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**FINDING A PLACE:
THE POLITICS OF FEMINIST ORGANIZING AGAINST SPOUSAL
ASSAULT IN OTTAWA AND LANARK COUNTY,
1970-1982**

by

Nancy Janoviček, B. A. (Hon.)

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

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

July 10, 1997

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"Finding a Place: The Politics of Feminist
Organizing Against Spousal Assault in Ottawa
and Lanark County, 1970-1982"

submitted by Nancy Janovicek, Hons. B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

Feminist organizing and service provision in response to spousal assault has transformed a private and personal matter into a public and political issue. Current conceptions about spousal assault that argue that it is inextricably linked to women's inequality find their roots in the efforts of locally based feminist organizations. Women organized shelters locally and promoted political agendas based on their conceptions of their place in the community, and used this to gauge the efficacy of their strategies. Rather than discussing the role that shelters played in the early years of the contemporary Canadian women's movement, this thesis explores the impact that shelters had at the local level using the privately held records of the Interval House of Ottawa Carleton and Lanark County Interval House as its empirical basis.

Acknowledgements

During the past year, I have had the privilege and the pleasure to work under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Adamson. As is fitting of a historian, she guided me through this thesis using stories of her experience as a feminist academic and activist. She is a talented and challenging teacher, and has also been a patient advisor who allowed me to explore ideas indiscriminately, but at judicious moments stepped in to offer much needed direction to my rambling thoughts.

This research would not have been possible without the cooperation of the Board of Directors of the Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton and Lanark County Interval House. I conducted the Ottawa research at the shelter, and am grateful to the residents for opening their home to me, and to Lyallen Hayes and the staff at IHOC who cleared desks for me to work on when I arrived to do research. In Lanark County, Fern Martin searched in the basements of friends and colleagues to find the material that I needed for this project. I thank her for the enthusiasm that she has shown for my work.

This thesis is enriched by the narratives of the women who agreed to be interviewed. Their continued dedication to ending spousal assault, and to ensuring that services for women remain open until that time are truly inspirational.

Andrea Trudel at the Canadian Women's Movement Archives/Archives canadiennes du mouvement des femmes was informative and helpful in suggesting files to me. Her personal involvement in the Canadian women's movement makes her a valuable resource as well, and I looked forward to discussions with her as I carried out my research there.

I owe much gratitude to those who have offered personal support to me throughout this degree. I could not have come this far without the love of my parents, John and Rosalind, and the unremitting confidence that they have in me. Many friends have helped me while I was writing this thesis by reading chapters, listening to me work out ideas and counselling me through anxious moments. During crunch times, I came to depend on the encouragement of a squad of 'cyberspace cheerleaders' who sent daily e-mail messages to maintain my spirits through the lonely days of writing. I thank those who put up with me during the final stages when I incessantly found connections between all topics and this thesis. In particular I indebted to the members of 'The Thesis Support Group,' Laura McCoy and Lori Wasserman, who read drafts at all stages of this thesis, and offered useful insights and criticisms. We'll have to plant that tree one day.

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Introduction: Finding a Place

For the past twenty-five years, feminists have organized politically to raise public awareness about spousal assault. Their strategies have ranged from providing services to help the women in their communities escape from violent homes to launching international agendas to fight violence against women based on the language of human rights. The underlying principle of these strategies has been that private violence needs to be exposed and discussed publicly so that women will no longer suffer in silence and in solitude. Hence, developing a language to help women articulate their experiences and to understand violence perpetrated by intimate partners as a violation of their rights has been central to agendas for change. Feminist efforts to raise public awareness about the extent of spousal assault and to develop strategies to assist battered women have taken place in two arenas. In recent years, national and international agendas have guided the mobilization of public outrage against wife battering. These efforts, however, find their origins in the struggles of grass-roots, community organizations which emphasised that wife-abuse was a social problem rather than an isolated and personal problem shared by a few unlucky women.

Organizing against spousal assault is part of a complex system of political action, consciousness raising and service provision related to the various forms of violence against women which stresses the link between women's subordinate status and their subsequent difficulty accessing legislative protection and appropriate social assistance. Since ending violence against women is a key component of feminist agendas for change, and because feminist lobbying has pressured national and international bodies to commit themselves to

working towards its eradication, it is difficult to imagine a time when trying to find ways to end spousal assault was not a priority for the contemporary women's movement. The first emergency shelters for women in crisis were founded locally in the early 1970s, but not all of them were established exclusively for the purpose of aiding women fleeing from violent homes. Over time, the number of women using these services because they had been repeatedly assaulted by intimate partners, made even more shocking by the brutal measures used by husbands to control their wives, led women working in shelters to reconsider their conception of wife-battering. Emerging radical feminist theories about violence against women influenced perceptions about the battered woman and activists began to talk about spousal assault as a form of social control over women. A co-ordinated movement that focused specifically on spousal assault developed at regional and provincial levels, but not until the late 1970s when shelter organizers decided that they needed political organizations which focussed on lobbying governments for financial support, legislative change and policies aimed at transforming public opinion about wife-battering. Moreover, the validity of spousal assault as a feminist issue was itself a contested issue because the new feminist conceptualizations of wife-battering which maintained that it was a consequence of the social situation of women, rather than individual and pathological reasons were not readily accepted by all who were active in the women's movement.¹

In this thesis, I examine the origins of Canadian women's organizing to expose wife-battering by mapping the emergence of the awareness of spousal assault as a far-reaching social problem and the language that women developed to talk about it. My focus is the role that feminist services for battered women played in making spousal assault an issue at local

levels through an examination of the founding of interval houses in Ottawa and in Lanark County in 1976 and 1979 respectively. My thesis begins with an overview of discussions about abused women focussing on grass-roots feminist responses to battered women which were based on the interpretations of activists' who worked with women who were leaving abusive homes.² Since the shelters examined are in Ontario, this study begins in 1972 when the province's first interval house opened in Toronto and ends in 1982, before the provincial government mandated police officers to press charges in cases of spousal assault and began to negotiate funding stabilization formulas with transition houses. I explore the origins of the strategies that were devised to provide services for battered women and to make their experiences political. The primary site of the political development of spousal assault was in emergency shelters for women in crisis. It was here that advocates for abused women began to emphasize the importance of feminist run services in facilitating women's transition from abusive homes into the community and to make connections between public and private violence against women.

Hence, my rationale for choosing two shelters to examine an issue which has taken on international implications is premised on the emergence of the battered women's movement from local initiatives to assist women in their communities.³ Emergency shelters for women at local levels were not founded in absolute isolation from one another; programs and philosophies for running the services were, in part, developed in consultation with women active in other locations. For the most part though, shelters established services in their community independently because women working at the local level were obligated to negotiate funding procedures with municipal governments and to secure additional

resources from the community and its existing charitable organizations. This, in turn, required a definition of the need for feminist services based on the assessment of the shortcomings of social services in their communities rather than an abstract notion of violence against women as a phenomenon grounded in patriarchal structures. They designed public education programs, and prompted agencies and members of their community to pay attention to wife-battering as a social issue in the absence of provincial and federal policy about it and with limited research which critically examined spousal assault from a feminist standpoint.

Focussing on two shelters which developed relatively independently despite their proximity to one another allows closer examination of local feminist organization, the structural and philosophical debates surrounding the provision of feminist services, and the strategies devised by women based on the relationship between feminist organizations and the place in which they came together. Launching the private discussions about wife battering into international and national arenas has been among the successes of the contemporary women's movement because it has provided victims of abuse with empowering frameworks with which to understand their experiences and to overcome their victimization. Current discussions about wife abuse have been dominated by national and international agendas for change so that now, political organization around family violence is part of a complex relationship between community, national and international agendas to end violence against women. This focus has tended to homogenize the experiences of advocates for battered women and shelter workers. It assumes that all women share the conception that spousal abuse occurs within a patriarchal framework, that it must end

because it inhibits women's equality, and that in order to achieve equality, violence against women must be eradicated. The presumption of this shared knowledge has drawn attention away from the struggles that occurred in various places to find a way to understand the prevalence of family violence in their communities.

Women in different communities have, out of necessity, responded to wife abuse in different ways. Communities have specific needs which are a result of geographic location, the composition of the community and the consequent diverse needs of those women, and their access to resources based on their relationship to governments and agencies that support them. The particular relationship of these factors created different ideologies and tactics for change. Women working at this level have provided the immediate services to women in crisis and act as a communication liaison between women who are in crisis and the larger movement. Their work has been the very essence of the movement to end spousal abuse.

Overview of the Literature

The 'discovery' of domestic violence in the 1970s initiated a flurry of research about the issue.⁴ This section provides an overview of the historical treatment of family violence and shows how contemporary notions about spousal assault affected explorations into the past. I discuss current feminist theories and debates about spousal assault and look at the impact of these debates on the literature about the contemporary Canadian movement to end violence against women. One common tendency of these bodies of literature is their focus on the external factors that guided Canadian women's organization at the local level. Hence,

rather than examining the impact of grass-roots women's movements on their own communities and the local factors that affected women's organizations, the literature has concentrated on discussing the role of community grass roots efforts in a national women's movement and the role of centralized feminist organization in various locations of feminist activity.

Scholars of the Canadian women's movement have maintained that Canadian women have developed ideologies and have adopted strategies which are specific to 'the Canadian experience.' There has been a tendency to trace the roots of the Canadian women's movement to external movements, in particular, that of the United States.⁵ Though the expansive size of Canada, and resultant regional particularities, have been a concern in theories which attempt to characterize the Canadian movement, the independent movements of Quebec women and those in English Canada have been posited as the principal division within Canadian women's organizing. This is not to say that the English Canadian movement has been presented as a monolithic, homogenous movement. Indeed much has been written to show that it is composed of diverse and dynamic movements of women.⁶ The bulk of this literature, however, has assumed that a national movement has informed and guided the work of women at the local level. Historical analysis of women's activities in the past is beginning to present more inclusive interpretations of the women's movement which underlines the differences among feminists rather than using women's history to forge a common historical legacy for women.⁷ This thesis contributes to the stream of women's history which uses local activism to illustrate the diversity of Canadian women. Its most important contribution to the existing literature about contemporary feminist organizing is

its presentation of the histories of two previously unstudied local women's organizations.

The conceptualization of wife-battering as a phenomenon that was based on the oppression and control of women, and the realization that wife-abuse was also a current issue, gave social historians doing research on women's roles in the family a new way to understand the history of family violence. With this new perspective, historians analysed documents differently and developed a literature about wife-abuse which set out to uncover its historical legacy. The impetus to understand the history of family violence has been as political as it has been scholarly. The central themes of historiographical examination of family violence have been to prove that there is a history of women's resistance to family violence in the home⁸ and that women's organizations in the past also identified wife-battering as a social issue.⁹ This is not to say that historians have argued that wife-battering is a trans-historical phenomenon. Much of the history about family violence has adopted Linda Gordon's assertion that "family violence has been historically and politically constructed."¹⁰ Historical examinations of domestic violence have used Gordon's thesis to explain how women experienced domestic violence from the perspective of that time and place, and through their class positions. Research has, none the less, been motivated by the assumption that a better understanding of the history of family violence and the ways that it has changed over time would facilitate current strategies to end domestic violence.¹¹

Historical documentation of the battered women's movement outside of Canada has concentrated on capturing the radical roots of the moment in order to criticize the institutionalization of the battered women's movement.¹² There is, however, little written about the history of contemporary Canadian women's organizing around spousal assault.

Rather than treating the founding of shelters for battered women as an independent study, research about establishing transition houses is subsumed in discussions about initiating feminist services for women, organizing around the issue of violence against women or as an example of the transformation of the personal to the political.¹³ Aside from cursory sketches of the transition of feminist consciousness about wife-battering as a social issue into feminist action in texts proposing theories to combat private violence against women, there are no historical accounts that analyse the contemporary Canadian battered women's movement exclusively. This is, no doubt, due to the fact that recording the history of contemporary Canadian feminism is itself a relatively novel enterprise. Furthermore, records for shelters are privately held, and as such, not readily available to researchers.

The literature that exists about feminist organization pertaining to spousal assault is polarized by a debate in Canadian feminist organizing which attempts to definitively determine the impact that state involvement has had on the women's movement in Canada. The digression from the grass-roots origins of feminist mobilization to end spousal assault has been a central theme of feminist research and debates about the battered women's movement.¹⁴ Those who defend working with institutions and the state maintain that its involvement is inevitable. Therefore, they argue, feminists must work from within traditional institutions in order to ensure that feminist concerns will be incorporated into their strategies for change.¹⁵ Critics of state involvement in feminist services argue that the bureaucratization of institutions will inevitably co-opt radical feminist agendas by demanding that all funded projects are accountable to the programme of the government or the institution providing the funding rather than that of the women's movement.¹⁶

One of the themes of the literature about the institutionalization of the shelters for battered women is analysis which questions the context in which the women's movement framed spousal assault. Gillian Walker is one of the most prolific Canadian scholars on this topic. Reflecting on her own involvement in the transition house movement, Walker has problematised the analysis of women's experience in violent homes put forward by the women's movement, arguing that,

Naming the experience is a double-edged sword. It co-ordinates our mobilization and identifies our difficulties to ourselves and each other. Many women have spoken of the power that being able to identify themselves as "battered wives" gave them. It was a first step for some in recognizing that the experience was widely shared and that taking action was a legitimate response. At the same time, it directed such action into particular channels: seeking "help" in the form of social services, or legal redress. Neither of these mobilize women unless they are put in a feminist context; nor do they address the totality of women's lives.¹⁷

Walker uses Dorothy E. Smith's theory of the relations of ruling as an analytical tool to systematically analyse confrontations between feminist groups and the state, and to expose the shortcomings of conceptual frameworks of family violence developed in medical and legislative professions which ignored women's experiences. In response, advocates for battered women fought to participate in this process to ensure that women would be considered in the development of policy and legislation. Walker argues that though feminists intended to help abused women by ensuring that their needs would be accommodated in government agendas, and to inspire public outrage against violent husbands, ultimately focusing on abuse removed the experience of violence from the totality of women's lives. Thus, the language adopted to talk about spousal assault has been detrimental to radical strategies for change because it has presented only one aspect of women's lives on which

to build public policy.¹⁸ The purpose of her work is not to criticize the women's movement, but rather to "move our efforts forward by uncovering for our understanding a feature of how our work comes to be organized against us by the processes we engage in."¹⁹ Walker argues that since resultant state policies have fractured women's experiences, feminist activism must be vigilant in its efforts to ensure that state policies, and its consequent practices, respond to the entirety of women's lives.

Similar conclusions have been submitted by minority women who argue that the 1970s radical feminist analyses of violence against women that focused on gender oppression, separated violence from other social categories which shaped women's lives. As a consequence feminists have produced strategies for change that disregard particular circumstances in women's lives. The dominant ideology of feminist theories about spousal assault posits the power imbalance between men and women as its basis, and has constructed wife-battering as part of the universal experience of violence against women that manifests itself differently in different places.²⁰ Women whose voices have not been central in decision-making processes of the women's movement have argued that the assumptions of radical feminism have overlooked the impact of race, sexual orientation and disability on the accessibility of the shelters for women. First Nations women do not agree with the feminist analysis of spousal assault which is based on patriarchal oppression because of the colonial disruption of their family systems and values. They argue that the legacy of colonization has subjected all Aboriginal peoples and has initiated a cycle of violence which cannot be solved by adopting the strategies of the colonizer.²¹ Immigrant women contend that the emphasis placed on invoking the criminal justice system deters women who depend

on their abusive partner's citizenship from seeking aid from feminist services.²² For lesbian activists the focus on *male* violence against women has obfuscated the experiences of women who have been abused by female partners, and they submit that the assumption that women are not inherently violent, which has been perpetuated in some feminist theories about violence against women, has made shelters inaccessible to them.²³ Finally, charges of racism, homophobia and classism against activists in the battered women's movement from colleagues and former residents have questioned the movement's claim that it is a source of empowerment for women who are abused.²⁴

The criticisms posed by women whose particular needs have been eclipsed by the evolution of a homogenizing depiction of spousal assault have called the radical roots of the movement into question. Yet in much of the theory and strategy concerning spousal assault there is a persistent theme that the experience of violence against women is different from other forms of feminist organization because all women are similarly and equally at risk.²⁵ Perhaps the physicality of abuse has created an assumption that the issue of violence against women transcends the differences that are apparent in other forms of women's organization.²⁶ The debates about spousal assault that have emerged to critique this universalist assumption show that this is an inaccurate assessment of feminist efforts to provide services for battered women. These debates, though, have not reverberated similarly in all places because the composition of particular communities has influenced the issues that have come to the fore in local organizing to provide services for battered women. I propose that considering how the diverse strategies that have developed in different communities because of the politics of that place, and the impact of the organization on the

immediate environs are also an important element of understanding the disparate histories of women's organizations around spousal assault.

This thesis adopts the analysis of Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail which conceptualizes the women's movement as having "a shifting, amoeba-like character; it is, and has always been, politically, ideologically, and strategically diverse."²⁷ The movement to end spousal assault has brought together women from different backgrounds who proposed numerous tactics to make changes in the lives of women in their communities. Moreover, organizing services for battered women has continually evolved as new conundrums have arisen and demanded resolution. In retrospect, the shortcomings of the decisions that were made may seem obvious; but at that time, organizers were learning about violence against women, the systemic barriers faced by women in violent homes and how they could effectively confront these issues. Therefore, when appraising past choices, we must comply with Joy Parr's assertion that understanding Canadian women depends on a comprehension of the views that women had of themselves based on "what others expected of them and how women came to understand their own predicaments, how the distinctive circumstances in which they found themselves framed their experiences, and how they, in interpreting these experiences made sense of their lives."²⁸ Furthermore, analysis of feminist organization has shown that a majority of women choose to be politically active in their communities rather than national or international agendas for change. The tactics and strategies which women are able to develop and pursue have, in turn, been influenced by the political climate in which they are living. Women's politics are often, but not exclusively, imbued with personal perceptions of their immediate

surroundings, and how they can affect change in it. As Pauline Rankin argues in her recent PhD dissertation, “women still live their lives locally with their consciousness formed in a distinct geographical (and I would add, political) place.”²⁹

This thesis contributes to the existing literature about feminist organizing against spousal assault by examining it from a local perspective. Few localized histories of contemporary Canadian feminist organizing exist, and there is no historiographical precedent for the study of the establishment of services for abused women which concentrates on its place in the community that it served, and the consciousness of the women who came together to organize it. In the battered women’s shelter movement, forging common goals in order to influence the agendas of governments has been complex because it has required negotiation between women who adopted different strategies and modes of organization due to their disparate histories and internal conflicts. The politics that occurred among women, and between feminist organizations and their communities at local levels were as complicated and influential to strategies for change as those which tried to build social movements at provincial and national levels. Shelters for abused women have held a distinctive place in the community. Their very existence is political, and to some extent confrontational, because they expose the failings of municipally run social service agencies. Though they have operated from a stance that is critical of the communities which they serve, they have been simultaneously dependant on them for financial and political support. Informed by the expectations created by feminist theories, local organizing was further intensified by the demand to strike a balance between running effective public education programs, providing continual service to women in crisis, determining which

crises would not be handled, and maintaining a workplace which reflected the principles on which feminist shelters have been founded. It is only possible to appreciate the intricacies involved in establishing grass-roots feminist services through localized study which is sensitive to what women hoped to accomplish in their communities, what they thought they could achieve, and how they struck a balance between these perceptions to define their strategies to make change.

Methodology

Initially, I had envisioned a much broader thesis which would explore the historical roots of the debates of the shelter movement which have been outlined in the overview of the literature. After narrowing my focus to Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton and Lanark County Interval House, and placing temporal limitations on my research, I realized that the documents to which I had access did not contain enough evidence about the politics of difference to explore issues of identity based diversity. Nor was there evidence in these collections which substantiated the thesis, promoted by women associated with the Vancouver Women's Research Centre, that engagement with traditional institutions has co-opted the battered women's shelter movement. The shelters that I examined worked closely with municipal social service agencies from their inception. What I did have were the records of a shelter that was located in a city, and another organization which served a rural population. The women in these organizations developed ideologies which were based on the perceptions of the political significance of the work that they were doing, and a different awareness of the place in which they were organizing. This thesis indirectly compares

organizing in urban and rural contexts, but following my conviction that understanding how women organize locally depends on the circumstances which are determined by time and place, the histories of the organizations are presented as local studies.

I examine the foundation of the shelters primarily from the perspective of the organizers and use their interpretations of events that influenced local understanding of spousal assault and the circumstances that brought women to the shelters. Hence, this thesis focuses more closely on the history of contemporary feminist organizing around spousal assault, than on that of the regulation of family violence. The privately held records of Ottawa-Carleton Interval House and Lanark County Interval House provide the empirical base for the case studies. Perusal of the Ottawa Women's Centre collection held at the Canadian Women's Movement Archives/ Archives canadiennes du mouvement des femmes (CWMA/ACMF) provided background for the women's liberation movement in Ottawa. I relied on articles from local newspapers to examine community conceptions of feminist organizing and to gauge its impact on local consciousness in Lanark County. Contemporary feminist journals and magazines, in particular *Kinesis* and *Upstream*, were consulted to discuss the evolution of spousal assault as a feminist and political issue. The discussion of the emergence of local women's centres, emergency shelters and organizations to make violence against women a political issue focuses on Ontario organizations. Again, I limited my study to those organizations who have made their records available to researchers by depositing them at the CWMA/ACMF.³⁰

At the outset of this project, I initiated correspondence with the shelters and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). Each of these organizations

privately holds records which are listed in *The Canadian Women's Movement, 1960-1990: A Guide to Archival Resources* as available to researchers upon negotiation.³¹ In letters to the organizations, I stipulated that my research did not require access to the client records since I planned to use the histories of their organizations to understand the battered women's shelter movement rather than investigate the experiences of former residents.

Fern Martin, the current public educator and one of the founders of Lanark County Interval House was the first to grant me permission to look at their records. At our introductory meeting in Carleton Place, I planned to set up a schedule for research dates and was pleasantly surprised when she sent me home with two boxes of documents. They held a rich collection of letters, newspaper articles, notes from public education meetings, promotional posters and correspondence to and from other local women's organizations that shared similar concerns dating from 1972. She also loaned me a collection of the minutes of the shelter between 1978 and 1985, and original copies of her column "Inter-view" which has been printed in local newspapers since the shelter's inception in 1979. The diligent manner in which the Lanark County women have held on to their documents is noteworthy because it embodies their sense of uniqueness and the importance of the work that they were doing. They deliberately kept their records for posterity because, in their words, "Our files and archives will, in the future, provide the basis for more localized research."³² Though the way that the records are organized and preserved does not adhere to professional, or even to less traditional methods used in archives, I have called the records the *Lanark County Interval House Archives* giving adherence to their nomenclature.

Lyallen Hayes, the director of Interval House of Ottawa Carleton, contacted me after

the Board of Directors had approved my request to look at their records. When we first met Hayes explained that, unlike Lanark County Interval House, the records in Ottawa-Carleton were not kept intentionally, and that many were destroyed to protect the organization and the residents from court subpoena. When the shelter moved, they brought the old records but placed them randomly into boxes. The files are stored in an unlit crawl-space in the furnace-room of the shelter, and many of the boxes contain nothing more than returned cheques, bills and tax receipts. I sorted through the files as thoroughly as I could, but I do not know what documents remain in the boxes which could have told me more about how feminist organizing and service provision worked before shelter activists began to co-ordinate their efforts to pressure provincial and federal governments to provide stabilized funding mechanisms for interval and transition houses. What I did find in the records that I pulled out of the basement were an incomplete run of minutes from 1976 to 1986, and copies of correspondence sent to donors from 1977-1993. Many of the files contained documents which outline the fiscal operations of the shelter such as audits, financial reports, incorporation documents, by-laws, and applications for government grants and bank loans. These documents spoke about structural and philosophical matters involved in establishing a service based on feminist principles. At a later date, Joan Gullen, one of the founders of IHOC informed me that she has records in her basement which dealt with the founding of the shelter. Unfortunately, we were not able to co-ordinate our schedules so that it was feasible for me to look at those documents as part of this project.³³

As stated above, neither of these collections has been catalogued; nor did I presume to order the documents. References to these records provide a description or title of the

document, the date (or a conjectural date if the document was undated) followed by the name of the collection in which it was found. The account in this thesis only tells part of what is contained in the documents that I perused. Researchers hoping to understand women's liberation organizing in rural communities will find many sources held in the women's organizations of Lanark County. Mention of events often prompts the recollection of things stored the basements of their homes. The records in Ottawa are more complete for the period following the parameters of my study. Records of staff meetings and log-books document the day to day dynamics inside the house, and could be the basis of further investigation into the definition of feminist service provision from the perspective of front-line workers.

I was not granted permission to review records at OAITH because of the absence of a policy to guide the release of documents, and the limited resources of the organization to respond to researchers' requests.³⁴ In e-mail correspondence and telephone conversation, I was informed that many of the documents had been destroyed when the organization changed locations because they were no longer deemed valuable. There are some documents from OAITH held in the collections of the interval houses of Ottawa-Carleton and Lanark County. These records include correspondence from OAITH and reports from conferences. Since I did not have access to the records of the organization which was established to lobby provincial governments on behalf of shelters, I ceded my original intention to discuss the impact of institutionalization on local transition houses.

The documents in the private collections allude to a myriad of discussions about ideology, procedure, feminist politics and strategy. Most, however, do not provide detailed

accounts which would expose the nuances involved in discussions about the efficacy of certain strategies, or the frustrations involved in organizing on shoestring budgets. As Marjorie Griffen Cohen writes in her assessment of the documents left behind by feminist organizations,

As someone who was involved in writing documents that are now part of our history, I am acutely aware of the political process of writing on a specific issue at a specific time. . . . Sometimes we wrote to accommodate the diversity of opinion within our groups. At other times we presented arguments that could be “heard” by people who were unfamiliar with the long trajectory of feminist thought and debate. . . For many feminists, their immediate work was more absorbing than writing about it. Consequently, incidents and experiences were invariably more complex than what was recorded.³⁵

To complement the records of the organizations, interviews were conducted with two women from each shelter who were involved during their initial years of operation. I spoke to one woman who was involved in the organization and management of each shelter, and another who was a shelter worker. In Ottawa, I interviewed Joan Gullen, who was one of the original board members of OCIV and continues to be involved in coalitions and committees to end violence against women. In the years following the time-frame of this thesis, she was instrumental in addressing issues of diversity in the battered women’s movement and was a founder of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Against Violence Against Women. Carolyn Sinclair began working at IHOC shortly after it opened, and continues to be active in the local movement to end spousal assault. Fern Martin and Olive Millet, a shelter worker who joined the organization in 1980 and still holds this position, met with me together in Carleton Place. All of the women signed a release form which was approved by an Ethics Review Committee and orally reiterated their permission to allow me to use their words in

this project.

I came to the meetings with a list of questions and soon noted that as they began to recall the early years of organization, their narratives answered a number of the specific questions that I had listed. Though I guided their recollection of past events by asking for clarification at certain points, the interviewees spoke about their years of involvement with the organization with only a little prompting on my part.³⁶ Because they continue to be active in the shelter movement their narratives were intermingled with commentary on their present problems and challenges. No doubt, their current concerns about the future of the shelter³⁷ directed them to recount events which they consider to be important today. Their narratives flow between past and present, thus expressing a sense of continuity and change. There are moments, however, when the excitement, confusion, frustration and sense of possibility felt at that time of the founding of the shelters, resounds despite their years of experience organizing strategies to end spousal assault, and working with women in crisis.

Overview of the Chapters

The title of my thesis, *Finding a Place*, intends to capture three conceptualizations of 'place' around which I have organized this thesis: establishing both a physical and ideological place for women, determining the place of feminist services in the women's liberation movement, and the place of grass-roots feminist organizations and services in the communities that they serve. In the battered women's movement, the concept of safety is intimately linked with place. Having a safe and secure place is most certainly a priority for women in crisis, but it is also necessary for the provision of services and the survival of the

battered women's shelter movement. Today, feminist services are considered to be an integral element of the women's movement because they facilitate individual liberation from oppressive circumstances, which in turn strengthens the women's movement. The current position, however, is the result of debate about the role of feminist services which occurred in some grass-roots organizations during the 1970s. Some argued that services were merely 'band-aid' operations which drained much needed resources from the more important goal of radical social change. This position was based on the premise that ending women's oppression would obliterate the daily trials and tribulations of women. Finally, services for women operate locally, and are defined by the women who organize and manage them. They require a public face so that women know that they have a place to go when they are in crisis, and because they rely on the community for funding. Public education programs complement the work of service provision in the hope that one day, shelters for battered women will no longer be needed, and women will live in peace and security.

This thesis does not analyse every facet of feminist organization against violence against women, rather it focuses on those which were organized locally, and strategies that targeted local audiences to make change. Notwithstanding, it begins with an overview of the emergence of the movement to end violence against women to set the stage for a more detailed examination of local feminist organizing. Chapter 1 provides a discussion of the literature about wife-battering written in the 1970s and outlines the evolution of the connections that radical feminists made between public and private violence to argue that all forms of violence against women worked together to keep women in a state of oppression. I use feminist organizing in Toronto as a case-study for this chapter because it

is the location of many of the earliest responses to violence against women in Ontario.

In subsequent chapters, I discuss the founding of interval houses in Ottawa and Carleton Place. Both chapters begin with a discussion of local women's liberation organizing to establish the debates and politics of activists in both communities. In Ottawa, feminist organizing was less centralized than in Lanark County, and women, who organized on numerous fronts, adopted diverse ideologies on which to base their activism. Feminists who organized services targeting particular issues adopted the political conviction that their efforts would draw women to feminism and strengthen the women's movement. In Lanark County, women planned events under the banner of the women's liberation movement, but their tactic for recruitment of women was to make explicit connections between women's organizing and its local contribution. Rather than drawing attention to the growing women's movement, they stressed the manner in which women's groups improved community life.

In Chapter 2, I discuss only two of the grass-roots feminist organizations in Ottawa that devised programs to assist battered women: the Ottawa Women's Centre and the Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton. Secondary literature about feminist organizing of shelters for battered women credits local women's centres with the founding of shelters. As such, I started this research project perusing the records of the Ottawa Women's Centre. There are a few references to battered women and to ad hoc strategies to help them, but the OWC did not initiate the organization of an emergency hostel for women because of limited resources and resistance within the collective to service provision. A group of women who organized autonomously from the OWC, and who were employed in municipal social service agencies founded IHOC because they deemed the measures that existed to protect

battered women to be inadequate. The role of services in the women's liberation movement was a contested issue in Ottawa in the early 1970s, and this polemic was later present in collective debates about the political countenance of the Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton. In both organizations, the efficacy of service provision as a strategy for change was frequently discussed as the women attempted to assess the role that feminist services played in liberating women.

Chapter 3 argues that service provision was the basis of local women's liberation organizing in Lanark County. The ideology developed by these women was perhaps best characterized by the classic contradiction of the women's movement: "I'm not a feminist, but . . ." It was not an express feminist ideology that held women's organization together in Lanark County, but a desire to help women in their communities. Public education programs to end spousal assault, and strategies for procuring community support for Lanark County Interval House were based on a sense of community responsibility and local cohesion. Strictly speaking, Lanark County Interval House does not qualify as a rural shelter because of its closeness to Ottawa. Regardless, the women who organized the shelter identified primarily as rural, and incorporated a sense of the place in which they lived and worked into their analysis of spousal assault, and in the definition of the shelter's programs and services.

This thesis demonstrates that conceptions of sisterhood, political feminist action, women's liberation and feminist services were more complex during this phase of feminist organization than many accounts have shown. It shows that a past unity of the women's movements (both global and local) which is often lamented in analysis which criticizes the identity-based fragmentation of women as a political group and conceptual category, never

truly existed.³⁸ Feminists did organize under the rallying cry the “Sisterhood is Powerful,” and frustrations derived from involvement with male-led political organizations did compel a relatively privileged and homogenous group of women to unite, but this did not preclude debate about how and why women organized politically. Different circumstances brought different groups of women together in Ottawa and in the towns and villages of Lanark County. Similarly, varying conceptions about what the women’s liberation movement should focus on, and the resultant debates about how feminists should organize, created two organizations which, though built on the same premise, had very different outlooks on their communities and what their role was in it.

ENDNOTES

1. Roberta Hamilton talks about her own reluctance to acknowledge wife-battering as a feminist issue in *Gendering the Vertical Mosaic: Feminist Perspectives on Canadian Society*. (Toronto: Copp Clark Limited, 1996), pp. 65-67.
2. During the period that I am looking at terms like "battered woman", "wife abuse" and "wife-battery" were used interchangeably and, often intentionally, to underscore the fact that incidents of spousal assault were not isolated, but rather were part of a system of social control that men used to control their wives. Spousal assault emerged when the advocates began to espouse criminalization to end violence against women in the home. Hence, I use these terms in my analysis of the development of the language that women used to understand this phenomenon.
3. This thesis does not attempt to analyse in detail the creation of coalitions among shelters and other violence against women services. I do, however, refer to the emerging movement as a backdrop to local organization. Hence, the use of the term "movement" to describe the coalitions which have formed to organize around spousal assault needs to be unpacked. Traditionally, conceptualizing social movements has conjured up images of mass demonstrations founded on a common ideology and political goals. More recently, social movement theory has attempted to understand the process of forging collective identities from the margins in order to represent voices that have not been heard. Analysis of the women's movement shows that these conceptualizations of social movement do not capture the complex web of relationships between feminist ideologies and identities, to the pragmatic concerns of service provision and political lobbying. The case of the battered women's shelter movement is further complicated by the shelter's simultaneous function as a political organization, a service for women in crisis and workplace. In a case study of St. Louis, Gretchen Arnold argues that simply equating the movement with the shelters is problematic because it does not incorporate initiatives outside of the shelters that also work to raise awareness of spousal assault. See "Dilemmas of Feminist Coalitions: Collective Identity and Strategic Effectiveness in the Battered Women's Movement," in Myra Marx Feree and Patricia Yancey Martin, eds. *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995): 276-290. The analysis put forward by Susan D. Philips to understand social movements is useful for understanding what is commonly referred to as 'the battered women's movement.' In her analysis of the network of national Canadian women's advocacy organizations, she states that current social movements depend on the strength of the social networks that it can build on, and argues that "we cannot presume merely because the notion of a movement has been accepted through popular usage, that these national women's groups are sufficiently interconnected to be considered a 'movement' at all." See, "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements: Mapping the Network of National Canadian Women's Organizations," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*. 24:4 (December 1991), p 759. It should be noted that the strength of the networks between shelters and other feminist services and advocacy groups is subject to the ebb and flow of financial resources. In times of financial crisis, the development of a movement often succumbs to the preservation of the service.
4. For an overview of the literature that was written in the 1970s and early 1980s, see Wini Breines and Linda Gordon, "The New Scholarship on Family Violence," *Signs* 8:3 (1983), 490-531.
5. For examples, see Naomi Black, "The Canadian Women's's Movement: The Second Wave," in Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code, *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993): 151-171; Constance Backhouse and David Flaherty, eds., *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*. (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).
6. See, for example: Jeri Dawn Wine and Janice L. Ristock, *Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada*. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1991).
7. For an overview of the development of political action based on difference, see Ruth Roach Pierson, "The Mainstream Women's Movement and the Politics of Difference," in Ruth Roach Pierson, Marjorie Griffen Cohen, Paula Bourne and Philinda Masters, *Canadian Women's Issues. Volume I: Strong Voices*. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1993), pp. 186-214.
8. For Canadian examples, see Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth Century Canada*. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991); Kathryn Harvey, "To Love, Honour and Obey: Wife-battering in Working-Class Montreal, 1869-79," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* 19 (October 1990), 128-40. There is a great deal of literature documenting nineteenth-century responses to domestic violence in Britain. See, for example Ellen Ross, "'Fierce Questions and Taunts': Married Life in Nineteenth-century London, 1870-

- 1914," *Feminist Studies* 8 (1982), 575-602; Nancy Tomes, "'A Torrent of Abuse': Crimes of Violence Between Working-Class Men and Women in London, 1840-1875" *Journal of Social History* 2:3 (Spring 1978), 328-45.
9. Elizabeth Pleck, "Feminist Responses to 'Crimes against Women,' 1968-1896," *Signs* 8:3 (Spring 1983), 451-470.
10. Linda Gordon, *Heroes of their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence*. (Boston: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 3.
11. For example, see R. Emerson Dobash and Russel P. Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*. (London: Routledge, 1992).
12. See Susan Schechter's account of the American movement, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement*. (Boston: South End Press, 1982).
13. See for example, Alison Prentice, Paula Bourne, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light, Wendy Mitchinson and Naomi Black, *Canadian Women: A History*. (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace and Javonovich, 1988), especially Chapter 16; Ruth Roach Pierson, "The Politics of the Body" and Marjorie Griffen Cohen, "Social Policy and Social Services," both in *Pierson, et al*, pp. 98-122 and 264-284 respectively.
14. This debate is not particular to the literature of the battered women's movement. It is, indeed, among the central controversies in the literature of the women's movement in Canada. In the theory about the women's movement, there has been synthesis which argues that both radical and institutional feminist organization are crucial to the survival of the women's movement. See, for example, Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin and Margaret McPhail, *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada*. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988).
15. For example, see Jane Ursel, "Considering the Impact of the Battered Woman's Shelter Movement on the State: The Example of Manitoba, in Elizabeth Comack and Stephen Brickley, eds., *The Social Basis of Law: Critical Readings in the Sociology of Law. Second Edition*. (Halifax: Garamond Press, 1991), pp. 261-288.
16. This literature has been based on Sue Findlay's analysis of working within the federal bureaucracy. See Sue Findlay, "Facing the State: The Politics of the Women's Movement Reconsidered" in Heather J. Maroney and Meg Luxton, eds., *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggles*. (Toronto: Methuen, 1987), pp. 31-50. For a discussion which is critical of institutional responses to spousal assault, see Jan Barnsley, *Feminist Action, Institutional Reaction: Responses to Wife Assault*. (Vancouver: Vancouver Women's Research Centre, 1985) and N. Zoe Hinton, "One in Ten: The Struggles and Disempowerment of the Battered Women's Movement," *Canadian Journal of Family Law* 7 (1989), 313-335.
17. Gillian Walker, "The Conceptual Politics of Struggle: Wife-Battering, the women's Movement and the State," in M. Patricia Connelly and Pat Armstrong, *Feminism in Action: Studies in Political Economy*. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992), p. 332.
18. She uses the hearings of the Standing Committee on Social Development on Family Violence of June and July of 1982 as an empirical basis for this analysis. See Gillian Walker, *Family Violence and the Women's Movement: The Conceptual Politics of Struggle*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
19. *Ibid.*, 219.
20. For example, see Kersti Yllö and Michele Bograd, eds., *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. (London: Sage Publications, 1988) and Miranda Davies, *Women and Violence: Realities and Responses Worldwide*. (London: Zed Books, 1994).
21. Emma D. Laroque, "Violence in Aboriginal Communities" in Mariana Valverde, Linda McLeod and Kirsten Johnson, eds., *Wife Assault and the Canadian Criminal Justice System*. (Toronto: Centre of Criminology, 1995), pp. 104-122.
22. Dianne L. Martin and Janet Mosher, "Unkept Promises: Experiences of Immigrant Women with Neo-Criminalization of Wife-Abuse," *The Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*. 8:1 (1995), 3-44; Lennie Timmins, ed., *Listening to the Thunder: Advocates Talk about the Battered Women's Movement*. (Vancouver: Women's Research Centre, 1995).
23. Bonny Murray and Cathy Welch, "Attending to Lavender Bruises: A Dialogue on Violence in Lesbian Relationships" in *Timmins*, pp. 109-126.
24. Rita Kohli, "Power or Empowerment: Questions of Agency in the Shelter Movement," Linda Carty, ed., *And Still We Rise: Feminist Political Mobilizing in Contemporary Canada*. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1993), 387-425; Vijay Agnew, Chapter 9 "Immigrant Women and Wife Abuse" of *Resisting Discrimination: Women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women's Movement in Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

- 1996), pp. 197-223.
25. This ideology is put forward to underline the urgency of the need to eliminate violence against women in The Final Report of The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence~Achieving Equality*. (Ottawa: 1993).
26. For further explication of this argument, see Linda Gordon, "Women's Agency, Social Control and the Construction of 'Rights' by Battered Women" in Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis, eds., *Negotiating from the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 122-144.
27. Adamson, et al., p. 7.
28. Joy Parr, *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 9.
29. L. Pauline Rankin, *Experience, Opportunity and the Politics of Place: A Comparative Analysis of Provincial and Territorial Women's Movements in Canada*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation (Ottawa: Carleton University), 1996, p 109.
30. Note that this thesis describes organizing that occurred in southern Ontario.
31. Margaret Fulford, ed., *The Canadian Women's Movement, 1960-1990: A Guide to Archival Resources*. (Toronto: ECW Press, 1992).
32. "Presentation to the Standing Committee on Social Development, Government of Ontario: A Transition House in a Rural Setting," The Staff of Lanark County Interval House, July, 21 1982, *Lanark County Interval House Archives*. privately held records in Carleton Place, Ontario. Hereinafter, *LCIH Archives*.
33. In the first message that Gullen left for me, she mentioned that she was thinking about a public home for these documents.
34. Personal Correspondence from Liz Wescott, OAITH Secretary, Board of Directors, April 7, 1997.
35. Marjorie Griffen Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement," in Pierson, et al, p. 3.
36. Feminist literature concerning oral interviews often argues that women do not understand the historical importance of their narratives, and as such, advise interviewers to be aware of the position of power held by the interview may be intimidating to the woman recounting her story. I did not get this sense from the women with whom I spoke. The women have been public figures in their community and have, in past offered these recollections For a useful guide to conducting oral histories with women, see Sherma Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, *Women's Words: the Feminist Practice of Oral History*. (New York: Routledge, 1991).
37. It should be noted that I ended each interview asking them to discuss the current provincial cutbacks and policies.
38. For a critique of the assumption that the politics of difference destroyed a unified feminist movement, see Laura Chermiak, "Spatial Displacements: transnationalism and the new social movements," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 3:3 (September 1996), p. 266.

Chapter One

Breaking the Silence: The Canadian Women's Movement Responds to the 'Discovery' of Spousal Assault, 1970-1979

Historical research has demonstrated that women have found spaces to resist violence from spouses in spite of societal and legislative dismissal of their experiences. Similarly, it has shown that there have been instances in the past when outrage has initiated public discussions about wife abuse. As I demonstrated in the introduction, much of the literature has also assumed that there is a correlation between women's resistance to violence and women's organization that creates an inevitable space for women to articulate their experiences in a political way. This assumption is especially prevalent in the literature of the second wave of feminism because feminist theories have been explicitly based on the everyday experiences of women.¹ Consequent strategies of women's movements have been designed to collapse the arbitrary division between personal and political lives. Indeed, the very assertion that "the personal is political" has exposed the theoretical division between the private and the public realms as a fallacious construction. Yet the assumption that this slogan is a given of feminist praxis has overlooked the fact that each experience of women's lives that has become political has undergone a process of recognition, definition and organization before it became an issue for the women's movement. Efforts to improve conditions in women's lives through political action have taken place in what Lorraine Code has identified as "unexpected spaces" that open up and allow for affective change "... not in the macro-political sense, but in a micro-political sense."²

The movement to end violence against women grew out of grass-roots feminist

organizing and has been rooted in local initiatives to provide services for women who were victims of male violence. Through consciousness-raising (CR) women identified experiences that were common among them, and transformed them into political issues by encouraging each other to link personal experiences to a larger vision of social change.³ In CR many women disclosed incidents of violence and unwanted sexual attention from family members and acquaintances,⁴ and began to uncover the social and legislative regulation that prevented them from defining violence as an offense to *their* bodies. Most importantly, CR opened up a space where women could escape from society's incredulous attitudes towards women's accounts of violence in their lives, and gave credibility to women's words. By linking personal experiences of violence, by both strangers and by acquaintances, feminists sought to raise women's awareness about the links between public and private patriarchal control, and to reveal that incidents that had been constructed as extraordinary actually happened everyday.⁵ Through this, women sought to develop a language on which to organize to make social changes that would make the places in which they worked, played and lived safe so that women could participate as equal individuals in society.

This chapter outlines the development of the language that grass-roots feminists⁶ used in the 1970s to challenge society's dismissal of the seriousness of violence against women, and the consequent movement to end violence in the lives of women. It begins with a discussion of the emerging analysis of violence against women as a form of patriarchal social control that affected all women which was introduced by feminist protest against rape, and the influence that this had on the depiction of the battered woman in feminist literature. Feminist discussions about battered women began in emergency shelters for women, and the

authors of the most widely read texts in the 1970s based their analysis on their experiences as shelter workers. The general theories about violence against women are presented to contextualize local feminist activism against violence against women in Toronto between 1972 and 1979. The politics of service provision are explained through an examination of two emergency shelters for women established in Toronto in the early 1970s. Toronto Interval House (TIH), founded in 1972, was the first shelter which catered exclusively to battered women and their children. Nellie's, which opened its doors in 1974, maintained services to any women in crisis, and became renowned for its outspoken political stance because of its struggle to stay open after government cutbacks to hostels in 1976. The number of women who came to the shelters, and the brutal experiences that many of them had endured, provided feminist activists with evidence that women fleeing from violent homes needed shelters to make a transition into the community. The difficulty that feminist services encountered securing reliable funding from governments illustrated society's apathy to the plight of abused women to grass-roots activists, and confirmed the need for confrontational political action to end all forms of violence against women. In Toronto, women organized activities on National Action Day Against Violence Against Women in 1977, and the outcome of the protest was the founding of a Toronto branch of Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW).

The Battered Woman, The Battering Patriarch and the Conspiracy of Silence

Spousal assault is an experience which has been continuously redefined by numerous contesting discourses, among them panic about the family and protest about the inferior

status of women. In the 1960s and 1970s, medical and juridical treatment of spousal assault was guided by discussions about family violence which tended to prioritize the protection of the nuclear family as the foundation of society.⁷ Their argumentation presumed that the family was the only institution which had the capacity to act as a haven in which individuals could seek solace from a dangerous world. In the 1970s, feminists began to counter discussions of family violence by arguing that the term itself was misleading since the majority of victims of violence in the home are women. Feminist analysis about violence against women began with the identification of rape, a public form of violence and then moved into the private sphere. Women first fought for bodily integrity and privacy in marriages by indentifying conjugal rape as a form of violence against women. As the brutality that existed in many marriages was exposed, wife-battering became part of increasingly vocal political acts to raise awareness about violence against women. Contrary to professional theories about family violence, feminists sought to develop their analysis of the experiences of abused women from perspective of women who have endured violent relationships.⁸

Feminist discussions about rape followed Susan Brownmiller's influential analysis of rape which boldly stated that actual rape, or the fear of rape "is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men keep all women* in a state of fear."⁹ This description of rape framed gender relations in the context of a war which women were losing because they were excluded from defining their experiences of rape in their own terms. This analysis was more fully developed in Loreenne Clark and Debra Lewis's study of rape based on Toronto statistics, entitled *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality*. They

argued that laws about rape were premised on the assumption that women belonged to men. Similarly, attitudes about rape identified it as the worst thing that could happen to a woman in order to protect male property. Laws were not written to protect women, and when women tried to use them to gain control of their bodies, they faced a legal system that did not recognize this as their right. Consequently, women were afraid to use the law. Instead, most women chose to remain silent in order to protect themselves from being humiliated by police and the courts. Basing their analysis for change on their experiences as workers in the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, Clark and Lewis contended that because rape was a social fact rather than a natural fact, it would not be eliminated unless women fought to include themselves in the discussions about rape. Hence, change could only happen if women shattered the myths about rape by breaking the silence which shrouded women's experiences.¹⁰

Rape was a crime that was associated with the public sphere, but increasing awareness about incest and unwanted sexual attention from acquaintances and spouses inaugurated a feminist challenge to social presumptions about rape. Feminists argued that the construction of public spaces as perilous for women detracted attention away from the dangers that women faced in their homes on a daily basis.¹¹ In feminist discussions, depicting husbands as rapists subverted the assumption that all rapists were pathological monsters and that women were most likely to be raped by strangers in public, and sought to help women understand isolated and private feelings in a different way. Opposed to the notion that marriage guaranteed the right of husbands to demand sex, articles in feminist newspapers legitimated women's perceptions of conjugal rape by emphasizing their feelings

about unwanted sexual attention, and uncovering the social mores which undermined women's control over their bodies. Building on the feminist critique of the construction of rape as a crime against property rather than against women, feminist papers published articles and political comic strips which challenged a husband's natural right to 'his' wife's body.

Consider figures 1, 2 and 3, placed at the end of this chapter, which were reproduced in *Kinesis*. Each political comic locates patriarchal oppression in perhaps the most intimate and private of places: the conjugal bed. This defied the prevailing notion about sanctity of the privacy of sexual relations between spouses best represented in Pierre Trudeau's 1969 declaration that, "The state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation."¹² In figures 1 and 2, printed in feminist newspapers in 1977, the husband demands his presumed right to use the woman's body with the knowledge that his desire was bolstered by the law. The women know that legal sanction of the men's actions defies their right to control their bodies, but because they do not have social or legal licence to support their knowledge, they do not publicly declare the violation. Figure 3, published in 1979, shows a different articulation of women's knowledge about their prerogative to control their bodies. Despite social refutation of this claim, the woman defiantly leaves the bed asserting, "I demand my human rights to say NO!" In these comics, the flexibility of the barriers between the private and the public are exposed as the characters recognize that the incidents of their private lives are buttressed by material and constructed practices and mores. All of the women are cognizant that rape should not be condoned in marriage. Their reactions, however, depict the relationship between personal experience and the imposition of social values. The comics illustrate the

range of personal reactions to conjugal rape, beginning with shame and confusion, which were dictated by society, and ending with an angry assertion of rights which was inspired by feminist praxis.

Feminist analysis of conjugal rape challenged conceived differences between sexual assaults against women that were perpetrated by strangers and intimate partners, and in so doing sought to expose the arbitrary distinctions made between the public and the private as conceptual constructions that prohibited women's liberation. Transforming the experience of violence against women that occurred in the home into a political issue was a challenge to legal and medical discussions about battered women because encouraging women to make connections between personal experiences of violence and the political oppression of women did not comply with the professional focus on the family. Sociological and psychological examinations of wife-battery developed in the context of apprehension about the perceived increase in intra-family violence which resumed when child abuse was named as a sociological and psychological problem in 1965.¹³ The medical profession pathologized family violence and framed its analysis in the context of the crisis of the family. In the social sciences alcohol abuse, disrespectability or individual pathological behaviour were cited as causes for wife-battering and were, in turn, defined as personal problems. Psychological literature was premised on the goal of preserving the family as the fundamental social unit of society rather than the protection of women, and often held women responsible for violent acts perpetrated against them. Many sociologists suggested that women provoked the violence either by what they did, or failed to do. Among the most prolific proponents of the conceptualization of wife abuse as a signal of family dysfunction was Dr. Murray A. Strauss.

When Strauss began writing about family violence in the early 1970s, he proposed that the primary cause of spousal abuse was an abnormal power relationship between family members which often culminated in violence. His work was based on a companionate model of marriage that assumed egalitarian relationships between women and men as the norm in functional, healthy families.¹⁴

Throughout the 1970s, sociologists and psychologists increasingly turned their attention to intra-family violence, but their discussions were not widely disseminated outside of their fields until feminists began to organize to raise public awareness about spousal assault.¹⁵ Despite the paucity of public discussion about wife-battering before its exposure by feminists, public sentiments about violence in families were marked by a class bias which considered it to be a characteristic of low-income families.¹⁶ Debunking this presumption was the goal of much of the feminist literature about wife assault in the 1970s which stressed that class was not a reliable predictor of the potential for violence in families. Among the first widely-read books that challenged the norm of peaceful family life, and which stated that wife abuse was a phenomenon that affected women from all backgrounds, was *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear* written by Erin Pizzey in 1974. Her book first appeared in Britain, and was later picked up by activists in North America and Europe. Pizzey's description of the horrific abuse suffered by the women who came to Chiswick Women's Aid, a women's centre that became a shelter for abused women and their children aroused public outrage. The stories of the women who sought refuge at Women's Aid exposed the lack of concern for battered women in the law, by the police and by society.¹⁷ Pizzey's analysis of wife-battering did not espouse the assertion of the British Women's

Liberation Movement that spousal assault was linked to other forms of violence against women.¹⁸ Nor did the publicity surrounding Pizzey's model for establishing refuges for women in violent marriages predate efforts in North America.¹⁹ She has, nonetheless, come to be known as the founder of the battered women's shelter movement.²⁰

Pizzey's sentiments about the conspiracy of silence were adopted by Del Martin in her book *Battered Wives*. Published in 1977, Martin's study of violence against women in American families outlined the difficulties faced by abused women who approached social services for financial assistance or who sought protection from the judicial system. Martin's book adopted a radical feminist position and her analysis was premised on theories of women's oppression which linked spousal assault to all other forms of violence against women. She argued that, "The isolation of the battered wife is the result of our society's almost tangible contempt for female victims of violence."²¹ Though both books mirrored discussions that were already occurring among women working with battered women in various communities, and in Canadian feminist newspapers, they were important texts because they exposed feminist theories about wife-battering to a wider audience. For activists who had been involved in the process of helping women understand wife abuse as a social rather than personal problem, the books gave a common name to a phenomenon that was just beginning to be tackled collectively as a political issue.

Using the analysis which transferred the focus from the individual circumstances that caused wife-battering to the social restraints placed on women, radical feminists created a universal experience for battered woman which emphasised that the possibility for violence was conceivable in any home. Shelter workers adopted this analysis to underscore

the urgency for the need for hostels for battered women. Because of the number of women who were using shelters, there was a perceived increase in the incidence of wife-battering which initiated a sense of urgency around the issue. Occasionally, the mainstream press printed stories about the precarious financial situation of transition houses. Using brutal experiences of middle class women to underline this was a typical theme in articles. One article printed in the *Globe and Mail* in 1978, analysed wife-battering the following way:

And it feels strange to be 'a battered woman' because she comes from a close family and a middle-class background, and she didn't think that things like this happened to her. . . . Researchers say that the phenomenon -- part of an alarming increase in family violence -- cuts across all class barriers, and that wife beaters include doctors and policemen as well as the less affluent. The only difference is that the more well-to-do don't mark up their wives' faces.²²

Emphasizing that abused women came from all walks of life, and similarly, that abusers could be men who held prominent positions in society challenged the characterization of wife-battery as a phenomenon that existed solely in 'disrespectable homes.' Providing services to battered women was no longer a strategy aimed at women who were presumed to come from less privileged backgrounds. Rather, transition homes became a necessary part of the women's movement because all women were potentially at risk.

Articles in feminist newspapers that addressed violence against women similarly stressed that wife-battering knew no cultural or class boundaries. Rather than emphasizing the class position of the victims, however, feminists blamed patriarchal legal and judicial systems which protected men's rights to control their wives using whichever measures they deemed appropriate. The creation of the male batterer as a patriarchal oppressor, rather than a confused, alcoholic, or 'henpecked husband,' countered cultural images of the battered

woman as a hapless victim or as someone who deserved to be reprimanded through violence. In feminist analysis, the batterer's actions were deliberate, controlled and part of a concerted strategy to maintain his position of authority not only in the home, but also in society.

Figures 4 and 5, two comics which were reproduced in *Kinesis*, illustrated this depiction of the patriarchal batterer. Figure 4, which appeared in the February of 1977 issue shows an unprovoked act of violence against a woman whose cries for help are ignored. His smug declaration, "Got to keep 'em in their place," adds a political dimension to his actions as he justifies them as part of the prerogative of all men to use violence to control the actions of their wives. According to the article that follows, entitled "But Why Doesn't She Leave Him?," assuming that woman could simply leave violent relationships neglected to take into consideration the fact that the only way that she could ensure accommodation and daily necessities was by staying in an abusive home. Governments were implicated for failing to provide an adequate social safety net which would facilitate her transition, and judges were accused of refusing to validate battered women's descriptions of violent marriages to prevent women from accessing the welfare system. The article charged that the welfare state benefited from forcing women to remain in abusive relationships because it was cost-effective. Thus, the article argued that spousal assault transcended personal sexual politics between men and women, and was appraised as a "political crime . . . by those who exploit the many for the profit of the few. As long as social decisions are being made on the basis of what is profitable rather than what is humane, the wife-beater has a whole arsenal behind him."²³ Figure 5, printed in *Kinesis* in August of 1979, portrays the conspiracy of silence by depicting the actions of abusive husbands, uncaring police and dismissive judges as part of

a continuum which sought to keep women oppressed.

Outraged by the stories of abused women, and their experiences with an uncaring legislative system, advocates for battered women demanded that judicial bodies make more strident efforts to assist battered women by prosecuting the perpetrator rather than the victim of the violent acts. Since they refused to use assault laws to prosecute abusive husbands, feminist analysis deemed the police and the criminal justice system to be an integral component in the process of perpetuating violence against women because they failed to adopt practices, such as pressing charges against violent husbands, which many feminists believed would stop the cycle of violence. Police countered feminist criticisms by asserting their role as enforcers of the law, and maintained that because there was no legislation which stated that wife-battering was against the law, they did not have the authority to press charges against abusive husbands. Feminists opposed the argumentation put forward by the police by exposing the criminal justice system as biased against women. For example, in *The Law's Not for Women: A Legal Handbook for Women*, June Callwood and Marvin A. Zucker argued that although police and judges were aware that wife-battering was a crime, they were unlikely to act in the defence of women because they created "their own slide-rules to determine what assault is in domestic situations."²⁴ The law was premised on the assumption that husbands should not beat their wives. Yet in practice, husbands' use of violence to control their wives was considered to be their prerogative.

The redefinition of violence between spouses which adopted feminist theory sought to expose the various layers of regulation that oppressed women in the family and linked them to social practices that prohibited change. Grass-roots activists who worked with

abused women realized that legal reform was insufficient as a strategy to end spousal assault because it did not address the effects that society's sanctioning of violence against women had on women's consciousness, and because women needed social support systems before they could leave oppressive homes. To address the lack of support for women in crisis, women organized locally to help each other build strategies to improve their personal lives, and consequently improve the status of women. Shelters for women in crisis were among the services created by feminist activists to help women liberate themselves. The number of women who sought refuge in shelter demonstrated that spousal assault was a serious issue. Activists argued that the difficulties that feminist run services faced in securing government funding was another illustration of the conspiracy of silence which maintained women's oppression, and convinced women that increased pressure on governments was needed if they were going to preserve feminist alternatives for women in crisis.

"2, 3, Many Nellie's . . ."²⁵: Fighting for Funding for Shelters for Women

The inability of women to access social assistance until they left the matrimonial home, exposed the need for a more effective system of social services which recognized that women were not safe in the home. In the Toronto women's movement in the 1970s, two shelters for women in crisis symbolized the importance of grass-roots feminist services as a necessary facet of the struggle to end spousal assault. The Toronto Interval House (TIH), founded in 1972, limited its services to abused women because they were overwhelmed by the number of women who sought refuge because they had been abused. Nellie's which opened in 1974 was based on the similar principles as TIH, but continued to serve any

women in crisis. Both shelters were troubled by financial problems due to insufficient per diem rates, and the unreliability of government and institutional support. The disinclination of governments to guarantee funding to feminist run hostels revealed to grass-roots activists that diligent political action to attain government funds was necessary. The struggle for funding for emergency shelters for women culminated in the occupation of Nellie's in 1976 when municipal cutbacks to emergency shelters threatened to close it. The realization that no one else would provide services that understood that women who were in crisis needed periods to heal and empower themselves before they could adapt to society on their own highlighted the crucial role that feminist services played in the women's movement.

In the 1970s, the idea that women were in transition was a central theme of women's liberation organizing. There was a sense that at that juncture, women's lives were changing in dramatic and unprecedented ways. Certainly the perception of women in society was altered by notable changing patterns in women's lives, such as women's increased participation in the paid workforce and post-secondary institutions, and growing numbers of women who chose not to marry and who sought divorces. Feminist analysis and CR politicized individual life changes by exposing the connections between women's struggles and the structural impediments particular to women that limited their choices.²⁶ Self-help groups were established based on CR models which followed the premise that women were the experts about women's lives and, subsequently, best suited to helping each other through times of change and crisis. Many argued that supporting women would strengthen individuals and, in turn, the women's movement.²⁷ Though self help and encouragement of independence in women were central goals of CR, feminist activists acknowledged that

women from less advantaged class positions needed more assistance during times of transition. This was the impetus for establishing emergency hostels and temporary transition homes for women in crisis. Most existing hostels provided services exclusively for men, and those which accommodated women reserved fewer beds for them, thus forcing women in need of emergency accommodation to compete for the limited spaces. When they did secure shelter, women found themselves in institutional and lonely settings at times when they most needed support.²⁸

The Toronto Interval House was among the first transition homes established by feminists in Canada. In August of 1972, a group of women “got together . . . to discuss a residential crisis centre for sole support mothers and their children.”²⁹ They secured a large centrally located house for women who had been deserted by their male spouses, or who were unable to maintain their house or apartment and needed a place to go while they found the resources to do so. Organizers also designed programs to help women who were unable leave ‘intolerable marriages’ because of their financial dependence on their husband. Underlying the desire to provide for the physical needs of women was acknowledgement that part of the reason that women were unable to cope during transitional periods was that managing the daily necessities drained women’s energies, thus making it difficult to find the time to adapt to an independent life.

Providing a comfortable and relaxed place for women to sort out their lives was the key characteristic that differentiated the services provided at TIH from traditional social services. Rather than trapping women in a confusing process, shelter workers aimed to make women more confident by showing them how to access the services that were

available to them. The founders asserted that the non-hierarchical and non-judgemental environment created by the staff of the house played a critical role in building women's confidence and ensuring their safety, and upheld that the sense of security created by the workers was only possible because of the collective structure of the organization. Despite complaints from paid staff and volunteers accustomed to working in hierarchically run agencies, the organizers professed unfailing and unquestioned confidence in collective structure. In the Annual Report of 1978, they addressed criticisms of the collective by arguing, "The most important thing for us to state is that our structure works. Secondly, our structure profoundly affects our clients, the public, and the staff."³⁰ Though they realized that collective organizing was risky and difficult because it demanded increased dedication and trust, they maintained that it was crucial because it ensured that Interval House would not take on institutional characteristics that would alienate clients and undermine their self-confidence.

Initially, serving abused women was not the primary concern of TIH. Increasing divorce rates, and the impact that this had on women who were ill-prepared to raise their families independently, were considered to be new phenomena, and the organizers opened the shelter on the premise that the community should take responsibility for alleviating the difficulties that newly-divorced women faced.³¹ Though organizers predicted that some women would use the home as a refuge from abusive husbands, transition house workers were astounded by the number of women who came to the shelter because they were victims of abuse perpetrated by their spouses. When the organizers realized that battered women were the primary users of the services provided at TIH, they narrowed their services

and made the house a place exclusively for women with children who were leaving violent homes.³²

The regulations governing who qualified as a potential resident of the shelter were quite strident because of the number of women who sought out the service, and TIH could make the decision to specialize its services because other hostels existed in Toronto which served women exclusively. Nellie's was one of the alternatives for women who could not be sheltered at TIH, and was also premised on the notion that women needed services that recognized the systemic nature of women's dependence on the family that complicated their access to social services. Both organizations depended on funding from agencies which was inconsistent because changes in governing bodies were often followed by modifications in policies which dictated the allotment of money to local initiatives. The fact that transition houses and emergency crisis centres had long waiting lists made shelter activists realize that they were providing a vital service to the community. Lack of funding led them to the conclusion that their efforts were being exploited by governments who did not give priority to women's issues. Activists at Nellie's were vocal about their criticism of the exploitation of feminist activism by established social service agencies.

The increasing use of Nellie's as a referral and resource centre by government agencies, despite the reluctance to give financial support to feminist run organizations, initiated a discussion about the role of autonomous women-led services in the women's movement, for women and for the state. Some activists wondered whether their work liberated women, or whether it merely reproduced existing power structures through organization that was disengaged from, rather than supported by the state. In a document

entitled "Notes on Nellie's and Alternative Services," Paula Fainstatt, a worker in the shelter analysed this situation through a discussion of the contradictions between her job and her feminist politics. She argued that although Nellie's was a 'band-aid' solution which could not address the structural forces that oppressed women, it was still necessary because it filled a need that other social services were ignoring. The philosophy of women's liberation argued that women's potential had been thwarted by patriarchal institutions which undermined women's independence, and consequently inspired women to take on huge projects to show that women could make a difference without the involvement of men. Ironically, she argued, the effort to liberate women by proving that they were capable, demanded unrewarded dedication that was similar to the commitment that women had always been expected to give to their families. She wrote,

This means, in effect, that whatever freedom we have gained in not centring our lives around men, we end up making up for by undertaking the large time commitment and responsibility that the job entails. And what 'liberation' we had won becomes quickly short-circuited.³³

She concluded that the government was exploiting the impetus of the women's liberation movement for its own interests.

The frustration of workers did not surpass their dedication to maintaining a place for women based on feminist principles. It did, however, make the organizers realize that a strategy that included more concerted political action was necessary in order to keep the shelters open, and to involve more people in the effort to help abused women. It became a symbol of feminist resistance in 1976 when workers and activists occupied the building to prevent its closure due to cutbacks. The YWCA, which owned the building in which Nellie's

was housed, decided to put it up for sale when the Metropolitan Toronto government cutback funding to emergency hostels. To prevent the loss of a much needed service for women in crisis, the staff took political action. The occupation of Nellie's became a rallying point to criticize the lack of support given to women's groups and community organizations which provided services that were crucial starting points for women who were in transition.³⁴ The support garnered by the fight which, in the end, prevented the closure of Nellie's illustrated that women were becoming increasingly angry about the fact that their efforts, which were meant to liberate women, were being used to replace more expensive state-run social services. The forms of protest that were aroused by the cutbacks to funding to emergency hostels in Toronto were related to the size of the feminist community and its diversity in that place. IWD rallies drew attention to the plight of Nellie's as a symbol of the dire situation of transition houses and social services. The political protests against budget cuts to feminist run hostels was bolstered by the emerging vocal demonstrations against violence in women's lives.

"Women! It's time to get good and ANGRY"³⁵: Taking the Issue to the Streets

On November 5, 1977, women across Canada participated in a National Day of Protest against Violence Against Women. The day was initiated by the Women Against Rape (WAR) collective in Nanaimo, British Columbia to protest the inadequate treatment of rape by legal, social and educational institutions. Following the lead of the Nanaimo collective, women in cities across Canada, including Toronto and Ottawa, struck ad hoc WAR collectives to organize local events for the day of protest. The impetus for the action was

staged to expose the links between rape and the “total oppression of women in society,”³⁶ but local demonstrations and activities addressed all forms of violence against women.³⁷ The event was significant because it altered the nature of the discussions about violence against women, and emphasized that all incidents and forms of violence, from the least severe to the most extreme, bolstered patriarchal control of women. Women were encouraged to be unashamedly angry about the impact of violence in their lives, and were urged to discuss their experiences of violence publicly in order to shatter the silence that perpetuated male violence. By exposing male violence against women as a common, rather than extraordinary, phenomenon activists aimed to empower victims of violence by demonstrating the links between their personal experiences and the societal processes that reproduced their isolation and shame. Feminists identified men as their common oppressor to unite women so that they could pool their resources to develop tactics and strategies to end society’s sanctioning of male violence against women.

Anger became a crucial element of women’s growing political awareness as feminists became more aware that acts of violence against women were everyday occurrences. This fuelled radical feminists perceptions of society as profoundly misogynist. Through theory which adopted the language of violence as a tool of oppression, rape by strangers and intimate partners, sexual harassment, the deluge of violent pornographic images of women, both in sexually explicit material and in advertising, mental and physical abuse of women in the homes and incest were defined as experiences that were common to all women. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) was the first Canadian organization that connected the various forms of violence in women’s lives and adopted a

strategy which espoused direct confrontation and public protest as crucial elements of the struggle to end violence against women. The Toronto branch's founding was a result of the National Day to Protest Violence Against Women which culminated in a demonstration outside of a pornographic film that promoted violent acts against women as sexually exciting. The event had a radicalizing effect on a group of women who met and drew up a list of demands which described any action, attitude or assumption that restricted women's choices as an act of violence against women. They *insisted*³⁸ on women's right to control their bodies and declared that their "demands are made and [their] campaign conducted on behalf of all women"³⁹ The angry and commanding language employed by the group in itself defied expectations of women as passive political actors. WAVAW refused to work with men, or with organizations that were affiliated with men, based on the premise that women's experience of violence was different from that of men because men, as a group, profited from the promotion of violence against women. WAVAW described violence against women as a universal experience for women regardless of its severity or the social setting in which it occurred.⁴⁰ In the "Statement of Perspective and Intent," they argued that,

Even if we escape physical violence to our bodies, and that is rare, we can never escape the constant assaults on our psyche which totally dominates the world we live in. The world is deeply misogynistic. Its violence against our deepest selves scars and destroys us. WAVAW intends to fight this violence on all fronts.⁴¹

WAVAW argued that violence against women would only end if men realized that women would not tolerate male control of women's bodies, and that only feminist political action, fuelled by anger, could produce this change.

Public demonstrations around violence against women changed the tone of the

discussion of violence against women. It recognized the trauma endured by women who were mentally or physically assaulted, but refused to victimize women. No place was safe for women, nor would women be safe until they demanded their right to have control over their bodies. Reluctance by governments and institutions to actively work for women's right to be free from threats of violence stimulated an analysis that stated that violence against women reflected society's hatred of women. Hence, women would be subordinate members of society until all forms of violence against women were eliminated. In this new analysis, services for women were not enough. Political action which forced society to recognize ubiquitous misogynist messages that oppressed women everywhere, everyday became a crucial element in the strategy to end violence against women.

Conclusion

This chapter has used activism in Toronto to illustrate various forms of grass-roots organizations and services that emerged in the 1970s to make violence against women a political issue. In Toronto, refuges for women were not founded exclusively to provide a place for battered women, but were established because grass-roots activists believed that many women needed a place to go during periods of transition due to a shortage of affordable housing and because social assistance programs were difficult to access. Emerging literature which linked spousal assault to ideologies and practices that oppressed women transformed a personal and private experience into a collective and public issue, and the lack of funding to feminist run services initiated protests to expose social apathy to the plight of women in crisis. Toronto feminist action to end violence against women became

confrontational and was founded in radical feminist analysis that described all forms of male violence against women as a weapon of patriarchy.

In the following chapters, I examine women's responses to spousal assault in Ottawa and Lanark County. As in Toronto, women in Ottawa used numerous methods to raise awareness about violence against women, and efforts to provide assistance to abused women were carried out by various groups. Feminist strategies to provide services for battered women differed from other services because they sought to make spousal assault a political issue by exposing the myriad of barriers that limited women's choices, and used them as evidence of the dire need of feminist political action aimed at changing social assistance and attitudes about spousal assault. Services created by feminists adopted collective procedures, and replaced traditional methods of counselling with CR to help abused women understand the politics of violence against women. In Lanark County, women involved in developing education programs and a shelter for women in crisis similarly emphasised the barriers created for women because of social approval of men's presumed position of authority in the home, and the inaccessibility of social services to married women. Although public education programs mirrored the analysis of radical feminists, they were not vocal about the feminist underpinnings of their efforts to convince women that there was an alternative to violent homes or in their promotion of the shelter.

Illustrations

Figure 1: *Kinesis*, June 1977.

CAN RAPE EXIST IN MARRIAGE?

Figure 2: *Upstream*, April 1977.

Figure 3: *Kinesis*, June 1979.

Figure 4: *Kinesis*, February 1977.

Figure 5: *Kinesis*, August 1979.

ENDNOTES

1. For the early articulation of the everyday as the basis of political struggle, see Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). In particular, see Chapter 1, "A Peculiar Eclipsing: Women's exclusions from Man's Culture," pp. 17-43. The conceptualization of women's everyday lives as a central, rather than peripheral, subject of analysis radically altered intellectual explorations into culture and society, and inspired feminists working within the academe to establish the links between academic and activist pursuits.
2. Lorraine Code, "Who Cares? The Poverty of Objectivism of a Moral Epistemology" in *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 118.
3. Adamson, et al, 206.
4. For one of the earliest monographs which discusses the importance that CR played in helping women make connections between violence and social control, see Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson, eds., *Rape: The First Source book for Women by New York Radical Feminists*. (New York: Plume Books, 1974).
5. For a discussion of testimonials as contested terrains in which the incredulity of dominant groups in society dismisses personal and collective experiences of less powerful groups by making them extraordinary, thus shrouding the impact that their social positions, mediated by race, ethnicity, class and gender, have on the credibility of oppressed groups, see Lorraine Code, "Incredulity, Experientialism and the Politics of Knowledge," in *Rhetorical Spaces*, pp. 58-82.
6. Though the Royal Commission on the Status of Women identified many of the issues which continue to be central issues in the women's movement, it was relatively silent about the issue of violence against women. The only reference that the report makes to violence against women is a short discussion about the addition of cruelty as a ground for divorce in the Divorce Act of 1968. *The Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women*. (Ottawa: 1970); for its discussion on the role of women in the family, see pp. 225-290. In defence of the document Monique Bégin, who served as the Executive Secretary for the report, argues that in 1968, no discussions which linked individual experiences of violence with the oppression of women existed on which to propose policies and radical strategies for change. See "The Canadian Government and the Commission's Report," in Caroline Andrew and Sandra Rogers, eds., *Canadian Women and the State/Les Femmes et L'état Canadien*. (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997), pp. 12-26.
7. Gillian Walker provides a comprehensive discussion of these competing discourses in *Family Violence and the Women's Movement*. In particular, see Chapters 2, 5 and 6.
8. For analysis of the role of shelters in constructing the experience of battered women by grounding it in the experience of the clients, see Donileen R. Loseke, *The Battered Woman and the Shelters: The Social Construction of Wife Abuse*. (New York: State of New York Press, 1992).
9. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 5.
10. Lorene Clark and Debra Lewis, *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality*. (Toronto: Women's Press, 1977).
11. For analysis of the construction of female sexuality as dangerous and its utilization as a means of social control over women, see Carole S. Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. (London: Pandora Books, 1989).
12. Cited in Angus McLaren and Arlene Tiger McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), p. 9.
13. Breines and Gordon, pp. 507-517.
14. For an example of his work, see, Murray A. Strauss, "A General Systems Approach to a Theory Between Family Members," in *Social Science Information*. 12:3 (June 1973), pp. 105-125.
15. For an overview of academic literature about family violence, see Janice Drakich and Connie Guberman, "Violence in the Family," in Karen Anderson et al, *Family Matters: Sociological and Contemporary Canadian Families*. (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1988), pp. 21-39.
16. The majority of the historical explorations of spousal assault have discussed the experiences of working class families. This has been due to the records available to historians. Many accounts of family violence in the past are documented in the reports of social workers and charity workers who were, in part, responsible for framing family violence as a social problem at the turn of the century. Their analysis exposed many of their class biases which assumed that disrespectability was an inherent feature of poverty. For further explication see Linda

- Gordon, *Heroes of their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1988).
17. Erin Pizzey, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear*. (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).
18. Pizzey identified as a feminist but differentiated her political analysis from that of the Women's Liberation groups which she thought was too radical and alienating. She was vociferously critical of analysis which posited male dominance of women as the reason for spousal assault. Her experience in a violent home where her abused mother, in turn, led her to abuse her children led Pizzey to her own theory that spousal assault was caused by bad parenting. See her autobiography, *Infernal Child: A Memoir*. (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1978) Her refusal to adopt a feminist analysis in Women's Aid led to a rift in the National Women's Aid Federation. See National Women's Aid Federation, *Battered Women: Refuges and Women's Aid*. (London: The Federation, 1977).
19. Pizzey's book was published in Canada in 1978. Reviews of the book in feminist newspapers appreciated the testimonials in the book and the fact that it forced the reader to understand the severity of the abuse and publicized the difficulty that battered women faced when they sought assistance from social service institutions. In Canadian feminist newspapers, some reviewers criticized Pizzey for promoting pathological theories that excused men's responsibility for violence. See Tia Strachan, "Scream Quietly," *Kinesis*, 17:2 (January 1978) p. 12 and Marie-Claude Hecquet, "Crie moins fort: les femmes battues," *Upstream* 3:3 (February 1979), p. 8.
20. American historian Elizabeth Pleck argues that the reason for Pizzey's impact was her marriage to a prominent BBC reporter that gave her uncommon access to the media. Elizabeth Pleck, *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of American Social Policy Against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 188.
21. Del Martin, *Battered Wives*. (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), p. 6.
22. Margaret Mironowicz, "Battered Woman Tells How it Was," *Globe and Mail* December 7, 1978, A1 and 2.
23. "But Why Doesn't She Leave Him?" *Kinesis* 6:3 (February 1977), pp. 1 and 3.
24. June Callwood and Marvin A. Zuker, *The Law's Not for Women: A Legal Handbook*. (Toronto: Pitman Publishing, 1976), p. 29.
25. This is the beginning of a chant for the IWD demonstration in 1978. The complete chant was as follows:
 "2, 3, many Nellie's
 Crisis centre, shelters, homes
 Many services fully funded
 For women battered and abused."
- A copy of the chant sheet can be found in the WAVAW file at the CWMA/ACMF.
26. For a contemporary account of CR and its impact on personal and political development, see Anurandha Bose, "Consciousness Raising," in Margaret Anderson, ed., *Mother was not a Person*. (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1972), pp. 176-179.
27. Rosemary Billings, "Women helping Women," *Upstream* 2:2, November 11, 1976, p. 4. See also, Helen Levine, "The Personal is Political: Feminism and the Helping Professions," in Geraldine Finn and Angela Miles, ed., *Feminism in Canada: From Pressure to Politics*. (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1982), pp. 175-209.
28. For an overview of the alternative living arrangements devised by feminists during this 1970s, see Marjorie Griffen Cohen, "Social Policy and Social Services" in Pierson, et al, especially pp. 275-277.
29. "Letter from Maggie Longdon requesting donations," [1973], Interval House, Toronto File, CWMA/ACMF.
30. "Interval House Annual Report, 1978," Interval House, Toronto File, CWMA/ACMF.
31. "Aims" [1973], Interval House, Toronto File, CWMA/ACMF.
32. Margaret Mironowicz, "Battered woman tells how it was," *The Globe and Mail*, December 7, 1978, p. A1.
33. Paula Fainstatt, "Notes on Nellie's and Alternative Services," undated, Nellie's, Toronto File, CWMA/ACMF.
34. See the posters for rallies in the Nellie's files at the CWMA/ACMF. The plight was much publicized in both feminist and mainstream newspapers. For an example, see Joanne Kates, "A Shoulder to Cry On," *Globe and Mail* December 1977 which is reprinted in Pierson, et al. pp. 295-296.
35. "Women! It's time to get good and ANGRY" WAVAW Pamphlet, undated, Women Against Violence Against Women, Toronto, File 2, CWMA/ACMF.
36. "WAR is declared," Ottawa Women's Centre press release, October 10, 1977, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 2, File 1:24, CWMA/ACMF.

37. For an overview of local events, see "Violence Against Women: A National Day of Protest," *Kinesis* 17:1 (December 1977), pp. 4-5 and 14-15.
38. The emphasis on "insist" is in the original documents.
39. "WAVAW Demands," November 13, 1977, WAVAW Toronto File, *CWMA/ACMF*.
40. The existence of violence in all patriarchal societies became proof of the universal control of men and the urgent need for women to unite. For example, see Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978). Daly's universal assumptions were criticized as being centred on the experience of privileged white women and western presumptions. See Audre Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," in *Sister Outsider*. (Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 66-52.
41. "Women Against Violence Against Women: Statement of Perspective and Intent," 1977, WAVAW, Toronto File, *CWMA/ACMF*.

Chapter 2

“A Place of Safety”: Political Action or Feminist Services? Women’s Organization Against Spousal Assault in Ottawa, 1972-1982

In a meeting held in June of 1981, the collective of Ottawa-Carleton Interval House decided to create a button as a fundraiser that would promote the shelter and raise awareness about spousal assault in their community. They adopted the slogan, “A Place of Safety” and discussed the possibility of producing them in time to sell them on Parliament Hill on Canada Day.¹ The suggestion that the buttons be launched into the community at such a public venue is noteworthy because the idea was proposed during a period when the *raison d’être* of the shelter was again in debate. The discussion about the purpose of the shelter had been reinvigorated at a workshop by collective members who queried, “Is this a political action group of which running an Interval House is an important part, or vice versa?”² Though the question may seem to be merely semantic upon first glance, it capsulized a persistent debate of grass-roots feminist organizing in Ottawa during the 1970s. Feminist services were supposed to serve the dual function of helping women in crisis and making the personal political. Maintaining a balance between these functions proved to be a difficult task, and during the 1970s, some women’s liberation activists argued that creating autonomous services for women diverted too much attention away from the broader goals of the women’s movement.

Feminist organizing in Ottawa in the 1970s was composed of various organizations, information and educational centres and feminist services for women that were organized

through informal networks among women. Similarly, political organization to assist battered women was carried out by a number of organizations and individuals that remained relatively autonomous from each other.³ The idea of establishing a shelter for women in crisis was proposed by many groups of women before it came to fruition in 1976. In this chapter I examine the Ottawa Women's Centre and the Interval House of Ottawa Carleton, two grass-roots feminist organizations in Ottawa that responded differently to wife-battering. The former was resistant to focusing on service provision because it believed that too much emphasis on providing services diverted attention away from building a women's movement; the latter organized to supplement existing municipal services, but the Board incorporated feminist ideology and political action into the creation of the service.

The OWC, which operated between 1972 and 1980, was conceived of as a place to pool the resources of women and to channel them into political action. The centre promoted itself as a place for women who wanted to build the women's liberation movement, but many of the women in crisis approached the OWC. Among those who sought support were women who needed refuge from abusive husbands and assistance securing affordable housing. In response to their requests, the collective established an ad hoc safe-house system from its membership list, and investigated the possibility of opening an interval house. Using the scant resources of the OWC to provide services, however, was a matter of debate within the collective. Not all members of the centre agreed that it could function effectively as both a service provider and a political action organization. Those opposed to service provision believed that political action involved confronting the systemic roots of women's oppression, which in turn required a disengaged politic. After much debate, the OWC

collective decided to concentrate on increasing public awareness about the oppression of women through the development of a feminist political culture. The collective supported services that assisted women in crisis, but expended its energies on projects that they felt would initiate far-reaching social change rather than addressing single issues.

While the OWC was trying to recruit women to create a visible and vocal women's liberation movement, other pockets of women organized independently from the OWC to address single issues through the creation of feminist services. One group of women, all with social service backgrounds, who wanted to focus on providing a place where women leaving violent marriages could go to sort out their lives, founded Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton in 1976. Like the OWC, the organization was grass-roots and community based, but practised a politic that was necessarily engaged with the municipal government and social services. They used their connections with municipal agencies to establish and sustain the shelter, but identified as feminist and based the organization's structure and procedures on feminist practices of collective and non-hierarchical organization. The minutes of the IHOC between 1976 and 1982 illustrate the evolution of the definition of feminism and its practice through the various modifications that were made to the structure of the shelter to ensure its survival. Debates about process were exacerbated by the apprehension over the inability of the organization to decrease the incidence of spousal assault, and the lack of impact that IHOC had on increasing general knowledge about the seriousness of wife-battering. Providing a safe haven for women and their children was considered important, but some argued that it was overshadowing the more important task of ending spousal assault.

IHOC was supported by a feminist community that was vocal, and which participated

in public demonstrations to promote feminism. Overtly confrontational political activities were complemented by women who promoted feminist ideas in municipal government agencies, through their professions, within academe. The size of the feminist community in Ottawa, and the various sites of feminist political activity allowed women to choose organizations which best suited their political ideology, and to pursue strategies which they believed would produce the most effective change for women.

“What to do until the revolution comes . . .” : Women’s Liberation Organizing at the Ottawa Women’s Centre

When women’s liberation organizing began in the 1970s, women identified with it for various reasons, and brought different levels of political experience with them to local feminist groups. In her analysis of the emergence of grass-roots feminist organization, Nancy Adamson points out that the contemporary women’s liberation movement emerged in two stages. The first occurred between 1966 and 1971 when groups of women, who had been active in various political organizations affiliated with the New Left, organized autonomously, largely due to their frustration with male-led organizations, with the express goal of changing the world so that it would be a better place for women. In 1972, women’s liberation organizing re-emerged, this time led by less politically experienced women. Their goal was to transform women’s daily experiences into political issues, and to take action to ameliorate women’s lives so that they could become independent political agents.⁵ The Ottawa Women’s Centre was established during the latter surge of women’s liberation organizing “to help women to liberate themselves by overcoming their isolation and

searching together for solutions as they work together for common goals.”⁶ The Ottawa Women’s Centre Association came together in May of 1972, and defined itself as a group that represented a variety of experiences, needs, ages, politics and lifestyles.⁷ What united the women was their common assumption that women needed an interim period to develop their skills separately from men so that they could improve their collective status in society. A collective model was employed to encourage personal growth and political action because they believed that informal and flexible operating structures were the only method which would level power differentials among women. Moreover, maintaining the centre as a retreat from men was crucial to women’s personal and political development because in the presence of men women would resort to the socialized habit of deferring to male authority. Men would threaten the safe space of the centre because, as it was articulated in the OWC’s policy on men,

Many many women come to this centre in a state of distress brought on by men or by society’s male orientation. The absence of men helps these women to cope with their situations by expressing themselves freely in an atmosphere of supportive friendly women.⁸

The OWC adopted the principles of CR and acknowledged that fostering personal development was a prerequisite for autonomous women’s liberation organization, but a distinction was made between supporting women and caring for them. Their conceptualization of sisterhood demanded empathy and understanding about the plight of women, and as part of a sisterhood of women, members were expected to help each other recognize that personal dilemmas existed within the context of the systemic oppression of women. Coping with daily struggles, however, was not to overshadow the political aspect

of sisterhood which called for women to unite to fight their common oppressor, patriarchy.⁹ Initially, the OWC considered establishing permanent services and programs, among them a hostel for women, as part of its mandate to encourage women's liberation.¹⁰ At the time, the only affordable spaces available to any women in need of a place to stay were at the YWCA,¹¹ whose services were deemed inappropriate for women in crisis because they did not offer the support that women in transition needed.

To address the lack of affordable housing and emergency accommodation for women, the OWC discussed the possibility of creating a feminist alternative to the institutional setting of existing hostels, and received support for this idea from women in the community. In December of 1972, the OWC received a letter from a woman who, during the previous year, had sheltered four women and their children fleeing from their homes. She encouraged the OWC to pursue the idea of a hostel arguing that there was an urgent need for this type of service in the area because the women whom she had sheltered were confused due to the abuse that they had endured, and were unable to cope with the social service system on her own. Each of the women, "ended up taking the path of least resistance – which was to return, with the children, to the untenable home situation they had previously felt forced to leave; there to become more physically and emotionally unable to cope when the next crisis arose."¹² Though the collective acknowledged the need for a shelter, they decided that they could not "take on the women's hostel as a group" because at that juncture there were not enough volunteers to carry out their current projects.¹³

Despite the concern about the lack of resources, the collective proceeded to consider establishing a hostel for women because of the number of women who came to the centre

requesting accommodation. As an interim measure, the OWC compiled a “crashing list” from members who indicated that they were willing to provide short-term shelter for women who were in crisis. This system created problems though, because there was not a clear policy about what was expected of those who opened up their homes to women in crisis; nor was there an efficient procedure which would ensure that the women who came to the OWC looking for accommodation understood that there were restrictions to their stay. From the few references to the “crashing system” left in the minutes of the OWC, it is safe to assume that battered women were among those who were accommodated from the other activities carried out by OWC.¹⁴ In an interview with Mike Cassidy, a local M.P.P., in April of 1973, representatives from the OWC indicated that most of the women who came to the centre seeking assistance wanted information about housing and welfare, and pointed out that many of these women were abused and had nowhere to turn.¹⁵ During a meeting in the same month, the collective decided that they needed to work out a policy on crashing since members who opened up their homes were complaining that they felt obliged to “hustle for crashers affairs.” The collective decided to give women in crisis and their children a rest period of three days before they “had a think-tank session with the person to see what their alternatives are and to apply some push for them to work things out for themselves.”¹⁶

It was clear to the collective that Ottawa-Carleton required a more reliable system of sheltering women in crisis. In 1973, the OWC applied for a LIP grant to investigate two feasibility studies, one for an emergency hostel for women and the other for a referral program for women in Ottawa. In following years, the OWC did improve their referral program, but did not follow up on the shelter. The needs study for an interval house,

conducted by Stephanie Holbik, proposed a far-reaching program which would provide services for women who needed accommodation because of financial or safety problems ensuing from a marital breakdown and unmarried mothers who needed assistance integrating into the community. Her research was based on correspondence with hostels for women in other communities and social services in Ottawa-Carleton. Local service agencies were unable to provide her with statistics to demonstrate the need for a hostel, but their enthusiasm for the idea of a home for women in transition led her to the conclusion that this type of service was needed in Ottawa.¹⁷ In her report, Holbik indicated that other organizations had investigated the possibility of opening an emergency hostel for women. Knowing that other women in the city were thinking about founding a shelter for women most likely contributed to the collective's decision to focus its resources on information and referral services.

Establishing a comprehensive referral service also corresponded more readily with the centre's directive to co-ordinate feminist organizing, the definition of political action adopted by many of the women who were active in the OWC and the role that the collective was trying to establish for itself in the community. At the time that the OWC was investigating the need for an interval house, the collective was in the midst of a debate about the political import of feminist run services. Therapy and services based on feminist principles were new ideas, and the challenge that they posed had yet to be established within feminist theory.¹⁸ Certain members of the OWC considered service provision to be an extension of women's traditional public participation which was based on care giving, and this was not the role that they had envisioned for the OWC. Requests for services frustrated

staff who, for the most part, were not willing to take on counselling because they wanted to create a woman's organization that was distinct from those which had preceded it.¹⁹

The debates about feminist services revolved around three central issues: recruitment, the perception of feminist organization in the community and the most effective way to utilize the limited resources of the OWC. Members of the centre who defended services argued that they were a necessary aspect of women's liberation because they addressed needs that were particular to women which were ignored by traditional agencies, and because they were an effective outreach method since women, who might not otherwise be interested in women's liberation, would be exposed to "new ways of thinking about traditional male/female roles."²⁰ On the other hand, those who did not think that service provision should be part of the mandate of the OWC maintained that, in addition to draining the limited finances and energies of the women who worked in the centre, providing services undermined its political countenance. In a staff report written in 1973, one woman argued that the Women's Centre was supposed to be more than just another social service centre, and that women who sought out its services needed to contribute to it as well.²¹ In order to ensure that the the long-term objective of the OWC, which was to build a women's movement, was not eclipsed the collective adopted a policy that stated that it was important to recognize that the centre could not meet every woman's needs. In June 1974, the policy committee developed a statement which argued that women who came to the centre needed to be ready to work, and those who were unable to do so were not ready to be part of the women's liberation movement. Defending their decision to send women who requested too much support to other services, the collective asserted "Who told us that sisterhood was for

all women?”²²

Concern about the dwindling resources of the OWC were at the root of most discussions about services. In 1975, the decision about what services would be provided by the centre was sent to the finance committee. Attempting to compromise between the two sides, they prepared a statement that underlined the limited resources of the women's liberation movement and the danger of adapting to institutional norms to secure funding. The committee addressed the importance of alternative services for women and the role that feminist services played in politicizing women. The final recommendation, however, cautioned that services must supplement more radical goals, arguing, “If an organization devoted to radical societal change . . . becomes over-involved in provision of services, then all energy is sucked into a ‘band-aid’ operation.”²³

Feminist services were part of the strategy envisioned in the original directive of the Ottawa Women's Centre Association, but developing services for women came to be considered secondary to feminist political action in the OWC. Though it soon became clear to the collective of the centre that assistance in securing housing and accessing the social services available for women in transition were among the priorities of women who came to the centre, it was also evident that the centre had neither adequate support nor resources to take on a project of this magnitude. The OWC supported the founding of IHOC, and would later become involved in organizing political demonstrations against violence against women. It saw its role in the women's liberation movement as one that looked beyond the need for services for women, and worked towards a society in which women would not need to rely on social services.

The OWC was a visible element of the local women's liberation movement because it was a physical place for women to meet and organize for change, but it was only one aspect of feminist organizing in Ottawa during the 1970s. The reluctance to provide services was based in the strategy for change adopted by the OWC which did not give precedence to feminist service provision, a decision that was possible because there were other pockets of feminists organizing in Ottawa that were willing to take on this responsibility. The debates about the role of service provision in the OWC are notable because similar discussions ensued in the definition of the services provided by IHOC. Though founded specifically to provide services for abused women, deliberations about the effectiveness of service provision as a strategy for change occurred frequently during the founding years of the shelter. The decisions that were made about the level of confrontation which the shelter would adopt were based on what the organizers deemed necessary to ensure that the shelter would stay open. Underlying the concern about keeping the shelter open was the desire to provide a feminist model to the residents of the shelter as a method of empowering them. Maintaining the shelter as a feminist and political organization, however required accommodation of various ideologies and procedures though, since the survival of the shelter depended on the support of the community, and therefore obligated the organizers to bear in mind their accountability to the community as well as to the women's movement.

“Struggles to change an idea into reality”²⁴: Founding Interval House Ottawa-Carleton

Opening a shelter in Ottawa occurred after two years of discussion, planning and organizing to secure adequate funding and to find suitable quarters for women in crisis. During the planning stages, organizers had to prove that there was a need for an alternative service specifically for women who were trapped in violent relationships to municipal social service agencies in order to secure funding from the city. The board also sought financial support from the community, and through fundraising hoped to change public opinions about spousal assault which assumed that it was a personal problem that did not merit public attention. From the outset, interval house was defined as a feminist organization, but the women that came together to organize the shelter did not share the same conception of feminism, or what relationship the practices of the board should have to these principles.

In the early 1970s, Stuart Godfrey, the commissioner of social welfare, had received a number of proposals requesting funding for an emergency shelter for women and their children. Godfrey suggested that the organizations coordinate their efforts, and in 1975 a group of nuns from who were concerned about the lack of adequate shelter for abused women, and the women who eventually founded IHOC, “sat down and decided [they] were going to do something about it.”²⁵ The women who met with the nuns worked in family counselling agencies and services and had grown frustrated with the unsatisfied needs of women in desperate situations. They organized because they realized it was not a project that the municipality would initiate.²⁶ Joan Gullen, a founder of the interval house, was one of these women. At the time the only social assistance offered to women was money to pay for a hotel room, a measure which did not meet women’s requirements because it did not

provide the emotional support and practical advice that abused women needed to integrate into the community. Gullen, who worked for the Family Service Centre at the time, remembered the incident which made the necessity of a shelter for women in crisis clear for her:

A woman . . . needed to get out of a violent situation. And what we did was get some volunteers and a van and when he was at work, we went and cleared her out, and moved her . . . And, interestingly enough, years later . . . I happened to phone one of the agencies and the woman who was at the reception on the telephone, she said, "I don't know if you remember me." . . . I had to tell her, that it was a very important turning point for her, for sure, to get out of an abusive situation that was grinding her down. And I told her for me it was a very defining moment about the need for some other kind of shelter.²⁷

Initially, the women intended to open one emergency shelter in the community, but when they began to discuss the philosophical framework for the organization, they discovered that they had different visions for the house. The nuns expected the shelter to have a religious component and wanted the home to include a chapel, while the women who came from the community services envisioned a secular organization which would base its operation and counselling on the ideologies and practices of the women's movement. Acknowledging that their goals for the shelter were incompatible, the groups decided to open two shelters. According to Gullen "there was no animosity" between the two groups, and they continued to collaborate with each other in their meetings with the Regional Social Services Committee about "the mundane" issues of funding and acquiring information about municipal standards for running a hostel.²⁸

In February of 1976, Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton incorporated; the objectives outlined in the incorporation papers were threefold. The primary function of the organization

was to provide “temporary shelter and supportive environment for women who are the sole source of support for their children in times of personal crisis.” This service would be supplemented by providing information and assistance to women, and other activities that were deemed necessary to ensure that the women’s needs were met.²⁹ The objectives defined by the incorporation papers were vague, and did not specify that IHOC would provide shelter and counselling services particularly for abused women,³⁰ but the organizers knew from the outset that the majority of the residents would be fleeing from violent homes. When asked if they were surprised by the number of battered women who needed a place to go, Gullen definitively replied, “No. Because many of us had worked on the front line and knew they were out there.”³¹ Women who had counselled abused women through their work in the municipal social service agencies were aware of the complexities involved in leaving a violent home, but this was not necessarily the case for all of the women involved with the shelter. Carolyn Sinclair, a feminist activist who worked in daycare centres doing relief work prior to taking a position at Interval House in 1976, admitted that before working at the shelter, she knew very little about spousal assault. She remembered, “I knew it was a form of violence against women . . . but I really didn’t know anything about issues of wife assault.” Sinclair identified as a feminist before she accepted a position at the shelter, but credited her work at the shelter with providing a foundation for her her feminist ideology. She remembered that,

It wasn’t just some kind of ideology that was out there. It gave me an opportunity to look at real women’s lives, and real situations, putting some of what I believed into practice. And having some of what I believed reinforced by others that had similar ideas, or reinforced by other people’s experiences because seeing their lives reinforced those ideas. . . . I think it gave me a lot of opportunity to grow in terms

of the inter-relations between a lot of issues like poverty, like lack of resources, like various forms of discrimination against women.³²

Setting up an emergency hostel presented more administrative and funding hurdles than the organizers had expected. They planned to purchase a house at the outset, but were not able to do so because financing from the CMHC program³³ was stalled due to a delay in obtaining charitable status for the corporation. Rather than delaying the opening of the shelter, they decided to pursue a less desirable route and rented a house. Gullen remembered finding the original space for the shelter on Elm Street:

It was a row house, not in very good condition. . . . We were all volunteers. And I remember the day – weekend – we went in to clean the place up. It was in dreadful condition. There were dirty tampons around; it was just a mess from the people who had moved out! We cleaned the windows and scrubbed the floors . . . It wasn't the best of places. We got second hand stoves and refrigerators, sofas, beds and all the furniture. It was a time of great enthusiasm because it was at the beginning of something new.³⁴

The enthusiasm of the volunteers was rooted in the political import of the work that they were doing. Not only were they dealing with a weakness in the community's social services, but they were also working together as women to rectify a problem which had too long been overlooked. Recalling the significance of their organization, Gullen stated, "Our vision then was that the way in which it operated was a model to women who used the place about how women can work together."³⁵

Demonstrating the effectiveness of feminist organizing was an important element of the service proposed because it differentiated IHOC from existing social services. Proving that women could work together effectively was also necessary for fundraising purposes since the board needed to establish that they were a reliable organization. Securing support,

and enthusiasm from the community was a priority for the board because they realized that they would rely on donations to sustain the shelter, and convincing people to contribute to the shelter obliged the organizers to guarantee that their organization was a worthwhile investment. For example, one anonymous donor who was prepared to contribute \$5000 to interval house, would not do so without a guarantee from both the province and the municipality that they approved of the project, and would provide continuing financial support to it.³⁶ Substantial financial contributions to the shelter, in turn, prompted donors to have a vested interest in the success of the shelter. Gullen recalled, “I was very aware that to raise funds was not just to raise funds but that’s how you got your public support – from people who put their money on the line.”³⁷

Hence, donations and fundraising projects were important for financial reasons, and also served a public relations function for the shelter.³⁸ Bringing together members of the community to convince them to contribute to the shelter entailed a public education element since organizers had to convince potential donors to understand that spousal assault was more than “just communication gone bad, but part of a systemic problem” linked to “all of the other kinds of oppressions that worked against women.” Despite the explicit political orientation of the women as feminist, some members of the board wondered whether the “f-word” should be used to describe the political orientation of Interval House, fearing that it would dissuade potential donors.³⁹ In a meeting held in June 1976, the board discussed potential responses to the question, “Are we a feminist group?” The debate centred around whether the organization would present itself as a group that would focus on “women in intolerable situations – those overt and subtle social and economic forces that . . . prevent

[women] from being the people they can and want to be;” others believed that the purpose of the shelter should be to help “women, with a recognition that women in our society have historically been oppressed . . . and are now desperately in need of special support systems to help them reshape their lives.”⁴⁰ On the surface, the debate centred around whether the shelter would present itself as a liberal organization which would remove barriers that prevented women from changing their own lives, or whether it would espouse a political framework which envisioned more fundamental social change. What is recorded in the minutes, however, only offers a glimpse into the complexity of the discussions that occurred during the foundation of IHOC. Sinclair mused that on a more personal note, the long debates about feminism and its practice were important because

. . . although some of it might sound funny . . . I think that they were really important discussions to have in the lives of a lot of the women that were involved in that movement, and that they took a lot of what they had learned in those discussion into whatever they did next.⁴¹

Interval House promoted itself as a feminist group, but the meaning of feminism and how to base a service on feminist principles was continually negotiated among the members of the collective. Gullen recalled that she realized at an early stage that the feminist ideologies represented on the board and in the community “was quite a range and [that] it was very important for us to tolerate them and appreciate those differences if we were going to be open to women.”⁴² The range of conceptualizations about how to operate on feminist principles became obvious after the house opened, and the board, staff, and collective learned that feminist service provision relied on mediation between formulating a structure which would ensure that the house functioned efficiently, and maintaining enough flexibility

in the day-to-day activities of the house to reflect the non-hierarchical feminist politic that the organization espoused.

“It worked for awhile. . .”⁴³: Modifying The Collective

Initially, the collective at Interval House operated quite fluidly because the group had decided that they would manage the shelter “strictly as a collective, with no imposition of hierarchy or authority.”⁴⁴ When the shelter opened, the organizers believed that setting up a feminist service would occur unproblematically since the women working in the organization identified as feminist. Sinclair recalled that “one of the things that happened with collectives, and maybe with feminist organizations too, is you can come in with a lot of idealism. Women are wonderful, any organization with women is going to be wonderful, and that wasn’t necessarily the reality.”⁴⁵ IHOC followed the ideology promoted within grass-roots feminism that political organizing could not be liberating unless it challenged the hierarchial power structures that contributed to women’s oppression.⁴⁶ Consequently, the process through which the service was provided was as important as the service itself. Applying the collective model to counselling services altered the relationship between the client and the service provider and demanded the elimination of power dynamics from this relationship, or more succinctly put, empowerment of the client. Collective organization of service provision was supposed to empower the women who used the services, and those who provided them by eliminating power differentials among women, but the elimination of a formalized chain of command in the workplace and the organization did not preclude hierarchies from developing among workers, volunteers and residents.⁴⁷ The expense of

providing a twenty-four hour service, and the requirements of women in crisis forced the board to revisit its founding principles to ensure that it was providing a service that operated according to the needs of abused women. As the costs of running a shelter became more obvious to the organizers, the Board realized that the collective model needed more structure not only to prevent the shelter from closing due to a shortage of funds, but also so that it would be accountable to its funders and the donors, and regarded as a credible service provider.

The Board was composed of twenty-two members, all of whom were women, with six of the seats reserved for staff members⁴⁸ of Interval House. Staff were given a place on the board so that they could take part in the development of policies that would oversee their workplace. Having staff on the board was an outcome of the collective model's ambition to eliminate power hierarchies, but also showed deference to the expertise of the front-line workers. In 1976, there were still few guidelines available to organizations providing shelter for women in crisis, and few feminists who claimed authoritative knowledge about the needs of battered women. Shelter workers were in direct contact with the residents, and because they dealt with the daily business of the shelter, their input was deemed invaluable to the management of the organization. Analogously, residents were encouraged to participate in some of the administration of the organization and had equal input into the house collective outside of the financial management of the house.⁴⁹

Aside from adhering to contemporary feminist practice, the premise for adopting a collective structure for the shelter was based on the assumption that the example of women working together confidently and in a co-operative manner would influence the residents of

the shelter, thus improving their self-esteem. At the outset, there was no clear division of labour because IHOC followed the feminist practice that “workers could turn their hands to any kind of task,” and that in so doing they would gain new skills which would ultimately strengthen the collective. Reflecting on the potential that the organizers saw in the non-hierarchical organization of the house, Gullen stated,

The idea was somehow that as long as you set up the environment women would respond. It was a bit naive because they came from their own history and their own background. [The idea was] that if you were to set up the model of how you worked – that they would pick it up. Well it doesn’t work that way at all. I wouldn’t throw it all out, not by a long shot, but you have to be a little bit more sophisticated.⁵⁰

An early incident which underlined the necessity of devising a more efficient manner of running the house was a complaint to the board from a social worker who left the shelter in disgust with a prospective resident. Before leaving, they commented that it was “better to return to an abusive husband than stay here” due to the disorganization and the state of the housekeeping of the shelter.⁵¹ For the collective, this incident revealed that creating and maintaining a comfortable atmosphere in the house required modification of the collective which established a clear division of responsibilities between the board, staff and residents. More importantly, the collective realized that an abstract model of empowerment was insufficient. Instead women required tangible advice and guidance to help them make a transition into the community.⁵² Providing leadership for women in crisis was incorporated into the collective model because, as they put it in their policy, “though the decision to leave a destructive situation is a healthy one, it is often accompanied by confusion, feelings of guilt and failure and enormous uncertainty.”⁵³ Without some stability and structure in the daily operations of the house, they would not be able to provide an atmosphere that would

foster individual growth.

Determining how to operate as a collective was further complicated by conflicts between the staff who were paid, and the volunteer members of the Board. For the staff, the survival of the shelter was important not only to ensure that there was an alternative for women and their children in crisis, but also because they themselves depended on it for their livelihood. The organization's finances were unstable because it depended on donations from the community and fluctuating per diem rates from the municipality. Shortage of funds generated problems in the development of the budget for the organization because they had no reliable manner of predicting how much money would be in the coffers from month to month. To qualify as a hostel so that the organization would be entitled to funding from provincial and municipal governments, the house had to meet standards which obliged organization to make costly repairs and renovations that drained its limited budget. Funds allotted to pay staff were often needed to upgrade the house. For the staff, the instability of the organization was intolerable because they felt that they were carrying an unfair responsibility for the survival of the shelter. They demanded that the Board reorganize so that it could function as an accountable employer which was responsible for ensuring decent conditions of work, salaries, OHIP and regulating the workload of the staff.⁵⁴

Although the root cause of disputes between the staff and the board was the lack of funds, underlying this debate were more fundamental questions about the goals of Interval House, and how to carry them out. In her recollection of the tensions that arose between the board and the staff over financial matters, Sinclair remembered that other issues were played out through these discussions that pertained to the different goals and backgrounds between

some members of the board and the workers. Assessing a discussion about staffing the house with volunteers to alleviate financial problems in 1977, Sinclair stated that

it may have been that some of the other people on the board were social workers . . . and the staff did not have social work training at the time, so it was kind of more of a grass-roots group. . . . It may have been a board too that had a lot of expectations about how things would happen in the house; I think that we probably all went into it with that. But when we came up against the reality of doing the work of doing the shelter, of making sure that the chores would get done, that the children would get put to bed, the very basic day-to-day reality, . . . maybe there was some disappointment on the part of the board thinking the staff weren't moving up to or carrying out some of their expectations . . . of what the house would be accomplishing. And staff feeling that the board wasn't aware of the kind of practical reality of running a house.⁵⁵

Discussions at Board meetings questioned whether IHOC was sustaining its original objective to create a feminist form of counselling which empowered women, or whether it was simply fostering women's dependence on service agencies. Offering safety and security for women in crisis became the focus of the shelter, and for some members of the board, the emphasis on service provision was taking too many resources away from the political role of the shelter which was to raise awareness about spousal assault in order to end it. For others, providing a space where women could come when they were in crisis did fulfil this obligation, since women's experiences would be validated by the existence of the shelter.

"Does this mean that cries to be rescued are also a sign of strength rather than dependency?"⁵⁶: Maintaining an Alternative Vision

Political action occurred primarily in the form of consciousness raising so that women would know that there was an alternative to staying in violent homes, and increasing public awareness about the number of women who sought refuge from abusive spouses to

demonstrate that spousal assault was a social problem. Interval House regarded its service to be political in and of itself because it did not use professional counselling techniques which alienated women from each other. Sinclair remembered that “a lot of the women who came to the shelter in some ways weren’t looking for counselling per se, but the validation, for somebody to talk to, for someone to run ideas by, [and] to get information about referrals.”⁵⁷ Offering women who had similar experiences a space to come together to talk, and in so doing remove the stigma attached to spousal assault was part of making change.

Organizers realized that establishing an alternative service, and raising awareness among the women who used it was only a partial solution, but in public relations they maintained that it played a rudimentary function in ending spousal assault because of the networks that it established. A thank you letter sent to donors in 1977, described the importance of this function,

We do not pretend the Interval House can solve women’s problems. To a limited extent, the resources of the house can ameliorate their immediate condition. In the long run it can provide the opportunity to meet other women and to organize so that they can work toward broad-based solutions to their situations.⁵⁸

The collective established a follow-up program to start organised networks among women outside of the shelter so that former residents could continue to help each other overcome financial and personal hurdles after they left Interval House. Some members of the collective were not sure that this was an effective measure because they believed that former residents were using the follow-up program to be rescued rather than as a way to develop their own self-sufficiency. Concern about the long-term impact of the shelter on women’s lives prompted discussions about the possibility of conflicting perceptions about the role of

Interval House between collective members and residents. In a meeting held in June 1977, the policies and programs of the shelter were discussed in detail to determine whether “Interval House plays a band-aid role as a social service rather than the role of self-help alternate service.”⁵⁹ The collective was resistant to being perceived as merely a rescue service for distressed women, but was simultaneously reluctant to abolish the program because their service was premised on the philosophy that asking for help was a sign of strength. Some women were unable to cope with the transition into the community, and consequently the Board questioned whether providing short-term accommodations for women was enough. Those who were unsure about the impact that providing shelter for women had on ending spousal assault argued that IHOC was not adequately confronting the social system which allowed wife-battering to happen.⁶⁰

Although the collective of IHOC wondered about their political role in ending spousal assault, the shelter was regarded as a symbol of women’s struggle to end violence in the lives of women within Ottawa’s feminist community. The efforts of Interval House were connected to those of the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre, and were offered as evidence to the community that only women would accept the responsibility of ending violence against women. Political demonstrations against violence against women were staged by ad hoc groups in response to particular events in the city which represented society’s control over women’s bodies. Ottawa women first demonstrated to stop rape,⁶¹ and participated in the National Day of Action Against Violence Against Women. In 1977, the Political Action Group of the OWC struck a WAR committee based on the model of the Nanaimo collective and organized events in Ottawa coinciding with activities in other cities. Initiating a women

against rape strategy was the primary reason for the event, but the activities of the week included raising awareness about all forms of violence against women.⁶² Interval House and the Rape Crisis Centre set up information booths to distribute information about rape, assault, wife-beating and incest, and the services that they offered to women who needed assistance. According to the account in *Upstream*, Ottawa's feminist newspaper, about one hundred women and men demonstrated and participated in a rally held at the University of Ottawa. The topics addressed at the rally, which included portrayals of violence against women in the media, wife-beating, and rape by strangers and in marriage, demonstrated the various fronts where women were attempting to end violence against women. Speakers talked about the connections between various forms of violence against women and argued that its acceptance, which was founded on the historical subjection of women, was engrained in all aspects of contemporary society.⁶³

In addition to public protest, several articles in *Upstream* discussed the role that violence against women played in perpetuating women's oppression. The articles sought to mobilize protest against society's dismissal of the seriousness of violence against women, encourage women to be vigilant in protecting themselves from attacks, and inform women about restrictions and changes in legislation that affected women's ability to protect themselves. Regular columns appeared to warn women about rapists in the community and to inform them about changes in legislation which improved women's ability to protect themselves from violent men.⁶⁴ In "Law for Women" columns Shirley Greenberg, a feminist lawyer who sat on the Board of Interval House in its early years, wrote about the connections between legislative dismissal of women's right to defend themselves as individuals.

Greenberg often focused on the connections between women's inferior status in the family and advised women that because "marriage is a very high risk for women who make it a priority," they needed to be aware of their rights, and maintain as much independence as they could in marriage.⁶⁵ According to Greenberg's analysis, the priority given to protecting the family instead of women was based in centuries of legal presumption that women were the property of their husbands. Though amendments to Ontario laws in 1975 allowed women to sue spouses for damages, legislative change was not deemed to be sufficient because centuries of conditioning had taught women to believe that they should not seek redress. Legal reform would not restore women's self-confidence, hence Greenberg argued that support alternatives such as Interval House were needed as well.⁶⁶

By July of 1978 Interval House had housed 420 women and their children with minimal funding from governments. Decrying lack of government support for an organization which had demonstrated that its services were necessary for women, a member of the board of directors stated, "Absolutely no priority, no consideration is given to women. We're the last item on any government pole."⁶⁷ Confronting an entire social system which, in the opinion of the organizers, condoned spousal assault was a daunting task. As the work of running the shelter increased, those involved in the shelter became more immersed in the work of the shelter and became less involved with other grass-roots organizing that confronted larger questions about women's oppression. In a 1981 board meeting, the collective wondered "Where did we lose our energy?"⁶⁸ Reflecting about how shelter workers became dissociated from other grass-roots feminist organizing against violence against women, Sinclair surmised that

Initially the workers at the shelter would be the same women that you would see at the marches or the fundraisers, . . . grass-roots women's events. What did happen was that because the shelter isn't a sort of drop-in place, it became somewhat isolated and that women who were working in the shelter became so busy with working in the shelter and the practical day-to-day reality that the two started to maybe not drift apart in terms of ideology, just in terms of how often they crossed paths.⁶⁹

Gullen's analysis of the debates surrounding striking a balance between political action and service provision also emphasised the importance of the daily activities of the shelter which contributed to changing attitudes about spousal assault. "I sat on the police committee which was a form of confrontation. . . . we weren't running out shouting at the police, but we were relentlessly confronting them with the fact that they were not responding in the way they were meant to respond . . . There are different ways to confront."⁷⁰

Conclusion

During the 1970s, it was clear to feminist activists in Ottawa that abused women needed a safe place where they could go to escape from violent marriages, and which would serve as a permanent reminder to women that there was alternative to living in untenable marriages. Feminists in Ottawa were active on many fronts and adopted various strategies and ideologies to combat violence against women in the home. Hence, women involved in the movement to end violence against women could choose to be active in the organization that best suited their political aspirations. What was common among the various groups that organized was their promotion of their organizations as feminist groups. Before the shelter came into fruition in 1976, the question was who would provide that service.

In this chapter, I presented two of the organizations that devised strategies to assist

abused women, and that were involved in raising public awareness about spousal assault. Women came to the Ottawa Women's Centre hoping to find refuge from abusive husbands. Because the collective believed that facilitating personal liberation was a building block of the women's liberation movement, they set up ad hoc measures to assist women in crisis, but did not give priority to creating services for women based on feminist principles. They sought to develop a feminist politics that resisted what they considered to be women's traditional role as care givers, and which organized strategies and actions that looked beyond women's immediate needs to a world in which services for women in crisis would not be necessary.

The women who founded the Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton adopted a different feminist ideology and practice. The organizers worked in traditional agencies and brought their feminist ideology with them to their work place. Rather than organizing in a manner which shunned involvement with institutions, they used their connections with municipal agencies to access funding and support for their service. The collective of IHOC was explicit about the role that feminist ideology played in the procedures and programs of the shelter, and argued that IHOC provided a more effective service for abused women because it used methods which taught them to understand the systemic barriers faced by all women. None the less numerous ideologies were represented within the collective of the shelter and debates about the political efficacy of the shelter ensued due to a range of conceptions about which form of political action would bring about the most change. The daily operations of the shelter consumed the majority of the energies of the board, and questions arose about whether the collective was expending too much of their energy in service provision.

Involvement with the creation of a service based on feminist principles influenced the feminist practice of the women who organized the shelter. The women who came to the shelter made the theoretical connections between the various layers of women's oppression tangible to the shelter workers who were compelled to uncover the various barriers faced by abused women to facilitate personal liberation. The range of feminist ideologies represented on the board, coupled with the practical concern of the shelter's accountability to the municipality necessitated negotiations about the relationship between feminist ideology and process. Their analysis of spousal assault was supported by a local feminist community which rallied alongside the shelter to demonstrate its outrage at violence against women, and supported the shelter by promoting its philosophy and reinforcing that it filled a need in the community. Forty kilometres away, in Lanark County, a different mode of women's organizing was developing which was reluctant to admit that it was based on feminist principles, and which did not consider confrontation to be an effective strategy for change. In the next chapter, I examine women's organizing and the founding of an interval house in this place. The practices of the women who came together in Lanark County distanced themselves from confrontational modes of feminist political organization. Unlike the women in Ottawa who sought to give credibility to feminist organizing and service provision in their community, they promoted the traditional role of women as caretakers in order to forge a place for women's autonomous organizing in Lanark County.

ENDNOTES

1. "Interval House Collective Minutes," June 10, 1981, privately held records of Ottawa-Carleton Interval House, Ottawa, Ontario. Hereinafter, all documents from this collection will be referred to as *IHOC Records*.
2. "Collective Workshop Minutes," May 25, 1981, *IHOC Records*.
3. It should be noted that IHOC was not the only shelter for battered women operating in Ottawa during this period. Nor did all of the women who encouraged the founding of a shelter for abused women identify as feminist. In 1977, a group of nuns opened Maison d'amitié, a shelter for Francophone women which was less involved in political organization against spousal assault. Initially, Maison d'amitié did not affiliate itself with the women's movement, nor did it operate as a political organization. As such it did not represent women's struggle to end violence against women in the explicit manner that Interval House did. Note also that in 1976 MATCH International Centre was founded in Ottawa to make links with women in developing countries. Part of its mandate was to end violence against women globally.
4. In the introduction of the "Ottawa Women's Resource Handbook" produced by the Ottawa Women's Centre in 1977, the following advice is given to women involved in the women's liberation movement: "What to do until the revolution comes . . . Talk; watch; speak; sing; love our sisters. And survive." Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 5, File 1.61, *CWMA/ACMF*.
5. Nancy Adamson, "Feminists, Libbers, Lefties and Radicals: The Emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement," in Joy Parr, ed., *A Diversity of Women: Ontario 1945-1980*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 252-280.
6. "Draft Proposal for a Women's Centre in Ottawa" [1972], Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 1, *CWMA/ACMF*.
7. "A Modest Proposal," June 1972, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 1, *CWMA/ACMF*. It should be noted that the women's centre operated for the most part in English. The issue of making the centre more accessible by making it a bilingual organization was addressed in later years. For an overview of Franco-Ontarian woman's organizations, see Linda Cardinal, "Making a Difference: The Theory and Practice of Francophone Women's Groups, 1969-1972 in Parr, *A Diversity of Women*, pp. 281-316.
8. "Why Men Aren't Allowed in the Women's Centre," [1972], Box 1, File 2, *CWMA/ACMF*.
9. For examples of documents which outline the dual function of sisterhood, see, "What is Women's Liberation?" and "Redefining Sisterhood," both undated, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 6, File 74, *CWMA/ACMF*.
10. "A Modest Proposal," June 1972, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 1, *CWMA/ACMF*.
11. Serenity House, operated by Sister Bertrand, ran an emergency hostel for women, but because of financial restrictions she chose to limit her services to women who were recovering alcoholics. Felicity Sinclair, "Submission to the Ottawa Women's Centre," November 20, 1972, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 12, *CWMA/ACMF*. The Elizabeth Fry Society was investigating the feasibility of opening a transition house for women who had recently been released from prison at this time as well.
12. Felicity Sinclair, "Submission to Women's Centre" November 20, 1972, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 12 *CWMA/ACMF*.
13. Point form note attached to Felicity Sinclair's submission. November 27, 1972, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 12, *CWMA/ACMF*.
14. Carolyn Sinclair, a worker at Interval House, remembered hearing from friends who worked at the OWC that abused women often came to the centre seeking shelter. Carolyn Sinclair, interview by author, 23 June 1997, Ottawa. Tape Recording. Hereinafter, *Sinclair*.
15. "Interview with Mike Cassidy, M. P. P.," April 16, 1973, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 6, File 74, *CWMA/ACMF*.
16. "Minutes of Staff Meeting" April 4, 1973, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 13, *CWMA/ACMF*. The list was compiled from membership forms which asked women if they would be willing to open up their homes to women who needed a place to stay temporarily. When Interval House opened, and needed extra spaces for the overflow, the newsletter of the OWC asked women to contact the shelter if they had room in their homes for them. "Newsletter," May 1976, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 6, File 1.64, *CWMA/ACMF*.
17. Stephanie Holbik, "Project Interval House," 1974, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 5, File 1.49, *CWMA/ACMF*.

18. In 1974, the OWC did organize a Rape Crisis Centre to address the shortcomings in the legal and judicial system, and to empower women by counselling them and supporting them through the police and courts. This too was a question of debate in the policy committee. The committee discussed whether providing this service was among the objectives of the OWC as the RCC was just beginning to establish itself. "Policy Committee Minutes" May 15 1974, Box 1, File 14, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, *CWMA/ACMF*. The Rape Crisis Centre became an autonomous organization when it grew too large to operate efficiently in the same space as the OWC.
19. Concern about whether the OWC was becoming simply another financing and service organization for women was a discussion topic at the Annual General Meeting in 1974, "Agenda of AGM" October 9, 1974, Box 1, File 14, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, *CWMA/ACMF*. For examples of submissions by members opposed to service provision, see "Letter from Kate Nonesuch," February 1975 and "Open Letter to the Women's Centre from Susan Power," 1975, Box 1, File 14, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, *CWMA/ACMF*.
20. "Brief to the Policy Committee," 6/2/1975, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 14, *CWMA/ACMF*.
21. "Staff Report" [1973], Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 6, File 64, *CWMA/ACMF*.
22. "Policy Meeting Minutes," June 6, 1974, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 13, *CWMA/ACMF*.
23. "Finance Work Shop" June 1975, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 1, File 13, *CWMA/ACMF*.
24. This description of the founding of Interval House is taken from the minutes of the 1986 Annual General Meeting. The women marked the tenth anniversary of the shelter with a review of the first ten years which was presented by Joan Gullen and Trudy Don. "Minutes Annual General Meeting," September 24, 1986, *IHOC Records*.
25. Joan Gullen, interview by author, 26 May 1997, Ottawa, Ontario. Tape Recording. Hereinafter, *Gullen*.
26. Karen Fish, "Interval House is needed service," *Upstream* 1:1 (October 23, 1976), p. 5.
27. *Gullen*.
28. *Ibid*.
29. "Incorporation Papers of Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton," *IHOC Records*.
30. I did not locate the needs study of this organization which would have defined the goals and objectives more clearly.
31. *Gullen*. The Board's discussion about who could stay in the house also indicates that they had a clear vision about who the house would shelter. The policy that they adopted stipulated that all women who were in danger would be admitted into the shelter, regardless of the occupancy of the house. The shelter would not take in women with psychiatric problems or with drug or alcohol addictions, but would refer them to appropriate services. Before the shelter opened, the Board also discussed their policy on men in the shelter. Initially, they decided that husbands would be allowed to come into the shelter to visit the residents. They realized that this was not the best scenario, but in the event that the residents could not leave the shelter, they would be able to speak to their spouses in the common area. Interval House Board Minutes, May 12, 1976, *IHOC Records*.
32. *Sinclair*.
33. The Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation, was a federal program which subsidized the mortgages of charitable organizations, and contributed to the stabilization of community run hostels. The applicant was responsible for 2% of the mortgage, and the CMHC paid the difference. The government guarantee of the mortgages was designed to help community organizations secure bank loans.
34. *Gullen*.
35. *Ibid*.
36. This caused anxieties for the organizers who desperately needed the money. Before they finally received the donation, the board had resorted to loans to meet the costs of repairs to the property that were required so they could open as a hostel and, subsequently, qualify for a per diem contract with the municipal government. As a result, Interval House was running at a deficit and carrying a \$4000 debt when it opened. "Minutes of Board Meeting," March 31, 1976, June 19, 1976, June 30, 1976, August 5, 1976.
37. *Gullen*.
38. Initially, fund-raising was carried out through social events. The board organized pub nights to raise money, and tea parties were held in private homes to bring together members of the community who were likely to contribute.
39. *Gullen*.

40. The recorder suggested the following compromise in the minutes: "Interval House focuses on women and their needs, recognizing that historically women have been oppressed by overt and subtle social and economic forces and are now in need of special support systems to help them to become the people they can and want to be." "Interval House Board Minutes," June 19, 1976, *IHOC Records*.
41. *Sinclair*.
42. *Gullen*.
43. *Gullen*.
44. "Interval House Board Minutes," January 1976, *IHOC Records*.
45. *Sinclair*.
46. For analysis which discusses the strengths and weakness of collective structures in grass-roots organization, see *Adamson, et al*, Chapter 7, pp. 229-255.
47. For a critical analysis of the processes, difficulties and visions of collectives in feminist services, see Janice L. Ristock, "Feminist Collectives: The Struggles and Contradiction in our Quest for a 'Uniquely Feminist Structure'" in *Wine and Ristock*, 41-55.
48. In 1977, the Board applied for special status that would allow the shelter to hire only women. "Interval House Board Minutes" September 14, 1977, *IHOC Records*.
49. Sinclair remembered residents sitting on hiring committees. Board members were also expected to acquire knowledge about spousal assault. To assure that board members remained active and knowledgeable about the organization, the by-laws stipulated that members who missed three consecutive meetings would be removed from the Board. "By-law No. 1," March 31, 1976, *IHOC Records*.
50. *Gullen*.
51. "Interval House Board Minutes," October 13, 1976, *IHOC Records*.
52. "Interval House Board Minutes," November 7, 1976, *IHOC Records*.
53. *Ibid*.
54. "Interval House Board Minutes," September 15 and 29, 1976 *IHOC Records*.
55. *Sinclair*.
56. "Interval House Board Minutes," June 1, 1977, *IHOC Records*.
57. *Sinclair*.
58. "Thank You Letter by Carolyn Sinclair," April 1979 *IHOC Records*.
59. "Interval House Board Minutes," June 1, 1977, *IHOC Records*.
60. "Interval House Board Minutes," November 1980, *IHOC Records*.
61. Public protest began with a spontaneous protest that arose to raise awareness about rape was an unorganized poster protest in the Lowertown area of Ottawa after an Ontario Supreme Court decision found a man not guilty even though he admitted to using a knife during the rape. The woman was held responsible for his actions because she was a hitchhiker and had willingly entered the car. In response, women put up posters in their windows decrying the decision. "Citizens start to fight rape in Ottawa," *Upstream* 1:5 (January 27, 1977), p. 1.
62. "War is Declared," Press release by OWC Political Action Group, 20 October 1977, Ottawa Women's Centre Fonds, Box 2, File 1.24, *CWMA/ACMF*.
63. "Organizer says March Against Violence 'success,' *Upstream* 2:1 (November 1977), p. 1; Deborah Gorham, "Violence against women: an historical perspective," *Upstream* 2:1 (November 1977), p. 17.
64. A regular column in *Upstream* entitled "Know your local rapist" gave descriptions of actions by rapists in the community to alert women to their tactics and the locations where they attacked.
65. Shirley Greenberg, "Law for Women," *Upstream* 1:7 (April 1977), p. 13.
66. Shirley Greenberg, "Law for Women," *Upstream* 1:10 (July/August 1977), p. 13.
67. Pat Daley, "Interval House still struggling," *Upstream* 2:6 (July 1978), p. 3.
68. "Interval House Board Minutes," March 4, 1981, *IHOC Records*.
69. *Sinclair*.
70. *Gullen*.

Chapter 3

“We are all our sister’s keepers”: The Role of Women’s Liberation, Community, and Rural Identity in the Founding of Lanark County Interval House, 1972-1982

In the early years of the operation of Lanark County Interval House, the London Catholic Women’s League sent a survey to the organizers of transition houses throughout Ontario to collect information on which to base a brief to the provincial government concerning the lack of funding to shelters for battered women. Responding on behalf of the organization, Olive Millet, a shelter worker, described the precarious financial situation of Lanark County Interval House which ensued from its dependence on low per diem rates set by the Lanark County Social Services, and the subsequent need for subsidization of these funds by donations from the community. She lamented the consequences that unreliable sources of income presented to the organizers, and identified the lack of job security for the staff of the house who often went without pay in order to keep the doors open as one of their primary concerns. Ensuring the survival of the shelter was, however, the priority because it was the only service of its kind in the county, and because the number of women coming to the shelter made the dire need for a refuge for battered women apparent to the organizers. In conclusion, she wrote, “I cannot tell you how wonderfully encouraging it is for us to hear from you and your active work in supporting those working on behalf of abused women and children. We are all our sister’s keepers.”¹

Olive Millet’s closing words succinctly capture the essence of women’s organizing in Lanark County in the 1970s, and the development of a political ideology that certain

organizers would, in retrospect and with some reluctance, identify as feminist. Their conceptualization of sisterhood differed from the universal image which was promoted in feminist theory during the 1970s. Sisterhood was local; and improving the situation of neighbours and friends sustained women's organizing in Lanark County. Providing services for women was uncontested as the cornerstone of their political organizing making the question about the role of services in feminist political activity which marked debates about feminist politics in Ottawa moot.

In this chapter, I document the strategies employed by the women and men who exposed spousal assault in a self-declared "quaint, quiet and peaceful community."² Many of the hurdles ascribed to rural contexts presume that the greatest challenge to rural organizing is the remote location which isolates the women living in those communities from each other.³ There were discernible hurdles involved in setting up a shelter in Carleton Place. Transportation costs, long distance charges, low and different per diem rates for women and children, and the absence of the resources of a local feminist community added financial burdens to the shelter. In comparison to the remoteness faced by shelters that were not close to a city they may not have been as formidable. Hence, the vicinity of Carleton Place to Ottawa and Kingston obliges a closer examination of their self-definition as rural women. One could make a case that its locale offers the best of both worlds since living in the Ottawa Valley offers the peace and solitude of rural living as well as the diversions of the city, but to take advantage of the locale one must have access to resources. As Fern Martin, a feminist activist and one of the founders of Lanark County Interval House writes,

This environment shapes our characters, and we either thrive or are inhibited by it.

What is privacy to some is isolation to others especially if they don't have their own transportation. What is self-sufficiency to some is poverty to those who have no choice.⁴

This chapter begins with a discussion of feminist organizing in Lanark County. Those who sought to mobilize women in Lanark County came together to improve services in their community, and it was through this that they began to talk about women's inequality and the need to organize for change. The local debates about feminism that were inspired by their activities demonstrated the reluctance of the community to accept feminism as the motivation for women's community service. Local misgivings about feminism were also apparent in the founding of the shelter. The political ambition to change the status of women, and the desire to protect women in crisis co-existed in the organization of LCIH. Protecting women was always in the foreground, and the feminist ideologies and organizational practices of the women who ran the shelter were kept out of sight in order to maintain community support. The strategies and tactics of the organizers of LCIH responded to circumstances, such as lack of privacy and distances between communities, that were particular to rural women. As a result, the women developed a political ideology which was inextricably linked to their community and rural setting. Demonstrating that they had made a clear connection between the programs of the shelter and the place that it would serve was part of the strategy used by the board to justify the creation of a feminist service in a community which was not receptive to extra-local ideologies, and accordingly united the ideological differences among the organizers.

“Why Not?”: Women’s Liberation in Lanark County

As feminism began to take hold in communities across Canada, a group of women in Almonte came together through a local auxiliary to raise funds for the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). According to Martin, the CHEO auxiliary became a meeting place where young mothers began to talk about their lives and discover similarities between their experiences.⁵ When asked how feminist ideas informed their activities and how they began to use them to understand their world, Martin replied,

I don’t know exactly how the thoughts got started. Whether somebody read a book, or whether I read a particular book. That doesn’t stick in my mind. What does stick in my mind was. . . [that] after we did our business . . . we’d talk . . . and we were talking about our rights to education – I think that was probably the first one – and to go back to work, which was a big deal in many households.⁶

In 1974, the women of the CHEO auxiliary joined forces with the Neighbourhood Club, a low-income women’s group, and set up a women’s centre in the thrift shop that had been run by the latter group since 1965. Organizing as the Almonte Community Service Coordinators (ACC), they named the shop “The Hub” and used the funds generated by the sale of second-hand clothing to operate an information centre and meeting place for women.⁷ Remembering her involvement with that organization, Martin quipped, “We were feeling quite radical. I think we were fairly radical in doing that.”⁸

Though explicitly formed as a place for women, the intention of the organizers was not to create a environment where women could sequester themselves from their communities. Rather, it was meant to be a space where women could meet in order to develop closer connections to each other and, consequently, to their community. Using the money raised in the shop,⁹ they developed a resource centre which made agencies such as

the Children's Aid Society and the Welfare Services more accessible to the residents of northern Lanark County.¹⁰ They supplemented existing services by creating programs to accommodate the needs of members of their community that were not met by established agencies. For example, through the Hub Extension Program, volunteers arranged home visits to those who were shut in and co-ordinated transportation for people who needed to go to Ottawa or Kingston for medical appointments.

Community activity was not novel to many of the women involved with the Hub, but the significance of women coming together *as women* to improve their community was exciting and markedly different from the community work done by women preceding their organization. Informed by the emerging ideologies of the women's movement, the ACC sought to increase women's independence and confidence, to raise the public profile of women in the community, and to validate women's ability to organize and affect change. In an article printed in the *Carleton Place Canadian*, Bev Watson described the Hub as a place where women were coming together to establish a new relationship with their community. Watson used the following quotation by Margaret Mead to give context to this change,

Because we are going to have a society where a large number of women are probably not going to have children, it is more important for them to think of themselves as people who can make a contribution to the public world, than as females who can make a contribution to the next generation.¹¹

The Hub collected information about the women's liberation movement and provided a space for women to meet based on the conviction that women were isolated from each other in their homes. In a flyer which introduced the centre to the community, the ACC invited women to join them by asking "Are you new in town? Bored at Home? Interested in New

Faces?" It even suggested that men could come to the centre if they were looking for their wives.¹² The Hub was clearly a place for women, but the welcome atmosphere that it presented to men is significant because, contrary to current assumptions, it demonstrates that feminist organization in this period did not universally shun men. In Lanark County, men were not excluded from the struggle for equality between women and men because discouraging their involvement would have been considered too controversial, and ran the risk of alienating women whom the organizers hoped to attract. Independent women's organizing was also met with misgiving because of the dominant assumption of the time that "women don't get along and can't work together."¹³ Hence, the ACC did not exclude men from entering their space, but, in a subtle manner, the organizers did define the terms of men's involvement in their organization.

Defining feminism and organizing based on its principles demanded negotiation between those who adopted a feminist identity and those who shunned a political foundation for their community work. Like women in other communities across Canada, they were inspired by the celebrations of International Women's Year (IWY) in 1975 and took advantage of the Women's Participation Grant made available through the Secretary of State Office to sponsor a Woman's Day Conference at the Almonte and District High School on April 19. Under the slogan of the year, "Why not?," the ACC organized workshops so that women could reflect on the "responsibilities of women to themselves, their families and society."¹⁴ The initiative for the program came from the Hub, but was developed in consultation with the women in the community through an advertisement in the local press. It asked women of all ages to choose from a list of topics that reflected the contemporary

concerns of the women's liberation movement to let the organizers know which issues most interested them.¹⁵ From this, the ACC organized a celebration of IWY, set up an information fair and gave workshops which focused on understanding oneself, the family, women's legal rights, adjusting to changes in women's lives, rape, local government and financial matters.¹⁶

The conference was well attended and inspired a conversation about the role of the women's liberation movement in the community. *The Almonte Gazette* ran a series of articles that allowed women to voice their opinions and concerns about International Women's Year. The columns reflected the aims of the conference in that they focused on the ability of the women's liberation movement to impact on the daily lives of women and their children. Those who wrote, however, were reluctant to defend the woman-centred ideology of feminism. One woman asked "Why Not – of course but How?" She supported the focus on "women, their rights, their status in society, their attitudes and desires for their own and their children's future" and placed emphasis on the desire for a better future for themselves and their children. Education, she argued was the key to motivating daughters "and sons –let's not forget" to work for a future where they would not be moulded by the strictures affecting her generation.¹⁷ Another woman argued that men should also be part of the process of change. She lauded the goal of working towards an egalitarian society, but maintained that women could not do it alone. To attain this, she put forth the idea of an "International Men's Year" because "Men need society to accept them for what they are or could be, as well as women."¹⁸ She closed by proposing that an International Individual's Year would promote equality more effectively than a focus which divided the sexes. Generally, the articles expressed an overriding conviction that women's liberation alone

could not achieve these goals.

The women who organized the event provided a different analysis of the importance of IWY. In response to a survey conducted by the Kingston's Women's Centre about the impact of IWY in the daily lives of women and the Canadian population, Martin wrote,

International Women's Year had no impact on those on low incomes and with no interest in women's issues. The women on low incomes have such a struggle just surviving, there is little time or energy left to be interested in ideas which seem beyond their reach. There was a very real impact on others who now felt more aware of the whole situation. . . . We found ourselves embroiled in illuminating and sometimes frustrating discussions with acquaintances, friends, and husbands. We feel we are more aware of the stereotyping, sexism, our "herstory" and our potential.¹⁹

She went on to describe 'pre-consciousness raising courses' entitled "face-to-face with ourselves" as the basis of personal liberation, and ultimately that of women.²⁰ She concluded that the most important effect of IWY was that it had initiated a discussion in the community about women's issues, and that "a new seriousness among women has developed – they have been given a taste of change and they are hungry for more."²¹ Martin's response demonstrates the recognition that they were involved in a movement that had implications beyond Lanark County. Facilitating change in their community was the priority, but for a core group of the women, the local initiatives were bolstered by the activities of women working elsewhere.

Building on the momentum of IWY, the ACC continued to develop a women's culture that retained its community liaisons. On April 16, 1977, the Hub and the Exchange, a women's centre and thrift shop in Carleton Place that was based on the Almonte model, organized Women's Day II at the Pakenham Public School. The objective of the conference

was to develop the continuum of women's community service and organization in Lanark County by breathing new life into it. They aimed to appeal to women on a county wide basis, to include young women and to explore rural issues through the theme of self-development. Clearly the central objective of the day was to bring women together to learn how to become more confident in their lives and to recognize the importance of their role in the community and its services and institutions.²² Yet the local press remained reluctant to associate the women in Lanark County with the women's liberation movement. *The Carleton Place Canadian* reported that

Some people think that women's conferences are 'women's lib' oriented. This is far from being the case. Most of the women attending the event are interested in the problems and concerns of women in general, and in finding out about services and opportunities available to women, which is not the same thing.²³

The rural identity and a sense of the place in which they were working was an important facet of the ideology that this group of women developed, and was woven through their political activities. In order for feminism to take root in Lanark County, the women needed to demonstrate that the ideas of the women's liberation movement which were held suspect because they were extra-local, and which were considered by some to be destructive to local cohesion, could help women to understand their lives and their community. Organizing as women was accepted for its contribution to building a stronger community. For those involved, their activities were significant because they demonstrated women could organize effectively without men. Millet remembered,

That was a big issue. . . . Can women co-operate together? Do women work as a team? Some anthropologist had just come up with a theory that men – Lionel Tiger! – that men worked in groups and teams as a kind of biological given, and that women naturally were competitive with each other for the males. It was a very male

point of view!²⁴

The reluctance in the community to acknowledge a burgeoning feminist ideology was paralleled in the development of the consciousness of the women involved. Millet referred to Tiger's theory to underline the impact that the lack of confidence in women's ability to organize effectively expressed by some sectors of the community had on the decisions that the women made. She added "it was partly because of that feeling of not being sure at all" that obliged the women to refrain from establishing the shelter without men. Becoming confident in their ability to organize independently, and expressing comfort with the feminist appellation developed after the shelter opened. Local misgivings about women's ability to organize autonomously, and mistrust of feminist organizing obliged the women to compromise by underplaying the political aspect of their public role as service providers.

A Place to Go: Uncovering the Need for an Interval House

Creating an alternative form of social work was the primary function taken up by women's liberation activists in Lanark County. Among the goals of the organizers was encouraging women to form support networks which would enable them to adapt to changes in women's lives and to share information in order to assuage transitional periods. As in other places, they noticed that divorce was on the rise, and in response, the ACC proposed a support group for recently separated women based on an Ottawa model. Martin initiated the project by sending a letter to the women in the area who had recently gone through a marital breakdown, which invited them to attend a meeting at the Hub to determine "what kind of help would be desirable and realistic in a small town or rural area such as ours."²⁵

Martin culled the names for the proposed support group from her own memory. Three of the thirty women who had received letters attended a planning meeting held at the Hub. When they were asked what sort of services a support group for recently separated women should offer, Martin remembered that “everyone of them said what we really need is a place for women to go.”²⁶

The letter is noteworthy because it demonstrates the contradictions between isolation and privacy that characterizes rural life, and which influenced the organization and practices of LCIH. Leaving untenable marriages at that time was impossible for many because social services were inaccessible to women who were living with their spouses. Even if women could secure adequate resources to leave the matrimonial home, there were few affordable places open to them in the area because of the scarcity of rented houses and apartments. Moreover, as Millet and Martin both attested, rural families were extended, and often farms had been owned by families for generations. Hence, division of assets between spouses was complicated and tended to be more advantageous for men since they could claim that the property had been in the family for generations. Women who married into farming families were under suspicion because it was feared that they could upset years of family tradition by divorcing and demanding the sale of the land as part of their settlement.²⁷ As Martin put it, “there’s a whole community that is afraid of daughters-in-law.”²⁸

Similarly, attitudes about divorce influenced women’s decisions since they were held accountable for marital breakdown. Martin recalled that divorce carried a major stigma and, as such, marital problems were furtively guarded to maintain a respectable status in the community. Women were taught that if there were problems in the marriage, it was because

of their own short-comings. In many cases, violence in marriages was not spoken of publicly.²⁹ Through her involvement in community development in areas identified as low-income neighbourhoods, Millet remembered talk about women staying with family and friends because they “got knocked about,” but acknowledged that there was no discussion about the systemic causes of abuse at that time. The social service agencies, however, were aware that women needed a place to go because women seeking a way out of violent homes were approaching the Lanark County Social Services for assistance. The only method that the social workers had devised to help women who sought refuge from abusive husbands was to take them to the Rivlar Hotel in Perth, which was, using Martin’s description “a dive.” She added, “And they were in just as much or even more danger from drunken men who came to the door there than they were even in an abusive and violent home.”³⁰

In 1978, The Hub applied for a Canada Works grant to sponsor a study to assess the need for an emergency shelter for women and children in crisis. Sandra Boyd, who went on to become the first director of the shelter, was hired to conduct the study. Using the statistics of the Lanark County Social Services and the Children’s Aid Society, she documented the number of families in crisis because of divorce, low income and incidents of violence between November of 1977 and 1978. Of the 75 families that sought assistance from these agencies, 28 were seeking relief from physical violence and 18 identified emotional abuse to support their claim for social assistance. In nine of the cases, child abuse was an issue. Sixty-five of the claimants were in a housing crisis. The cases were organized around families, but in her analysis of the data, Boyd clearly identified that it was primarily women who sought social assistance during family crises. She validated the necessity of a shelter

by adding that,

The numbers listed above are only those women who sought professional help. . . We know of many more not included in the statistics who moved out of the county in order to find supportive living accommodation. Also, not included, are the many women who had help from their family, or those who persevered alone.³¹

The idea of the shelter was encouraged by Ray Elgersma, the director of LCSS, who recognized that providing women with money to stay in a hotel was inadequate because it only relieved crisis situations temporarily.³² Organizers also rallied support for the shelter through the local press. Before the shelter opened, Fern Martin began to submit a bi-weekly column entitled "Inter-view" to all of the newspapers in the community, and used this venue to call for donations, to keep the community up to date on the status of the house, and to reinforce the need for a service designed exclusively for women in crisis and their children.³³

Their efforts were applauded by some newspaper editors, in particular Inez McCoy, of the *Carleton Place Canadian Reporter*. In her editorials, McCoy advised the community to give material support to the shelter not only as a form of civic responsibility, but also because of a growing realization that wife-battering was more than a series of isolated incidents. She argued that the shelter would help the community to deal with a changing society, stating that

More now that at any time in my life, I realize the need for the kind of help provided by Interval House for the community of Lanark County. As values and lifestyles change, one should not be smug and think, "This couldn't happen to me." Who knows?³⁴

McCoy's concluding remarks demonstrate a growing awareness within the community that it was difficult to determine which women were most at risk in their homes. The organization of the shelter instigated discussions about violence against women that

removed the stigma from abuse, and concentrated on social causes of spousal assault rather than personal reasons.

Examples of commentary supporting the shelter often included disclosure about helping women whom they found in crisis by offering them shelter to indicate that there was a need for such a service. Generally, the articles stressed the links between the intolerable situation of women in violent homes and the lack of awareness about it to stress the community's responsibility in ending wife-battery. A poignant testimonial written for *The Almonte Gazette* by Sandra Boyd stressed the need for a change in public awareness and attitudes about abused women, as well as improved financial or emotional support systems to facilitate escape from violent spouses. She wrote candidly about a violent marriage in which she endured a broken jaw, and spent many days in seclusion to hide the bruises inflicted by her husband. She described the isolation and shame that she felt as a battered woman, and the lack of support from her family who advised her that it was her responsibility as a wife to bear the brunt of her husband's rage for the good of the family. Taking control of her life was discouraged by the instruction of her church which suggested that she pray for divine intervention. When the violence would not end, she stopped trying to defend herself and "accepted his barrage of insults and threats" for the sake of her children who, she felt, needed a stable family. This ended when she came home to find one of her children had been beaten because she had not been there to intercept the blows. Seeing her "own flesh and blood with two very black eyes" convinced her that the only way that she could defend her family was to leave. She concluded by arguing that had an Interval House been available, she would have left long before and would not have had to accept the

responsibility for her children's anxiety and pain.³⁵

In Boyd's testimonial newly developed feminist analysis of the battered woman was tempered by community standards. Until she submitted this article, the organizers of the shelter were not aware that she had been an abused woman.³⁶ It is curious that Boyd would have taken on the task of establishing the need for a shelter, but would not have exposed her past experience as a battered woman to those with whom she was working. Her revelation of a life that she had hidden from neighbours and associates followed the emerging contention that the silence and solitude surrounding spousal assault allowed its recurrence. Yet she drew attention to the negative effects that living in an abusive home had on her children rather than on herself. The feminist analysis espoused at that time stressed the links between wife-battery and women's oppression, and focussed on women as individuals rather than as family members. Boyd's understanding of her experience combines both feminist arguments which encouraged women to take control of their lives, as well as traditional notions about women's responsibility to her family, rather than to herself. Much of the feminist theory of that period regarded these to be conflicting ideologies. In Boyd's mind, however, they were not. As Joy Parr states in her analysis of discourse in shaping experience, "Because people historically have existed severally, holding within themselves different and contending conceptions of their place in the world, experience is formed dialectically, as the meanings made from these several parts collide."³⁷ Boyd's testimonial exhibits a new understanding of the significance of the violence that she endured, but despite her central involvement in a service which was transforming itself into political movement,³⁸ she did not espouse a feminist analysis. Her understanding of the import of her experience

simultaneously articulated her expectations of herself as a mother based on those of her family, church and community.

In order to convey the urgency to the residents of Lanark County, organizers and supporters had to prove that wife-battering affected women living in their community, and that violence in homes would persist unless women had a safe place to go. Convincing the residents of Lanark County that wife-battering was a serious issue that required community attention was particularly important to the founding of an interval house in Lanark County because the shelter would be located in a small town. They could not hide the shelter from the community, and if they hoped to provide a relaxed and comfortable place for women in crisis, they would need the support of their neighbours.

The Mary Street Controversy

Generally, the location of shelters was kept secret to protect women from abusive husbands and to ensure their privacy while they sort through the conflicting messages that have influenced their understanding of their situation. Guarding the location of the shelter would have been impossible in Lanark County due to the small size of the communities in Lanark County; Carleton place had a population of 5600 at the time of the founding of the shelter. As such, no attempt was made to do so. The organizers chose a house on Mary Street as the future home of the shelter, an act which aroused protest from some of the street's residents. The controversy that arose about the location of the shelter in a residential area obliged the organizers to negotiate between the apprehensions of some of the neighbours that were based on erroneous conceptions about wife-battering, and their own ambition to

provide a comfortable environment for women in crisis.³⁹ The primary concern about having a shelter in their neighbourhood was worry about the effect that it would have on the property values because of the potential disruption it would cause in the neighbourhood. One resident argued,

I am totally opposed to the house being located on any residential street. Who is to say the street won't be overrun with irate husbands ready to fill people full of lead. Surely there are other commercial areas that could have been looked at for this purpose.⁴⁰

The neighbours petitioned the town council to change the zoning by-laws in the community to prevent the house from moving into their community. The organizers were opposed to this because it would perpetuate the seclusion of the women by locating them in an isolated area.

The sentiments expressed by opponents to the location of the shelter were shared by a small group of people, and the resistance of the Mary Street Residents provoked outrage from supportive sectors in the community. The priest of St. James Anglican Church warned the congregation to "beware of small town agitators and demagogues" and their "unholy war" against the shelter. He called upon the sense of community and Christian values of love and charity and encouraged the members to support the organizers of Interval House.⁴¹ Local papers argued that the residents of Mary Street should give the Interval House a chance and used examples of hostels in surrounding communities to demonstrate that the neighbours were being unreasonable because their fears were unsubstantiated.⁴²

The imperative to compromise between the goals of the shelter and the requirement of community support, was demonstrated by the board's diplomatic reaction to the neighbours' complaints. They decided that the most effective response to their concerns was

not to take issue with the neighbours, but rather to “bend over backwards” to keep them informed and to make them feel more at ease.⁴³ To accomplish this, the Board organized a meeting with the residents of the street and invited a woman from Ottawa-Carleton Interval House to assure the protestors that the neighbours of the Ottawa shelter had not been disrupted by the shelters. They were also supported by a town councillor who lived two doors away from the proposed site of the interval house. Her influence hindered the petition of the protesters, and they could not prevent the shelter from establishing itself on Mary Street.⁴⁴

Aside from the initial uproar, there were no public protests against the shelter. In fact, when the house opened, some of the neighbours joined the effort to improve the site and keep the house open.⁴⁵ The Board members were comforted by the change of heart, but were careful in their dealings with the neighbours due to some lingering feelings of discomfit at the choice of Carleton Place for the location of the shelter. When the Board decided to put political pressure on the local councils to provide grants for Interval House, they discussed approaching the neighbours to sign a petition to demonstrate their support for the shelter. One board member advised that only residents of Carleton Place should approach the neighbours because there was “some anti-feelings against ‘outsiders’ placing the operation” in their town.⁴⁶

The controversy of the location of the house further demonstrates the importance that the organizers placed on community support, as well as their ability to mobilize it. They did not ignore opponents of the house because changing their opinions about spousal assault was part of their mandate. Women who wanted to leave abusive relationships in Lanark County

did so fearing the peering eyes of the community. If women were to feel comfortable in the shelter, the organizers needed to remove the barriers created by public notions about women and divorce, and the lack of privacy afforded to families. The contradictions between the isolation of abused women in rural settings and the very public nature of private lives in rural settings were not lost on the organizers of the shelter. In a public education conference they held in 1980, they pointed out that small hints such as “an envelope in a general store, or a car parked in a laneway” could provoke speculation about women’s lives and often stimulated unwanted gossip.⁴⁷ The close knit character of the community was not exclusively negative though. Personal opinions about the shelter often changed when they discovered that a family member or friend was able to end a violent marriage by going to Interval House. Millet emphasized the impact of these networks, which were often unknown to the shelter workers, arguing that many who had not condoned the shelter changed when they found out that they knew someone who was living there. Martin added, “But it works the other way if they find out someone they know was in the shelter and they hate it.”⁴⁸

Through their efforts to assuage the anxieties of neighbours about the impact that a shelter for abused women would have on their community, the board of the house also raised awareness about spousal assault as a political issue. Though the organizers managed to mobilize a great deal of support for the interval house, there was not consensus within the community about whether it was needed. This added worries for the organizers about the perception that the community had about the shelter because they could not afford to upset or alienate the community, which, in turn, affected the structure of the shelter and created tensions on the board.

“Ah Collective! How do thee frustrate me!”⁴⁹: The Structure and Financing of the Shelter

The effort to found the shelter brought together members of the community with different backgrounds who often held oppositional views on procedure. What united them was their concern about the lack of social services available to residents in the county.⁵⁰ The house was run by sixteen directors, and the by-laws of the organization stipulated that ten of these positions were to be held by women.⁵¹ During the initial years of operation men were involved at the executive level because of their connections to the community to secure its confidence in the shelter.⁵² Though they did not describe their organization as feminist for fear of estranging the community, this did not preclude feminist principles from guiding the operation of the shelter, and the relationships between the members of the board, the staff and the residents of the shelter. When asked how the men related with the women who had been influenced by the women's movement, Martin recalled,

... one fellow wanted to refer to us as girls and refused to not call us girls. And so he quit. ... And we had another fellow who we think sexually harassed one of the women. And we had another who was fabulous and he quit because he thought women should run it themselves.⁵³

Early discussions of the board considered the type of service that Interval House would provide and how the structure of the house would reflect its philosophy. The board operated in a hierarchical manner, but the structure of the shelter was an issue of debate. Before the house opened, Beth Lay, a board member and volunteer in the shelter, visited Toronto Interval House to examine its operation. She described the principles of the collective structure which levelled the salaries of the workers and gave all staff, volunteers and board members an equal voice in the management of the house. In response, her

husband Nelson Lay, a retired naval officer, asserted that “it wasn’t like that in the Navy.”⁵⁴ Originally, the house also functioned in a hierarchical manner, but after a year, a collective form of management was adopted. Staff felt that a non-hierarchical structure presented a more relaxed atmosphere for the residents of the shelter, and better reflected the philosophy of the shelter which stated that the mandate of Interval House was to “offer protection and support so that [women] may find the strength to make the necessary changes in [their] life.”⁵⁵

The house collective was a hotly contested issue in the board because some members identified it to be the reason for the financial problems that plagued the shelter. Those opposed to the collective argued that the shelter would not be able to operate efficiently unless a more accountable mode of management was developed.⁵⁶ Martin and Millet agreed that the financial crises that marked the early years of the shelter generated most of the disputes between board members and staff. Despite support from the LCSS, the low per diem rates set by the county fell short of the money needed to shelter the residents. Government grants were reserved for covering expenditures for public education programs and printed materials, but not the essential costs required to provide twenty-four hour service and accommodation.⁵⁷ Staff salaries, and money for food and rent had to be supplemented by fund-raising projects.

Indeed, community support was crucial to keeping the doors of the shelter open. Although The Exchange had donated money to cover the first six months of rent, the shelter was in financial crisis from the moment it opened in April of 1979. There were already women living in the house before its official opening, and prior to that the phone line had

been put into operation because of the number of crisis calls that members of the board were receiving at their homes. The money generated in The Hub and The Exchange,⁵⁸ and later As Good as New, a thrift shop opened to provide an income for the shelter, did provide a limited source of income, but it was not nearly enough to ensure the survival of the shelter. The Board appealed to individuals and services to donate money to Interval House, and organized community events to raise funds. Many of the fund-raising projects organized by the board were social events through which the organizers hoped to raise the profile of the shelter as well as money. Dances and showers were organized for adults, and young people were also active in the crusade. When one woman's children overheard her say that it would be nice to do something for the shelter, they, and a group of high school students organized a bake sale to raise money for the shelter.⁵⁹

Local coverage of the fund-raising events indicate that there was support from the community, and in the "Inter-view" columns Martin praised the community for their generous support. Many of the projects, however, lost money because of poor turnouts and unexpected overhead costs. In retrospect, Millet admitted, "I think we did things we'd never do again." The alternative to the exhausting and continuous attempts to raise money was closure of the shelter. This option was unacceptable to the women because of the desperate circumstances of those who came to the shelter. Millet mused, "How do you close the door? It came down to that."⁶⁰ When asked where their support came from, Martin and Millet decisively stated that it was women and women's groups who often provided unsolicited support to the shelter through donations of food and money. Men's organizations and businesses did make substantial contributions to the shelter, but procuring their support

tended to require formal requests for donations.⁶¹

Even with the support from the community, the shelter operated from “hand to mouth.” Martin spoke about “one tearful day” when she borrowed \$600 from her father to meet payroll, and reinforced the precarious financial situation of the shelter by stating, “We scrounged.” Paying the staff was the cost which was most often negotiated during periods of drastic financial crisis. Millet recollected times when the staff negotiated among themselves to determine who could work for nothing, or for reduced wages, in order to open up funds for the provision of services.⁶² Disputes which were induced by the inability to meet staff wages forced the board to critique its own structure so that it would be accountable to the staff. This came to a crisis in June of 1981 when a series of meetings were held to discuss exclusively the benefits and deterrents of collective organization. In August of 1981, they decided to modify the collective, but remained committed to the notion that power and efficiency need not be regulated by hierarchical structures.⁶³ Concerned about the lack of fiscal accountability of the house, half of the board resigned in October of 1981. Those who remained were committed to operating the house as a collective, and the board invited women from the interval house in Ottawa to subsequent discussions about collective organization focused on resolving personal disputes between the collective and the board in order to strengthen the organization.⁶⁴

The women who remained on the board were dedicated not only to the shelter, but also to running it according to non-hierarchical principles. In discussions within the organization, the Board discussed the merits of alternative organizational procedures. Promoting their structure, however, was not used to illustrate the uniqueness of their service

to the community in order to secure its support. Rather than emphasising untraditional methods of procedure, public relations material and education programs discussed the novelty of women organizing to carry out their traditional role as care givers and counsellors. Hence, the Board did not openly challenge power structures in society as part of their strategy for change in the community.

“Around the Kitchen Table”: Feminist Counselling

From its inception, LCIH corresponded with other shelters to develop programs and counselling services for their shelter.⁶⁵ Representatives from LCIH attended a conference which brought together women from interval houses in eastern Ontario⁶⁶ to talk about funding crises and to exchange consciousness raising strategies.⁶⁷ LCIH delegates were also present at the founding of OAITH in 1978. From the level of involvement with women working in shelters outside of Lanark County, it is clear that at the time of the founding of LCIH, the idea of transition houses was no longer novel, and that a network had developed among shelters so that they could rely on each other for information and during difficult periods. The ability of the women to access information and ideas about the purpose of a shelter for battered women and their children from existing interval houses facilitated the founding of the shelter in Carleton Place because the organizers could use the experiences of other organizations to develop their ideologies and structures. Nonetheless, the pressures of keeping a house open, coupled with the shocking revelations of the forms of abuse that women had endured and concealed seemed overwhelming at times. Martin remembered, “It seemed we were galloping to catch up.”⁶⁸

Shelter workers were expected to provide a non-threatening atmosphere for the residents by counselling residents in a non-judgemental and supportive manner. Workers were encouraged to make women aware of the social relations that contributed to the perpetuation of spousal assault, but were advised to prioritize the needs of women seeking assistance. A profile of a successful worker stated that she would,

Operate from a feminist, or at least non-sexist frame of reference: this will include an understanding that human conflicts and problems do not develop in a vacuum but are related to the social and economic systems under which we live. Although Interval House is not a consciousness-raising group per se, there is a need to sensitize (not convert or convince) residents and other participants to the sexist assumptions that play a critical part in their lives.⁶⁹

The primary responsibility of the staff was to maintain an open environment where women could spend some time sorting out their options. Staff were to facilitate the residents' decisions by informing them about services and agencies which were available to them, but were not to coerce them into making choices.

To the community the staff and volunteers were regarded as experts on family violence. Expert was not an appellation with which the workers were comfortable. Often organizers found themselves counselling women with problems that they had not expected to encounter. Millet described the apprehension she felt when first confronted with incest. After advising a woman who had just realized that her husband had been sexually assaulting her children to come to the shelter, she remembered thinking, "Well thank goodness she was in Smith's Falls. . . . I called Ottawa and I said 'What do I do?! Tell me everything you know. I've got twenty minutes.'" Though the counsellors had undergone training,⁷⁰ Martin and Millet stressed that they had little confidence in their expertise when they began to

counsel women in crisis, and admitted that they were afraid of their new authoritative position about an issue which was as unknown to them as it was to the community. They were more disconcerted by the weight that the women's movement placed on their experience. Millet recalled listening to a woman at an OAITH conference praise front-line shelter workers for their "cutting edge" knowledge about wife-battering, and thinking "that was one of the most depressing things I'd heard." For her, it was the women who came to the shelter who were the authentic experts about spousal assault.⁷¹

Indeed a great deal of trust was placed in women's 'innate' ability to counsel and care for each other. They adopted a peer counselling program based on the premise that everyday routines were part of the process of empowerment. Participating in the maintenance of the house would help women become comfortable in their new environment, and working with the other women would build trust among the women. By sharing their stories and using each other's experiences, women would be able to think through solutions for themselves. In the "Welcome to Residents" prepared by the organizers women were encouraged to be confident in their ability to help each other because

Women have always been good at giving support -- a smile, a hug, taking the time to listen to what someone is saying, to really understand. Usually we give this kind of support to our men, our children, our bosses. At Interval House we try to give it to each other.⁷²

The hominess of the shelter facilitated the feelings of trust, and it was this image that the organizers presented to the community. In an "Inter-view" column which ran in February 1981, Martin used the words of residents to describe the comfortable atmosphere of the house. The women expressed their relief when they arrived at the shelter and found that the

house was not distinguished from those that surrounded it. They described their preconceptions of the shelter as an institutional place that would announce her plight to the community. They described the shelter as a home just like any other and emphasized the importance of being with women who had undergone similar experiences. “The quiet ones among us often stay quiet, but some of us have talked about things we’ve never talked about before and we don’t feel judged. It’s easy to talk around the kitchen table.”⁷³

The Board of LCIH used feminist analysis to understand spousal assault, and to explain why women who had experienced violence were best qualified to counsel other women. Their language was similar to that employed by radical feminists, but differed in that it did not use women’s traditional role as caregivers to explicitly challenge the subjection of women’s work. The organizers of Lanark County were shocked by the stories of abuse that the residents brought with them to Interval House. Their dismay was often exacerbated by their acquaintance with the woman who sat across from them at the table. The secrets that these women had kept within the parameters of their homes altered the organizers’ perceptions of their community. What had once seemed to be a peaceful place where familiarity had fostered security, became a violent and dangerous environment in which women were not safe. This new perception of the place where they lived motivated women to organize to change the presumptions and attitudes about women that encouraged violence against women and compelled some of their friends and neighbours to live in fear and shame.

Conclusion

Feminist organizing in Lanark County did not entail protest and public demonstration. Rather, it was characterized by a conciliatory and cooperative politic which sought to establish a central place for itself in the community. The feminist practices that they adopted were persistent but quiet; often their political ideology remained unnamed. Some women involved in the shelter were influenced by the feminist ideologies, but providing services for the women in their community remained the cornerstone of their activism. Their politics were shaped by the rural population that they served. The close-knit character of the communities placed limitations on the degree of criticism that the organizers could incorporate into their politics. Confrontation was dangerous because it could alienate much needed support. Instead the women negotiated when they met dissent, and sought to appease misgivings about their ability to run an effective organization. On the other hand, the sense of local cohesion, and the outrage inspired by the exposure of violence in the homes of their communities united women from disparate backgrounds. Reflecting on organizing in Lanark County, Martin stated, "I think in our area you cannot be isolated from your community. You cannot go off and do something on your own without support from your community. It just simply doesn't happen."⁷⁴

In this chapter, I presented the dilemmas, challenges and vision of a group of women who organized a shelter for battered women living in rural areas and small towns. They sought information about spousal assault from feminists working in other areas, but deliberately connected their activism to their community in order to acquire its support and to allay concern that their activities would radically alter the sense of local cohesion in

Lanark County. Drawing attention to the ways in which the shelter would benefit the community rather than contribute to the women's liberation movement was part of their strategy to ensure that the shelter would be accepted as a viable alternative for women in crisis. Furthermore, focussing on local benefits mediated between the different expectations for the shelter that women brought with them because one's commitment to the improvement of the community was more viable than dedication to the women's liberation movement. In this instance, the import of where women came together to organize transcended practical concerns such as the composition of the community, the access that they had to resources and the alternatives for political organizing from which women could choose. In Lanark County, the sense of place united women with diverse ideological backgrounds and the founders of the shelter used it to forge a central place for themselves in the communities of the county.

ENDNOTES

1. Olive, Millet, "Response to Catholic Women's League" (undated) *LCIH Archives*.
2. This is the declaration on a boundary sign in Lanark County described by Fern Martin, a founder of Lanark County Interval House in her book *A Narrow Doorway: Stories of Escape from Abuse*. (Burnstown: General Store Publishing House, 1996), p. 12. This text is a combination of testimonials of former residents of Lanark County Interval House and the personal reflections and memoirs of Fern Martin. It is an excellent resource for understanding feminist organizing in rural communities and the impact of the discovery of the extent of violence against women in their own community on their consciousness.
3. For discussions of the challenges of establishing a shelter in a rural location, see Marilyn McCrea, "Safe on the Farm? Outreach to Women in Rural Saskatchewan," in *Timmins and Changing the Landscape*, pp. 71-72. Feminists exploring the barriers to women's organization in rural areas written from an urban perspective tend to assume that feminism is an urban creation, and examine women living in small communities to prove that feminism has had an impact on the lives of women outside of urban centres and tend to look for ways that feminist analysis influences rural women's understanding of their lives rather than on how rural women have used increased awareness about women's oppression to understand their situation and to develop strategies to improve their status in the family and community. For example, see Louise I. Carbert, *Agrarian Feminism: The Politics of Ontario Farm Women*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). There is a different tone in the few articles written by women writing from rural communities that are published in feminist journals which emphasise the local origins of feminist organizing in rural areas. See Liz Willick, "Working to Organize Rural Women in Canada," *Canadian Women's Studies/Les Cahiers de la Femme* 7: 1&2 (1986), pp. 168-169.
4. *Martin*, p. 13.
5. *Martin*, 14.
6. Fern Martin and Olive Millet, interview by author, Carleton Place, May 27, 1997. Tape Recording. Hereinafter, *Martin and Millet*.
7. Bev Watson, "The Hub: It's a dandy thrift shop and a great place to meet," *The Carleton Place Canadian*, March 26, 1975, p. 7.
8. *Martin and Millet*.
9. Opening a second-hand shop to finance local endeavours was a model adopted by the women's organizations in Lanark County in the 1970s. The Exchange, a women's organization that formed in Carleton Place in 1976 based on the Almonte model also ran a thrift shop. When the shelter opened, the Board established As Good As New in Carleton place to generate steady funds for the shelter. It should be noted that though some of the women who were involved in LCIH were also active in either the Hub or the Exchange, each of the organizations has maintained an autonomous board. Even the organizers of As Good As New, which is integral to the shelter, have maintained some autonomy in their decision-making. Moreover, organizers of the shelter were cautious in assuming support from the Hub and the Exchange. For example, before opening As Good as New, the Board discussed potential difficulties that opening another second hand shop in Carleton Place could cause between the Exchange and the shelter.
10. These services were located in Perth, the county seat which was 35 kilometres away from Almonte.
11. Bev Watson, "The Hub: It's a dandy thrift shp and a great place to meet," *The Carleton Place Canadian*, March 26, 1975, p. 7.
12. "Flyer: The Hub," undated, *LCIH Archives*.
13. *Martin and Millet*.
14. "Flyer: Women's Day Conference," [1975], *LCIH Archives*.
15. "Advertisement and survey for Women's Day," 1975, *LCIH Archives*. The topics that the women were asked to choose from were: Women and the Law (Marriage, Divorce, Separation and Widowhood, Financial Dependence, Property Rights, Rape), Women and Doctors, Women and Working, What is a Woman (Getting to know yourself), Sexism (Boy? Girl? – Child, Man? Woman? – Person), Birth Control, Abortion: Pro and Con, Women and Politics and Education. They were also invited to make suggestions for other topics.
16. "Flyer: Women's Day Conference," [1975], *LCIH Archives*. The displays advertised in the flyer are New Horizons, Abortion – ARCAL, Women's Career Counselling and Books. "Action Life" was hand written in the flyer. This is significant, I think, because it demonstrates the perceived need to accommodate opposing ideologies in order to unite the women in the community and that developing unity among the women in order

to build a strong local movement was a priority for these women.

17. Janet Duncan, "Women's Year," *The Almonte Gazette*, March 20, 1975, p2.

18. Joan Stoddart, "Local Women Observing International Women's Year," *The Almonte Gazette*, March 13, 1975, p. 2.

19. "Response to Kingston Women's Centre survey about International Women's Year," December 1975, *LCIH Archives*.

20. Because men had expressed an interest, they had considered involving them in the process of consciousness raising.

21. *Ibid.*

22. "Women's Day II Report," *LCIH Archives*.

23. "Women's Day Successful," *The Carleton Place Canadian*, April 20, 1977, p. 12.

24. *Martin and Millet*.

25. "Letter from Fern Martin to all separated and divorced women in the area" May 18, 1978, *LCIH Archives*.

26. *Martin and Millet*.

27. Moreover, in cases where the land was owned by the man's family, the woman's participation to the growth of the business and the family economy was not recognized. Hence, if she did leave, she could not claim half of the land as part of her settlement because it would impinge on the man's ability to make a living. This injustice of this situation was well publicized when Irene Murdoch was denied a fair settlement when she divorced her husband in 1972.

28. *Martin and Millet*.

29. See Martin's *A Narrow Doorway* for testimonials by former shelter residents in which they talk about the strategies that they devised to hide harrowing, and often disfiguring, assaults from their spouses.

30. *Martin and Millet*.

31. "Needs Study for Interval House," 1978, *LCIH Archives*.

32. Interview with Fern Martin and Olive Millet.

33. "Inter-view" continues to run in many of the local newspapers. Using the press and their columns to garner support was a concerted strategy that was discussed in Board Meetings.

34. Inez McCoy, "Editorial Comment: Need Recognized," *Carleton Place Canadian Reporter*, December 19, 1978.

35. Sandra Boyd, "Do We Need an Interval House?," November 22, 1978, *The Almonte Gazette*.

36. Interview with Fern Martin and Sandra Boyd.

37. Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark, Ltd., 1996), p. 16.

38. It should be noted that Boyd did not consider herself to be a political person. Assessing her involvement in the OAITH, arguably a more openly political aspect of the shelter, Boyd expressed reluctance about involvement in the women's liberation movement because she felt that it would distract her from helping women in need. In her report to the Board of Directors, she wrote, "I had a fear before I went that I would run into a lot of feminist and women's rights persons." Sandra Boyd, "Report on Interval House Conference," October 28, 1978, *LCIH Archives*.

39. The concern about the location of the house was not peculiar to the residents of Mary Street. The council of the Village of Lanark was not supportive of the idea and argued that there was not a need for the shelter. In response to their concerns, Sandra Boyd argued that the shelter would not be located in Lanark Village but in Carleton Place. "Letter from the Village of Lanark" December 7, 1978, "Letter from Sandra Boyd to the Council of the Village of Lanark," December 11, 1978, *LCIH Archives*.

40. Mary Cook, "Residence Taken Over for Battered Women," *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 19, 1978, p. 3.

41. "St. James Anglican Church, Carleton Place Bulletin," December 17 and December 25, 1978, *LCIH Archives*.

42. Bob Rickman, "Writes Supporting Interval House," *Carleton Place Canadian*, January 3, 1979, "Give it a Chance" *Carleton Place Canadian*.

43. *Minutes*, January 10, 1979.

44. *Martin and Millet*.

45. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1979.

46. *Ibid.*, July 6, 1979.

47. "Conference Report: Hidden Violence" Carleton Place, May 24, 1980, *LCIH Archives*.

48. *Martin and Millet.*

49. This subtitle is taken from the following poem written by Olive Millet in 1984 which summed up the frustrations and possibilities of collective organizing:

Ah Collective! How do thee frustrate me?
 Thou frustrates me to the depth and width of my soul's grace.
 Thou drives me bonkers to the edge of sanity.
 Thou possesses the anarchy, disorganization and chatter,
 Endless meetings, non-decisions, and fly away energy.
 Thou can make me believe in "the end of days."

Ah Collective! How do I love thee?
 Thou accepts and cares for me to the depth and width of thy soul's grace.
 Thou opens thy heart to all women and children in need,
 Thou possesses the caring, loving and nurturing,
 The patience, warmth, and ability
 That makes me proud to stand with thee in thy endeavours.
 Ah Collective! I could not love thee so much.
 Disliked I not hierarchy more!

"On Collectives" October 29, 1984, *LCIH Archives*.

50. This sentiment was expressed by Rear Admiral H. Nelson Lay who moved to the county after his retirement. The lack of cultural and welfare services available in rural areas and the inaccessibility of those which did exist prompted he and his family to get involved in the founding of the shelter. "Letter from Rear Admiral Nelson Lay to the Honourable Denis Timbrell, Minister of Health," November 9, 1979. *LCIH Archives*.

51. "By-Law No. 1," 1979, *LCIH Archives*.

52. Interview with Fern Martin and Olive Millet. For example, Martin remembered that they felt that they needed a lawyer to sit on the board, and because there were no female lawyers in the county, they were obliged to invite a supportive man. She also attested to the fact the men tended to have stronger contacts with community organizations who had money to donate to the shelter, and were, therefore, quite useful in raising money for the organization.

53. *Martin and Millet.*

54. *Minutes of Lanark County Interval House*, April 10, 1979, *LCIH Archives*.

55. This philosophy was created for the brochure of the shelter. *Minutes*, November 27, 1979.

56. *Minutes*, March 18, 1980 and May 13, 1980, *LCIH Archives*.

57. For a discussion of the federal government's funding of projects rather than core funding, see Susan Philips, "How Ottawa Blends: Shifting Government Relationships with Interest Groups," in Francis Abele, ed., *How Ottawa Spends. 1991-1992: The Politics of Fragmentation* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), pp.183-196.

58. The organizers did not assume that The Hub and The Exchange would continue to act as funding resources for the shelter and were careful to approach the respective boards only when the desperately needed money to keep the doors open. The Board of the shelter had a similar relationship with the local Women's Institutes who could not, under their constitution, support another organization with their funds. *Minutes*, November 27, 1979.

59. "Interval House Aided by Local Youngsters," *The Carleton Place Canadian*, Sept. 5, 1979; "Hub to Hold Shower for interval House," *Almonte Gazette*, March 14, 1979; "Update on Lanark County Interval House," *Almonte Gazette*, April 11, 1979.

60. *Martin and Millet.*

61. *Ibid.* Martin and Millet stressed the importance of donations of food during the unfunded years. Donations came from people's gardens, and in some cases, food was confiscated from the neighbouring Ministry of Natural Resources.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Minutes*, June 9 and 30, August 11, 1981, *LCIH Archives*.

64. *Minutes*, October 13, 1981, November 9, 1981 and December 8, 1981, *LCIH Archives*.

65. Annual Reports and newsletters were collected from Interval Houses in Toronto, Thunder Bay, Kingston, and Ottawa. *LCIH Archives*.
66. This conference was attended by delegates from the interval houses and crisis centres in Eganville, Pembroke, Cornwall and Ottawa.
67. "Report on Interval House Day," October 17, 1978, *LCIH Archives*.
68. *Martin and Millet*.
69. "Thoughts re Jobs at Interval House," handwritten and undated document, *LCIH Archives*.
70. Training sessions were required for all who worked or volunteered in the shelter. The organizers encouraged members of the community to participate in the workshops as a consciousness-raising and fundraising strategy. *Minutes*. April 3, 1979, *LCIH Archives*.
71. *Martin and Millet*.
72. "Welcome to Residents" (undated), *LCIH Archives*.
73. *Inter-view*, February 6, 1981, *LCIH Archives*.
74. *Martin and Millet*.

Conclusion

In 1980, the federal government heeded feminist pressure to address spousal assault and through the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, published *Wife-Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle*. The report, written by Linda McLeod was the first federally sponsored study which argued that wife-battering was a social problem which would not end without programs designed to facilitate abused women's departures from violent relationships. McLeod stressed the urgency of finding a solution for spousal assault by contending that "Every year, 1 in 10 Canadian women who are married or in a relationship with a live-in lover are battered."¹

With this shocking statistic, McLeod convinced a wider audience that wife-battering could happen to women from any background, and sought to convince Canadians that the possibility that they knew a women who had been either physically or emotionally abused by an intimate partner was more likely than they may have previously thought. In our discussion about initial community responses to spousal assault in Ottawa, Sinclair remembered the importance of McLeod's report in changing public perceptions about abused women. She argued,

I think what was missing . . . before Linda McLeod's report, was that that person could be me, or my sister, my mother. It was like this was a minority of people. I remember thinking that it's safe for people to think that, it's safe for people to think that women who are abused must be low income or less educated or have addiction problems or swear or whatever . . . because as long as we believe that, we're safe.²

In Lanark County, the organizers of the interval house used McLeod's statistic and the county's Municipal Directory to estimate that in Carleton Place alone 187 of the residents

were battered women to prove that spousal assault was a serious problem in their community.³ The possibility of such extensive violence in their communities was shocking to the residents, and particularly to the women who organized the shelter, because it shattered their conception of the tranquillity of the place in which they lived.

The federal government's acknowledgement that spousal assault was a matter of social import followed a decade of grass-roots feminist organizing to raise awareness about the extent of violence against women in the home, and to pressure municipal, provincial and federal governments to guarantee funding to feminist run shelters and transition homes for abused women. During the 1970s, feminist activists argued that shelters for women who were fleeing from violent relationships played a rudimentary role in women's transition into the community as self-sufficient individuals. Women working in community based organizations established emergency shelters for women in crisis, and built their services on the principles of CR which was based on the premise that bringing women together to discuss their experiences was the most effective way to plan personal strategies for change. Shelters for women were established as radical feminists were beginning to develop a language which linked all forms of violence against women to patriarchal social control.

Interval houses shared similar ideologies and analyses about wife-battering, but during the 1970s they were established locally by women who came to the problem with different conceptions of how to organize and confront their community to change public perceptions about spousal assault. In this thesis I have used the founding of Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton and the Lanark County Interval House to illustrate the differences between feminist services that were determined by the possibilities that the women

perceived in the place in which they were organizing. The political consciousness that developed locally played a key role in the strategies that they devised to raise public awareness about spousal assault, and to develop programs and services for abused women. The records of the shelters reveal that the women who organized interval houses in Ottawa and Carleton Place had different conceptions of their place in their communities as women and as feminists. This affected their perceptions about the political role of shelters for battered women, and subsequently how they placed themselves in the women's movement.

In Ottawa, establishing service provision as a viable form of political action was a point of contention among feminists who were active in the women's liberation movement which was organized through the Ottawa Women's Centre in the early part of the 1970s. Abused women sought assistance from the OWC, and though the collective discussed opening an emergency hostel for women, they did not do so. Many women in the OWC collective believed that greater change was possible, and that the centre should conserve its limited resources for more radical goals which they believed would make permanent changes for women. The organization focused on confronting power structures through the creation of an alternative women's political culture. In later years, women working at the OWC contributed to the effort to end spousal assault by organizing public demonstrations and providing information to women in crisis.

Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton was founded by a group of women who worked in social services, who were active in the community, and who used their connections to secure funding to establish the shelter. From their experience as community workers they were aware of the fact that most of the residents of the shelter would be battered women,

and knew what social agencies the women would need to contact in order to make the transition into the community. They also sought to challenge the existing system by basing their services on feminist principles to demonstrate that the feminist model of women helping women was more effective than the alienating and bureaucratic system provided by the municipality. Though feminist practices which opposed hierarchy and rigid chains of command guided the philosophy of the shelter, they did not definitively govern the organization. Rather, early concepts of what it meant to run an organization in a feminist way were modified according to the needs of the residents. Confrontation was not conducted through protest, rather the collective of the interval house challenged the community through consciousness-raising. In fund-raising projects and in dealings with the RMOC they exposed the shortcomings of existing social services, and simultaneously attempted to make the community feel that they too had a vested interest in the survival of the shelter.

In Lanark County, women began to organize under the banner of women's liberation in the 1972 in order to build their confidence in their ability to make a contribution to their community. When women in Lanark County began to organize the shelter, they were unaware of the violence that occurred in the homes in their communities. The method of ascertaining the need for a shelter for battered women, and the strategies that they adopted to establish the shelter in Carleton Place were defined by the character and strictures of the rural communities in which they lived. Few women disclosed family violence to those outside of their family, and when they did so their experiences were rarely validated. LCIH adhered to the ideologies of other interval houses and argued that women were most suited to helping other women in crisis. This, however, was based on traditional conceptions that

women were naturally supportive and comforting rather than feminist principles of empowerment. Promoting feminism was not among the objectives of the board of Lanark County Interval House, and many of the women who agreed to be on the board did not espouse feminist practises of organization. Over time, some of the women in Lanark County Interval House began to identify as feminists, and to make links between violence which occurred in the homes of their communities, and beyond.

Where women organized to establish shelters for battered women played a role in the development of the strategies and tactics that they devised to raise awareness about spousal assault. Shelters for women in crisis were established to provide physical space for women who need protection from violent husbands, and exposing family violence illustrated that no place could guarantee that it was safe for women. Local perceptions about the extent of spousal assault and its causes determined how the programs offered by the shelters were designed to help women fleeing from violent homes. The range of services offered by shelters, and the women that it would accept as residents depended on the other alternatives available to women in crisis. In Ottawa, the organizers created a service exclusively for battered women, and received support from a feminist community which did not dispute the analysis that IHOC promoted. Hence, choices could be made about which services would not be offered, and the organizers could rely on other organizations to carry out various forms of demonstration and political action. Women organizing in Lanark County, however, did not have a support system that was as far-reaching as their Ottawa counterparts. Existing social services were fewer and more difficult to access because of circumstances that were particular to their rural setting. When new issues arose, the women at LCIH felt obliged to

create a service to address it because there were no other alternatives in their area. How women organized was based on the goals that they envisioned for their organization based on the political consciousness which resulted from their perceptions of women's role in their community, and the impact that feminist organizing had on their identity. Feminist organizing in Ottawa openly challenged assumptions about women and adopted procedures which would enable women to overcome the strictures that had been placed on their development. In Lanark County, not all women accepted feminism as part of their identity, and those who did grounded it in social expectations of women. The common theme that linked shelters to each other, though was the conviction that if women wanted a society in which they could live free from violence, they would have to find that place for themselves.

ENDNOTES

1. Linda McLeod, *Wife-Battering in Canada: The Vicious Cycle*. (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1980).
2. *Sinclair*.
3. "Questions and Presentation for Interval House," [1981], *LCIH Archives*. The same calculation was done for all of the communities in Lanark County, and the organizers estimated that in Lanark County there were 1500 abused women.

Epilogue

Possibility is neither forever nor instant. It is not easy to sustain belief in its efficacy. We can sometimes work long and hard to establish one beachhead of real resistance to the deaths we are expected to live, only to have the beachhead assaulted or threatened by those canards we have been socialized to fear, or by the withdrawal of those approvals that we have been warned to seek for safety.

Audre Lorde¹

During the time that I was conducting research for this thesis, the Ontario Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris called together a group of ten activists involved in service provision for assaulted women, in what it called a consultation, to discuss the *Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario*. Highlights of the report, commonly known as the McGuire Report, had been released prior to this meeting, and activists were shocked by the recommendations. Among them was a limitation of women's stays in shelters to 24 or 48 hours, presumably the amount of time needed to secure a restraining order and a personal security alarm to prevent violent spouses from entering the family home. Outraged by the fact that the consultants hired to write the report had not contacted front-line workers in the process, activists demanded to see the report. Their request was denied, and in what one commentator described as "the wildest and yet most meaningful act of civil disobedience" that she had witnessed, one of the activists "quietly rose from her place, strode to the end of the table, . . . picked up the report and returned to her seat." When the consultants tried to regain the report from the woman, she threw it to the back of the room where it was intercepted by a group of women "who headed straight for the copy shop."²

The report was quickly disseminated to women's centres and services that addressed

violence against women across the province, and ad hoc groups met to prepare responses to it. In Ottawa, a group of women gathered at a community centre in January 1997 to discuss the province's framework for policy on funding to services to assist assaulted women. The morning began with brief discussions of the recommendations from a panel of women representing various services for assaulted women in the area. One of the most effective demonstrations of the short-sightedness of the report was a presentation by a woman who brought in a file folder bursting with the documentation of her attempts to leave her violent husband. The women then divided into focus groups to talk about the report. The panellists and groups expressed anger at the lack of transparency or inclusiveness of the consultation process, and at the report's contention that because alternative services have not ended violence against women, the system is not effective. The Ottawa-Carleton responses concluded that "Saving money at the expense of women's physical, emotional, and spiritual health seems to be the only purpose of the recommendations in the McGuire Report."³

In Lanark County, Dianne Thornhille, the co-ordinator of LCIH prepared a response to Dianne Cunningham, the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, asking to be a part of the consultation process promised in Phase II of the report. The letter addressed the contradictions in the report that most affected rural women. Thornhille pointed out that the report's emphasis on the responsibility of friends and neighbours to assist abused women and to contact authorities in the event of violence would not be effective for many women in their community because they lived in the country "where neighbours cannot see or hear each other." She concluded by stating that "We as women have fought long and hard for services that serve us and our children. . . . We are asking that you respect our expertise and

experience by including us as equal partners in any evaluation, decision-making reform process.”⁴ A month later, Heather Imming, a Carleton Place woman who had survived a brutal attack with a tire-iron by her husband in December 1994, found herself preparing for his release from prison the following month. In a talk that she gave in Ottawa advocating for the rights of victims of violence against women, she stated, in partial jest, that “Should my ex-husband ever be successful in achieving his goal of killing me, that I don’t want a vigil in my memory. I want a demonstration at Queen’s Park and Parliament Hill, decrying the inability of the justice system to protect me, and all of the others before me and all the ones that will follow.”⁵

I asked the women who I interviewed to comment on the impact that the Progressive Conservative cuts have had on the organizations, and to discuss their reactions to the McGuire Report and how they think it will affect the battered women’s shelter movement. Carolyn Sinclair marvelled at how the Ontario government could expect the few shelters that serve battered women, and which operate on shoe-string budgets, to end a problem as expansive as violence against women.⁶ Joan Gullen expressed suspicion about the agenda of the government and described the report as “sinister.” Responding to the recommendations of the report she stated “The fact that they expect women to move on. I mean that’s more complex. . . And the ideal of having the community monitor. That is such a facile way of looking at it.” Gullen believes that the report is “going to make us very vigilant . . . It’s given impetus and some solidarity to the women’s movement. . . Hopefully, it has re-politicized . . . The whole population needs to be politicized.”⁷

In Carleton Place, Olive Millet and Fern Martin were less optimistic about the future

of the movement to end violence against women. The McGuire report, which they described as “vicious” and “evil” is, for them, an indication of the loss of status that feminists once held. Millet stated, “I think we’ve lost the [shelter] movement. . . . I think there are shelters hanging on for dear life . . . I’m not saying there’s not caring and compassion. But basically, we don’t have a movement anymore. We can’t afford it.” Martin agreed, and admitted that without support from the community, Interval House would not have been able to keep its doors open after the government started to cut back funding. Acknowledging its support, she mused “Thank heavens for that. Because every once in a while I get a little window into what would happen if we didn’t have that. And I don’t like what I see too much.”⁸

The report recommends that the Ontario government shift its commitment from services that protect women to those which focus on the prevention of violence against women, and to place the onus of sustaining programs on communities. For victims of spousal assault, the McGuire group promotes community services over those provided by grass-roots feminist organizations because shelters “are highly disruptive to the lives of [the victim] and her children.” Focusing on prevention, the report recommends targeting “high risk groups” through education and early intervention.⁹ The report also suggests that shelters have been established according to a model which have “been organized historically to respond to the needs of white, able-bodied, English-speaking women despite efforts to be more responsive to the diverse and changing needs of women who are victims of violence.”¹⁰ The report does not incorporate any of the strategies and adjustments in structure made by shelters to address these shortcomings. Because violence against women is “pervasive and costly,” and since services for assaulted women have not decreased the its occurrence, the

report concludes that the current system is inadequate, and recommends

Incorporating services for women victims of violence into existing community services as a means of gaining cost efficiencies, and creating services that are not necessarily identified as being for abused women. It does not make sense to set up a new infrastructure when the existing community service infrastructure is one that provides the most easy access to women. Using community health centres, community centres, or multi-service centres could help to create additional cost efficiencies. . . . As well, friends and neighbours can be advised of the situation and asked to phone the police if there are breaches of restraining orders. Violence prevention then becomes much more a community responsibility.¹¹

The options for assaulted women proposed in the McGuire report mirror those which were available to women in the 1970s. Before there were shelters for women fleeing from violent homes, women turned to doctors, social service agencies and the police for assistance. Their pleas were often ignored; when the 'existing community service infrastructure' did respond, it did so in a manner that was insufficient because it neither addressed the violence, nor attempted to empower women. In response, feminists developed services and strategies for change based on an analytical framework for violence against women that exposes the barriers placed in front of abused women by social services, legislative and judicial practices and the tenacious dogma that women are responsible for acts of violence perpetrated against them. Empowering women escaping from violent relationships by teaching them the skills to develop tactics to overcome these systemic barriers has been central to feminist solutions to help victims of violence.

The McGuire Report usurps the feminist vision of a non-violent world, but does not share its commitment to working towards equality for women. It places the onus for the perseverance of violence against women on grass-roots feminist organizations, arguing that because feminist services concentrated on protecting women in crisis, too many resources

have been diverted from programs seeking to prevent violence against women. Once again, women are being blamed for violence against women, if only by what they have failed to do. To encourage strategies which will 'promote change' the report recommends that funding for projects should be based on proven effectiveness. Monetary costs outweigh human costs. In the objectives of the report, the Ontario government posits itself as a leader in anti-violence initiatives to ensure that the system is fiscally responsible and accountable. Under this sort of leadership, it is no wonder that Fern Martin has decided to organize meetings to envision a world where women and men are equal because she no longer has an idea of what equality looks like.¹²

Ending spousal assault has not lost its urgency within the movement against violence against women, and today it is a cornerstone of the women's movement. When women began to establish emergency hostels for women, not all who were active in grass-roots organizations agreed that services were political, and to some service provision could not be a part of radical social change because it merely reproduced traditional notions about women either as caregivers or dependent on others for their well-being. Hence, women who did not advocate service provision worked towards more radical social change which they argued, would eliminate the need for support services for women. Similar logic is reflected in the analysis presented by the women who wrote the McGuire report. The crucial difference though is that in the 1970s, criticisms of women-run services were part of a process of creating a distinctively feminist politic which reflected the aspirations of the women's liberation movement. Government resistance to fund feminist alternatives in the 1970s demonstrated that the provision of services was part of the movement for radical

change. As Jillian Ridington argued in 1985, "In a feminist utopia . . . there would be no need for rape relief centres or for shelters for battered women. . . . In the real world, all of these services are vital and must be the first priority for the women's movement."¹³

In light of accusations of the McGuire Report, perhaps it is appropriate to pause for a moment and reflect on the standards by which success has been measured in the women's movement. In an analysis of the Domestic Assault Intervention Program (DAIP) in Minnesota, Ellen Pence and Melanie Shepard suggest a different analysis of the inability of services to end spousal assault. They argue,

If our practice is rooted in feminist theory, then realization that this model will not eradicate battering should neither surprise nor discourage us. Battering is rooted in a culture of domination, a culture that does not celebrate our differences in race, age, sexual preference, physical and mental abilities, and gender, but instead uses these differences to exploit and dehumanize.¹⁴

Until feminist activists in the 1970s began to develop frameworks which made connections between personal circumstances and the social restrictions imposed on women's ability to make choices, spousal assault was a shameful and isolating experience. The McGuire report undermines the feminist analysis which identifies discrimination as the reason why violence against women persists by proposing to target groups which studies and surveys have shown to be more vulnerable to violence. This subverts the political nature of private violence and threatens to reimpose the stigma once attached to spousal assault by perpetuating stereotypes based on age, marital status, disability, and past experience.

Pence and Shepard use their discussion of the DAIP to illustrate that models for the prevention of spousal assault must be open to revision and change because "each community [needs] to experience its own learning process, from which would emerge a theory and

philosophy upon which to base its intervention.”¹⁵ The McGuire Report makes a case for a centralized method of creating standards for, and assessing local services because shelters “have been built on urban models [that are] often not appropriate for rural and northern communities.”¹⁶ This contention opposes the history of the founding of feminist services. In the 1970s, shelters for abused women were initiated at the grass-roots, community level. The goals of the shelter were determined by the women who came together to found them, who were influenced by the various political ideologies that they brought with them to the organization. What was possible for them was determined by the place in which they were organizing, and the connections that organizers had, and forged, in their own communities. Their efforts supplemented local social services which were deemed to be inadequate, often even by those working in them, and raised local consciousness about the need for concerted and public solutions to alleviate the isolated and private suffering of abused women and their children.

The founding of hostels for women in crisis in the 1970s is often attributed to radical feminist organizing. To be sure, the creation of alternative living arrangements was a part of the creation of an alternative women’s culture at that juncture in women’s liberation organizing. In Toronto, the mobilization of the women’s liberation movement behind Nellie’s when it faced closure has created an image of the shelter as a bastion of uncompromising, confrontational, and dyed-in-the wool feminists. The women who organized to end spousal assault in Ottawa and in Lanark County have created different feminist politics which are rooted in the places in which they organize. Their sense of what was, and is, possible has been determined by their sense of their efficacy in their

neighbourhoods and beyond; their strategies and practices guided by what they deemed the people in their communities would support. In both communities though, the politics of the shelter have engaged with municipal governments and have sought to establish a relationship with the community based on cooperation. Though their politics differed from the confrontational approach established by Nellie's and the movement to end violence against women in the 1970s, it is marked by the same tenacity and dedication to the cause of maintaining a safe place for women in crisis. The words of Nellie McClung, which Nellie's embraced as its slogan, can also be used to sum up the activism of the women in Ottawa and Lanark County:

Never retract, never retreat, never apologize. Get the thing done and let them howl.

ENDNOTES

1. Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury" in *Sister Outsider*. (Freedom: The Crossing Press, 1984), p. 38.
2. Michele Landsberg, "Women's activists revolt over minister's 'dishonesty,'" *The Toronto Star*, December 15, 1996.
3. "Ottawa-Carleton Community Response to the 'Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario,'" January 1997. A copy is available at Women's Place/Place Aux Femmes, Ottawa, Ontario. Hereinafter, *Women's Place*.
4. "Lanark County Interval House Response to Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario," February 26, 1997. *Women's Place*.
5. Her speech was broadcast on Radio Noon, CBC Radio, March 27, 1997.
6. *Sinclair*.
7. *Gullen*.
8. *Martin and Millet*.
9. The report identifies "pregnant women, young new mothers, young couples (under 24) living common-law, recently separated couples, women with disabilities and children who witness violence or are victims of violence" as high risk groups. *Ibid.*, "Executive Summary" vii.
10. *Ibid.*, iii.
11. The McGuire Consultant Group, *Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario*. (Toronto) December, 1996, p. 51. A copy of the report is available at Women's Place.
12. Interview with Fern Martin and Olive Millet.
13. Jillian Ridington, "Providing Services the Feminist Way," in *Fitzgerald, et al.*, 105.
14. Ellen Pence and Melanie Shepard, "Integrating Feminist Theory and Practice: The Challenge of the Battered Women's Movement" in *Yllö and Bograd*, p. 296.
15. *Ibid.*, 296.
16. *McGuire*, p. iii.

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I PRIMARY SOURCES

(1) Privately Held Collections

It is not possible to give a precise references for the documents that I perused from the privately held collections to which I was granted permission because the files have not been catalogued. In many cases, documents have been placed into reused file-folders with names that do not correspond with what is held inside. In other cases, the documents are not placed in file-folders, but are simply stored in boxes. Hence, I only provide an idea of what is contained in the collections of Interval House of Ottawa Carleton and Lanark County Interval House.

(1) Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton Records. Ottawa, Ontario.

The records that I was granted permission to were those which dealt with the business of the organization. I did not request nor look at any client records. When IHOC restructured in 1995, the outgoing staff placed the records dating from 1976 into storage in the basement of the shelter. When I interviewed Carolyn Sinclair, she mentioned that she had tried to place what she considered to be historical records into a clearly marked box which I did not find. She mentioned that other researchers had expressed interest in those records, and it is possible that they were not in the shelter when I was conducting this research.

Many of the boxes contain returned cheques, tax receipts and other financial records. I located an incomplete run of minutes from 1976-1986 in one of these boxes, and later found a run that was in better order, and was more complete. Most of these minutes are from Board meetings, though some workshop minutes and collective minutes and Annual General Meeting minutes are included in this run. Appended to the more recent AGM minutes are reports from the committees that operated during that year; for example in 1983 these include financial, direct action, public education and speaking, fundraising and police committees.

Official documents such as grant applications, leases, loan applications, by-laws, applications to the municipality for charitable status and per diem contracts are stored together. Financial statements from 1976-1995 are stored with these documents. The only correspondence which was useful for this research was thank you letters sent to donors, and fundraising committee letters requesting donations; these letters also were used as updates for the shelter, and as a venue for public education. Posters and notices for fundraising events from 1977 on are also kept together.

Other documents which I noticed, but did not peruse because they fell out of the

temporal and thematic parameters of my thesis include: letters of resignation from staff and board members, reports about the Immigrant Women's Committee to End Wife Abuse, log books, notes from meetings with the Ministry of Community and Social Services in 1984 to negotiate stabilization of funds and binders containing correspondence from OAITH. This is not an exhaustive list since I did not pull many of the boxes from the crawl space since they held documents that were produced after 1985, which was the original cut off date proposed for this paper.

(ii) Lanark County Interval House Archives. Carleton Place, Ontario.

Fern Martin produced two boxes in which she has placed records pertaining to the founding of the shelter. One of the documents in this box is a scrapbook about the Hub Extension Program which was established to determine the need for and found Lanark County Interval House in October 1978. In this scrapbook are newspaper clippings, church bulletins, and posters for the fundraising events of the shelter.

Correspondence files include letters of support written for the shelter by members of the community and former residents. They also hold letters and reports received from shelters and women's centres in other communities, and drafts of responses written by board members. Also included in these files are a few poems and letters written by residents about how the shelter helped them reorganize their lives. Other correspondence includes letters to local members of federal, provincial and municipal governments pressuring for funding, requests to public figures for contributions to or speak at fund raisers, and their responses.

The shelter has stored copies of flyers for The Hub and LCIH. Reports from events sponsored by these organizations and newspapers which contain articles from these events have been saved together. Public relations files include notes and reports from public education programs dating from 1979, posters for fundraising events, kits for organizing a fund raiser for the shelter and information from a conference about family violence, *Hidden Violence*, which took place in 1980.

Official documents include the needs study, personnel policies, the constitution drafted in 1982, and a submission to the Ontario Standing Committee on Social Development about Wife-Battering. The files also contain David Peterson's 1981 Private Member's Bill, "The Homes for Abused Spouses Act," and responses to it not only from LCIH, but also IHOC and OAITH. The files pertaining to OAITH contain reports from founding meetings and early conferences.

The shelter holds a complete run of minutes from January 1979, which are stored chronologically, and which appear to be a complete run. Original copies of "Inter-view" columns which were sent to all of the newspapers in Lanark County are also kept in binders, in chronological order and are held at the offices of the shelter.

(2) Interviews

Gullen, Joan, Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton. Interview by author, May 26, 1997, Ottawa. Tape Recording.

Martin, Fern and Olive Millet, Lanark County Interval House. Interview by author, May 27, 1997, Carleton Place. Tape Recording.

Sinclair, Carolyn. Interview by author, June 23, 1997, Ottawa. Tape Recording.

(3) Archives

Canadian Women's Movement Archives/ Archives canadiennes du mouvement des femmes, University of Ottawa, Library Network.

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 Nellie's (Toronto)
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