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**A POLITICS OF ENGAGEMENT:
A SOCIAL CHANGE FRAMEWORK FOR RETHINKING OUR
CURRENT APPROACHES TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

by

Karen Myers, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Masters of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**

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**A POLITICS OF ENGAGEMENT:
A SOCIAL CHANGE FRAMEWORK FOR RETHINKING OUR
CURRENT APPROACHES TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

submitted by Karen Myers, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

Flo Kellner, Chair

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Fran Kłodawsky, Thesis Co-supervisor
Eileen Saunders, Thesis Co-supervisor

**Carleton University
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Abstract

Writers such as Walker, (1990) and Struthers, (1994) have argued that the 1990's has signaled the need for a strategic re-thinking of our approaches to end violence against women. In this project I argue that critical reflection on questions of strategy is limited by the extent to which assumptions about social change and collective identities are based on "us"/"them" categories and either/or dichotomies. I ask whether a framework based on a politics of engagement would address the strategic dilemmas faced by activists working to end violence against women. A politics of engagement is a social change framework that conceptualizes the state as a contested terrain (Reinelt, 1995) and refuses to conceptualize strategy in terms of either/or dichotomies (e.g. mainstream/disengaged, grassroots/ institutionalized, moderate/radical, service/advocacy, and insider/outsider). Instead it argues that strategies must both "contradict" (pose alternatives to the status quo) and "compete" (engage with the mainstream). I address these questions by interviewing activists who were working in Ottawa-Carleton to end violence against women. Overall, I found that activists in Ottawa-Carleton are using at least four distinct strategies for change: femocrat strategies, mediating strategies, challenging strategies, and disengaging strategies. Each strategy is premised on a different understanding of the state and different assumptions about how to create social change. I situate these strategies in the context of two opposing vision (mainstreaming and disengagement) that have been particularly influential in shaping activism. Each vision has view of what activists should be doing. Finally, I propose a politics of engagement as a strategic social change framework that brings together disengaged and mainstream visions by reformulating their points of disagreement as strategic tensions.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the many people that made this project possible. First and foremost, the extraordinary efforts of feminist activists working to end violence against women need to be recognized. In particular, I would like to thank the activists who agreed to be interviewed for this project. Their critical reflections on current organizing dilemmas form the core of this project. I would also like to thank my key informants. It is through my discussions with these women that I developed my research questions and methodology. My co-supervisor, Fran Klodawsky deserves a very special thanks. Fran has been both a mentor and a friend. She believed in this project long before I could even articulate what it was that I wanted to do. Fran's work on violence against women and local activism has both inspired me and influenced my thinking about social change. It was Fran who introduced me to the Women's Action Centre Against Violence and the Putting the Pieces Together Workshop. I want to extend my thanks to Chris Hunter, for making it possible for me to participate in organizing the workshop. My participation allowed me to work closely with other women working to end violence against women. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Eileen Saunders for her incisive and insightful comments on my final draft. Throughout the time I have known her, Eileen has challenged my thinking, always encouraging me to take my ideas one step further. The careful editing of Jim, Lisa and John on partial drafts of this project was greatly appreciated. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for providing me with support and encouragement throughout this project. I would especially like to thank Peter for believing in me when I needed it the most.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the course of twenty years, violence against woman has moved from a largely unquestioned practice to a highly contested political issue. Recent unprecedented public attention to the issue has made Canadians increasingly aware of the overwhelming extent and prevalence of violence against women. The 1993 Statistics Canada Violence Against Women Survey reports that one-half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since age sixteen and that twenty-five percent of all women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a marital partner. Although numbers such as these have shocked and outraged most Canadians, they cannot convey the truly horrific nature or devastating impact of violence against women. This impact is so far-reaching that the financial and social costs are impossible to calculate. The complexity of the problem of violence against women overwhelms even those who have been working in the field for decades. The phenomenon itself cannot be easily defined. The continuum of violence ranges from verbal abuse to physical assault to murder. Its dimensions include psychological, sexual, physical, financial, and spiritual abuse and it knows no racial, social, cultural, economic, political, or religious boundaries (Canadian Panel, 1994). The 1993 Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women recognizes that violence, in all its complexity, must be situated in the context of racial, gender and class inequality:

Violence against women is seen as the consequence of social, economic and political inequality built into the structure of society and reinforced through assumptions expressed in the language and ideologies of sexism, racism and class . . . Any analysis of violence against women must include recognition of the complex ways in which inequality and power balances structure the lives of Canadian women. (Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1994:3-4)

Several writers have remarked that any account of violence against women faces the task of analysing women's oppression without denying women's agency and resistance (Gordon, 1990; Klodawsky, 1995; Mahoney, 1994; Marcus, 1994; Segal, 1990). The challenge is to describe the horrific nature of violence without por traying women as passive victims of male violence. The Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women states that it struggled to find a balance between the "stark reality of violence against women and women's extraordinary efforts to change the nature of Canadian society" (1994:4). Recognizing that the "horrors" of violence against women have been well documented in so many other sources, in this project, I have chosen to focus primarily on the "extraordinary efforts" of activists working to end violence against women. In this introduction I argue that both as activists and as academics we need to step back and strategically re-think our current efforts to end violence against women. I begin by situating our current efforts to end violence against women within a historical context. Next I describe what I mean by a "strategic rethinking". Finally I introduce my conceptual framework, state my research questions and outline the chapters that follow.

The Historical Context

Gillian Walker (1990) argues that Canadian efforts to end violence against women have passed through three overlapping and interrelated stages: making the issue visible; getting something done about it; and persuading the ruling apparatus to respond properly. She says that the 1990's have marked the beginning of a fourth stage that involves a strategic rethinking of our current approaches to ending violence against women. In this

introduction I use Walker's stages as a framework for reflecting on our past organizing efforts and clarifying our current dilemmas.

(a) Making the issue visible: Historically violence in the home was considered a private or domestic matter inappropriate for state intervention. Fifteen years ago the term 'wife assault' did not even exist. The silence of the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women on the issue of violence against women reflected its almost complete absence from public discourse. The now infamous House of Commons incident represents another indication of just how difficult it was to get the issue taken seriously. In 1982, when Margaret Mitchell requested that the House address the findings of a recently published study that suggested one in ten women were battered by their husbands several male MP's responded by laughing out loud.

By the mid 1970's several shelters had been established and a history of activism had begun. But even as women brought the plight of battered women to public attention, police generally refused to intervene in what many people still considered to be a private or domestic matter. As late as 1982, the Ontario Police college manual directly instructed police to attempt to dissuade the complainant from laying charges. Police officers were instructed "not to discuss the seriousness of the crime, not to threaten arrest and not to 'legalize' unnecessarily" (Walker, 1990:164).

(b) Getting something done about it: During the late 1970's and the early 1980's women's groups pressured the state to respond to the problem of woman abuse. Women demanded both fundamental social change and a response to women's immediate needs. A number of factors converged, however, to make crisis intervention the primary

focus of our efforts to end violence against women. First, as the state responded, feminist challenges were transformed into demands that could be met within the existing political framework. (Many feminists have called this process institutionalization.) Second, as Mathews (1994) points out, pressuring the state to fulfill its stated liberal function of managing violence is a more accessible goal than implementing a broader critique of the state. Third, front-line workers were critical of funds being spent on public education and long term prevention that may or may not work, when so many women were experiencing life-threatening violence. For these reasons, criminal sanctions and crisis services became the cornerstones of the response to violence against women.

In 1983, the federal Solicitor General wrote to Chiefs of Police across Canada, asking them to instruct their officers to lay charges when they had reasonable and probable grounds to believe an assault had occurred. At the provincial level, public education campaigns sent a strong message to the public that wife assault is a crime that will not be tolerated. For example, in 1987, the Attorney General of Ontario introduced the "Wife Assault -- It Is A Crime" strategy:

We will be moving the message of the family violence campaign from "Breaking the Silence"-- which was the first part of our awareness campaign to "Wife Assault -- It Is A Crime". We want to reinforce the message once and for all, that wife assault is not a family affair, but a crime -- and that those who batter their wives will have to be prepared to take the consequences. . . ¹

In the context of a long history of the state's refusal to take wife battering seriously, many women's groups saw the pro-arrest strategy as a significant victory. But

¹From the remarks of Hon. Ian Scott, Family Violence News Conference, April 15, 1987, cited in Breaking Free: A Proposal for Change in Aboriginal Family Violence, Ontario Native Women's Association. Thunder Bay, 1989.

even at this stage, some women were concerned that the criminal justice response would become equated with solving the problem. They feared that the radical impetus of the movement to end violence against women would become absorbed into a conservative law and order agenda.

During the same time period, shelters for abused women were built across the country. By 1986, the number of shelters had grown to 400. In the early days most shelters were run by feminists who saw themselves as women working with other women towards empowerment (MacLeod, 1994). Shelter workers attempted to balance the short term goal of meeting women's immediate needs with a long term vision of social transformation. They provided short term counselling and advocated for structural changes that would promote women's equality. This vision, however, became increasingly influenced by an overall response to violence against women that focused on crisis intervention, short term protection and individual acts of violence (MacLeod, 1994). As shelters became institutionalized, funding formulas tended to require shelters to restrict their work to provision of services. In addition, the overwhelming nature of the problem combined with the urgency of women's safety needs and the sheer number of women seeking support meant that, for the most part, long term goals seemed "formidable, unaffordable, and unattainable (MacLeod, 1994).

(c) Persuading the ruling apparatus to respond appropriately: It wasn't long before women's advocates, community groups, policy makers, and others were questioning the appropriateness of both the social services and criminal justice responses. Aboriginal, immigrant and visible minority women argued that many women in their

communities distrust the police and fear their involvement. In a letter to the editor of the Globe and Mail, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women (NOIVMW) stated, "the strategy of 'wife assault as a crime' is not responsive to the complexities of violence against women in the context of racism in society" NOIVMW goes on to say that "we recognize that the policy works quite well in many communities and that it would be reckless to suggest its abolition".

But even women who chose to use the system often experience it as coercive and unresponsive. In July, 1993 the federally appointed Panel on Violence against Women produced a 10 million dollar report entitled Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence -- Achieving Equality. The final report of the Panel of Violence Against Women, confirmed what many women have already suspected: traditional social services tend to treat women in a patronizing and paternalistic manner and approach the problem in an individualistic, fragmented way with "little or no consideration of survivor's social, economic, political, cultural, religious milieu" (p. 197). One woman testified to the panel, "Social welfare agencies are terribly abusive to women in need. They treat us like second class citizens. Social workers can be abusive, disrespectful and dangerous" (p.179). The report further argues that the criminal justice system is not only hostile and insensitive, but that the entire process "revictimizes" women.. As Barnsley (1985) has so succinctly put it, "a decade ago, much feminist effort was focused on pressuring institutions to respond to wife battering and to other women's issues. In the 1980's we have to deal with the consequence of limited success" (p 84).

A Strategic Rethinking of our Current Approaches

Researchers such as Walker, (1990) and Struthers, (1994) have argued that the 1990's signaled the need for a strategic re-thinking of our approaches to end violence against women. Struthers urges activists and front-line workers to step back from the work long enough to see what it is that we are doing. She asks, "Do we continue to invest so heavily in strategies of individual change in the form of service to some women, or shift the emphasis to systemic strategies of prevention and social change that will, over a much longer time frame, benefit all women?" A second set of questions concerns the criminal justice system: Can the criminal justice system be used as an effective strategy in the struggle to end violence against women and furthermore, should it be used? How can women's groups reconcile the need to engage with the criminal justice system in order to provide protection and safety for women and criminal sanctions for batterers with the reality that the system routinely revictimizes women and perpetuates race, sex and class conflict? In expecting the justice system to respond sensitively to the needs of victims, are we asking it to intervene in ways that are outside its mandate, purpose and capabilities?

In 1994, these questions became particularly relevant for me when I agreed to participate in what appeared to be an innovative project to improve the criminal justice system response to violence against women in Ottawa-Carleton. The goal of the project was to identify obstacles to improving the criminal justice response and to develop a strategy to overcome these obstacles. The project, called, "Putting the Pieces Together", involved two phases. The first phase was a broad-based consultation with frontline workers, survivors, community groups and different sectors of the criminal justice system.

The second phase was a two day conference which brought the same local groups together with representatives from other cities that had developed coordinated criminal justice responses to violence against women.

Overall, the response of women's communities was positive. Some activists, however, were quite critical of the project. These activists were skeptical because the project involved criminal justice decision makers in the process from the beginning. They felt that engagement with the state was essentially synonymous with co-optation. In addition, they questioned the sponsoring agency's ability to represent the interests of battered women because it was not a direct service organization.

The concerns raised by these activists challenged my thinking about social change. Is it reasonable to assume that engagement with the state will inevitably lead to cooptation? Is the state inherently coercive? How does one become entitled to represent the interests of battered women? Whose interests does it serve to maintain a dichotomy between service and advocacy? In thinking about these questions I became aware that these activists held some assumptions about social change that had begun to be challenged by activists and writers in other places. I began to wonder whether challenging assumptions about how to make change was the key to engaging in the strategic rethinking advocated by Struthers, Walker, and others. And I decided that this question was worth pursuing. For this reason, assumptions about social change became the focus of my own project.

A Politics of Engagement

My thinking about social change has been influenced by a number of writers and activists who challenge assumptions about social change (Adamson et. al., 1988; Arnold, 1995; Briskin, 1989; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Klodawsky, 1994,1995; Ferree and Martin, 1995; Fraser, 1989; Greaves and Wylie et. al., 1995; Martin, 1990; Mathews, 1994; Reinelt, 1995; Ristock, 1991; Ursel, 1991; Wittier, 1995). What these authors have in common is that they reject a notion of the state as exclusively coercive and instead conceptualize the state as a contested terrain (Reinelt, 1995). Also, they refuse to conceptualize strategy in terms of either/or dichotomies such as grassroots/institutionalized, moderate/radical, service/advocacy, and insider/outsider. Following Reinelt, (1995) I call this kind of approach a "politics of engagement".

In particular, I have been influenced by Adamson et. al.'s mainstreaming/disengagement continuum and Dobash and Dobash's notion of competing contradiction². Klodawsky (1994,1995) points out that these two sets of concepts provide the basis for a social change framework that avoids polarization around either side of dichotomies. Adamson et. al. argue that activists tend to think about social change in terms of either/or choices between two key politics of change: mainstreaming (engaging with the mainstream to challenge existing social institutions) or disengagement (disengaging from the mainstream to create alternatives). They argue that a more strategic framework would conceptualize the politics of mainstreaming and disengagement not as a choice that needs

² I would like to thank Fran Klodawsky for bring these authors to my attention and pointing out the link between their concepts. Her work on violence against women and local activism (1994, 1995) has strongly influenced my thinking about social change. The connection between these concepts form the core of the conceptual framework of this project.

to be made but as a tension that needs to be maintained. Dobash and Dobash's "competing contradiction" embodies this tension. This notion suggests that it is not enough for strategies to simply critique the status quo. Instead strategies also need to propose solutions that have the potential of being realized in mainstream society. In other words, strategies need both to challenge existing social institutions and to create alternatives. The challenge is finding the most effective balance between mainstreaming and disengagement and competing and contradicting given one's goals, resources, principles, and the political climate of the day.

Research Questions

The focus of this research project is whether a framework based on a politics of engagement would address the strategic dilemmas faced by activists working to end violence against women. Would a framework that challenges assumptions about social change and transcends dichotomies contribute to a strategic rethinking of our approaches to ending violence against women? Do the terms mainstreaming and disengagement have resonance with activists? To what extent do activists identify a tension between "competing" in the mainstream and "contradicting" the status quo. How do activists balance immediate needs of women with a long term vision of social transformation?

I decided to address these questions by interviewing activists who were working in Ottawa-Carleton to end violence against women. In total I conducted 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews with activists. I asked activists questions about the work they have been involved in; their motivations to do this work; the collective identities they construct

for themselves; the factors they consider when evaluating strategies; how they understand the problem of violence against women; and how they think about social change.

In addition, I was able to draw from my observations as a participant in the "Putting the Pieces Together" project. Perhaps because this project was taking place at the same time that I was conducting my interviews, many activists referred to it when they were discussing strategy. As a consequence, the "Putting the Pieces Together" conference, (or "Quincy" as it was popularly know), is used as an example in several instances in Chapter three.

My thesis is divided into five sections: an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter describes my theoretical influences and outlines my conceptual framework, the second chapter describes my research methodology and the third chapter presents my research results and analysis.

Chapter one is an exploration of different theoretical perspectives about social change. In this chapter I argue that how an activist understands social change depends on the conceptual framework she uses. I identify and discuss the state and collective identity as two key concepts that influence understandings about change. Next, I examine how resource mobilization theory, new social movement theory and feminist theory treat these concepts. Finally, I outline my own conceptual framework based on a politics of engagement.

Chapter two outlines my research methodology. In the first part of this chapter, I situate my epistemological orientation within a social constructionist approach and outline the social action framework that guided the research process. Second, I discuss the

methodological literature that influenced my thinking as I attempted to put my feminist values into practice. Third, I outline the actual research process and describe how I conducted my analysis of the data.

In chapter three I present my "results". In the first part of this chapter, I describe and analyse the strategies that were articulated by the activists I interviewed. For each strategy I outline its assumptions about the state, how to make change and what counts as change. In part two I situate these strategies in the broader context of two distinct visions about what activists should be doing to end violence against women.

In the last part of this chapter, I attempt to synthesize two opposing views about how to create social change. I argue that we need to resist either/or dichotomies and move towards conceptualizing mainstreaming and disengagement as a strategic tension that needs to be maintained. Finally, I propose a politics of engagement as a social change framework that addresses the organizing dilemmas of activists working to end violence against women.

I conclude this project by arguing that as activists we need to question our own assumptions and practices and examine the extent to which they produce division and conflict. I summarize the major arguments of this project and describe how a politics of engagement might contribute to a strategic rethinking of our current approaches to ending violence against women.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL INFLUENCES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Several feminist writers (Barnsley, 1988; Currie, 1990; Hilton, 1989; Morgan, 1981; Walker, 1990) have argued that women's engagement with the state and the criminal justice system has severely compromised the goals of the battered women's movement. Hilton goes so far as to argue that the movement is a failure:

Despite partial success in terms of public policy, the movement has failed. Although "battered women" achieved prominence on the public agenda, the very issues which necessitated the recognition of wife beating as a social problem have been refined and even reversed through government cooptation of the problem. (1989:314).

In contrast, Ursel (1991) argues that state involvement should be considered a success, because it has placed the issue in a prominent position in public policy agenda, increased services to abused women and their children, and enforced sanctions for abusers.

Should the decision to accept state funding and to work with existing institutions be considered a strategic failure? More fundamentally, how do we distinguish between better or worse strategies for change? Adamson et.al. (1988), argue that despite the increased skills and knowledge of activists within the women's community, it often seems that there is still no satisfactory answer to the question of what constitutes an effective practice for change. Lundy, Andrew, and Klodawsky (n.d.) argue that although we may have a sense of the end goals that would promote equality for all:

we are far less clear about the steps that constitute social transformation in the process. We know we are referring to a gradual and uneven process, but we don't have a clear sense of how to distinguish the better from worse paths towards transformation (4).

Several feminist writers have argued that feminist organizing dilemmas revolve more around questions of "how" than questions of "what". (Ryan, 1989; Whittier, 1995). As early as 1972, Jo Freeman argued that the primary differences between branches of the women's movement were strategy and style, not ideology³. Speaking of the contemporary Canadian women's movement, Doris Anderson⁴ argues that differences among activists arise from issues of political process, strategy and tactics rather than substantive policy.

I would argue that the most important "how" question of feminist organizing has been and continues to be: under what conditions and to what extent should activists *engage* with existing institutions or *disengage* from the mainstream to create alternative institutions and cultural values (Adamson et al., 1988; Briskin, 1989; Riger, 1994; Whittier, 1995).⁵ According to Adamson et al. mainstreaming and disengagement represent two key politics of change, both of which are essential for social change. Each approach carries a strategic risk: disengagement can lead to marginalization and

³For a different interpretation see Arnold (1995). Arnold argues that the ideological differences of the St. Louis activists she interviewed led to considerable conflict. This difference in interpretation can be in part explained by different conceptions of ideology. Freeman uses ideology to refer to participants' positions on major feminist issues (1975:50 n.22). In contrast Arnold defines ideology as the "the set of political beliefs and values on the basis of which individuals interpret conditions and events" (279). Following Buechler (1990b), she states that the most important difference in ideology is the extent to which an activist challenges power relations. Activists who fundamentally challenge power relations are radical and those who indirectly challenge power relations are moderate. The difficulty with this formulation is it assumes *prima facie* that a direct challenge to power relations is more "radical" than an indirect challenge regardless of effect or outcome. I argue that each approach may be more or less strategic or effective depending on the specific conjuncture. Questions of *how* to challenge the system are better conceptualized as questions of strategy rather than measures of "radicalness".

⁴Interview with Doris Anderson cited in Jill Vickers (1991) "Bending the iron law of oligarchy: Debates on the feminization of organization and political process in the English Canadian women's movement" in J.D. Wine and J. Ristock, and *Women and Social Change*. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company.

⁵The distinction between strategies that take place in "political" realm and those that take place in the "cultural" realm are made throughout feminist and social movement literature. Staggenborg (1995) distinguishes between political and policy outcomes and cultural outcomes. Whittier (1995) following Hill Collins (1991) argues resistance occurs at both the cultural and political level. Katzenstein (1995) recognizes both interest group politics and discursive politics. New social movement theory makes the distinction between strategies that are directed at the state and strategies that target civil society (Carroll, 1992).

invisibility, mainstreaming to co-optation and institutionalization. This strategic dilemma has been the source of intense disagreements and deep and long-lasting divisions among activists.

In this chapter I argue that the strategies advocated by activists depend on the conceptual framework they use to understand the process of making change. I identify the state and collective identity as two key concepts that shape an activist's conceptual framework. I argue that, among feminist activists, prevailing understandings of social change still tend to be based on dichotomies such as mainstreaming and disengagement, moderate and radical, despite evidence to suggest that in practice these distinctions are blurring (Reinelt, 1995; Whittier, 1995). Arguing that dichotomous thinking has contributed to a preoccupation with moralizing and decreased the effectiveness of the movement, I propose a more strategic framework. A more strategic framework would reformulate choices between mainstreaming and disengagement and other dichotomies as a tension that needs to be maintained. By strategic I mean the ability to make organizing decisions based on a consideration of goals, resources, principles and political context rather than a set of pre-given assumptions about the "correct" feminist positions. Following, Reinelt (1995), I call this approach a "politics of engagement".

I begin this chapter by arguing that theories conceptualizing the state as exclusively coercive have produced analyses of the battered women's movement that are unnecessarily pessimistic about the potential for collective action. I question collective identities that depend on rigid "us/them" distinctions arguing they inevitably lead to strategic paralysis. Then I outline the theoretical influences that have shaped this project.

This section is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature but rather to provide a discussion of the ideas and insights that have shaped my thinking about social change. In the final section of the chapter, I outline my conceptual framework. I state that in order to develop an analysis of the strategic possibilities of a particular state, attention must be given to the specificity of local variations, differences between state agencies and the specific historical conjuncture. A second set of considerations involves the category of woman. I ask, what do we mean when we say “women’s interests”? I discuss the politics of experience and the construction of women’s interests and the difficulties involved in evaluating policy when women vary across race, class, sexual preference, age, geography and ability. Finally, drawing on these insights, I describe what I mean by a politics of engagement.

KEY CONCEPTS

Conceptions of the State

Embedded in conceptions of the state are assumptions about how change occurs and beliefs about what counts as meaningful change. Notions of the state influence choices about strategies and tactics and shape beliefs about the potential for agency and collective action. The liberal notion of the state as a neutral arbiter, and the strategies of state intervention and reform that flow from this conception, have been extensively critiqued by both feminist theorists and activists working to end violence against women. According to this critique, state involvement, particularly through the funding process, will inevitably lead to institutionalization, cooptation, or depoliticization.

The process by which the battered women's movement has been institutionalized has been well documented in the literature (Barnsley, 1985; Hilton, 1989; Morgan, 1981; Walker, 1990). Barnsley defines institutionalization as the process by which the state responds to women's issues, "redefines them and compromises them often beyond recognition" (1985:4). She argues that the institutional response to women's demands inevitably results in a new set of problems for women and women's groups.

There is little question that institutionalization has had a significant impact on the movement. Over the past 15 years shelters have become more professionalized and bureaucratized and movement activity has shifted in emphasis from advocacy to service provision (Morgan, 1981; Schechter, 1992; Walker, 1990). While, institutionalization has diluted some of the goals of the movement, it has contributed to the realization of others. State involvement through the provision of funding, has lead to increased participation of working class women and women of colour (Mathews, 1994; Ursel, 1991) and created more services for abused women, particularly rural, aboriginal, and immigrant and visible minority women. In addition, refusing government funding tends to leave women with low paying jobs without security or benefits (Kenny and Magnusson, 1993), perpetuates the belief that women are "natural" caregivers, and plays into a conservative agenda to relegate "politicized" needs back to the private realm (Mathews, 1994).

I argue that it is a strategic mistake to conceptualize the state as an exclusively coercive force. Not only are individual women occasionally able to use the state to their own advantage, but feminists have made considerable gains in the areas of formal equality such as abortion and reproductive rights; in addressing the gendered division of labour in

the home and the workplace (Adamson et.al., 1988); and in naming and exposing sexual harassment, rape, woman abuse and femicide (Mathews, 1994; Ursel, 1991). To explain these gains only in terms of the state's need to legitimate itself or as a consequence of contradictions intrinsic to the system, denies and devalues the impact of feminist activism and collective struggle.

In the early years the battered women's movement gained political strength by defining itself in opposition to mainstream institutions. Through the process of defining what is radical, feminist and transformative, values, practices and structures that were considered patriarchal, mainstream or hegemonic were reified. Reinelt (1995) argues that this process produced distinct "us" and "them" categories based on a set of dichotomies that defined what was feminist and what was not. The list of dichotomies includes: collective/hierarchical; democratic participation/ bureaucracy; empowerment/power; grassroots/professional; confrontation/co-optation; cultural/political; mainstream/disengage; outside/insider; and process/ task. If an activist or organization identified with the left side of these dichotomies she was feminist. If she identified with the right side she was not. Although the construction of a collective identity is critical to the functioning of all social movements, the strong emphasis on a distinct "us" category created a false unity among activists. Ristock (1991) points out that all too often activists who were considered a threat to that unity had their feminism called into question.

Reinelt identifies three major problems with this type of dichotomous thinking. First, this framework assumes that organizations are either feminist or patriarchal when in practice many organizations may have both collective and bureaucratic processes.

Second, this framework assumes that all grassroots collective organizations are democratic and responsive to people's needs and that all hierarchies are oppressive and unresponsive. This framework is unable "to explore the unresponsive elements in collective practices or the democratic impulses in hierarchical practices" (Reinelt, 1995).

Third, it assumes that co-optation is inevitable: what is patriarchal, bureaucratic and institutional will always win over what is feminist, collective and grassroots. Dichotomous thinking makes it difficult to understand the presence of feminists within mainstream institutions, feminist activism to transform institutions, and the formalization of feminism within alternative organizations (Reinelt, 1995).

Analyses that present the state as a monolithic entity with the power to determine outcomes tell us little about how feminists can strategically use the state, underestimate the impact of women's activism on the state and dismiss the potential for collective agency. Ursel (1991) argues that a "poverty of strategic options flow from an analysis which speaks only to the problem of cooptation in reform and not to the potential for reform". She further remarks that:

This concept of an overly deterministic state which can coopt all social movements is simply not a concept verified by history. It is also a concept which begs the question of what should feminists do while waiting for the revolution? (1991:265)

Those who theorize of the patriarchal capitalist state tend to lose sight of the fact that women are not simply victims in the making of history, but also political actors with the potential for collective action. Briskin reminds us that, "in emphasizing the degree to which the political and historical conjuncture shapes our choices we often lose sight of the very premise of a feminist politic- a belief in the ability to make change" (1991 :39).

Collective Identity

Taylor (1989) defines collective identity as the "shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences and solidarity". It is the process in which values, loyalties and rules for behaviour are defined (Friedman and McAdam, 1992). The concept of collective identity differs from the concept of class in that it recognizes that a group's common structural position is not sufficient to mobilize members (Whittier, 1995) and that the formation of collective agents needs to be problematized. Although the notion of collective identity is grounded in the structural position of a group, it is "constructed, activated and sustained only through interaction in social movement communities" (Mueller, 1992).

An activist's self concept comprises both personal and social identity. According to Gamson (1995), the task of social movements is to link the social and individual level by transforming the personal identities of participants to include socially constructed collective identities as part of their sense of self. As Whittier (1995) points out, because people incorporate collective identities into their own personal identities, the line between these two levels will always be blurred.

Collective identities play an important role in the social change process. They provide a framework that allows individuals to contextualize their experiences within the broader context of structural inequality and thus motivates them to act. Whittier sees the formation of collective identities as a process in which "participants analyze the world relative to themselves and their group, politicizing their beliefs and understandings about

events and placing their personal life histories into a larger political narrative of oppression, commonality and resistance" (1995:57).

Collective identities politicize participants and provide a social basis for mobilization, however, they may also create a false sense of unity (Ristock, 1991), stifle debate and limit strategic choices. Because collective identities create shared values, loyalties, and rules of behaviour, they have a tendency to devolve into narrow views of legitimacy (Ryan, 1989) and demands for ideological purity (Mansbridge, 1986). Several writers (Reinelt, 1995; Ryan, 1989; Whittier, 1995) have argued that prevailing feminist collective identities have tended to assume that activists who are associated with collectivist and grassroots organizations are feminist and those who are associated with bureaucratic and institutionalized organizations are not. Thus prevailing feminist collective identities tend to be based on the same set of dichotomies and face the same set of problems as discussed in the previous section on the state.

One consequence of this is that organizing dilemmas, such as the question of whether to mainstream or disengage, are turned into disputes about who is most feminist or who is the right kind of feminist (Ryan, 1989). Because collective identities (especially those based on rigid "us/them" distinctions) are threatened by difference, activists whose ideas or actions question accepted orthodoxy may have their feminism called into question (Ristock, 1991, Ryan, 1989). Mansbridge states that standards of ideological purity have too often been used "... to read one another out of the feminist movement" (in Riger, 1994)

Collective identities, however, are not simple reflections of feminist commitment. They are influenced by ideology, political opportunity structures, availability of resources, social location and organizational strength (Mueller, 1992). Fraser (1989) argues that the 'need claims' articulated by members of social collectivities are influenced by the availability of historically and culturally specific discursive resources. According to Fraser, access to discursive resources such as, idioms, vocabularies, paradigms of argumentation, narrative conventions and subject positions, is stratified, organized in a manner that is "congruent with societal patterns of dominance and subordination" (1989:165). Some discursive resources are "hegemonic, authorized and officially sanctioned" and others are "nonhegemonic, disqualified, and discounted" (165).

These discursive resources make up what Jenson (1989) calls the "universe of political discourse". According to Jenson, the universe of political discourse filters and delineates all political activity. Within any universe of political discourse, only certain collective identities are possible. Entrenched relations of dominance and subordination mean that it is difficult to construct progressive collective identities without challenging the universe itself. For example, as activists made the issue of violence against women visible, they created feminist discourses with new words such as "wife battering", "wife assault", and "sexual harassment". These discourses positioned abused women not as individualized victims but as "members of a politically constituted collectivity" (Fraser, 1989:176). Feminist discourses, however, were constrained by "officially sanctioned" and "hegemonic" medical and psychological discourses that positioned abused women as weak and helpless victims. As many activists have come to realize, positioning abused

women as survivors and activists, requires nothing short of a transformation of the universe of political discourse.

In addition, social, political and economic structural relations interact with the social categories of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability and geography in complex and contradictory ways to shape collective identities. For example, some women of colour argue that discourses that focus on violence against women and other forms of gender oppression have created a victim-based feminism that is incapable of acknowledging that women too can be victimizers. bell hooks (1984) argues that certain assumptions about what constitutes an abused woman have obscured the fact that women perpetuate relations of dominance that cut across multiple axes of oppression. Aboriginal women and women of colour argue that discourses that explain violence against women solely in terms of gender oppression, deny the complex history and everyday realities of a racist, classist, sexist, and imperialist society. Another example of the intersection of social location and collective identity is lesbian and gay activists who challenge heterosexual discourses that assume that men are the victimizers and that women are the victims. They argue that these discourses preclude an analysis of the existence of same-sex partner abuse. Thus, it is impossible to examine the discursive formation of collective identities without considering the social relations in which they are immersed.

However, I would also argue that although social and structural factors enable and constrain the choices that activists make, they cannot fully explain them. Organizing choices are also influenced by less obvious factors such as personal identity and emotion. For example, Oliver and Marwell (1992) found that while middle class tactics of

mobilization did tend to reflect the routines of middle class family and community life, distinct strategies exist even within middle class collective action. Middle class collective actors used both professional strategies organized around mobilizing money and influencing the political arena, and grassroots strategies organized around mobilizing people and social networks. Why do activists with similar social locations choose radically different social change strategies? Although there is an important link between social location and ideology, this research suggests that strategic choices cannot be traced to ideology or structural position in a straightforward manner.

Based on her research of mobilization strategies of the American women's movement in the years from 1966-1975, Ryan concludes that activists advocated views of feminist acceptability that corresponded closely with their own lifestyles. In other words feminists organize around the experiences of their everyday lives using the interpersonal styles and group structures that are most familiar to them. Although not all choices are available to all actors, women do make choices based on skill, interest, and compatibility. Women who have professional skills may choose mainstreaming as a strategic choice because they are both interested in and comfortable with writing briefs and lobbying for policy and legislative changes. Women who dislike bureaucratic or professional practices may choose to work primarily with other women at the community level or to build alternatives to the mainstream. Both groups of women may hold radical ideologies and work towards radical change. Although the opportunity to develop professional skills may be linked to social class, Ryan's (1989) and Oliver and Marwell's (1992) research suggests that social class does not necessarily determine organizing choices.

How do the personal identities of activists influence the collective identities they adopt? Why does one activist choose to struggle in the mainstream by becoming a lawyer who represents women who have been abused, while another activist chooses to work in the "community" in a rape crisis centre? Does the first woman necessarily have a more "moderate" ideology? Would it be reasonable to suggest she is "less" feminist simply on the basis of the location in which she chooses to work? How do personal identities intersect with collective identities to produce strategic choices? While it may appear that in asking these social psychological questions that I am minimizing socio-economic structural issues, this is not my intent. I agree with Fraser (1989) that a full account of any social phenomenon must consider both structural and discursive factors, however, for this project I have chosen to privilege discursive or meaning oriented questions. I feel that until we address these issues, we will be unable to move beyond our current organizing impasses.

With few exceptions, traditional research has been silent on the issue of personal identity (Billig, 1995). But as Cole (1995) and others point out, activism is often closely associated with personal coping strategies. She states that collective struggle needs to be recognized as a powerful process that changes individuals "in ways that endure across the life course; thus, political activism may be understood not only as a mechanism of social transformation, but as a catalyst for individual growth and development" (1995:321). Similarly, Reagon remarks that through community activism she gained a "sense of power in a place where [she] didn't feel that [she] had any power" leading to a change in how she understood herself. Research that takes seriously the identities and cognitive frameworks

of actual participants (Billig, 1995) will surely improve thinking about strategies for social change. Moreover, a consideration of a broader range of factors that influence strategic choices may diffuse ideological deadlocks and bridge divisions between and within feminist communities.

THEORETICAL INFLUENCES

A project calling for a critical re-thinking of strategies to end violence against women requires a conceptual framework that places "how" questions at the forefront of its analysis. In this section I discuss how resource mobilization theory, new social movement theory and feminist theory have treated the concepts of activism, the state and collective identity.

I have been influenced, in particular, by recent work in resource mobilization (RM) theory which recasts the building blocks of resources, formal organizations, tactics, and political opportunities within a broader paradigm that is more attentive to both historical, cultural, and structural factors and the micromobilization processes in which collective identities are negotiated (Mueller, 1992). Micromobilization-- the face-to-face process in which meanings, opportunities, greivances, loyalties, and commitments are created and interpreted--is a particularly useful concept for this project. New social movement (NSM) theory's emphasis on civil society has also been of interest. I consider NSM theory's attention to culture and identity formation to be a positive move; however I am unconvinced by arguments to de-centre the state and disappointed by the lack of attention to strategic questions.

I have also been inspired by new developments in feminist theories of the state. Influenced both by trends in feminist and non-feminist state theory and by critical reflection on feminist activism, feminist theorists (Eisenstein, 1991, 1995; Ferree & Martin, 1995; Fraser, 1989; Mathews, 1994; Reinelt, 1995) are increasingly eschewing notions of the state as an exclusively coercive force. Instead they conceptualize the state as contested terrain on which collective action can make a difference. In addition, I draw on insights from several collections of essays (Carrol, 1992; Carty, 1993; Ferree & Martin, 1995; Harries-Jones, 1991; Wine & Ristock, 1991) that examine the impact of specific policies, the policy making process, particular feminist organizations, campaigns, protests, identity formation, and cultural transformation. By linking social movement and feminist theories to organizing in practice, these studies make a significant contribution to our understandings of what constitutes effective strategies for making change. What the theoretical approaches that inform my conceptual framework have in common, is that they attempt to transcend the dichotomies such as, discursive/structural, cultural/political, state/civil society, strategy/identity, moderate/radical and mainstream/disengagement that tend to both polarize and paralyze.

Resource Mobilization Theory

The emergence of the resource mobilization (RM) paradigm in the early 1980's transformed American social movement research. RM's strategic-instrumental perspective challenged the collective behaviour tradition that viewed collective action as atomic and irrational behaviour acted out in crowds, riots and mobs. The RM approach asks how

actors mobilize resources, take advantage of political opportunity structures and act collectively to pursue common interests. By focusing on the strategic and rational nature of social actors, RM theory presents collective action as a legitimate activity.

By the 1980's RM theory was the dominant approach in American literature on social movements and collective action (Mueller, 1992). RM theory has been so influential, in part, because of its attention to empirical studies of collective action and social movement organizations (Mueller, 1992; see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1988, for a review of the literature). RM theory has provided researchers of the American women's movement with a vocabulary to analyse and reflect on feminist organizing (Taylor, 1995, see also Freeman, 1975; Ferree and Hess 1985; Katzenstein and Mueller, 1987; Staggenborg, 1991; Ryan, 1992).

The central problematic of the paradigm is mobilization--the process by which agents act collectively to assemble resources to pursue goals. This approach focuses on identifying factors that facilitate or impede collective action and asking how resources are mobilized. Factors that influence mobilization include changes in the political opportunity structure (Tilly, 1978) organizational dynamics (Morgen, 1995; Martin, 1990; Riger, 1994; Staggenborg, 1988) and leadership (Freeman, 1982; McCarthy and Zald, 1973,1977; Staggenborg, 1988). The outcomes of collective action are considered open processes contingent upon these factors, and the tactics and strategies chosen by activists (Canel, 1992). The RM framework provides the tools to analyze the "how" of movement formation and collective action (Melucci, 1989; Carrol, 1992).

Even as RM theory was developing it was critiqued and revised by its proponents. The rational-instrumental approach of RM was challenged by social movement theorists who held a social constructionist perspective (Mueller, 1992). Social constructionists questioned RM's exclusive focus on institutional change arguing that a rigid separation between individual and institutional change was untenable. They argued that RM theory's assumption of "common interest" ignores the process by which interests are constituted and assumes that common interest exists independent of the awareness and actions of social actors (Canel, 1992). RM theory was criticized for its lack of attention to the construction of meaning, to collective identity and to the symbolic dimensions of collective action. It is these in areas that new social movement theory makes its most significant contribution.

Before I move to a discussion of new social movement theory it is interesting to note that RM theory has not been as popular in Canada. Carroll (1992) states that while the dominant discourses in Canadian sociology recognized the importance of social movements, they tended to explain their existence directly from the master narrative of political economy rather than from observation and reflection on actual movements. Essentially social movements were considered epiphenomena of the economic realm. In contrast to the RM approach, Canadian accounts tended to emphasize the importance of structural inequalities, but give little theoretical attention to identity formation, strategies, organizational forms and resource mobilization of social movements. Historically, Canadian analyses have tended to emphasize idiographic accounts rather than nomothetic explanations. As such, Canadian empirical studies tended to be organized less around

theoretical issues and more around substantive areas of struggles. The rise of new social movement theory has influenced both Canadian and American studies of social movements.

New Social Movement Theory

William Carroll (1992) argues that "it is precisely on the question of 'how to make change', of how to create a 'politics of transformation', that careful consideration of contemporary social movement theory can be helpful" (1992:5). New social movement (NSM) theory claims to transcend economic and deterministic explanations of the emergence of social movements, arguing instead that social movements emerge out of a complex relationship of structural, political, and cultural tensions and conflicts.

Scholars of new social movement theory understand social movements as struggles over control of the construction of meaning and the formation of collective identities (Canel, 1992). Their accounts emphasize the expressive components of movements such as consciousness, self-actualization, and the expression of subjective feelings. The constitution of collective identities is put forth as a strategy of political change (Taylor, 1995: 226). The work of Melucci (1989), Touraine (1988) and others challenged the assumption that collective interests are pre-given and can be read from class positions. Although the attention of NSM theory to the creation of alternative cultural values and identities makes a significant contribution, its strategic potential is limited for several reasons.

One of the main themes of NSM theory is the "non-centrality" of the state in the process of social transformation (Mooers and Sears, 1992). Magnusson and Walker (1988) claim that new social movements reject the state as a "natural container" for politics. They argue that social actors have increasingly turned to civil society as the key site from which to create social change. The shift towards civil society is consistent with the efforts of feminists to politicize what has historically been considered private or domestic, particularly the issues of sexuality, family and reproduction. Feminists have always questioned the limits of state reform and argued that violence against women will not be ended by reforming the criminal justice system alone. Feminist activists, however, cannot avoid the question of the state. The state remains a critical site of struggle over the construction of gender inequalities (Reinelt, 1995).

NSM discourses have been critiqued on many fronts including: their exclusive focus on the middle class and failure to recognize the importance of class to collective struggle (Epstein, 1990; Weir, 1994); their tendency to dissolve into identity or lifestyle politics that leave state and capitalist structures intact (Kaufman, 1990); their exaggeration of the discontinuity between old and new social movements (Carroll, 1992; Cohen, 1983); and their preoccupation with critiquing Marxism which has led them to go too far in rejecting the categories of the state and class and has produced exaggerated and untenable claims (Plotke, 1990; Weir, 1993).

Eduardo Canel (1992) identifies two limitations of the new social movement approach that are particularly relevant to the central problematic of this work; that is, the question of how to create change. First, new social movement discourses do not identify

all of the processes that intervene in the passage from condition to action. Perhaps in an attempt to avoid class reductionism, social movement discourses tend to focus on identity formation. While the recognition of new actors is a significant contribution to the literature, it appears to be at the expense of considering strategic-instrumental questions. Questions of leadership, decision-making, resource mobilization, membership recruitment and organizational forms are rarely addressed in new social movement discourses. In short, social movement discourses tend to focus on the "why" rather than the "how" of social movements and as such fail to address strategic questions about creating social change.

Second, in its efforts to "de-centre" the state, new social movement theory tends to dichotomize both the concepts of social movements and politics, and the concepts of civil society and the state. This makes it difficult to explore the connections between civil society and the state, and between social movements and political reform. Canal states that, "new social movement theory does not attempt to explain the processes and the mechanisms that intervene in the institutionalization of new values and social practices that social movements create" (37). Feminist theorists and activists who are critical of the institutionalization of the women's movement have urged activists not to be confined to what can be achieved within the limits of state reform, but a separation between social movements and politics and civil society and the state is problematic on a number of counts.

First, it is extremely difficult to establish any social, political or economic space outside of patriarchal capitalism (Briskin, 1989). Second, as Charlotte Bunch (1981) has

argued, in order to create a politics of transformation, alternative institutions need to challenge the status quo and not simply be havens of retreat. An emphasis on the creation of cultural alternatives has been criticized for its tendency to devolve into alternative lifestyles for those who can afford it, instead of a viable political strategy (Kaufman, 1990; Briskin, 1989; Moors and Sears, 1992). Third, in order to be effective, a politics of transformation must confront state power. Feminists have made considerable effort to politicize activities of sexuality, family and reproduction and to expose the extent to which the state is involved in the regulation of what has historically been considered the "private" sphere. Unless we challenge state power it will continue to be involved in the regulation of our lives. Moors and Sears argue that politics that offer no coherent strategy for confronting the state or capitalism must be satisfied with that which can be obtained within the boundaries of the existing state and market. They conclude that social movements inevitably come up against the power of the state: "Those that have no strategy for confronting the state tend to be incorporated or defeated" (68).

New Resource Mobilization Theory

Until recently, resource mobilization and new social movement theories have existed in relative isolation from each other (Canel, 1992). Some theorists have argued that this separation is inevitable. For example, Cohen (1985) states that one can not "simply add a consideration of solidarity, collective identity, consciousness, or ideology to the RM perspective without bursting its framework" (687). Other theorists have been more optimistic about the possibilities of synthesizing the strategic-instrumental approach

of RM with the collective identity approach of NSM theory (Canel, 1992; Gamson, 1992; Mueller, 1992).⁶ Canel argues that social movements can be best studied through “an eclectic approach that borrows from both new social movement and resource mobilization paradigms” (1992: 50). The “new” resource mobilization theory (NRM) outlined by Mueller (1992) comes close to achieving this synthesis by integrating the NSM theory concepts of collective identity and meaning construction with an analysis of strategy and resources.

NRM theory moves away from the conception of an individual as a “a pseudo-universal human actor without either a personal identity or gender, race, or class position within a societal history” (Ferree, 1992: 31). Some authors (Friedmen and McAdam, 1992) attempt to reframe the rational actor while others (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1992; Johnston and Klandermans, 1995) turn to the notion of collective identity to explain the new actor. The new actor is conceptualized as socially embedded in group identities and social networks based on race-ethnicity, class, gender, geography or religion (Mueller, 1992).

While RM tended to focus on formal organizations, the focus of recent research has expanded to include the micromobilization of social networks of face-to-face encounters (Mueller, 1992). NRM theory recognizes the micromobilization context as an important site for social movement activity, out of which meaning is constructed and collective identities and loyalties are formed. As such, everyday life becomes an important

⁶The collection of essays entitled *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* edited by Morris and Mueller (1992) contains several essays that attempt to bring together the cultural and the structural, and identity and strategy. Mueller’s introductory essay provides an excellent discussion of the theoretical issues arising from an amalgamation of the two perspectives. My discussion of recent developments in resource mobilization theory draws heavily from her work

site of resistance. NRM theory recognizes that inequality is maintained by cultural hegemony and that relations of domination and subordination are reproduced in everyday life (Whittier, 1995). Taylor and Whittier (1992) connect the politicization of everyday life to the construction of political identities. It is through face-to-face interactions that cultural boundaries are created, a shared consciousness is developed and essential differences of the group are reified.

Although NRM theory recognizes collective identity formation and cultural transformation as goals in their own right, it tends to focus on the more strategic implications of meaning construction. The concept of collective action frames (Snow et al., 1986) is typical in its attempt to link the interpretive frameworks of social actors with mobilization. Collective action frames are "emergent action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns" (Mueller, 1992:14). In addition, in contrast to NSM theorists, NRM theorists tend to avoid "depoliticizing" lifestyle politics by linking the construction of collective identities to structural inequalities.

NRM theory's integration of the structural and the cultural has produced a number of relevant empirical studies. Findings that I have found particularly influential can be organized around three themes: (a) the micromobilization context and the extent to which identity and actions are shaped by historical circumstances; (b) a critique of the assumptions underlying the "feminist process"; and (c) a critique of the position that outcomes of institutionalization are necessarily negative.

(a) Identity, Actions and Historical Circumstances

Whittier's (1995) study of the radical women's movement in Columbus, Ohio explored how the social contexts of different periods of activism influence how women define feminism and feminist activism. Whittier identifies the point in time at which feminists are politicized as one factor that influences the collective identities feminists adopt. She found that definitions of feminism changed over time as the external environment changed and that differing understandings of what it meant to be a feminist were a major source of conflict among activists.

Many of the activists that Whittier interviewed, who were politicized in the early 1970's, are currently struggling with the loss of "outsider" status as feminism becomes more institutionalized. Often these women had sacrificed financial security and respectability to build feminist organizations. As a consequence some of these activists were mistrustful of women who are able to advance their own careers as well as pursue activist goals. Whittier describes the current dilemma facing radical feminists:

It is difficult and dissonant for radical feminists who scorned the mainstream, cooptation, and compromise to live in a world where "feminism" has too often come to mean political power-brokering and where their own political victories occur in professional arenas rather than in the streets (1995: 204)

Whittier's work points to the role historical context plays in shaping the collective identities of activists. Her work, however, also raises important questions about the intersection of personal and political identities. She argues, for example, that factors such as, the institutionalization of the feminist movement, the realization that unequal power relations are deeply entrenched and a backlash against equality movements worked

together to influence the collective identities of radical activists. She argues that as a consequence of these factors radical feminists who were politicized in the 1970's turned towards two different directions. Some feminists moved away from broad critique of social structures as a strategy and focused more on pragmatic and achievable goals and institutionalized tactics. Other feminists turned to culture, creating alternative practices, values and organizations. Why did some women choose to work in the mainstream while others turned to culture? Although Whittier does not attempt to answer this question, I would argue that this finding suggests that the relationship between collective identity and strategy cannot be understood without reference to the social psychology of activism.

(b) Critique of Feminist Process

An assumption is often made that the ideal feminist organization has a collective structure, and that as organizations become more bureaucratic, they become less feminist (see Feurguson, 1984). Few feminist organizations fit the ideal of a collective structure. In fact, most organizations are mixtures of both bureaucratic and collective structures and each ideal type has its advantages and disadvantages (Martin, 1990). Several writers have challenged the assumptions underlying the "collective process". First, collective and grassroots organizations are not necessarily more open and democratic. Conversely, bureaucratic organizations are not necessarily more oppressive and unresponsive (Reinelt, 1995). In her research on the American Abortion Rights movement, Staggenborg (1988) found that structured social movement organizations may be more democratic than unstructured ones. The absence of a formal decision-making structure often leads to the development of an informal hierarchy. Decisions come to be made by women who are the

most articulate, persistent and who are able to commit the most time. If the decision-making process is not formally recognized, it is difficult to ensure accountability. These problems can create what Jo Freeman (1972) has called the "tyranny of structurelessness". The Chicago Women's Liberation Union, for example, decided that the problem was not leadership itself, but the absence of accountability mechanisms (Strobel, 1995). The union found that a minimal level of leadership did not allow them to meet their goals of democratic and accountable leadership. Throughout its life span, the organization experimented with structures of representation that would balance democratic participation and accountability with action and efficiency.

Second, the time required for collective decision-making and the time devoted to internal process may detract from an organization's goals to make an impact on the external environment or to provide services for women. Organizations may choose to develop bureaucratic processes and structures to facilitate goal achievement. Ferree and Martin (1995) argue that it is possible to do this without oppressing members. Some organizations develop more than one kind of structure. For example, caucuses within the National Women's Studies Association operate collectively (Leider, 1991). In her study of stages of growth in feminist organizations, Riger (1994) found that organizations often formalize in order to have an impact beyond their individual members. The process of formalization often gives rise to difficult questions about how much emphasis to place on the "task" or outcome and how much to place on the "process" or values. For example, should a rape crisis centre limit its size to maintain a collective structure if it means helping less women (Riger, 1994)? This dilemma is succinctly expressed by the question of this

activist: "Shall we evaluate our process tonight or get out a mailing?" (Batchelder and Marks, cited in Riger, 1994).

Yet some aspects of hierarchical, depersonalized structures clearly conflict with some feminist goals and values. Riger (1984) sees the challenge as developing the least degree of bureaucracy required to achieve a particular goal. Going further, Martin (1990) suggests that structure is not a defining characteristic of feminist organization and that too much time has been given to the issue of collectivism versus bureaucracy. She states that "how power is actually used, and for what purposes, may be more important than its hierarchical or collectivist arrangements" (1990:196).

(c) Institutionalization

Recently some feminists have challenged the belief that working outside the system is automatically more radical than operating within an institutional framework (Felski, 1989). For instance Sawyer and Simms argue that, "women publicly lobbying for women's rights may be seen to be more radical than the liberationist doing her roster duty for the women's refugee collective" (1984:189). In fact there is a growing body of empirical evidence that challenges the claim that institutionalization leads necessarily leads to deradicalization (Splater-Roth and Schreiber, 1995; Reinelt, 1995, Staggenborg, 1988, Whittier, 1995).

It has become increasingly difficult to make a clear cut separation between what is institutionalized and what is radical (Taylor, 1983; Reinelt, 1995, Whittier, 1995). First, feminist activists within alternative organizations have challenged the politics and practices of mainstream institutions (Reinelt, 1995, Mathews, 1994) Second, women within

mainstream institutions as diverse as the Catholic church (Katzenstein , 1995), labour unions (Briskin and Yanz, 1983) and universities (Caplan, 1992) have fought sexist, racist and homophobic policies and practices. Third, “femocrats”, feminists who move into positions of bureaucratic power (Franzway, 1986), do not automatically lose their commitment to feminism (Whittier, 1995). In fact, femocrats have played an important role in the implementation of pro-feminist policies, legislation and programs (McGregor and Hopkins, 1991). Perhaps the more pertinent question is how does working within the “system” influence the kind of social change an activist believes is possible. How does it influence what tactics she will use and the alliances she will make? Fourth, hierarchical, mass membership organizations are increasingly addressing issues of diversity, inclusiveness and process--issues that were once considered the exclusive domain of radical feminism. Finally, even the most institutionalized feminist organizations help to maintain and perpetuate the women's movement (Ferree and Martin, 1995; Martin, 1990). Recognition that the effects of institutionalization are not pre-given or always, already known is one factor that has led to the development of a more strategic theory of the state.

Feminist Theories of the State

There has been a significant shift in the way the literature conceptualizes women's relationship with the state. Linda Gordon (1991) points out that earlier literature tended to focus on women's victimization and oppression. Increasingly research on women and the state has moved away from abstract theorizations and has focused on women's political

activism and agency in shaping state policies (Carroll, 1992). Recently feminist researchers have attempted to formulate theories of the state that take seriously questions of agency and strategy.

The recent publication of two collections of essays on the Canadian feminist activism -- Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada (eds. Wine and Ristock, 1991) and And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada (ed. Carty, 1993) have made significant contributions to a feminist politics of transformation. Both collections document women's experience and activism in order to record our struggles, critically reflect on our practices and learn from our own history. Women in Social Change aims to bridge the gap between feminist activists and academics and to "provide accounts of some of the directions, strategies and actions of the contemporary Canadian women's movement" (1991: 3). And Still We Rise documents the struggles of women of different class and ethnic backgrounds working together for social change, and aims to move beyond a politics of diversity to show that it is not our social locations but our visions for the future that create social change. Speaking of the essays in the collection, Carty states: "Collectively, they point to the need for collective struggle and agency to restructure the politics of everyday life, which would then ground a reformulated feminist theory. This is the challenge for Canadian feminism" (p17).

Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement edited by Ferree and Martin (1995), an American collection of essays on feminist organizations, has also made an important contribution to feminist politics. Essays examine the survival and

effectiveness of feminist organizations with attention to the “multi-dimensionality of feminist politics” and the “outcome of situationally and historically specific processes”. Empirical evidence from these case studies, coupled with insights from resource mobilization, new social movement and feminist theories, form the conceptual framework I use to understand the state.

Pringle and Watson (1990) state that while academics have attempted to theorize the structural features of the state, it is not clear that our efforts have been of much strategic use. They argue that feminist theories of the state have tended to be abstract, emphasizing overall unity while leaving little room for fluidity or change. Weir (1987) comments that “in viewing repertoires of official gender regulation as fixed and static--likely an inheritance from socialist functionalism--the capacity of the state for a limited reformulation of gender regulation catches us largely unprepared” (p. 98). Pringle and Watson (1990) claim that socialist, radical and liberal feminist theories all share a common functionalist heritage. These theories assume that all state functions (whether they are for preservation of capitalism or patriarchy or society in general) are pre-given and can simply be recited.

In the early 1980's there was a shift in both feminist theory and practice from the conception of the state as a monolithic entity to the state as a set of social relations and a site of struggle. Speaking of this shift, Ng (1988) suggests out that there has been a move away from seeing the state as “a monolithic structure, composed of different apparatuses, which perform different functions for the dominant classes on behalf of capital” towards seeing the state as a set of social relations and the embodiment of struggles between

classes. Feminist theorists were influenced both by the work of Poulantzas and other Marxists and by the critical reflection of activists. Poulantzas (1978, 1980) argued that the relative autonomy of the state from the dominant classes gives rise to contradictions that could be exploited by class actors to make social change.

Some feminists have examined the link between the dual systems of patriarchy and capitalism (Eisenstein, 1979; Ursel, 1986). Eisenstein argues that patriarchy and capitalism exist within a "mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship" (1979:5). Dual systems theorists argue that the potential for political action exists within the contradictions between patriarchy and capitalism⁷. But as Franzway, Court and Connel (1987) point out, although these theorists refer to the "interdependence" of patriarchy and capitalism they still tend to posit a hierarchical relationship between the two in which patriarchy exists solely for the purpose of ensuring the smooth functioning of capitalism.

At the same time activists and academics were expressing frustration that although women were increasingly recognizing the effects of intervention, such as absorption of progressive goals and diffusion of issues, our understanding of how the state actually promotes such undesirable outcomes was limited (Morgan, 1981; Schreder, 1990; Weir, 1987). In 1987, a conference called Women and the State, organized by activists for activists, was held in Toronto for the purpose of reflecting on state processes. In their opening speeches, conference organizers urged Canadian feminists to move away from the "Smash the state! Build Alternatives! purism" that had dominated feminist thinking about

⁷Ursel (1988, 1991) argues that the introduction of the Married Property Act in Canada in the late 1800's is an example of a convergence of interests between the state and women that arose out of contradiction in the operation of patriarchy in the state. Because the laws and practices had become increasingly costly to the state, the state shared an interest with women in dismantling them.

the state (Weir, 1987: 94). Conference organizers called for a more dynamic understanding of how women's issues enter the terrain of the state and how they are re-constituted by the state. According to Weir (1987), the conference signaled the emergence of a more concrete socialist feminist theory of the state as a site of struggle.

Feminist theorists were urged to:

detail the manner in which feminist demands and categories are taken up and entered into the work processes of the state, their meaning and regulation displaced from feminist control or work in becoming actionable and organized within the state apparatus (Weir, 1987 :99).

There now exists a growing body of literature addressing the issue of state response (Morgan, 1981; Ng, 1988; Schreader, 1990; and Walker, 1990). Walker and Ng have both produced detailed case studies documenting the state's response to women's demands. Walker, for example, traces the process whereby wife assault came to be seen as a public issue. Her work is an inquiry into the ways in which the "state outcomes to date relate to organizing and mobilizing initiatives taken by activists". She documents the processes by which women's political demands are translated into the conceptual framework of the state. Ng is interested in how class relations are reproduced in the ordinary activities of everyday lives. She investigates the process whereby an employment agency for immigrant women set up by community activists came to function on behalf of the state apparatus. These studies provide detailed information about state processes and methods of operation and make significant contributions to our theoretical understandings of the state.

Although these studies claim to start from the premise that the state is not a wholly repressive, monolithic totality operating on behalf of capitalist interests, they seem to

suggest institutionalization is inevitable and undesirable. Morgan (1981), for example, critiques studies that obscure the extent to which class or community struggles have historically acted to shape the process of state intervention, however; her own work focuses on the ways in which state responses to the battered women's movement have bureaucratized, professionalized and institutionalized the problem of violence against women. In other words, she focuses on the impact the state has had on the movement and not the impact the movement has had on the state. Schreader too, dismisses the concept of a monolithic state. She agrees with Walker stating that "It does a disservice to both women and our understanding of the structuring, ordering and ruling of society to regard ourselves as having been merely passive victims of historical, social and political processes controlled by a conspiracy of men" (Walker, cited in Schreader, 1989:197). Schreader acknowledges that people organize to challenge the state. She concedes that activists "for a time, interfered substantially with the capacity of the state to organize hegemony" but states that in the end " [the Women's] Program has been fully assimilated into bureaucratic process and managers have replaced advocates with administrators" (192). These theorists, thus, tend to treat the state as a process that feminists can enter into and influence for a limited time, but one that will always, ultimately, be won by the state. However relatively autonomous the state may be, the ruling classes are always determinate in the "last instance".

As Watson (1990) points out, these theories still tend to treat the state as a relatively unproblematic category. In an attempt to avoid a simple functionalist approach and to theorize the complex and confusing workings of the state, the notion of

contradiction is often used (Eisenstein, 1984; Ursel, 1991). While state contradiction theories recognize that the state is not a blunt instrument of the ruling class and that the divisions between and within classes are actually inscribed in its structures, they still assume that the state acts coherently (Franzway, Court, Connell, 1987; Watson, 1990). Victories achieved by disadvantaged groups are explained as exceptions to the general trend, part of the contradictory nature of capitalism, or part of the state's need to appear neutral in order to legitimate itself. Ruling class victories, on the other hand, are considered inevitable (Watson, 1990).

In contrast, other theorists have not been willing to assume the ultimate determinacy of ruling class interests. For instance, Gordon (1991) makes a strong empirically based argument against functionalist explanations. She asserts that it is a mistake to understand social control intervention as an exclusively coercive force. Her work on the history of family violence and social control in Boston provides concrete examples of ways in which women of different races, ethnicities, classes, and ages are able to use the state for their own interests against "more personal oppressions". She states, "the social control experience was not a simple trade-off in which the client relinquished autonomy and control in exchange for help. Clients helped shape the nature of social control" (191). Functionalist analyses have difficulty explaining inconsistent or self-defeating aspects of welfare policy because they assume that welfare policy is uniformly advantageous to some group or groups and detrimental to others. Far from representing a coherent body of interests, the goals of policy makers are often piecemeal and

contradictory Welfare policies are the product of "jerry built compromises that are the artifact of social and political conflict" (23).

Some feminist academics, influenced by post-modernists and post-structuralists such as Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe and again by critical reflection on feminist practice, have turned towards an understanding of the state as a contested terrain in which the outcomes are unknown and the limits themselves are part of the contested terrain (Mathews, 1994).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Towards An Analysis Of The Strategic Possibilities Of Particular States

According to Fincher (1993) we should not think of the state as a predictable, unchanging or consistent set of institutions and practices. The numerous organizations of the state operate at different and often opposing levels of interests (Mathews, 1995). Therefore the state is most usefully conceptualized as a by-product of political struggles "whose coherence is as much established in discourse as in shifting and temporary connections" (Pringle and Watson, 1990). Abandoning a notion of the state as representing a definable set of already constituted interests allows us to move beyond questioning why the state acts contradictorily or fails to act at all (Pringle and Watson, 1990), towards developing an analysis of the strategic possibilities of a particular state, in a particular place, at a particular historical conjuncture. Such an analysis would consider local and temporal variations and differences between state agencies.

General analytic theories tend to gloss over spatial and historical variations in local states (Pringle and Watson, 1990; Duncan, Goodwin and Halford, 1988). Abstract theories of the state are usually unable to present concrete analyses of specific policies, initiatives or strategies. State variations play a role in shaping what issues an activist should take up, what demands she should make and what strategies are likely to be effective. For instance, differences in the strategies of the American and British battered women's movements can be traced to differences in the state and its institutions. Dobash and Dobash (1992) suggest that the American movement was dominated by campaigns to change the law and its enforcement, while the British movement emphasized changes in social and material conditions. The entrenchment of the beliefs of equal rights before the law, individualism, and economic conservatism in American society, meant that strategies emphasizing rights would be more viable than ones emphasizing needs claims. In contrast, British activists, influenced by leftist and labour politics, worked towards achieving the economic independence of battered women by pressuring the state to provide housing, social and health service and welfare benefits.

In addition the terrain of the state must be considered dynamic and not static. The state may change over time and sometimes overnight in the case of elections. Whittier (1995) notes that the gradual increase in the number of elected officials sympathetic to feminists opened up new possibilities and required the re-thinking of strategies and tactics. The recent election of a conservative government in Ontario provides a more dramatic example. In a matter of hours and days the government cut funding for welfare, education and health care, repealed labour legislation, canceled employment and pay equity

programs, cut the budgets of neighborhood centres, women's shelters, language programs and advocacy and services for the disabled, beginning a transformation of the state so thorough that it is likely to become almost unrecognizable in the near future. In sharp contrast to the previous government, this government refuses to negotiate or consult with advocacy organizations and ordinary citizens. This operating style, combined with massive cuts, has meant that social activists have had to fundamentally rethink their issues, priorities, strategies and tactics.

In addition to spatial and temporal variations, significant variations may exist between different agencies of the same state. Within the criminal justice system, the police and courts operate in distinctly different organizational cultures and structures, with different values and norms. Police agencies tend to be centralized hierarchies. If a chief of police decides that an effective response to violence against women is desirable, she or he has the organizational authority to ensure her/his officers comply. Notwithstanding its patriarchal, sexist, racist and homophobic tendencies, police culture is also oriented towards protecting society's most vulnerable. Officers may be mobilized to protect battered women out of a sense of duty. In contrast, lawyers are part of a decentralized professional bureaucracy in which reform is generally treated as a threat to professional autonomy (Mintzberg, 1983). In order to be "fair" and "just" lawyers must appear objective and impartial. As professionals they do not want to be perceived as serving the interests of any particular group.⁸ Of course, within these organizational cultures there are local and temporal variations.

⁸ These differences in organizational norms and culture may in part explain the existence of several strong police initiatives to respond to violence against women (e.g. London, Metro Toronto, Durham Region,

The above considerations suggest that the the state is neither a neutral arbiter of gender nor an exclusively coercive force. For this project, the state is most usefully conceptualized as a contested terrain on which experts, politicians, bureaucrats, advocates, social service agents, professionals activists and others engage in struggle over the construction of gender and other relations of power. State policy outcomes for battered women are shaped not only by social relations of dominance and subordination but also by the collective action of feminist activists.

The Category of Woman, The Politics of Experience and the Construction of Women's Interests

A further difficulty in evaluating the impact of specific policies, initiatives and strategies on women's lives is that the category 'woman' does not represent a set of coherent or stable interests. Historically, feminist analyses have tended to reflect the perspectives of white middle class women of North America and Europe and failed to acknowledge the assumptions embedded in specific social locations. (Nicholson, 1990). The representation of 'woman' as a universal and unitary category has been thoroughly critiqued in recent feminist literature. (Butler, 1992; Haraway, 1990; Hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1992; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981; Riely, 1988; Spelman, 1988). Postmodern critiques have called into question the essentialism, ahistoricism and universalism underlying the category of "woman". Writers such as bell hooks (1984), Audre Lorde (1984), and Elisabeth Spelman (1988), have challenged notions of sisterhood based on

Ottawa-Carleton) and the resistance on the part of many crown's offices, (with the notable exception of Winnipeg), to change how they operate with respect to battered women.

shared oppression and analyses that privilege gender over race, class and sexual preference.

Some feminists, however, have argued that feminism depends on a relatively stable notion of the social subject 'feminism' and have expressed concern over the future of feminist politics within a postmodern paradigm (Bordo, 1990; Di Steffano, 1990; Harstock, 1990). They feared that postmodernism's deconstruction of the subject into a multiplicity of differences, none of which can be privileged over the other, would lead to the end of feminist politics. Harstock wonders why it is just as the efficacy of feminist activism is being realized that the existence of the subject is being questioned:

Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be theorized. Just when we are talking about the changes we want, ideas of progress and the possibility of systematically and rationally organizing human society become dubious and suspect. Why is it only now that critiques are made of the will to power inherent in the effort to create theory? (1990:164).

Ironically while one camp of postmodern theorists argues that our perspectives are so hopelessly rooted in our social, historical, cultural and economic positions that any attempts to construct theory will be simply a reflection of our positions and an attempt to fortify our own interests another camp argues that argue that fixed categories of identity have been dissolved and that the subject no longer exists. In my opinion, both of these positions are problematic for a feminist politics of transformation.⁹

⁹Theorists such as Lyotard (1984) who assert any attempt at theorizing is exclusionary, oppressive, totalizing and therefore illegitimate are strangely reminiscent of theories of the patriarchal or capitalist state that argue the state is always inherently oppressive. While it is the case that theorizing is always exclusionary to some extent, to argue that theory is always oppressive is surely functionalist, essentialist and ahistorical.

However, several feminist theorists have been able to articulate sophisticated theoretical analyses that avoid polarization around either of these extremes. For example, Mohanty (1992) states that it is failure to acknowledge social location and the assumption of the category of 'women' as a universally, cross-culturally applicable "already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions" (1992:55) which requires critique before a feminist politics can be viable. Mohanty's work explores the concepts of experience and difference and their relation to political praxis without losing sight of the goal of social transformation. She claims that analyses that assume universal sisterhood based on the shared status of victims of patriarchy, are depoliticizing. She uses Robin Morgan's Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology (1984) as an example of a politics based on experience. Mohanty argues that Morgan represents women as either victims of shared oppression or as truth-tellers--epistemically privileged by virtue of their shared oppression. Morgan links a "common world view" of women such as opposition to war and a healthy skepticism of technological advances to a "common condition which, despite variations in degree, is experienced by all human beings who are born female" (1984:4 cited in Mohanty, 1992:79). Mohanty argues that Morgan's assumption that women are inherently peaceful, erases difference across women and glosses over women's participation in nationalist movements and non-peaceful struggles. Morgan's assumption that experience leads to politics in a predictable way precludes a political analysis of actual efforts of peace organizing:

Universal sisterhood, defined as the transcendence of the male world thus ends up being a middle-class, psychologized notion which effectively erases material and ideological power difference within and among groups of

women, especially between First and Third World women (and paradoxically, removes us all as actors from history and politics). It is this erasure of difference as inequality and dependence that the privilege of Morgan's political location might become visible (1992:83).

Mohanty's critique of experientially based politics raises the question of what role experience should play in feminist politics. In a world where women's experiences are often denigrated and ridiculed, most feminists would state that they are committed to taking women's experiences seriously. However, as Mohanty demonstrates, the assumption that women's experiences alone will lead to the formation of transformative politics is problematic. The recently politicized identity of survivors of abuse is a case in point that is relevant to this project.

A strong belief exists among some activists that the movement to end violence against women should be lead by and accountable to battered women. This belief acts as a remedy against the increasing professionalization of the movement and a reminder of the importance of accountability. This stance reinforces the feminist value that women are "experts" of their own experience and forces activists to ask the question: advocacy for whom? However, to argue that the battered women's movement should be based on the standpoint of women who are abused is to suggest that this experience provides a clear understanding of the most appropriate strategies to end violence against women (this is not unlike Morgan's conception of women as victims and truth-tellers). Certainly women who have been abused have an understanding of what it feels like to be abused and this understanding needs to be respected. However, just as being woman does not necessarily mean one is a feminist, women who have been abused are not necessarily politically sensitive or politically strategic.

Furthermore, can women who have been abused speak for all women who have abused or just women of their own social position? Code addresses this dilemma:

Often we do not understand even "our own" experiences as well as the seemingly sacrosanct expression of ownership implies; and only rarely can we presume to understand exactly how it is for someone else even of our own class, race, sexual orientation and social group (1995:30).

Claiming the subject position of survivor as the privileged actor of the movement inevitably creates tension across race, class, sexual preference, geography, age and ability. Theories that focus on the standpoint of gender have been critiqued for their exclusive focus on gender (Alarcon, 1990; Moraga, 1986; Mohanty, 1992) and their inability to account for the ways in which women's subjectivities are constructed across multiple axes of oppression. Code claims feminists need to be wary that the "tyranny of authoritarian expertise that discounts women's expertise" is not replaced by a "tyranny of experientialism that claims for first-person experiential utterances an immunity from challenge, interpretation, or debate" (1995: 36).

In addition, a politics based on experience tends to assume women's needs are pre-given or already constituted outside of politics. Fraser (1989) points out that traditional theories tend to take the interpretations of needs as simply given and unproblematic. They assume that it does not matter who interprets the needs, from what perspective and in light of what interests. Group interests, however, do not exist "pre-given fully formed and representable outside the state" (Watson, 1990). Politics are not simple representations of women's needs but rather processes in which women's needs are constituted. Women's interests are not given by abstract class or gender location but rather are discursively

constructed through the process of engagement with the state. The act of articulating needs modifies them (Fraser, 1989).

For instance, the category "battered woman" did not exist prior to negotiation with the state. Early organizing efforts were based on a model of empowerment in which women assisted other women to create a life free of violence (Macleod, 1994). Battered women were positioned as no different than other women. Over the last decade, an emphasis on short-term protection, crisis intervention, physical violence and the criminal nature of wife assault converged with state funding requirements to create an image of battered women as victims requiring therapeutic services and outside protection. Macleod links this formulation to the need to make an overwhelming problem seem more manageable. Helping individual women was a more manageable goal than the feminist demands for the fundamental re-thinking of the family and socio-economic inequalities. But even as the needs claims of battered women were being translated into potential objects of state administration, women were resisting the notion of victim through the production of the new identity of "survivor". This example demonstrates that the "interests" of women do not exist pre-given but rather are the product of a struggle over meaning that takes place among experts, politicians, bureaucrats, academics, advocates, social service agents, abused women and others.

Political outcomes of actual strategies and politics provide a further challenge to the existence of a unitary category of women. (Dahlerup, 1993; Showstark Sasson, 1987; Walby, 1990). It is difficult to make generalizations about how state policies affect women when women differ across race, class, age, sexual orientation, and geography

(Fincher, 1993). A particular government policy may enable certain groups of women while disadvantaging others. Affirmative action programs are more likely to benefit white middle class women who are already educated, qualified and in the labour force (Carty, 1993 Franzway, Court, and Connell, 1987). Similarly, the right to abortion on demand is a bittersweet victory to women who have felt the threat of forced sterilization (Weir, 1994 Staggenborg, 1988).

Mandatory charging provides another example of this difficulty. While it is clear that mandatory charging leads to more arrests, and thus gives a strong message to men that they must face consequences for their battering, such policies differentially impact women according to race, class and geography. Strategies that focus exclusively on the family as a site of oppression ignore the multiple axes of oppression that women of colour face (hooks, 1984). Because of the overwhelming evidence of racism of law enforcement and criminal justice systems, many women belonging to racially or ethnically oppressed groups may fear police intervention in any matter (Thobani, 1992). Women may feel that they are forced to choose between staying in a violent situation or risk subjecting themselves and their partners to racist treatment by the police and courts. Furthermore, by pressing charges, women of colour also risk reinforcing stereotypes and appearing as traitors to people in their own communities. For economic reasons poor women may not want their partners to face a heavy fine or jail sentence. Mandatory charging may benefit women who have economic choices, but can be disastrous to those who rely on their partner's income to make ends meet.

In order for strategies to end violence against women to be viable, they must recognize that women vary across race, class, sexual orientation, age, geography and ability and that women's interests do not exist pre-given but rather are constructed through the process of politics. As the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women states: "violence is linked not only to the sexist nature of society, but also to racism and class inequality upon which our society is based . . . any analysis of violence must include recognition of the complex ways in which inequality and power imbalance structures the lives of Canadian women" (1993: 4).

A Politics Of Engagement

In conclusion, the conceptual framework of this project is based on what Reinelt (1995) calls a "politics of engagement" which recognizes the importance both of creating alternatives and of challenging existing institutions. A politics of engagement is based on an analysis of the strategic possibilities of particular states in particular places at particular times. This framework rejects analyses that present the state as a monolithic entity or an exclusively coercive force. It rejects the representation of women as a unitary category and recognizes difference across a multiplicity of subject positions. It recognizes that distinctions between mainstream and radical organizations are blurring and that institutionalization does not necessarily lead to deradicalization.

In addition, a politics of engagement takes seriously the identities and cognitive frameworks of activists (Billig, 1995) and is attentive to how the social contexts of different periods of activism influence how women define feminism and feminist activism.

It is interested in the intersection of personal and collective identities and the impact of this intersection on the development of strategy.

A politics of engagement attempts to reformulate dichotomies such as cultural/political, mainstream/disengagement, task/process and moderate/radical as strategic choices. It argues for the importance of maintaining a strategic tension between mainstreaming and disengagement (Adamson et al., 1988). The notion of "competing contradiction" (Dobash and Dobash, 1992) provides an indication of what this strategic tension involves:

In order to stand as a true alternative to the status quo, a change proposal must both contradict the existing order, that is represent a real alternative, and, at the same time, seriously compete for adoption or acceptance (1992:21).

Critiques of patriarchy, capitalism and racism and the creation of feminist alternative values, practices, and institutions contradict dominant ways of doing things. However, unless they include goals that have the potential of being realized in the mainstream, they fail to provide a serious challenge to the status quo. The strategic dilemma is that the very process of competition (engaging with the mainstream) produces the risk of turning competing contradictions into messages that reflect dominant values. (Theorists have referred to this as the risk of co-optation).

This formulation is significant in that it transcends that dichotomy between radical and mainstream, arguing that strategies must both "contradict" (pose alternatives) and "compete" (engage with the mainstream). Dobash and Dobash state:

The dilemma of participating in a political process is one of holding onto the goal of change while trying to influence organizations which by their very nature would be expected to resist or subvert such goals (1992:20?)

For activists working to end violence against women, the challenge is to meet women's immediate safety needs without losing sight of a long term vision of social transformation.

Fraser captures the essence of what is meant by a politics of engagement that seeks both to compete and contradict. She states it is always necessary to ask what is getting lost or altered in the process and what are the countervailing costs and benefits of engagement but that "these are better treated as conjunctural, strategic questions than as matters of principle--and that, in principle, there is no alternative to bridge building . . . social transformation requires struggle in the sense of engagement with one's opponents" (1989:13).

Would a framework based on a politics of engagement address the strategic dilemmas that activists working to end violence against women are faced with in the 1990's? Would a framework that attempts to transcend the dichotomies of cultural/political, mainstream/disengagement, task/process and moderate/radical address the organizing impasses that activists face? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to begin by asking, "How do activists understand the process of making change"? At the beginning of the chapter I argued that an activist's understanding of social change depends on the conceptual framework she uses. I identified the state and collective identity as two important components of a conceptual framework. Therefore I would have to ask, do activists have a clear way of thinking about the state? Are understandings of the state linked to different collective identities? How do different personal identities intersect with collective identities to produce different orientations towards change? To what extent do activists balance immediate needs of women with a

long term vision of social transformation? Do the terms mainstreaming and disengagement have resonance with activists? To what extent do women identify a tension between "competing" in the mainstream and "contradicting" the status quo? To what extent does dichotomous thinking interfere with strategic thinking and a politics of engagement?

With these questions in mind I identified the specific site of activists working in Ottawa-Carleton to begin my inquiry. The next chapter outlines my specific research questions and method, and provides a brief discussion of the methodological issues with which I grappled.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

After critical reflection on both the literature and feminist practice, I formulated my research questions: Would a framework based on a politics of engagement address the strategic dilemmas that activists working to end violence against women are faced with in the 1990's? To what extent do activists balance the immediate needs of women with a long term vision of social transformation? In essence, how do activists understand the process of making change? I identified the state and collective identity as key concepts and I chose activists working in Ottawa-Carleton as the specific site of my inquiry. I was armed with insights from feminist theory about the social category of woman, sisterhood and experience. I recognized that the category woman does not represent a set of coherent or stable interests; that a notion of sisterhood based on shared oppression which privileges gender over race, class and sexual preference was no longer viable; and that we need to be careful that the principle of respecting women's experience doesn't turn into a "tyranny of experientialism" that places experience above "challenge, interpretation, or debate" (Code, 1995: 36). But I had less certainty about what these insights meant for feminist research.

As I attempted to incorporate these theoretical insights into practice I faced several questions: What mix of quantitative and qualitative methods should I use? Should I use interviews, questionnaires, and/or participant observation? How do I determine whether my approach is consistent with feminist values? How many women and which women should I sample? And which criteria should I use to inform my selection? What do the principles of inclusiveness and diversity mean in practice? What kind of relationship

should I foster with my research participants? How much reciprocity is enough? What if gender is not enough to create a relationship of trust and understanding? This chapter describes how I grappled with these questions and outlines the methodology that I developed.

In the first part of this chapter I situate my epistemological orientation within a social constructionist approach and outline the social action framework that guided the research process. Second, I address the dilemmas I encountered as I attempted to put my feminist values into practice and I discuss the methodological literature that informed my research decisions. Third, I describe the actual research process. Finally, I discuss my approach to the analysis of the interview data, including the role of conceptual baggage.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Broadly defined, epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge. It is the study of what makes knowledge possible and of assumptions about how knowledge can be acquired and validated (Code, 1995). Epistemological assumptions that underlie the feminist project to understand the unequal social relations include decisions about what social issues are worth pursuing and questions about how they should be pursued. Methodological questions, such as which methods produce reliable knowledge; which methods respect women's experience and diversity and which methods empower rather than oppress, are closely linked to epistemology.

A starting point for feminist epistemology is the recognition that all knowledge is socially constructed. The pursuit of value-free, objective, disinterested and autonomous

knowledge is a myth. In fact, the process of interpretation is at the core of the entire research process (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). Knowledge production is located in a specific social context that is shaped by historical, political, cultural and economic factors.

Kirby and McKenna explain:

What knowledge we are able to observe and reveal is directly related to our vantage point, to where we stand in the world. Our interaction with the social world is affected by such variables as gender, race, class, sexuality, age, physical ability, etc. This does not mean that facts about the social world do not exist, but that what we see and how we go about constructing meaning is a matter of interpretation (1989: 24)

Because knowledge is socially constructed it will always have political implications.

Knowledge can oppress or empower, justify certain actions and delegitimize others.

Many feminists thus agree that feminist research should be consistent with the goal of understanding, challenging and transforming unequal power relations (Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1983; Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Mies, 1983; Weskott, 1979).

In conceptualizing and implementing this project I have been influenced by Dobash and Dobash's (1988) "social action framework" as a means of connecting research and action. Their framework draws attention to the social and political consequences of messages inherent in the research processes. Dobash and Dobash argue that some messages reinforce the status quo while other challenge it and purpose alternatives. According to this framework, effective messages need both to "contradict" the status quo and have the potential to "compete" in the contested terrain on which activists, politicians, bureaucrats, advocates, social services agents, and others engage in struggle over the

construction of relations of power.¹⁰ In other words, research that points only to the dangers of co-optation or research that suggests that the only way to achieve meaningful social change is to completely disengage with the mainstream does not provide activists and policy makers with real alternatives. For Dobash and Dobash, social action research must both challenge institutional power and provide real alternatives to it.

I have also been influenced by Reitsma-Street's (1996) exploration of what research can contribute to social justice practice. She states that researchers must "ask timely questions that mobilize energy and that do not paralyze". I thought this notion fit particularly well with Struthers' (1994) assertion that the movement to end violence against women had reached a strategic paralysis and as such it is time to rethink our current approaches to ending violence against women. At the same time, I recognized that any project that critically reflected on the organizing practices of activists had the potential to paralyze as well as mobilize. Thus as a researcher committed to creating social change, I was continually aware of the need both to "contradict and compete" and to mobilize and not paralyze.

METHODOLOGY, LITERATURE, AND RESEARCH DILEMMAS

In particular, I found four questions to be particularly problematic throughout the research process:

1. How can I move beyond individual women's experience without imposing an interpretative framework which delegitimizes the perspectives of research participants?

¹⁰In the first chapter of this paper (p58), I use Dobash and Dobash's notion of a "competing contradiction" to argue that effective strategies for social change need to maintain a tension between mainstreaming and disengagement.

2. How can I be inclusive of activists who vary across race, class, sexual orientation, ability and age?
3. What happens when there are conflicts or ideological differences between the researcher and the participants and/or among the participants?
4. What happens to the feminist goal of developing mutually empowering and deeply satisfying relationships when the participants are politically astute, articulate and have little interest in time consuming research?

To address these questions I turned to the literature on feminist methodology. What follows is a discussion of the theory that guided my approach to resolving these dilemmas.

Women's Experience

Most feminist research places women's experiences and women's lives at the centre of its inquiry (Code, 1995; Cook and Fonow, 1986). Many researchers connect this focus with the goal of social change. Lather, for example, argues that research on women's lives has the potential to "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to end women's unequal social position" (Lather, 1988). But as Code argues, given the hegemony of patriarchal, racist and capitalist ideologies, it is not enough for women to separately insist on the "veracity of their own experiences" (1995:26). Researchers must move beyond individual experience to produce social analysis (Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, 1991). In fact, Kirby and McKenna (1989) state that research may inadvertently reinforce the status quo unless it addresses the social context and its underlying power relations.

This discussion is particularly pertinent for this research project because it was likely that the participants I would interview would have different and potentially conflicting perspectives on making change. While I am clear that it is not my role as

researcher to judge or evaluate these different perspectives, if I do not point out the strengths, limitations, and contradictions I see, am I failing to produce social analysis? Moreover, what if I find evidence to suggest that some perspectives are more or less effective for creating social change? In this case, the goal of creating social change may conflict with the value of respecting women's experience. Recognizing this dilemma cannot be easily solved, I am guided by Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1991) who argue that the challenge for feminist research is to maintain a tension between respecting women's experiences and constructing interpretations that will lead to social change.

Gender Relations and Multiple Axes of Oppression

A central goal of feminist research is to critically examine the pervasiveness of gender relations throughout society, including the research process (Cook and Fonow, 1991). Increasingly feminists are arguing that researchers need to recognize the diversity of women's lives and attend to unequal relations that cut across multiple axes of oppression. Patricia Hill Collins emphasizes the importance of not "starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, [but rather thinking] of these systems as part of an interlocking matrix of relationships (1990: 20). As Edwards (1990) argues, however, there has been little consideration of what a politics of difference means for feminist research in practice.

At the beginning of this project I took the goals of diversity and inclusion for granted. Informed by critiques of a unitary or monolithic notion of woman I assumed that my sample should reflect the diversity of feminists activists. As the project continued I

began to realize that this assumption, however desirable, was also problematic. A woman of colour who participated in a pilot interview questioned my assumption asking me why I wanted to interview women of colour. She stated that there was a lot of rhetoric about inclusiveness and diversity but limited understanding of what these concepts actually mean in practice. I began to realize the question of inclusivity was more complicated than it first appeared.

Writers such as Amos and Parmar (1981) have suggested that white people should not do research on people of colour. They state that the inclusion of Blacks "serves only to add cross-cultural spice to predominantly ethnocentric work (129). In a similar vein, Phoenix states that:

Academic work is conducted within a social context in which racism means that black people are socially devalued and white people are socially valued. Most researchers are white, and as a result are likely not to share the same perspectives as black people. Research therefore must be suspect when conducted within the value systems of a racist society. This means that when comparisons are made between groups of black people and groups of white people research continues to construct white people as the norm and black people as abnormal by comparison (1987: 51)

Several researchers claim that it is problematic for white women to research women of colour-particularly when race and racism are central focus of the study, but what about situations such as my own research project which are not directly concerned with theories of race but in which race plays a part? I agree with Cannon, Higginbotham, and Leung (1991) that to completely leave women of colour out of studies conducted by white women serves only to further erase the lives and experiences of women of colour from history. Based on her own work on mature mother/students, Edwards too concludes that if women of colour are part of the population in question they should be included in the

research. In this sense I am reminded of Nancy Fraser's comment that there is no alternative to bridge building. But having said this, it is not always easy to build those bridges.

Cannon, Higginbotham, and Leung (1991) point out that women of colour are often excluded from qualitative research. In contrast to the experience of white researchers interviewing white women, (Finch, 1984; Oakely, 1981; Wise, 1987) who report no trouble in getting women to talk about the intimate details of their lives, both white and Black researchers report many obstacles to interviewing women of colour. Cannon, Higginbotham, and Leung found that Black women were more likely to be skeptical about the purpose of the research, more likely to ask questions about the perspective of the researcher and how the research would be used and more likely to be distrustful of the researchers' affiliations with university institutions. They found that involving Black women required face to face methods that established credibility and built trust. These methods included presentations to women's organizations and a snowball technique in which one participant recommended another. The researchers realized that Black women were more likely than the white women they approached to fear that they or a member of their group would be exploited by the research process. Recognizing that it may be difficult to reach women of colour who were willing to participate in my own research, I looked for strategies to include diverse groups of women in a respectful manner that was consistent with feminist principles.

Relationship Between the Researcher and the Researched

Feminist researchers attempt to transform the object/subject split found in traditional research by conceptualizing research as “for” and “with” women rather than “on” women (Kirby and Mckenna, 1989). As a result the relationship between the researcher and the research participants becomes a key aspect of feminist politics, epistemology and methodology. Reflexivity and reciprocity are two interrelated concepts that address this relationship.

Reflexivity is a means of accounting for subjectivity and the role of values in research (Fonow and Cook, 1991). Reflexivity is the continual and critical awareness about research relationships and the influence of beliefs, values and social location on the research process (Fonow and Cook, 1991). Harding describes reflexivity as the process of placing the researcher on the same critical plane as the researched. She writes, “thus the researcher appears not as an invisible, anonymous, disembodied voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests--and ones that are sometimes in tension with each other” (1987:571-572).

Reciprocity is another strategy that feminist researchers may use to minimize the objectification of participants. Feminist research challenges the typical research process in which subjects are often treated as no more than objects of deception, manipulation, observation and measurement. A central aspect of feminist research is the establishment of honourable overt relationships with direct communication. Covert or manipulative approaches are generally not acceptable to feminist researchers (Kirby and Mckenna, 1989). For example, Oakley urges researchers to become more than “an instrument of

data collection" and to develop deep friendships with the women they interview (1981:48). Kirby and McKenna (1989) talk about the need for intersubjectivity: "an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all are respected as equally knowing subjects" (34). This dialogue involves the reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience between the researcher and the researched (Rutledge Shields and Dervin, 1993).

Reinharz (1993), however, remarks that the feminist desire to transform all relations of unequal power has led to some feminists to argue that all research should produce deep, mutually satisfying reciprocal relationships. Although there is considerable agreement that the concepts of reflexivity and reciprocity are central to feminist research, there is some disagreement about what these terms mean in practice. Both concepts have been critiqued on several counts: 1. for assuming that gender is enough to create a bond of shared trust (Edwards, 1990); 2. for assuming research participants are oppressed and want/need to form intimate relationships with researchers (Reinharz, 1993); and 3. for assuming that the beliefs and values of participants and researchers will not be in conflict (Wasserfall, 1993). What follows is a discussion of these issues in the context of this research project.

1. In contrast to the experience of researchers like Finch, Oakley and Wise, many researchers have discovered that gender is not enough to create intimate relationships (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Edwards, 1990). Given the current critiques of the category of woman and the politicization of identity, it is unlikely that women of different social locations will assume they can form a relationship of equality based on

the shared commonality of gender. In fact, Edwards found that in contrast to "non-challenging sex-based trust", rapport was easier after she acknowledged the difference of her social location compared to that of her participants. I agree with Mies (1991) and Wasserfall (1993) that researchers must resist the temptation to believe that the process of reflexivity can be used to transcend power differences. Following Edwards, (1990), in my initial contact with potential research participants, I situated myself as both an activist and a student and invited participants to discuss any questions about my social identity, political commitments, or the research process.

2. Some feminist researchers have argued that one goal of feminist research is to give a voice to the silenced and disenfranchised. For example Lather writes that feminist research allows subjects to realize "how poorly their ideologically frozen understandings serve their interests"(1986:286). Farrow explains that one of the central benefits of participatory research is that participants emerge "self-confident, skilled, aware, and knowledgeable" (1994: 94). In my case, I felt that the women I interviewed were already "self-confident, skilled, aware, and knowledgeable". Many of the women I interviewed had completed Master's degrees (something I had yet to do) and had established credibility and expertise both in the area of violence against women and in the Ottawa community. From my standpoint, the women I interviewed seemed older, wiser, politically astute and more articulate than myself. In addition, I realized that activists are not necessarily isolated or looking for intimate relations with researchers. Most activists are already stretched to their limits both in terms of time

and resources. In fact, lack of time was the most common reason women declined to be interviewed. It seems unreasonable, therefore to assume all women would want/need the same degree of rapport. I agree with Reinharz that the degree of rapport should be negotiated based on the needs and wants of both the researcher and the researched and the constraints of the research process. Therefore, for this project rapport is most usefully conceptualized as the establishment of "relations of respect, shared information, openness and clarity of communication" (Reinharz, 1983:74).

3. Wasserfall argues that reflexivity implies a "certain political sameness, commonality or identity". In the same sense, Acker, Barry and Esseveld state that reciprocity and rapport require a "minimum level of similarity, ideology, and language" (1991:26). For example, Acker, Barry and Esseveld were reluctant to share the interpretations of their research with those who they expected would be upset by them. They were afraid that their feminist values would conflict with and potentially disrupt the lives of participants who held traditional beliefs. As a result, the researchers did not include these women as active participants in the analysis of the research data. They concluded that it is difficult to reduce power differences when there is a lack of shared values. Taylor and Rupp (1991) faced a similar dilemma in their research of the women's movement in the 1940's and 1950's. They were dismayed to discover that many of the women they interviewed held "unenlightened" views about lesbians, bisexuals, radicals, and working class people. The researchers felt unable to directly ask participants many questions including whether they were involved in same-sex

relationships. As a consequence, the researchers were not able to openly discuss their viewpoints and interpretations with their participants. Wasserfall (1993) reports a more extreme example of conflict between herself and her research participants. As her study of how Moroccan Jews in Israel constructed gender and national identities progressed, Wasserfall became increasingly alienated from her participants. Although she began by believing that her reflexive praxis would allow her to deal compassionately and in a non-exploitative way with difference, she came to question whether the notion of reflexivity provided the conceptual tools to address the issues arising out of social, cultural, geographic, political and economic differences.

Wasserfall's experiences led her to ask whether a researcher should only study people she likes and identifies with. Mies' (1991) notion of "conscious partiality" is helpful here. Mies argues that researchers need to understand their own identity and social location as well as those of their participants in the context of inequality embedded in the structures of society. She cautions, however, that this reflexive process can only produce partial identification. With the limitations of partial identification in mind, the notion of reflexivity becomes a more tenable process.

The issue of difference is particularly relevant to this project. My research began with the assumption that there are competing ideas about how to make change. In fact, the goal of the research was to understand different viewpoints on how to organize in order to move beyond the strategic impasse created by divisions in the movement. There are deeply entrenched divisions, long standing debates, distinct collective identities, differences across race, class, sexual preference, age and ability,

and different assumptions about what constitutes feminism, feminist activism, and feminist research. Anticipating tensions arising from these differences but still wishing to respect the principles of reciprocity, I chose to conduct interviews with a flexible structure and ample opportunity for feedback but stopped short of a full scale collaborative project.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Method

After careful consideration of the above issues I developed my research methodology. I interviewed 21 activists using a semi-structured questionnaire. This approach allowed me to ask specific questions as well as give each participant the opportunity both to address the issues she thought were relevant and to proceed in a manner she felt was appropriate. Interviews lasted from 1 hour to 3.5 hours with the average interview being about 1.5 hours. The interviews took place during the months of February and March of 1994. I also relied on my observations as a participant in a community based project to improve the Ottawa-Carleton criminal justice system response to violence against women. My participation in this project began in April 1994 and ended in February 1995.

The exploratory nature of this project makes use of semi-structured interviews particularly appropriate. According to May (1993), qualitative methods are likely to be appropriate when the goal of research is to investigate how participants interpret and understand events, experiences and beliefs, but inappropriate when the goal is to test

specific hypotheses and make generalizations. In addition, qualitative methods may be appropriate when little is known about the phenomenon. In this case, little previous research has been conducted about the question of strategy in organizing to end violence against women. I wanted to explore the extent to which the strategic framework I developed was relevant to the practical dilemmas activists were facing. I believed that methodologically it was important to be open and responsive to how activists understood the issues and at this stage not to impose a pre-defined set of ideas.

Although qualitative methods appear to be the most appropriate given my research goals and the state of knowledge in the area, there are two major limitations to this approach which I feel need to be addressed. One, it is difficult to establish to the extent to which my sample is representative to the general population of activists working to end violence against women. Two, the relatively small sample size dictated by the demands of qualitative research means that it is difficult to test hypotheses about the relationship between strategy and difference among activists. These limitations are accounted for in my analysis and interpretation of the interview data.

Sampling

The most critical methodological issue I faced was sampling. How should I identify activists to interview? One woman suggested that there are over 200 activists working to end violence against women in the Ottawa area alone. At most, I would only be able to interview a fraction of this number. How could I justify my choices? I certainly didn't want to interview only women I had worked with in the past or only women that I

liked. I wanted to ensure that I interviewed activists who work across a range of social locations, with a range of perspectives, across multiple axes of difference. This proved to be extremely difficult to do without lapsing in to a formulistic and tokenistic method.

Through discussions with my advisor, I identified a long-time activist who had considerable credibility with diverse groups of women within the Ottawa community. She agreed to act as a “key informant” for the project. Through further discussions with my key informant and my advisor we developed a method to address the problem of sampling. Using Adamson et.al.’s (1988) mainstreaming/disengagement continuum as a framework (see chapter one) we decided to invite two more women who have different orientations towards social change to become key informants. The first key informant identifies herself as working primarily from a disengaged stance. Although she has worked in and with mainstream institutions, she believes most strongly in activism that is outside the mainstream. The second key informant works in a community organization but sees considerable strategic potential in working closely with mainstream institutions. The third key informant works within the state. This woman has participated in disengaged activism and sees it essential for the success of the movement but she also believes that meaningful change can occur within the state. Although all three women use a variety of strategies and work from a number of locations depending on the historical conjuncture, each woman felt that their basic orientation towards social change could be described with reference to the continuum (See table one). It should be emphasized, however, that these are basic orientations and cannot in any way account for dynamism of each woman’s activism.

Table One: Basic Orientations Towards Social Change

Key informant 1	Key informant 2	Key informant 3
disengagement		mainstreaming

After meeting with each woman, I asked my three key informants each to identify ten women who were working to end violence against women in the Ottawa-Carleton community. I told them that I was interested in interviewing women who had thought about strategy, who were using a variety of strategies, and who were working from different locations. I felt this approach would ensure the participation of activists with a cross section of different orientations towards change. One key informant included the following note with her list of activists.

The women on this list have all at some time or another talked with me about strategies (short-term/long term) or issues, dilemmas facing the movement. When I say that I have talked with each of them about strategies (issues, dilemmas etc.) it doesn't mean that we have always agreed it is just that I know they have thought about "things" to some degree or another".

I sent out letters to 32 women (this number includes three key informants and two women who agreed to do pilot interviews). The letters, personally addressed to each woman, included information about my own experience as an activist and my motivations to do this work (see appendix A). Women were also assured of confidentiality. In total 25 of the women contacted agreed to be interviewed, constituting a response rate of 81%. Of the women who agreed to be interviewed, two withdrew. One woman indicated that she had recently returned to university and simply did not have time. Another woman, who initially expressed enthusiasm about the project, simply stopped returning my calls. In

addition I was unable to interview two other women due to numerous scheduling conflicts.

The Interview

All women were asked to sign a letter of informed consent that outlined the research procedure (see appendix B). Women were asked if they minded the interview being taped and told that they would have a choice of the tape being returned to them or destroyed. No one disagreed to being taped. Women were also told that only myself and my thesis supervisor, Fran Klodawsky, would have access to the audio-tapes.¹¹

Confidentiality was ensured and women were informed that they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time. In addition women were asked several questions about their own background (see appendix C). They were asked about their household composition, paid work and volunteer experience, age, income and level of education. These questions were asked so that a participant profile could be developed and the sampling process could be accounted for.

The interview itself was divided into four parts. (See appendix D for interview schedule.) In the first section I asked the women to provide a contextualized history of their activism, including the work they have been involved in and their motivations for doing this work. In this section I hoped to develop an understanding of how each woman

¹¹It was seen as particularly important to identify my supervisor by name, because as an active participant in the Ottawa women's community, she was well known to many activists. It was important to ensure that participants were comfortable with this. Although many women commented that they appreciated being informed that another activist/scholar would have access to the interview tapes, no one expressed discomfort.

situated herself as an activist and how each woman constructed a sense of collective identity for herself. In the second section the women were asked to evaluate three initiatives to end violence against women that were currently in place. In this section I looked for the factors that each woman considered when she evaluated strategies. Next I asked the women how they understand the problem of violence against women and what they thought activists should be doing to end it. In this section I was primarily interested in the ideological framework that activists used to understand the problem. Finally, I asked the women some broader questions about how social change happens. First I asked them about the terms "mainstream" "grassroots" and "radical". Second I showed them a diagram of the mainstreaming/disengagement continuum (Adamson et. al. 1989) and asked them to describe themselves in terms of these concepts (both in terms of history and beliefs and ideology). I asked the women about these concepts in order to gain a sense of the extent to which dichotomous thinking about social change was present among activists working to end violence against women in Ottawa

Participant Profile

The paid employment of all the activists interviewed relates in some way to the issue of violence against women (see table two). Twelve of the activists work providing direct service to survivors of violence. Of these twelve women some lead support groups for women whose partners were in treatment, some are shelter or sexual assault crisis workers, some work in communities and some work in mainstream institutions. Seven of the women are involved primarily in advocacy and education work. Most of these women

focus on violence against women issues but some also work on human rights and labour and employment issues for women. The remaining two women work inside the state. One of these women works primarily with violence against women issues and the other works primarily with labour issues for women.

Table Two: Paid Employment of Research Participants		
DIRECT SERVICE 12 women	ADVOCACY/EDUCATION 7 women	WITHIN THE STATE 2 women
Support groups leaders Men's Treatment Programs Shelter workers Sexual Assault Crisis Centre	Violence against women issues, Human rights and Labour issues	Violence against women, Human rights and Labour issues

All of the women do some volunteer activist work in the women's community. This work includes education, direct service and advocacy on a wide range of issues including: disability issues, peace activism, anti-racist work, lesbian politics, community health, pro-choice activism, socialist politics, and electoral politics.

The youngest participant was in her early thirties and the oldest was in her mid sixties. The majority of the women were in their mid thirties to mid forties. Participants' incomes ranged from just under \$30 000 to above \$50 000 with the majority of women earning between \$30 000 and \$40 000. Women who work within state institutions had the highest incomes, but there were no significant differences between the incomes of women doing advocacy and women doing direct service work.

The women in the sample are very highly educated. All but two women in the sample had completed university degrees and these two women were in process of completing theirs. Even more surprising, nine of the participants have masters degrees. This high level of education is worth reflecting on. These figures are obviously very high in comparison to those for Canadian women in general (see table three), but because of the small sample it is impossible to determine whether feminist activists are more likely than the average Canadian woman to have a post-secondary degree (or for that matter whether this sample is reflective of the larger population of activists in Ottawa or Canada). Perhaps the more interesting question is whether the high level of education of these particular women is related to the fact that key informants were asked to identify women who had thought about strategy or reflected on their work? Perhaps there is a relationship between education and the opportunity for critical reflection. Further research could explore these connections in a more systematic manner.

Table Three: Comparison Between Education Levels of Research Participants and Women in Canada		
	Research Participants	Women in Canada¹²
Some post secondary	100% (21)	32%
University Degree	90% (19)	10%
Masters Degree	42% (9)	--

(a) Diversity

Four of the twenty one women interviewed are women of colour.¹³ Three francophone women participated in this project, all of whom are active in the francophone

¹²Based on figures cited in 1995 Statistics Canada publication, Women in Canada.

¹³Although this percentage is higher than the percentage of Ottawa/Hull's population who are visible minorities, (10% according to Statistics Canada) there are no reliable data on the composition of activists in Ottawa/Hull.

women's community. Two of the women interviewed have disabilities and a third works actively with women with disabilities who are experiencing violence. Several of the participants are lesbians.

Almost all of the activists had participated in coalition work with diverse groups of women. Moreover, almost all of the women showed an acute awareness of the politics of difference within the Ottawa women's community. A few women in particular demonstrated commitment and solidarity through their long histories of work with women of colour, francophone women and women with disabilities.

ANALYSIS

Dynamics

A guiding assumption that is central to the analysis of interview data is that data are always and necessarily partial. My analysis is firmly rooted in the recognition that an activist's understanding of how to make change will be different over time. I agree with Routledge Shields and Dervin that "one person understood yesterday may not be so readily understandable today" and that there is "always the potential for differences to be different over time" (1993:74). For instance, a woman who has just returned from a defense of an abortion clinic or just heard of massive cuts to day care funding may be focused on the need for fundamental changes to our social fabric before women can be free of violence against women. If the same woman was to be interviewed just after she facilitated a group for survivors in which several women made significant breakthroughs, she may be more likely to emphasize the power of women working with women.

Similarly an activist may be more or less open to the possibility of changing the system depending on the extent to which she perceives that gains and losses have been made in the recent political context. How women construct their accounts is not static. The understanding of how to make change captured on a particular date is only one moment in an activist's history. For these reasons, Routledge Shields and Dervin make a case for moving away from "conceptualizing humans as a static bundle of traits and states to conceptualizing them not only as active, constructing and meaning making but as potentially flexible over time" (1993:76; see also Dervin, 1990).

Conceptual Baggage

There is a tension between letting the data speak for itself, feminist principles and interpretation. Gordon urges researchers to listen "quietly and intently" to the voices present in their data. She warns against silencing voices with assumptions that arise from "methodological or political determinism" (1978: 129-130). Essentially, Gordon is referring to the "conceptual baggage" that all researchers bring to the research process. (If researchers did not have ideas, experiences or opinions of the phenomenon in question, they would be unlikely to have any desire to study it.) Conceptual baggage includes beliefs and experiences, methodological preferences, epistemological assumptions and political ideologies. In one sense, my theoretical framework outlined in chapter one forms the basis of my conceptual baggage. (One purpose of providing a theoretical framework is to place the assumptions that the researcher will use to interpret her data out in the open.) But theoretical frameworks generally do not make clear the researcher's personal

experiences and preconceptions. For Kirby and Mckenna, conceptual baggage is a “process by which you can state your personal assumptions about the topic and the research process” (1989:32). This layer is always present in the research process but is rarely made explicit in traditional research. Throughout the research process I have attempted to contextualize myself in the research and account for the decisions I make.

In the next chapter I present my results and analysis. Following my conceptual framework that identifies challenging assumptions about social change as the key to rethinking our approaches to ending violence against women, this chapter focuses on the assumptions of the strategies and visions being articulated by activists.

CHAPTER THREE: RETHINKING STRATEGIES TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

All of the activists I interviewed agreed that the problem of violence against women is the outcome of social, economic, and political inequality built into the structure of society. Moreover, they all agreed that in order to make change, activists need to both engage with institutions and create alternatives. But in answer to the questions of under what conditions should one engage, to what extent and for what purpose, I found considerably less agreement.

Surprisingly though, few activists articulated these disagreements as sources of conflict within women's communities. In fact, many of the activists I interviewed did not see the organizing decisions of other activists in terms of strategic choices at all.¹⁴ For the most part, concepts such as strategic engagement, collective identity, and the tension between mainstreaming and disengagement were not part of the vocabulary of the activists I interviewed. Throughout the interviews, activists talked about strategic decisions as if they were pre-determined by their assumptions about change. In this chapter I argue that critical reflection on questions of strategy was limited by the extent to which assumptions about social change and collective identities were based on "us"\' "them" categories and either/or dichotomies. Thinking about concepts such as, grassroots\'institutionalized, moderate\'radical, insider\'outsider as either/or categories prevents activists from conceptualizing strategy in terms of a tension between mainstreaming and disengagement.

¹⁴I want to make it clear that I am not suggesting that activists do not think about strategy at all. By the very nature of their work activists are always involved in strategizing. What I am suggesting is that certain ways of thinking about social change limit the potential of this strategizing.

A further consequence is that issues that are more appropriately considered questions of strategy turn into disputes about who is most feminist or who is the right kind of feminist. Instead of asking whether particular strategies are effective given the goal, activists tended to question the analyses, motivations and commitments to feminism of other activists.

In contrast to the lack of clarity expressed by activists themselves, from my vantage point, activists appear to be using several distinct strategies. The purpose of this chapter is to articulate and critically analyse these strategies. My hope is that a focus on specific strategies will push current debates beyond conceptualizing organizing differences in terms of dichotomies or the traditional categories of liberal, radical and socialist feminism. I believe this focus is particularly appropriate given the difficulties activists had thinking about strategy and the growing number of activists, survivors, front-line workers and policy makers who are calling for a strategic rethinking of our approaches to ending violence against women. Unless activists begin to critically discuss questions of strategy our organizing efforts are likely to reach an impasse.

In part one of this chapter I describe and analyse the strategies that were articulated by the activists I interviewed. For each strategy I outline its assumptions about the state, how to make change and what counts as change. In part two I situate these strategies in the broader context of two distinct visions about what activists should be doing to end violence against women. I argue that these visions have been influential in shaping the current course of activism in Ottawa-Carleton. Each is tied to a different collective identity and a different understanding of how to make change. Despite the

complexity of activism in practice, at the level of discourse, debates seem to be polarized around either a mainstreaming or disengaged vision of social change. Each vision has different historical roots and different ideas about how to respond to the institutionalization of the problem of violence against women. These visions represent struggles over ownership of the problem of violence against women, over definitions of feminism and feminist activism, over conceptions of the state and over relationships within women's communities. I believe that an examination of these visions will provide insight into current organizing dilemmas of activists working to end violence against women.

Finally, I propose a politics of engagement as a more strategic framework for thinking about social change. A politics of engagement refuses to accept either/or dichotomies, instead arguing that strategies must both "contradict" (pose alternatives) and "compete" (engage with the mainstream). In this section, I attempt to bring together a disengaged and a mainstreaming vision by reformulating their points of disagreement as strategic tensions.

STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO MAKING CHANGE

As I analyzed the interview data four distinct strategies for making change emerged-- each with its own set of assumptions about the state, how to make change and what counts as change. I think it is important to emphasize that my arrival at four distinct strategies is the product of my analysis influenced by the conceptual framework I outlined in chapter one. The four strategies did not come directly from the interviews but rather are categories that I imposed on the data in order to make sense of it. I created these

categories because they seemed to be the most effective way to make sense of how the activists understood the process of making change.

Interestingly, the strategies could not be easily categorized using the traditional typologies of feminism--liberal, socialist, and radical, or moderate and radical.

Theoretically these categories are supposed to provide different analyses of women's oppression, which in turn suggest what issues to take up and what methods to use.

However, only three of the activists I interviewed identified themselves as belonging to one category or another. (All three women identified themselves as socialist feminists.)

The other eighteen women did not categorize themselves as belonging to any category at all. Furthermore, given their analysis, it would be difficult to classify these women as belonging to any particular category. In fact most interviews contained elements of all three currents of feminism.

I found Adamson et. al.'s (1988) mainstreaming\disengagement continuum (described in chapter one) to be a more useful conceptual tool for understanding different approaches to making change. Tension between the two key politics of change: mainstreaming and disengagement is pervasive throughout the interviews. I began by mapping each strategy on to the mainstreaming\disengagement continuum. Then I named each strategy based on the relationship it advocates between the community and the state (see table four). The first strategy is called the femocrat strategy, because it involves feminists working within state bureaucracies. Because this strategy operates from within the state it is situated close to the mainstreaming pole of the continuum. The second strategy is the mediating strategy, which involves bringing community groups and state

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agents together. It is situated in the middle of the continuum. The third strategy is called the disengaged strategy. As its name suggests, it is the furthest removed from mainstream institutions and as such is located close to the disengaged pole. The last approach, the challenging strategy is located on the disengagement side of the continuum. I discuss this approach last, even though it is closer to the centre of the continuum than the disengaged approach, because it shares many of the assumptions of the mediating and disengaged approaches. Although a challenging approach involves confrontation with the mainstream it operates from a disengaged critique. Discussing this approach last makes it easier for the reader to see connections between the approaches. Table five provides a summary of the characteristics and assumptions of each approach.

TABLE FOUR: THE MAINSTREAMING\DISENGAGEMENT CONTINUUM

disengaged	challenging	mediating	femocrat
<u>Disengagement</u>			<u>Mainstreaming</u>

Although all strategies contain both engaged and disengaged elements, some strategies are oriented more towards engaging with the mainstream to transform it, while

others are oriented more towards disengaging to create alternative values, practices, and institutions. Femocrat and mediating strategies are based on a conception of the state and assumptions about change that are more consistent with a politic of mainstreaming.

Disengaged and challenging strategies are based on a conception of the state and assumptions about change that are more consistent with a politic of disengagement.

It is important to state from the outset that none of the women I interviewed adopt any one approach exclusively. An activist may use a femocrat strategy at the mainstream social service agency where she is employed; a mediating strategy at a round table with different players from the criminal justice system and the community; a challenging strategy at a consultation with a government minister; and a disengaged strategy in a direct action campaign. While all women move along the continuum, most women do have preferred ways of working that reflect their assumptions about social change. A woman who works predominantly with approach four may also work with approach two and three but rarely work with approach one. Similarly, a woman who works with approach one may rarely work with approach four.

TABLE FIVE: FOUR STRATEGIES FOR MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE

	FEMOCRAT STRATEGIES	MEDIATING STRATEGIES
Orientation	legitimization of institutional change task orientation	tension between mainstreaming and disengagement and task and process
Strategy	use position of insiders to place radical and transformative issues on the public policy agenda	building bridges between the state and women's communities
Activities	development of policies, legislation and programs	primarily advocacy and public education
State	women can take advantage of historical moments when the interests of women and the state overlap	contested terrain, a site not just to be used but a set of practices to be transformed
Assumptions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. gains can be made through cooperation and interaction between women on the inside and outside 2. you can create fundamental change using the methods of the status quo 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. working with the state has the potential to be effective but the extent of effectiveness depends on both time and place 2. women's communities need to examine their own practices 3. boundaries between the system and community are not clear cut
Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. constrained by the limitations of operating within the system 2. many activists do not recognize femocrat strategies as legitimate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. difficult to maintain tension between mainstreaming and disengagement 2. disengaged activists see mediating strategies as too moderate to create meaningful change

TABLE FIVE (CONT'D)

	DISENGAGED STRATEGIES	CHALLENGING STRATEGIES
Orientation	disengagement and feminist process	disengagement, and feminist process but sees strategic potential of engagement
Strategy	working with women to provide support and to create alternative values, practices, and organizations	using a disengaged critique to challenge the state come up with alternatives
Activities	direct service with women and some advocacy	advocacy and public education
State	coercive force whose interests are fundamentally opposed to the interests of women	coercive force but can be used strategically
Assumptions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. violence against women is linked to the functioning of the state and capitalism 2. engaging with the state is risky, costly and largely ineffective but activists must continue to reform institutions as long as women continue to use them 3. real change is made by direct action and confrontational politics 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. change is created in the grassroots by being radical but change does need to be institutionalized 2. feminist activists can develop concrete solutions that can be accepted in the mainstream
Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. maintaining a disengaged stance is emotionally draining. 2. difficult to move beyond critique to create a concrete vision of social transformation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. tension between working in a certain way so that government officials will take activists seriously and maintaining a disengaged stance 2. difficult to know when to cooperate and when to confront

Approach One: Femocrat Strategies

Situated close to the mainstreaming pole of the mainstreaming\disengagement continuum, this approach to making change involves working within the state and its institutions. I call this approach the “femocrat” strategy, borrowing from Australian writers who use the term to describe feminists who work within bureaucratic structures.¹⁵ Femocrats develop policies, legislation and program for all levels of government. Femocrat strategies challenge the belief that working outside the system is automatically more radical than operating within an institutional framework (Felski, 1989). Unlike “liberal” feminists,¹⁶ (who see the state as a neutral arbiter), most femocrats acknowledge the state’s proclivity for racism, sexism, and homophobia. The femocrat view of the state is best captured by Comack and Brickey’s assertion that:

it is not necessary to believe that the state shares the interests of the feminist movement to believe that there are historical moments that arise in which the state’s interests and women’s interests overlap. It is the role of feminists to recognize when these instances are present and to pressure the state for change (1991:313).

Femocrat strategies are premised on the belief that gains can be made through the cooperation and constructive interaction between women inside and outside the bureaucracy. Ideally femocrats use their position of “insiders” to place radical and transformative issues on the public policy agenda. In addition femocrats often act as “experts” who translate the politicized needs of women into the language of state administration (Fraser, 1989).

¹⁵See H. Eisenstein, 1995; Franzway, 1986 and Franzway et. al., 1989; Sawyer, 1990; Yeatman, 1990 for excellent discussions of the femocrat strategy.

¹⁶See Briskin, 1989; Jaggar, 1988 for discussions of the different theoretical currents of feminism.

Femocrats are constantly faced with a tension between maintaining the credibility needed to influence policy and legislation and their commitment to feminist principles.

One woman I interviewed describes the work of a femocrat as a tight wire act in which she uses her position to drop indications of where and how women's groups should be applying pressure.

Informal back door stuff goes on. You always feel like you are doing a tight wire act. You sort of say things off the record and try to nudge the women's groups in the direction that you know they should be going to get to the minister, but you cannot actually tell them that is what you are doing.

The same woman describes the work of a femocrat as accepting the constructs of the system and using them strategically to get across a feminist message in terms that the system can understand:

Trying on the inside to make that system accountable to women's reality while using their tools and terminology. So basically it is accepting the constructs of the system. For example if you are talking methodology with the applied research people, it is knowing enough to be able to translate women's reality through statistics and empirical research . . . So you are constantly taking the tools that are imposed upon you from the constructs of your location and not using it against the system but using it to get your own message across to the system in terminology that they can accept. It is a lengthy process. It is not an overnight thing.

As this woman suggests, femocrat strategies accept that change is a long term, ongoing process. Small changes are perceived as legitimate and meaningful. There is an assumption that we cannot change entire structures at once. Even if a particular initiative doesn't benefit all women or address the fundamental roots of the problem, it may still be worthwhile because it is one small step in the overall vision of social change.

In terms of the mainstreaming and disengagement continuum, femocrats tend to be oriented towards the legitimization and institutionalization of social change. Femocrat strategies are based on the premise that although the impetus for change may come from the grassroots, it needs to be institutionalized in order for it to impact the majority of the population.

It doesn't matter how legitimate at the grassroots level our work is . . . unfortunately the way that society is structured, until it gets government sanction it is not legitimate. So you need to have women on the inside that are part of the structure without being engulfed by it and you need the women on the outside who don't give a damn . . . shoving and pushing and making as much noise as possible. You need that parallel stream happening . . . the outside people who don't have those constraints pushing harder and pushing more.

This approach understands the importance of feminist ideology, but it tends to be frustrated by the constraints imposed by adherence to the principles of feminist "process" (see chapter one p36-38). Femocrat strategies tend to take a pragmatic rather than an idealist approach. This woman is critical of the importance placed on the collective process, particularly when it jeopardizes the task of providing services.

If you accept provincial funding you won't be a collective any more. . . . Do you let 500 women go shelterless in exchange for preserving your ethics and your principles? Tell that to the woman who is being beaten every night by her husband that you won't accept provincial funding to provide her and her kids with a safe place because you are afraid that it will compromise your collective.

Femocrat strategies are based on the assumption that you can create fundamental change using the methods of the status quo.

If getting a policy or legislation formulated that will ensure women's safety means mainstreaming it for a certain amount of time to build up credibility, I will mainstream. The ultimate goal is that the policy will become legislation. If I had to mainstream for a while as a tool then, so be it. But it is only one aspect of the strategy, once they accept me, I am going to

take their language and throw it at them. I don't see any inconsistency in doing that.

Working within the existing frameworks tends to be extremely limiting. Femocrats constantly face challenges to their credibility from both inside and outside. Futility and isolation were recurring themes. This woman speaks of resistance to a feminist analysis within the state.

There is a real resistance [internally] to feminist analysis. You are constantly fighting a backlash. . . . There is a sense of isolation that you feel that you have to spend all of your time fighting for validation and so the rest of the time you are scrambling to get the time to actually do the work

In addition, women's groups are often skeptical of femocrats. Most activists had a pessimistic view about the potential to make change from within the state. Some activists assumed that women in positions of bureaucratic power would be too "moderate" to push for "real" change. Furthermore some activists believed that if femocrats did push for change they would not survive in the bureaucracy.

People are getting into positions of power that are reformist and liberal and not radical . . . Maybe getting into positions of power means not being particularly radical especially now because feminists are being marginalized.

I have seen a lot of radical women go in to institutions and be either totally devastated by it, changed by it, stripped of their dignity, stripped of a lot things that they need to survive. I think our present institutions are so poisonous towards women that they don't allow women to be radical within them. . . . That is why a lot of women's advocates would never go into those types of positions, because they don't want to lose their spirit.

In summary, femocrat strategies play a vital role in the legitimating and institutionalization of social change. However, without strong links to women's communities these strategies may become coopted and lose their effectiveness.

Approach Two: Mediating Strategies

These strategies are characterized by a willingness to build bridges between the state and women's communities. The mediating role of this approach places it in the middle of the mainstreaming/disengagement continuum. Mediating strategies are often used by women who work in mainstream community based organizations and who are involved primarily in advocacy and public education. These strategies work best when they are connected both to the community and to mainstream institutions. Mediating strategies conceptualize the state as a contested terrain. The state is not just a site to be used but a set of practices to be transformed.¹⁷ In essence these strategies try to bring together two different languages, cultures and belief systems in order to create social change. Because of their willingness to build bridges, women who use mediating strategies continually face the dilemma of balancing mainstreaming and disengagement. In addition, they face a similar tension between their commitment to feminist process and their desire to get the task done.

A central premise of mediating strategies is that the extent to which working with the system is effective depends on the specific time and place. According to mediating strategies, whether to engage or disengage, confront or cooperate, are strategic decisions based on the principles, goals, resources and the political climate of the day. For example, one activist argues that the terrain on which activists have struggled over criminal justice response to violence against women has changed over the last fifteen years and we need to adapt our strategies and tactics to reflect these changes. Fifteen years ago, woman abuse

¹⁷Kate Sandilands (1992) makes a similar distinction in her case study of the Ontario Green party.

was considered a private or domestic matter not appropriate for public intervention.

Confrontations and attacks were the only way to get the attention of the criminal justice system. Now that we have its attention, we need to develop ways of working with the system in order to hold it accountable.

It is not a productive vehicle for change to just keep attacking all of the time. For years, in the early years of the struggle it was to get the police to take it seriously, and I really believe that those systems are all now struggling to take it seriously . . . maybe it is fear, if you stop attacking maybe it is going to revert back to what it was or if you let down the pressure, maybe they will slip back. This is legitimate. I think there is a balance between holding a system accountable by attacking, and working with them so that you don't have to be attacking and I think that we have to find a better balance.

A second premise of this approach is that the reluctance of the women's communities both to critically examine their own practices and to work strategically with mainstream institutions is slowing down the process of social change.

The lack of ability to say what the community is not doing and to only pin it on the system. The lack of willingness of the community to coordinate with the system is slowing the work down and losing opportunities.

Mediating strategies stress the importance of involving key players in strategies for change that are aimed at changing existing institutions. One activist argues that initiatives are likely to be more successful if the agents and systems that women's communities are trying to change are involved in the process from the beginning.

I think that one of the things that was successful about Quincy was that there were police officers and crown attorneys and decision makers in the room with women who had experienced the system and advocates. There was some honesty and there were some real issues on the floor. Those different parts felt safe enough to come there and felt that they might gain something from it. And the only reason they had some expectations is that they had some involvement all way along. They believed that they would be given a fair shake at things. Otherwise they would have done the PR thing and left.

This approach argues that the boundaries between the "system" and the "community" are not clear cut and in fact are often blurred. This is partially because it recognizes the agency of individual players.

Certainly there is a danger when you start working with the system that your project will be coopted to their needs. On the other hand, there are people in that system. Some of them who are equally members of oppressed groups, some of whom have a commitment to fundamental change and some of them who don't.

Like femocrats, mediators tend to be task oriented. They are, however, more likely to raise questions about process. They are concerned as to whether methods adopted are consistent with feminist principles. With this approach, more than any other, there is a tension between task and process. For example, this activist recognizes the importance of getting to the task at hand but at the same time she is concerned about replicating unequal power relations.

In collectives you have groups of women who have gotten together and have said until we find a decent way, an egalitarian way, of dealing with one another we cannot offer support to the woman. You end up talking about process and not really getting to the task of providing the services. But you are being paid to provide the services, so you have to leave the process aside a little bit and make sure that you produce result.

When a service becomes mainstream there becomes a greater need to evaluate the service and as you said earlier to assess is this being effective? Are we indeed reproducing structures that we are saying are the basis of the problem in other institutions. It is a careful balancing of both that needs to occur, when we form associations to fight violence against women.

She is willing to put aside questions of process in order to focus on the task of providing services. However, she believes that focusing exclusively on the task may have unintended consequences.

Mediating strategies are bridge building strategies that bring together the state and the community. Working with opposing groups requires a constant balancing of mainstreaming and disengagement and task and process.

Approach Three: Disengaged Strategies

This approach conceptualizes social structures as primarily coercive forces and sees the potential for change within existing institutions to be extremely limited. Disengaged strategies are based on the premise that violence against women is inextricably linked to the functioning of the state and capitalism. The role of the state is social control and the state's interests are fundamentally opposed to women's interests. For these reasons disengaged strategies tend to involve working with other women to create communities with alternative values, practices and organizations. Women who use disengaged strategies tend to be involved primarily in providing direct service for women. They do engage in advocacy but their negative view of the state limits the scope of this role. The following statements made by activists capture a disengaged perspective's conception of the state:

I do not believe that the state has an interest in protecting women's rights . . . look at what happened in P4W (the Prison for Women). . . look at Minnie Sutherland, the native woman who was ignored when she was dying because she was a "drunken Indian" and was disregarded . . . I think no matter how you chip away at the system, no matter how you reform it, no matter how many times you adjust this or that law, I think that ultimately the state and our society the way it is now doesn't have an interest in protecting women.

It is not that the state does well if women are economically dependent on men. Capitalism does and I think that is why the state supports it.

The role of the state is social control. That is the role of the state - To serve and protect - to defend the public interest - well who defines that interest? The public is not feminist. Serve and protect feminists? To me it's a contradiction in terms. And I think that many women in the broad women's movement are very critical of the state but they do think that the State has a role in protecting our interest to some degree. I don't think they have an interest at all - I really don't.

Despite their radical critique of the system, most women who use disengaged strategies believe that activists must continue to work to reform existing institutions as long as women continue to use them. One activist states:

My accountability to women is that while women are calling the police and using that system, I have to try to make it work better. I see that as mainstreaming and I see it as important for me to do.

In addition, disengaging strategies assume that activists can and should use the state to fund women's activities as long as they are clear that state funds will never stop violence against women.

I still feel that you can use the state but that you cannot trust the state to act in women's interest. You can use the state to get funds for women's services that support women's activities whether it is rape crisis or women's educational support retraining centres but that none of that will ever stop rape or violence against women. . .

Most activists who adopt a disengaged stance would identify themselves as "radical" activists but not necessarily "radical feminists". Although there are some similarities between activists who adopt a disengaged stance and what is commonly understood as radical feminism there are important differences. First, radical feminists are generally characterized as wanting nothing to do with the state (Echols, 1989; Briskin, 1989; Jaggar, 1988). As the above quotations suggest, women who use disengaged strategies are suspicious of the state in theory but

often use it in practice. Second, radical feminism focuses almost exclusively on gender. The women I interviewed did not privilege gender over race or class but rather held a more complex view of interlocking oppression across multiple axes of difference. In general women who adopt a disengaged stance have an analysis of capitalism and sense of solidarity with other oppressed groups, both of which are often missing from early accounts of radical feminism (Jagger, 1988).¹⁸

Women who use disengaged strategies tend to believe that challenging and confronting institutions is extremely risky and costly. This activist believes that confronting people in positions of power is like "going into a lions den". She says that this is one reason why activists chose to focus their energy on working with women.

We need to look at who's in power and people are not willing to do that because that is like signing your own death warrant. To actually go to places where things need to happen you are going into the lions den and you cannot do that anonymously and it is very difficult and you suffer for it. Stand up in a meeting to say "this is what it is" is very risky. This is why women continue to work with women to encourage them to help make changes.

Women who use disengaged strategies tend to have little patience with mediating strategies. They argue that real change will be made by direct action and confrontational politics not by sitting around a table and being nice.

To me you have to change the material conditions of women's lives. We fought for the abortion clinic and we won - that's important - that's what activism means. Historically, that's how women have made gains - by being active - not by sitting around a table trying to get this judge to be nice or trying to get that cop to listen or whatever - but by being active - out in the streets in the unions. That's how abortion rights were won in

¹⁸In her work on feminist organizing to end violence against women in St. Louis, Gretchen Arnold (1995) makes similar distinctions. She argues that radical activists in her study fit more closely with Alison Jagger's (1988) category of socialist feminist because of their emphasis on political unity with oppressed groups, workplace equality, and other issues.

Quebec - in the trade union - they opened a clinic in the trade union office, when it was not even legal.

Disengaged strategies assume that players within the state act only to serve state interests. They also assume that the system is so powerful that if state agents were really sympathetic to women's interests they would be removed from their positions. As such, they have little faith in the potential for agency within the state. One activist states:

If Brian Ford [the chief of Police for Ottawa-Carleton] got some real consciousness raising and put big pressure on the crown's office, I honestly believe that he would be gone.

Women who use disengaged strategies are critical about the institutionalization of the movement to end violence against women. They argue that a long term vision of social transformation is lost when feminist activists engage with mainstream institutions. Furthermore, tinkering with the system will divert activists from the real work of creating social change.

The work has become really institutionalized and bureaucratized. People who work more around issues of coordinating rather than an analysis of the vision are in positions of power.

I will pick and chose a bit more where I am going to put my energy and it won't be this, [reforming the system] because I don't trust that we will have any accountability for what will happen. The whole process of Quincy really drew a lot of people into trying to make that system better rather than the radical social change stuff and I think that my work with women will be a bit different—exploring more of the options and things like what to expect and what not to expect.

Disengaged strategies provide a radical critique of existing social institutions. The challenge faced by this approach is to move beyond critique to build a concrete vision of social transformation.

Approach Four: Challenging Strategies

This strategy is best described as a combination of the mediating and disengaged approaches. Like the disengaged stance, this approach holds an analysis of the state as an instrument of social control but like a mediating approach believes that there are opportunities to work strategically with the state. There is, however, a fundamental difference between a challenging approach and a mediating approach. Unlike the mediating strategies, challenging strategies are unwilling to accept the framework of existing institutions. The focus of challenging strategies is advocacy work, but as their name suggests, they see their role as "challenging" rather than working with the state. They use the process of negotiating with the state as an opportunity to pressure the state to come up with alternative solutions.

Some times I wonder is it worth it. But at the same time it [dialoging with the state] also gives us an opportunity to say NO we are not going to play by your rules and if you want to charge us with contempt of court or whatever we are going to find creative ways of dealing with it because you are not.

Challenging strategies are suspicious of working with institutions in a non-confrontational way. In fact, they tend to see cooperation as synonymous with co-optation.

It is difficult to situate this perspective in the context of feminist or social movement theory. However, recent consultations with women's groups held by the federal Justice Minister, Allan Rock, provide an excellent example of this approach. The Minister of Justice invited a small group of women to consult with him about legal issues, many of which pertained to violence against women. Based on previous experience of working with this minister, the women believed that the consultations could be used

strategically to create change, provided that it occurred on their terms. The small group of women demanded that the group be expanded to include representatives from women's groups across the county and that women be given time and resources to meet together as a group for two days prior to the consultation. As a consequence, this strategy allowed women across Canada to speak in a strong unified voice to influence the federal government.

According to this perspective change is created in the grassroots by radical activists and radical acts. One activist who uses challenging strategies states that she is tired of polite approaches.

I am tired of women wanting to be nice all the time and not wanting to offend people. Women need to start saying what they feel. I hear that a lot especially at some of those NAC meetings that we go to. If they are not the front-line grassroots organizations, a lot of the women want to soften things, they want to say of a lot of changes have been made in these areas. Instead of being strong and vocal and saying too bad this what our demands our. Being radical. I don't see enough women being radical.

Unlike the disengaging strategies, challenging strategies are particularly interested in proposing solutions that could be accepted in the mainstream. However, most of these solutions could not be implemented without fundamental change. One activist argues that feminists do come up with solutions, but they are dismissed by state personnel. She says that state personnel have a perception of activists:

as a bunch of radical feminists and all you do is bitch and complain but you don't want to work with the system to make change. If they listened to us long enough they would also hear that we are proposing solutions. They just shut down listening as soon as they hear us say that this is what you are not doing. And so they get defensive and they don't listen to you say but you could do this or this or this.

Unlike the mediators who think more in terms of evaluating the gains and losses of a particular strategy, challengers are hesitant to support any initiative unless it incorporates a radical analysis of gender inequality. Speaking of a recent project to improve the criminal justice system, one activist stated that although the project may have a practical impact on women's safety, she was hesitant to support it:

I thought that the Quincy presentation was very idealistic. I did not think it could function as well as they said it did. I didn't hear anything about accountability to the women's community. I heard internal accountability. . . . The problem is too big and too deep for it to be that easy. And the other thing is that sexual violence wasn't even mentioned. . . . there was no analysis done on how the police are inherently sexist. They separated out wife assault and made it a nice neat little package. Women's equality or gender issues were never even discussed. They never said they did an analysis of their whole criminal justice system. And I don't think you can solve the problem without doing that.

Challenging strategies represent an innovative approach to advocacy that combines a disengaged critique with a willingness to use the state strategically. In the next part of this chapter I situate these four strategies in the broader context of two distinct visions about what activists should be doing to end violence against women.

TWO VISIONS OF HOW TO CREATE SOCIAL CHANGE

Perhaps the most obvious finding of my research is that within the Ottawa community relationships between the four strategies do not appear to be symmetrical. By this I mean that the four strategies are not recognized as equally valid nor are they equally utilized by the activists I interviewed. I argue that this is because most of the activists I interviewed are not thinking about organizing decisions in terms of maintaining a tension between mainstreaming and disengagement. The polarization of strategies around either a

mainstreaming or disengaged vision limits activists from exploring a full range of strategic possibilities and slows down the work to end violence against women.

In this section, I compare and contrast the assumptions of each vision. I begin by placing each vision in a historical context. For each vision, I describe its theoretical and practical influences and its assumptions about change. Next, I compare how each vision has responded to the institutionalization of the issue of violence against women. Finally, I describe what each vision suggests that activists should be doing to end violence against women.

Before I begin, I want to explain the language I have chosen to use with respect to visions. Throughout this chapter I use phrases such as "this vision positions itself as" and "a disengaged vision argues". While I am aware that visions cannot literally "position", "incorporate" or "argue", I chose to use this language to emphasize the point that these visions are ideal types. None of the activists I interviewed articulated these visions in a fully formed, completely coherent fashion. Although women did tend to identify quite strongly with one vision or another, actual visions that activists articulated were full of contradictions, nuances and incomplete ideas

A Disengaged Vision

The disengaged vision currently being articulated in Ottawa activist communities has its roots in earlier discourses used by the activists who first put the issue of violence against women on the public agenda (See Walker, 1990 for a Canadian example and Schechter, 1982 for an American one). Operating from a disengaged stance this vision

seeks to create alternative values, practices and organizations. Its theoretical influences include Del Martin (1976), Susan Schechter (1982), Susan Brownmiller (1975), Diana Russell (1982), Susan Hanmer and Mary Maynard (1987) and other radical feminists. This vision aligns itself with collective values, grassroots organizing and confrontational politics and defines itself against patriarchy, hierarchy, bureaucracy, professionalism and institutionalism. For this vision, the state is conceptualized as a coercive force whose interests are fundamentally opposed to the interests of women.

The collective identity created by a disengaged vision is based on "outsider" values and a strong sense of the personal as political. A disengaged collective identity assumes that activists will define their values against the mainstream and that they will organize their lives around work for social change. It derives its power and energy from both its opposition to the mainstream and its strong sense of cohesiveness based on us/them distinctions.

A disengaged vision assumes activists have a strong sense of loyalty and respect for women who share their analysis. However, according to this vision, activists should be skeptical about feminists who have other analyses of social change. For example, one activist I interviewed states that she has full confidence in her activist cohorts

The women I strategize with don't leap over process out of respect for the other women . . . strategy is the process in which you arrive at an answer to a need in a way that everyone can live with that is respectful and accountable. . . I know I have every faith in the group that I am associated with.

But the same activist describes activists who do not share her analysis as dangerous to women.

I think most avowed feminists are closer in agreement than anyone else. There are people in this community that describe themselves as members of the women's community who I would see as extremely traditional and dangerous to women. Unfriendly to women but that is my own opinion, my own analysis.

The historical association of this vision with the movement to end violence against women has meant that in some activist circles a disengaged analysis is synonymous with the interests of abused women. Women who work on the issue of violence against women but do not share this analysis are often dismissed by disengaged activists.

Outsider values, a coercive conception of the state and a closed collective identity make this vision suspicious of engaged strategies. From a disengaged stance, femocrat strategies are seen as naive and irrelevant at best and harmful to women at worst. Mediating strategies are dismissed as coopted strategies used by women who are too moderate to create meaningful change.

A Mainstreaming Vision

In contrast, the mainstreaming vision circulating in Ottawa has its roots in activism around broad equality issues. It advocates the use of engaged strategies to transform existing institutions. This vision is based on two key assumptions: a belief that change is possible and a belief that dialogue with one's opponents may be useful. Its influences include such diverse sources as women in left wing politics (federal, provincial and municipal levels), feminists working on safety and the built environment, trade union activists, feminists in women's centres and more institutionalized women's organizations such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

As the range of its influences suggests, the collective identity of a mainstreaming vision is not particularly cohesive. It is based on both outsider and insider values (by definition all feminism is disengaged to some extent) but is more closely associated with the mainstream. It is sympathetic to collective values, grassroots organizing and confrontational politics but it does not reject outright hierarchical bureaucratic and professional institutions.

Perhaps, because it does not start from a strong opposition to mainstream values, this approach does not make rigid us/them distinctions. As a consequence, it is more open to other approaches. For example, the femocrat strategy locates itself as one part of the overall efforts to end violence against women. Because it recognizes the sexism, classism, and racism embedded in the state, it is quite aware that there are limits to what can be achieved within the state. Furthermore, it recognizes that insider strategies work most effectively when there is a strong push from the outside. Similarly, part of the mediating strategy is to determine the most effective balance of mainstreaming and disengagement.

A mainstreaming vision argues that the concern with having the right kind of analysis leads to divisiveness, blaming and judgment. It calls for openness, respect and a willingness to accept women who do not share the same analysis. One activist I interviewed points out that feminists too often condemn each other for their different approaches and are too caught up in trying to be the "right" kind of feminist.

A mainstreaming vision wants to reach out to more women and become more inclusive. It aims to address the reasons why some women feel alienated from the women's movement. One woman gave the example of the women's party in Iceland

whose members traveled across the country in a bus asking all women to articulate their vision. She says that although the positions of the Icelandic women's party may be more mainstream than those of the Canadian feminists, one third of Icelanders voted for the women's party. Such widespread support has not occurred in Canada.

I want to work with people in my community towards social change and I want to be able to reach out to them and have them join me in that goal. Not just me and a small group of people screaming. I don't think that is a way of getting change. It might make us feel better as a group but I don't think that it does anything for any other women.

Comparison of Each Vision's Response to the Institutionalization of Problem of Violence Against Women

The transformation of woman abuse into a social problem appropriate for state intervention that occurred in the early 1980s created a whole new set of problems for women working to end violence against women. Public recognition of the seriousness of the problem increased the number of people working on the issue. An industry began to develop around the provision of professionalized social services and the development of an appropriate criminal justice response. In addition, communities began to create initiatives to encourage ordinary people to take responsibility for the issue of violence against women. Each vision represents a different response to the institutionalization of the problem of violence against women. In this section I compare the responses of each vision using two projects that took place recently in Ottawa as examples. I choose these examples because both were mentioned several times by the activists I interviewed.

Because a mainstreaming vision assumes that change is possible and that dialogue with one's opponents is useful, it supports initiatives that bring together people with

different perspectives. Perhaps because of its roots in equality issues, this vision has never felt a strong sense of ownership over the issue of violence against women.

Institutionalization is associated with success because it signals a willingness on the part of the state to take the issue seriously. In contrast, a disengaged vision is skeptical that both community responsibility initiatives and strategies that engage with the state have the potential to water down the feminist analysis to the point where they no longer serve women's interests.

As long as they promote women's equality and women's safety, a mainstreaming vision is supportive of community responsibility projects. For example, a mainstreaming vision would support a violence against women project created by the Kanata Community Resource Centre. The project involves a peer support program in which women from the community formed supportive relationships with abused women. In addition, community leaders, city council members, church members and residents raised money and became actively involved in the issue. The program is unique in that it goes beyond traditional social services relationships towards the development of community responsibility for the problem. One woman states:

What is happening is that there is starting to be a community ownership of solutions to end violence against women. Changing the partners, bringing in more people to do the work. Assessing the community and building on strengths.

A disengaged vision would be more critical, looking for what and who is being left out and what is not working. For example, one woman who identifies with a disengaged vision does not support the Kanata Community Centre initiative. She says that although the Centre's rhetoric claims that it wants survivors of violence to lead the initiative, it does

so only if they do not challenge the status quo. She believes that the centre is more interested in building links with the community and protecting its funding than it is in representing women's interests:

Radical people get marginalized by a bureaucracy that has to worry about funding. The centre claims it wants to have survivors lead things but only if they are not radical and do not jeopardize funding.

A disengaged vision would conclude that because radical activists did not have control over the initiative, the project is not worth supporting.

While a mainstreaming vision suggests that activists should be willing to moderate their approach as long as their principles are not compromised, a disengaged vision argues that activists should refuse to compromise. A mainstreaming vision is sensitive to when a radical analysis and confrontational style may be ineffective. It argues that activists should be willing to mainstream in order to achieve a goal. For example, according to many women, a recent initiative to improve the criminal justice system was successful because it involved key institutional decision makers in the process from the beginning. Influenced by a politics of mainstreaming, activists felt that they would be more likely to achieve their goal of institutional change if criminal justice personnel were brought into the project. A decision was made, that at that particular point in time, a cooperative and educational approach would be more conducive to change than a confrontational one. Therefore the conference did not begin with a radical analysis of the sexist, racist, and classist nature of the criminal justice system. Instead organizers focused on developing a vision of safety for women based on shared values of equality, justice, fairness and respect.

Taking a different point of view, a disengaged vision would argue that because organizers did not use an analysis that was confrontational or overtly radical, the initiative was coopted from the start. Speaking about the initiative, one activist declares that it is unlikely to contribute to the work of ending violence against women because it did not address the root of the problem:

There was no analysis done on how the police are inherently sexist. They separated out wife assault and made it a nice neat little package. Women's equality or gender issues were never even discussed.

Disengaged activists believe that initiatives such as the ones mentioned above will always occur at the expense of women's interests because they will always involve working with people who do not share their analysis.

What Should Activists Be Doing?

Each vision has different ideas about what activists should be doing. A mainstreaming vision argues that activists need to develop political clout and use state resources to open up new terrains of political activity. A disengaged vision argues that feminists need to become more radical, fight the institutionalization of the work to end violence against women and hold on to the gains we have made. Each vision is essentially a set of beliefs about how to make change. Neither vision is very clear about what concrete steps activists should actually be taking. In this section I describe each vision and outline its key assumptions. A critical analysis of this list of assumptions will provide the starting point from which to articulate a more strategic vision.

(a) Mainstreaming Vision

A mainstreaming vision talks about the need to create a stronger presence in the mainstream and work towards transforming institutional and community practices. One woman I interviewed argues that women need to carve a bigger space for themselves within the mainstream of society:

Violence against women represents between 2-5% of social services spending. You realize the clout is not there. How do we build up our resources? How do we take up enough space in society. The women's credit union is an early attempt. Getting a bigger stake in society as a whole. We are still not sitting at a lot of the tables we need to be sitting at still. Bigger presence in our communities, broader resource base, a more effective voice, be extremely strategic in how we work.

Because it recognizes that there are instances when women can use the state to their advantage, a mainstreaming vision believes that a lack of willingness to work strategically with mainstream institutions is slowing the work down and resulting in the loss of opportunities. Its focus on equality issues, leads this vision to advocate for the broadening of work to end violence against women beyond providing services to abused women. Fearing that the current focus on service provision and women's experience is too narrow, a mainstreaming vision argues that we need to look at other ways for women to develop individual and collective strength. It calls for a shift towards the development of women's economic, political and social equality.

A mainstreaming vision of social change is based on the following assumptions:

1. Change is a long term process. We cannot change entire structures overnight.
2. Small changes are legitimate and will likely have a cumulative effect that will benefit women.
3. Even if a particular initiative doesn't benefit all women or address the fundamental roots of the problem it may still be worthwhile because it is one step in the overall process of change.
4. You can create fundamental change using the methods of the status quo.

5. There are historical instances when the interests of women may overlap with the interests of the state.
6. The state is not just a site to be used but a set of practices to be transformed.
7. Whether to engage or disengage, confront or cooperate are strategic decisions based on the principles, goals, resources and the political climate of the day.
8. Boundaries between state institutions and communities are fuzzy.
9. Not recognizing the potential of state personnel to effect change may result in the loss of opportunities.

The following quotation by feminist academic and activist, Jane Ursel, captures the essence of a mainstreaming vision of social change. She sees the institutionalization of the problem of violence against women as a signal that the issue has begun to be taken seriously. She points to an increase in the number and diversity of services that are now available to women who have been abused and states that feminists do not have ownership over the issue.

Concerns expressed about ownership of the issue cuts to the quick of feminist politics. Does one group of women--founders of the battered women's movement--who share a specific analysis of patriarchy, a specific political agenda, as well as a specific class and racial background, have the "ownership" of an issue which destroys the health and life of many different women of different class and racial backgrounds, who have many different political perspectives and many different views of patriarchy? . . . And, as momentum for reform accelerates, involving many more women and many different perspectives, by what criteria do we conclude the movement has failed? . . . The increased funding has resulted in more agencies becoming involved and these agencies are more heterogeneous . . . Broad societal legitimation of an issue does mean that feminists lose exclusive ownership of the issue. However, the recognition by the larger community that wife abuse is a prevalent problem should be taken as a measure of success of the movement (1991:283-85).

(b) A Disengaged Vision

A disengaged vision argues that the institutionalization of the problem combined with a backlash against violence against women issues has meant that feminist struggles

are actually losing ground. It is concerned that there are too many women doing work who do not have a radical analysis or vision of social change. It argues that a profession has developed around the problem of violence against women and that people doing this work are more interested in advancing their careers than ending violence against women.

There is not enough people fighting. There are a lot of people who are making careers out of this work. I find this quite distressing. . . there aren't a lot of people visioning. I think these people have a big investment in their jobs. People do have to work for a living but I think building systems, having system layered upon system institutionalizes this as a social problem that needs to stay around. Otherwise what would happen to these people. Real social change would put a lot of people out of their jobs

A disengaged vision is critical of institutionalization for three main reasons. First, it is concerned that a criminal justice response has become equated with solving the problem of violence against women and that a long term vision of social transformation has been lost. Second, it is concerned that state institutions and social services respond inappropriately to abused women because they do not have a feminist analysis of the issue. Third, it fears that institutionalization of the issue has signaled the end of feminist control and ownership of the problem. It fears that if feminists lose control of the issue, women's safety will be compromised.

At the same time this vision recognizes that a vision based on a politic of disengaging is difficult to sustain. Many of the women who identified with this vision found it difficult to articulate a concrete vision of what activists should be doing. This may be partially because of their deep sense of frustration and burnout and partially because of the gap between ideals and the reality of daily practice. The following quotations capture the mood of frustration underlying this vision:

I don't know the answers other than sometimes I make a difference in the day of one person. That is all that I do sometimes and not even that sometimes. . . . I guess that is my mood . . . Probably one of my days with energy I will say we need to continue doing it even if it helps one person.

I am so unclear as to what the answer should be, I talked about education, but I know that is not going to do anything. I talked about the crown's office and that is a nightmare. I guess activism, the way I understand it which is women supporting and working with women in all kinds of ways.

A disengaged vision is based on the following assumptions:

1. Challenging institutions is extremely risky and often futile. We need to change entire structures.
2. We need to move beyond tinkering with the system. Small changes will not amount to much.
3. We need to look for what or who is being left out. Mainstream initiatives tend to leave out the most vulnerable women contributing to their further marginalization. We should be weary of strategies that do not benefit all women.
4. Activists can and should use state funds but violence against women will never be stopped with these funds.
5. State interests are fundamentally opposed to the interests of women.
6. Social structures are primarily coercive and the potential for change within existing institutions is extremely limited.
7. Engagement with mainstream institutions is not likely to create meaningful change but activists must continue to work to reform them as long as women continue to use them.
8. Boundaries between the state and women's communities are clear cut. Women's collectives are democratic and empowering and bureaucracies are oppressive and unresponsive

The key assumptions of a disengaged vision are expressed in this quotation by feminist activist, Lee Lakeman. Lakeman voices the opinion that engaging with institutions is risky and futile and that co-optation is inevitable. Her statement suggests that she believes that what is patriarchal, bureaucratic and institutional will always win over what is feminist, collective and grassroots. She has no doubt that the control and

ownership of the problem of violence against women should remain firmly in the hands of disengaged feminist activists.

Mainstreaming is one restraint. This current buzz idea implies that the issues raised by feminists in the seventies are now the common concern of all the "stakeholders" in the hierarchy. Women's groups are told they "don't own the issue" they just have the old pioneering expertise and now they should yield to the wonderful opportunity of sharing work with the establishment. . . . we are told to secure "partnerships" with universities, police departments, corporations or professional associations for any project we wish to launch . . . Does anyone think you can get the same struggle for change on women's rights from a university, professional association, police department, crown counsel office or a church as from a feminist rape crisis centre? (1993: 6-7).

A POLITICS OF ENGAGEMENT

The most striking finding of my research is that few women were able to clearly articulate a vision of what they thought activists should be doing. Activists talked about the need for direct service, education, prevention, structural change and increased economic power for women, but they had difficulty articulating what strategies we should be using to go about achieving these ends. I argue that this difficulty occurs in part because disputes about what activists should be doing tend to be based on a set of false oppositions that needs to be challenged.

How do we make sense of these two apparently contradictory visions? Are small changes legitimate? Are they likely to have a cumulative effect that will benefit all women? Or do they amount to no more than tinkering with a system that is fundamentally flawed? Even if an initiative does not benefit all women, or address the fundamental root of the problem, is it still worthwhile? Is it still worthwhile to participate in initiatives that

involve the community and agents of the state if some feminist principles are compromised? Do these initiatives always occur at the expense of women's interests?

In this section, I propose a politics of engagement as a social change framework that addresses these organizing dilemmas. According to this framework, strategies must both "contradict" (pose alternatives) and "compete" (engage with the mainstream). In this section, I attempt to bring together the disengaged and mainstreaming visions by reformulating their points of disagreement as strategic tensions. In particular I examine four key issues: engagement with the state, what counts as legitimate change, conceptions of the state, and control and ownership.

Engagement With the State: At Once Risky and Strategic

A mainstream vision advocates for the strategic potential of engaging with the state, whereas a disengaged vision argues that such engagement is risky and futile. In contrast, a politics of engagement recognizes both of these perspectives. It argues that engagement will always contain elements of both risk and potential. Initiatives such as the Putting the Pieces Together project will not end violence against women, but they do have the potential to create concrete changes for women. A disengaged vision may agree that change is possible but it is concerned that the cost of these changes is too high. It is skeptical that these kinds of initiatives coopt the movement by drawing radical activists into a process of reforming the system. A politics of engagement recognizes this dilemma but argues that it cannot be addressed by refusing to engage with the mainstream. In fact,

as Dobash and Dobash have argued, this dilemma represents one of the most significant challenges for social activism. Dobash and Dobash state.

The dilemma of participating in a political process is one of holding onto the goal of change while trying to influence organizations which by their very nature would be expected to resist or subvert such goals (1992:20)

It is important to recognize that it would not be possible to meet this challenge without a strong disengaged vision based on alternative values, practices, and institutions. A disengaged vision allows activists to work towards addressing women's immediate needs without losing sight of a long term vision of social transformation.

Thus, following Fraser, a politics of engagement argues that while it is always necessary to ask what is getting lost or altered in the process and what are the costs and benefits of engagement, "these are better treated as conjunctural, strategic questions than as matters of principle" (1989:13). In other words whether to engage or disengage, confront or cooperate, are strategic decisions based on principles, goals, resources and the socio-political climate of the day.

In addition, a politics of engagement recognizes that individual women may choose to pursue engaged or disengaged strategies based on their personality, interests, experience and skills. In fact when activists were asked to describe themselves in terms of the mainstreaming\ disengagement continuum the most common response was for an activist to talk about where and how she felt comfortable working. For example, one woman says that for her mainstreaming is "very difficult, risky, costly, exhausting work". She continues to say:

For me personally I need to do the disengaged stuff in order to keep getting my own energy . . . Direct action empowers me because there are things that I can say . . . and I don't feel crushed by the power of people in

positions of power. So for me I disengage to support the other work that I do but I also do it for myself.

Another woman is more comfortable working in the mainstream:

I have been clear for a while about where I am best able to work and it is not actually because of my philosophy but because of my skills. . . . My best way of working, my comfort zone is to work fairly close to the mainstream in the community but not in large institutions.

I believe that these responses represent a significant finding. Too often activists are ready to argue that a woman is less of a feminist or less committed to the movement because of the location in which she chooses to work. My research suggests ideology is not the only thing that influences the locations and strategies that women chose. Perhaps out of a desire not to individualize or depoliticize the process of social change, some activists' discourses have ignored questions of personality. But as long time activist and writer Gloria Steinem suggests, this is a strategic mistake. "Activism without introspection and self discovery turns into imitation at best and burnout at worst; introspection without activism leads to isolation and passivity" (1993:339). A politics of engagement refuses to see the personal and the social as either/or categories. It is open to exploring the ways that personal identities intersect with collective identities to influence the choices activists make.

What Counts a Legitimate Change: Maintaining a Balance

Even if we agree that the question of whether to engage is a strategic issue and not a matter of principle, there are still practical questions that need to be addressed. Mainstream and disengaged visions disagree about what counts as legitimate change. A

mainstream vision believes that small changes are legitimate because they will have a cumulative effect that will benefit women. Even if a particular initiative doesn't benefit all women or address the fundamental roots of the problem it may still be worthwhile because it is one step in the overall process of change. In contrast, a disengaged vision asserts that small changes will not add up to much and that we need to move beyond tinkering with the system. It also states that we need to look for what or who is being left out.

A disengaged vision is right to ask who is being left out and who benefits the most from initiatives. Because the interests of marginalized women are not usually represented in the mainstream, there is a real danger that engaged strategies will end up benefiting white middle class women more than other groups of women. But as feminist activists continue to learn more about what a politics of difference means in practice, this problem becomes less acute.

The Putting the Pieces Together project is a good example of how engaged strategies are becoming more inclusive. Workshop organizers engaged in several months of coalition building prior to the actual workshop date. This outreach was part of a broad effort to ensure that the workshop agenda reflected the concerns of a diversity of women within the Ottawa community. One measure of the success of this strategy was the prominence given to the issues of cultural interpretation and same-sex partner abuse at the workshop. Although the workshop was not able to represent the interests of all women, the outcome does suggest that engagement does not have to be synonymous with exclusion.

The State as a Contested Terrain: The Limits to Change are Real But They Are Not Pre-given

Mainstream and disengaged visions have different conceptions of the state. While a mainstream vision asserts that there are historical instances when the interests of the state overlap with the interests of women, a disengaged vision states that the interests of the state are fundamentally opposed to the interests of women. A politics of engagement argues that one does not have to believe that the interests of the state are the same as the interests of women in order to use the state strategically. A politics of engagement agrees with a disengaged vision that the potential for change is limited but it does not see these limits as pre-given. Instead it conceptualizes the state as a contested terrain in which the outcomes are unknown and the limits themselves are part of the contested terrain (Mathews, 1994). A politics of engagement agrees with Ursel (1991) that an overly deterministic analysis of the state creates a "poverty of strategic options" (265) and with Briskin who reminds us that, "in emphasizing the degree to which the political and historical conjuncture shapes our choices, we often lose sight of the very premise of a feminist politic-- a belief in the ability to make change" (1991: 39).

Of course the corollary to this statement is that social change does not depend only on the strategic choices made by activists but also on the characteristics of the state structure in question (Jenson, 1989; Mahon, 1991). I agree with Mahon that the strategies adopted by actors are effective to the extent to which they are "based on an accurate (albeit dynamic) understanding of the possibilities opened up (and foreclosed--at least temporarily) by existing state structures" (1991:137). In other words, "not everything is possible" (Jenson, 1989:236). A politics of engagement thus argues that in

order to develop an analysis of the strategic possibilities of a particular state, attention must be given to the specificity of local variation, differences between state agencies and the specific historical conjuncture.

Control and Ownership of the Issue

A politics of engagement argues that the issue of control and ownership is more complicated than either of the above formulations by Ursel or Lakeman suggest. Do feminists own the issue of violence against women? And if so, which feminists? A disengaged vision points out that many of the approaches that come out of the mainstream are dangerous to women. Treatment programs that collude with batterers, community leaders who excuse violence against women, court mediation programs that pretend that an abused woman and her abuser have equal power, and mainstream institutions that blame the victim are only a few examples. At the same time, as Ursel argues, broad societal legitimation of the issue does mean that feminists lose exclusive ownership over the issue. How can feminists give up exclusive ownership over the issue and still ensure that new initiatives prioritize the safety of women and children? Although there is no easy answer to this question, a politics of engagement reminds us that these do not have to be either/or choices.

Adamson et. al. (1988) argue that feminist practice must incorporate the contradictory demands of mainstreaming and disengagement. Taking this idea a step further, Klodawsky (1995) argues that some feminist activists and academics are realizing that accepting these contradictions as necessary tensions may provide a more effective

framework for thinking about social change. Following Klodawsky, a politics of engagement argues that an effective social change framework must incorporate both sides of dichotomies not as resolutions but as tensions. I believe Nancy Fraser points us in the right direction with her comment that there is "no alternative to bridge building . . . social transformation requires struggle in the sense of engagement with one's opponents (1989:13).

In this chapter I have tried to synthesize two opposing views about how to create social change. I have argued that we need to resist either/or dichotomies and move towards conceptualizing mainstreaming and disengagement as a strategic tension that needs to be maintained. I propose a politics of engagement as a social change framework that addresses the organizing dilemmas of activists working to end violence against women.

CONCLUSIONS

Critical Reflections on a Politics of Engagement

The activists I interviewed had many ideas about what we should be doing to end violence against women. Some women argued that we need to shift our emphasis from service provision; others questioned a politics too closely based on women's experience; still others argued that we need to move our focus beyond women's victimization, towards broader equality issues; and a few women even spoke of trying to resist either/or choices between mainstreaming and disengagement. However, overall, activists did not identify themselves as consciously engaged in a period of strategic rethinking.

In this research project I have argued that one of the most significant factors that is preventing activists from thinking strategically is divisiveness among activists. I have attempted to clarify current debates about what activists should be doing by identifying and critically discussing the strategies and visions being used by activists in Ottawa-Carleton. Finally, I have attempted to push current debates forward by proposing a politics of engagement as a conceptual framework for feminist activists.

In her research on the American women's movement, Ryan reports that by the early 1980s the intense divisions that had plagued activists in the 1970s had given way to a new sense of community. She states that many activists came to believe that difference among activists stemmed more from personal preference than ideology and that "conflict related to self-identity issues no longer played such a divisive role"(90:1992). In my own research, I came to a somewhat different conclusion. I found that many activists believed quite strongly that there were important ideological differences between their own cohorts

and other activists. For example, one activist I interviewed argues that there are significant differences among activists in the Ottawa-Carleton women's community:

I have every faith in the group I am associated with . . . [however] there are people in this community that describe themselves as members of the women's community who I would see as extremely traditional and dangerous to women.

In general, I have found that activists' assumptions about social change and collective identity were based on us/them distinctions and either/or categories. Activists tended to categorize each other as being the "right kind of feminist or not" based on the organizing choices that they made. Instead of focusing on the effectiveness of particular organizing choices, activists tended to call into question the motivation and commitment of activists with whom they disagreed. As a consequence, debates about what activists should be doing have tended to take place in what Ursel calls "the murky waters of moralizing" (1991:266).

This transformation of "strategic questions into moral axioms" (Ursel, 1991:265) has had devastating consequences, not just in Ottawa-Carleton, but across Canada. There is widespread agreement both among the activists I interviewed and among activists across Canada that we can never build enough shelters or provide enough services for all the women who have been abused. There is also a growing recognition that criminalization alone will not end violence against women. However, not only have we been unable to move beyond a crisis oriented approach, some of the crisis services that are in place have been jeopardized by intense internal disputes among activists.

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's a significant amount of energy has been focused on internal conflicts among activists working to end violence against women. In

Ontario alone, at least four shelters have been closed because of bitter disagreements among staff. Many women have argued that conflicts among feminist activists need to be understood in the context of destructive state funding process that breeds competition and distrust among activists and community groups. A further source of conflict is difference among women across race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, ability, age and geography.¹⁹

While there is no doubt that systemic discrimination, and government intervention have created new divisions and intensified old ones, these factors are not the only source of conflict. Without minimizing the destructive nature of discrimination or government intervention, I have attempted to argue that as activists we need to question our own practices and assumptions and examine the extent to which they produce conflict among activists. The underlying question of this project is whether current divisions among activists are important enough to allow them to jeopardize services for abused women or paralyze the movement to end violence against women?

Over the course of my research, it became clear to me that part of the reason why this question is so difficult to answer is that activists are not necessarily using the same

¹⁹ Difference among women has been unevenly addressed by activists working to end violence against women. In some cases, issues of difference have caused bitter rifts and torn shelters apart and in others they have pushed women to become more inclusive and more strategic. Women have responded both with hurt, anger and denial and with honesty, openness, and a willing to learn. While I agree with Glenda Simon's comment that "attempts at discussing racism within the women's movement have been incoherent, condescending and patronizing" (1989:21) I would also argue that some women's organizations have made considerable inroads in addressing these issues. A few examples of these inroads include: the staff of the Sexual Assault Service Centre of Ottawa-Carleton who agreed to reduce their hours to allow a woman of colour to be hired; the high profile given to the issue of cultural interpretation for women of colour who access the system at the recent "Putting the Pieces Together" conference; the strong presence of lesbians activists who put the issue of same-sex partner abuse on the agenda at the same conference; and the collaborative efforts of shelter workers, Ottawa-Carleton, Independent Living Centre and individual disabled women to make shelters accessible to disabled women.

vocabulary or starting with the same assumptions when they talk about social change. During their interviews many activists made statements such as "she is too mainstream", "the movement has become too professionalized", "she is not grassroots enough", and "we need more women being radical" without defining what they meant by these terms. When I asked women to define the terms grassroots, mainstream, and radical many activists hesitated. Although these terms were part of the everyday vocabulary of most activists, few had thought about what these terms actually meant. The following definitions of grassroots show that there is little consensus among activists as to the meaning of the term.

- Always thinking about the interests of women.
- I don't have any important connection to the word because it means havoc and process, no decision making and all those kind of weird things that are really frustrating.
- People who are working directly with women.
- Working outside of an institutional setting with very few resources.
- It is synonymous with community. It is being on the front-line. It is trench warfare.
- The word is unclear. It is usually used as a judgment, as in you are not grassroots enough. Without saying what there is not enough of.

Thus, in this project I have argued that in order to begin the task of a strategic rethinking we need to clarify existing assumptions about social change. I have argued that we need to understand both the strategies actually being used and the visions that are circulating about what activists *should* be doing. My research has suggested that activists in Ottawa-Carleton are using at least four distinct strategies for change: femocrat strategies, mediating strategies, challenging strategies, and disengaging strategies. Each strategy is premised on a different understanding of the state and different assumptions about how to create social change. It has also suggested that two opposing visions

(mainstreaming and disengagement) have been particularly influential in shaping activism. Each represents a different vision of what activists should be doing.

Several of the activists I interviewed were critical of femocrat and mediating strategies. They believed that women who use these strategies have a liberal orientation towards social change and that they are too easily coopted by the state. By challenging assumptions about social change, I hoped to demonstrate that each of the four strategies has the potential to be effective depending both on the goal and the particular political historical context. In my opinion, the most important findings of this research project are as follows:

- Women who use femocrat and mediating strategies are not necessarily too "moderate" to create meaningful social change. All of the women I interviewed understood the problem as systemic and they all believed that structural change was necessary to end violence against women. In fact there were no discernible ideological differences in the analyses of any of the activists I interviewed
- Women choose strategies based on personality, interests, experience and skills as well as ideology.
- Although it has been historically associated with the movement to end violence against women, a disengaged approach is like any other approach: effective for certain goals in certain contexts

I believe that these findings open up the range of strategic options available to activists and reinforce the notion that organizing choices are strategic not moral dilemmas.

I have proposed a politics of engagement as a conceptual framework that resists either/or dichotomies. I use this framework to bring together disengaged and mainstreaming visions by reformulating their points of disagreement as strategic tensions. A politics of engagement embraces disagreement and contradiction, bringing them together to create a more sophisticated and nuanced argument. Concepts are re-worked

until they include both sides of dichotomies--not as resolutions but as tensions. I have argued that this framework effectively addresses four key issues facing activists organizing to end violence against women. These issues are:

- Engagement with the state
- What counts as legitimate change
- Conceptions of the state
- Control and ownership

A politics of engagement transcends the dichotomy of mainstreaming and disengagement by reconceptualizing the questions of whether to engage or disengage, confront or cooperate as strategic decisions based on principles, goals, resources and the political climate of the day. It argues that small changes have the potential to have a cumulative effect, that but it is important to ask who is being left out, and who benefits the most from an initiative. The idea is not to dismiss changes that affect only a small group of women, but to build on these initiatives to create more inclusive change. A politics of engagement recognizes that the potential for change through engagement with the state is limited but it sees these limits as part of a contested terrain upon which activists can have an influence. Perhaps the most difficult question that this framework addresses is the question of ownership of the problem of violence against women. This question is so difficult because it concerns the immediate and long term safety of women and children. This framework recognizes that feminist activists need to give up exclusive ownership of the problem of violence against women without giving up the role of ensuring that the safety of women and children remains a priority. And it recognizes that this is a task filled with challenge and contradiction. But as Klodawsky (1995) has argued, learning to live

with contradiction may be the key to transcending our current organizing dilemmas as feminist activists.

Afterward: Critical Reflections on the Process

Overall, I have been encouraged by the response to my project. For the most part, activists welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their practice. Most women found the interview process to be challenging and draining but at the same time energizing and revitalizing. One woman commented that there never seems to be enough time to step back and actually analyse what it is that we are doing. When an activist does reflect it is often about the priorities of an organization or the implications of a specific strategy. She continued to say that it is rare that an activist has a chance to reflect on her own personal understandings of social change. Another activist stated that that if we stay isolated, our assumptions remain unchallenged. She said, "it is through talking to each other and hearing ourselves talk (because sometimes we contradict ourselves) that we make sense of the issues".

The underlying theme of these comments is the gap between theory and practice. Ideally theory is built on the critical reflection of practice but this is often not the case. Carty (1993) argues that feminists who are working in the trenches have little time to reflect on practice. She is extremely critical of academic feminists --the only women in her opinion who have the privilege of time for reflection--arguing that their work has no vision. Although I sympathize with Carty's point to a certain extent, I believe that she has discounted a growing number of feminist activist/academics who are trying bridge the gap

between theory and practice. Writers such as Adamson et. al., Dobash and Dobash, Klodawsky, Reinelt, and many others who are too numerous to name, are currently engaged in a process of redefining what it means to be a feminist academic and contesting the boundaries between academia and community. My hope is that my own research represents a contribution, however modest, to this project.

This research project has been primarily exploratory in nature. For this reason any conclusions must be regarded as extremely provisional. Having said this however, I do believe that the findings of this project provide a solid basis from which to conduct further research on the movement to end violence against women. Future research could be both more systematic and more participatory in nature. While my research does suggest that a politics of engagement would be a useful framework for activists, this claim needs to be substantiated using a more interactive, participant-centred methodology. One such approach could be to bring together activists who situate themselves across a range of positions on the mainstreaming/disengagement continuum and give them the task of creating a shared vision. The objective would be to determine the extent to which a politics of engagement would facilitate this process. The appeal of such a project is that it has to the potential to be both explosive and transformative.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Consent

January 8, 1995

Dear:

I am writing this letter to invite you to participate in a research project designed to explore future directions and strategies of activists working to end violence against women. Your name has been suggested to me by another activist. She felt that the extensive experience and the knowledge you have gained as an activist would make a significant contribution to this research project.

I am a graduate student in the department of sociology at Carleton University. Before moving to Ottawa, I lived in Toronto where I was active for several years in an education project for recent immigrants and visible minority youth in the Jane-Finch community. The idea for this project arose out of my long-standing interest in how social change is created in general and in particular my commitment to the struggle to end violence against women.

Many researchers and activists have argued that we have arrived at a stage of strategic rethinking of the direction and priorities of the movement to end violence against women. There is a growing consensus among survivors of violence and grassroots activists that our criminal justice system is not responsive to women's needs or considerate of women's reality. Immigrant and visible minority women have argued that because of the racism embedded in the structure of the criminal justice system, many women distrust the police and fear their involvement. On the other hand, calling the police may be a women's only option to defuse a life-threatening situation.

My research topic has emerged out of these debates. Can the criminal justice system be used as an effective strategy in the struggle to end violence against women and furthermore should it be? One thing that is clear is that relying on the criminal justice system alone will not solve the problem of violence against women. What else should activists be doing?

There are numerous approaches competing for resources: shelters and advocacy and support groups; efforts to change the criminal justice system; men's treatment programs; and prevention and public education programs. What are effective strategies for ending violence against women? Although there may be agreement among activists about the need for change, there is significant disagreement on how to achieve it. I am interested in exploring what you think activists should be doing.

Participation in this study involves an interview that would last between one and two hours. This interview will be arranged at a mutually agreeable time and place. I will ask

you to fill out a consent form which outlines the procedures and goals of this project to ensure that we agree on this approach.

The goal of this research project is to explore the question of "what is it that we, as activists, should be doing to end violence against women"? As activists emersed in the work we often don't have time to pause and reflect upon the work we are doing. I hope this project will provide such an opportunity. Thank you for taking time to consider participating in this study. If you would like futher information or would like to participate in the study please contact me at 567-3963. I will be following up this letter with a phone call in about a week. I look forward to speaking with you.

Yours Sincerly,

Karen Myers

Letter of Consent

I _____ agree to participate in the study being conducted by Karen Myers of Sociology Department of Carleton University. I am aware that this study will explore my perspectives on the future direction priorities and strategies of the movement to end violence against women.

I understand that participation in this study will involve one interview that will last between one and two hours.

- This interview will take place at a time and location that is agreeable to me.
- This interview will be taped. The tape will be returned to me or erased at my request.
- Only Karen Myers and Fran Klodawsky will have access to the audio-tapes
- My participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time
- I can refuse to answer any question, at any time and still continue to be part of the study
- My confidentiality will be protected through the elimination of my name and identifying details from the report
- I am entitled to access to the final report. I will receive a copy if I check the box at the bottom of this letter.

I have read the above information and based on this information I give my consent to participate in this research project providing that all my rights, as described above, will be strictly protected.

Name:

Signature

Date:

Would you like a copy of the final report?

If at any time you need to contact my supervisor or a member of the Ethics committee they can be contacted at the following addresses:

Dr. Fran Klodawsky
Department of Geography
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada
K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-788-2600 ext

Dr. Nosanchuk or Dr. Manyoni
Ethics Committee
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada
K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-788-2600

V. Question about your background

I am asking the remaining questions to better enable me to account for the social, economic and racial backgrounds of the participants in this project.

1. What best describes your household? [Circle all the numbers that apply]

1. Woman living alone.
2. Single mother (with child at home)
3. Married, common law or committed relationship with no child at home. (includes same sex partnership)
4. Married, common law or committed relationship with child at home. (includes same sex partnership)
5. Shared accommodation with related person.
6. Shared accommodation with unrelated person.
7. other (please describe) _____

2. (a) What kind of paid work do you do?

2. (b) What kind of unpaid work do you do?

3. In what year were you born?

4. What is your current yearly income category?

1. Under 5,000.
2. \$5, 000 to 10,000
3. \$15,000 to 20,000
4. \$20,000 to 30,000
5. \$30,000 to 40,000
6. \$40,000 to 50,000
7. over \$50,000

5. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

1. some high school	5. completed university degree.
2. completed high school	6. completed Masters degree.
3. some post-secondary school program	7. other (please explain) _____
4. completed post-secondary school program	_____

Interview Schedule

I. Contextualized History

I would like to begin by asking you about your history as an activist working to end violence against women. I am interested in your motivations to do this work and in the circumstances under which you became involved.

1. How did you come to be involved in this work?

2. (a) Can you describe the organizations, activities, and initiatives that you have been involved in as a volunteer?

(b) Can you describe the organizations, activities and initiatives that you have been involved in for paid work?

II. Opinions, Evaluations of Initiatives Already in Place

Now I would like to ask your opinion about some recent initiatives taken by the government to address the problem of violence against women.

3. Are you familiar with the "Wife Assault Is A Crime" initiative? In 1982 the former Attorney-General stated that we would be moving from a message of "Breaking the Silence" to "Wife Assault It Is A Crime". According to the Attorney General, the initiative was meant to reinforce the message that wife assault is not a family affair, but a crime--and that those who batter their wives will have to be prepared to take the consequences.

(a) Do you feel that the "Wife Assault is A Crime" initiative has been an effective strategy?

(b) How do you decide whether a strategy is effective or not? What factors do you take into consideration?

4. In 1982 the Solicitor General of Canada issued a directive that police should lay charges in cases of wife assault when they have reasonable grounds to believe that an assault took place? Since then, police forces throughout the province have adopted mandatory charging or pro-arrest policies. Do you think that the mandatory charging policy of the Ottawa Police force has been effective? Do you support the policy?

5. At the municipal level, an increasingly common approach to the problem of violence against women has been to develop a "coordinated criminal justice response" to violence against women. Examples include, Canadian cities such as Ottawa, London, Winnipeg, Renfrew and American cities such as Duluth and Quincy, Massachusetts. The term coordinated criminal justice response has been used to describe initiatives with different degrees of coordination and change and with varying degrees of success. Are you familiar with the concept of a coordinated criminal justice response approach? In general do you think this kind of approach is effective? Would you support efforts to further develop a coordinated criminal justice response in Ottawa-Carleton?

III. Understanding of the Problem

Now I want to ask you a few questions about how you understand the problem of violence against women and what you think that activists should be doing..

6. How do you understand the problem of violence against women? What are its root causes? Why does it persist?
7. What do you think should be done to help stop the violence?

What emphasis should be placed on each of the following approaches? For what reasons?

- (a) -efforts to develop a coordinated criminal justice system response
 - (b) -men's treatment programs
 - (c) -shelters, support and advocacy groups
 - (d) -public education/prevention strategies
 - (e) -sensitivity training and education for criminal justice professionals
 - (f) -access to safe and affordable child care, access to safe and affordable abortions,
 - (g) -access to safe and affordable housing
 - (i) -programs, policies, legislation to improve women's social, economic and political equality
8. When you consider whether to support a particular policy, approach or program, or participate in a particular activity that has been created to help stop violence against women are there some general criteria that you keep in mind? In other words, given your end goal to end violence against women, how do you evaluate particular initiatives?

IV. Questions About How Social Change Happens

Now I would like to ask you some questions about how social change happens. Although there may be agreement within the women's movement about the need for change, there is significant disagreement on how to achieve it. Activists often agree on particular tactics or issues but the reasons why they do so and the purposes they hope to achieve can be quite different. The strategies that activists use are extremely varied: pressuring the state for legislative changes, providing support and advocacy for women, direct action, public education, influencing or participating in electoral politics and so on. The locations from which activists may work for social change range from government or state institutions to community-based grassroots organizations to national women's organizations such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women or National Association of Women and the Law. Some activists use only certain strategies or work in certain locations. Other activists use different strategies and work in different locations depending on the context. Tactics, methods and issues are often described as either "grassroots" "radical", "institutionalized" or "mainstream". These concepts may have different meanings for different activists. Now I would like to ask you how you understand these concepts.

9. How do you understand the terms "grassroots" and "mainstream"?
 What are some examples of each type of approach?
 Are these strategies at odds with one another or do they compliment each other?
 Are some strategies inherently more radical than others?

In an effort to describe and evaluate different strategies for social change, three women activists and researchers came up with what they call the mainstreaming/disengagement continuum.

Disengagement: operates from a critique of the system and a standpoint outside of it, and a desire, therefore, to create alternative structures and ideologies. It can provide a vision of social transformation. Activities, issues, tactics and beliefs that work outside of existing institutions would be disengaged.

Mainstreaming: operates from a desire to reach out to the majority of the population with popular and practical feminist solutions to particular issues and therefore works within major social institutions, such as the family, the workplace, the educational system and the state. Activities, issues, tactics and beliefs that work with institutions would be mainstream

Activities, issues, tactics and beliefs can be classified as more or less mainstreamed or disengaged. In practice, activities, issues, tactics, and beliefs can rarely be classified as purely one or the other. The majority are some combination of both strategies. The use of a continuum is meant to capture the idea that classification is not cut and dry.

10. Could you describe yourself in terms of these concepts, both in terms of your history and your beliefs or philosophy? Do you see your self and your work as closer to one end of the continuum or the other?

(participants will be provided a diagram of the mainstreaming/disengagement continuum, definition of the terms and examples of each) (see attached sheet).

11. We have been talking a lot about strategy but have not explicitly defined it. What does the word "strategy" mean to you? Or what does it mean to be "strategic" Is this something that you can define? Are there certain factors that determine whether a particular initiative is strategic?

V. Question about your background

Is there anything else about you in relation to your work on violence against women that you feel is important for me to know or understand in relation to the kinds of issues that we have been talking about.

THE MAINSTREAMING/DISENGAGEMENT CONTINUUM

Disengagement

Mainstreaming

Disengagement	NAC	CACSW
Take back the night march		
feminist presses		
health collectives		women's caucuses within trade unions
women's bookstores		sensitivity training for police officers
alternative or parallel system of justice		
direct action, protests and marches		
Shelters, Rape Crisis Centres		
Women's Studies Programs		
Sexual Assault Support Centres		
Support and Counselling groups		

This diagram is meant to provide a starting point from which to begin thinking about the mainstreaming/disengagement continuum. The classifications that I have made provide a very general overview of how the continuum may be used. In order to classify a specific organization or initiative one would have to consider many factors. For example a shelter may be considerably more mainstream or disengaged depending on how funding has altered its internal structures.

Disengagement: operates from a critique of the system and a standpoint outside of it, and a desire, therefore, to create alternative structures and ideologies. It can provide a vision of social transformation. Activities, issues, tactics and beliefs that work outside of existing institutions would be disengaged.

Mainstreaming: operates from a desire to reach out to the majority of the population with popular and practical feminist solutions to particular issues and therefore works within major social institutions, such as the family, the workplace, the educational system and the state. Activities, issues, tactics and beliefs that work with institutions would be mainstream

While disengagement holds the danger of marginalization, the politic of mainstreaming risks institutionalization and co-optation.

END

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FIN