, suggests that by:

combining feminist research's critique of androcentrism with participatory research's critique of positivism, a feminist participatory research provides a powerful approach to knowledge creation for social and personal transformation.

A participatory research approach that is absorbed into a feminist theoretical framework provides a powerful model for enacting personal-political and transformative changes. There is an important distinction to be made between incorporating a feminist perspective into traditional frameworks of androcentric research methodology, and incorporating particular methods into feminist theoretical frameworks. Both approaches tend to serve different functions of agency: the former does not necessarily challenge the core of a positivist-quantitative paradigm that underlies the patriarchal assumptions of

either objectivity or gender-based liberalism; while the latter relentlessly provokes discourse around how feminists make sense of representation, voice, reflexivity, authority and the subjectivity of the research process. I tend to view some of the discourse in methodology in the same terms as I view the attempt of some feminists to incorporate feminism into traditional male-centered paradigms rather than incorporating analysis of various theories into feminism. For example, there is an effort by some feminists to add feminism to major schools of sociological theories, such as Marxism (and varieties of neo/post-Marxian theory), socialism, liberalism, and post-modernism.

European feminist Maria Mies advances methodological postulates that have become a “must” guide for any feminist doing qualitative research. They are based on seven assumptions of feminist practices: a partial identification; a double consciousness; the view from below; research both tied to and participation in political action; integration of theory and practice; and the collectivization of women’s consciousness. I incorporate Mies’ postulates in the body of this text to represent their importance and their importance of doing respectful research with women. In 1983 Maria Mies (122-128) wrote “Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research,” in which she explained the feminist method approach as follows:

The postulate of value free research, of neutrality and indifference towards the research objects, has to be replaced by conscious partiality, which is achieved through partial identification with the research objects....

The vertical relationship between researcher and ‘research objects,’ the view from above, must be replaced by the view from below. Research must be brought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited and oppressed groups, particularly women.

The contemplative, uninvolved 'spectator knowledge' must be replaced by active participation in actions, movements and struggles for women's emancipation. Research must become an integral part of such struggles.

Participation in social actions and struggles, and the integration of research into these processes, further implies that the change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest. The motto for this approach could be: 'If you want to know a thing, you must change it'.

The research process must become a process of 'conscientization', both for the so-called 'research subjects' (social scientists) and for the 'research objects' (women as target groups). The decisive characteristic of the approach is that the study of an oppressive reality is not carried out by experts but by the objects of the oppression. People who before were objects of research become subjects of their own research and action.

The collective conscientization of women through a problem-formulating methodology must be accompanied by the study of women's individual and social history. Women must subjectively appropriate (make their own) their history, their past struggles, sufferings and dreams; this would lead to something like a collective women's consciousness without which no struggle for emancipation can be successful.

Women cannot appropriate their own history unless they begin to collectivize their own experiences. Women's Studies, therefore, must strive to overcome the individualism, the competitiveness, the careerism prevalent among male scholars.

The feminist discourse around whether there is or is not - should or should not - be a particular feminist method/methodology/epistemology, is not unlike the conundrum of revolution versus reform. Can we work within the system to effect change without being compromised by that system, or do we need to deconstruct/dismantle it? In

contrast to the approach that Stanley and Wise (1990: 47) use, I agree that dichotomous thinking serves no useful purpose for feminists:

to assign ourselves to one 'end' or another of the dichotomies 'foundationalism v. relativism', 'idealism v. materialism' and 'methodological individualism v. collectivism' which have surfaced in feminist discussions of methodology.

However, I am not prepared to give up the notion of a feminist methodology. In approach, feminist methodology uses the above principles of research that are specifically feminist, and aims to lessen power dynamics while creating social change through grounded theory, no matter how we view it. Whether there is a method particular to feminists or not, there is a feminist methodology that brings along with the process some very complex issues.

In Defence of Participatory Research as an Achievable Model

Feminist research has barely made use of the empowering possibilities of bringing women together to share their experiences in a group setting. This is paradoxical, given the development and its use of consciousness raising groups as a liberation strategy (Maguire, 1987: 125-126).

Most of my adult life has been spent working in feminist collectives where "decision making" is a process that invokes an horizontal power-balance which also attempts to diffuse an abuse of power. In such situations, the sharing of knowledge becomes a learning experience. The commonalties between the feminist collective work situation and feminist participatory research attracted me to this methodological approach. As Maguire (1987:126) notes, in this approach, research is "a collective

experience in which women talk and act together. The collective aspect is critical to overcoming the structural isolation women's experience." These collective and interactive features make feminist participatory research an ideal model for feminist research that is explicitly feminist.

For the most part, feminist participatory research encompasses a feminist collective epistemology and engagement. This methodological approach would have allowed the greatest latitude to explore, in a personal way for women, the issues of Lesbian visibility and space within the Nova Scotia women's movement. By incorporating Maria Mies' seven postulates of action research (Mies, 1996:13) with a modification of Patricia Maguire's feminist participatory research framework (Maguire, 1987: 245-264) it would create a model on which to base the principles of feminist research for my own research project.⁷ Once I had focused my topic more clearly on a Lesbian theme, I also wanted to use a methodological approach that was Lesbian. In developing a Lesbian methodology approach I have modified parts of Patricia Maguire's feminist framework. I ascertained this would be appropriate for my research process and a starting point to theorizing how Lesbians are situated in the Nova Scotia feminist movement.

Maguire (1987: 246) proposes a critique of the androcentric aspects of non-feminist participatory research. I propose instead, or maybe in addition, a critique of the dominant heterosexist assumptions in feminist research. My adaptation also suggests that sexual orientation, ability, race, culture, age and class should be central elements to

theoretical debates. In particular, while Maguire has a well-thought out analysis of gender issues in participatory research, I wish to extend that analysis into an integrated feminism that recognizes Lesbian diversity and fits more accurately with my proposed project, which would use both textual and fieldwork components. In this context, I believe the adapted model would allow for the process of thoughtful reflection in which the integration of action and knowledge becomes a matrix of feminist praxis.

Next Maguire (1987: 247) advises that explicit attention needs to be given to women's issues at each stage or phase of the research. For the purposes of this specific venture, theorizing heterosexism is given explicit attention at all stages or phases of the project. Part of this model of research also included the benefits derived from the very process of participating; consciousness raising was a means of reintroducing Lesbian issues back onto the women's consciousness agenda.

Along with the tenet of feminist research being for, by, and about women - I believe that the course I initially proposed for my research, working with focus groups, made my approach ideally feminist.⁸ A feminist community-based participatory process would have required that the research design be developed in conjunction with the women's community, particularly with those who participated in the study.

Research Process and The Ethical Approval Process

In the pre-study stage of the research I began to carry out loosely structured conversations with the women I hoped to involve in the research to help shape the

subsequent ways in which the research would be conducted. The informal exchanges partially helped to narrow the procedures that I eventually used in the field, as well as assisted to formulate the questions I needed to ask and how I asked them. These unofficial, casual conversations allowed me to determine who else would be involved. However, when a researcher is engaged in carrying out studies with human subjects, it is necessary to prepare a fairly detailed design for submission to an ethics committee governed by the university before one can even begin to gather data. Since it became necessary to make contact within the field early on, it also made good ethical sense to approach the Women's Studies Ethics Committee to obtain their permission right away so that I could begin to talk to the potential community participants. In contradiction to this policy, I would not have been able to work on the project without first talking to the women whom I wished to include in my sample. Because I already knew the community and had experience as a participant myself during the 1980s, talking to community members would have allowed me to expand my potential sample, as well as to explore with people what I was working on when I encountered them in the community.

This process set up an unfortunate succession of circumstances that ultimately became problematic and even contradictory as to when and how to initiate the ethics process. In turn, these initiatory plans were abandoned while the ethics committee was considering the proposal. This meant there was an interim period of five to six months in which I was not able to carry out vital research. Not having received permission from the Ethics Committee to officially proceed with the first stage of my project until as late as

the first of March 2000 presented complications with the time frame and design of the research. Meanwhile, time restraints diminished my ability to fully engage the community in the process. It takes considerable time to set up focus groups, so for practical reasons the method had to be adapted to individual interviews. Time was a prime consideration that led me to abandon my original design of focus groups for individual interviews.

Regrettably, these time delays caused missed opportunities around various holidays and social events, and proved to be somewhat awkward. Interactions with women, who wanted to know what my research entailed, necessitated that I devise a standard answer that would satisfy both the Ethics Committee's concerns, and my friends' curiosity, without really knowing what the concerns were. My response became an off-handed reply of "negotiated space between Lesbians and straight feminists during the decade of the 1980s in Nova Scotia." I would have preferred to explore with women their thoughts and experiences in a socially relaxed setting, in order to stimulate their memories while formulating open-ended questions for the subsequent interviews.

Generally, protocol requires that a graduate student also submit a literature review with the research design. However, as a grounded theory project, the specific focus of the literature review also became problematic in that it depended upon the questions raised and experiences of participants in the study. Even my initial interests might have led the study in different directions of social events, or sociology of Lesbians. The one clearly

anticipated focus of the literature review was the history of the Nova Scotia women's movement. Producing a literature review on that subject introduced an unexpected challenge. There were so few publications available it was dismal. In trying to do secondary research on Nova Scotia feminist activities of the 1980s, I needed to review numerous books on the Canadian Women's Movement for any content on Nova Scotia.⁹ The serious lack of accessible, written material concerning that period also made it necessary to excavate the gray literature produced during that decade. For that particular reason, and time constraints, I focused on documents from that period, namely, an examination of the women's periodical *Pandora*, which was produced from 1985 to 1993, Women's Health Education newsletters, and the meeting notes of the activities of the "Voice of Women" in the 1980s.

Study Participants

The change from a participatory-centered research design to an interview format obviously had consequences for my research objectives. I could no longer wait for the study's goals to emerge from a participatory process with these feminist leaders. When considering my task of gaining an understanding of how Lesbians and heterosexual women experience working together, I knew I would have to embark on a different process. The textual component of the research became a great deal more important than I had anticipated. The challenge of exploring the language of identity politics, as a reversal of hierarchy, the disjunction and heterosexism of the women's movement, as

well as the notion of separatism, all became a necessary theoretical component to the research. I also knew I would have to examine and confront my own ambivalence towards the communities I would engage. To accomplish gaining the data I needed to answer my research question, meant that I would have to use a different method to explore my research question.

An instrument to ensure both Lesbians and non-Lesbians could talk comfortably about the issues that might account for Lesbian invisibility was needed. Besides individual interviews, the gathering of data expanded to include a number of old newsletters and copies of the Women's Health and Education Network paper *Vitality*.¹⁰ Pictorial scrapbooks of actions, posters, films and pamphlets of actions from the 1980s as well as old Voice of Women meeting notes played a significant role in gathering data.¹¹ There was an invaluable amount of what I now considered data that were derived from the women's newspaper *Pandora*, as well as from my personal journals of that era. In addition I recognized the importance of my earlier participation in the activities that were a focus of this study. My research methodology and design rely centrally on my grounded reflexive analysis. I identify the analytic importance of some of the groups that were active during that period – in part through their present absence.

The method of recruitment of women leaders to become study participants was a modified chain-referral system or a snowball sample.¹² Because I drew from a small pool of women who were personally familiar to me, based on my experience of having worked with them during the decade of the 1980s, my field was limited. I approached the two

women I didn't know personally on the bases of referrals, their work, reputation and connection to their particular community.

Overall, the major participants consisted of five Lesbian and four heterosexual women with whom I conducted semi-formal interviews. I also had casual phone contacts with seven women and spoke with other women at meetings as well as in social situations. Most of the respondents were interviewed at their own kitchen tables. Two women were interviewed in their offices. The interviews lasted anywhere from one hour to two and one-half hours each. Two of the participants were contacted twice due to personal time constraints. The women were forty years to ninety-two years of age, and all were of Caucasian descent. Geographically the interviews were held in both rural and urban communities in Nova Scotia.

Ethical Issues

Feminist participatory research is about excavating the collective knowledge and furthering the empowerment of women. It also raises a number of complicated ethical concerns, particularly questions of confidentiality, which would be best worked out with the women's community leaders. Partially drawing from my psychotherapist background, sensitivity to the concept of consciousness-raising as a healing-strategy, inherent to the process, is a high priority for me. I also had confidence that I would be more than capable of respecting confidentiality, troubleshooting and discussing ethical considerations with those feminists involved. However, the Ethics Committee expressed their concerns in these areas and, again, retarded the process.

The uniqueness of this project was that since these community leaders are typically not a vulnerable group of women around issues of process, they had a deep understanding of the ethics involved in this type of research, and most issues were discussed openly. Women were not inhibited or shy about speaking out about what they thought and how they perceived things. However, the interviews were somewhat formalized by the use of a tape recorder and some of the respondents took on a more professional demeanor than I had hoped.

As disturbed and disappointed as I was over the changed design of my research from participatory-centered research to an interview format, it was also a relief both from the time constraint aspect, governed by the university schedule, and my need to conclude the project within a reasonable time frame. A release form was devised to ensure that each respondent's wishes were honoured (Annex A). All respondents expressed a great deal of interest in the research and requested a copy of the finished thesis. Only one of the respondents even indicated an interest in the disposition of the data beyond the academic requirements. A few women generously agreed to be part of a focus group in the future if I wanted to arrange one.

Confidentiality was perceived as a continuum, some wanted to be credited with their insight and words while others participants allowed for only partial disclosure. None of the women, either Lesbian or heterosexual requested total anonymity. Initially, different protocols needed to be followed and negotiated in order to respect individual needs. Some participants were currently out as Lesbians and some were out in the 1980s

but not now, and some were closeted at the time and are out now. All of these concerns were discussed with individuals prior to the interviews. This, in fact, became a non-issue with the exception of one respondent who did not want the groups in which she was involved to be named. With most participants there were occasional comments that they requested be removed from the transcript.

To prepare for the formal interviews it became apparent that I needed to look more closely at some of the issues that could become problematic while doing the research. As an insider, I am part of the Lesbian and larger feminist communities, and for that reason I assumed my identity might become a difficult piece of the process to incorporate into the research, without making preconceived assumptions about what the data would reveal. In particular, my identity as a very “out” and an “outspoken” radical Lesbian feminist was already well known to the participants, based on personal knowledge, but also on my activism in the 1980s. This might have worked both for and against the comfort level of the respondents. For those women who were already well known to be Lesbians, identification as Lesbian was less problematic. However, for those who were only “out” in the Lesbian community, to be identified with a research project such as this may have proved threatening. None-the-less, they did not request anonymity. It was difficult for me to gauge how freely heterosexual women felt in expressing what they really felt and thought, maybe for fear of not being political correct, or not wanting to offend. My role as interviewer was ambiguous and difficult to define. How my identity affected the dynamics of the interview process played an undetermined

part in the data. However, it did give me access to feminist leaders of the period that some other researchers may not have enjoyed.

I did not anticipate that I would have to maneuver so much between being a participant in the conversations, as well as an observer, to the extent that I did. With the Lesbian respondents, I found there was less of a need to clarify stereotypes and definitions, or explain concepts. There was a definite shared recognition of experience with these particular Lesbians: the interviews often consisted of much laughter and “insider” joking, as well as warm reminiscences of personal involvement, and actions we had engaged in during the 1980s. Having said that, it also followed true what Ellen Lewin (1995: 327) had to say about working within Lesbian communities:

The act of writing about lesbians from our own communities poses a difference between the ethnographer and the informant, no matter how participatory her research techniques; in most instances, other differences arise even as we put ourselves into the research picture.

On an important level, I felt distanced from both groups of women because of my absence from the community for so long. It was not the “coming home” experience I had anticipated. And as wonderful as it was to get “caught-up on our lives,” a gap emerged because I was not part of their process of growth, nor they mine. I would sometimes return home, after having spent an hour or two with these women, thinking I had missed out on something special and important that I should have had in my life, but was no longer entitled to.

After much consideration and consultation with neutral friends around dynamics and issues of confidentiality, I decided to keep all participants anonymous. I ascertained

that it would allow me the greater degree of latitude to be able to write as freely as I needed to without offending any particular respondent. I incorporated some of the quotes that best illustrated the subtle and overt processes of oppression that was made relevant by the data. For the purposes of clarification and contextualization of the data, occasional statements identifying Lesbian or heterosexual speakers were included in the text to strengthen the impact of the assertions. The main reason for proceeding in this manner was the closeness of the women's community in Nova Scotia.

These were community leaders whose work was well known in the community. They have many years of experience working in collectives and with other groups of women, and some of the comments in the long run may have caused particular participants to become uneasy. Such arbitrary decisions are contrary to doing the kinds of research I had envisioned, none-the-less it became essential so that certain quotes could be included. One of the two exceptions I made was identifying Muriel Duckworth, who gave me the awesome responsibility of using her words for the enhancement of this work. The second exception was my interview with Ann Bishop, who was largely responsible for Lesbian inclusion into Nova Scotian Human Rights Legislation Act.

Field Note Reflections

One interesting feature of this research is that it builds on my knowledge of a recent herstorical period of the women's movement in Nova Scotia. Expectations of what I would uncover ranged from overt tensions between Lesbians and non-Lesbians, to a

supportive relationship between the two groups. I also carried with me into the field the illusion that Lesbians were more visible in the 1980s than they are now. I was so “out” myself that I assumed a visibility in the larger women’s community that may not have existed. I had not anticipated how my absence from Nova Scotia allowed me to see only particular events, and in some ways froze this period in time for me.

A development I had not predicted presented itself when interviewing past friends. I had been removed from active participation in the Nova Scotia feminist community for such a long time that much valuable interview time was exhausted while trying to recall the sequence and details of events that were clearer in my memory than in theirs. Almost every woman I interviewed expressed the wish that they could have done the interview in a group setting so that they could collectively recall some of the important details. Says one respondent, “I wish I had more people here with me now, you know, sort of do a collective memory. That would be wonderful.” Comments such as these validated my initial instincts to design a research project involving groups of women. It also underlined the importance of focus groups as part of a participatory approach to recording women’s collective herstory.

Another unexpected issue arose from interviewing (past) friends. Would previous friendships be rekindled and deepened as a result of this process, and would there be intimacy hangover (vulnerability), which, sometimes occurs when people feel exposed?¹³ The experience of open-ended questions can unexpectedly lead into the information shared being more personal than either the interviewer or respondent had anticipated, and

afterwards became uncomfortable with disclosure. With one woman I interviewed, who was also a friend I hadn't seen since the 1980s, a tension emerged after the interview which had to be processed and resolved before the interview could be incorporated into the research. An instance such as this is a reminder to us of the sensitivity and seriousness inherent in the kinds of ethical research we are trying to accomplish as feminists.

Ascertaining what I wanted to accomplish with this research, beyond contributing to general feminist knowledge, is the easy part. I want Lesbians to no longer be invisible in the Nova Scotia feminist community-movement. I want Lesbians to be visible and valued as Lesbian. Realistically, what I can accomplish with this research is to create a dialogue between feminist leaders, both Lesbian and heterosexual in the women's community. Perhaps the outcome of this venture will be to focus and reframe some of our thinking about how we actually process our activism, how we interact with one another, and how we explore what the priority issues are for the feminist movement. What methods do we engage to negotiate what gets included and what gets left out in our decision-making? Uncovering the strategies we invoked in the past that allowed us to successfully, and not so successfully, work together can be a solid and valuable piece of information. This kind of knowledge we just may need now, at a time when the survival of grassroots organizations is becoming both vitally important and increasingly more vulnerable to the neo-liberal economic system.

Chapter II

A Movement of Feminists

We've just begun to comprehend the vast implications of our own politics,
and even though these implications seem most startling when they lead forward into infinity,
they also pertain directly to the present.

Robin Morgan¹⁴

The numerous organizations women participate in today did not descend from the sky. As we
stand atop our 20th Century achievement and gaze back into our past, we realize that our lineage is
woven into a continuous and colourful fabric.

Sandra Barry¹⁵

In my heart I am a radical. I cut my feminist teeth on the writings of the United States women's movement of the 1970s. In particular, I received nourishment from the experiences of other women in the anthology, Sisterhood is Powerful,¹⁶ and Kate Millett's Sexual Politics,¹⁷ and gained my early class analysis at the breasts of the Furies (although they most likely at the time would have been appalled at my symbolism).¹⁸ These sources formed the basis of my initial understanding of Radical Feminism. It took me a few more years to recognize there were great differences between Canadian feminist politics and activism, and the women's movement in the United States. None-the-less, I still cherish what I gained from these early movement works and analysis.

I suspect many of us identified more readily with United States media-feminists such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and Gloria Steinem, than with the gutsy Laura Sabia, Judy Lamarsh or Kay MacPherson, women who shaped the course of Canadian feminist politics. There is a tendency for some to think that the Canadian women's liberation movement began with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and that the

Canadian movement may be a bit stodgy. Doris Anderson (1991: 203) has noted that Canadian feminists “are always comparing themselves with their next-door neighbour. They are generally more conservative, believe more in collective action, are more law-abiding and less flamboyantly individualistic than their neighbours to the south.” In fact, the Canadian women’s liberation movement has an unique and exciting herstory, while continuing to be at the forefront of women’s global initiative.

In this chapter I place Nova Scotia within the perspective of the larger Canadian Women’s Movement experience. I look at the movement within an herstorical context to help understand the dynamics of a maternal feminist legacy in Nova Scotia and how that may account for the disappearance of Lesbians. In the second half I explore the feminist movement within social movement theory, addressing the fluidity of the movement giving relevant (to this research) definitions of the women’s movement and movement organizations. The process of differentiating the feminist movement from movement organizations helped to clarify the need to examine the lack of Lesbian visibility based on an undefined concept of Lesbian community. The notion of community is an amorphous one and extremely difficult to elucidate. I have structured my thoughts around Straggenborg’s work on community clusters to determine how this concept may or may not relate to the Lesbian cultural community. Within a women’s movement made up of a cluster of communities, it is significant that Lesbians have no clearly-defined or identifying characteristics, making it difficult for the community to maintain a visible presence.

Nova Scotia – Golden Age of Sail

The “first wave” women’s movement swept across the western world in the mid-to-late 19th century, where the forces that were “set in motion at the turn of the century continued to redefine the status of women throughout the twentieth century” (Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth, 1988: 18-19). The ideology of separate spheres was prevalent in Nova Scotia. As Errington (1993:65) explains:

[A]lthough British North America was still pre-industrial, the division of labour on the basis of sex became more exact, as distinctions began to be drawn between public and private spheres of activity. As these distinctions became more defined, women throughout North America were increasingly confined within the physical and psychological limits of the private world of the home and the hearth.

Nevertheless, women did organize and were politically active in one form or another throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.¹⁹ Unlike some countries, Gwendolyn Davis (1994: 234) informs us, in Canada “convictions were rarely revolutionary in tone. Instead, evolutionary change [was] nurtured by maternal feminism and an astute sense of political influence of that approach in achieving reform.”

When the great British Suffragette, Emmeline Pankhurst visited Canada in 1909, the voice of the conservative-anti-suffrage movement - which represented mostly white, mostly middle-class and most definitely heterosexual men and women, who adopted a “separate sphere” philosophy - can be heard in this editorial comment that Gorham (1976: 24-25) quotes as having appeared in the Toronto, *Mail and Empire* newspaper:

Nature has assigned to us all our duties in life. To the man has been given the task of supporting the woman, of sustaining the home, of fighting the battles and of governing the family, the clan or the nation. To woman has been

committed the charge of the home and the duty of exercising a moderating influence over all its occupants. The Suffragettes ... are at war with nature. They want the women to be too much like men.

Maternal feminism in Canada was about suffragists supporting the notion that women did have special duties, and insisting that it was these very duties that made it necessary for women to participate fully in the public sphere, thus turning the conservative argument back on itself. Even though Suffragists accepted the notion of separate spheres and maternal feminism as a political strategy, according to Gorham (1976: 25), most women were “ambivalent about both their literal and their figurative maternal roles.”

Due to the scarcity of information about Lesbians in the “First Wave” of feminism, one can only speculate on their role or lack of visible role in the movement. The concepts of romantic attachments between women, and independent single women, were just beginning to be viewed as standing outside the accepted norm. Up to this point with no public distinction, these two categories of women, if visible at all, were considered non-threatening. It is quite possible that as women started demanding a move into the public-sphere, the definition of single women and Lesbians also had to change. At least one reason why Suffragists may have veered into a maternal-feminist stratagem was so their message would be more palatable and not overly threatening to the male status quo. Nevertheless, perhaps it is a sign of backlash against Lesbian feminist activism during this period that patriarchal power tried to portray Lesbians as perverse, sexual inverts (Faderman, 1991).

In this section I borrow from women’s movement theory the idea of Suzanne Staggenborg’s (1998) cluster of protest communities. In addition, I argue that the

women's movement also has a radical timeline of continuity. Further more, the women's movement also derived both from a line of continuity from an historical thread, as well as from a cycle of protest, within the auspices of what Suzanne Staggenborg (1998) refers to as a cluster of protest communities. I am convinced there was a radical-timeline of seditious women that further research will unveil (a radical-timeline, I define, as a thread of continuity that has been missed in social movement theory, that is, women's movement work apart from other social movements). It also manifests certain perpetuity of purpose, which has yet to be fully uncovered, analyzed or appreciated. Fundamental to the definition of a radical-time are the elements of the "radical" ingenuity and strategy of women's resistance beyond the ideal of reform to the recognition of a need to deconstruct patriarchal societies.

This brings up the question of what is radical as a philosophy, and what is radical strategy? Or to put it another way, radical as "deconstructing" by arson and bombs, or radical as "reconstructing," making rudimentary changes. Civil disobedience within sections of the feminist peace movement's strategy to build a culture of peace can be seen as radical reconstructing. In contrast, the militant British Suffragist's strategy of using radical means to gain access to male power institutions within the existing systems, basically leaves the system in tact. For instance, small numbers of "radical women," who were committed to moving beyond equal rights or maternalist-reform approaches, did step over that line of private/public-sphere at great personal risk.

A number of Canadian women travelled to Britain and the United States, frustrated with the non-militant, reformist approach generally used in Canada (Bacchi 1989: 33-34).

A particular example is Canadian militant, Mary Raleigh Richardson (alias – Black Jennie and Polly Dick) who became an arsonist and bomber. She was arrested in Britain for her activities in support of the Women’s Social and Political Union (Mackenzie, Midge, 1988: 200-5, 219-23 and 260-1). Other more affluent suffragist reformers travelled back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean and up and down the Atlantic coast in order to participate in both American and British demonstrations.

It would be arrogant to assume there were very few women in Nova Scotia involved in public activities or not concerned with equal rights issues as Deborah Gorham (1976: 30) indicates in her article “The Canadian Suffragists.” As early as 1827, women in Pictou County established the first temperance society in Canada, a good twenty years before the rest of the country (Bacchi, 1989:70). Nova Scotia was also one of the first four provinces that had recognized suffrage societies before the 20th century (Bacchi, 1989:27) as well as the first province to have a co-educational University – at Acadia, in Wolfville (Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth. 1988:20).²⁰ None of these achievements would have happened, without well orchestrated campaigns by numbers of active women. Unfortunately in 1851 women had their rights to vote rescinded, and they were once again barred from enacting their full civil rights. “In the ‘responsibly’ governed colony [of Nova Scotia] ... legislators set out specifically to exclude women from the franchise (Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth, 1988: 10).”

Like elsewhere, Nova Scotia women at the turn of the 20th century found their voices through secular as well as religious organizations and, “[I]t was through such organizations that women were able to express separate political voice” (Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth, 1988: 20). By 1893 women in Nova Scotia had already got a suffrage bill, giving them the right to vote past a second reading in the Legislative Assembly. It was “only a concerted effort on the part of anti-feminist forces [that] prevented its passage into legislation. Thereafter, Nova Scotia suffragists experienced the same problems as other Canadian women in beginning the suffrage campaign” (Bacchi, 1989: 27). In 1895, Anna H. Leonowens and Eliza Ritchie founded the Halifax Suffrage Association (which is commonly attributed to having gained suffrage for women in Nova Scotia).²¹ According to Bacchi, 1989: 27):

The prohibitionist cause was strong in Canada’s eastern provinces ... the WCTU [Woman’s Christian Temperance Union] had been actively campaigning for woman suffrage before the inception of this association. Between 1892 and 1895 the Nova Scotia WCTU presented thirty-four petitions on behalf of women suffrage. These temperance women formed a large part of the membership of the new suffrage society.

While other countries of the Western world, including Canada, attributed gaining the vote primarily to the war effort, in Nova Scotia it was both the war effort and the Halifax Explosion in 1917, which gave legitimacy to women’s demand on the provincial and federal level:

Women’s suffrage enthusiasm was temporarily diverted when a disastrous explosion leveled much of the city of Halifax in December 1917. The role of women as crisis managers in this instance was particularly visible since so many of the province’s men were fighting the First World War in Europe (Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth, 1988:21).

After World War One, the provincial government established a Royal Commission to examine the need to implement mothers' allowances and investigate the working conditions of women.²² "In 1930 mothers' allowances, for those who met a commission's strict guidelines of eligibility, became available in the province. Federal legislation for universal mothers' allowance was passed in 1944 and universal old age pensions followed in 1951" (Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth, 1988: 22). None of these piecemeal achievements would have manifested out of the heads of male legislators. Women's experience of struggle has shown us that there had to have been a strong woman's voice behind the legislators advocating for even these miniscule changes for women. These political changes belie the commonly held assumption that feminism became defunct in a post-suffrage age.

The Canadian context of the 1960s saw the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement set against a backdrop of political, economic and social changes, along with the blossoming of movements such as the peace, civil rights, and Native rights movements.

In Canada some women who became active in the women's liberation had previously been in the Native-rights movement. Many lived and worked on reserves, doing organizing in Indian, Metis, and Inuit communities. Like many women in the mid-nineteenth-century abolition movement, and like their U.S. counterparts active in civil rights, they led through this work to the women's movement (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988: 39).

The emerging left and the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA) were also active on Canadian Universities at that time. Another core factor, that may have had as much to do with the increased activity and women's conscious politicalization and involvement, was

an unprecedented access to higher education for working class and minority women. This was also due in part to some of the policies of the Trudeau years, and an increased number of women entering the workforce (Adamson; Briskin and McPhail 1988). With all the changing expectations brought about by an increased consciousness, partially through access to media coverage, women became more politicized around their own oppression as women.

The “new women/feminist” movement of the 1960s did not appear in a vacuum, nor did it lay totally dormant during the post suffrage and the pre and post-World War II abeyance era.²³ Naomi Black (1993: 154) speaks of the present movement as not being just a *rebirth* of feminism:

Feminism and women’s groups had not simply died off at the successful end of the suffrage campaigns. As we begin to uncover the history of women in the interwar and early post years it becomes clear that as might be expected ... organized women were engaged in fewer concentrated campaigns, had less publicity and less success, but their activities never stopped.

Canadian women continued to be involved in “a variety of causes and issues throughout the years 1920-60, but it was not until the sixties that they came together again in what is referred to as the second wave of the women’s movement” (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988:30). The accomplishments of this “first wave,” and the period in between, were vital in tilling the ground for the movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In other words, there are no clear boundaries that indicate a clear beginning or end to different phases of the women’s movement. The political struggle of the “second wave” has its grounding in the “first wave” and even before that, perhaps in Harriet Taylor’s

influence on the work of John Stuart Mill, and before that in Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women, and so forth. The accomplishments by the women from the "first wave," that we take for granted now, laid the foundation for the enabling of current activism that needs to be recognized, and as Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail (1988: 36-37) point out are:

tremendously important in making the current women's movement possible. Although we are too often unaware of who they were and what they did, every day we reap the benefits of that work. Our right to vote and to own property, to participate in the world of politics and government, and our access to higher education, divorce, and guardianship of our children [although that is continually being eroded and challenged by father's rights and the extremist christian-Rights groups] all owe much to these women.... The second wave has been able to take for granted certain basic rights and build on those.... We are both a new movement and a part of a long history of women organizing for change.

Despite the long term legacy and herstorical threads, the movement does have phases. One of the unfortunate side affects of early "second" wave feminists and activism has already begun to happen, that is the leaders and their works are beginning to be lost or forgotten. I was in Toronto when the women's community there held a memorial for Kay Macpherson. One of my feminist friends, with whom I was staying, had no idea just who Kay was or what she had done for the Canadian women's movement (see reference to Macpherson's autobiography, and Kerans, 1996).

Another adverse affect is the lost clarity and power of our analyses. I continue to give preference to the terms "women's liberation movement" or "feminist movement" which connotes more than just "the women's movement;" they give feminism an identity of purpose. In the current frame of feminist thinking I believe we have lost our edge by

watering down the terms and definitions from the early movement, words such as consciousness raising, sexism, patriarchy, radical and women's oppression. When I first identified with the feminist movement, women were unapologetic in the use of these and other basic concepts. I understand that some feminists – *the term feminist is also on the endangered species list of expressions* - suggest that these words have lost their power to define women's situation and that we need new ones in order to make an impact.

However, in part, the lost power is in the fact of disuse and trying to say the same thing in convoluted, humanistic terms. Along with Jane Mansbridge (1995: 27) I ask, then, "what is the feminist/women's movement," and what are the most useful ways of understanding women's oppression?

Feminism, Women's Movement and Social Movement Theory

Feminism can have as many definitions as there are feminists: it is a lifestyle, a way to live one's politics, an identity. It has the potential to bridge other aspects of our identities, such as: Lesbian-feminist/feminist-Lesbian, Black feminist or working-class-feminist, as well as experiencing ourselves as women. There are, however, three prerequisites that I believe must be part of any definition of feminist: viewing life experience from a women's "standpoint," as a woman; actively working towards eliminating women's oppression; and loving and putting women's concerns first. The kinds of love and commitment I am talking about here are different - although similar, in that it involves putting women first, caring for and about women, who they are, what they

do and what happens to them, the energy they emit and the sheer beauty of who they are.

The more I read current feminist literature, the less I am able to definitively answer Mansbridge's question, what is the movement? Certainly it is an entity, flexible, malleable, alive, and as Mansbridge (1995: 27) explains, "one cannot define the feminist movement only through formal organizations that facilitate and direct its activities in any country, or set of countries." She continues by defining social movement as discourse:

Feminists often turn for conscious inspiration to the 'women's movement.... [They also] often feel internally accountable to that movement. The entity – 'women's movement' or 'feminist movement' – to which they feel accountable is neither an aggregation of organizations nor an aggregation of individual members but a discourse. It is a set of changing, contested aspirations and understandings that provide conscious goals, cognitive backing, and emotional support for each individual's evolving feminist identity.

I would move beyond that definition to add that "women's movement" is grounded or embodied in real experiences, organizations, and activities of integrative communities. And sexism, wherever and however that manifests itself, is central to feminist movement analyses.

Often we confuse "the movement" as an entity, for "movement organizations" and connections that are "doing the work of the movement" (Ferree and Martin, 1995:3). We have come to expect and to view the feminist/women's movement, as being all things to all women and to become disenchanted and discouraged when it is not. Single mom's agonize that their concerns have not been included; Black women, the poor, disabled and older women, women of colour and Lesbian women express feelings of being marginalized. I have done it myself in other parts of this thesis, and it is true - and yet,

we tend to think of ourselves as part of the movement of feminists²⁴ even if we do not use the term feminist, or prefer “womanist”.²⁵ We may not often categorize it as such anymore, but being a feminist does connect us collectively to other women in a power-filled way. In a social movement, “the actors [sic] adopted collective identity is linked to their understanding of their social situation” (Scott, 1990).

Current scholars have become skeptical of talk of collective identity, “[b]ut the concept of collective identity as it has been defined by scholars of social movements is not essentialist or exclusive or apolitical. Rather, it allows an understanding of feminism as a political identity that is continuously negotiated and revised” (Rupp and Taylor, 1999:365). At the beginning of this twenty-first century no one denies that feminism has become more complex as it has become internationalized. Rupp and Taylor (363) have expressed it this way:

As women’s movements emerged in all parts of the world at different points in time, feminists began to talk to one another across national and regional boundaries. They sometimes used different terms, had different ideas, chose different strategies to fight different goals. How, then, can we make sense of the diversity of feminism historically? Who, indeed, was a feminist?

The term “feminist movement” is also spectral, and individually or group-defined in multifaceted ways. For instance, how does one reconcile historically the existence of both the Nazi and the Socialist-Communist-women’s movements? How do we explain, against all odds, the courageous alliances of the current Jewish and Palestinian feminists as well as the phenomenon of the new christian-feminist movement. Often we feel strangely accountable to the movement of feminists, have passion for it, are inspired by it;

we have even been changed by its paradoxes as it explains our lives and helps to make the personal become political.

The distinction between movement organizations and feminist movement discourse is an important one to note because both are complicated mixtures of goals, ideology of purpose and commitment. Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, (1988: 230) talk about it in these terms:

An organization has structural form, organizational norms and goals, and a membership. It can be small or large, it can tend to homogeneity or heterogeneity, it can be focused on personal or political goals or both. However, it is constructed, an organization is identified by a structure, membership, politics, norms, and goals... A movement, on the other hand, has an amorphous or fluid organizational quality; episodically, a more stable form might emerge. What holds a movement together is more ideological in nature than what is necessary to sustain an organization. So the women's movement, which has no formal organization per se, is held together by a commitment to women's liberation.

In a search to understand social movements, I spent some time reading the scholarly literature in sociology. The approach to social movement theory in sociology was dominated by the resource mobilization paradigm associated with the work of John McCarthy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. According to Ryan (1992: 3) "a resource mobilization framework focuses on the ways a movement creates interest and support for its goals ... particularly how people get together and what they do. Before resource mobilization, the functionalist perspective focused on the consequences of peasant and labour movements for nation-states."²⁶

By mid -1990s a synthetic perspective emerged which was based on a collective and collaborative synthesis of European and North American sociological traditions.

Five factors were combined to engage and to analyze the development of social movements. Based primarily on the various works of Doug McAdam and John McCarthy, five sets of factors were recognized in social movements. First of all, the primary factor was mobilizing structures and processes, which basically incorporates the theory of resource mobilization. The second factor, the structuring of political opportunity, derives from political science. The third factor was the process of framing, which is more associated with a social construction framework. The fourth factor was a combination of collective identity and resource mobilization, which seems to have been adopted from various feminist analyses of the women's movement, in what is now being termed the "new women's movements" (Taylor and Whittier, 1993; Ferree and Martin, 1995; Somerville, 1997 Rupp and Taylor, 1999; and Fitzgerald and Rodgers, 2000). The fifth aspect was the use of tactics and strategy. I will not give long explanations of these various theoretic stands of social movements theory because I did not find them particularly useful. As the following discussion illustrates, they are riddled with patricentric assumptions. I think it is more useful for the purpose of my study to explore what feminists have to contribute.

Feminists bring their own combinations and applications of multi-disciplinary theories to their work on the feminist movement. There seems to be reluctance for feminists to embrace fully the theories of resource mobilizations (especially radical feminists). Traditional research in social movements and resource mobilization theories is problematic in its use of the generic "he," and its measurement of movement success in

terms of mass movement, membership, and adaptability to the existing system (that is, the movement's ability to reform, dislodge or accept new minorities as members into the status quo). As feminist critics Fitzgerald and Rogers (2000: 576) point out:

One measure of a movement's institution was whether or not it had 'been accorded a recognized position within the larger society.' The radical organizations ... tend to make revolutionary demands rather than simple requests for reform of, and incorporation into, the existing system.

Although radical social movements share some of the same characteristics as reform movements, such as lesser emphases on large numbers of membership and an increase in mass actions, it is the ideology of anti-capitalistic, anti-racist, anti-homophobic components that mark a difference. Radical social movements can appear to be single-issued, but in feminist radical movements, the complexities of what is being incorporated into ideologies are multi-leveled and consequential. Fitzgerald and Rodgers, (2000) imply that it is the lack of resources for feminist movements generally that make it ineffectual to gauge success in resource mobilization terms. Participation by feminists in movement action works both despite and because of lack of resources; more moderate or reform feminist organizations "may accept funding from sources that restrict their political range, while RSMOs [Radical Social Movement Organizations] consciously avoid this restriction. Therefore, a definition of success for RSMOs need not include an apologia for lack of resources"(Fitzgerald and Rodgers, 2000:575). Moreover, having or not having resources is only part of what makes up the Women's Liberation Movement.

Overall the movement seems to fit on a continuum of radical deconstructionist to extreme conservative-christian. One of the hard lessons from the 1980s and earlier was that

just mobilizing women was not enough. Ryan (1992: 156) proposes that “social movements must also mobilize sustaining ideas. And while a shared goal may bring people together, an essential part of the mobilization process is a unifying ideology that keeps them together.”

The Canadian Voice of Women, an organization that will be discussed in following chapters, is just one example of a movement of women that has been sustained over time by its ideology, and not by the kinds of resources that resource mobilization theories would deem necessary for success. In order to move beyond identified goals and ideals into the building of a sustainable movement sometimes the ideals behind the goals get lost. Ryan (1992: 157) recognizes this process: “[W]ithin the theoretical framework of resource mobilization, it appears that a multi-group movement [such as the women’s movement] supports the activation of large numbers of people but, in so doing, runs the risk of displacing ideological commitment.”

Has the women’s movement been able to maintain its original ideology and goals of freedom for all women? “At a deeper level,” says Ryan (1992: 157) “it [the process] suggests the importance of ideological dialogue between groups supporting the same goal. Had the groups interacted on an ideological level, they might have reached some agreement on the dual need for women’s equality and a changed social structure.” According to Mansbridge (1995:29) those movement ideologies and goals, as well as feminist identities:

are created and reinforced when feminists get together, act together, and read what other feminists have written. Talking and acting creates street theory and gives it meaning. Reading keeps one in touch and continues to make one think. Both experiences, of personal transformation and continuing interaction, make feminists ‘internally accountable’ to the feminist movement.

Wine and Ristock (1991:3) point out that the feminist movement in Canada is represented by:

feminist activism in communities in every Canadian province and in national organizations, activism that reflects the diverse class, ethnic and linguistic identities and concerns of Canadian women, and the diverse geographic and demographic characteristics of their communities, as well as the uniquely Canadian political climate.

The advent of what is being designated the “new social movements” is said to have originated with the student movement of the mid-1960s in the United States (at Berkeley), although, this version of history sounds rather U.S.-centric. These new movements according to Handler (1992) apparently spread into Europe from Paris and Berlin, where it marked a broader precipitation of social protests such as: peace, anti-Vietnam involvement, anti-nuclear and environmental issues, and manifested itself in all advanced industrial democracies. As Handler (1992: 710) points out, New Social movements:

emphasize solidarity and the common struggle. At the same time, they are infused with the values of postmodern politics – anti-foundationalism, anti-materialism, anti-bureaucracy, and anti-statism. reject bourgeois hegemony. They emphasize grass-roots democracy, experimentation, and social change at the local level.

These social movements are also considered “new” because they are not so explicitly based on labour movements and peasant movements as the only source of transformative change. The theory of what is distinctive about them, explains Taylor (1995: 225-226), “is their emphasis on consciousness, self-actualization, and the expression of subjective feelings, desires, and experiences – and new collective identities

– as a strategy of political change.” Whether the “new” social movements are either new, or how effective they are as agents of transformative change, is another question. Their characterization sounds suspiciously like some basic feminist principles, without the feminist consciousness. “These movements,” says Handler (1992: 711) “advocate a new form of citizen politics based on direct action, participatory decision making, decentralized structures ... advocate greater attention to the culture and quality-of-life issues rather than material well-being.” Although the humanistic component here is considered new, it also tends not to have a vision (or at least has a limited one) of how to proceed or how to accomplish that which they have not envisioned. On the other hand, a transformative vision associated with a Radical-feminist movement tends to have deeper and more far-reaching aspirations that encompass and engage people in societies on all levels.

When social scientists write about movements in a context of “cycles of protest” language and more generally think about movements, they tend to focus on the precipice or upward crest of the cycle, the high-energy active phase, rather than the in-between “doldrums” stage (Rupp and Taylor, 1987). As Bashevkin, 1998: 3) explains, “It is not surprising that they tend to focus on the heights – the energetic periods when soaring involvement stimulates fresh ideas and new claims for public awareness and response. Far less research examines the valleys, the periods after movements establish themselves, when progress may be slower and opposition greater than during earlier times.”

Feminist theorists also write about the beginning of the “new women’s movement” as divided into two strands, one being the origin of the movement emerging from pre-existing organizations and institutions, and the other coming from the New Left and civil rights movements. The former was formed by a few older professional women already established in bureaucratic or women’s social organizations with a slant towards a reform focused, liberal ideology and the latter was small collective groups and organizations with a radical dogma (Taylor and Whittier, 1993).

The view that there were really two factions or strands of the “second wave” movement that paralleled each other in the earlier days of the movement bears out in Canada. For example, Canadian scholars such as Wine and Ristock (1991:4-5) make a convincing point that it is both the national umbrella organizations coalitions²⁷ such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women²⁸ (NAC) - which represents the interests of diverse and widely dispersed women’s groups – as well as the many small face to face groups of feminists, particularly radical feminists who operate on an egalitarian-collective model which most fully reflect the Canadian feminist process.²⁹ It is still pertinent to feminist ideology, theory and practice to examine further the concept of two, or multiple, strands of development within the women’s movement. It could also be argued that the two branches quickly divided into three with the radical faction, very early on, separating into radical and socialists elements or, in fact, growing from alternative sources.

The most simplistic dichotomous theory of how feminists strategized for change, either radical or reform, seemed to hinge on specificity, whether women were different or the same as men and thereby deserving of equal treatment. If women were really the same as men and were just excluded from acquiring the same societal privileges, it led to a “liberalist” agenda of equity, reforming the system without challenging what it was based on. Lengermann and Niebrugge (1996) write that liberal feminism, “is consistent with the dominant American ethos in its basic acceptance of America’s institutions and culture, its reformist orientation, and its appeal to the values of individualism, choice, freedom, and equality of opportunity.” Or, if women and men were basically different and socially defined (different but equal theory) and women’s social characteristics were less valued than men’s, it necessarily led to a radical approach and deconstruction of the system of patriarchy. It was argued that how one thought about specificity determined to what faction or branch of the movement they gravitated and, therefore, in what strategy you engaged. Women’s social history researcher, Lynne Teather (1976) is one such researcher who examines differential notions of women’s rights and women’s liberation and finds herstorical consequences. Teather (1976: 315-6) explains:

The aim of Women’s Rights groups is to achieve *equality* by working through the existing social system. Whereas Women’s Liberation grew out of New Left politics, and Feminism from different sources, the Women’s Rights groups originated from traditional and social organizations earlier represented by suffragists: i.e., business and professional bodies, service and church organizations and government.

On the other hand, research on the women’s movement in Canada by Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988) failed to find a relationship between ideology and strategy.

In Canada the lines between radical and reform were not as clearly drawn as they seemed to be elsewhere, partly due to the Canadian feminist movement's early and complex relationship to the government. Canadian feminists have had, in the past, an unique association with the various levels of government - creating and maintaining a precarious balance of both autonomy and reliance. Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988: 86) actually argue for a closer alliance with government:

In maintaining a critical distance from the government and the legitimated processes of change, feminism does more than just isolate itself; it actually disempowers and demobilizes women. By presenting the state as a monolith of patriarchal power rather than as a structure vulnerable to pressure, and by making only criticisms of the state rather than viable suggestions for change, feminism robs women of any belief that social change can take place and that what they do could make a difference.

In effect, many Canadian feminist scholars and activists have tended to reject simplistic either/or approaches to the state and have developed broader conceptions of the political. For example, Vickers, Rankin and Appelle (1993: 67) argue for a *double vision* to maintain that balance:

From a women-centered perspective, it is essential to maintain a capacity for double vision that views politics within movement for change and within the official politics of the state as equally important.... [This] approach assumes that understanding the politics within movements for change and their organizations, such as NAC, has intrinsic value and is central to comprehending fully the meaning of a movement's expressed demands.

Adamson, Briskin and McPhail argue in their 1988 book that a combination of disengagement and mainstreaming in government-women's movement relations can be maintained without being consumed by the mainstream. It may be, however, that feminist influence may have been more viable in the zeitgeist of the early "second wave,"

when feminists had more clout through the National Action Committee of Women and strong feminist allies in various levels of government. However, the atmosphere of the 1990s and the new millennium, following the decades of the Reagan, Thatcher, and Mulroney policies of less government and less intervention, as well as the Chretien Liberal Government's debilitating cutbacks, has made feminist persuasion of the government more difficult. In the 1970s, and the 1980s, the various levels of government could be shamed into doing the right thing by women's activism more easily.³⁰

Protest Cycles and Culture Communities

Women's conceptions of the political did not restrict itself to political opportunities within state structures alone, as suggested in the synthetic perspective of social movement theory. Suzanne Staggenborg (1998) contends that it was the "culture and community" of protest cycle that attracted so many women to the women's movement. She saw the community as providing the tactical strategies that allowed the opportunities for new movements to flourish. Although Wine and Ristock (1991:3-4) have argued that it was also the atmosphere of "the radical activism that permeated North America in the sixties [which] provided a climate for the development of feminist concerns." It is interesting that the Canadian Voice of Women, whose range of activities I will further develop in the following chapter, predated and was at the forefront of a lot of the secular activism of the sixties.

Staggenborg (1998, n2: 181) also differentiates a multi-organizational field from a social movement community, in that an organizational field is a collection of organizations whereas a movement community includes individuals and cultural groups who are not necessarily organization-focused. The women's movement community is fluid. In addition, the "waves" of the women's movement do not have clear beginnings and endings, and culture communities overlap within both the women's community and social movement community.

While organizations are important in analyzing the women's movement as a social movement, Staggenborg (1998: 181) argues that "if we treat social movements simply as collections of SMOs [Social Movement Organizations], we miss some of the less visible ways in which movements emerge and survive" within a cycle of protest. We also do not see how movements are maintained in a period of less mobilization. Staggenborg (1998: 182) suggests that studying movements during the downward phase may be an appropriate means to analyzing local, national and international movement communities as well. In fact, Rupp and Taylor's (1987) monumental work "Survivals in the Doldrums" explored the role Lesbians have played in preserving women's rights movements in the descending phases of protest cycles.

Lesbian Abeyance and Community Development

A social movement theory such as Staggenborg's becomes important when theorizing Lesbian-feminism within the concept of communities, and enables us to speak

of Lesbians in terms of communal or cluster groups that make it possible to understand some of the inherent difficulties of maintaining visibility and categorization within the women's movement.

Staggenborg (1998: 184) indicates that:

At times communal groups within SMCs [Social Movement Communities] may focus primarily on their own internal communities rather than on the larger movement community. For example, lesbian feminists may for a time be completely absorbed with the development of lesbian groups and networks rather than the larger feminist movement community. Communitarian groups, such as the members of a local ethnic community, who become part of a movement community ... may return to participation in their original community rather than the movement community once a crisis ends or political opportunities fade.

An interesting observation here is how this process becomes part of the paradox of Lesbian lives, in that when Lesbians concentrate on creating a culture for themselves, they are immediately criticized with the label "Cultural Feminists" and reproached for becoming depoliticalized. And yet, some Lesbians I've spoken with over the past few years perceive that other cultural communities do not as quickly face the same kinds of stigma.

As Wine and Ristock (1991: 13) have accurately observed of the Canadian feminist movement:

[T]hough lesbians have been very active in the movement since its inception the statements and actions of the organized movement have, for the most part, been oddly silent regarding lesbian experience and oppression. It's likely that the close relationship between the movement and the state in Canada has helped to insure this silence in order to avoid jeopardizing other movement goals and programs.

To cite an instance, in a public meeting about funding for women's causes in Nova Scotia, Lesbians were once again being used as a lavender herring against the government's socially irresponsible cut-backs. One study participant who was at that meeting eloquently expressed the following astute observation of the complexities around the issues of visibility and silencing of Lesbians in feminist groups and organizations, "[M]ost women's groups were under attack for being lesbian anyway.... Some of the straight women were saying ... what if we were [Lesbian]? Others [would] say, oh no, no, no, there's nobody like that around here. It's a two-sided coin. In fact, it was one of the nicer ones who said that publicly." The dynamics of Lesbophobia in this instance are both subtle and overt. They serve to illustrate the contention that some tenets of feminist theory and praxis break down at the juncture of public visibility of Lesbians.

Chapter III

Radical Women and Feminist Radicals: The Voice of Women

You, in your consciousness, I, in mine, need to be clear on how we feel about such actions and whose side we are on. And the best way, maybe the only way to be clear, is to be a part of the action holding on to our vision.

Muriel Duckworth³¹

The Voice of Women (VOW) evolved from a tradition of women's involvement in international pacifist and peace movements. Although little is known about Canadian women's involvement prior to the late nineteenth century (Roberts, 1987), British and European women became active in international peace as early as the 1820's. The first all-women's peace group was founded in 1868 for all the same reasons women in VOW find it necessary to have separate groups today - males dominated the movements, and women's and men's values and goals rarely harmonized, even in peace movements. Women participated in the first international peace congress in Brussels in 1848, and by 1852 both British and United States women began publishing the first international women's peace paper, Sisterly Voices. Julia Ward Howe worked to organize the peace movement in the United States after the American civil war (Roberts, 1987: 15).³²

In Canada, in the 1890s several committees for peace were formally organized. "The Women's Christian Temperance Union ... [and the National Council of Women in Canada] had Peace and Arbitration Departments in many local branches which organized educational and religious activities to promote peace.... Most women's organizations, feminist or not, assumed that women naturally supported peace because women's roles as

mothers made women nurturers and preservers of life” (Roberts, 1987: 15). These are important concepts to remember because there is a direct connection to how, at least in part, and right or wrong, the women’s peace movement is viewed today. Initially, herstorical women figures such as Nellie McClung and Flora MacDonald Denison protested WWI, but eventually they succumbed to the pressure to support Canada’s war effort. To abandon the peace movement in the time of war was a contradictory move for some early feminists.

There were small numbers of Canadian women in public life who registered their objections to the world of wars. These women linked with other women who held similar views in other countries and could be considered another example of what I would call a radical-time-link. This type of link made between women on both sides of any man-made conflict is important to take note of as well for two reasons. Firstly, it is a courageous and radical stance for women to take in the face of cultural pressures. Secondly, its network form resembles how some women connect globally across current feminist movements. Peace-making is also an example of how women can act radically without necessarily acting from a conscious radical-feminist theoretical base.

Members of both the international mixed-gender peace movement and the international women’s movement numbered in the millions before the outbreak of the first-world war, only to dissipate in numbers during a war that involved their own government’s actions. The International Women’s Suffrage Association itself had eleven million members in 1911. Governments on both sides of the conflict had suppressed any

pacifist movements. Nonetheless, American social-reformist Jane Addams managed to organize the very first women's peace conference in The Hague in April of 1915.

Governments also did not prevent courageous women, like Canada's Marion Beynon and Laura Hughes, from being vocal about their insight that war is based on economics.

Williamson and Gorham (1989:31) write; "War profiteers [on both sides of any given conflict] who had something to gain from the war were the real enemies of the ordinary people who were the victims of war."

During the second-world war women were speaking out, not so much as protesters of the war, but protesting the suspension of civil liberties in the time of war. There was a small handful of radical women in Canada that continued their pacifist approach to opposing the war itself.³³ However, most women's groups, as in the first world war, deferred their actions for peace to the war effort and supported once again "our boys over there." Working for peace during war is a radical and courageous commitment; a fundamental strategy of VOW has become the practice of women's contact with other women on all sides of a conflict. To forge ties with women across male-made political boundaries has helped to "lay the basis for the flood of women into the peace movement [of the 1980s] ... [T]heir efforts provide an example for today's feminist pacifists attempting to avoid the Final War" (Williamson and Gorham, 1989).³⁴

The Voice of Women held its founding meeting in July 1960.³⁵ The title, "Voice of Women," was adopted by founding member Helen Tucker from the name of an African Magazine (Macpherson, 1989:90). The Canadian VOW itself was established

amidst a backdrop of international crisis. The threat of a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States seemed eminent after Gary Powers, a pilot from the United States, flying “a high altitude U2 spy plane, was shot down over the Soviet Union. At that very moment Krushchev was in Paris participating in a Summit Conference of the four big powers. In a fury, Krushchev immediately broke off negotiations, proclaiming publicly, ‘we won’t stand for this!’ Newspapers headlined the threat of war.” (Kerans, 1996:88).

Journalist Lotta Dempsey “sparked” the Voice of Women when she wrote a piece for the *Toronto Star*, stating that men had messed up when the “Paris Summit” failed and suggested women could do better, if they could get together. She asked, “What can women do?” Thousands of women from across the country responded in an overwhelming way. Marion Kerans explains, “A group in Toronto, led by Helen Tucker and Josephine Davis, began to organize a women’s peace movement and to make contact with women across the country who felt the same sense of urgency.” After several planning sessions, and a mass meeting at Massey Hall in Toronto, The Voice of Women / la Voix des femmes, was formed. By the summer of 1961 there were chapters of “Voices”, not only provincially, but internationally in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria and Jamaica. There were also important contacts made with other women’s peace groups in other countries.

The Nova Scotia Voice – “Anything worth doing is worth doing badly”³⁶

On November 23, 1960, twenty-three women gathered at the home of Muriel Duckworth, and the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Voice of Women was founded. Marion Kerans (1996: 90) documents the experience, “These women had wide community contacts whom they resolved to reach as they talked with growing apprehension about the prospect of war. Some were so alarmed they were in tears.” The Nova Scotia, Voice of Women has a herstory of non-violent activism for peace and disarmament. It has always been at the forefront of the national VOW Movement in Canada since its inception. At the provincial level VOW chapters are mostly autonomous. In fact, Nova Scotia Voice of Women held its inaugural protest (which was the first of its kind in Canada) against an American company intent on dumping nuclear wastes only two hundred kilometers off the coast of Yarmouth. As Kerans (1996: 91) comments on the effectiveness of their strategy, “The publicity generated by the meeting did contribute to the federal government putting an end to the dumping.”

This initial action by VOW set an important precedent for Nova Scotia peace activism of being well-prepared and of contributing the additional component of public education to all demonstrations. Within a few short months of that first meeting in Muriel’s living-room, Nova Scotia VOW had fifty active members. It established two vital committees, dealing with human rights and political study/action. The political study/action committee developed an analytic and action strategy which was to become a model for how the Nova Scotia women’s peace movement approached peace-making in

subsequent decades, that is, connecting various forms of oppression, human rights and violence, and using vigils as a strategy. These were women who never thought of themselves as extraordinary or radical but women who were committed to preserving a healthy, nuclear-free environment for their families. Holding silent “Vigils” for peace has become a powerful statement for VOW over the years. In the ultra-conservative times of the 1950s and immediately following, before protests became common Nova Scotia, women were instigating ground-breaking actions. Muriel Duckworth in her biography (Kerans, 1996:89) describes the courage and commitment it took for those early members of the Nova Scotia Voice to challenge authority by initiating their first silent vigil. Women were “quaking in their boots; they timidly walked back and forth in front of the memorial during an hour of silent meditation, carrying a poster that said ‘Vigil for Peace’.”

Actions during the 1980s were wide-ranging from the sixties style “sit-ins” to education, lobbying governments and presenting briefs. It was during this period that women gathered together creating feminist theory, trying to make sense of what was happening in the world. A great number of evenings and weekends were devoted to analyzing the connections between women’s personal/private lives and the socialized justification for making war. As well as kitchen-table theorizing, whole conferences and retreats were devoted to creating feminist theory around issues of violence and war. Elaborate charts were created and civil actions were strategized.³⁷

During that decade VOW grew, drawing many other feminist groups into itself and expanding its numbers around the Maritimes. The fear of “Reaganomics” and the insanity of Reagan’s “Star Wars” (Strategic Defense Initiative) ambition, as the high-tech answer to Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), brought women to peace groups from all over Nova Scotia, the Maritimes and the country. The early to mid-Eighties were overshadowed by the specter of what we feared could be imminent nuclear warfare because of the escalation of the arms race.

In an attempt to win wide spread support for a new phase of militarization, the United States government targeted Nova Scotia culture (which in Halifax, historically, was already a military one); the Pentagon in the United States began to promulgate its Defense Guidance Plans. The mentality of “Star Wars” and MAD had as its premise a possibility of winning a nuclear war. To that effect, the Pentagon sent officials across Canada with the mind to teach Canadian business “men” how to procure defence contracts within the United State’s war machinery.

Women were caught in a drama of protest and non-violent civil disobedience. This atmosphere of intensity was one in which some of us lived on a daily basis in the early eighties. In Nova Scotia women from diverse backgrounds came together, training in non-violent methods of resistance and learning how to accomplish direct action with the least amount of personal harm. Protesting the American Pentagon’s presence in Nova Scotia and Canada became a main concern of VOW. Some protesters were arrested in one of the largest, coordinated operations, in a series of actions from beginning of 1983

through to the end of 1985 in Nova Scotia.³⁸ During those few years, women participated in numerous protests; phones were tapped, and some of us were made to choose between our involvement and our employment. These were heady times for some of us, coming from the 70s Radical women's movement into the excitement of innovative street theatre and demonstrations for the peace movement.

Most of the Nova Scotia Voice of Women was, and continues to be, made up of middle-class white women, professionals and students (although some of us have either moved on to other concerns or are retired now). It is also true that the Voice of Women, from the beginning, was an unusual mixture, from ultra conservative to radically acting women. In the mid-eighties the base broadened in the Halifax metro area and to regions throughout the province. During this period, the Voice of Women was structured into a series of cell groups, called *affinity groups* - which initiated individual actions and were supported by other affinity groups. Groups often came together for mutual demonstrations and to participate in ongoing agitation against the normalization of the military presence in Nova Scotia. In the early days of the "second wave" women's movement of the 60s 70s and 80s, feminists in the Voice of Women - who were connected to that beginning, also examined and constructed theories about the basis of women's oppression.

The Endurance of an Ideal

It would be remiss of me not to include a considerable tribute to Muriel Duckworth in this section. Even though she would vehemently deny it, Muriel is the uncontested Matriarch of the Nova Scotia Women's Peace Movement. She is also our radical time-link in Nova Scotia. Duckworth's life reads like the "who's who" and the "who's done what" in Canadian herstory and society. She is known and respected by Prime Ministers through to radical Black leaders such as Rocky Jones, who has expressed to me many times his considerable admiration for Muriel. She has accomplished and packed a great deal into her living, and much of what she has realized – some of her greatest social achievements - have come to her in later life. She increased her political and peace activism at a time in life when older women are more often than not characterized as non-visible and desexualized, by a society that has become customarily pro-scripted for youth. Kay Macpherson (1994: 92) expresses it much more succinctly: "what is so remarkable about Muriel is that, besides being kind, non-violent, a perfect grandmother, she is also a dangerous subversive with world-shaking ideas and ideals." Her wisdom that she graciously shares with us, while denying that it is so, guides us in the Nova Scotia women's movement. It is comforting and reassuring to know that Muriel loves us all while teaching us to be subversive.³⁹

The importance of the Nova Scotia Voice, throughout its years of political focus and change, has been its consistency and its willingness to take on most issues. Wars in

Nicaragua, the Gulf and Kosovo all became VOW concerns. So did protesting rape in war with the Women in Black in Serbia, opposing low flying military jets in Labrador, and protesting Canada's allowing of the testing of Cruise missiles by the United States Air Force. A core group of women have continued to remain active when most of us had moved on once the threat of nuclear build-up dissipated (or so we thought). While we concentrated more on attempts to create a feminist culture, lessons from the Voice of Women's culture of peace continued to reverberate. Despite its radicalism, Nova Scotia VOW is a highly respected "voice" in most circles from the most radical to the most conservative. The Voice of Women, as a peace organization, has managed to survive the decade of the 1990s, as the Soviet Union collapsed and feminist politics underwent major changes.

The Voice of Women continues to be on top of current struggles in the world, keeping informed of the latest threats to the well being of the planet, with active representation in other organizations. VOW also commits to local actions such as supporting residents affected by environmental damage at the Sydney tar ponds, through vigils at Province House, the public library and through workshops at places such as Saint Mary's University. On a local, national and international level, VOW works with various groups and organizations. The Voice of Women has long associations with groups and organizations such as: Women's Action Coalition; Movement for Citizens' Voice and Action (MOVE); the Canadian Commission for UNESCO; Canadian Peace Alliance; Canadian Peace Building Coordinating Committee (CPBCC); International Peace

Bureau; Project Ploughshares; National Action Committee on the Status of Women; the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) in Nova Scotia as well as nationally, and the United Nations Committee on Disarmament.

The Voice of Women is committed to conscious non-violent actions in response to state violence. Theoretically, most of VOW's members would make a patriarchal-based connection of war to the violence of poverty, rape, pornography, homophobia, racism, ageism, ableism, anti-Semitism, and the degradation of individuals suffering from physical, mental, sexual and emotional violence from individual men and the male dominated system of oppression. This connection, however, seems to have made more of an impact on feminism in the 1970s and 1980s than it appears to now in the year 2002. At the national level during the Annual Meeting Conference, for example, I perceived a non-bridging of feminist theory and praxis. Although there were many women with a solid feminist perspective and analysis, I think VOW has lost the *focus and theory building* somewhere along the way.

Many women in the Nova Scotia chapter of VOW, currently seem more likely to incorporate a "womanist" approach than a feminist approach into its strategies of action. Indeed, over the years, with the exception of perhaps the 1970s and 1980s, VOW Nova Scotia has consistently maintained an analysis of peace based on a modern version of maternalist politics. This lack of connection to integrative feminist politics and theory building was evident in the vigils VOW held in protest of the Kosovo war.⁴⁰ It was not until the last vigil of the weekly protests that someone publicly made the link between

spousal abuse and the tactics of war. In a world, which visibly rewards male aggression and violence, feminist non-violence as a strategy for change also challenges human behaviour, which has been enshrined in the state by the police and military. Feminists cannot afford *not* to make these connections, and there is a need to incorporate them into the philosophy for action, focused on “[T]he most blatant and visibly destructive form of violence: war. War epitomizes the violence in our society today, reflecting the institutions which are themselves the products of certain basic principles and assumptions” (Feminism and Non-Violent Study Group, 1983: 8).

My re-involvement with VOW was due to the Canadian involvement in the war in Kosovo. However, my expectations of becoming active in the women’s peace movement again were very much determined by the memories of my activism of the 1980s and Muriel Duckworth’s influence.⁴¹ In early October 1999, I was asked to represent the Nova Scotia Voice on the National Board of Directors to attend the National VOW General Meeting in Toronto. I was reluctant to become any more involved than I had been. However, I know of very few women who can say no to Muriel Duckworth.

The National Voice was undergoing a process of restructuring with the stated goal of analyzing and changing VOW’s national structure and process in order to carry out its work more effectively.⁴² I saw my role, at least at that point, as stressing the need to solidify again a feminist philosophy and analysis. There was support for this from some of the members, but it did not seem to be a priority. My argument was that feminist principles needed to be incorporated at the beginning of the process as part of the

restructuring. As stated earlier, my decision to join the Nova Scotia Voice was partially based on my past involvement, and I slowly recognized my expectations of VOW were unreasonably built on those earlier experiences. I began to understand this when I helped to coordinate a Voice of Women Day of Renewal, which was meant to celebrate the anniversary of a particular action "Debunk Debert" in 1984.⁴³ My disappointment was not so much with the current VOW structure, but in mistaking my nostalgia for the reality. The strategies that we used in the 1980s were appropriate and effective for that time.⁴⁴ However, as important as it was to document this experience, it was with an effort that I pulled myself out of the past in order to concentrate on what strategies were needed in the here and now.

The women involved in this organization are strong, and they have an unwavering commitment to building a "culture of peace". Feminism and focus on the women's perspective need to be constantly re-affirmed. Unfortunately, VOW lacks sufficient numbers, power and strategy for effecting the concrete changes we desire to be effective in the Canadian and Global system.

Some of the more obvious methods or strategies for social and political change need to move beyond non-violent resistance, and resistance to the military mentality, to a fuller analysis of patriarchy. Non-violent resistance is strategically viable, although we are in a privileged position living in Canada, where it has not been tested beyond demonstrations, where people at worst are pepper-sprayed. As we are caught up in the business of peace - protesting the business of war - we sometimes forgot the central

premise of taking care of ourselves, and of each other, as a basic feminist strategy. What made the movement powerful in the 80s, I believe, were the elements of strength gleaned from a women only support base, consciousness-raising and an approach to activism that continually created theory by making “universal” connections. Our strategy and effectiveness was primarily our connection to, our trust of, and reliance upon each other that built up over time.

The gradual changes in the focus of Voice of Women can be attributed to a number of things such as disarmament agreements, dispersal of affinity groups, burnout, and the need for some women to move into other areas of activism. As we moved into the second half of the decade, affinity groups – women with similar social construction, experience and connectedness - began to dissolve. The diversity of VOW began to narrow. The Nova Scotia Voice of Women, as an organization, became less diverse, and there was less feminist discussion of integrative theory. The continual possibility of burnout without a consistent regenerative plan, beyond a yearly “Day of Renewal,” is problematic. Currently, what remains is a core group from which to precipitate action. It is vital for women to feel as if they are doing something. The main strengths and benefits of being linked with this group was having information and access to information on current issues and international networking. Susan Faludi (1991: 456) in the epilogue of her book, Backlash, recognized the need for women to have a clear agenda, as a social movement, to effect the changes we want:

In the past, women have proven that they can resist in a meaningful way, when they had a clear agenda that is unsanitized and unapologetic, a

mobilized mass that is forceful and public, and a conviction that is uncompromising and relentless. On the rare occasions when these three elements have coalesced in the last two centuries, women have won their battles.

One way to begin to accomplish change, in a manageable way, requires a return to consciousness-raising and a focus on making connection with each other, as well as a grounded approach to challenging the larger questions of military mentality and how it relates to the issues of oppression of women. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on New York and Washington, in which approximately twenty-six hundred people were murdered, and the military response around this horrific event, only serves to emphasize the urgent need for women to form a strong voice and strengthen analytic ties to each other globally, in a focused and comprehensive way. Robin Morgan (1989: 33), in her passionate exploration of modern-terrorism, connects it to patriarchal politics as a “logical incarnation”. Morgan’s insightful work, The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism, could very well have been written as an after rite of the attack on the World Trade Center. Morgan (1989: 44-45) asserts it is not:

[C]oincidental that random murder of average citizens, including those in no way connected to power, emerged as a strategy of insurgent struggle *after* the random murder of average citizens had become a ‘legitimate’ military tactic in conventional warfare ... a new level of desensitization to civilian death on a mass scale was set in motion in the twentieth century, and it isn’t surprising that those already numbed by powerlessness should move with it.

There are times when we need to look at the immediacy of a situation, such as war, human rights and violence against women, and come together in a support of women in a “universal” politic. An inward focus in organization is often criticized as a de-

politicization or turning away from the reality of global feminist politics when the world is in crisis. Whether this is true or not makes for interesting discourse. However, I believe in a micro-macro synthesis of feminist theory, where material production /reproduction is linked with situations that call for an understanding of the nexus of violence that is gendered.

When I joined the women's peace camp at Britain's Greenham Common, in 1987/88, I learned a very important lesson: we essentially need to find different ways of confronting, or going up against, the walls of patriarchy besides direct confrontation. I witnessed some of the reverberations of the personal cost to women who had been beaten up and "zapped" with the emissions of military microwave technology.⁴⁵ I saw their deep scars from being repeatedly jailed for engaging in direct action against the military.

The Canadian State has the material power of violence, and our own military/police is no different from any other; we cannot afford the luxury of ignorance. The belief that the military exists for our protection, and the notion that it will not in turn kill its own citizens is inconsistent with the rest of the world's experience of military control. The peace movement is not for the faint of heart. Most of us have found this out, on the domestic front of picket lines, demonstrations and in jail. I do not pretend to have a definitive answer, but I do know that violence rewards violence and non-violent resistance seems to be one part of the solution. This commitment to non-violence is precisely why I keep coming back to The Voice of Women and their women-only and

non-violent resistant philosophy. In personal communication with Muriel Duckworth (2001) she speaks of the *women-only space* of VOW:

When the Voice of Women was founded in 1960, it wasn't thought of as a feminist movement – it was thought of as an anti-war movement. But there has always been an element that questioned 'why only women, and why don't we open it up to the 'voice of humanity'? And there's always been a deep reluctance [within VOW] to do it without an understanding of why we fought the 'humanity' without really looking at that [fully]. And this was ten years before general feminist analysis.

The Voice of Women fulfills for women a need to work in a non-hierarchical and democratic group. It also works as a clearing-house for information, which women might not have access to otherwise, and its greatest strength lies in this networking with women across the globe. There is freedom within the organization to make one's own projects around peace issues which are in turn supported and encouraged by VOW, or you can join any number of "circles" already established that are connected to its philosophy.

Lesbians, Working for Peace and Women-Only Spaces

The committee on human rights in the earlier years of VOW examined race relations between Black and White people of Nova Scotia. Members mounted a telephone campaign to canvas employers in the area to ask about their employment policies with respect to Blacks (Kearns, 1996). The action to support early Black movement initiatives was a very timely manifestation of the "civil rights" movement in Nova Scotia. However, similar support never extended to Lesbian's rights when the Lesbian and gay-rights movement was emerging.

Although there was a beginning recognition of Lesbian and gay rights in Canadian society beginning by the late 1960s, it was to be another two decades before it was even to be mentioned as a human rights issue. Regardless of VOW's commitment to opposing different forms of oppression, there has never been, to my knowledge, a formal or informal incorporation of Lesbian concerns into VOW's mandate. Neither has there been a focused position on attempting to ensure civil, provincial or federal rights for Lesbians or gays.

Despite the lack of sensibility and recognition of Lesbian oppression in the Voice of Women some Lesbians were drawn to organizations such as VOW specifically because they were women-only spaces and felt free to express themselves as Lesbians under relatively congenial circumstances. Lesbians made up a significant portion of the women involved in the Nova Scotia peace movement. Many of the leaders and core supporters were Lesbian. Although most Lesbian members were fairly open and gained support for their lifestyle within the perimeters of the movement, few ventured beyond that context into the public arena. There was a curious relationship between Lesbians and Voice of Women. On the one hand, Lesbians were attempting to develop an identity and felt more or less free to express themselves; on a personal basis, being Lesbian rarely became an issue within the groups. On the other hand, an awkward dynamic emerged that played out in two ways: firstly, around issues of women-only actions which were often erroneously projected onto or attributed to Lesbians; and secondly around the denial of Lesbian oppression being an issue at all, by some Lesbians and non-Lesbians.

Adrienne Rich (1979: 122) speaks of four mechanisms feminists often enlist to disempower themselves that seems to fit within this context. Notable for Lesbians, in terms of self-silencing, are: the dynamics of *self-trivialization*, in which we “always [find] the needs [and issues] of others more demanding than our own” and *misplaced compassion*, where the pain of those oppressing us, whether it be men or heterosexual women, is more important than the pain of our Lesbian sisters. The dynamic that manifests itself in *horizontal hostility* is about the ways we feel embarrassment and contempt for those Lesbians who fit the most extreme stereotypes or who speak out about their own oppression at times and in ways that may be seen as inappropriate. These devices are all means of self-silencing for Lesbians and serve to benefit the larger patriarchal society and the continuation of sexism and heterosexism.

There are long term members, who are also Lesbian, who make no demands on VOW by challenging the inherent heterosexism of the organization. At least part of this silencing is brought about “naturally” by the Voice of Women’s modernized version of maternal-feminist philosophy. One of VOW’s five stated objectives is “to provide a means for women to exercise responsibility for the family of humankind.” One might argue that this fifth objective ties into the fourth mechanism Rich writes of, women’s *addiction* to what she calls “the idea of selfless, sacrificial love ... a way of self-blurring or self-immolation ... the most acceptable way of living out a female existence.” To add to Rich’s list, another mechanism of self-silencing which also adds to their invisibility is

by going along with the mis-belief that Lesbian concerns will be dealt with later when the latest crisis is over.

The women in VOW, both Lesbian and non-Lesbian, have consistently put themselves on the line for peace for forty years and have connected to networks of women from around the world. This allows for the possibility of an integrated feminism that women need, primarily because what they are struggling against is a natural extension of patriarchy in its most overtly pernicious and direct form - the power of the state encompassed in the military.

Chapter IV

Resisting and Re: Sistering: The Thin Lavender Line

It is hard to imagine one's own time as history.⁴⁶
Ursula Franklin

The previous chapter laid out the herstory of the women only organization, the Voice of Women, a group where Lesbians were present but largely invisible. In this chapter I will be looking at the heart of the research question on the relationship between Lesbian and heterosexual women in Nova Scotia. In conjunction with the data collected of individual women's experiences, the findings will also be framed and applied within the context of three groups of communities of women, which I analyse next. These three groups were ideal in bringing together Lesbians and heterosexual women in a social and political atmosphere, which allowed me to glean not only a certain understanding of the dynamics of the 1980s but also an interpretation of what it meant in terms of Lesbian invisibility and visibility. In addition to the Voice of Women - "Wild Women" Don't Get the Blues" (Wild Womyn), "Women's Health Education Network," (WHEN), and *Pandora* (feminist newspaper) - were important entry points for feminist activism in the 1980s by both Lesbians and non-Lesbians.

Because of the relatively small numbers of feminist activists in the Nova Scotia population, it was not unusual to have the same activists involved in numerous groups, and overlap was common. For instance many of the women who were involved in the Voice of Women were also involved in *Pandora*, and other circles of women overlapped

“Wild Womyn” and WHEN. It also proved true what Kay Macpherson said about “every meeting a party and every party a meeting,” as our politics usually merged with our social life and visa versa.

Women’s Health Education Network, A Radical but Respectable Entry Point

Women’s Health Education Network (WHEN) was officially founded in 1979 as an information-sharing network with a specific emphasis on the promotion of Nova Scotia women’s health. As an organization, and for a number of years, WHEN provided an extensive resource center with a large variety of health materials. It kept a quarterly newsletter, *Vitality*, with occasional monthly updates. Each spring WHEN hosted a conference focusing on health concerns and issues that most effect women’s health. There was a very active political component, and WHEN frequently submitted briefs and applied pressure to both federal and provincial government commissions. One of the long-standing strengths of WHEN was their “Well Women’s Clinics” which spanned the province.

WHEN is women helping women to take responsibility for their own health, to make the most of education, information and support systems, and to work with other women in their communities to identify and meet their common needs. WHEN defines health as more than an absence of illness. We support the physical, mental, emotional and environmental health of women through various channels (*Vitality*, 1985:2).

Janet Maybee (*Vitality*, 1990:35) one of the founding mothers of the Women’s Health Education Network, dates the seeds of the organization to around 1975, and

places WHEN into the herstorical context of the United Nation's declaration of "The International Year of the Women" as a convenient starting point. Maybee (1990: 35) writes:

"There was a furry of mini-conferences around the province. Several [Well Women] clinics developed in isolation around the province during the next three years but our attempts to connect them brought no success – so it was difficult for new groups to find out what help was available."

Maybee called together a meeting of representatives of approximately 30 to 40 clinic-sponsoring groups, which expanded to over one hundred once word of the impending conference spread. From that point WHEN as an organization was founded. "The 'Organizing for Change' conference, [in 1979] led to a resolution that a province-wide umbrella group should be formed. We recognized the value of information sharing, but we felt a strong need for a collective voice that could speak with some power to medical and political decision- making (Maybee, 1990:35).

As an organization, WHEN took on similar characteristics and structure of most feminist organizations of the times in Nova Scotia, struggling to define itself and work on a modified collective and egalitarian basis. A fourteen-woman steering committee was formed to create a structure, draft a constitution and negotiate with the government for funding. WHEN received a grant which financed the organization as a three-year project. They were able to hire a staff-person while continuing on with a volunteer Board. By the end of the third year, accomplishments ranged from creating a resource library to an impressive newsletter.⁴⁷ WHEN closed down their office in 1983, for many reasons: funding, women needing to travel long distances for meetings, and a continuity of

purpose, all played a part. However, their spring conferences continued with a much lower attendance. "After this difficult transition year [1983-1984] the 1984-1985 Board had much rebuilding to do.... The newsheet was revived, sources of funding were explored, and the newsletter received a new masthead and a new name, *Vitality*" (Campbell, 1990:35). WHEN spanned the province and sliced through a whole range of social issues that affected women across mainland Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, both rural and urban.

The spring conferences were particularly significant to feminists throughout the province, and an ideal entry point for Lesbians into the feminist community. One of the study's respondents described the experience:

That was also the era of province-wide connection happening through both the Status of Women, and WHEN. I loved the WHEN conferences, which gave us a chance, once a year, to sort of see everybody and what everybody is doing all over the province. Health wasn't particularly my issue, but those conferences interpreted health in a very, very positive sense, so that was definitely a place to go and plug in. Women who were exploring spirituality and the transition house stuff, health, employment and all those streams plugged in through that conference.

As an entry point for Lesbians who were not involved in the workings of the Board, WHEN tended to be responsive and accepting of their Lesbianism on a social and individual basis. One woman reminisced:

When I think of being at a Woman's Health Education Network conference, I started doing more health issue conference workshops, [then] mov[ed] into doing more Lesbian [focused issues] and being way more "out." It did change how you were perceived though. If you had the privilege of making that choice for yourself, then you could live in a quite powerful place for a while. So, okay, you came out [at the conference] and people saw you as a Lesbian, [then] you had the secure group of support of other Lesbians – or the support

of heterosexual women, [but] mostly Lesbians, partly [because] of shared experience but then you had a peripheral support group of heterosexuals - and then, you had everybody else.

Lesbians enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom within the context of the conferences and held leadership roles within the membership and the Board.

Predominately a heterosexual focused and operated organization, there was also a certain amount of tension between Lesbian and non-Lesbian factions, particularly towards the end of WHEN's life span. Most women, however, were reluctant to explore these issues with me in the interviews and avoided going into depth around the concerns involved.

Only one woman with whom I spoke talked freely of the tensions between Lesbian and non-Lesbian women, albeit in somewhat agitated terms. She offered some invaluable insights into the fact that there were contentions around the fading out of the organization. As she noted, it was the result of Lesbians pushing for and demanding that Lesbian issues become "central to the process and the focus of WHEN," which created the irreparable damage and burnout over "their issues and their need to process everything."

One Lesbian stated the need for women to educate themselves about issues of oppressed groups:

There was that whole thing, remember? About, heterosexuals [being] responsible for their own education on Lesbianism. We're not really [there to be] a support for them in their process. We're not really responsible for educating them. Sometimes you just don't want to be in the role of educator, people are responsible for getting their own education, somehow.

There seemed to be unresolved issues at the Board level that women were unable or unwilling to discuss or disclose. More interviews with other Board members and perhaps some more critical distance may be required in order to extract the real dynamics of the process of Lesbian-heterosexual relationships in WHEN. It would have been helpful to this project had I found a way to explore further the intricacies of that relationship.

Having said that, most of the research participants, both Lesbian and straight women, had very positive and fond memories of working in WHEN - especially the spring conferences. This view of mixed conferences appears to tell us something entirely different, in that it was also a safe space for women who were primarily heterosexual to explore their sexuality in different terms.⁴⁸ The data suggests Lesbians were accepted and supported on a personal basis within the organization as long as they remained semi-invisible and did not push to have their status recognized as an integral and public function of that particular organization.

Wild Womyn Don't Get the Blues: A Space of Safety for Lesbians

In the wake of women's music festivals around the country (and in the U.S.), Wild Womyn Don't Get the Blues (Wild Womyn) became for Nova Scotia women an important event, and a celebration for Lesbians and for a considerable number of heterosexual women. Wild Womyn was a long-weekend camping festival that was held yearly; it began in 1982 in an undisclosed (at least to the public) beautiful country hide-away and lasted until 1993.

The first womyn's festival was organized by Rose and Heather John Turner, with Lesbian-feminist activists Megan Ardyke, Brenda Bryant with the assistance of a few other women when plans for the project became known. One hundred-sixty women came from different points of Nova Scotia and the rest of the Maritimes; they came to camp and enjoy each other in a women only, *Lesbian-focused space*. The festival, says one research participant, "had an image that went with it. The kind of event, that for some people, ... didn't become a big music festival, it stayed just a safe, fun, relaxed, low-key[ed] Lesbian camping event. You know, with a bit of entertainment and a little dance, and workshops."

Another woman remembers:

It was pretty high times, I mean in 1982, "Wild Womyn Don't Get the Blues," we had 160 women at the first one, well we never topped that again, you know, that was pretty cool. It was not about people that were "out" [and] it was not necessarily about people who were feminist or political.

One participant speaks to the significance of "Wild Womyn" for the women's community; it became her doorway to the Lesbian feminist community:

"Wild Womyn Don't Get the Blues" was really my first introduction to the feminist Lesbian Community in Nova Scotia. Although I was working on a farm owned by a Lesbian, and there was a group of us farming that summer of 1982, there were more Lesbians from Europe and other places, so really I got plugged into the community and that was kind of the beginning [for me].

Women also found the event comfortable to be at. In the words of one Lesbian respondent, "It was made up of people you knew. That was my vision really, other people have had visions of it being something else. For the Lesbians who had been there,

there was that picture. That was pretty powerful times and we certainly, annually, got around 100, depending on the year.”

Wild Womyn was open to any female who wanted to attend, from Lesbian to heterosexual; the organizers worked towards that end, even in the planning stages. One of the organizers talked about how important it was for them, that all women felt safe and welcomed:

It went until 1993 ... [and] became throughout the 80s, really important for me. Creating space where Lesbians – and not only Lesbians – I was a pretty big proponent of, you know, any woman attending. It was very clear that we were a Lesbian sponsored event, but any woman could come. I really felt strongly about making room for women who weren't self-identifying Lesbians, [also] if you weren't in the feminist circle you probably weren't a Lesbian, you were probably gay, or a dyke or a bull-dagger, or closeted.... So, that meant that women who were straight or were closeted could come as well, because it offered some women space [to be who they were].

During the first couple of years the festival was overshadowed by fears around confidentiality and physical-safety issues. Because it was primarily a Lesbian event, the organizers felt the need to create a space that protected women's anonymity:

The first year we did, the first maybe two years, we did it, women signed a form ... or maybe when you just signed that you were coming, what you were really signing was for confidentiality, that your name wouldn't become public. The mailing list would not be shared with anybody - to create an atmosphere of safety for Lesbians primarily. You know ... it all goes back to that, [protection, secrecy and security] so that's perpetuating homophobia in a way. At the time we didn't see it that way, at the time we saw it as making it possible for Lesbians, who were positive, to be able to come because there would be a modicum of security given. The first couple of years we had watch guards with walkie talkies at the beginning of the lane.⁴⁹

You couldn't get into where we were without passing our security guards. Well, over the years we got more confident, you know, who cares if somebody comes, we'll just ask them to go away. It's private property and

not a problem. So, our levels of confidence and fear shifted, and I think our confidence in our ability.

Wild Womyn also played the role of presenting a space to do consciousness raising, and feminist theorizing. It was a respite from an hostile world and an invaluable opportunity to network. Throughout the winter planning sessions, some of the most controversial and stimulating discussions took place. Women grappled with all the current issues, such as, should Wild Womyn provide childcare? Should boy children be permitted to attend (if so, up to what age)? And should it be a separatist space, for Lesbians only? What was Wild Womyn's obligations to the Lesbian community and the larger women's community? Did they need to be all things to all people? Lesbians hashed over, agonized over, inclusion of straight women in a way I have yet to experience in the larger women's community, especially around Lesbian concerns - other than to argue credibility or visibility issues. It was at these "kitchen table" planning sessions a lot of us developed our Lesbian-straight politics and theory building around heterosexism. There was mostly consensus agreement that Wild Womyn be open to all women who wanted to attend.

*Pandora: Lifting the Lid Off*⁵⁰

Pandora was Nova Scotia's feminist newspaper for almost a decade, from September 1985 to 1993. It was the brain-child of three long-time feminists: Betty Ann Lloyd, a journalist and one time professor of journalism at Kings College, Dalhousie University; Carol Millett, a video artist and film-maker; and graphic designer Brenda

Bryant. The three women began developing their dreams of producing a feminist newspaper that was by, for, and about women. Linda Christiansen-Ruffman (1995: 377) writes about *Pandora*, relating some herstory of its inception, “[t]he initiative came in April 1985: several women attended the annual conference of Women’s Health Education Network.... They made a personal commitment to put out four newspaper issues during the year and to build a continuing organization.” This was the beginning of a solid relationship between *Pandora* and the women’s community in Nova Scotia.

Pandora began publishing four times a year, by the Pandora Publishing Association, which was a non-profit organization of Nova Scotia women. The editorial guidelines were consistent with common feminist principles of working collectively in a non-hierarchical structure. “We have no titles, we all contribute to the work as we are best able, all members participate equally in the decision-making process, and we come to decisions by consensus” (Pandora Collective, 1990: 49). Part of the policy of *Pandora* was dedicated to being non-oppressive, whether it fell under the category lesbian, race, sex, or class.

Women from all over the Maritimes submitted articles on every conceivable subject or issue. As I scanned almost ten years of newspapers I was overwhelmed with the depth and high caliber of professionalism. This periodical was no fly-by-night endeavor, but a well thought out and accomplished documentation of Nova Scotia women’s herstory of the 1980s and early 1990s. It also seemed to bring together the women’s community in a cohesive manner that had not been apparent since before the

demise of “A Women’s Place” in 1982.

Pandora also became a vehicle for Nova Scotia Lesbians to speak out about their issues for the first time ever in such a public manner. This Lesbian presence, however, was not without repercussions or reactions from the greater women’s community. An article by Mathers and Ardyche, that is reminiscent of my experience in some women’s studies classes, confirms that even a little bit of Lesbian content proved to be unsettling to some heterosexual readers. Because of the letters of criticism *Pandora* received, Mathers and Ardyche decided to do an analysis of Lesbian content, with some surprising results. The collective had received a number of letters stating that *Pandora* had entirely too many articles dealing with lesbianism. Up to that time (Vol. 3, No.2, December, 1987) *Pandora* had produced, 6,139 column inches of text, the Lesbian content was 516 column inches or 8.4%. “The number of lesbian articles in each issue ranged widely from a low of two articles to a high of nine articles (3.5% to 21%)” (Mathers and Ardyche, 1987: 4). Given the accepted 10% Lesbian to straight ratio, the average 9 to 8.6 percent Lesbian content of *Pandora* leaves Lesbians slightly underrepresented. The point is:

[f]or those who are homophobic, whether the ‘lesbian’ appears once or 100 times, it’s too much. For them, the sore point is not the quantity, but its very presence ... If you compared the amount of lesbian copy in our paper with the total amount of publicity given to heterosexuals in all the media they have as resources, 100 per cent wouldn’t be enough to make a dent (4).

Only more research on the overt and subtle forms of Lesbian oppression in Nova Scotia will help us understand more fully how relationships between Lesbian and heterosexual feminists affect the community as a whole. *Pandora* has given us some

vital inside information we may not have had access to in any other forum. *Pandora* was primarily a Lesbian production, and yet, as the statistics have indicated, the amount of content devoted to Lesbians was still slightly underrepresentative. How do we reconcile that lack of full representation within the feminist community? Mathers and Ardyche (1987:4) present some very challenging questions:

This is by no means a new issue. We have received various letters addressing this issue from the second paper onwards.... Is 10% (or more) too frightening for some women to handle? Or do some feminists believe that having lesbians in "their cause" somehow undermines that cause? Is it the fear of being associated with lesbians, or of being called a lesbian? If so, why?

Is lesbianism a fundamental challenge to society? Is there something so "other" about lesbianism that it threatens the entire structure of our "reality"? Do many women still see lesbianism as 'dirty' or 'sick'.' If not, what is the basis for the fear/antagonism/closed-mindedness.

They go on to challenge feminists to show solidarity with Lesbians, the same solidarity that Lesbians have shown the rest of the women's community. With full support, "many personal attacks would be diffused, and lesbians would feel less isolated, and much safer. Also, the word [Lesbian] itself would lose some of its power to threaten. We can only be threatened by something if we are afraid of it" (4). The role *Pandora* has played in Nova Scotia Lesbian herstory is invaluable because it created a previously unheard of positive visibility in a public space.

The Thin Lavender Line

On a social level, and to some extent on a political level, in the 1980s Nova Scotia Lesbians and heterosexual women often came together to support one another in causes, fundraisers, dances and conferences. The social milieu of play evoked as much interest and excitement for straight women as it did for Lesbians. After the demise of A Woman's Place women's center in 1982, the women's community dances were held at Veith House (a Halifax based community centre) which acted as a vehicle to bring together both groups of women. It was common to see Lesbian and heterosexual women dancing together freely, the energy was high and just plain fun. Dances often acted as an outlet for the stress women experienced from the heavy issues they were all dealing with on a constant basis. It spoke well to the fact that Lesbians and heterosexual feminists in Nova Scotia played together as hard as they worked, transcending some of the very complicated personal dynamics and deconstructionist strategies in which they engaged.

One of the first themes to present itself in the data was the personal support that Lesbians felt from the heterosexual women with whom they worked and were friends. Women's organizations were ideal for Lesbians to connect with other Lesbians. As one respondent described, "at that time it was always a part of it. There weren't specific issues defined, apart from safety and employment, and, you know, issues that everybody else shared, but it was the place to get together and talk, you know, to be open." Any tensions between Lesbian and heterosexual women in the 1980s seemed to lie within personal/public identification. Public identification, I believe, is a key factor in

understanding Lesbian invisibility. Sometimes lesbophobia was blatant, but more often invisible and subtle.

There was some work done on issues at _____, but at the time I was there, umm, and the women I knew, were just supportive. But, not defining it, supportive of us in our personal journeys but there was no particular issue that was underway that was separate from employment and violence.

Definitely there were issues. Did it ever come to women sitting in a room together and saying, look you're being, whatever, it never did because nobody was really able to be out. Actually, to have that kind of discussion really required somebody being out enough, because it wasn't coming from the heterosexual side. Nobody would ever recognize there was a problem, so the *whole onus* was on Lesbian women to bring that forward, and it was, from my perception, too risky because women were not out even with that large group ... yeah, I know, it sounds like the dark ages.

...I mean everybody knew if you were in heterosexual couple relationships, but, as for single women, and women who were not living in couples at that time, people didn't know, and most people made assumptions that women were not. I don't think people questioned a whole lot, but the assumption was women were not Lesbians. So there was a lot of homophobia. Yes, yes, it was heterosexism, with Homophobia well sprinkled and well planted at that time.

Lesbians spoke from very different places of their experiences working with heterosexual women within feminist organizations:

My experience of heterosexual women in those organizations both the local ones and the province-wide ones that I was involved with, was a good solid ally relationship, very supportive. Many women were, of course, exploring that boundary too, many of the women who later confirmed that, yes indeed, they were heterosexual – that at the time were saying, 'well maybe I am a Lesbian.' A lot of people were exploring the line.

And:

We were just asking for personal support, women are very good at that. And we had wonderful people in that group in terms of heterosexual women and in terms of their understanding of the issue.

I can't begin to imagine the difficulties people would have had to face in the 1950s. And I think when you look at the lives of - except for people who lived lives that were in any case very unconventional - in the 70s, you know among progressive people, I don't recall any vibrations that made me uneasy. I think, to a certain extent we were protected, any way, they would have had to take on the both of us, and not a lot of people were willing to do that. Women who called themselves feminists were reasonably sophisticated about those kinds of issues – were at least careful.

Well, I would say at the time [there was] support for Lesbian issues ... understanding of the oppression that Lesbians face, in so far as it is possible to understand anybody else's oppression. We went through some big things, we had hired one woman who turned out to be hugely homophobic and religiously so. We learned a lot through that experience. There was a lot of support through it.

When I asked one respondent how visible Lesbians were allowed to be, or allowed themselves to be in her community and her place of work, she replied as follows:

Well it certainly wasn't negotiated in any formal way. I would have said the heterosexual women danced around us in that we were kind of allowed to set that up, to a point. I think maybe we determined how visible Lesbians were. Probably because it had to do with how visible we wanted to be ourselves, and being in a rural community, and being the 1980s, you know it [Lesbian visibility] wasn't quite as television assessable as it is now.... That's partly because of my whole approach to being Lesbian, is - I'm not really prepared to tolerate homophobia, so I mostly make it not exist. You know, I have a comfortable denial of other people's homophobia.

Sometimes the Lesbophobia was more blatant in the 1980s, for instance, federal funding bodies withdrew moneys from any issues that had to do with sexual orientation and abortion. Wine and Ristock (1991:15) point out that it was the:

Secretary of State Women's Program's homophobic policy of refusing funding to 'those organizations, projects and recipients whose primary purpose is to promote a view on sexual orientation' (Fairness in Funding

Report 1987:15) ... [and] the organized far right and the conservative trend of the eighties has provided a milieu which contributes to the silencing of lesbians.

Although there was more rage, marches across the country, and out-cry from women's groups over abortion issues, not often, but on occasion other groups did come through for Lesbians, but not without the long bitter struggles. Locally and nationally, Lesbian silencing and anti-Lesbian sentiment became most obvious through the battles over government funding bodies:

Women merged at that time to try to become a new provincial, multi-issued organization. I was at its second conference in Sydney. That was when there was a huge fight going on, on the floor about whether WAC [Women's Action Coalition] would insist on being public about its incorporation of Lesbian issues, and there-by disapproving of [the strictures on funding] or whether it wouldn't.

In order to do anything with Lesbians or Lesbian content, it became necessary to disguise the fact. In applications for funding from the Secretary of State, groups hid lesbian activity under vague categories, projects and activities such as health and education. Again, strategizing Lesbian invisibility.

We knew we couldn't, at that time, write the word Lesbian in our grant application, so we knew we couldn't include workshops on Lesbian issues. We knew we couldn't do the workshop on Lesbian health.

It wasn't that we didn't talk about them [Lesbian issues]. It was simply that we couldn't apply for funding for them. I couldn't believe what had happened – totally wild. There were some very strange sorts of things along the way.... You had to talk about abortion in code, certainly in Planned Parenthood for a while. In WAC ... - there wasn't enough organized women's voices for the various women's groups...

In some communities of the province lesbophobia still falls under a “blatant” category of prejudice:

It is not a safe community for people who are Lesbian to be out. So it’s only been really within the last four to five years that people have actually been out in their work places in _____. And I would say not even in a really public way, but just in a more “this is who I am” ... [being out carries the] risk of loss of employment, personally, [and] risk of public censure and ridicule. Is there a risk of violence, I would imagine. I would imagine. It’s like this is also a very racist town but at least people are politically correct to a certain extent in the schools ... under the surface, right, but we’re not even there yet with homophobia.

When we look at the fear base of Lesbian visibility, there are multileveled issues involved for Lesbians; the fears may have been more easily definable and concrete in the 1980s than they are now. Another theme that flows through the data has to do with the strategies we used in the 1980s, which then became silencing mechanisms. When silence is used as a strategy, it becomes a pattern and in turn becomes part of a culture, and that leads to Lesbian invisibility. When Lesbians demand radical change, it becomes easier to write feminist radicals and Lesbians gradually off the agenda. So, some of the fences we built in the women’s movement in the 1980s, to protect ourselves - Lesbian and straight feminists, and the organizations to which we belonged, over the years, have turned into bars confining us to invisibility. This herstorical analyses has led me to see that when Lesbians hide behind their own silence, even when it is a good “interim” strategy, they are complicit with their own disappearance.

The subtleties of Lesbian invisibility and silences are often not even recognized because they are structured in what I call “the 4Ps” - the politics, policies, philosophies and practices of an organization:

Some things that you think would be obvious are not necessarily things that the community wants. So that’s the way we work, is that if someone comes in and identifies an issue, sometimes we do a group, sometimes we will do a workshop, sometimes we’ll do whatever needs doing. We have never had anyone come and ask us.... We have a community development approach, essentially.

Given the dire risk involved for Lesbian women being “out” in this particular community, perhaps the initiation of programming and public support for Lesbian issues should be incumbent upon the center (or any movement faction) itself to initiate these kinds of activities - at least until Lesbian women felt safer to contribute. However, there are some very complicated issues here, and admittedly, the thin lavender line becomes even more tenuous and vague for heterosexual women who were often placed in the unfortunate position of not feeling able to “out” women or speak for Lesbians. They were sometimes silent out of respect for Lesbians, and sometimes out of a fear they might be identified as Lesbian by whatever they had to say or supported.

Some of the heterosexual feminists I interviewed for this project had a fairly sophisticated analysis of Lesbian oppression, recognized overt lesbophobia when they encountered it, and were generally very conscious of not wanting to speak for Lesbians. Nevertheless, not speaking out *for* Lesbians and *against* lesbophobia is another

mechanism of silencing. At the same time organizations were silent about Lesbian issues, they also benefited very well from the seldom publicized and often unrecognized input of Lesbians:

Twenty years ago, it was a terribly frightening topic for many people. Not something that had been broached, particularly by women from the community. And so when we first started as a women's association and some of the women who were very involved in getting that association up and going, and it wouldn't be going without the Lesbian women. However, that didn't mean that there weren't also women in the organization who felt very threatened by the fact, and like I say, at the time people weren't even out. So not everybody even knew that someone was Lesbian or not.

For different and complex reasons, Lesbians are also complicit and self-silencing.

After commenting on my concern that the women's studies perpetuated Lesbian invisibility by using "softeners" in the creation of their programs, one Lesbian study participant acknowledged:

That may very well be the case, umm, and in fact I may very well have been a person who thought that was a good idea. In fact, I would still probably think it was a good idea, in practical terms. Because it was quite difficult to get that program through and at that time probably would have just shot it down, or would have made it [women's study program] much more vulnerable. So, I wouldn't be at all surprised at that, and I wouldn't have had a problem with people doing that as just a strategic plan.

Naturally, the issue of credibility becomes part of the overall concern when we move into the arena of visibility, and it can become a "lavender herring" when we attempt to categorize the subtle differentiation:

There is that whole problem of what is it people will do to be credible. Credibility always seems to be a movement towards the right, no one moves to the left to be more credible. In fact credibility is a word I've ceased to use because I've observed that pattern so much. I would say in terms of keeping the "L" word out of women's studies proposals – I call that strategic, I don't

call that being credible because here's something where, ammunition for the university...this program is just not going to go. That's not like saying, oh well, the media won't treat us nicely if we have the "L" word there. So, I would distinguish between those two situations. There are some situations too where you say, well the hell with it, even if we don't get the money, we have to have that in there.

One heterosexual woman commented on the difficulties they had trying to even support an inclusion of Lesbian content into the university system:

I do remember ... issues about trying to get Lesbian content into courses – more at the national level than at the local level. I also remember the real problems, and a number of us struggled against [the exclusion], unsuccessfully. They were part of the policy and we were trying to change policy. In other words, ones that were seen to be controversial, the more real ones for women, the more cutting-edge ones for women, they were off the agenda. There were a number of times when we tried to get those changed ... but never successfully.

Other participants spoke of their fears of being Lesbians in the public sphere.

When I asked them about their experiences of challenging lesbophobia or heterosexism in the groups they participated in:

We weren't about to make issues out of any of that, right, because we were still talking about whether or not to be open. So none of us were thinking of it in terms of any kind of public *fight*. We were just thinking about public.

Anyway, _____ County, in 1979 was a different feeling. And I think also, who knows if there would have been conflict in organizations if we had tried to force the organization to take stands on things. It would have been different.

Anne Bishop was an active force behind Lesbians gaining access to their rights under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission in 1992. In conversation with her, a number of issues, which other respondents touched on, came to the surface. I offer here an excerpt of my interview with Bishop to give readers a sense of her recollections of

living in rural Nova Scotia during the 1980s, and some of the complexities facing women at that time.

Darl - Do you have any thoughts on the earlier years, why sexual orientation wasn't an "issue" in any of your feminist groups?

Anne - Umm, I think I could throw out a bunch of guesses.

Darl - Okay.

Anne - I think, at least in the circles I was in, most of us were dealing with issues on a personal level.⁵¹ Like issues of degree of openness in a rural area, the degree of openness in our workplaces.

Darl - So those kinds of things were brought up within your circle of friends?

Anne - Umm, hmm.

Darl - But not necessarily in the groups you were working in?

Anne - Well, processed there too, but those were the issues we were dealing with, and none of us were ready to really move on them. I didn't become fully open, like in every job interview before I was hired, and to everybody I knew until 1985. So in the late 70s, and the first years of the 80s in Pictou County I was still hiding my books under the bed, and being very careful whom I said anything like that to. And so were others that I knew, you know, people were feeling their way. The women who were farming were feeling very vulnerable....

Darl - What were some of the concerns that were being expressed?

Anne - How would the community respond? The women who were farming were totally ... you know, how anyone who is farming is very dependent on their neighbours, in various ways. How would they react? Would there be any violence? Women living on your own in a rural area, that can be quite a scary thought. I was working in a factory with the fisheries in a fish plant, and there was violence going on in it anyway.

Darl - What? Because you were Lesbian?

Anne – Although there was a very small amount of violence among the women in the plant based on homophobia, none was directed at me, and all of it was completely overshadowed by the domestic violence going on in the heterosexual households.... Because we were organizing a Union in the plant, and some of the women got beaten up by their husbands, there was other violence going on anyway. So if I had suddenly been exposed in the middle of that, what would have happened, because I was hated for other reasons.

Darl - So these were very legitimate concerns.

Anne – Oh yes, very dire, even though now I would say having experimented for years I would say that if you're a good neighbour, and treat your animals right, and maintain your fences, you know, and have the proper kinds of exchanges that are expected in a rural community of neighbours, then people tend to say that's fine. But first of all, this is twenty years later.

Darl - Have things changed considerably?

Anne - I think so, I don't think it's the same. I think everything's changed. Because it's now something that everyone knows, I don't think people had even thought about the issue much. I think the United Church, stuff, the fight over the sexuality report transformed the issue in rural areas. The United Church was very courageous.

Darl - Really? Well, I guess they are progressive in a lot of areas...

Anne - Right, and even when they retreated from the issue later, like the Maritime Conference did, I don't think the Maritime Conference will ordain yet. I mean it was getting the issue discussed in a public way. I think the debate over the Human Rights Legislation supports people coming out [and] has been absolutely important. And we had wonderful people in that group in terms of heterosexual women and in terms of their understanding of the issue.⁵²

Darl - What about families?

Anne - Oh, that's another reason. Before I came out to my family I was very held back.... I wouldn't have done anything public. You know, media level, until I was out to my family, because I would hate the thought of them finding out that way, instead of from me.

Darl - You weren't really at that point then.

Anne - No, I came out to my family in 1986 shortly after I came out at work. I began to realize it was going to leak through to them somehow. But I was becoming more and more public. But that was another reason not to fight battles, or not to be public, because you need to – unless you distance from your family – you need to deal with your family. Well that's another reason to hold back.

Darl - From another direction, what are some of your thoughts on why the heterosexual society, including the women's movement, would have such angry reactions and deeply held fears towards Lesbians?

Anne - I mean sure, the patriarchal structure is threatened. People who wouldn't even know those words, can feel it. I think people are right, if that's where their investment is – their security, stability, all of that, career structure, whatever. You of course, are a threat.

Darl – And you are a threat, because...

Anne - Because we challenge that whole basis of patriarchal nuclear family and there's good reason why the family has become the heart of the whole issue now. Even in 78, 79, but in the 90s the family became the center of the issue, because I think most of the battles about the right to be gay or Lesbian, bi-sexual or transgendered as an individual were pretty much won by then. But all of a sudden ... the right to form family units and to have them recognized and taxed....

Conclusion

The levels of complexity of Lesbian visibility and safety can be analyzed more clearly by examining the degree of openness within various community and organizational spaces. All things considered, as Becki Ross (1995: 80) reminds us, "there's a big difference between being out to 50 even 500 other Lesbians and being out

to a heterosexist and homophobic world.” In this context I would modify that statement to: there is a big difference between being “out” to small groups of feminist activists on a personal level, and being “out” and publicly “visible” in a largely silent women’s movement.

Chapter V

Lesbian Politics and the Politics of Invisibility

What is normal in this deranged society?
Audre Lorde⁵³

Lesbianism has been intricately and herstorically connected with feminism; understanding this association will help to set the stage to recognize the ways in which Lesbians have functioned as both a buffer to, and a scapegoat of, the women's movement.

In this chapter I begin by grounding feminist theory in an herstorical context of Lesbian and Nova Scotia Lesbian herstory. Concepts of the Lesbian feminist community and Lesbian culture proved to be illusive and difficult to define. The Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians for Equality (APPLE) is presented here as Nova Scotia's only specifically Lesbian political organization. APPLE's demise left a perceptible gap in Lesbian political visibility within the larger feminist community, a discontinuity that was not to be spanned until the inception of *Pandora*.

Lesbian Herstory and Feminism

The correlation between feminism and Lesbian invisibility in the women's movement is an important one, making it necessary to explore that relationship within the context of public perception of Lesbians over time. Western public perception of Lesbianism has moved and changed gradually but dramatically. For instance, sexologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries proclaimed same-sex activity a perversion, and

Lesbians were considered men trapped in women's bodies called "sexual inverts" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1989; and Faderman, 1981, 1991 and 1996). By the time Freud and his little band of misogynists came along with their concept of "arrested psychosexual development" and the psychoanalytic approach to Lesbianism, public attitudes had shifted. Society's sensibilities altered from seeing "women-loving-women" as non-threatening "romantic-friend relationships" (Faderman, 1991) to medical disorders (Morgan, 1992) to a threat to the whole structure of patriarchy.

Marlene LeGates (1996) explains that at the beginning of the 20th century in feminist groups such as the primarily heterosexual, Heterodoxy Club, heterosexual women pushed for separation politics. These women insisted that it was the specificity of women and the need for separate groups explicitly for women which were needed, and blamed the erosion of separatist politics for the demise of post-suffrage feminism of the "first wave".⁵⁴

It is curious to note there is an inverse relationship to some of those very same notions of separatism that are being raised today in regard to "second wave" Lesbian-feminist separatist positions. Perceptions of current theories of separatism, of being partially responsible for the decline of post-second-wave feminism is often leveled against Lesbian separatists. These charges deserve a closer examination of the underlying lesbophobic assumptions inherent in those allegations.

Within that general time period, LeGates (1996: 240) informs us:

A stunning seventy-five percent of women who graduated from American colleges before 1900 remained single - and the number of female students

and even female faculty rose; divorce rates went up; and the medical community condemned homosexuality as abnormal, associating lesbianism with feminism.

She goes on to talk about the “freewheeling” discussions of the feminist Heterodoxy Club in New York during the Gay Nineties, and how by the 1920s the discussions became narrow and restricted to heterosexual women’s concerns of the heterosexually defined family. Some Lesbians still participated in the group but felt increasingly uncomfortable without a broader base of analysis. LeGates (1996:240) writes that:

[W]hile individual friendships could and did flourish, the new climate weakened women’s gender consciousness ... one historian has even suggested that the erosion of separatist ideology and institutions was responsible for the decline of post-suffrage feminism.

Mary Eaton (1993: 346) points out that “[t]he politics of lesbian existence have always been about wiping out our traditions, our knowledge, our existence,” and Audre Lorde (1980: 39) poignantly reminds us, “unless one lives and loves in the trenches it is difficult to remember that the war against dehumanization is ceaseless.” So, even with the little we know of Lesbian activism in the early days of the “first wave” women’s movement, the actual place Lesbians held was obscured, and the issues that were considered vital to the movement were almost exclusively heterosexual, rendering Lesbians invisible. Ann Ferguson (1981: 166) writes:

[T]here is some evidence that in both the United States and Western Europe the growth of lesbianism among middle and upper-class women was as closely connected with the first wave of the women’s movement as the growth of lesbian feminism is with the second wave of the movement.

Historiography has confirmed, agrees Korinek (1998: 84), that “lesbian magazine fiction [with] stories involving Lesbian plots or characters were regularly published in American women’s general interest magazines until the 1920s, ... [and it was not until] after 1920 [that] the general populace [became] aware of the medical and psychiatric pronouncements about such relationships, and thus these stories were abandoned. A previously acceptable genre was now regarded as morally suspect.”

With Freud also came a time when accessibility to culturally popular ideas about sexuality started to increase significantly. Grounds (1997:1-2) points out that:

[T]he proliferation of ideas about homosexuality [which] occurred during the 1920s contributed to the fears concerning lesbianism as the country entered the turbulent 1930s... The difficult times of the Great Depression along with new ideas ... made mainstream Americans [and presumably Canadians] suspicious of love between women and created a cultural climate that sought to eliminate any images that might be perceived as condoning such perverse behavior.

The general public by the end of the Second World War and into the 1950s, had been sporadically exposed to negative and pernicious images of Lesbians, but even those became increasingly rare. As Campbell’s (1998: 129) analysis found:

The majority of the newspaper and magazine articles about homosexuality in the 1950s and 1960s referred solely to gay men. Lesbians were rarely mentioned, and the term ‘homosexual,’ when used in media articles in this period, refers primarily to men, thus reinforcing the social invisibility of lesbian.

An exception to this form of Lesbian invisibility was the Canadian women’s magazine, *Chatelaine*, which did on occasion include both explicit and implicit Lesbian images. *Chatelaine* disseminated feature articles on and information about Lesbians into

mass markets of the Canadian mainstream. Unfortunately, the portrayal of Lesbians and lesbianism was uniformly negative. Valerie Korinek (1998: 103-104) explains that even for one of the most popular columnists in *Chatelaine* during the 1950s and 1960s, Marion Hilliard (who was a Lesbian herself, according to June Callwood, quoted in the article, and the author of the article Valerie Korinek) wrote of Lesbianism in negative terms:

[T]he female homosexual or the maladjusted woman was usually seen as neurotic and immature. One of her [Dr. Marion Hilliard's] main purposes was to represent the apex of women's dysfunctional behaviour.⁵⁵ The lesbian was dysfunctional primarily because of her negative attitude towards men and disgust with heterosexual sex – not for her attraction to women. While not characterized as predatory [a common theme presented in the literature of the time] she posed a threat to marriage by virtue of her ability to develop deep emotional bonds with other women, thus making marriage appear unattractive to the unmarried and creating fissures between husbands and wives. As well, she [the Lesbian] served as an object of interest or novelty that provided fodder for story illustrations or feature articles.... [I]n the late 1960s she appeared as a representative, like Black women, of the diversity of female experience.

There were other sporadic articles over the years in a majority of mainstream media that identified homosexuality as a social problem and a threat. Campbell (1998: 129) explains that almost all journalists “unquestioningly accepted medical explanations ... as an illness or disease. This medical model, which developed during the 1920s and 1930s, had become the dominant ideology in academic and popular literature on the subject of homosexuality by the 1950s.” More often than not Lesbians became an addendum to the articles as female homosexuals. The very few pieces that featured Lesbians were categorically invalidating. In her article “Deviance, Inversion and Unnatural Love: Lesbians in Canadian Media, 1950-1970” Campbell (1998: 129) cites an

“excerpt” from the popular, *Canadian Home Journal*, written by C.K. Cameron in 1951.

This particular quote illustrates the prevailing attitude towards Lesbianism as dangerous, a mental illness or disease that could be cured:

[A]lthough lesbianism is a very different matter from venereal disease, there is the same need to have more than a vague and horrified notion of what it is if we are to understand and help to solve the social problem it presents.

These perceptions of Lesbians were instrumental in molding the images presented to the public. Unfortunately, they also played a large part in how Lesbians perceived themselves. Even the political activists who were organizing in the 1960s were influenced a great deal by these media images. By comparing media images of the 1950s and 1960s with coverage from 1990s, Campbell (1998: 134) was able to show that, although the language had changed, the essential message, had not:

After decades of invisibility, lesbians and lesbianism have become a popular media topic in the 1990s. In 1993, which was the peak of the ‘lesbian chic’ trend, the American television show *Roseanne* introduced a regularly appearing lesbian character into its plot and almost every major North American newspaper and magazine ran feature articles, in which lesbianism was presented as ‘fun,’ ‘fashionable,’ and ‘trendy.’ Although the ‘lesbian chic’ articles published in the 1990s are less overtly homophobic than articles from the 1950s and 1960s, they are in many ways informed by the same ideologies. The articles are still aimed at a primarily heterosexual audience. Lesbians who are white, thin, able-bodied and stereotypically attractive are presented as fashionable and ‘chic,’ while lesbians who are less attractive too butch, or too political [as in the case of Ellen Degenerous and the Lesbian feminist content in her television show] are either excluded or denigrated.... Mainstream media still uphold a heterosexual hegemony, in which homosexuality, although tolerated to a certain extent, is still defined as a deviation from the norm.

As part of this research, I re-viewed the 1992, National Film Board of Canada Documentary, Forbidden Love, where it featured some of the newspaper headlines during

the 1950s and 1960s. “YOUR CHILD MAY BE HOMOSEXUAL – Here are the Shocking Details;” “Teenagers Should Be Warned by Parents Against Mingling with Homosexuals, Either Sex;” and “Sex Deviants Seen as Menace to Morals of All Young Canadians.” One elderly woman spoke of the dangers Lesbians faced when they attempted to socialize in public places:

It was well known that the Toronto police got their kicks from picking on women – taking them out to Cherry Beach. Some of them were raped and some of them were badly beaten up, and they just left them there. I guess they got away with it because the women were gay and nobody cared about gay women. Gay women couldn’t complain; there was nobody to complain to. You went to court and you just didn’t exist (Forbidden Love, 1992).

The release of Alfred Kinsey’s report on female sexuality in 1953, Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, reported that 13% of women by the age 45 had had sexual contact with another woman to the point of orgasm. Twenty percent had had some sexual contact with another woman and 28% ‘recognized erotic’ attractions to other women. This survey research was received as a mixed blessing within the Lesbian population. In the United States, heterosexual society became shocked, frightened and appalled at the suggestion that 28% of American females at some point in their adult lives had “homoerotic” feelings for other women (Grounds, 1997:3). Whether that statistic was true or not, it is now a generally accepted statistic that 10 % of the female population is exclusively Lesbian. Never before had “straight” North American society been so widely exposed to the concept of homosexuality.

The release of the Kinsey statistics became a double-edged labyris for Lesbians. On one side, the report increased the general public’s awareness of “homosexuality,” and

Lesbians became aware that there were many other Lesbians out there in the “real” world. On the other side, these figures also “frightened Americans and contributed to the persecution of all homosexuals: Kinsey’s findings ... were widely discussed in the mass media in publications such as *Newsweek* and *Time*” (Grounds, 1997:8).

The Kinsey studies were ultimately used to justify American Senator Joseph McCarthy’s persecution of Lesbians and gays as a national threat. There is little information available at this time to determine how the McCarthy era affected Lesbians and gays in Nova Scotia. One can legitimately assume, however, given the same accessibility to the Kinsey Report, the psychoanalytical babble, as well as the same mass media presentation of “the” Lesbian lifestyle, that Canadian Lesbians were indirectly but profusely affected with similar fears of exposure issues. Campbell (1999: 107) also suggests that:

McCarthyism ... had a significant impact on the media representation of lesbians, in both the United States and Canada. A woman interviewed by the Lesbians Making History Collective recalled that many lesbians, especially those employed in areas considered sensitive, such as teaching and the military, feared losing their jobs and falling victim to increased violence.

Lesbians struggled to maintain a positive sense of self while being continually bombarded with pernicious descriptions of themselves. They were depicted alternatively; as immoral and perverse, and having arrested psychosexual development; as suffering a pathological flight from “normal” relations; and as sinful, sick, decadent, predator and child molester. For Lesbians to develop and maintain a self-image that was healthy and

confident in light of those kinds of assessment was a remarkable feat. Susan Krieger (1985: 225) in her study on Lesbian identity and community puts it this way:

Once we were sick and now we are well. The story goes in its most rudimentary form. All contemporary research discussions reiterate some version of it. Before 1960, they tell us, such meager treatments of lesbianism as existed in the literature were based on medical, psychiatric, or psychoanalytic expertise, and depicted lesbians as pathological: sick, perverted, inverted, fixated, deviant, narcissistic, masochistic, and possibly biologically muted, at best the daughters of hostile mothers and embarrassingly unassertive fathers.

To a certain extent it was these earlier images that created a conflict of identity for Lesbians that remain today, in particular for older Lesbian who recognized their lesbianism before the second wave women's movement. These are also frightful representation for those who grew up in Nova Scotia in the 1950s, moving into their teens in the 1960s, where the sexual revolution was a seemingly new and wondrous freedom - for everyone but Lesbians. There was little information available, good or bad, which helped women to come to terms with their Lesbian identity.

Becoming Lesbian in the 1960s and 1970s in Nova Scotia was still a very scary process. That raging voice that continually told you that you needed to be ashamed of who you were fixed itself in your mind and in your body and was still too loud, too present and too pervasive to be silenced or overcome in a few short decades. Secrecy was Lesbian's safeguard, and feelings of shame the legacy. If one were lucky enough to have heard about it, the only counter balance to this legacy was the Lesbian periodical the *Ladder*. The *Ladder* was one of the few positive sources the average Lesbian had

available to refute these representations; it came from the Daughters of Bilitis, the first all Lesbian Association in North American, formed in 1955.

What also must be kept in mind is that Lesbians were still being given shock treatments and incarcerated in mental institutions well into the 1970s, and it was not until 1973 that the American Psychological Association no longer considered homosexuality an illness – either medical or psychological. It is not unheard of to hear stories of women still being treated for emotional disturbances by practitioners because of their sexual orientation. For instance, *Pandora* ran two articles on artist Sheila Gilhooley's story of her experiences with the psychiatric system. JoAnne Fiske, the author of one of the two articles, wrote of Gilhooley's internment in a mental institution for three years. The very real fear and threat of involuntary commitment to psychiatric facilities for being Lesbian was an ever present concern for large numbers of women: “[I]n the hands psychiatry, gender myths are manipulated to define ‘reality’ and ‘sanity.’ They deny the political nature of psychiatry’s project – compliance with a male-dominated, heterosexual social order” (Fiske, 1987:19).

Lesbian Herstory in Nova Scotia

Against this period herstorical background, it is not surprising to find within the Nova Scotia gay community, during the early 1970s, an atmosphere of entrenched fear surrounded attempts at community building. And the emergence of the women's movement at the time exacerbated the distrust between women and men and set the mood

of the times for some feminist Lesbians. For Lesbians during those beginning days of the movement, the entry point into the political scene and feminist activism often came through Gay Alliance for Equality (GAE). Before GAE, Lesbians and gay men, for the most part, existed in separate social communities. Gay Alliance for Equality was founded in 1972 and operated until 1988 when the name was changed to Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia or GALA. GALA continued until its demise in 1995. According to long-time Maritime Gay activist Robin Metcalfe (1997: 30), GAE:

was virtually unique in North America. It was a broad-based community organization, with significant lesbian participation, that was the main source of political, social service, and cultural activities in a medium-sized city, and that owned and operated the club [from 1976 through 1990,] the only fully gay social venue in town.

Some Lesbian feminists were dissatisfied with the GAE process. One respondent expressed her feelings of rejection and bewilderment:

Particularly, coming from spending the summer in California [we expected to find that GAE] will be an interesting sort of place to be, as it were. And we actually found people rather, unfriendly, and seemingly kind of suspicious of us. We never really did figure out why that was.... Maybe we just weren't right, but we certainly never had the sense that people were particularly friendly so we didn't really see what we could contribute. Because the group wasn't – didn't seem to say, 'here are new people' ... we weren't given any work to do. So that gets kind of dull.

The Lesbian and gay activism of the 1970s, 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, and more often for Lesbian feminists, was fraught with unacknowledged tensions and resentment around the political-social space of the various GAE clubs. Generally speaking, the funds generated by the clubs were supposed to support the development of a cultural center, which would in turn support political activism. Eventually the

organization bought a house on Russell Street in the north end of Halifax, which sponsored groups, meetings, and workshops, and even the Uniting of two Lesbians in a beautiful ritual. But, it was obvious to a lot of Radicalesbian feminists that there were three very distinct factions - Lesbian-gay women, gay men and Lesbian feminists that intersected only in a common cause.

Most Lesbian feminists found the gateway into the Women's Movement more compatible and conducive to their personal politics as women. However, a number of feminist-Lesbians carried on in the organization fighting sexism and then coming together with other gays during the end of the 1980s and early 1990s as they struggled for inclusion under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*.

One time president of GALA, Jane Kansas (1997: 28) offers her thoughts on the Lesbian and gay community, including the specificity of the two groups:

[H]owever much we hear about 'the lesbian and gay community,' that sense of community is, for many, rooted in same-sex social grouping, with distinct attitudes, codes of behaviour, and cultural histories. It is true that those histories frequently intersect ... To assume, however, that they are simply male and female versions of the same thing is to ignore the rightness and diversity of our respective histories.

The first all-Lesbian organization in the Atlantic Provinces was founded in 1976, although it was mostly a Halifax based group. One of the women who initiated the Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians for Equality (APPLE) described its beginnings this way:

It wasn't until the gay conference in Kingston, Ontario in the spring of '76, at which the drive for a national lesbian organization was ignited, that I became aware of political lesbianism. APPLE ... sprouted at the National

Lesbian Conference in Ottawa that fall. (Later, because we couldn't figure out who we wanted to be equal to, we changed the name to Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians for Example)... Our meetings were held at the MOVE (Movement for Citizens Voice and Action) offices, at A Woman's Place – Forrest House, at the Turret (operated by GAE), at the Red Herring Co-operative Bookstore, and at various members' homes. We had up to 20 or so members in Halifax and Pictou Counties, and, for a time in New Brunswick (anonymous, 1990:9).⁵⁶

Initially there was some fear that as an organization APPLE might split the gay and Lesbian community and diminish Lesbian participation in GAE. One Lesbian responded that their presence alone was a challenge to many of the men in GAE, and it also gave a strong voice to lesbian concerns. APPLE produced their first national newsletter *Lesbian Canada Lesbienne* in 1976, and distributed it throughout Canada in 1977.⁵⁷ It was the first national and bilingual Lesbian newsletter across Canada. APPLE also produced a one only edition of *The Sisters' Lightship*, another periodical in 1978. In some respects there was an overlap-relationship between APPLE and "Wild Womyn Don't Get the Blues" that grounded Lesbians in feminist praxis. Both groups were feminist and Lesbian focused and thrived on consciousness raising and celebrated being Lesbian while exploring issues that effected them. Developing Lesbian feminist theory became a natural extension of "play" and "activism". At the same time Lesbians were creating networks throughout the Maritimes. For some women being Lesbian was being political. None-the-less it was the earlier group APPLE which gave public political voice to Lesbian concerns.

Despite all the positive feminist activity going on during that period, one woman, speaking of the pervasiveness of fear that still surrounded Lesbians in Nova Scotia in the

1980s, reminisces. “I remember somebody was taking photographs, it was a Lesbian party, and somebody really had a strong reaction and asked for the film, for fear of their picture being [taken].” What was so interesting about the incident was that at that time, not one of us thought it was a strange request or thought anything about it.⁵⁸

The reality for most Lesbians, even for the most political Radicalesbianfeminists of the 1970s and 1980s, there were well-grounded fears. These fears were true for women locally as well as for Lesbians in large centers like Toronto as Becki Ross (1995: 79) attests:

As women and as lesbians, those attracted to building a lesbian-feminist organization were keenly aware of the potential repercussions of coming out: loss of jobs, family ties, friends, child custody; harassment in the workplace, on the streets, in the media, at the hands of medical practitioners and other figures of authority. Those fears were not in the abstract.⁵⁹

Quoted in, The House That Jill Built, international award-winning film and video-maker Marg Moores remembers what it was like for radical Lesbians in Toronto at that time. “People were even nervous coming in the door [LOOT office], thinking there was a camera on them from across the street or the phone was being tapped.... [W]e were worried about being found out, but not too worried to stop going” (Ross, 1995:80).⁶⁰

The fast-paced changes that were happening in Nova Scotia during that time were exciting and difficult to keep up with. In the midst of this high activity within the protest cycle it was the demise of APPLE and the lack of a Lesbian-specific, public voice, that left a representative gap and political presence that was not fully bridged until the inception of *Pandora* in 1985. Nevertheless, in the next section of this thesis I argue that

it was the spectral Lesbian presence in Nova Scotia that continued to play an involuntary role in the maintenance of the women's movement by acting as both a buffer and scapegoat.

Lesbian As Buffer and Scapegoat⁶¹

Perhaps more so now than in the 1980s, Lesbian feminists are in danger of being silenced, serving as a scapegoat and as a buffer to the women's movement.⁶² From the beginnings of the "second wave" women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, Lesbianism has played the vital role of a buffer between the male state and the feminist movement. By definition, a buffer is a state between two possible belligerents, diminishing chance of hostilities (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976). The buffer, Lesbians in this instance, functions as a balance between the oppressed class - women/feminists, and the oppressor - the patriarchal state; and the oppression of Lesbians becomes important to maintaining the system, only as long as Lesbians remain outside the social norm.⁶³

Lesbianism, as a buffer, also acts to absorb the impact of hostility directed at the women's movement from conservative backlash and the neo-liberal agenda. The oppression of Lesbians acts as a stabilizer to the system of patriarchy. This is accomplished by frightening non-radical, and even some radical factions of the movement, into compliance by identifying them with Lesbianism and the need for some women to distance themselves from Lesbians and Lesbian causes. Therefore we can also

assume that Lesbians must also act as a **scapegoat** for the women's movement as well, where often strategic planning offers up Lesbian issues as sacrificial lambs to the more "important" or less controversial issues.

The concept of "scapegoat" is generally associated with theories of frustration and aggression, which suggests that when a person, or a group of distinctive peoples, are prevented from reaching a goal or are frustrated, the perceived cause of this frustration will raise their level of antagonism.⁶⁴ In this case, within feminism "[i]f the cause of this frustration is too powerful [such as patriarchal structures,] aggression may be vented on a more accessible or vulnerable target...Thus minority groups [in this case Lesbians] may be blamed for many social problems...by a majority group, without the necessity to analyze the real cause of these problems" (Jary and Jary, 1995). For example, at an Ontario Association of Interval and Transitional Housing (OAITH) conference in 1991, in which I served as the Metro-Toronto Representative, one of the shelter directors stood up in the midst of a discussion on the rights of Lesbians. She stated very clearly that if there was a choice between accepting a Lesbian or another visible minority woman into the shelter, she would choose the visible minority woman every time, because at least they would not be in danger of losing their funding.

On a local level, one of the women I interviewed spoke in similar terms of her experience of lesbophobia while working at a women's shelter in Halifax where a board member was extremely abusive to her each time she encountered her in the work place. At that point in time (the 1980s) the respondent felt it was not safe for her to challenge

such opprobrious behaviour and still maintain her job. There was also a certain amount of lesbophobia and Lesbian blaming for the demise of the Women's Health Education Network and A Woman's Place (women's centre).⁶⁵ Rather than analyze the overwhelming dynamics of heterosexism as it affects all women's lives, it became expedient to blame Lesbians and lesbianism for the difficulties encountered in a given group or organization.

We can easily recognize the impact of "scapegoating" on mainstream feminist groups and women's organizations in the phenomenon of Lesbian baiting⁶⁶ and in the group's reaction to it. Lesbian baiting is an attempt to control women by accusing them of being Lesbians because their behavior is not acceptable, that is, when they are being independent, fighting for their rights, demanding equal pay, saying no to violence, being self asserting, bonding with and loving the company of women and assuming the right to their own bodies.

It is also about using the label, Lesbian, to confuse, distort, and destroy women's efforts to secure self-determination. Some feminist groups that are labelled Lesbian do not know how to respond, especially if they have few Lesbian women. Their fear of an association with lesbianism sometimes equates with the possibility of loss of funding, public support and being discredited by peer groups (see chapter IV). All of these concerns have been expressed by organizations at one time or another, and this fear only adds fuel to the already high levels of fear and Lesbophobia, which prevent feminist organizations from including Lesbianism in personnel policies and procedure manuals

and affirmative action programs. For Lesbians, exclusion equals invisibility in the women's movement, and the invisibility of Lesbians is an absolutely crucial component of heterosexist oppression.

Lesbians in the women's movement, besides serving the multiple functions of buffer and scapegoat, also play an important role in maintaining a consistency during times of political abeyance, such as the post-suffrage time period, the McCarthy era in the United States and, most recently, in the conservative 1980s (see Taylor and Rupp, 1996). Lesbian feminists have a specific and vested interest in focusing energy into the women's movement, although the viable benefits at times may seem questionable to some Lesbians. But I believe that most Lesbian feminists are committed to the integrity of their politics, and struggle to end all women's oppression. None-the-less, we have only to listen to what those in the right-wing "bible belt" of Alberta, influenced by the "moral majority" in the United States, have to say to appreciate the significance of the connection between Lesbians and the feminist movement and how Lesbianism is used as a buffer for the movement.

The backlash attacks on the women's movement comes almost directly through the ideological hatred and assaults on Lesbians and the pro-choice faction of the movement. Lesbians are seen as the instigators and the ungodly force behind feminist issues. One example of misguided but, typical theorizing, by the "right" is expressed by Betty Steele, Canada's very own Phyllis Schlafly. Steele (1987: 22), who is an advocate

of anti-woman, feminist-fear-mongering, blames everything from teen-age pregnancies to the collapse of Canadian society on Marxist Lesbians and the women's movement.

The 'solidarity of women,' of course, has always been a principal platform of feminists in general, and lesbians who have sometimes dominated the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States and Canada in particular - driving wedge after wedge of 'hate' and 'vengeance' between all women and men. Betty Friedan described homosexuality as 'spreading like a murky smog over the American scene' In fact, feminists dictators may be able to ensure more and more Marxist control in all areas of society ... [and] are we willing to listen to the death-knell of our traditional family (175)?

The "righteous right" has gradually gained further political power in the United States by the election of fundamentalist-christian-Republican, George W. Bush.⁶⁷ In Canada, with the election of the right-wing and anti-gay movement advocate to the leadership of the Canadian Alliance Party, Stockwell Day, the christian-right has gained a strong foothold in Canada giving the party enormous new powers. Former party leader Day was quoted in the, *Globe and Mail*, on the day he was elected as leader of the opposition as stating, "I define the family heterosexually." The Alliance Party policies have also made it clear that the majority of members would use the constitutional "notwithstanding" clause in regards to Lesbian and gay rights in family issues which would leave any gains made by Lesbians in the past couple of years precarious at best.

Forces like REAL women (Realistic, Equal, Active for Life) who used to be annoying, and something that was often joked about in the early 1980s, are no longer a joke.⁶⁸ REAL women and Campaign Life Canada, were very vocal in their anti-Lesbian attacks of the Lesbian caucus in Beijing (CBFC. 1995: 13). In Canada we have not yet seen the powerful lobby of the christian right and father's right's movements to the same

extent that women in the United States have. None-the-less, we are starting to see effects of it in Alberta. As Lesbians and feminists we can no longer afford to ignore the “right’s” increasing influence on politics, because Lesbians are one of the main targets of their escalating attacks. We also need to monitor what is happening in western Canada because it is a source of much reactionary bigotry as well as a fertile deposit of oppressive acts from which to draw insight into the climate of what is to come in the future.

We can recognize the extreme right’s influence on the agenda on government decisions, such as the recent and oppressive bill, The Domestic Relations Amendment Act, which was introduced into the Alberta legislature in 1998. This ruling defined a common-law union as a relationship between two people of the *opposite sex*, who have been living in a marriage-like relationship for at least three years. It will always be possible to pass these provincial discriminating law because Lesbians and Gays were deliberately excluded from the Constitution.⁶⁹ The “notwithstanding” clause makes it easier to entrench Nova Scotia provincial legislation that discriminate. This clause has the potential to set up uncertain conditions for an ill-defined Lesbian community to survive.

Community, Culture and Visibility and Invisibility

Notions of space, visibility and separation were also significant elements in the process of creating a radical concept of community and Lesbian-feminist theory. Several levels of visibility were explored within the Nova Scotia organizations studied in this

project, as well as varying degrees of openness for individual Lesbians. Creating safe spaces became of utmost importance to Lesbians working in movement communities (see chapter IV). Various strategies of invisibility were utilized or imposed, depending on which organization Lesbians chose to devote their time, resources and energy.

Lesbians rarely have the same access and benefits of community institutions which service most communities by providing resources that allow control over the conditions under which most minority communities exist within the framework of the larger society. This is particularly true in provinces such as Nova Scotia where even the general population is small and limited in resources. “Lesbians do not have the resources to create all our own institutions ... the more we are a visible, public identifiable group, the more our claim to be recognized and protected legally is legitimized. Without visibility there can be no legitimacy to political struggle on behalf of particular groups” (Lesbian Psychologies. 1987:349).

Although a quasi-Lesbian presence in the women’s movement remains, heterosexism as a major analysis of Nova Scotia women’s oppression does not seem to have survived the 1980s. While it is true there have been wonderful attempts to create a Lesbian-feminist culture, Lesbians have mostly experienced their analyses within the context of the male-gay, racial rights, other resistance groups or within the auspices of the women’s movement. Other than for a brief period of time in the 1970s when Lesbian analysis of women’s oppression was central to feminist analysis, Lesbian theory became an extension rather than a central feature of other movements. Because some of the

processes leading to decentralization that were explored in chapter IV, Lesbian struggles have taken on complex and specific forms. A truly integrated theory should give credence to most feminist analysis, I challenge that this has not happened with heterosexism as part of a current integration of feminisms. The question that remains is how Lesbians and heterosexual women can change that, or will Lesbian feminists have to move outside of feminism and separate Lesbian theory from feminist theory?

As Staggenberg has suggested, it is the culture of a community that provides its members with a sense of identity, and one of the hardest projects for Lesbian feminists is how to create a culture-community that will reinforce positive identity (see chapter II). How can groups organize with a clear sense of consciousness in and of themselves as an oppressed group? That, I believe, requires a common identity and visibility. “The fact is that more often than not, Lesbians have little in common ... [i]n so far as we are of different ages, abilities, sizes, classes and races, [where] our oppression as women are concerned,”(Lesbian Psychologies, 1987: 349).

As Lesbians are more often connected to other identified groups, enforced invisibility, because of the intimate nature of sexual oppression of women and heterosexism, renders Lesbians a non-specific, non-visible group, without the same benefits of other minority communities and cultures. Theoretically and in what may be perceived as a paradox, one can attribute Lesbian invisibility to the current focus on differences that is advocated by “identity and Queer politics,” which are telling Lesbians they have more in common with male gays than feminist women.

The result of Lesbian-feminist sexuality being seen as specifically linked with gender politics (see Chart 1, page 144) is that Lesbians no longer fit within the framework of current feminist agendas as they did in the early days of second-wave feminism. My argument of “theoretic paradox” is around the issues of sex and gender, and subsequently centres on Lesbian invisibility in the women’s movement, that is as much about gender as it is not about gender, and it is as much about sexuality as it is not about sexuality.⁷⁰

Lesbians have then had to find different ways to incorporate the experience of heterosexism into feminist theory on an equal basis with other major theories of oppression. Again it is necessary to explore separating Lesbian theory from feminist theory in order to ensure that symmetry. In other terms, a combination of Lesbian identity (gender, sexuality and human rights) politics and feminist (women-identified-women) politics is required to create that congruity.

Lesbians grapple with questions of how to integrate into a movement (feminist) without a community or a culture of their own and develop a base that would keep them (or at least their work and visibility) from becoming absorbed or ghettoized into the gender politics of the women’s movement or other movement politics. Firstly, Lesbians need to re-affirm their existence without withdrawing from feminist politics or focusing solely on Lesbian-rights activism; and secondly, create their politics in a different way.

In rhetorical terms, the politics of invisibility in the larger heterosexual society also ties into the present individualization of the neo-liberal-conservative agenda that began to materialize during the Thatcher-Reagan-Mulroney governments of the 1980s

(Baskevkin, 1998). Obviously Lesbian feminists wanted a lot more than legal-rights: they wanted an end to patriarchy. On the one hand, as quoted in Lesbian Psychologies (1987:

348) Lesbians also hoped to:

achieve visibility without the ghettoization intrinsic to establishing communities by continuing work as lobbyists, special interest organizations, and caucuses within organizations, [and maybe challenging women's studies on its heterosexual biases. On the other hand] Lesbian's quest for visibility is also better served by the courage of individuals and groups of lesbians who openly identify themselves as lesbians and challenge homophobia where they live and work.

Neither Lesbian feminist goals of deconstructing patriarchy nor their political awareness since the 1980s has changed so much as how they have come to identify themselves or have chosen to act and strategize for the changes they wanted. Clearly if there is no community base or specificity, there will be less of a power base from which to make the changes we all want, such as an end to heterosexist-classist-racist patriarchy.

Separatism offers one alternative to the dilemmas Lesbians faced during the 1970s and 1980s. During those years great numbers of Lesbians did choose community building as an option by creating women's alternative businesses, collectives, women's co-ops, alternative bookstores, feminist newspapers like *Pandora*, and restaurants; building a women's culture in art, music and film; and helping to create and work in the shelter/hostel movements and rape crisis centres. Lesbian feminists entered into the therapy and alternative healing professions in droves. It became particularly important for some to embrace the Women's Spirituality Movement.⁷¹

There appeared to be a period of abeyance during the 1980s, and to some extent in the present when large numbers of “second wave” Lesbians in Nova Scotia withdrew somewhat to look at who they were and where they wanted to go as Lesbian feminists. Other Lesbians such as Ann Bishop worked within mixed groups to have Lesbians and gays included in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*, while others put their energy into social work, community services and alternative counselling services. These kinds of movements toward community-building have been seen as a “sell out” to cultural politics by some feminists (see Miles, 1997, Echols, 1989). It is important that the move by some Lesbian feminists to develop women’s culture is not viewed as being non-political. Cultural and human rights advancements, to varying degrees, can be seen not so much as a “separatist” movement (although I am not discounting that possibility, because some women chose that option) but as the building of a needed and desired Lesbian Community.⁷²

The apparent inward focus and attempt to create a Lesbian culture has also been seen, and is often criticized as, a de-politicising or a turning away from global feminist politics when the world is in crisis.⁷³ However, when one views it in terms of attempting to build a form of community-based participatory agency for change, one that Lesbians have been denied by a homophobic and heterosexist world, these criticisms make little sense. In fact, I am as puzzled as Verda Taylor and Leila Rupp over the assault on cultural feminism in feminist discourse, it being so closely identified with Lesbianism. As Taylor and Rupp (1993) have pointed out, this move by some feminists to disrespect

cultural feminism constitutes little more than a thinly disguised attack on Lesbians and lesbian feminism, an onslaught that even “mainstream” feminists would never presume to direct at any other community, culture or minority group struggling to find its identity and human rights.

While Alice Echols (1989) is a Lesbian, and seen as one of the most influential Lesbian critics of cultural feminism, I disagree with her analysis of cultural feminism as having a depoliticizing influence in the feminist movement for two basic reasons. Cultural feminism can be perceived in somewhat different terms and perspective. Firstly, as mentioned, cultural feminism is a means of creating a community base for Lesbian-feminist agency and a channel for working through a radical agenda. Secondly, cultural feminism can also be seen as a mechanism for maintaining a women’s community through the downward cycle of protest (Rupp and Taylor, 1987). What could be more political than women healing from patriarchal abuse or getting together to create change in their lives?

Cultural feminism as defined by Radical feminists, I believe, has helped feminism survive the “80s”, not led to its decline or demise as suggested by some theorists. Taylor and Rupp (1996:151) maintain:

The other social movements of the sixties, which gave birth to the radical branch of the women’s movement, began to ebb in the late seventies to a period of abeyance. Lesbian feminists, like the earlier women’s rights advocates, hung on in a climate of declining opportunities.

My challenge to this would be that we have only succeeded in small ways in establishing the culture and community-based forces for change we had hoped for in the “70s”.

However, when one takes a step back to gain a perspective and to consider what has been accomplished, virtually in a thirty-year period of building alternatives for women that are not centred in the patriarchy, it is more worthy of inspiration than condemnation.

Just as other minority groups have learned, some Lesbian feminists have come to recognize that their interests will most likely not be served outside of their own efforts and visibility. This became obvious to some Nova Scotia Lesbian feminists when time and again throughout the years working in ad hoc committees such as International Women's Day and Take Back the Night, Lesbian inclusion would be dropped from the agenda for the "good" of that year's particular theme. For example, between the drafting of posters and pamphlets and the going to print, the term Lesbian somehow "mysteriously" disappeared. This was not a one-time "mistake" or "oversight" but a year after year occurrence, a structure that partially stems from Lesbians being a buffer/scapegoat of the movement, discussed earlier in this section. It was also these kinds of silencing mechanisms that were part of the process of invisibility that also tempted some Lesbians to withdraw from their direct involvement in the women's movement to form their own culture. This illustrates some of the "politics" between Lesbian and non-Lesbian women. Moreover, each oppressed group or movement reaches a point of balance between supporters of the oppressed and the oppressed, and it is incumbent on both Lesbians and heterosexual women to remember and to remind each other of our achievements as we continue to focus on our feminist visions.

Chapter VI

Lesbian Theorizing and the Paradox of Lesbian Theory

Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression and violence.

Adrienne Rich⁷⁴

Previous chapters ground feminist theory in the herstorical context of Lesbian and Nova Scotia feminism. Kitchen-table theorizing played an intrinsic part in the building of a solid and comprehensive women's movement in Nova Scotia. Women gathered together in homes, women's conferences, restaurants and borrowed spaces from various community centres to strategize for political action as well as to develop feminist theory. For most women involved in the arenas of grass-roots activism, creating feminist theory was not about intellectual interpretation of academic discourse or abstract thinking. Feminist theory was about women making sense out of the oppression happening in their own, and other women's, lives. The personal as political was about feminist praxis. This process of consciousness-raising was vital for women and particularly for Lesbians who were exploring the ways they fit or did not fit within women's organizations.

In this section the status of Lesbians will be analyzed through such topics as: women's studies, identity politics, postmodernism, and Lesbian invisibility and silence. In addition, Cheshire Calhoun's (1995) concept of the "Lesbian disappearance under the sign women," and her (1997) project of separating Lesbian feminist theory from feminist theory as a political initiative is explored. Her work begs answers to the question, at what juncture in the last couple of decades have Lesbians and heterosexual feminists allowed

radical feminist theorizing about heterosexism to become a moot point in serious feminist-theory making?

Radicalesbianfeminism

The rumours of the demise of “radicalesbianfeminism” have been greatly exaggerated. There is a body of academic literature published lately that suggests radical feminism is dead, in fact it is said that it lasted roughly from 1970 – 1975. For those of us, who have actually been around, and practicing it for the past thirty years, that has come as a bit of a surprise. Defining radical feminism, however, is extremely complex. What Lesbian feminism means depends on whose work you read and with whom you speak. It can be anything from the grounded theory of Lesbian oppression, a liberal analysis of the state, an analysis of heterosexism, to the postmodern polysyllabic and polyphonous analysis of difference, or anything in between. Even trying to create a definitive meaning of what constitutes Lesbian sexuality (what makes a Lesbian a Lesbian?) is wrought with complex paradoxes.

What cuts through it all for Lesbian feminists during that time frame of the 1980s was a comforting realization that “when you meet one – you will know it.” Relatively speaking, however, as the decade advanced it became harder and harder to identify who was a Lesbian. Most of the Lesbian women interviewed, to varying degrees, maintained their Lesbian feminist analysis as defined in early radical writings. Classic and monumental works such as, “The Woman Identified Woman,” by the Radicalesbians, and

Charlotte Bunch's "Lesbians in Revolt" were about both personal and political choices.

The tenets on which radical lesbian feminism was based proclaimed sexism as the root of all oppression, and therefore Lesbianism was the most basic threat to male supremacy. This was stated in the 1970 Radical Lesbian edict (2000) "with that real self, with that consciousness, we begin a revolution to end the imposition of all coercive identifications, and to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression."⁷⁵ Radical feminism – Lesbian feminism is as simple and as overwhelmingly complex as that, working toward rudimentary change of the social structures of institutions and social relations. It is an analysis of patriarchy and how oppression manifests itself within that context.

As theorists we need to look at the roots of this phenomenon of invisibility from the perspectives of both Lesbian feminism and heterosexist politics, and as Lesbians we also need to further consider the safest way to speak out. What do Lesbians have to gain by speaking their truths and what do they have to gain or lose if Lesbian feminists move towards separating Lesbian and feminist theory? Making sense of it is challenging, frustrating and bewildering at the same time, and there is no clear consensus even in academe that Lesbians are oppressed, thus the need to become more visible is in our own interests. In addition, it seems there has always been a necessity for Lesbians to be vigilant about visibility in the movement and the Academy, a presence that Lesbians have had to cultivate and maintain.

Lesbian Standpoint, Within the Rupture of Their Stories

Feminist theory and knowledge came through academia as well as grass roots and women's herstory. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of authority kitchen-table theorizing has on academic theorizing or the influence the academy has on the everyday life of feminists outside of the academy. Academic feminists worked diligently towards creating new ways of doing research based in community experience.⁷⁶ However, over time the gap between community based kitchen-table research and theorizing and feminist academic theorizing expanded; and as Lesbians attempted to analyze their oppression within a feminism framework they got caught in a whirlwind of theoretical paradox characterized in the reality of their lives.

In the 1970s feminists within the university setting began to recognize the androcentric nature of studies and theories in the academy. Dorothy Smith (1992: 131) referred to the historical erasure of women through male bias; she wrote that sociology was written from the "position" of men.⁷⁷ In the embryonic phase of women's studies, women began to theorize and initiate research practices from the "standpoint" of women. At that stage, Smith's concept of a "standpoint" for women provided a critical strategy for providing a methodology to essentially remake sociology and other disciplinary studies in the academy by virtue of the knowing of society from outside the abstract of established practices of research. There began to be a determined and concrete recognition for the need to ground theory in the actual lived experience of women.

Women as a marginalized group existed in what Smith (1975:371) called the “rupture” of their stories, their descriptions of themselves and their understanding of their world was provided to them by the “social knowledge” available to them. I suggest here that just as women as a marginalized group existed in the gap of androcentric theory and practice, so do Nova Scotia Lesbians exist in the “gap” of heterosexist feminist theories in the academy. This rupture is indicated by the persistent pattern of exclusion of Lesbianism from women’s studies materials and syllabi as witnessed in the content analysis project I undertook of the Nova Scotia Women’s Studies Program (see preamble, vii).

The construction of thinking and the portraits we use to understand ourselves are created for us by the dominant ideology. This ideology represents a largely heterosexual women’s standpoint in Women’s Studies Programs, and perspectives of Lesbians are kept on the periphery of those same mechanisms of education, media and other social structures that Dorothy Smith (1987) speaks of in The Everyday World as Problematic. Marilyn Frye (1996: 53) offers us insight in response to what she perceives as an heterosexual bias in women’s studies:

[L]ooking at women’s studies from my lesbian perspective and my lesbian-feminist sensibilities, what I see is that women’s studies is heterosexual. The predominance of heterosexual perspectives, values, commitments, thought, and vision is usually so complete and ubiquitous that it cannot be perceived, for lack of contrast ... basically and persuasively [the] heterosexual character of women’s studies is very clear and perceptible - overwhelming and deeply disappointing. It is also, usually, unspoken and unspeakable.

Lesbians then come to interpret their experiences as a rupture in both community and academically generated theory as well as within a global feminist context.⁷⁸ It is within this rupture of Lesbian experience, especially in women's studies, that discourse needs to be happening because it is this reality that holds potentially crucial concepts basic to both Lesbian standpoint and feminist theory. Now Lesbians are increasingly in danger of becoming, if they have not already, invisible within the process of feminist-theory making. While Lesbian theorists debate the merits of a dual system separating Lesbian theory from feminist theory and both theorists and activists struggle against being consumed by "queer" politics, Lesbian feminists, particularly those women who are being labelled "Second Wave," often feel caught in a no-win situation - both inside and outside of the feminist movement.

Feminist academic research constantly attempts to bridge that gap by engaging in participatory research based in the community. The women interviewed have undergraduate to post-graduate degrees, therefore, the level to which the academy has swayed their theories of Lesbian oppression remains undetermined. Academically defined "trickle-down" theories of knowledge do not usually work well for women, even within a feminist context. However, theories from academia have an undetermined effect on Lesbian lives and we need to know where the gaps are in order to begin to understand the effect. This project with Nova Scotia feminists and grass-roots organizations is one such attempt to comprehend that rift in order to discern the levels of visibility of Lesbians in the Nova Scotia women's movement from the 1980s to the present.

The Dislocation of Lesbian Feminists

The theoretical paradox for Lesbians was exacerbated by the advent of Identity Politics and the politics of “difference” that is currently debated within the feminist movement in the guise of positionality of particularly identified women. The complexities and theories of Lesbian identity began to filter into *Lesbian focused spaces* like Wild Womyn where Lesbians struggled with how they fit within the structures of other women’s movement organizations such as Women’s Health Education Network and Voice of Women.

Nova Scotia feminists moved from crisis to crisis in the 1980s responding to every military initiative as well as every move by the government to cut back core funding; and because of this, one of the most difficult to recognize silencing mechanisms of Lesbians was inadvertently practiced during this period, namely there never seemed to be a “right time” to challenge heterosexism within organizations. There were obscurely unspoken promises that Lesbian issues would be examined when any given crisis was over because “now” was not the appropriate time to push a “Lesbian agenda”. Examining heterosexism did not seem to fit into the larger agenda.

With the exception of a few Lesbian feminists who attempted to incorporate an analysis that integrated and connected Lesbophobia with military/government patriarchal power in practical terms, most Lesbians seemed to accept this argument. Others eventually began to question whether there would ever be an “appropriate” time and continued to push for Lesbian issues to be incorporated at each and every level of

analytical theory and feminist action. Lesbians were without a doubt welcomed and supported on individual and personal levels in the *women only space* of VOW and the *Lesbian friendly space* of Women's Health and Education Network but silenced at the apex of visibility. Workshops and conference meetings were occasionally disrupted over the philosophical issues of a women-only meeting space or action. This worked both for and against Lesbian contribution and visibility in these organizations.

The wondrous differences that Lesbian feminists discovered and cultivated in the 1980s through such venues as Wild Womyn festivals that allowed Lesbians to claim a distinctive identity are currently being corrupted in an ever narrowing feminist theoretical dialogue in the academy. For example, questioning definitions of erotica and examining ways in which Lesbian love-making was different from heterosexual sex, or questioning areas of sexuality that supposedly "lead" to the "sex wars".⁷⁹ Some of those same conceptualizations are also being employed by post-modern feminists to disavow a common base from which feminists can strategize for radical overall change or challenge to the structures of patriarchy.

Identity Politics

One of the most useful explanations of difference and "identity politics" that I have come across yet, is found in, Practising Feminism, by Charles and Hughes-Freeland (1996: 4) who defines it as the emergence of a new-politic in feminism:

The assertion of difference was associated with the emergence of identity politics within the women's liberation movement and a shift in the analysis

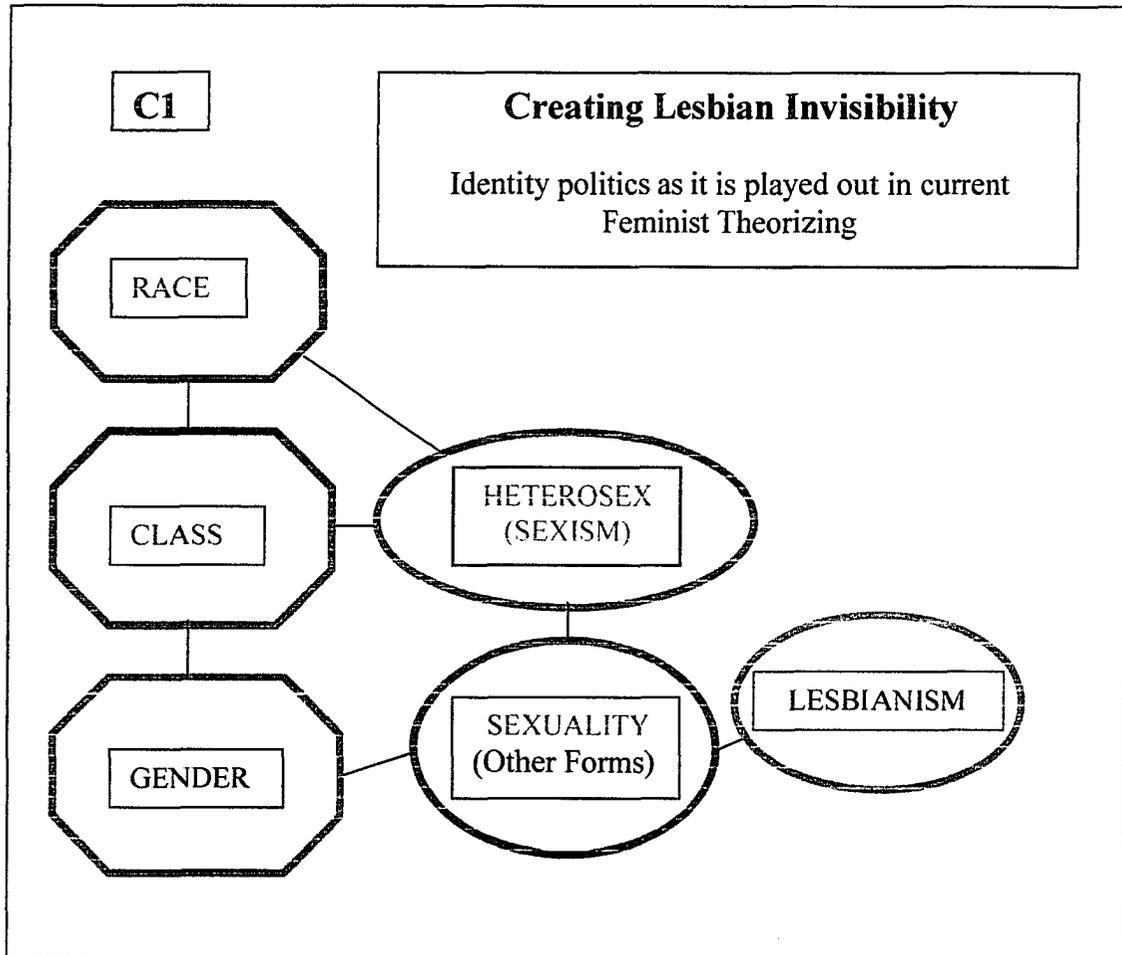
and explanation of women's oppression. The notion of oppression was not abandoned but, instead of analysing it in terms of structures and systems, the construction of gendered subjectivities and identities was problematised; the focus shifted from class to culture, from structure to agency, from a concern with systematic gender divisions to a concern with gender identities based on difference.... Feminist *identity politics* tended to foreground individual behaviour and lifestyle rather than structures of oppression.

Lesbians might legitimately expect that a move towards Identity Politics would de-marginalize them from the periphery of theoretical feminist frameworks and create an unprecedented inclusion of Lesbian feminist theory. Although the potential, in theory at least, was present to effect that move, in practice, it created the opposite effect by the entrenchment of a structure of theory that has displaced Lesbians, rather than ensuring their equal inclusion.

Identity politics as constructed theoretically in the late 20th century focused theoretical attention on gender, race and class. This type of framework viewed Lesbians only in terms of their sexuality, located within gender analysis. The failure to place Lesbians within the context of culture and community equal to that of race and class relegated Lesbians to an annex of radical gender politics. This phenomenon of excluding Lesbians is even evident in the area of women's studies. My argument is that it is the very structure of current feminist "politics of difference" in feminist theory that sets up the dynamics of exclusion which makes it easier for heterosexual women (of any ethnic, race, class, age or ability) to exclude Lesbians in the theoretical narrative. Because the theory of heterosexism does not easily fit within current frames of feminist theory, as an equal theory of decentralized gender politics, it also removes Lesbians from the centre of

issues and projects except when initiated by Lesbians themselves (Lewin, 1995).

Let us look more clearly at this example of Lesbian visibility being erased. In chart one (C1) I have constructed an image of “identity politics” as it has developed



over the last number of years. The diagram characterizes a displaced women-centered feminism. The design is a representation of how I have argued the politics of identity and difference works to disappear Lesbians, particularly within a gender analysis. This characterization also indicates how Lesbianism has been relegated to a sub-category of a sub-category within feminist theorizing. When assuming heterosexism and decentering

women, feminists tend to examine the concepts of gay oppression in conjunction with sexuality, under the auspices of gender studies.

This depiction (C1) partially explains Lesbian omission in feminist works by those who analyse women's oppression from the perspective of race and class. Lesbianism just does not fit within the framework on par with gender, class and race. Analysis of heterosexism is relegated to gender analysis either because of the assumption that it is the most appropriate forum in which to engage discourse or because of outright Lesbophobia. Since gender analysis tends to disappear women generally, it only follows that Lesbians are doubly disadvantaged. Sheila Jeffreys (1996: 359) in her critique of gender theories recognizes that they have become:

[D]epoliticised, sanitised and something difficult to associate with sexual violence, economic inequality, women dying from back street abortions. It is gender reinvented as play for those who see themselves far removed from the nitty gritty of women's oppression.

When we remove women from the centre of our analysis, it stands to reason the results will be a fragmented feminism, and as the chart indicates, a displacement of Lesbians.

That awkward fit of Lesbianism in current theoretical analysis also allows global feminist heterosexual theorists, writers and researchers to ignore the importance of recognizing and theorizing heterosexism. The mechanisms of Lesbian exclusion become apparent even when authors adopt a more women centered approach and do name Lesbians in a list of oppressions. At best, however, they add Lesbianism onto *the end of the list* of oppressions as an inconsistent afterthought. For example, Angela Miles' Integrative Feminisms,⁸⁰ among other contemporary feminist writings, demonstrates this

exclusionary pattern characteristic of heterosexist theory and Lesbian visibility in women's studies programs and in the feminist movement.⁸¹ Just as androcentric focus in the academy has a distinct effect on women (and in society generally), having been diluted under a generic heading of male, so do Lesbians become hidden within the term "women". This can lead to missing information or misinformation about Lesbians in the current local and global women's movement(s), as well as within an herstorical context, in similar ways that women have suffered erasure in male history and androcentric theories.⁸²

Post-modernity and Gender Analysis

Post-modernity has had an increasing impact on feminist theory.⁸³ Because of that influence, it becomes necessary to examine the roots of post-modernism as well as its impact on Lesbian visibility. It was within the context of the *Lesbian focused space* "Wild Women Don't Get the Blues" that a large number of Lesbian feminists worked through their analysis around post-modern ideas (although at the time few of us understood the term). In the later years post-modern tensions began to manifest through topics and confrontational discussions around sexual performance issues that did not necessarily employ a feminist analysis.

By the middle of the 1980s, according to the literature in Sociological texts such as Ritzer (1996), there were also growing claims in academic discourse that because modern society was in the process of moving into a post-modern one, new tools were

needed for analysis. The validity of “grand-narratives” or “meta-structures” was in serious question as were explanations for what was going on in the world as a whole. New contexts, suggested postmodernism, could only be explained by the complexities of difference. Post-modernism was also characterized by the belief that there are no scientific laws of explanation or laws of existing structures independently of people’s experiences and will. Post-modernists rejected the perspective of a rational process that could be explained through underlying structures, and the notion of objectivity.

Some critics such as Rosemarie Tong (1989: 231) see post-modern feminists (proponents of pure post-modernism) as “contemporary epicureans who withdraw from real revolutionary struggle-marches, campaigns, boycotts, protests - into a garden of intellectual delights, use ideas in such a specific way that no one else can understand what they are doing.” Personally, I find Tong’s assessment harsh because in reality there are many dedicated feminists who have postmodernist ideas (to varying degrees) and are striving to explore new ways of “doing” feminism while struggling to deconstruct the relationship between how women are oppressed and what oppression is about. Post-modernism does provide a challenge to dominant theories of feminism with its multiple truths and diverse analyses.

The problem of post-modernism for some feminists is that it denies the very possibility of creating significant social change. Traditional feminist theories such as - liberal, Marxian, socialist and radical feminism - attempt to identify the structural factors and effects that shape the reality and the knowledge of women’s oppression by social

structures, that can be explained intelligibly, and theories that can be reduced to the common denominators of these oppressions. Otherwise, there would seem to be no distinction between feminism and humanism. In moderate forms such as in identity politics, postmodernism does allow for some social analysis, but it has become mostly a non-aligned approach. Because it is so extremely subjective there is no structural reality or larger forum of order from which to draw explanations. Social life has no logic or meaning for extreme post-modernists, so social analysis is rather like trying to hold sand in the palm of your hand and having it run through your fingers. If there are no structural forces operating, it makes social theorizing for change, as much of an impossibility as it does a social science or a feminism.

To view post-modernism in slightly different terms, proponents have rightly (although not uniquely) pointed out that society can be characterized by increasingly complex forms, and new ways need to be developed to capture, describe and explain the complexities of “difference”. However, I would argue, social analysis also needs to explain the complexities of “sameness” at the same time.

I share with post modernists some of the cautions they express of the modernist project and agree that a different way of discerning oppression does need to be seriously considered. The “god-trick,” as socialist theorist Nancy Hartsock has coined it, is the assumption of the enlightenment ideal, that disembodied “reason” can produce accurate and objective accounts of the world, and the supposition of human universality and homogeneity based on the common capacity to reason.⁸⁴ Fundamental to modernist

theories is the postulate that one can speak of human nature, truth and other statements of universality. A third area of concern is that enlightenment thought is generally perceived to be characterized by an overall power of knowledge. These are serious and legitimate challenges to feminist thought, theories and practices, and if ignored, or not somehow incorporated into various feminisms, they could very well be vital challenges to feminism as a social agent for change. However, despite the valid postmodernist's claims of a rejection or avoidance of universality and opposition to enlightenment ideas of empirical and universal assumption, universal assertions tend to find their way into post-modernist writings.⁸⁵

Post-modernism faces the same criticisms which all micro-exclusive-theories do, that is, the inability to transpose social behaviour to a larger scale. It fails to adequately deal with such issues as wide-scale oppression and domination of women. The need to understand the present world system, to bring about changes in it, almost inevitably means the theories of post-modernism (just because it is so fractured) can be harmful in their ability to be a distraction from strategizing for changes within the current world system. Post-modern feminist thought can be most useful as part of the challenge and criticism of the biased assumptions inherent in enlightenment methodologies. This is especially true of the implicit heterosexual middle-class and white-male westernized reference points embodied there. These assumptions and criticisms, however, are mainly concepts that radical feminists have been working through for the past thirty years (Mies.1991: 60-84).⁸⁶

Theoretical gains made by feminists, in particular groups such as Women's Health Education Network, recognized in the 1980s that the inequality of women in the health system was based on sexual difference and a radical analysis was needed to strategize against it. It is true that gender roles and relations are social constructs, nevertheless, post-modernism and gender studies currently ignore radical and Lesbian feminist analysis, and yet, have adequately challenged neither the concept of patriarchy and man's domination over women nor violence directed against women's issues. Gender studies have either shelved or excluded the radical feminist and psychoanalytic components of the analysis around sexuality, sexism, heterosexism and male violence, that is proffered by Miles' (1996) vision of an *integrative feminism*.

The further we move away from the analysis of patriarchy as a primary basis of women's oppression, the greater the risk of rendering Lesbians invisible. The further we move from a completely integrated understanding of violence against women, the greater the risk of neutralizing feminist's power to invoke change. Issues of patriarchal violence is just one strong nexus of unity for all feminists, because again, these issues do not fit easily into a de-woman centred politic as it has developed over the past couple of decades; and incidentally, allows heterosexual women and males cross-culturally, off the hook in dealing with heterosexism and sexism.

Feminist Theory or Lesbian Theory: The Ins and Outs of Being Out or In

Lesbian oppression, says Adrienne Rich (1979: 202), is about silence and invisibility:

For us, the process of naming and defining is not an intellectual game, but a grasping of our experience and a key to action. The word *lesbian* must be affirmed because to discard it is to collaborate with silence and lying about our very existence; with the closet-game, the creation of the *unspeakable*.

Adrienne Rich wrote those words over twenty years ago, and as I read them today, it becomes a sad indicator of how little has really changed for Lesbians in the women's movement. Lesbian feminists may feel the need to start over again fighting the overt war against patriarchy that infiltrates their struggle to exist within a movement that they had a very large part in building. I do not presume, or even attempt to, recreate Rich's brilliant work on "Compulsory Heterosexuality" (Rich.1986).⁸⁷

Rich moved us beyond the analysis of exclusion, while most of us were mainly complaining about it, into an examination of the heterosexist institutions of patriarchy. She offered us new insights into that ideology that has been instrumental in our understanding of the configuration of all women's sexuality, economics, gender inequity and racial oppression. The next step should have been for us to further explicate the interrelations of compulsory heterosexuality, racism and class analysis as they function within patriarchy. However, as Calhoun (1997: 200-201) correctly surmises:

Contemporary lesbian theorists are less inclined to read lesbianism as a feminist resistance to male dominance. Instead, following the trend that feminist theory has taken, the focus has largely shifted to women's relation to women: the presence of ageism, racism, and anti-Semitism among lesbians; the problem of avoiding a totalizing discourse that speaks for all

lesbians without being sensitive to differences; the difficulty of creating community in the face of political differences ... and the need to construct new conceptions of female agency and female friendship. All of these are issues that have their birthplace in feminist theory. They become lesbian issues only because the general concern with women's relation to women is narrowed to lesbians' relation to [other] lesbians.

Once again, lesbian thought becomes applied feminist thought. The premise of Cashire Calhoun's project to explore the options of separating Lesbian theory and feminist theory, as it fits into my work here, is her recognition and exploration of both a dual biological sex and gender system in order to theorize both male domination and heterosexual domination. Calhoun questions whether Lesbian interests can be best met within a purely feminist frame.⁸⁸ One of the core points of this section is questioning whether Lesbian interests can be fully incorporated into the de-centralized-women's framework of identity politics, post-modernism or within the radicallesbianfeminist theory of women-identified-women and compulsory heterosexuality - or something altogether different.

Feminist philosopher, Claudia Card (1998: 207) when attempting to define Lesbian feminism, assessed that it was about "several approaches to feminist theory that happen to be taken by lesbians moved to protect and defend lesbian existence and lesbian connections and to improve lesbian social well-being. So, loosely understood, lesbian feminism might be basically liberal, for example, or basically socialist." Although I tend to agree with her, I do not think she goes far enough and would add that Lesbian feminism is also "radical" in the true sense of the word. Lesbian feminism is a rudimentary challenge at the very core of patriarchy. Heterosexism, as a theory, is about

deconstructing the systems of heterosexism and sexist oppression, at least to the same extent feminist theorists deconstruct classism and racism.

In the early 1970s, Adrienne Rich turned feminist theory on its ear by insisting we look at “compulsory heterosexuality” as the means to Lesbian oppression. Instead of focussing on what makes a Lesbian a Lesbian, the shift of consciousness freed up a lot of energy for Lesbians in the Women’s Movement to explore the ways in which the institution of heterosexual patriarchy affected all women. The effect on those Nova Scotia Lesbians engaged in grass roots activism having access to Rich’s essays (compulsory heterosexuality in particular) was like a breath of fresh air. There was many a night after VOW meetings and WHEN conferences, that pockets of Lesbians met to pour over and talk well into the wee hours about Rich’s words, gauging how they fit in their lives.

The “woman-identified-woman” continuum created a different kind of consciousness for all feminists in those earlier days of the “second wave” women’s movement. The understanding of the need for political unity for Radicalesbians, and the idea that women’s oppression was fundamental to patriarchy, were both primary in the creation of a common base of analysis and action for Lesbians and heterosexual women.

According to Phelan (1989: 41) this:

[n]ew analysis carried within it something more than coalition, however. The conclusion of ‘The Woman-Identified-Woman’ is that the basic structure of control over women is that of sexuality, and in particular the requirement of heterosexuality. This is the structure that must be rejected if women are to become whole beings.⁸⁹

Beyond analysis and in practical terms, invisibility can be an insidious form of the psychological violence of sexual oppression. However, to be visible, loosely defined as being “out” to the greater society, can bring with it sexual violence and physical oppression, but it can also be a freedom from socially confining norms as well. I do not want to make personal judgements about women who do “choose” to remain invisible or “in the closet,” because it takes a certain kind of courage to live a secretive life: it requires living in very difficult circumstances. All Lesbians carry their own complex considerations of choice to be “in” or “out” of the “closet”. However, it is my personal contention that of the two, visibility is my preferred strategy for change. One concrete example is that Lesbians are now covered under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. This accomplishment is attributed to daring women such as Ann Bishop (see interview in previous chapter), gaining public attention while offering society an alternative view of Lesbians, one that is not laden with negative stereotypes.

The Paradox of Lesbian Theorizing in Praxis

Within feminist theory, the paradox for Lesbian feminists seems to lie in an obscure need by contemporary theorists to re-create an *either - or* matrix in which either Lesbian-feminism or feminist-Lesbianism can gestate. In the same way that women personally exist with all of their identities and grapple with ways to discover a means to incorporate each identity in order to stay healthy, so does an integrative feminism.

Growing up with a fractured identity is bearable when women recognize that instead of

being excluded from the milieu of each identity, it is possible to create a way to embrace them. In this same way we need to be searching for ways to explore the gap/ruptures in feminist theory while finding a way to amalgamate. I am not speaking here primarily of identity politics, but of the necessity to create a balance between theories of difference and sameness that can be absorbed into a feminist movement of what Angela Miles calls “integrative feminism”. This is the paradox and the challenge to our feminist politics, as Lesbians, do we open up and expose the *rupture* between feminist theory and Lesbian theory, or do we move off the feminist continuum all together and move into Queer politics, which disappears Lesbians? Or do we create something entirely different?

Throughout this thesis I have suggested that feminist theory, without being grounded in the reality of women’s lived experience, is an exercise in intellectual indulgence. Lesbian reality is what Chashire Calhoun offers in her analysis, and in this section I seriously consider, her project of separating Lesbian theory from feminist theory. I believe what she is attempting fits precisely within the discourse of the “rupture” of feminist theory making. Calhoun outlines for us in “Taking Seriously Dual Systems and Sex,” three major principles where, in dialogue she diverges from theorists such as Ann Ferguson⁹⁰ and feminist philosopher Claudia Card by examining the desirability of heterosexism as a distinctive axis of oppression (Calhoun.1998: 224-225):

First, I think lesbian difference needs to occupy center stage, including possible conflicts between lesbians’ and heterosexual women’s political aims. Second, I think that difference will come into full view only by thinking of heterosexual domination as a separate axis of oppression. Third, I think that heterosexual women’s compliance with male domination [as suggested by analysis of compulsory heterosexuality]; these privileges are sufficiently

attractive to give heterosexuals a vested interest in maintaining ... lesbian oppression even in the absence of patriarchy.

The cornerstone of Calhoun's project, as feminist philosopher Claudia Card (1998: 206) views it:

is to distinguish lesbian oppression (or justice) from gender oppression (or injustice) in order to be able to identify specific strategies of resistance to lesbian oppression as distinct from strategies of resistance to gender oppression ... [and] suggests the possibility of real conflict, as in the question whether to open up the family, marriage, and motherhood to lesbians and gays, rather than resisting those institutions as oppressive and for that reason seeking alternatives to them.

From a radical feminist (often understood as one word in the 1970s) perspective, marriage was seen as the convergence of men's legal access to women with the sanctions of society and religion, all of which created an outlaw status for Lesbians.

The privilege and state sanctioned marriage brings up two salient issues that appear to be paradoxical goals for Lesbians. Firstly, to resist the "privilege" of marriage, as Card suggests is a futile endeavour, - considering Lesbians are denied the right anyway. It seems for Lesbians to waste energy on discourse around whether or not they should or should not uphold the patriarchy by resisting marriage may be a moot point. Since the only radical feminists (with a few exceptions) who hold true that analysis any more are Lesbians, and Lesbians cannot make an impact alone, perhaps equity rights proponents are somewhat justified in asking why not put energy into at least making this society bearable for Lesbians? That does not negate a deconstructionist analysis, it means Lesbians cannot resist what they do not have.

Card intimates that a civil rights approach retards the rudimentary changes Lesbians want by legitimizing and buying into the patterns of patriarchal oppression. None-the-less, it is the heterosexual privileges of a state-endorsed marriage, family and uncontested motherhood that characterizes one of the core differences experienced by Lesbians and heterosexual women. So Calhoun (1998: 226-227) is correct when she assesses that marriage is much more than what is included in a:

set of privileges that result from giving pride of place to the heterosexual married couple. Those privileges include a socially and legally recognized private sphere, control over the education of children, the freedom to self-identify as heterosexual in public, the guarantee of seeing one's own life reflected and affirmed in cultural products, and the status to define and redefine what marriage and the family mean ... [it means] in allying themselves with lesbians, heterosexual women stand to lose much more than access to male privileges.

State and church recognized marriages may not be the answer to Lesbian oppression, but the mere fact that Lesbians are denied them is a key to understanding and analyzing all women's oppression.

A second point of theoretical paradox for Lesbians is that gaining equity rights for Lesbians is only a pseudo-solution. Lesbianism cannot *only* fit within the theory of heterosexism, nor can it *only* fit within a feminist theory, which is why I endeavour to show there is an overlap of current gender and sexuality theories. This is why it is also necessary to develop a whole new analysis that encompasses a theory of all women's situation in patriarchal societies. A feminist analysis needs to be constructed which will ensure that heterosexism, as a core oppression, fits within a framework of patriarchy that respects the uniqueness of the Lesbian position.

Creating A De-marginalized Feminist Theory

Throughout this research I have emphasized dichotomies such as; visibility and invisibility; Lesbian and non-Lesbian; feminist theory and Lesbian theory; first wave and second wave. While it is possible to profess that a fissure exists in the Nova Scotia Women's Movement, theoretically the "Cartesian split" is a false dichotomy, and useful for the purposes of analysis only. For Lesbians, the effect of existing within a patriarchal world is a scenario of duality, one that demands both the possibility of choice and, at the same time, removing it. The lived experience for Lesbians is entangled in the process of being "in" or "out" to family and the greater society.

In what Linda Christiansen-Ruffman (1989:133) calls the "either/or syndrome," she points out that "we" verses "they," (or in this case "visibility" verses "invisibility") is more characteristic of an hierarchical and patriarchal-organized approach to the world than one based on women's culture. Dichotomous reasoning, says Christiansen-Ruffman (1989: 135-136), can also be:

[c]onceived along a continuum of one level of reality through our instructions to form mutually-exclusive and exhaustive categories ... Perhaps a legitimate – and corrective – assumption would be to see how both 'ends' of such dualisms might apply to an individual in different ways and over time and space".

At the same time, it can be hazardous to fall into the trap of one-dimensional, "either/or" analytical thinking – with your eyes shut.⁹¹ So we must be aware and keep in mind the nature of patriarchy when incorporating the notion of dualism into our theoretical framework.

Christiansen-Ruffman (1989: n143) writes that there can be inherent dangers in the use of dichotomies as an analytical tool and, at certain stages, it becomes counter-productive.

Keeping in mind Christiansen-Ruffman's admonition, I have developed a chart to help visualize the complexities of feminist thinking, and where Lesbians fit within the frameworks of feminist theory.

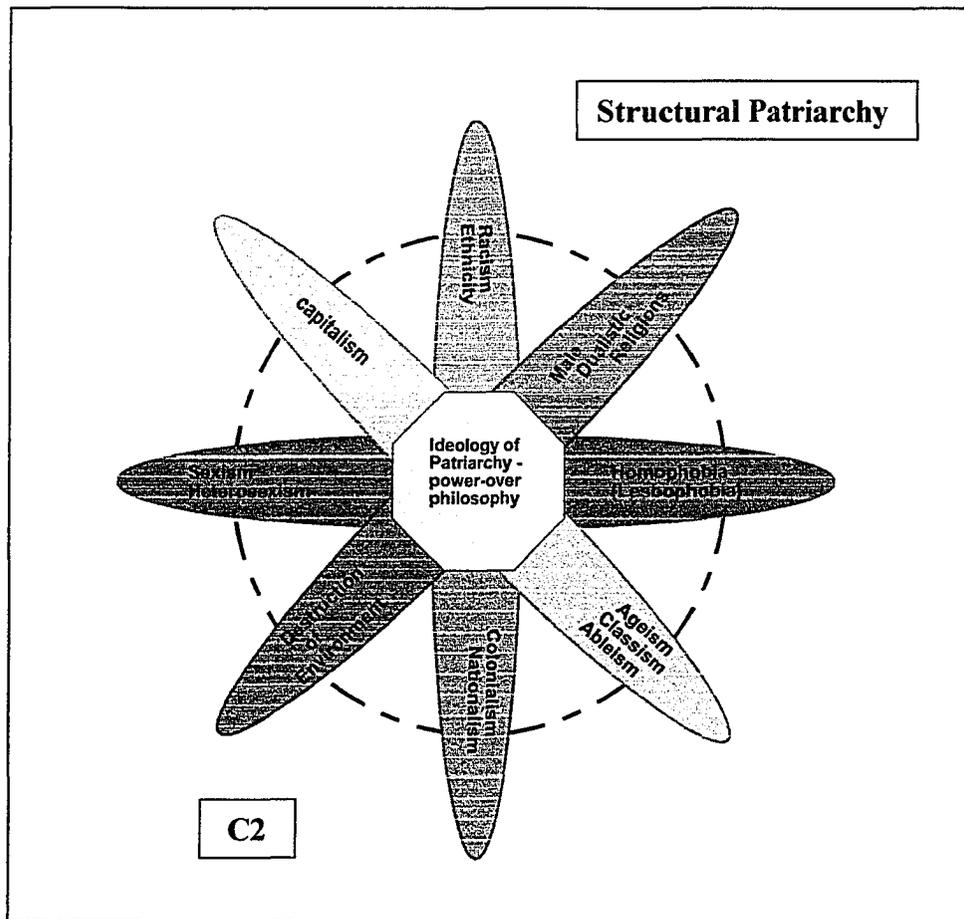


Chart two (C2) is a model of what structural-patriarchy might look like from the analysis of de-marginalized feminist theory. The Diagram represents how Lesbian feminists might assume, at least in theory, they fit within a women-centered model, or in a

a paradigm which recognized the interconnectedness of patriarchy.

From this model we get a sense of how various segments of the feminist movement might choose to strategize for change, deriving priority from their position within patriarchy. At the *octagonal core* we can see how the ideology of patriarchy (male coercion) overlaps and merges various forms of oppression while the structure and ideologies of patriarchy manifest themselves under the mask of a power-over philosophy.

Oppression resides both inside the system of patriarchy, with degrees of resistance within the system (the arms within the broken circle – the broken circle representing the boundaries of patriarchy), and small pockets beyond the periphery. Each manifestation, or effect of oppression, is illustrated corresponding to the philosophy from which it might possibly be derived. For example, the effect of Racism might be patriarchal colonialism, or nationalism. One can observe this dynamic in the fallout from war: where one race or ethnic group of people is vilified as a means of drawing another group together in national patriotism, setting up a dichotomy that can both perpetuate and maintain patriarchy.

To see either “end” or side of the process of invisibility for Lesbians in the Nova Scotia Movement has certainly been a component of this study. All things considered, I have more often favoured the political strategy of being visible over invisibility. I do this because of a sincere belief that visibility as a course of action has brought Lesbians more concrete changes in the scope of Canadian society.⁹² It is the dichotomous nature and structure of the patriarchy that creates the situation for Lesbians. In any event, the need to

be able to make choices whether to be open or not, and the question of physical, emotional and economical survival is paramount in most Lesbian's lives. The more terrible questions, says Adrienne Rich (1979: 211) "lie deeper where a woman is forced, or permits herself, to lead a censored life." In the 1950s and before, when the public was notably intolerant, and more narrowly/rigidly defined, my strategy may or may not have been different. And as the extreme political right gains more and more power and support from the general public, I suspect there will come a time when there will be increased risk involved in being visible.

Feminist theorists have to look more closely for ways to incorporate an analysis that does not create Lesbian invisibility or compulsion to separate to ensure visibility, but one that will allow them to still function within a feminist framework. I have certainly experienced many times in the past couple of years the phenomenon of equating Lesbian theory with feminist theory, where I was asked to explain over and over again a grounded-Lesbian theory of oppression that makes Lesbian oppression differentiated from other women's oppression under the structure of heterosexism. This is where feminist theory breaks down. This rupture is not only because some straight feminists "just don't get it." It is the collapse of the edifice of Lesbian theorizing of such concepts as "women - identified - women," or "the continuum of compulsory heterosexuality" and "identity politics," all of which ultimately create the rupture/gap within feminist frameworks.⁹³

Adrienne Rich (1986) exhorts us that when trying to create theory out of life experience it is:

crucial that we understand Lesbian feminism in the deepest, most radical sense: as that love for ourselves and other women, that commitment to the freedom of all of us, which transcends the category of 'sexual preference' and the issue of civil rights, to become a politics of *asking women's questions*, demanding a world in which the integrity of all women - not a chosen few - shall be honoured and validated in every aspect of culture.

Regardless of how legitimate Rich's radical transformative vision may be, we can take exception to the "transcending" of the categories of sexual preference or civil rights. In an either/or world it implies a depreciation of the value and need of sexual practices and the basic rights aspect of this politic, and a desire to create a Lesbian identity. We must gaze through the politics, as well as transcend them, and find a way to work simultaneously to accommodate both. In fact, this is one of the major challenges of Lesbian/heterosexual feminist theory. As Calhoun has shown us, it is this point of civil rights - having the same rights as other minorities and heterosexual persons - that is part of the core of Lesbian oppression, particularly, as the rights relate to marriage and access/adoption of children. As to the situation here in Canada, it also means the need for inclusion of sexual orientation as sexual orientation in the constitution.⁹⁴

The feminist movement cannot hope to accomplish the goals of freedom from oppression while still thinking and strategizing within the frame of linear and dichotomous theory. Although as feminists we are exploring various ways not to use linear theory we continue in a linear and hierarchal frame by attempting to *superimpose* one form of oppression over another, expecting them to fit. We are still maintaining a

climate of hierarchical oppressions by moving away from viewing patriarchal ideology and its effects as the centre of women's oppression. Oppression may manifest itself in different and pernicious ways, some more visible than others, but it overlaps and interrelates and, if we continue our exclusive and fractured way of perceiving feminist theory, how then can we lay claim to an integrative and transformative feminism? How then will we accomplish the radical Lesbian project envisioned by Rich, if that turns out to be our goal? When we speak of the politics of silence and invisibility, what is it that we are really saying? Adrienne Rich (1986: 199) expresses the effects of invisibility this way:

[I]nvisibility is a dangerous and painful condition.... When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you ... when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you look into a mirror and see nothing. Yet you know you exist and others like you, that this is a game with mirrors. It takes some strength of soul - and not just individual strength, but collective understanding - to resist this void, this non-being into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard. And to make yourself visible, to claim that your experience is just as real and normative as any other.

Without fully recognizing the pernicious dynamics of non-visible oppression, it becomes difficult for some feminists to appreciate the insidious damage of the impact on Lesbians. Some charge lesbianism is a matter of a "choice" that visible minorities do not have; and for those who are more conscious of the issues and are compelled to search deeper, it becomes either the effects of oppression or the effects of suppression.⁹⁵ In fact, the politics of invisibility is neither. It becomes a *Sophie's Choice* where we as Lesbians are placed in an untenable position - not of our own making - and, are forced to make

decisions that detrimentally effect our lives and the lives of those we love in ways that hurt us all, regardless of the supposed “choices”.⁹⁶

Different forms of oppression always weave in and out, back and forth. As feminists we need to see what is visible and what is not visible in new terms. We also need to learn to see the double-sided lybris – visibility in both positive and negative terms, and invisibleness in negatives and positives. Both situations have their costs and privileges; they take on different forms of pain, internally and externally. The goal has to be, as much as possible, to bridge the gaps as they exist rather than fracturing them into too many irreconcilable pieces.

To break silence is to strategize against forced invisibility. “It is important to me,” says Rich (1986: 199) “to remember that in the nineteenth century, women - all women - were forbidden by law to speak in public meetings. Society depended on their muteness. But some, and then more and more, refused to be mute and spoke up. Without them, we would not even be here today.”

Chapter VI I

Conclusion

The three basic concepts explored within the context of this work, the relationship between Lesbian and heterosexual women, the processes of Lesbian invisibility within the Nova Scotia women's movement and the seeming contradictions of Lesbian visibility and invisibility have had profound effects on the current levels of Lesbian feminist activism. Motivation for this thesis was to put Lesbians back on the agenda of women's studies and visibly back into the centre of Nova Scotia feminist politics. To ensure that Lesbian voices are heard, and their presence normalized inside and outside of the women's movement, Lesbians must visibly re-emerge in women's studies and in theory making, with a deeper, more comprehensive model of how to analyse heterosexism. The last chapter suggested an analysis that weaves throughout patriarchy, interrelating the politics of oppression in whatever form it manifests itself.

The decade of the 1980s was a time of exciting activity in the Nova Scotia feminist community. Affinity between Lesbian and heterosexual women was unique in that the province is geographically small and close knit; feminist leaders recognized and welcomed diversity and had little tolerance for the kinds of ideological splits that badly fractured other places such as Toronto. The study participants inferred that Nova Scotia was too small to follow Toronto's factionalism, and that the women's movement would be stronger if diverse groups worked together. If you were a feminist and involved in

doing the work of the movement, chances were very good that you would have personally known most of the women active in the province, or at least known of them and their work. This closeness allowed Lesbians and heterosexual women to work together and negotiate how to approach and to accomplish what needed to be done. Feminist leaders who welcomed diversity made an enormous difference, women such as Muriel Duckworth, and educator, Black community-leader Marie Hamilton who guided the women's movement through difficult times over the years.

One rural respondent assessed the situation of Nova Scotia feminism in these terms; "it was partly the times and partly the kind of environment in which we saw ourselves as feminists. We were living in a very rural, traditional community. [As] a small group, we were already isolated and there was no benefit to isolating the Lesbians because then we would have been two little tiny groups, even smaller. *We were just thrilled to have what we had.*"

Early Lesbian feminists, with the exception of a few courageous women, were not yet out of the closet in the 1970s and early 1980s. Despite this lack of visibility Lesbian contribution was well known; although seldom acknowledged, Lesbians were central to theory making and political activism. However, as the data have shown, the movement often used Lesbian silencing and invisibility as a strategy to further the goals of feminism. This became most evident in the struggles around such issues as funding and public events that called for movement credibility. At the individual level, the self-silencing among Lesbians was used as a self-defence or safety mechanism; and "self-sacrificing" a

Lesbian political agenda was sometimes used as a misguided protection of the movement and movement goals.

The appalling lack of herstorical information regarding Nova Scotia Lesbians opens up whole new areas for intensive research. There is a definite urgency for future research that may account for the erasure of Lesbians in the Canadian and Nova Scotia movements other than what I have put forth here. For instance, an exploration of whether new converts to the movement are more or less Lesbophobic than “second” wave feminists would provide an important means of comparison. One obvious limitation of this study in determining Lesbian visibility is the consideration of how younger Lesbian feminists see their oppression, and how they view their place in the movement. Another project that would better help us understand the process and dynamics of this era compared to the present would be to employ similar kinds of research with Lesbians and heterosexual women who had been deeply involved in the women’s movement during the 1970s and 1980s but are no longer. It would also be meaningful to engage in discourse around the role that identity politics and Queer movement has played in erasing Lesbian visibility both inside and outside the academy. Such a study would perhaps be imperative to the continuity of the women’s movement by also placing it within a macro political economic context.

This feminist research based within the community has the potential for transformative consciousness-raising. It has allowed reciprocal benefits for those women who participated, while creating and adding to a knowledge base that helps to reframe our

thinking. If this endeavour has accomplished nothing else, it brought Lesbians and non-Lesbian women's thoughts, experiences and relationships with each other into the open with a new understanding.

Not reflected in the data are the emotions and individual antidotes that one would have hoped for in a project such as this. Before we can even begin to consider the full scope of relations between Lesbian and heterosexual women, it makes sense to pursue research that will bring together the two constituents in a focus-group format. None-the-less, the data very clearly indicated that most of the Lesbians in this research felt strongly supported by heterosexual women on a personal and individual basis. That the support was solid and welcomed was apparent, and to some extent, is still happening in Nova Scotia as seen in the discussions that are taking place sporadically in small groups, particularly when initiated by Lesbians in such places as Women's Studies seminars. However, discussions and support need to be happening in a larger, public context. The feminist movement must move beyond recognition of Lesbians in the private sphere into a visible and public one. I argue that Lesbian-feminists need to take the lead in this as well. It would be strategically meaningful for Lesbians to continue to work on personal levels locally and on political levels nationally and internationally, which could then be used strategically at the local level.

On a political and theoretical level, Lesbian feminist visibility in Nova Scotia has been strategized nearly out of existence today. While the implications of fully separating from the feminist movement may at times be tempting to some Lesbian feminists, it leads

to moving Lesbianism off the feminist continuum, and that leaves me decidedly uncomfortable. To assuage the sometimes painful experiences and incorporate the paradoxes Lesbians encounter within the women's movement, the situation often seems irreconcilable and overwhelming. However, I envision a model of feminism for the Nova Scotia women's movement that moves women into the realm of spirals that have women at its centre and sweeps outward with each circular motion.

This women-centered vision must not be seen as being essentialist but a multi-centered and transformative feminism similar to that envisioned by Angela Miles. Along with Miles (1996: 144), I imagine a movement as one of: "cooperative, egalitarian, life-centered social arrangements wherein the currently devalued, marginalized, and trivialized women-associated responsibilities and values of love and nurturing are the organizing principles of society; wherein differences do not mean inequality and can be celebrated as constitutive of commonality; wherein freedom is found in and won through community; and wherein humanity's embeddedness in nature is not only recognized but welcomed."

Endnotes

¹ Quoted from Graduate Seminar research essay by Darl Wood, Winter, 2000. Saint Mary's University, Halifax.

² The use of the upper case "L" in Lesbian is deliberate and a political statement of dignity which I incorporate here and in all of my writings.

³ This quote is an excerpt from an unpublished paper "Feminist Research: Exploring the Spaces between Theory and Practice" which was presented at the 16th Qualitative Analysis Conference at the University of New Brunswick, 1999.

⁴ I would like to thank Anne Manicom for passing on her personal copies of Pandora to me for this project.

⁵ Doyle-Bedwell is the past Chair of the Nova Scotia Advisory Counsel of the Status of Women, and a professor of law at Dalhousie University, Halifax. Bedwell spoke on "Ethics and Community-Based Research," September, 22, 1999.

⁶ For the purpose of this section on methodology, I define "social engagement" (a term I adapted from a conference, presentation paper, by Linda Christiansen-Ruffman and Stella Lord, "Thinking Through Qualitative Methodologies: Diversity and New Directions from Feminist Participatory Action Research," 1999) as engagement in social change, particularly the process of consciousness raising and any reciprocal exchange that engages women in research. Participatory research, in and of itself, is a form of action research, not in the traditional research sense of the word, but none-the-less, a valid form of agency. The process includes an agreement of the use of data disposition. My concept of engagement could range from consciousness-raising to direct political action. I deliberately invoke the term social engagement as opposed to action research, even though it entails most of the same principles, because it invites a stronger sense of the process of reciprocity with the participants and the researcher. I can only hope that this use of collected data, challenges the invisibility of Lesbians within the Academy, but also moves beyond the achievement of minimal thesis requirements. However, as true to the principle of feminist participatory research, the outcome depends on the participants.

⁷ In this adapted model, theory and praxis becomes a process, one that Maria Mies calls, "conscious partiality." The recording of women's words gives voice to their lived experience. The sharing of collectivized wisdom, perceptions and assumptions (Mies, 1996:13) creates an exciting and powerful forum in which to engage in social change. By adopting a particular Lesbian approach to research was what I proposed considered Lesbian research? Just what does it mean to be doing lesbian research? Does being a Lesbian, focusing on Lesbian - heterosexual relationships and communities make the research I do lesbian or feminist research, or both? Can there be a distinction? Who else would or could do the research if not Lesbians? Ellen Lewin (1995: 324) in her now classic article, "Writing Lesbian Ethnography" asks some of the same questions:

The notion that work on 'one's own group' was needed to address the long-standing

invisibility of that group was bolstered by the related notion that a gay or lesbian investigator would benefit from a sort of insider status that would avoid problems of objectification and exoticization. The apparent inability of traditional anthropology to consider sexual variation as other than a bizarre curiosity speaks to the parallel phenomenon of a "heterosexual assumption" in Western societies, that is, the assumption that heterosexuality is natural and universal and that it requires neither explanation nor theorizing. Homosexuality, on the other hand, becomes visible under these intellectual conditions only when specifically revealed.

⁸ At the very beginning I had planned focus groups that would be structured with four women in three separate groups. One group was to be heterosexual women with myself as an observer. I anticipated that working as an insider with an all-Lesbian focus group, an outsider in the heterosexual focus group, and an insider/outsider within the mixed focus group. Each focus group would present its own set of dynamics as well as separate sets of questions and problems that would have required different approaches and scrutiny.

⁹ Within the context of this project I have used the colloquial language of the feminist movement generally practiced here in Nova Scotia, for example, the use of *Nova Scotia* movement instead of *Nova Scotian* movement.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Jan Catano for so generously making copies of WHEN's Newsletters and newspaper, *Vitality* available to me. The contents allowed me to gain a more complete understanding of the significant role WHEN played in bringing together Lesbians and non-Lesbians.

¹¹ I am extremely grateful to Betty Peterson for allowing me access to her files, scrapbooks and personal knowledge, as well as her memories of the activities of the Voice of Women from the 1980s through to the present. She graciously allowed me to wander through her personal space, browsing the shelves and walls of her apartment, which turned out to be an incalculable source of VOW paraphernalia and Nova Scotia women's herstory.

¹² The lack of demographic diversity was ultimately disappointing for me, in that it produced a very limited view of one section of the Lesbian and women's community.

¹³ This is a phenomenon that sometimes happens in therapy when the client, upon reflection, feels she has exposed more of herself than she felt comfortable with.

¹⁴ Quoted from The Word of A Woman: Feminist Dispatches 1968-1992. Robin Morgan. 1992. W.W. Norton and Company, New York: 158.

¹⁵ Quoted from "A Circle of Voices: Women's Organizations in the Early 19th Century," by Sandra Barry. In Group Dynamics: A Collection of Nova Scotia Her-Stories. Eds. Megan Ardyche; Brenda Conroy; Barbara Cottrell; donalee Moulton-Barrett and Jane Wright. Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women 10th Anniversary Celebration Project, Halifax: 1990.

¹⁶ Edited by Robin Morgan, Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement. Random House, New York: 1970.

¹⁷ Sexual Politics is Kate Millett's doctoral thesis, published in 1970, and sensationalized by the media as a manifesto of the Women's Liberation Movement.

¹⁸ The Furies was a Lesbian/feminist collective who compiled a series of articles on class attitudes and behaviour as a way to begin to understand class as a political mechanism within feminism. They also understood that it was a mechanism for maintaining not only capitalism but also patriarchy and white supremacy. These writings were in the days before Adrienne Riche's concept of compulsory heterosexuality (1978); the concept of the "woman identified woman" was just beginning to be explored by the Furies in 1970.

¹⁹For those who assume that Nova Scotia has a bland history and lacks imagination, even a quick read of the introduction of No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938, edited by Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth, tells a different story. The complex roots of Nova Scotia heritage is both exciting and engaging.

²⁰ Mount Allison University, in Sackville, New Brunswick opened its doors to women approximately the same time as Acadia University in Nova Scotia.

²¹Anna Leonowens, of "Anna and the King" fame, wrote a book about her experience as governess to the 67 children and many wives of King Mongkut of Thailand, An English Governess at the Court of Siam. Eliza Ritchie was the first female professor in Nova Scotia.

²²It only took fifty more years of agitation by women's organizations for the government to actually pass an equal pay for equal work law in 1972.

²³ See the 1987 work of Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, in which they researched the post WWII "abeyance" of feminism, and the resurgence of the "second-wave" women's movement.

²⁴ Mansbridge quotes some very interesting statistics in her article. A 1989 survey asking a representative sample of United States women if they considered themselves feminists, 42 percent of Black women said "yes" compared with only 31 percent of White women and as many working-class as middle-class women said "yes" they considered themselves feminists. In a further study 11 percent of white women compared to 28 percent Black women admitted that the label "feminist" perfectly described themselves.

In a new twist to the, "I'm not a feminist but," category, the second survey suggests that more than half (52%) of the women interviewed rated themselves at a six out of ten on the scale – one being rated as totally wrong and ten being a perfect fit for the description of feminist.

²⁵ Alice Walker's definition of "womanist", for the most part, coincides with how some of us define feminist. Of particular interest is her statement that "womanist is to feminist as purple to

lavender” when the reverse is closer to reality and rather like comparing apples to oranges. See “Womanism” by Alice Walker in Women: Images and Realities, A Multicultural Anthology, Second Edition. Eds., Amy Kesselman; Lily D. McNair; and Nancy Schniedewind, 1999: 13.

²⁶ Resources referred to here have to do with such things as media access, money, power, and expertise as well as the people that the organization is built around (Ryan, 1992).

²⁷ Wine and Ristock (1991) suggest it is common for national organizations in Canada to engage the strategy of coalitions, because they are particularly suited for Canada’s large geographical area and diverse population.

²⁸ For an in depth analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, its history and achievements, see Jill Vickers, Pauline Rankin and Christine Appelle’s Politics as If Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

²⁹ Another interpretation suggests that the liberal approach in Canada was presented by the women who successfully advocated for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women and that NAC was the coalition of diverse forms of women’s movement organizations, including some radical collectives.

³⁰ Many feminists would argue that the current government in Nova Scotia, unfortunately, seems not to have any shame.

³¹ This quote was taken from Muriel Duckworth’s acceptance speech when she received her Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Dalhousie University in 1987 (Kerans, 1996:22).

³² It was Julia Ward Howe who developed Mother’s Day as a day of peace. Unfortunately, the concept of peace was dropped, and Mother’s Day remains today as a day of honour devoid of any overt political context.

³³ There are wonderful stories of a handful of women who resisted the world wars, which can be found in Janice Williamson and Deborah Gorham’s 1989 book about the Canadian Peace Movement, Up and Doing: Canadian Women and Peace. The Women’s Press, Toronto. For further reading, another interesting book, Shoulder to Shoulder, illustrates the paradoxical move of a large portion of militant suffragists into supporting the WWI war effort in Britain. Also see Lisa Thickner’s The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914. London: Chatto and Windus, 1988.

³⁴ For an in-depth account of VOW’s actions to support anti-American aggression in Viet Nam, see Kay Macpherson’s autobiography, When in Doubt, Do Both, and Marion Douglas Kerans’ biography of Muriel Duckworth, Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active Pacifist. Both of these books tell of the plight of the women and children in Viet Nam. One action that reached into the hearts of the Canadian and American peace movements was to knit woolens for Vietnamese children. Many children lived in caves and holes because their bamboo villages had been destroyed. Instructions that accompanied knitting patterns, stated “*must be knitted in dark colours*.”

A baby wrapped in a light-coloured shawl or garment is a deadly attraction for Napalm, 'Lazy Day' or High Explosive bombs in Vietnam, and must be properly camouflaged in dark blending colours" (Kerans, 1996:117). The description in Macpherson's book was even more stark, "Hiding can be very cold. Families had to live under-ground, in caves and dugouts, sometimes floating the babies in baskets when trenches were flooded." Garments had to be knitted in dark colours because light colours could be seen by American bomber pilots (Macpherson 1994:119).

³⁵As a note of interest, 1960 also happens to be the same year Status Indians in Canada gained the franchise.

³⁶ This quote was taken from film maker Pat Kipping's profile film on Muriel Duckworth, "Muriel Duckworth: Practising Peace." Perversity Productions, Inc., 1999. Producer/Director, Patricia Kipping.

³⁷ Detailed information on actions undertaken by VOW and other groups during the decade of the 1980s, are in the process of being catalogued in preparation for submission to the Nova Scotia Provincial Archives. These are being compiled by Betty Peterson and will become available to the general public under her name.

³⁸Long time American Civil Rights and Peace activist, Betty Peterson, describes one of the protests: "[a]t lunch hour, a disciplined and well-prepared group of fourteen, mostly women, sat in a circle amid a web of yarn and sang peace songs while a support group stood nearby and cheered as they were charged and carried off, limp and unresisting, by the hastily summoned police.

Outside a large group of well-wishers linked arms in front of the police van filled with civil dissidents. Upon orders of the police, they broke ranks and moved back, but not before several incidents occurred which, as usual, were blown out of all proportion by the press. There was no violence involved *per se* and supporters are investigating and resolving each report:

The fourteen arrested were held in jail for eight hours until the meeting [U.S. and Canadian big businessmen and Pentagon officials] was adjourned ... In retrospect, this action has produced many pluses: various peace groups are working well together in trust; there is a core in each affinity group, which is more willing to sit down and be counted ... more people are alert and disturbed over the connections between business and the military and our increasing support of U.S. foreign policy. Next time we can be sure that these connections will not be so well advertised" (Macpherson, 1987:70).

³⁹ On a very personal note, Muriel is one of the most extraordinary women I have ever met, and when I was formally introduced to her in 1980 it seemed as if I had always known her. I am still infatuated with the way Muriel's mind works and with her keen insight into international and

local politics. I love her life-long dedication to the cause of peace and human rights; and I especially love her sense of humour that kept me laughing throughout the various interviews.

⁴⁰ During the course of the hostilities, the Voice of Women maintained a vigil every Friday.

⁴¹ My instruction in the use of nuclear, biological and chemical defence (NBCD) and combat training in the military, and my involvement with the activities of the peace movement in the 1980s left me with disturbing nightmares of nuclear holocaust. These dreams resumed with

my re-involvement with the Voice of Women at the beginning of the war in Kosovo. It would be interesting to know if other women are bothered by these same kinds of dreams, which motivated us to action in the 1980s.

⁴² The Canadian Voice of Women for Peace was actually incorporated on February 27, 1986.

⁴³ Debunk Debert was a combined action by affinity groups formed at the Women and Militarism conference in 1984. The action was in response to the Emergency Measures Operation, "Continuity of Government Program," planned by the Military and Government Officials who would converge at the Military Installment (Bunker) in Debert, Nova Scotia. This was to be a practice-run of a fake nuclear war, where the government would remain functional within the confines of a radiation shelter in the likelihood of a nuclear attack. As a point of personal reflection, I had worked with military police when I was in the military where I acted as a courier of classified NATO documents. I would, therefore, have been one of the few women who would have been admitted to the installation. As they say, life is not without its ironies.

⁴⁴ In a personal conversation with local feminist-activist and author, Donna Smyth, she discussed strategies we used for actions, and the issue of differences between contemporary public space and that of the 1980s. "It is very difficult to do things in public space in the world we have now because there's not much of it [public space] left that we have access to. We found that in the 80s when we were doing actions in Halifax there were about five locations that we could actually do them [political action and street theatre] without being kicked out. If we look at our society from that angle, you could see in the 80s the closing out of public space by privatization of things and the commercialization of that, ... people are being consumer units, as it were. They [the authorities such as security guards and police] keep that [our protests] out of view, literally, they removed [it from people's view]. Everything that we would do there [protests], it was too political" (Personal conversation, 12 Nov. 1999).

⁴⁵ One woman, whom I interviewed while visiting Greenham Women's Peace Camp, had just celebrated turning sixty-five and the birth of her first grandchild. She had been bodily thrown down an embankment by a soldier guarding the perimeter-fence of the base. Meeting and speaking with the women there left me with the insight that we must find other ways to challenge and resist the tools of the patriarchy, such as the military. The damage done to women by direct confrontation is a very high price to pay.

⁴⁶ This quote was taken from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Massey Lecture Series that Ursula Franklin gave in 1989. Her lecture was eventually published as The Real World of Technology. This revised edition by Ursula M. Franklin was published by The House of Anansi Press, Toronto, 1999: 113.

⁴⁷The resource library is now housed at the Pictou County Women's Centre in New Glasgow, and it gives women access to a large and wide variety of resources on women's health, and feminist issues.

⁴⁸ Relations between Lesbians and primarily heterosexual women who were exploring their sexuality during this era were extremely complex and fraught with explosive emotions and resentments. The experience of what was termed "political lesbianism" was more often than not left unresolved in the community, and would make a most interesting study.

⁴⁹ One of my favorite personal memories of Wild Womyn, had to do with "personing" the perimeter of the land, and spending time partnering with various women, getting to know them, talking politics and sharing coming out stories. I think I learned more stationed at the gate than in all the workshops that first year.

⁵⁰Symbolically, "lifting the lid off," was Pandora's gift to Nova Scotia women. The myth of Pandora's Box, is herstorically misrepresented by male history as bringing evil into the world. In truth she was "the first woman, sent to earth with all gifts. She brought forth everything that was ... Pandora [the newspaper] was created to provide access to information for those often denied access" (Pandora Collective, 1990: 49).

⁵¹ It was inevitable that the factor of age would play an uncertain role in the data, given the focus of the thesis was mostly structured around the 1980s. How free Lesbians felt about coming out and being out in the women's community, a Lesbian friendly community, or the reality of being out in the context of the larger heterosexual world have different meanings now. I include a couple of brief quotes that express how aging has affected this group of fairly economically privileged women. When I broached the subject of changes over the last twenty years and the unwillingness to tolerate heterosexism within groups they are in now, one respondent described how her fears had disappeared:

Certainly, just when we were talking about what it was like in the 80s – the level of fear that we were dealing with, both as a community and as individuals was amazing. Now, I'm sure there are women who still are, but as for me, and my friends, we've come to a point where fear isn't so present or urgent any more, so it's okay to say what you want to say.

Women who were in their thirties and forties are now entering their fifties and sixties. Having already established a career and place in the world helped to create a comfort level with being out. This lifestyle was not possible for Lesbians of earlier generations, and one that working class women still may not have. The same woman added:

It's different when you own property, instead of renting, and when we're not dependent on other people for our lives. Different when you've got enough of a professional occupation to be able to get work when you need it. All of it is a

product of age, and that makes a difference when you're not so frightened at what the world could do to you.

⁵² In the core group there were two Lesbians, two heterosexual women and two gay males.

⁵³ Audre Lorde, quote from Sister Outsider. 1984. Crossing Press, Freedom, California.

⁵⁴ Lesbians, I suspect, were relatively okay with specificity, but not with the focus of the politics which became almost exclusively about motherhood and marriage, without putting it in the larger context of patriarchy.

⁵⁵ Doctor Marion Hilliard, herself a very closeted Lesbian, and hugely popular. She was one of the most highly respected experts on sexuality and women's health of the time. Korinek, 1998:104) tells us that "all of the issues of Chatelaine that featured Hilliard's articles sold out, many within days. Hilliard was so popular ... because she was not afraid to champion women's rights – in the bedroom, the boardroom and the community. With the exception of her articles, however, the definitions and descriptions of female heterosexuality were often as narrow, rigid and 'constructed' as were the definitions of lesbianism. Neither was unproblematic, but at the end of the day heterosexuality was defined as 'normal' and lesbianism 'abnormal'.

⁵⁶ The anonymous author of this quotation added a postscript to her article entitled "Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians for Example (APPLE) – How it Flowered and Went to Seed" in Group Dynamic: A collection of Nova Scotia Her-Stories, stating that she felt afraid to self-identify as an out Lesbian.

⁵⁷ This newsletter was produced in the manner of so many newsletters of the day by a gestetner duplicator. It was printed on lavender paper in red ink – the front and back covers "featured the same drawing of the heads and shoulders of two women, one with her arm around the other." (Metcalf, 1997: 31). *The Sistership* showed a humorous depiction of ten women afloat in a lifeboat in shark infested waters.

⁵⁸ And, lest we are tempted to think that perhaps Lesbians were being paranoid, those activists who were involved in the Peace Movement were also very aware of having personalized Canadian Security Intelligence Service files. This information, files kept on peace activists, was passed on to me by an old friend who worked on Parliament Hill at the time.

⁵⁹ The Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) was the first Lesbian feminist organization in Canada. The House That Jill Built, by Becki Ross, is also the first comprehensive piece of research on Lesbian feminism from the decade of the 1970s.

⁶⁰ The title of Ross' book, The House That Jill Built, is in reference to Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution, by Jill Johnston, which is based on a compilation of her articles in *The Village Voice* from 1970-1972. It is a fine example of early "second wave" radical Lesbian feminist herstory.

⁶¹ The concept of Lesbians functioning as a buffer for the women's movement is an adaptation and paraphrased from early feminist philosopher Ti-Grace Atkinson, found in Amazon Odyssey: The First Collection of Writings by the Political Pioneer of the Women's Movement. Links Books, New York: 1974.

⁶² An example of another form that "silence" takes is the seeming complacency of other groups and movements to engage when issues that specifically affect Lesbians and Gays, such as inclusion into Provincial and Federal Human Rights Amendments and Bills. Shortly before I left Toronto to move to Halifax, there was a vote in the Ontario Provincial Legislature to include the right for Lesbian and Gays to receive same sex benefits. However, the issue was really about the right for Lesbians and Gays to adopt children and to marry legally. It appears most heterosexual people became squeamish (even those who are somewhat supportive in other areas of human rights for homosexuals) when these types of issues come up. When the Bill was defeated, there was a mass demonstration in Queen's Park, and although there were thousands of Lesbians and Gays present to protest, there was significant "silence" and no visible presence of Unions, other civic groups, or other minority communities. There were no official statements of outrage, condemnation or outcry from women's groups. Lesbians and Gays were alone in their battle by many of the very movements, groups, and affiliations Lesbians had supported and given time and energy to over the years. These are the challenges that the current women's movement need to hear, because some of us ("Second Wave" Lesbians) are reaching middle age and beyond, and we are getting tired.

⁶³ Although, if Lesbians were to gain specific recognition under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they would still face similar kinds of prejudices as other minority groups: intolerance that continues in our misogynist and homophobic-heterosexist society.

⁶⁴ For example, when associations such as the white supremacist group "Arian Nation" proclaim that the reason why there are no jobs available to young white males is because of immigration policies that allow minorities to come into the country and take away *their* jobs, it creates an elevated sense of frustration in white males, elevating the antagonism towards immigrants, sometimes leading to violence against the immigrant target group.

⁶⁵ The Woman's Place was a YWCA (Barrington Street, Halifax) sponsored space and held an anti-Lesbian sentiment from the beginning of its inception. Both Lesbian and heterosexual respondents attributed the demise of A Woman's Place to Lesbophobia. In 1979 the International Women's Day dance had to be moved from the YWCA to the Lesbian and gay bar, The Turret, because there were objections to Lesbians dancing together the previous year when it was held at the YWCA.

⁶⁶ Adapted from Lesbians: A Consciousness Raising Kit, by the Boston NOW Lesbian Task Force.

⁶⁷ It is common knowledge that there is a strong connection between politically influential, Lesbian hate-mongers, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and George W. Bush. During the presidential election both evangelists gave large financial support to the Republican campaigns.

⁶⁸ “REAL Women” is an ultra right-winged organization founded out of the anti-choice movement in 1981. They are against the progressive aims of the women’s movement and aggressively opposed to abortion and Lesbians and Gay rights.

⁶⁹ On February 11, 2000, the Parliament of Canada tabled a same-sex legislation in the House to eliminate discrimination, giving Lesbians and Gays the right to claim each others children as dependants on their income tax; collect survivor benefits under Canada Pension; as well as Pass RRSPS to their partner without being taxed. Of the 65 law statutes of Bill C23, very telling is what was left out, that is, the changes that had to do with definition of family and the right of Lesbians to marry. Unfortunately, the hard -won court victories are not secure. Clause 33, of the Canadian Charter, allows the federal or any provincial government to “opt-out” of any part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This means that even the currently obscure protection that Lesbians (and gays) have as individuals, under the Constitution, is precarious at best. Particularly in that they are excluded from the prohibited list of enumerated grounds, in Section 15(1) – equality before and under the law and equal protection and benefit of law, and, Section 15(2) – affirmative action programs.

⁷⁰This is especially true of Judith Butler’s rejection of sex/gender distinction (Butler, 1997:113-128) that is, her performative account of sex and gender - although fascinating, delving into the complex explanations as I would have to in order to fully appreciate and understand it, would not enhance my arguments here.

⁷¹ When I look back at my life as a feminist, I see my own growth and progress as one of a process, which has evolved. First of all in the 70s, women learned from the feminist movement what they were not allowed to be in this society as a women and as Lesbians. Secondly, in the 1980s women learned how to work towards the goals of freedom within the political framework of feminism. Thirdly, in the 1990s, the movement taught women what they could be as whole beings. However, it was feminist therapy and the women’s spirituality movement that taught women how to get where they wanted to be, and how to heal emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually from the violence of patriarchy. It was through these various movements that women learn how to realize their integrated selves as personal/political praxis; they allow women to develop in as far as women are able to develop within a system that wants to disappear them. Both the women’s spirituality movement and feminist therapy were integral parts of my Lesbian politics.

⁷²For extensive readings on Separatist theories, I would suggest Sarah Lucia-Hoagland and Julia Penelope’s 1991 Anthology, For Lesbians Only. Only Women Press, London. I would also suggest some classical works by Marilyn Frye (particularly “Some Reflections on Separatism and Power” in: Feminist Social Thought: A Reader, ed. Diana Tietjens Meyers. And, anything you can find on Sonia Johnson’s project of a women only, living commune.

⁷³For an over all analysis of reductionist-depoliticization of feminism see *chapter five* of Miles’ Integrative Feminisms.

⁷⁴ Adrienne Rich, quoted in Conditions for Work: The Common World of Women: Twenty-three Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work. Eds. Sara Ruddick and Pamela Daniels. 1977.

⁷⁵ There are numerous publications of "The Woman-Identified-Woman" which was first written and distributed in 1970. This version is part of a remarkable collection of Radical Feminist writings of the 1960s and 1970s, edited by Barbara Crow. It is an extraordinary documentary of the early feminist movement.

⁷⁶ The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women / Institut Canadien DeResherches Sur Les Femmes (CRIA-W-ICREF) is an excellent resource and example of a feminist organization that works toward narrowing the gap between the women's community and academe and research and action. Nova Scotia has been very influential from the creation of the Institute in 1976. CRIA-W-ICREF is a non-profit, national and bilingual organization that is committed to advancing women's equality through research.

⁷⁷ Feminist standpoint theory, often associated with Nancy Hartsock, was actually a concept initiated in a 1974 essay, and became associated with Dorothy Smith's adaptation to the field of sociology. There were three more major essays published by the year 1981, as well as number of colloquia on both Smith's and philosopher of Science Susan Harding's works in the late 1980s (Harding, 1997:388). Feminist standpoint theory as a general class of theory in feminism came about as a way to analyse the worthiness and problems of feminist theoretical achievement that sought a radical break with existing disciplines through locating and discovering knowledge of the social from the position women held in society and her experience of it. My own feminist philosophy of standpoint theory is partially based and influenced by my interpretation of some of Smith's early lectures and writings on Marxist feminist thought.

Standpoint epistemological theory, as it has been developed by other scholars, is used as a focal starting point for many minority groups and movements. For example, Ruth A. Wallace's study "The Mosaic of Research on Religion: Where Are the Women?" looks at the experience of the individual in subordinate positions within the Catholic and Muslim religions (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1997, 36, 1 Mar, 1-12). The women's labour movement as explored by Kathi Weeks around the issues of gender and labour, "Traditionally, women's labour has been undervalued or ignored; therefore, feminist standpoint theories attempt to establish the value and social contributions of women's labour." (Chapter in Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order. Eds. Antonio Calari, Stephen Cullenberg and Carole Biewener. Guilford Press, New York: 1995).

⁷⁸ When the process to incorporate women's studies, epistemology and research into the academy began in Nova Scotia, Lesbians played an important part in its creation. Nevertheless, they were often forced to use selective language and present overt heterosexual issues and materials as "softeners" and exclude the more overt Lesbian materials in the curriculum. This was done in order to present the least controversial and most heterosexual face for the academy in the hopes of legitimizing the newly fledging women's studies program. The ideas of "softeners" in regard to lesbianism was suggested to me by one of the professor in the Nova Scotia Women's

Studies Program in a personal conversation following a presentation I made of this material in 1998.

⁷⁹ In particular, see the work of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon where they enter into discourse on pornography and sexual politics.

⁸⁰ I use this particular book as an example because I feel that Miles has offered us valuable insights and key points of observation and evaluation around transformative feminism. However, there remain for me three primary areas of concern with this work. My first concern was the exclusion of heterosexism from the various listings of oppression and from major analyses on thirty-eight separate occasions, occurrences where I felt it should have been included. These were both in the author's own work and in chosen materials of reference. This omission is significant in a one hundred and forty-five page work.

A second consideration was the placement of Lesbianism or heterosexism in the list; it was invariably and consistently listed last or close to the end of the lists of oppressions. This practice inadvertently creates an hierarchy of oppression because it becomes a subtle statement of qualified and valued importance. My final concern was the heterosexist bias I sensed to be inherent in the work. Although, I assume these patterns to be honest oversights and unintentional, they have helped me to recognize and identify the subtle nature of heterosexist oppression.

⁸¹ When searching for books to verify my observations of Lesbian invisibility in feminist writings I did not lack for materials that validated my theory. Angela Miles' book, Integrative Feminisms, it must be noted is a brilliant and important work and for that reason opens itself to this challenge. What seems to be one of the leading Canadian feminist theory books used in Nova Scotia Women's Studies courses is Changing Patterns: Women in Canada (eds. Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code and Lindsay Dorney – published by McClelland and Stewart, Inc., Toronto: 1993). Burt, Et al, with the exception of perhaps four or five pages that specifically deal with Lesbian issues, Lesbians are fairly invisible and once again *tacked on to the end of lists* of the theories of oppressions, with very little indication that heterosexism exists as a major theoretical perspective. The exception is a brief generalized analysis in Joanna Boehnert's article "The Psychology of Women" (173-175). Heterosexism was not listed in the index. Another leading feminist work used in Nova Scotia Women's Studies courses is, Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States (eds. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, published by McGill – Queen's University Press. Montreal: 1996). These books rate about the same in content and analysis, keeping in mind that these books are the foremost feminist theory books published in Canada in the past ten years, the results can only be disheartening for Lesbians.

⁸² Except for the very dedicated research done by Lesbian scholars, some of the leading herstorical writers and personalities of their times were almost lost to us both as women and as Lesbians. Lesbians, whose lives have been inspiring to Lesbians, just because they were recognized as Lesbian, including women who have become important figures in women's history - women such as: Madame de Stael (1766 - 1817); Willa Cather (1873 - 1947); Amy Lowell (1874 - 1925); Bessie Smith (1894 - 1937); Ma Rainey (Mother of the Blues) and Marguerite Yourcenar (1903 - 1987, who in 1981 became the first woman inducted into the French Academy in its 350

year history). These women provide models for contemporary Lesbians.

⁸³ For an accessible introduction to postmodernism and the social sciences that more evenly portrays the postmodern view see Pauline Marie Rosenau, 1992, Post-modernism and The Social Sciences. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Jurgen Habermas' work, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," in New German Critique 22:3-14 is particularly helpful in understanding the arguments around the complex issues of intellectual discourse. Also the writings of Fredric Jameson are valuable sources of moderate postmodern social theories. I found George Ritzer's 1996, Modern Sociological Theory to be an important source, offering a basic and fairly comprehensive overview of poststructural and postmodern ideology, covering such theorists as Charles Lemert, Jacques Derrida, and of course Michel Foucault.

⁸⁴ The works of Socialist feminist, Nancy Hartsock, is one of the main sources for my views and challenges to enlightenment ideas that I address here in principle. "Feminist theory and the development of revolutionary Strategy," 1979, in Capital Patriarchy and The Case for Socialist Feminism, ed. Z. Eienstein. Monthly Review Press: New York. And, 1997, "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited: Truth or Justice?'" Signs Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Vol.22, 2:367-373.

⁸⁵ For an extensive assessment of postmodernism and identity politics see Alison Assiter's 1996 Enlightened Women and Angela Miles' Integrative Feminisms, 1996. Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell's book, Community Research as Empowerment: Feminist Links, Postmodern Interruptions is filled with examples of an attempt at postmodern discourse that falls back into a modernist critique. For example, their attempt to create a theoretical framework for their book by combining feminism with postmodernism (97) denies the tenets of postmodernism's non-structural premise.

⁸⁶ Maria Mies is outspoken in her disdain of postmodernism, seeing it as a de-politicization and a self-destructive strategy of oblivion - "the killing of the origins." She also uses the appropriate and colourfully-descriptive term "academic matricide," (Mies. 1996: 15-16).

⁸⁷ First published in 1980, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" was a response by Rich "to challenge the erasure of lesbian existence from so much of scholarly feminist literature, an erasure which I [Rich] felt (and feel) to be not just anti-lesbian, but anti-feminist in its consequences, and to distort the experience of heterosexual women as well... I was urging that lesbian existence has been an un-recognized and un-affirmed claiming by women of their sexuality, thus a pattern of resistance, thus also a kind of borderline position from which to analyze and challenge the relationship of heterosexuality to male supremacy. And that lesbian existence, when recognized, demands a conscious restructuring of feminist analysis and criticism, not just a token reference or two" (Rich. 1986:23 and 73).

The original article by Rich was written in 1978 for Signs' Sexuality issue, the 1986 edition included in her book, Blood, Bread, and Poetry consists of a forward and an after-word in which Rich explores in more detail her concept of the Lesbian continuum. "*Lesbian continuum*-the phrase-came from a desire to allow for the greatest possible variation of female-identified

experience, while paying a different kind of respect to *lesbian existence*—the traces and knowledge of women who have made their primary erotic and emotional choice for women. If I were writing the paper today, I would still want to make this distinction but would put more caveats around *lesbian continuum*” (Rich. 1986:73-74).

⁸⁸ My first encounter with Calhoun’s writings was in 1995 when I read her article, “The Gender Closet: Lesbian Disappearance Under the Sign ‘Women’,” in *Feminist Studies*. I was intrigued with the ideas she was articulating because so many of them were thoughts I had been mulling over for some time, and although I differ with her in some key areas such as actually separating Lesbian and feminist theories, her arguments are seductive.

⁸⁹ This analysis, I believe, was particularly based in a Psychoanalytic-feminist framework.

⁹⁰ Ann Ferguson gives an in-depth examination of compulsory heterosexuality in her essay “On ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence’: Defining the Issues.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1981, vol.7, 1:158-172.

⁹¹ At first, the dichotomy is identified, is used in theorizing, and commands its own scholarly importance or dies in obscurity.... At a second stage, some dichotomies that have gained scholarly importance became recognized and used in public discourse. Early in that process such dichotomies provide new insights, but as they gain political use and are applied in ways that are divorced from context, they become what might be called inappropriate public stereotypes. It should be recognized, of course, that this process of knowledge dissemination happens within a political context and those that are most consistent with prevailing ideologies and in the interest of those in power are most likely to progress through the early states, are least likely to be transformed in the process, and are most likely to be reinforced and maintained as inappropriate stereotypes in later stages of the process.

⁹² For an in depth analysis of Lesbianism cross culturally, see Shawn Meghan Burn’s chapter on Lesbianism in her book, *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective*, 2000. Mayfield Publishing Company, Mountain View California.

⁹³ The “woman-identified-woman” was a discussion paper presented at the second Congress to Unite Women in 1970, by a group of women who identified themselves as Radicalesbians. It was the written, distributed and proclaimed answer to the question “what is a Lesbian?” (Phelan. 1989:40).

⁹⁴ Since Egan, (Egan V. Canada (1995), RRFL (4th) 201,95 C.L.L.C. 210-025(JCC) “sex” and “sexual orientation” have been deemed to be analogous. Every subsequent case of sexual orientation has been decided in this light and is considered as the need for *express inclusion*.

⁹⁵ The term, “choice”, more often than not, is used in a tone of accusation or a dismissal of Lesbian claims of oppression. This is double edged, in that it is both insulting to women of colour, by insinuating they might want to change their colour, and belittling to Lesbians because it denies

the reality of their lives and their oppression in a patriarchal society, and judges that lesbianism is in fact a social choice.

⁹⁶To help me understand linear ways of thinking, which brings about concepts of “choice,” which in turn sets up dynamics of hierarchal oppressions, I look to my experience as a therapist for an appropriate analogy. I have worked extensively with adults who had been abused as children. It became apparent early on in my practice that the processes of healing from various forms of abuse required different and specific approaches. However, it was all a manifestation of patriarchal male violence. The women who suffered from severe forms of neglect as children, those who held inside and invisible scars from neglect were some of the more complex clients to work with. In theory, as in issues of power relations, there are no easy answers. And, whether we talk of individual pain and violence, or forms of institutional violence and oppression, it is never as clear-cut as expressed in the linear terms of hierarchical oppressions.

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Annex A

Participatory Research Project

Consent to Participate in Interview and Interview Information Release

I agree to participate in an initial interview about the Nova Scotia feminist movement of the 1980s and in the present.

Part I

I will allow the interview to be taped.

I understand that the interview is being taped so that nothing is missed and so that my words are not changed or missed/misunderstood.

I understand that I may request that the recorder be turned off and that I may also ask that certain sections be erased.

Part II

I agree to allow Darl Wood to use the information from the interview in the research project for her Graduate thesis, report, any publication or speaking engagements in the future.

I understand that my privacy and confidentiality will be honoured and protected by disguised names and any other identifying information if I so desire.

I understand that I have a right to review a written transcript of the interview. After reviewing and discussing the transcript with Darl, I can suggest modifications for accuracy, clarity or for additional information.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Annex B

Possible guide for interviews

Lead in or opening questions:

1. What kinds of issues were they involved with during the 1980s?

Possible follow-up questions and areas that may be useful

2. Do they recall if any of their issues involved Lesbian concerns?
3. Did they perceive any tensions between Lesbians and Straight women while
4. Working on issues? If so, what were they and in what ways were they manifested?
4. Were there misunderstandings or a breakdown in the process of the work?
5. How were those considerations dealt with? Were they faced openly and directly?
6. Were the tensions resolved?
7. Were the tensions resolved to their satisfaction?