CHALLENGES, CHANGES AND CONSTRAINTS: TRANSFORMING THE RESPONSE OF THE CANADIAN STATE TO WIFE/WOMAN ABUSE

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ABSTRACT

This work explores the process of social change through an examination of the interaction between the Canadian state and the women's movement at the macro, mezzo and micro level concerning the issue of woman abuse. Using an expanding case study, an analysis of a small family service agency, a medium size Canadian city and the parliamentary and public hearing process are combined to examine how feminist challenges at various levels have interacted to transform the response of the state to woman abuse.

In addition, this work examines the effectiveness of various feminist approaches to creating change. I challenge the dichotomy between mainstreaming and disengagement (Adamson et al ,1988) arguing that when it comes to effective action it is not a question of 'either/or' but rather 'which one, when'. The conclusion of the work is that challenge is required from many locations, in many different forms if change is to occur.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Violence is a potent tool of oppression and violence against women is one of its most effective forms (Stanko, 1993). In 1975 I was newly married to a man who, over our one-year marriage, physically assaulted me on several occasions. My first response was to be frightened but then I engaged in a thorough self-examination. What had I done to bring this on? When I told friends and family they didn't know how to respond. These very caring people were concerned but none of them were outraged (or even surprised). My husband also abused me emotionally but at the time there were no words to describe what was happening to me. I finally left him when he told me I could not return to my studies at university. I was very fortunate that my abusive partner, after harassing me for several months, finally moved to another province. If the same thing were to happen to one of my daughters today, she would find family and friends who would not only be outraged but who could help her to access a wide range of services. She would be less likely to blame herself and more likely to charge her partner.

Women are beaten, screamed at, and threatened every day by those who are supposed to love them and we, as a society, have just begun to come to terms with this reality. It is only within the last twenty years that the issue of

wife/woman abuse (also known as domestic violence, family violence or wife battering) has gained public recognition. However, within these twenty years tremendous changes have occurred. In the late 1970's a woman who was being abused by her partner would have found little support and few services. If she recognized that she was being abused, it is likely that she would have blamed herself or been blamed by her friends, family and any professionals she might have gone to for help. Wife/woman[1] abuse was considered a private matter, the result of individual problems. Today, the same woman is more likely to be supported by her friends and family. She is able (in most places) to access a place of safety, to expect protection from the police, to get counseling services and to move on to a new life. The issue of wife/woman abuse has been brought into the public realm. As well, an understanding of wife/woman abuse as a problem embedded in unequal gender relations has gained some currency, although this point continues to be hotly debated. Such changes can mean the difference between life and death, misery and a chance for happiness.

These changes have partially been a result of the response of the Canadian state[2] to the issue of wife/woman abuse. In the period between 1980 and 1995 the official position of the federal, provincial and municipal governments towards wife/woman abuse changed dramatically in terms of the definition of the issue and the funding available for service provision. This had an enormous impact on

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[1] I use wife/woman abuse to denote what is often referred to as domestic violence, woman abuse, and/or violence against women. Please see chapter two for a more detailed defintion.

[2] What I mean by the Canadian state will be outlined in Chapter Two.

local, community service delivery, not only in the development of new services but in changing the direction of existing service agencies.

This dissertation seeks to explore this process of social change. I argue that these changes have come about as a result of the challenges to the state made by feminist activists in the Canadian women's movement. They have demanded that the state recognize violence against women, in general, and wife/woman abuse, in particular. As well they have insisted that a feminist definition of these issues be adopted. These struggles have occurred at all levels of the state apparatus, including the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government as well as within local state agencies.

I begin by examining the particular sites of struggle around definitions of wife/woman abuse at the federal level and the establishment of funding at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. In examining the federal government, I have focused on parliamentary committee hearings and the National Panel on Violence Against Women. Such venues provided a public access to the process of problem definition and agenda setting. In addition I investigate how problem definition has interacted with the provision of funding at the federal, provincial (in Ontario) and municipal (Hamilton-Wentworth) levels. This work provides the context for an exploration of change at the local/community level.

I focus on the local/community level for two reasons. First, examinations of social change tend to focus at the macro level and therefore theory about social change at the micro level is underdeveloped. Secondly, women face abuse in

their own homes in their communities. They do not look to federal or provincial politicians to help them, they look to services at the local or micro level. It is here where the solutions to violence are worked out. Social change in the area of wife/woman abuse has been investigated at the local level but usually in terms of particular programmes or approaches (Pence, 1993; Luton, 1996). Instead, I am looking at how the issue is defined (and therefore how service is provided) at the local level. My approach is similar to that of Jan Barnsley (1985) and Leslie Kenny and Warren Magnusson (1993), who have explored the struggle over defining the issue of wife/woman abuse at the local level in the Vancouver area. I chose Hamilton[3] as the community I would investigate. Hamilton is my own location, the site of my experiences and it has undergone many of the changes I wished to examine. The definition of wife/woman abuse accepted by community service providers was transformed from a traditional approach emphasizing the personal and private nature of wife/woman abuse to a feminist conception which recognized wife/woman abuse as a public problem embedded in unequal gender relations. In addition, during this time period Hamilton had a vibrant women's movement which prioritized the issue of wife/woman abuse and was willing to press local government and service providers to accept a feminist definition.

Finally, I have examined how issues of definition and service provision are addressed at the micro level, that is, in some of the smallest units of social

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[3] Hamilton, Ontario is a medium sized city located in southern, central Ontario on the shores of Lake Ontario. This city is particularly interesting in terms of its feminist movement against wife/woman abuse because of some very public conflicts in the community over how to address

organization, social service agencies. These agencies are either local divisions of the state, such as welfare offices or are related to the state through third party service provision agreements, such as family service agencies. Feminists within these organizations have contested traditional approaches to women that reinforce male dominance (Halford, 1992; Charles, 1995). These struggles are particularly important when providing services to abused women.

I chose Catholic Family Services to investigate because, for almost three years, I was involved in the changes that occurred there. As well, over the last fifteen years its management has moved from ignoring the problem of wife/woman abuse to supporting the provision of some of the most innovative service for both men and women in the province. As in the community, a group of dedicated feminists within the agency challenged management to change the service approach. I was one of these feminists.

The aims of this research project were as follows:

1. To contribute to our understanding of the process of social change, particularly at the local level.
2. To provide a more detailed account of the changes feminists have achieved in the area of wife/woman abuse at various levels and to examine how these changes have interacted to impact service to abused women.
3. To provide concrete information to activists in order to help inform choices of tactics and practice. In particular, I wish to assist in the development of an analysis of change that would provide insights into how traditional agencies could be convinced to provide service from a feminist perspective.
4. To contribute to theoretical discussions of political struggle at the local level.

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wife/woman abuse issues and some very tragic and sensational murders of women (these issues are more fully discussed in chapter 5).

5. To do all the above from a feminist perspective, attempting to bring my personal experience and my knowledge as an activist to the feminist academic project.

1.2 Exploring Social Change and the Issue of Wife/woman Abuse.

The Canadian women's movement resurfaced publicly in the 1960's and began to challenge the oppression of women. By the late 1970's one of the central issues for the movement was violence against women (Cohen, 1993). Violence against women is often described as a continuum, ranging from catcalls on the street to murder. I have chosen to focus on a particular aspect of violence against women, wife/woman abuse, because it calls pivotal aspects of masculine dominance into question. For example, bringing the violence that women have suffered in their homes into the public realm has challenged the public/private split in social and political relations.

One of the ways to investigate social change in this area is to examine the challenges feminists have brought to the federal and provincial government. Gillian Walker (1991) and others (Currie, 1990; Levan, 1995; Gotell, 1997) have studied the various parliamentary committees and the National Panel on Violence Against Women, that have examined the issue of wife/woman abuse. I build on this work, focusing on issues of problem definition and agenda setting and outline what I see as the progressive influence of feminist thinking in these areas. In addition, funding of services for abused women is a central concern for feminist activists. It is not only the amount of funding that is important but also how such

funds are allocated. For example, one issue of concern is the impact that funding can have on feminist services. Tracing the state's funding decisions provides an opportunity to observe how the state may act to constrain change.

These same questions are relevant for the local level although the focus here is on both problem definition and service provision. In Hamilton, feminist activists used a variety of tactics to promote a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse with varying levels of success. I agree with Dominique Masson (1997) that how we define a problem is integral to how we decide to address it. Therefore, at the local level, ensuring the acceptance of a feminist definition was a central focus. In many communities, committees were set up to co-ordinate service to abused women. These committees became the arenas for local struggles over the definition of wife/woman abuse. In Hamilton, these struggles were particularly eventful.

The changes at the federal, provincial and local levels impacted on service provision. This work traces the evolution of services to abused women, which were related to changes in definition and funding. The movement from a social problem approach to a feminist one affected the service that abused women received. In 1980, a woman seeking help at Catholic Family Services would probably not have thought of herself as an abused woman and the agency would not have identified her as one. Instead they would have seen the abuse as evidence of marital dysfunction, a product of the deviance of her partner (alcoholism, difficulty with anger), or herself (masochistic personality, shrew).

Marital counseling would have been the recommended treatment. If her partner refused to attend marital counseling then the focus would have been on individual counseling which would have focused on helping the woman to deal with her own dysfunctions and/or on how to live with her partner's. If the same woman came to Catholic Family Services in 1995 there was a much greater likelihood that the violence she was suffering would be identified. She would then have had available to her a host of choices to help her escape her violence and deal with its consequences. Her partner would have been considered responsible for the abuse rather than herself. Counselors would also have been clear that the abuse was a product of a power imbalance that not only existed in her own partnership but also in society. Group counseling that would confront his violence and hold him responsible for the abuse would be offered to her partner. One of the major questions in this work is how did such a remarkable change take place in such a short period of time?

1.3 Choosing Tactics - Engaging the State?

Although the state is a central player in the creation and maintenance of masculine dominance, feminist activists are often of two minds when it comes to the question, should we engage the state? Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988), identify these stances as mainstreaming (yes we should) and disengagement (no we should not). Although maintaining distance from the state (disengagement) has helped to ensure that feminist philosophies and practices stay intact, feminists who wish to gain resources to meet women's everyday, concrete needs have found

it necessary to take a mainstream approach and engage the state. The emphasis in Canadian investigations of state engagement has been on the negative aspects of taking a mainstream approach. Feminists researchers have detailed how receiving state funding, although important, has essentially changed the nature of feminist service organizations (Ng 1990, Christainsen-Ruffman, 1990, Barnsley, 1995). Gillian Walker's (1991) examination of the state's response to wife/woman abuse in the 1980's describes a process of bureaucratization and re-definition that resulted in the assimilation of the wife/woman abuse issue into the state apparatus. Other feminist researchers, such as Jane Ursel (1997) and Alicia Schreader (1990) argue that the state is an essential source of resources and that the women's movement has succeeded in obtaining such things as legislation and funding in order to make change by meeting the needs of women. An analysis of the efforts by the women's movement to deal with the issue of wife/woman abuse, at the various social levels, has allowed me to explore how and when each of these approaches, or some combination of them, is effective.

The terms, mainstreaming and disengagement, also are used to identify those who work inside the state and those who are outside the state (respectively). The dichotomy that is often drawn between these two groups can be damaging to the process of achieving change. Co-operation between inside and outside feminists has been essential to achieving change in some situations (Dale and Foster, 1986; Sullivan, 1997). The relationship between 'inside' and 'outside'

feminist activists is one of the themes in my investigation of feminist actions in trying to end wife/woman abuse.

1.4 Examining Change at the Micro Level.

Transformation on a small scale is becoming a focus for those who are interested in examining social change. For example, some of the most interesting new research on social movements is about the importance of identity formation and face-to-face contact in social change (Masson, 1997; Arnold, 1995; Mueller, 1992). The feminist movement, in particular, has been important in bringing the private and personal into the political realm. This has been essential to understanding such issues as wife/woman abuse which occur, for the most part, in the private realm.

In addition, the local or community level is an important site of investigation. In fact, much of what activists do occurs at the local level. However, the majority of theoretical conceptions of the state and the women's movement have been developed at a macro level (with the exception of writers such as Foucault (1980) and Smith (1987)). In order to begin theorizing change at a local and personal level, this work develops a definition of the state that draws on postmodernist ideas of the state as fragmented and amorphous. Therefore the state can be seen as a much more malleable structure that might have different forms at different levels. What feminists might engage at the national level in the form of the federal government is likely to be quite different from what they find

when they picket a local police station, but each is recognizable as a 'piece' of the state.

This work sifts through the available feminists definitions of the state from structured definitions that owe a lot to Marxist definitions (Burstyn, 1985), to those which claim the state had no structure (Brown, 1992), and others who feel that the process of defining the state was a waste of time (Allen, 1990) to create an eclectic definition that combines the continually mutable nature of the state with a recognition of its tangible character.

It is important to understand that the Canadian women's movement also operates at many social levels. However, when we speak of the women's movement in Canada research tends to focus on the macro level. When examining the women's movement at the local level, researchers are inclined to focus on feminist organizations (although the women's movement includes many other types of groups as well as individuals). The conception of the women's movement used in this work includes a wide range of individuals, groups and organizations that work to end masculine dominance.

At the most micro level of change, we have the language we use to describe and structure our world. I have integrated some post-modern ideas about the importance of language into this work (Masson 1997, Weedon, 1999). For the issue of wife/woman abuse, language use, or what social policy analysts call problem definition, is fundamental. As mentioned above, once wife/woman abuse is recognized the state attempts to define the issue as a social problem.

Such a definition includes the acceptance of wife/woman abuse as a problem worthy of public attention but retains the emphasis on individual responsibility. This results in an approach that relies on social control. This minimizes any disruptive potential the issue may have for the state (Morgan, 1981). Such a definition is evident in the terms domestic violence or family violence. In contrast, a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse recognizes that the oppression of women is central to the problem and that wife/woman abuse is therefore a political issue. Feminist approaches to wife/woman abuse are intended to disrupt the current social order in order to redress women's inequality (Schechter, 1982; Prieur, 1995; Stout and McPhail, 1998). The difference between a social problem and a feminist approach to wife/woman abuse is another central theme in this work.

1.4 A Feminist Academic Project

Like many feminists I have chosen to investigate a topic that has been central in my life. The abuse in my own life led me in later years to become an activist in the anti-violence movement. I joined the mainstream when I accepted a job at Catholic Family Services (C.F.S.) working with abused women and their abusive partners. I was fortunate be involved in some of the changes that occurred there. I was fascinated by the fact that a traditional, social service agency could change so much in such a short a time. As an activist I wanted to know not only how this was possible, but, also, how to replicate the process. The journey to understanding the processes responsible for the changes at C.F.S. has

been long and convoluted and has allowed me to engage with some of the central issues facing the women's movement in Canada.

This work is necessarily embedded in the political process of creating knowledge. Like the feminists I have interviewed, my aim has been to work from and to express a counter-hegemonic position. Although I have worked from a marginalized position based in my gender, I have also enjoyed the privilege that being white, heterosexual and able-bodied, brings. This has meant that I have had the ability to both conduct this research and have my interpretation of events become official. I have attempted to be reflexive so that these considerations have been part of my work. This means that in addition to challenging various hegemonic practices I have also worked to challenge myself. The draft version of this work has been made available to women in the community to ensure that the work is grounded in activism and in many cases their suggestions have increased the soundness of this work.

This dissertation is organized in the following way. In chapter two I explore some of the central concepts that are used throughout this work, including feminism, the state, the women's movement and the relationship between them particularly in the area of wife/woman abuse. Chapter three explains the methodologies I chose to explore this question and my reasoning for doing so. This chapter also embeds my research process in a political context. Chapter four outlines the larger context by examining the response of the federal, provincial and municipal governments to wife/woman abuse. The evolution of a public,

government definition of wife/woman abuse is outlined as well as the funding directions that were taken. The balance between gains and losses when engaging the state at this level are explored. Chapter five, moves down to the next level of investigation, the community. The struggle between the feminist movement and the state at the community or local level is analyzed to discover, first, how the context created by the formal state impacted on the local level and, secondly, how feminists challenged the local state and were then contained by it. Finally, the impact of these struggles on the community is described. Chapter six is a delineation of the changes that occurred at Catholic Family Services and a mapping of the events that made the changes possible. My conclusions and their implications for future work are contained in the final chapter

CHAPTER TWO: TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT: WIFE/WOMAN ABUSE, THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE STATE.

Wife/woman abuse is a complex and difficult issue. This work endeavours to explore interactions between the Canadian state and the Canadian women's movement in order to understand changes in the state's response to wife/woman abuse. One of the major tasks of this chapter is to explicate the terms and concepts that will be used throughout this work. Although phrases like 'the state', 'the women's movement' and even 'violence against women' are assumed to have commonly understood meanings, this chapter is intended to unwrap, scrutinize and delineate these terms. The chapter begins with an exploration of social movements in general and the Canadian women's movement, in particular. Unfortunately, there have been few attempts to define the Canadian women's movement and hence, my own definition rests, in large part, on the work of Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin & Margaret McPhail (1988) who have done the most extensive work in this area. As well, their conceptions of grassroots versus institutional organizing as well as mainstream versus disengaged action speak to the relationship of the Canadian women's movement to the state.

The state has been a central subject for sociologists but feminists theorists have been slow to enter the discussion. Feminists, in many ways, have built on established theories of the state, but considering gender as a central issue, necessitates new ways of looking at the state. This is particularly evident when examining the local level of social organization, the family and the individual. There is much debate over what the state is and how it functions. The definition of the state that emerges in this chapter draws on a combination of the work of several feminist theorists. It attempts to identify the state at the mezzo and micro levels as well as the macro.

The relationship of the Canadian Women's Movement to the state is explored in order to begin to unravel one of the most pertinent questions in Canadian feminism: in trying to create change, should we engage the state or not? The issue of working inside the state versus outside the state is examined and the hierarchy of political action (that is what is the 'right' response to the state) that seems to exist is questioned.

These understandings are then applied to the central issue of this project, violence against women. There have been substantial changes in our understanding of violence against women over the last fifteen years. The issue of wife/woman abuse, a particular form of violence against women, illustrates how central issues of masculine dominance such as the private/ public split can be engaged by the feminist movement, through the state, to create substantial change in society.

2.2 Working for Change - Social Movements

Before moving on to an examination of the Canadian women's movement, I will begin with an overview of social movements in general. Classical social movement theorists such as Geschwender and Kornhausser (as cited in McAdam, 1997), explain the emergence of social movements by focusing on the psychological needs of the individual and their actions at the micro level. They attempt to explain why individuals join movements. They argue that those who have experienced status inconsistency or social isolation, as a result of societal strain, join social movements to ameliorate these feelings. While this approach provides explanations of individual motivation, it is unable to answer bigger questions about social movement formation, structure or development.

The second classical approach, Marxism, focuses on social movements as an expression of the conflict between classes, particularly on how the proletariat or working class can capture the state from the capitalist class in order to address the inequalities of capitalism (Darnovsky, et. al., 1995: vii-x). Classical Marxism deals with both individual motivation and larger issues of social movement formation. The focus on the working class has tended to exclude the examination of the involvement of members of other classes in social movements as well as issues such as gender, race and sexuality (although this is changing).

A more general approach, which focuses on the development of social movements at the macro level, is resource mobilization theory. This theory holds that social movements are organized responses to opportunities to gain a bigger

piece of the societal pie (Costain, 1992: 6). Resource mobilization theorists endeavour to understand how movements structure themselves, how they gain access to resources and what practical impact they have on policy (Mayer and Roth, 1995: 299). While resource mobilization theory begins to look at social movements as a whole, it does not adequately explain why individuals join social movements.

The political process model tries to answer some of the questions raised by classical and resource mobilization theory. Political process theory suggests that the appearance of a social movement is the result of several factors which combine to provide an opportunity for change. For example, there might be a shift in political opportunities created by the aftermath of war or industrialization, and/or a transformation of the understanding individuals have of themselves and their place in society (Costain, 1992). The political process model is an attempt to include both the individual in the movement (micro) and the movement itself (macro). However, like the above theories, the political process model focuses on claiming a 'piece of the pie', that is, a piece of social and political power in its existing form.

In the 1960's several social movements - the civil rights, peace and women's movements began to appear. These 'new' social movements challenged the assertion that those who joined social movements were only from the margins or the working class. Many of the individuals who joined them were not the marginalized and disaffected. In fact, many of them were young and middle

class. In contrast to the assertions of resource mobilization theory, many members of the movement did not maximize their share of societal resources by joining social movements. Rather, they dropped out and joined communes or risked jail sentences during civil disobedience.

For the most part, these movements were/are not after a 'piece of the pie'. They were interested in the transformation of the 'pie'[4]. Much of the action taken by members of these 'new' social movements[5] was and continues to be focused outside the traditional political realm. New social movements do not appear to be interested only in accessing political power as it stands but are more interested in creating new political spaces in the realms of the private and the individual (Darnovsky, Epstein and Flacks, 1995, xiv)[6]. Such movements illustrate that change can be accomplished through actions at the micro level. For example, Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier have examined feminist lesbian mobilization and argue that one of the most important aspects of the new social movements is the incorporation of the understanding that power operates at the personal level so that "collective self-transformation is itself a major strategy of political change"

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[4] This is not to say that there were not parts of the 'new' social movements that were after a larger piece of the pie. For example, in the women's movement Liberal feminists often work to ensure that women have access to more of the powerful positions in government that are usually occupied by men. My point is that this is not seen as the central focus of 'new' social movements.

[5] Of course, as Lorna Weir (1993) points out, the new social movements are not really new. They have their roots in previous social movements. For example, the women's movement has its antecedents in the Suffragette and Temperance movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

[6] Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall (1987), in their book *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850,* trace how the ideology of the nuclear family was developed with the advance of capitalism. The family home was portrayed as a space outside of the public realm and therefore separate from political machinations. Feminist activists of the second wave have challenged this ideology illustrating how social and political systems such as race, class and gender structure the family.

(Taylor and Whittier, 1992: 110). Carol McClung Mueller (1992) discusses the transformation of "hegemonic meanings and loyalties" occurring at the level of face-to-face interaction, not only within social movements but with those actors with whom social movement members interact. This emphasis on the personal as a location of change and the individual as an agent is evident in feminism (Masson, 1997; Arnold, 1995), particularly in the politicizing of spaces that were once seen as private. For example, Meg Luxton (1980) and Arlie Hoschild (1989) have politicized the nuclear family with feminist studies that question 'natural' structures in the private realm.

As well, new social movements have developed ways of strategizing, which meld theory and practice. For example, in his article on affinity groups, Sturgeon identifies something he calls "direct theory". He argues that the new social movements, rather than developing theory in a formal way, are theorizing through practice in the structures that they are building and the political practices that they choose. Their work provides "a *lived* analysis of contemporary domination and resistance" (emphasis added, Sturgeon, 1995: 36). For example, many feminist organizations have a non-hierarchical structure. These structures are developed and worked through 'on the ground' as opposed to the developing new models theoretically and then implementing them. William Carroll (1992: 7) sums up what is new, in emphasis rather than practice, about the new social movements,

> [they are] emergent forms of praxis with the potential to transform both everyday life and larger institutional practices....new social movements are viewed as instances of cultural and political praxis through which new identities are formed, new ways of life are tested, and new forms of community prefigured

The Canadian Women's Movement is one of the new social movements, creating original praxis in new political spaces.

2.3 Feminisms

Feminism is the driving theoretical, philosophical and practical underpinning of the women's movement. Defining feminism is not an easy task because feminism is constantly growing and is both historically and culturally specific. However, for the purposes of this paper it is important to at least set boundaries in order to establish a common understanding of the term feminism. Perhaps it is best to begin with some common themes. A key element in feminism is the belief that the superior position of men in societies is not a natural occurrence but rather a product of social structures and processes that are organized to oppress women to the benefit of men, or, in other words, to maintain male dominance. This is accompanied by the belief that change is possible and a society should be created where equality exists. As bell hooks (1988: 27) states, feminism without action is not possible although that action can be undertaken in a variety of ways. Feminist approaches begin to differ when these general principles are developed theoretically or applied in practice. As Adamson, et.al., (1988: 9) state

> within these broad parameters of commonality are extensive differences: in political strategy, in vision about what constitutes women's liberation, in attitudes towards men, in understanding the roots of women's oppression, in setting priorities, in identifying constituencies and allies.

One can think of feminism as a continuum, a circle or perhaps in some three dimensional form. There is a large diversity of definitions of feminism with each woman developing what works for her with the commonalties noted above as boundaries. In providing descriptions of three types of feminism, liberal, radical and socialist feminism, Alison Jaggar (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984) provides an initial form of signposting, a way to establish possible points of reference for purposes of discussion and comparison. For example, the point identified as Liberal feminism is seen as emphasizing equality of opportunity and relying on the present structures of pluralist democracy to provide the changes necessary to achieve equality. In this view, it is not necessary to fundamentally change society only to address existing inequalities. One can achieve such change through established channels such as lobbying or involvement in political parties.

Radical feminists, in contrast, are described as seeing the oppression of women by men, as based in women's biology. Consequently, fundamental changes are necessary in society. Such changes can be accomplished by establishing a separate women's culture that emphasizes women's values. This is done through the establishment of feminist social services such as rape crisis centres, shelters for abused women, and abortion counselling, as well as, women's presses, cultural events and businesses.

Finally, socialist feminists are described as integrating the oppressions of gender and class in their understanding of capitalist patriarchy. For socialist feminists, the oppression of women is a product of inequality based not only on being a woman but also on the inequalities created by capitalism. Accordingly, they work for the development of a broad-based movement for change in the structures of society. Socialist feminists have emphasized education and challenging the state through public expressions of dissatisfaction such as demonstrations (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984)[7].

In addition to philosophical differences, it is important to remember that the definition of feminist is historically specific, changing even over a generation. As Nancy Whittier (1995: 15) states:

> what it means to call oneself "feminist" varies greatly over time, often leading to conflict over movement goals, values, ideology, strategy or individual behavior. In other words, coming of political age at different times gives people different perspectives.

The action inherent in feminism, the living of feminism, is a work in progress. This has been particularly true for the early feminists of the second wave. For them:

> Feminism is a constructed identity. Contemporary activists aren't born into a feminist community—though future ones may be. The activists of the last twenty-five years have had to put together their own feminist

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[7] Although during the 1970's and early 1980's the different 'types' of feminism were often a topic of discussion, this type of categorization is both inaccurate and unproductive. From the earliest days of the second wave, theories, discussion and tactics often overlapped. For example, when Judy LaMarsh (a liberal feminist according to the above definition) told Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson that she could have two million women marching on parliament hill within the week if he didn't call a Royal Commission on Women's Equality, she had moved far beyond the liberal tactic of lobbying.

> identities as adults rather than inherit them from parents (Freeman, 1995: 407).

Many feminists have come to the movement with little knowledge of their feminist foremothers and therefore cannot place the work of themselves or younger women in historical perspective. In some ways this has created a "generation gap" between established and newly emerging feminists. Hopefully, time will establish that differences in feminist thinking can be a product of historical circumstance as well as political differences.[8]

Feminism is also culturally specific[9]. Women of colour, lesbians, disabled women, working class women and poor women have challenged their exclusion from the white, middle-class definitions of feminism noted above. (Decter, 1993; Carol, 1993; Abdo, 1993; Cassidy, et al, 1995, Hamilton, 1993; Iyer, 1997; Martindale, 1995; Nahanee, 1997; Turpel-Lafond, 1997). Vijay Agnew (1993: 221) contends that racism, one form of exlcusion, was and continues to be evident in the Canadian Women's Movement in the lack of representation of women of colour as members of well recognized feminist organizations such as National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). As well, there have been continuing difficulties in attempts to form coalitions with organizations that

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[8] This is not to say that generations of feminists do not already exist. What is lacking is a more public consciousness of such a history. I have observed this "generation gap" in action at conferences where young women challenge more established feminists. Such challenges have been perceived as differences in politics rather than the inevitable transformation of feminist ideas over time. For a discussion of feminist generations see Cook, 1999.

[9] I use the idea of culture in a very broad way to describe the differences in women's lived experience due to a wide variety of material and ideological circumstances

represent women of colour. Disabled/lesbian/poor women have similarly argued that we must also be aware of the impact of oppression due to hegemonic ideas of disability, class and sexual orientation and include a diversity of women in the movement (Doucette, 1991; Pierson et.al., 1993; Spelman, 1988). Therefore, masculine dominance cannot be understood in any singular way. It is differently experienced in terms of race, ability, sexual orientation, age and class. Patricia Hill Collins (as noted in Creese and Stasiulis, 1996: 8), argues that ,

> we should think in terms of a "matrix of domination", of an inter locking, though fluid and contradictory system of oppression, power and privilege.

Consequently, we cannot think of masculine dominance in isolation from the other oppressions that women face[10].

Feminism as a concept is therefore continually evolving and being contested. M. Anne Hall (1995) writes that this fluidity makes it difficult to find a common basis of analysis. Nevertheless, she agrees with Elizabeth Spelman (1988) that overlooking the differences inherent in the oppression that diverse women face results in an even more complex problem. Accordingly, it is appropriate to speak of feminisms, which have in common a resistance to women's oppression in it's many forms but which sometimes differ in approach and context. My own feminism hovers around the signpost of socialist feminism, in its most current form, which recognizes the matrices of domination suggested by Patricia Hill Collins. My own work has focused on the violent domination of

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[10] Of course, it is important to remember that categories such as race, ability and sexuality are themselves fluid concepts that are historically and culturally specific.

women which has been a central concern of radical feminists and I have used a wide variety of tactics including the lobbying that is most often associated with liberal feminists. Like most feminists, my own feminism is an eclectic combination of many theories, positions and tactics. Of course, the common and central concern of both my own feminism and this work is how the oppression of women can be challenged and rectified.

2.4 Feminisms in Action: The Canadian Women's Movement[11]

The belief that change is possible and necessary is a common, central tenet of feminism. The Canadian Women's Movement is the tangible evidence of feminists, of all kinds, taking action to make that change. The commonalties among types of feminism noted above are also used as a way to identify and define what constitutes the women's movement in Canada.

The beginning of the second wave of the Canadian Women's Movement is usually said to coincide with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The groups that formed the Committee for the Equality of Women who called for the Royal Commission came from already-established women's groups such as the Voice of Women and the Fédération des femmes du Québec (Black, 1988: 85). These groups relied on traditional political strategies such as lobbying and formed one strand of the emerging women's movement in Canada. Another

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[11] When I speak of the Canadian women's movement I am referring to the English Canadian women's movement. The women's movement in Quebec is qualitatively different than that in English Canada. For more information see DeSeve, 1992; Dumont, 1992; Jean, et.al., 1986.

strand emerged from consciousness raising groups and women's centres. These were, for the most part, initiated by socialist and radical feminists. Many such groups formed, as Cohen (1993: 7) suggests,

> because a few women got together and just talked -- something that women have undoubtedly done from the beginning of time. But this became political and feminist when the objective was to understand the ways in which a woman's personal, individual experiences had relevance for other women.

These small groups grew into a wide variety of feminist organizations.

Feminist organizations have proven central to the women's movement in providing a base for organizing, information and sometimes service to women. They have also illustrated how a feminist philosophy can affect the organization of our social world. The quintessential feminist organization is stand-alone (it does not answer to a parent organization in making decisions), woman-only, and is dedicated to eradicating the oppression of women. Feminist organizations may also have a modified structure (horizontal rather than hierarchical), that reflects feminist values. (Staggenborg, 1995, Feree and Martin, 1995). Patricia Yancey Martin (1992: 190) includes other secondary criteria such as the founding circumstances of the organization (was it founded as part of the women's movement?) practices, membership, size and relationships with other organizations. By these definitions, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, despite its somewhat bureaucratic and hierarchical structure would be seen as a feminist organization. It is stand-alone, women only, espouses a belief in the need to challenge the inequality that women face in Canadian society,

promotes feminist values (although some would argue not always successfully), and its goals and outcomes are directed towards improving the lives of its members and all women in Canadian society.

The Canadian women's movement is also composed of other kinds of groupings. In some communities, the very fact that women are meeting, no matter how small the numbers, may be an audacious political act[12]. As well, women's committees and caucuses within unions and universities, student federations, political parties, churches and a myriad of other institutions have been critical to the evolution of the contemporary Canadian women's movement (Adamson, et.al., 1988). It is also important to note that some feminists have located the majority of their work in other social movements, particularly the peace, labour and environmental movements (Black, 1993).

Of course, organizations and groups approach change in a myriad of ways. Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988) utilize the concepts/practices of institutionalization versus "grassroots" organizing, and mainstreaming versus disengagement to delineate the difference in approaches usually taken by traditional women's and feminist organizations. The first distinction between institutionalization and grassroots reflects the structure and practices of organizations. Those that are more bureaucratic and hierarchical are in the institutional stream. This includes organizations such as the YWCA or Planned

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[12] Thank-you to a woman from the Hamilton community who pointed out to me that in some cultures the very act of women coming together to talk, in public, without men present is a political act which challenges their oppression.

Parenthood. Grassroots organizations are those that have a less formal hierarchy and structure. These include rape crisis centres, women's centres and political action groups. This distinction has blurred over the years as grassroots organizations have formalized somewhat in response to funding pressures (see Morgan, 1981; Pennell, 1987; Ng, 1990; Chritiansen-Ruffman, 1990), and more institutional organizations have experimented with less formal structures (Vickers, 1993).

The other dimension of variance in approach is that of mainstreaming and disengagement. Disengagement describes the work of the women's movement that is outside the 'established'. Those with a disengaged political stance are not interested in compromise or acceptability. Rather, they are for the most part, interested in furthering social change according to a feminist agenda. A mainstream approach makes compromises with the state or other established organizations in order to solve the concrete problems that women face. For example, in relation to state funding a feminist with a disengagement perspective would argue that an organization should avoid such funding because of the co-optation or incorporation that inevitably results from accepting it (see below). A mainstream feminist would argue that such funding is necessary to provide service. Such distinctions, although not always easily identifiable in practice, allow for a fuller discussion of the weaknesses and strengths of the various tactics that particular feminists/feminist groups might use.

There has been a great deal of conflict over both types of organizing and approaches. For example in the *Feminist Manifesto* written by a collective of women working in the Vancouver Women's Research Centre, institutionalized, mainstream feminists are criticized for engaging with the Canadian state.

> As the strategy of lobbying governments for legislative reforms became the movement's primary strategy, the task of articulating these requests has increasingly been undertaken by women who speak the language of power. These liberal lobbyists seek the small reforms, which enable the state to maintain an appearance of addressing the subordination of women (Working Group on Sexual Violence, 1986: 46).

However, as Sue Findlay (1998: 296) points out, those who thought of themselves as socialist and radical grassroots feminists and who had criticized the practice of lobbying soon found themselves engaged in it so that they could change legislation or secure resources for feminist services. As well, women who might have, for the most part, been identified as liberal feminists, have taken up demonstrations and political education in order to achieve their goals of equality of opportunity in our society. Today, most organizations, caucuses, and committees negotiate a tension between mainstreaming and disengagement, institutionalization or maintaining a grassroots base[13].

What are the boundaries of the Canadian women's movement? How do we decide who is part of the movement and who is not? Roberta Garner (1996), for example, distinguishes between those groups that are focused on fighting the

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[13] It is important to note that all types of women's organizations and groups were/are being challenged by diverse women. For example, organizers for the 1986 International Women's Day were critiqued in a statement issued by the Black Women's Collective, regarding their exclusion from the 'sisterhood' that should have been apparent on that day. They argued that feminist organizations needed to be open to a "struggle for a new kind of sisterhood" (Findlay, 1998: 299).

inequality of women (feminist groups) and those groups that do not necessarily recognize this inequality but are made up mostly of women (women's movement).

I use the more broadly inclusive term, women's movement but restrict inclusion in the movement to groups which work to end women's oppression. Although one can broaden the definition of what such work entails, I would argue that an intention to address women's oppression is an essential element in deciding if a group is part of the women's movement or not. Some groups provide a social outlet for women without any necessary emancipatory connotations, for example, the women's auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus. Others, such as R.E.A.L.[14] women are, by their own definition, anti-feminist. It would expand the definition of the women's movement beyond sensibility to include such groups.

It is important, as well, to include individual women in the women's movement. Some women may not formally belong to a group yet support feminist beliefs and live them out in their daily lives. Because the oppression of women is both a public and a private matter, the struggle for equality can occur in private places, such as the home. A woman who insists that her husband do half the housework, that her daughters love their bodies, that pornography will not be

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[14] R.E.A.L. stands for Real, Equal, Active, for Life. This is the acronym for a Canadian women's group which is explicitly anti-feminist and anti-choice.

permitted in her home because it demeans women, is working to end the oppression of women.

In summary then, I use a broad definition of the Canadian women's movement including individuals, groups and organizations who have, in common, a desire to address the oppression of women. This work examines the many forms that the resistance to women's oppression may take. For example, feminists may work both inside and outside the state. As well, individual women may be indispensable to some of the challenges that are made to the dominance of men in our society. It is also important to remember that, like feminism itself, the Canadian women's movement is continually changing in response to evolving theories and practices, new challenges and a changing social environment. The state is a pivotal part of this environment.

2.5 What is the State?

For feminists, the central issue in identifying and describing the state is an analysis of how it contributes to the oppression of women. Patriarchy is the term that is most often used to describe the structuring of women's oppression by men, not only in terms of the state, but also in other elements of our society. Bonnie Fox (1988) explains the importance of this term:

> For feminist theory, use of the concept 'patriarchy' has been a means of asserting that gender inequality is a pervasive feature of the society in which we live, that women's oppression is different from other kinds of oppression, and that gender inequality calls for specific explanation and analysis (164).

Fox states further that the term patriarchy has had two disparate meanings. One focuses on male dominance as an endemic attribute of society, while the other sees patriarchy as an autonomous system focused on the reproduction of gender. The first definition tends to rely on a reified signification of men as dominant and requiring dominance, that is, the idea that all men are irredeemably tyrannical. The second does recognize that the dominance of men is a process rather than a natural characteristic but examines it in isolation from other forms of oppression such as racism or classism. What neither of these definitions provides is a sense of the oppression of women as a process that has historical specificity.

I prefer to use the term, masculine dominance, coined by Varda Burstyn (1985: 50). As Burstyn explains, "this terms lacks elegance but it allows us to name both the relation (dominance) and the agent, (the gender men)" without the static connotations of the term 'patriarchy'. As R.W. Connell (1990: 517) remarks, seeing the dominance of men as a process embedded in the procedures and functioning of the state, "allows us to acknowledge the patriarchal nature of the state without falling into a conspiracy theory or making futile searches for Patriarch Headquarters." The use of the word masculine instead of male identifies that the placement of power in male hands is a product of social relationships and processes of power as opposed to being based in nature. Consequently, this term is open enough to allow for the inclusion of other forms of domination and the fact that it might change over time and place.

Masculine dominance is found in almost every aspect of our daily lives: in the family, workplace, education, media, churches and our economy. In modern Canadian society, the state creates and maintains masculine dominance in each of these areas as manifested in legislation, regulation, funding and service provision. And, as Davina Cooper (1995: 20) points out, one must also include that privilege is not necessarily conferred in a blatant way. Such privilege is evident in the possibilities created for the dominant group that are not open to others based on the grounds of race, class, gender, and disability. For example, many leisure activities may not be actively denied to less privileged groups but the requirements for participation exclude them nevertheless.

While some form of masculine dominance or patriarchy is accepted as a component of the state by most feminists, they differ (as they did with feminism itself) on the details. In many ways, feminist explanations of the state tend to shadow the various strands of established state theory. For example, liberal feminist theories of the state are based in classical pluralism. Theorists such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill argue from a pluralist perspective that the state is equated with government and is seen as a neutral social arbitrator between the various interests in society. All citizens have access to the state and can influence it through avenues such as voting, letter writing, or by joining pressure groups or political parties. In this sense, society creates the state (Carnoy,1984).

Liberal feminists also accept a pluralist vision of the state and believe that women have just been 'left out of the game'. The pluralism of society must be

modified to make women equal players. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was a product of liberal feminism, emphasizing the importance of legislation and socialization in achieving women's equality (Nelson and Robinson, 1999: 101). However, this approach does not explain how power relations can create differential access to the state with some groups holding more power than others. For example, women of differing classes, races, abilities or sexualities may not benefit equally from a pluralism that is made equal only in terms of gender.

Radical feminists appropriate ideas from Marxism. Classical Marxist theorists argue that the state is not a neutral arbitrator but rather represents the interests of the bourgeoisie. This does not necessarily mean that the state is an instrument of the bourgeoisie, but since they hold the balance of power in the relations of production the bourgeoisie are also likely to hold the balance of power in the state. Hence, the state is not open to all views equally. Although Marxism does begin to examine differential access to state power, it has been critiqued for an overemphasis on economic determinism (Knuttila, 1992). Radical feminists have adopted the idea that the state is structured for the benefit of a particular group of people. However, they substitute men for the capitalist class. In her article, *Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory*, Catharine MacKinnon (1982), makes a direct comparison between radical feminist and Marxist theory, arguing that sexuality for women equates

with work for the working class. Radical feminists replace economic absolutism with a reified concept of women's oppression.

In the 1970's, Neo-Marxists proposed additional modifications to Marxist theory in order to explain the complexity of capitalism in the late twentieth century. Ralph Milliband illustrated the bourgeois nature of the American state by examining the class of the actors who occupied important roles in the state. He showed that the vast majority of the actors in the state such as the heads of bureaucracies, generals in the army and politicians, were bourgeois themselves or had taken on the values and ethos of the capitalist class (Carnoy, 1984). Poulantzas disagreed with Milliband's approach saying that it was too reliant on empiricism (that is, looking at the actual actors rather than the structure they worked in), and therefore resulted in the mistaken impression that the state was merely an instrument of the capitalist class. In his view, the state had 'relative autonomy' from the means of production. That is, he argued that the means of production and the consequent class structure had an influence on the state but the relationship was somewhat reciprocal and the state was involved in the creation and maintenance of the class structure. In their discussions of the balance between structure and agency, Poulantzas and Milliband began to flesh out the complexities of the state in the late twentieth century, shifting the focus away from an understanding of the state as a monolithic entity that was economically determined. In addition, together they illustrated the importance of finding a balance between structure and agency in understandings of the state.

Marxist feminists have taken up these ideas of structure and agency and applied them to the location in society most commonly associated with women, the family. They argue that the structuring of the state for the benefit of the capitalist class results in structures that support masculine dominance. Writers such as Varda Burstyn (1985) and Mary McIntosh (1978) explain how in addition to the state and civil society, the household is structured by the relations of production. This results in a split between the public and private realms that leaves women labouring in the realm of reproduction with little economic or political power. Socialist feminists, expand this understanding by rejecting hierarchies of oppression and instead of seeing patriarchy as an outgrowth of capitalism, have tried to see patriarchy and capitalism as two interacting systems of oppression.

Antonio Gramsci's work expanded the understanding of the power of the state by considering the use of the ideological to maintain power relations, in both the political realm and in civil society. He agreed with Marx that the state was largely controlled by the bourgeoisie though he argued that such control was achieved not only through economic dominance and coercion but also through 'hegemony'. Achieving hegemony meant that the values and norms of the bourgeoisie became dominant in such a way that their concept of reality became accepted as 'common sense'. (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci argued that the bourgeoisie attain and maintain control by a combination of coercion and the continuous process of achieving hegemony. Although this combination is a very

effective form of domination, Gramsci proposed the possibility of creating a process of achieving 'counter-hegemony'. He laid out a plan for challenging the state, which he called a 'war of position'. This was opposed to the traditional Marxist vision of overthrowing the state through force, a 'war of manoeuvre'. A 'counter' hegemony based in the ideology of the proletariat could be developed along with a struggle for working-class consciousness. Then this new hegemony would be translated into action, allowing the proletariat to control the state. The concept of hegemony/counter-hegemony brings the work of challenging the state into civil, as well as, political society.

Gramsci's theories of ideology and the war of position fit well into the attempts by the Canadian women's movement (as well as other new social movements) to develop a counter-hegemony of women's equality (Maroney, 1988). For example, Gramsci's ideas are reflected in the work of Claire Reinhelt (1995: 87) who argues that the state is "a contradictory and uneven set of structures and processes that are the product of particular struggles". In her view the creation of counter-hegemony is a continuous, irregular process and that therefore the state is not only contestable, it is a product of such contests. Such an uneven process can result in a fractured state where even different 'bits' of the state can be in conflict with each other. For example, one part of the state could support the demands of the women's movement while another blocks the progress made possible by that support. However, this fragmentation also means that progress can be made and maintained in an area and then that area can be used for

further advancement. Rosemary Pringle and Sophie Watson (1992) add that such contests are cumulative resulting in a state and a hegemony that is a historical product.

While Gramsci argues that powers inherent in the state also apply in civil society, Michel Foucault (1980) dismantles the divisions between the state and civil society. He argues that power is not centred in the state. Rather it is diffuse and diverse, permeating all aspects of society. Wendy Brown (1992) maintains, like Michel Foucault, that the state has little shape at all. She writes,

> "the domain we call the state is not a thing, system, or subject but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, practices, co-habiting in limited, tension-ridden, often contradictory relations with one another." (12).

Dorothy Smith (1987), maintains a Marxist perspective but also integrates the work of Michel Foucault in her theories of how the private and local are structured by the state. She calls this the "relations of ruling". She illustrates how all the facets of our lives are structured by a combination of coercive power, ideology and bureaucracy filtered through class relations and the oppression of women. This explication also provides a framework for resistance to the relations of ruling that emphasizes the personal, the immediate and the local. (Preston, 1993).

Understanding the state as fragmented and mutable means that the state would be difficult to identify. Sandra Burt (1995) argues, we can identify what we mean by the state by recognizing that it is bounded by general frameworks

such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism and ablism. Davina Cooper (1995: 3) summarizes her definition:

> I adopt an approach which conceives of the state as irreducible to a single core, conceptualizing it instead as a historically contingent articulation of different identities. Thus the state is both unified and fragmented, a complex apparatus as well as a social relationship. Multifaceted and fluid, its character varies according to context as one or another identities emerges as foremost."

A fragmented state means that a movement may impact on one part of the state and another can mitigate that impact.

Although I would concur that there is 'some thing' we can identify as the state, I also agree with Davina Cooper and Wendy Brown that the power we attribute to the state is diverse. Dorothy Smith's focus on the structuring of the local through ideology, regulation and power, is important. I would add that such structuring is not only imposed from above but also occurs at the local level. For instance, municipal governments have played an important role in some women's issues (Andrew, 1995). In addition to government, there are local versions of the media, police, educational facilities, religious organizations and social service organizations. I would identify these as local state agencies. They are essential to the political process, the application of coercive power and the maintenance of hegemony.

In addition to municipal government and local state agencies, there are the third party private, usually non-profit organizations that are paid to carry out the responsibilities of the state. For example, many agencies that provide social

services are the offspring of churches and service organizations. And as Terry Robson (2000: 44) notes:

> There are clear and unmistakable historical precedents which point to the existence of the use of extra-governmental agencies in imposing the will of the state.

However, if we include entities such as social service organizations as 'part' of the state, how do we think about feminist organizations that fulfill a similar third party role? Jan Barnsley (1985) from the Vancouver Women's Research Centre, answers this by defining state institutions as those which "order and organize society and define what is appropriate behavior in our relations with each other". This definition allows us to discriminate between social service agencies which support the hegemony of the state and feminist organizations which challenge the state. Although these 'appendages' of the state are structured in many ways by other segments of the state which exist at the mezzo and macro levels (ie. global, national and provincial/state levels), they interpret and in turn structure the micro.

In summary, I would agree with Antonio Gramsci that the state operates to maintain social order through both coercive force and ideology - practices which fashion and refashion hegemony. And along with Sandra Burt I would say that it has a recognizable form since it is bounded by frameworks such as racism, classism and sexism. However, this form is open, a product of an ongoing process that changes over time and is contestable and, therefore, as I examine in this work, we can impact on its form. In this work ~~that~~ the state is understood as something that exists at various levels in both ideological and

material forms. Although it is important to understand the state at the macro level, that is the federal government, military, media, etc., it is also important to understand that the state acts and exists at other levels. Therefore, it would not be enough to examine the state's response only at the federal level. To truly understand how the state's support for wife/woman abuse can be challenged we must be willing to look at all the levels of its existence.

2.6 Mainstreaming and Disengagement Revisited

The state may be contestable but the question remains should one engage with the state to create social change or not? For the Canadian women's movement the state is a source of resources but also danger. Claire Reinhelt (1995: 101) describes this quandry.

> Engaging with the state is a strategy that has risks. It is risky because state funding is contingent on economic and political forces that one does not control. It is risky because state engagement can threaten movement solidarity. But any strategy that has risks also has benefits. Funding for movement activities, access to policymakers, and opportunities for educating many people about issues of violence against women are not trivial.

As Reinhelt points out, feminists engage the state to change it and access resources but the relationship is dialectical. The state, in turn, influences the women's movement. For example, Alicia Schreader (1990) argues that the funds that the state can provide for movement work are essential, but Roxanna Ng (1990) and Linda Christainsen-Ruffman (1990) have detailed how government funding of feminist agencies has led to the establishment of hierarchies and bureaucratic processes that interfere with political work such as advocacy. Somer

Bodribb (1988) demonstrates how even applying for funding requires that one learns how to present women's lives "in bureaucratic linguistic currency" (51). She also argues that the search for funding changes the emphasis from "reasoning directly developed from women's experience" to arguments "likely to win funding and support" (52). The most blatant form of state control is evident in funding cuts. Kenny and Magnusson (1993) analyze how funding issues were used to close down the feminist-based Vancouver Transition House, while opening new services that were more willing to respond to violence against women in a state-defined manner.

In her in-depth analysis of the Canadian state's approach to the issue of violence against women, Gillian Walker (1991), shows how the state can impact on the women's movement through the discourse of state bureaucratic process. Through a detailed analysis of various government hearings, she shows how the issue of wife assault was redefined in order to make it acceptable to state bureaucratic processes. The result was an emphasis on the legal aspects of assault as opposed to its social/political aspects. Patricia Morgan (1981: 21) describes how the state reforms a political question into a social problem that must be addressed by state services.

> Social problem management through the capitalist state serves to depoliticize political questions: to incorporate demands through quasimedical models, to individual and personalize structural problems, and to obscure any class interests inherent in them.

Of course the state uses this process to address political questions that represent the various other hegemonic frameworks that structure the state. It is evident that a mainstreaming approach can lead to co-optation and bureaucratization.

These dangers are evident in the Canadian state's incorporation of the women's movement into the government bureaucracy. Janine Brodie (1995), discusses the proliferation of offices and agencies that were developed in the federal government during the 1970's such as the Status of Women and the Women's Programme in the Secretary of State. These programs were an attempt to incorporate the demands of the women's movement into the bureaucracy of the state. Feminists joined these programs, sometimes with hopes of changing the state or accessing its resources, sometimes because they needed a job. Working for the state required and continues to require the development of the professional persona described above, as well as the ability to negotiate between a commitment to feminist change and the expectations of one's employer. Alicia Schreader (1990: 191) describes how the expectations of the bureaucracy have worked to counter any feminist possibilities women brought to these departments,

> "Women hired to staff the Women's Program quickly discovered that their required role was not that of advocate but of mediator. The mediation role was accomplished through the demand to contextualize, justify and rationalize the Program into the then current ideological forms: "the just society", "national unity" and so on."

Feminists who had entered the state to address women's issues found that social change from within the bureaucracy was very difficult indeed.

Janine Brodie (1995) argues that when women are incorporated into the state their expertise is largely confined to 'women's issues' and these issues are not given priority. Monique Begin (1997) explains how women's issues are sidelined in the government hierarchy:

> First, let us examine the ranking of "woman-centred" areas in government. Take, as an example, cabinet rank. There is an unexpressed but clear hierarchy of prestige and power among ministers in cabinet. Not only is this evident at both the federal and provincial levels in Canada, but it probably holds true everywhere in the western world. After the Prime Minister comes the Minister of Finance, of course. Other "real" departments, those that count, are ministries dealing with economics (Industry, Trade, and Commerce), technology (Transport, Agriculture), and war and peace (Defence, External Affairs). When I was Minister of Health and Welfare, despite the fact that the department spent 25 percent of the federal budget, my colleagues and senior bureaucrats always called it "a nonproductive department." (23).

Maureen O'Neil and Sharon Sutherland (1997: 215) maintain that "Canadian governments have never created an in-house capacity to deliver policy on women."

If feminist influences are contained within the state then it is important to have movement organizations and services that stand outside the state. "Outside" feminist organizations and services serve several purposes. They provide an alternative to state service and thereby accomplish two things. First, by their very existence feminist organizations/services illustrate that it is possible to provide service in non-sexist ways. Women can then access that alternative rather than the state service. This puts pressure on state services to address sexism in their organizations and to adopt feminist ways of service provision. Second, feminist organizations/services also act as sites for advocacy and public education. When

women cannot access feminist organizations/services, they are often able to access information about their needs and what choices they have in meeting them (Dale & Foster, 1986). As well, feminist organizations/services provide employment to feminist advocates and give them a base from which to work in challenging the state. Feminist organization/services provide an important alternative to state services even though they may only be accessible to a minority of the women who require assistance.

Some feminists would argue that one cannot be a feminist and work for the state but 'insiders' can be essential when 'outsiders' engage the state (Sullivan, 1997; Frazee, 1997; Charles, 1995). Having feminists inside the state means that a feminist perspective can be brought to issues, particularly those issues that affect the lives of women. This provides an opportunity to educate colleagues. (Halford, 1992; Burt, 1993; Eisensteing, 1995; Paltiel, 1997).

Jennifer Dale and Peggy Foster (1986) illustrate how feminist insiders in the British welfare system worked to point out the gender inequity in the system and develop a feminist form of welfare practice. Their position inside the organization gave them validity and they were better able to convince their colleagues to change because they could place issues in the language used by the welfare system. Nancy Sullivan (1997) examined the implementation of pay equity in Manitoba and argued that this success was a result of co-operation between feminists 'inside' and 'outside' the state. Feminists outside the Manitoba government were putting pressure on it to provide pay equity. Feminists inside

the government channelled these demands into 'solutions' that were able to fit into, while also stretching, the bureaucratic language and structure. Mary Katzenstein (1990) describes a more holistic change brought about by feminists inside the Catholic church and the armed forces who have managed to "recreate and sustain a gender consciousness" (54). The existence of such a consciousness within the organization impacts on the culture of the organization even if it is only in the attempts that are made to confine it. It is obvious that in many cases the work of feminists inside and outside the state is interdependent.

Traditional measures of social movement success have relied on how effectively social movements have moved into existing channels of power. Often this is measured by how much the movement has become institutionalized and therefore permanent (Staggenborg, 1995). Although some feminist organizations have become somewhat institutionalized (e.g. shelters, sexual assault centres and women's centres), most remain informal and precarious. Of course, many groups and organizations in the women's movement have no interest in traditional or institutionalized forms of power. For them such incorporation is actively resisted.

Since, the women's movement, as a new social movement is not (for the most part) interested in obtaining a piece of the existing political pie then perhaps it would be more accurate to use alternative measures of success. Suzanne Staggenborg (1995: 341) presents an alternative set of criteria for movement success: "(1) political and policy outcomes; (2) mobilization outcomes; and (3) cultural outcomes." Her measures assess the impact of social movements on our

society rather than their acceptance by and incorporation into the existing channels of power. Feminist ideas and values have become a part of the political parlance in Canada whether speakers are supporting or opposing them (Findlay, 1988). As well, feminists have struggled for, and achieved, changes in legislation and policy in almost every area of Canadian life, from the criminal justice system to the local classroom (Eliasson and Lundy, 1999). As well, in one form or another, the women's movement has mobilized large numbers of women in Canada. The N. A. C., for example, boasted 458 organizational members and 900 individual members in 1984. (Vickers, 1993: 14). In 1998, they numbered their organizational members at 750 (Personal communication, N.A.C. Head Office). And there are many other organizations such as Justice for Women (mentioned in chapter 5) that are not affiliated with NAC yet identify themselves as feminist. Cultural changes include the growth of feminist businesses (eg. bookstores), music, theatre groups and literature. The "private" lives of women and their families have also been altered with access to birth control, abortion and divorce.

However, although it is evident that in many ways the Canadian women's movement has had some success as a movement, its relationship with the state has been dialectical. Sue Findlay (1988: 9) proposes an interesting twist in the analysis of the impact of the state on the women's movement,

> It is clear, however, that as feminists we have participated and continue to participate, in the development of the state's response to our own demands. Therefore, it is also important to examine the contradictions inherent in the women's movement. How as feminists, have we participated in the construction of these limits? What factors led us to enter into and/or support particular forms of representation? How did these particular

> forms of representation encourage or reinforce a political practice that stifled opposition and encouraged us to compromise on some of our fundamental principles in the hopes of persuading the state to act on our behalf.

Findlay makes the point that in our relationship with the state, we may, in fact, be collaborating in our own co-optation. Engaging the state is a hazardous but often necessary endeavour. The effort to end wife/woman abuse by the Canadian women's movement is an excellent illustration of the dangers and rewards that engaging the state can generate.

2.7 The State, the Women's Movement and Wife/Woman Abuse

Male violence pervades women's lives in many forms, both in the actual experiencing of violence or the fear of such an experience. Violence against women includes sexual assault, harassment in the workplace, the violence that women experience in their intimate relationships with men as children, adolescents and adults, and the generalized violence that is perpetrated by pornography or the catcalls that women experience as they walk down the street. The consequences for individual women are physical, psychological, financial, emotional and spiritual. Barbara Pressman lists some of the various sequelai of violence; low self-esteem, psychic numbing, self-blame, indecisiveness, feelings of powerlessness, emotional instability, concerns about sanity, depression, anxiety (sometimes phobic), passivity and sleeplessness. Intensive, long-term violence often results in serious health consequences, including eating disorders, multiple personality disorder and long-term addictions (Pressman 1988, 26-29). Each act

of violence has physical and emotional consequences for a woman, controlling her behaviour in the immediate and increasing the likelihood that she can be controlled in the future. For example, a woman who is phobic or depressed will have difficulty battling her oppression, personally or publicly.

The impact of violence also extends to women who are not direct victims but who are aware that they are potential targets. Women as a group live in fear of attack. This awareness controls women's movements and countenance. For example, most women are not comfortable walking alone at night. Many women also feel that they must be careful with how they present themselves. They must be strong and confident to deter attacks but not provocative since this might draw attacks. Carole Scheffield (1993: 73) refers to this as sexual terrorism. She emphasizes that we must consider both actual and implied violence and the vulnerability of all women to attack. She reminds us that this terrorism serves to indicate to women how vulnerable they are to male aggression. In short, violence against women acts as a powerful tool of oppression, invading women's feelings of safety and restricting their behaviour through fear.

While murder and catcalls have much in common (that is, the intent to control women), they also have very different consequences (Schecter,1982; Canadian Panel On Violence Against Women, 1993, Currie, 1998). I have chosen to focus on a particular kind of violence against women, wife/woman abuse. How wife/woman abuse is defined is extremely important, particularly in terms of how it will be addressed. For example, calling it domestic violence de-genders the

problem and places it in the purview of the family. Wife battering over-emphasizes the physical aspects of abuse. The term 'violence against women' connotes the connections between the various forms of abuse that women suffer but in some cases it is important to remember that each form of violence has particular characteristics. There is a difference between a sexual assault perpetrated by a stranger and systematic, long-term violence committed against a woman by her intimate partner. The word abuse is used to encapsulate the purposefulness and intention to control a particular woman and/or child that is inherent in male violence against an intimate.

Violence against women, in general and wife/woman abuse, in particular are contextually sensitive, often varying in form based on race, class, age, sexuality and ability. Marina Helen Morrow (1999: 242) reminds us that:

> Feminists must act against pressures to split forms of oppression off from each other, and instead maintain analyses that see violence against women as emerging out of historically and culturally specific practices, values and social relationships.

Patricia Monture-Okanee (1992) points out that there is racism inherent in the fact that it is white women who have been able to define the discourse on violence against women. bell hooks (1988) has discussed how violence and abuse are experienced differently for black women since it is experienced in a context of violence that springs from racism. For example, for black women, family is often viewed as a source of support, not oppression. It is the racist violence experienced in the public world that is particularly devastating. Emma LaRocque (1995) explains that Aboriginal family violence is a product of colonization, as

well as racism. However, she argues that this does not mean that aboriginal men should be excused from the violence they perpetrate against their wives and lovers. These men, she states, must also take responsibility for their abuse. As well, women from a diverse community may have fewer resources available to her and those resources that are available may not meet her needs. For example, Rita Kohli (1993) has pointed out that racism is evident in many shelters. A complete understanding of the violence women experience is not possible without including a consideration of other aspects of oppression.

For this work I have chosen to focus on a particular form of violence. I am interested in the violence that men perpetrate against women in their adult, intimate relationships. The term wife/woman is intended to indicate the female in a heterosexual relationship[15] with some permanence, either common-law or marriage. This differentiates it from dating violence. Such a relationship incorporates the impetus for men and women to create heterosexual partnerships, with the endemic divisions of power and labour ascribed to them. The heterosexism that structures the intimate relationships between men and women in our society is integral to the abuse of the wife/woman, particularly in the creation of societal expectations of masculinity and femininity and the structuring of the

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[15] The issue of violence in lesbian relationships has been used to challenge the assertion that wife/woman abuse is a gendered problem. I would argue that there are many forms of violence and abuse in the world based in various forms of oppression but that they differ qualitatively from wife/woman abuse. Violence in lesbian relationships is an important issue but one that differs qualitatively because it is not based in the structures of heterosexual partnerships embedded in a private sphere. The fact that violence exists in other forms and in other relationships does not negate the argument that the form of violence that occurs in wife/woman abuse is gendered and embedded in a societal structure which oppresses women (among others)

nuclear family located in the private realm[16]. The term abuse indicates that we are not talking about random acts of violence but a continuous, often planned, use of violence to establish control over the woman in the relationship[17]. The types of abuse are many and varied. They can include emotional, physical, financial, spiritual and sexual abuse. As mentioned above, wife/woman abuse may take different forms depending on the intersections of masculine dominance with other forms of oppression such as race, class, ability and age.

The private nature of wife/woman abuse has meant that women who endure this form of violence have, for the most part, suffered in silence. Women who did seek help were most often blamed for bringing the violence on themselves. Until recently, wife/woman abuse was recognized as a problem but as a marital problem, the result of two 'deviant' individuals (Pressman, 1988; Pâquet-Deehy et al, 1992; Prieur, 1995) . In the early 1970s some women began to question the private, 'personal problems', that women faced and to link them to a very public, political system that created and maintained the oppression of women. "The personal is political" emphasized how women's personal, private lives were the products of politics. Instead of blaming individual women for the problems they experienced, feminists began to unravel how these problems were

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[16] Although many families are not 'nuclear' in structure, for example, the extended families often found among First Nations peoples, I am referring to the hegemonic expectation that all families will be 'nuclear' in structure.

[17] See Ptacek, 1998 for interviews with batterers. They are quite candid in discussing the reasons for their abuse. The issue of having power and control over their partners is the prime reason for abusive actions.

created and maintained in the public realm. For wife/woman abuse, feminists began to explore how attitudes towards women, in the justice system, social services, religious institutions, the media and even the educational system produced the environment for wife/woman abuse. They argued that women were not masochists who enjoyed the violence they suffered but were casualties of a gender-based system of oppression. Women who are abused are not emotionally unstable, masochistic or dependent and the men who abuse them are not isolated examples of mental illness or addiction. Rather, wife/woman abuse is an example of the control that men wield over women and violence is just one of many tools. Melanie Randall (1989) explains:

> Men's violence against their female partners is also only one part of a larger attempt by individual men to control and dominate the women with whom they are involved. The male power which expressed and exercised by individual men in their personal and intimate relationships with women is also socially granted to men as a group to wield over women as a group. This means that woman abuse is part of a larger problem of social inequality between men and women.

Thus, if we want to address abuse, it is not enough to just deal with individual men and women. We must reshape some of the fundamental structures in our society including the patriarchal nuclear family. (MacLeod, 1980; Currie, 1990; Profit, 1996, Reinelt, 1995; Ursel, 1995; Pierson,1993; Levin, 1995; Gotell, 1997, Fine, 1993; Walker, 1990).

One of these fundamental social structures is the state, but what part does it play in wife/woman abuse? Jane Ursel (1994: 75) asserts that because of the lobbying of feminists the state has come to the conclusion that "the perpetuation

of wife abuse is costly" and that "in the late twentieth century the state has no economic and/or structural interests in the perpetuation of wife abuse". Therefore, we should expect the state to retreat from it's support of wife/woman abuse. In contrast, Melanie Randall (1988) argues that if we look at the actions of the state, its support for violence against women is self-evident:

> by allowing men to commit rape, incest, wife assault, and sexual harassment on a massive scale with virtual impunity, by enacting laws which adopt a male perspective on these forms of abuse, and by failing to condemn these crimes through the criminal justice system the state is complicit in perpetuating violence against women. In some cases, the state actively works against women, for example through divorce and custody decisions which force women and their children to maintain contact with a violent or sexually abusive husband (10).

Lorraine Clark (1997:11) argues that the entire socio-legal system in Canada is:

> organized around preserving a private sphere, intact and insulated from the public sphere and its values, in which men have exclusive power to dominate and subordinate women and to use violence or the threat of violence to achieve this objective whenever they, in their sole, exclusive, and unfettered discretion, believe it to be necessary. However, if we cannot leave the house, we cannot enter the public world.

An essential constituent of wife/woman abuse is that it occurs in the private sphere of home and family. Acknowledging the role that masculine dominance plays in wife/woman abuse by the state will result in a breach of the private/public split which is an integral element of both capitalism and masculine dominance (Weedon, 1999). Understanding that wife/woman abuse is inherent as a possibility in all heterosexual relationships challenges the romanticism that supports heterosexuality and explodes the myth that the family is a "haven from a harsh world" (in fact more women are harmed by loved ones than strangers

(Ontario Association of Social Workers, 1996). This would be particularly damaging to the current neo-liberal attempts to valorize the family. As well, violence is an effective way to keep women in their homes, unable to exercise their rights as citizens or address their own oppression because of fear or other sequelai of abuse (Pressman, 1988). The oppression of women within their homes, interconnected with their oppression in the public sphere, creates a powerful dynamic that keeps women in heterosexual relationships, doing the work of reproduction without complaint or question (Cooper, 1995, Maroney and Luxton, 1997). Of course, individual men also gain from their use of abuse, as their needs are met at the expense of their wives and often, their children. However, Lynne Segal (1990) argues that when we look at violence against women we should understand that although violence is perpetrated by individual men, it is "state violence in the hands of men" rather than "male violence in the hands of the state" (268). Finally, violence along with issues such as a woman's right to choose, works to interfere with a woman's right to bodily integrity (Orloff, 1993; Boyd, 1997) Accepting wife/woman abuse as a political issue challenges both the public/private split in our society and masculine dominance.

Over the last twenty-five years, the women's movement has addressed the state over the issue of violence against women and wife/woman abuse because the state is central to this issue. It is a perpetrator of, and co-conspirator in violence against women and conversely, the site of the assistance many women need to escape or recover from violence. Initially, when the issue of wife/woman abuse

first surfaced, feminists took women who were endangered into their homes to hide them. However, it soon became clear that the women's movement, alone, could not meet the needs of the thousands of women who need assistance (Schechter, 1982).

For women who have been abused by their partners, the state may provide their income, housing, medical care and police protection. In her comments about community organizing, Barnsley (1995: 195) notes:

> We knew that working with other community agencies and other "sectors", like the justice system or social welfare or government, is essential. It's essential because the people and policies in these agencies and institutions can make a life and death difference to assaulted women. Even if our agenda is radical structural change and the overthrow of patriarchy, we know that, till we succeed, women have to deal with these systems."

The state cannot be 'left out' of the issue of wife/woman abuse.

A variety of groups/organizations within the Canadian women's movement, such as the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (and their provincial equivalents across the country), have worked to identify and address wife/woman abuse. They have sought to bring an awareness of masculine dominance to the issue, arguing that it is a political issue, based in masculine dominance, as opposed to an individual problem. This is important because making wife/woman abuse an issue for public concern is only the first step. The state prefers to deal with issues as social problems which can be dovetailed into the existing bureaucracy (Morgan, 1981). Therefore, at the federal level the women's movement has struggled to create a 'counter-hegemony' which defines

wife/woman abuse from a feminist perspective as a political issue based in masculine dominance.

In addition to establishing a political definition of wife/woman abuse, feminists have battled the federal, provincial and municipal governments for funding of services. Funding has been achieved, and at surprising levels for a new issue, yet most of the funding has gone to existing bureaucracies. As well, feminists have lobbied all three levels of the Canadian government to change policies and regulations so that the existing and new legislation criminalizing violence against women would be enforced. Activists have also been involved in public education. Public surveys in the United States (Klein et al, 1997) show that such education has been effective in alerting the public to the problem of violence against women, its criminal nature and the services available although an understanding of masculine dominance as integral to wife/woman abuse is not yet widespread.

The challenges to the state regarding wife/woman abuse have occurred at all levels but the most crucial struggles have occurred at the local/community level. Women who fear for their lives are not concerned with the positions that provincial or federal governments take regarding the definition of wife/woman abuse. They need the services that are delivered at the local level: protection, shelter and support. At this level feminists have worked to create sexual assault centres, shelters and second stage housing for women who survive abuse. They have then lobbied for and received funding for these services. They have

challenged local service agencies and police forces to change their approaches to women who survive abuse. Initially, feminists were the only ones who recognized the issue of wife/woman abuse as a public issue and were willing to provide specific services. The advantage with this was that they controlled the service provided. However, only a small number of women were able to access the alternative services that the women's movement can provide. While such services provide an important alternative to traditional social service agencies, they do not have the resources to meet the needs of all abused women. Feminists have therefore worked to ensure that these agencies, which began to provide service, did so appropriately. For activists, this has meant many hours educating judges, social workers and police officers and many more hours sitting on community committees called to plan for a co-ordinated, community response to wife/woman abuse.

As Jane Ursel (1994) points out, the state has made many concessions to the women's movement in the area of wife/woman abuse, yet I would argue that it has not done so willingly. It continues to strive to regain lost ground through the bureaucratization of feminist services, such as shelters, funding cuts under the rhetoric of restraint, and redefinition of the issue as an individual rather than a societal problem. Patricia Evans and Gerda Wekerle (1997: 9) are concerned about the establishment of a "public patriarchy". This reliance on the state for protection and resources may help women out of misery and dependency but at what cost? Wendy Brown (1992) argues that a faceless, disperse 'patriarch' may

be even more oppressive than women's abusive partners. This is important to consider since the resources that have been provided have been funnelled through the state bureaucracy and targeted for social service approaches. The state has moved from ignoring the problem of wife/woman abuse to a social problem approach, which sees the issue as an appropriate one for public action but only in providing social services to what is ultimately believed to be an individual problem (Morgan, 1981; Prieur, 1995). Feminist activists have challenged the state, at all levels, to adopt a position, which recognizes that the oppression of women is integral to the problem of wife/woman abuse. Their success in this endeavour has been mixed.

2.8 Conclusion

The Canadian women's movement has, over the last twenty-five years, challenged the state to acknowledge and remedy wife/woman abuse. When I speak of the Canadian women's movement I am referring to a variety of organizations, groups and individuals who have addressed the issue of wife/woman abuse in many different ways. What they have in common is that they accept that wife/woman abuse is embedded in the larger structure of masculine dominance. Because of this, feminist activists have engaged the state in attempting to eradicate wife/woman abuse. They have done this because the state controls essential resources that abused women require. Of course, engaging the state is a risky business since the result may be co-optation and constraint. Mainstreaming and disengagement are the two approaches to the state. One

approach is not more effective than the other, although a discussion of this issue has been central in the women's movement. Rather they compliment each other and each is effective in particular situations.

What makes such challenge and engagement possible is the open and contestable nature of the state. One must be aware that the state is constantly changing and that it is difficult to predict if success in one forum will lead to success in others. As well, the state must be engaged at various levels to achieve change. Although this work examines the response of the state to wife/woman abuse at the macro level in order to establish context, the focus of this work in on the micro level since this segment of the state is often ignored by feminist theorists. Finally, the state does have some form, particularly evident in its defining hegemonic frameworks.

It is these hegemonic frameworks, particularly those of masculine dominance and capitalism that ensure that the state will not accede to a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse without resistance. Doing so would breach the public/private split that is integral to our present society. Furthermore, accepting a feminist definition in one area would signal capitulation in others. Instead, the Canadian state has attempted to contain the political impact of wife/woman abuse by re-framing it as a social management problem. In this way, it can recognize that wife/woman abuse is a problem which is in the purview of the state, that is a public problem, but that it is, nevertheless, just trouble between two deviant individuals.

In the following chapters I will employ the concepts I have explicated in this chapter to examine the ongoing challenge the Canadian women's movement has brought to the state, at all levels, to address the issue of wife/woman abuse.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH AND THE ACTIVIST

This chapter reviews the choices I have made in conducting the research that resulted in this work. It also addresses the processes of power which form the context for this and any other research. My choice of taking a feminist perspective is in many ways a form of resistance. My feminism has influenced how I have approached my methodology. For example, I have attempted to be reflexive in my writing and research. As well I have included my own voice which may not fit with traditional rules of objectivity but which allows the reader to place me in both the events reported and the analysis of such.

As with much feminist work, this dissertation is grounded in my own life, with both the advantages and pitfalls that this brings. I discuss both these issues and the problematic of abstracting both one's own life and the lives of others for the purposes of research. Finally, I explain the methods that I have chosen for this investigation and explore their strengths and weaknesses.

3.2 Research and its Embedding in the Processes of Power

Knowledge is a particular aspect of power and its production is part of the work of the university. Academics have the privilege to define what we will and will not accept as knowledge. Although women have entered post-graduate

education in increasing numbers, they continue to be underrepresented at the higher educational levels, such as full professor, or in administrative positions (Caplan, 1993) As a woman, then, I entered academe on the margins. This marginality was mitigated by the fact that I was white, heterosexual, able-bodied and of middle class origin. These 'central' characteristics have contributed to the privilege I have had to pursue an academic career and to have my voice heard. I have tried to be cognisant of that privilege throughout this work. Although, for historical reasons, race, class and ability are not central issues in this work, I have tried to maintain a consciousness of them.

I also came to the university as a feminist and an activist. The relationship between feminists at the university and their activist counterparts in the community has been problematic. Activists in their communities and academics in their institutions share a feminist perspective and a place on the margins but with important differences. For example, academics have greater access to power and privilege through their status as accepted purveyors of knowledge and access to resources in the form of grants, time for reflection and good libraries. Activists have the freedom and time to dedicate to direct political action and challenge. The requirements of an academic career mitigate against involvement in political action (although many feminist academics do have community involvement). Like most women in state institutions, they must follow the rules to advance. As Karen Messing states, we must understand our place as "good girls in academia on sufferance" (1991: 311). While activists may have more freedom, the

circumstances of the activist mean that there is little time to think through strategy or to research their issues.

Jan Barnsley (1995) argues that the reason most academics collaborate with community groups is to facilitate their access to difficult-to-reach populations. Although this may be true, I would argue that this is often because feminist researchers are committed to doing research that is relevant and useful. There is no doubt, however, that the collaboration between these two communities is fraught with difficulty (Wine, 1991; Bishop, et. al., 1991).

My experience in completing my dissertation seemed to encapsulate this conflict. As an activist, I have found myself frustrated with the emphasis on theory in doing dissertation work. Often, I was focused on the result, the concrete details of change. In contrast, as an academic, I understood the importance of theory in providing a framework for exploring and explaining our world. Academic work has been particularly important for women working to end wife/woman abuse. For example, statistical work on the incidence of violence against women, has shown that many women suffer abuse and journal articles have been important to front-line workers as a source of information on wife/woman abuse. As an academic, my frustration has been with the lack of theoretical work on the Canadian women's movement in general, and on the movement against wife/woman abuse in particular (Fine, 1993). Women in the movement have been very busy saving women's lives and even though Noel Sturgeon (1995) argues that social movements theorize through action, the

exploration of complex questions such as the one I am analyzing requires time and resources.

In both my roles, a feminist perspective is a defining part of my work. It was important to me that I would use a feminist methodology in examining my research question. In choosing my methods it became apparent, as Shulamit Reinharz (1992) argues, that there is no quintessential feminist methodology but rather a feminist *approach* to method. In an overview of the contributions of feminists to sociological methodology, Marjorie DeVault (1996) describes feminist methodology as sharing three commitments:

> 1. Feminists seek a methodology that will do the work of "excavation," shifting the focus of standard practice from men's concerns in order to reveal the locations and perspective of (all) women."
>
> 2. Feminists seek a science that minimizes harm and control in the research process. In response to the observation that researchers have often exploited or harmed women participants, and that scientific knowledge has sustained systematic oppressions of women, feminist methodologists have searched for practices that will minimize harm to women and limit negative consequences."
>
> 3. Feminists seek a methodology that will support research of value to women, leading to social change or action beneficial to women. (1996: 32/33).

Vickie Sheilds and Brenda Dervin (1993: 78) add that an important part of feminist work is that "women's experience is valued and valid in its own right".

3.3 The Researcher as Part of the Process

> To be reflexive is to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment. By extension, the reflexive ethnographer does not simply report "facts" or "truths" but actively constructs interpretations of his or her experiences in the field and then

> questions how those interpretations came about. The outcome of reflexive social science is reflexive knowledge: statements that provide insight on the workings of the social world *and* insight on how that knowledge came into existence. (Hertz, 1997: viii).

Feminist sociologists have worked to challenge the concept of objectivity in research. Women such as Helen Longino (1989) and Vickie Shields and Brenda Dervin(1993) argue that every researcher brings a perspective to their research. This means that in order to understand the product of a research process we must also understand the perspective of the researcher. Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989) call this our conceptual baggage. I have clarified my position as a white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied woman with a feminist perspective. As well, it is important to know that my research question came from my own experience as a front-line worker at Catholic Family Services coupled with my years of feminist activism in the Hamilton community. As Shulamit Reinharz (1992: 259) comments, "feminist researchers often start with an issue that bothers them personally and then use everything they can get hold of to study it".

While I came to this work with some preconceived notions, I followed the advice of Margrit Eichler (1989 : 13) who argues that "objectivity remains a useful and important goal for research". However, she talks about objectivity in terms of practice rather than stance. For example, she continues to talk about a commitment to "truth-finding" but this is defined as being willing to look at evidence that is contrary to your expectations and beliefs. And as Longino, Shields and Dervin note above, objectivity rests on the willingness of the

researcher to be transparent about the underlying values that inform her research rather than a stance that rests on attempts to be value-free. The explanation of methodology that follows indicates how I have worked to include evidence that was contrary to my initial perceptions and my commitment to my own form of 'truth-finding' that is available to me at this particular time in this little piece of an imperfect and unpredictable world.

It has also been particularly important to me that I maintain, as much as possible, the words and experiences of the women (and sometimes men) that I interviewed and, in many cases, worked with. This includes my own voice which I have integrated into this work in the form of footnotes in chapter five, since I was an interested outsider for most of these events, and, in the body of the work in chapter six since I was an active participant in the changes that occurred at Catholic Family Services. This is an attempt to avoid what Dorothy Smith (1987) labels the abstraction of everyday life. This phenomenon has been particularly evident for me in the fracturing of my life into everyday and academic compartments. It is difficult to unravel the knots of theory when your nine-year old needs attention. I was made aware that being an academic requires particular kinds of thinking and experience, not to mention the privilege of being allowed into the university in the first place. I have worked with women who are brilliant at uncovering the tangled processes that bind women in violent relationships but they are not academics. It is a loss that the experience and intelligence of these women is not as much a part of our knowledge as the work of academics. The

emphasis on knowledge production in academe creates a particular kind of knowing. Patricia Monture-Okanee (1992: 195) identifies this as she talks about her time in university,

> In ten years of being at university, I have not spent one single day in any of those institutions where I was dealt with as a complete person. I was merely a mind. No one wanted to address my spirit, or my emotions, my sexuality. We have to look at the definition of what is knowledge – the way we learn things...

I have tried, therefore, to bring some of the activist, some of the mother, some of the everyday to this piece of research.

3.4 The Research Question – A Paradox at Catholic Family Services

As described in Chapter One, my research question was a product of my work in the community. The programme Catholic Family Services provided for abused women changed dramatically over a ten-year period. I have spent most of my life active in movements for change and I wanted to understand how this particular fragment of change had occurred so that I could reproduce it. I chose a topic for my research from personal experience which is not unusual for feminist researchers. Fonow and Cook (1991) point out that feminists have to be creative and spontaneous in their approach to both method and topic because of limited opportunities and resources. An emphasis on experience also corresponds with the feminist premise that the 'personal is political', that is, that the everyday experience of women is an important source of theoretical questions.

As I embarked upon my exploration of change at CFS it became clear that there was not a single set of neat variables that I could capture and measure to

explain the changes I had observed. Although I began with what would be recognized by most as a case study, I soon had to move beyond this into what I came to call an 'expanded' case study. Eventually, I investigated not only the agency but also the context in which the agency operated. I looked at the community in which it was situated as well as the larger sphere of funding and policy that municipal, provincial and federal governments were providing. A combination of methodologies (a hallmark of feminist research) was needed to obtain the required information.

3.5 The Case Study or Exploring the Micro-state in Context

The case study approach allows one to take a small piece of life and investigate it thoroughly. This method allows you to examine complex relationships and follow them over time. (Reinharz, 1992). This seemed the best way to fully examine the agency that was at the centre of my question. I have chosen to study a fifteen-year period from 1980 to 1995. This has allowed me to explore the events leading up to the initial changes at the agency and to follow those changes for an extended time period. Catholic Family Services is a medium-sized family services agency located in the centre of the city of Hamilton. Although it is a Catholic agency with ties to the Diocese of Hamilton-Wentworth, it is open to all denominations. Thirty-six full-time staff provide a variety of services to members of the Hamilton-Wentworth community (A fuller description of the agency follows in Chapter, 6). The focus of this study is on the Counselling Unit, also known as Clinical Services. This unit was responsible for

providing service to abused women although a woman might access other services if she needed them. The case study of the unit was accomplished with interviews of past and present employees of the Counselling Unit, the manager of the unit, the director of the agency and volunteers, including two board members. The director also gave me access to agency papers including meeting minutes, agency policies and annual reports. This information was supplemented by my own understanding and experiences of the agency where I worked for two and a half years.

The case study of the feminist movement against wife/woman abuse in Hamilton was garnered from interviews with activists in the community and a content analysis of the local daily newspaper, *The Hamilton Spectator* over a fifteen-year period from 1980 to 1995. The interviews provided a picture of a range of activism in the community over the years leading up to and during the changes at CFS and the analysis of *The Hamilton Spectator* provided a catalogue of events with which to corroborate the memories of the activists. As well, *The Hamilton Spectator* provided an overview of community responses to wife/woman abuse and the work of feminist activists.

A full understanding of either the community or the programme was impossible without knowledge of the policy and political context created by the state in the area of wife/woman abuse. Issues of definition, funding, and service provision were being worked out at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. These issues were explored through the examination of various government

documents at all levels, including reports, background papers, committee meeting minutes and policy position papers. These government documents provided written records of the government's public positions on the issue of wife/woman abuse.

3.6 Interviews

Interviews are a commonly used method of feminist sociologists. Interviewing is concrete and connected, allowing for the participation of the interviewee in the research process. This participation creates possibilities for the levelling of the relationship between the researcher and her subject. Interviewing also allows for the recording and sometimes the expression of a participant's own voice, bringing her experience to the work in the most unadulterated way possible (Reinharz, 1992). In my case, interviewing allowed me to compare my understanding of the changes that occurred in the program with those of other participants. As Vickie Shields and Brenda Dervin (1993) explain, feminist interviewing means that the researcher and the participant can create meaning together through dialogue. I gave participants an opportunity to contribute to the interview process by asking them to add to the interview or change questions if they felt it was necessary. It was also made clear to participants that they could refuse to provide information if they wished.

Subjects were contacted for the interviews in various ways. Interviewees who were past employees of the agency's Counselling Unit were contacted through letters from the director of the agency. They were given information

about the study, particularly the fact that it was agency endorsed. Contact information was included so that they could call me if they chose to participate. Out of six possible past employees, four contacted me and were willing to be interviewed. Present employees were told about the study in a staff meeting and then I was responsible for contacting them.

All five present team members of the Counselling Unit agreed to be interviewed. All the employees are middle-class as measured by their income and their professional standing. There is only one non-white employee in the Counselling Unit, while two have disabilities and none are openly gay or lesbian. There is only one male team member. Two members of management, the unit supervisor and the director, also agreed to be interviewed. The director contacted several board members and two of them agreed to be interviewed. All of the management interviewees were white, middle-class, and able-bodied. None identified themselves as gay or lesbian. The director and manager were men and the board members were women. Finally, I interviewed three members of a volunteer advisory group, the Reference Group. They were all white, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle-class, women.

Contacting activists was slightly more difficult. I used a snowball technique, connecting with those activists that I did know and asking for information on additional contacts. In total, I interviewed fourteen of the twenty activists contacted. Most of these individuals had been involved in the fight against wife/woman abuse for many years. The average years of experience was

fourteen. Women ranged in age from their early thirties to their early fifties. They were mostly white, able-bodied, and middle class. Two of the women were self-identified lesbians. These women represent a range of political positions and comfort with challenging the state. Some activists refused to be interviewed. They did not give reasons. There are several possible explanations. First, they may have had no time available. Secondly, the issues I wished to talk about had been very difficult for many activists in the community and they may not have wished to speak about it. Finally, they may not have trusted me since I was attached to Catholic Family Services and not an active participant in the political action group, Justice for Women, of which many of ~~them~~ were members.

Interviews were carried out with a set of semi-structured questions (see Appendix 1). The same questions were utilized for all groups but participants could direct the interview. Often this meant that the interviews went off in other directions. The questionnaire was tested on several women who are feminist activists in other areas and it was adjusted according to their suggestions. They generally found the questionnaire clear and easy to answer. The interviews took place at people's place of employment, at my home, and on occasion, at a coffeehouse or cafe. The interviews lasted from one hour to three hours, with an average of one and a half-hours. The interviews were taped with the permission of the participant and transcribed for analysis.

It is important to recognize that although interviews have many strengths, they also have weaknesses. In her article on ethnographic work, Stacey states her

conviction that we must work towards a more equal relationship between interviewer and interviewee, yet her own experiences have shown that a more equal relationship may actually be more, rather than less, exploitive.

> For no matter how welcome, even enjoyable, the field-worker's presence may appear to "natives," fieldwork represents an intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships, a system of relationships that the researcher is far freer than the researched to leave. The inequality and potential treacherousness of this relationship is inescapable (Stacey, p. 113).

In addition to the power that is inherent in the role of researcher, there are also other aspects of power that relate to oppression based in racism, ablism, heterosexism and agism. I tried to be aware of and address any imbalances that I identified.

Because I had been an employee of Catholic Family Services, I was both inside and outside the events that form my research. I had an established relationship with employees because I had worked with most of them, or, they were acquainted with me. This gave me credibility and some amount of trust. The director of the agency endorsed my research. This meant that employees were given paid time to speak to me. The director's involvement may have been a cause for concern for some interviewees. Those who knew me had a level of trust around what I would, or could, disclose in my research. My interviews with activists in the community were also with those who knew me personally or by reputation. I had a certain amount of credibility with them as well. However, a certain level of trust can be a double-edged sword in research.

> Despite the aspects of intervention and exploitation I have described, ethnographic method appears to (and often does) place the researcher and her informants in a collaborative, reciprocal quest for understanding; but the research product is ultimately that of the researcher, however modified or influenced by informants With very rare exceptions it is the researcher who narrates, who "authors" the ethnography. In the last instance, an ethnography is a written document structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered in a researcher's voice. (Genova, 1989, p. 114)

As Judith Genova states above, qualitative research can be more equal and collaborative but we should never lose sight of the fact that the researcher is still in a position of dominance. I have tried to address this issue by ensuring that participants had some control over the process and the results of the interview. As mentioned above, participants could ask questions, change questions, or refuse to answer them. Some interviewees requested that parts of their answers not be quoted. All requests were respected. Finally, all participants were offered the opportunity to read and comment on a draft of this work. Some have done so and their comments have contributed to the final product.

Confidentiality is an important issue for interviewing. All participants were assured that their responses would be confidential and no identifying information would be used without their permission. It was particularly difficult to maintain confidentiality in this research because the agency is very small and well known in the community. Some measure of anonymity might have been achieved by disguising the name of the community, but the events that have occurred in the community and are significant to this research made the community easy to identify. Once the community was identified the agency

would also be easy to identify. Participants were aware of this problem before they were interviewed. I have tried to maintain the anonymity of the participants by coding them as activists or employees. I have combined present and past employees in order to make them less recognizable. It was, however, difficult to maintain the anonymity of management or board members since they are so few in number[18].

3.7 Document Analysis - Government Documents, Agency Files and *The Hamilton Spectator*

Content analysis is a means of using text and other cultural artifacts to provide information about events, attitudes and the production of the artifacts themselves. It is particularly useful because artifacts are removed from their makers. While memories may fade or change to suit a new perspective, artifacts are more static (Reinharz, 1992). I am aware that the information presented in the texts I analyzed was itself a process of mediation. There were various types of documents for each part of the research. In the case study of the programme for abused women at Catholic Family Services, I used organizational documents. These documents included minutes of meetings, criteria for service from the Counselling Unit, mission statements, descriptions of groups, policies, procedures and annual reports. These documents were used to corroborate interviews and to explore the public position of the agency on the issue of wife/woman abuse.

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[18] A special effort was made to allow these interviewees to approve the quotes that were used from them in this work. All of them were offered the opportunity to read and revise this work.

The interviewing of activists provided a picture of the movement to end wife/woman abuse in Hamilton from their perspective. I reviewed the local newspaper, *The Hamilton Spectator* to develop a catalogue of events in the community and articles that involved the issue of wife/woman abuse. I reviewed the front section of the newspaper, the section covering local news and the sections covering women's issues, variously identified as the life, issues or observer sections. Photocopying allowed me to return to the articles numerous times. The articles were reviewed for information as to events, such as a march, a funding announcement or an assault, and also for tone, such as type of language used or commentary on the issue of wife/woman abuse.

Government documents were collected from the government document section of the McMaster library, the legislative library of the Ontario government, and special collections in the Hamilton Public Library. Archival data included reports from parliamentary committees, background papers on the issue of wife/woman abuse, press releases, reports, information pamphlets, committee minutes, and annual reports. This information furnished details on the changing government position on wife/woman abuse and the consequent funding structure.

3.8 Conclusion

Reflexivity is an attempt to counteract the embedding of power processes in research. Ristock and Pennell (1996: 48) define reflexivity as "self-awareness" which is evident in a full-disclosure of the choices made in the research process, including choice of methodology as well as the process of interpretation. I have

started this process of public self-awareness by locating myself as both an academic and an activist, attempting to straddle both worlds. This has meant that I have the advantage of a dual perspective but also the complications that come with both positions. As much as is possible, I have identified how I hold power as white, heterosexual and able, while also recognizing how my gender places me on the margins. From this somewhat complex and contradictory location, I chose a research question that was a product of my life experiences.

My research question is a product of both my experience and my limitations. Often women (particularly graduate students) must work with what is readily available and recognizably achievable. I was fortunate to come to university with a question that met both criteria - the changes in the programme for abused women at Catholic Family Services. The complexity of the question has meant that I have had to use a variety of methodologies and sources. Although this was sometimes difficult and frustrating, it has provided a more complex representation of the social processes that were evident in Hamilton from 1980-1995.

Doing the research has itself been a learning process. I had developed my own informal understanding of the events that had transpired to change the definition and approach to wife/woman abuse. I realized as I was delving more deeply into the sources that the explanations were much more complex and nuanced than I had initially believed. My 'insider' role was complimented by the

'outsider' role I presently occupied. This facilitated a deeper understanding of the social changes that brought a feminist perspective to Catholic Family Services.

CHAPTER FOUR - ENGAGING THE STATE FOR MEANING AND MONEY: DEFINING AND ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF WIFE/WOMAN ABUSE

Although the issue of wife/woman abuse was not even mentioned in the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (Begin, 1997), it became one of the central issues of the Canadian women's movement in the late 1970's and 1980's. As feminists became aware of the level of violence occurring against women in their homes, they began to seek public recognition of the problem. At the same time, they recognized that the needs of abused women could not be met by the women's movement alone and so they began to engage the state to acquire resources. The recognition of wife/woman abuse as a public problem was a necessary but not sufficient achievement. It was important that a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse be established which would, in turn, support a feminist approach to solving the problem. But what was the best way to accomplish this task? Central to the discussion were the rewards and costs of a relationship between the women's movement and the state around the issue of wife/woman abuse.

In the struggle to establish a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse, some feminist activists in the area of wife/woman abuse chose to take a

mainstreaming approach and engaged the state through parliamentary hearings and panels. They chose to focus their efforts at the federal level of government since successes here would echo throughout the nation. This chapter follows the government process of problem definition, beginning with the establishment of wife/woman abuse as a public problem through the attempts by activists to establish a feminist definition and the state's resistance to this. The section on problem definition ends with the successful establishment of a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse through the publication in 1993 of *Changing the Landscape*, the final report of the National Panel on Violence Against Women.

Although the federal government was not successful in maintaining a social problem definition of wife/woman abuse, it continued to support this approach through its funding decisions. While feminists were successful in securing the commitment of funds to the issue of wife/woman abuse from all levels of government, these funds were channelled, for the most part, through traditional bureaucratic structures, thus mitigating the challenge of a feminist definition. This resulted in problems and new sites of contest at the local level. This chapter examines the process of defining wife/woman abuse, which occurred mostly at the federal level of the Canadian government. The development of funding is described at both the federal and provincial levels but the focus is on the provincial level since the majority of services are managed at this level. Finally, the role of the municipal government in both funding and definition is initially examined although it will also be explored in chapter five.

4.2 Wife/Woman Abuse - Expression of Masculine dominance or Social Problem?

By the late 1970's feminists had brought the issue of violence against women into the public realm but this was only the beginning. Nancy Fraser (1990: 202) outlines a model of the process which issues undergo in their movement through the process of definition by the state. The first step is to establish that the issue is a legitimate public problem. Once an issue is established in the public arena, the struggle begins over interpretation. This conflict centres around who will have the power to define the issue. Dominique Masson (1997: 65) points out that the debate is over more than meaning: "The institutionalization of particular ways of framing claims has very real, material consequences." The material consequences are evident in the final step, the decision about how these needs will be met.

Initially, wife/woman abuse came to the attention of feminists who had opened women's centres. These centres provided opportunities for women to gather and quite often volunteers provided information to women over the phone lines. Abused women began to call and visit, asking for help. The extent of the violence was surprising and overwhelming (Kenny and Magnusson, 1993; Adamson, Briskin and MacPhail, 1988).

While various feminist 'namings' indicate differences in focus, the definition of wife/woman abuse by feminists shows a notable unity (Walker,

1990). Feminists define wife/woman abuse as a political problem rather than a social problem based in masculine dominance rather than individual deficiencies. In many ways this definition has changed little over the last fifteen years. For example, in 1980, when Linda MacLeod wrote "Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle", for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, she used the then current feminist definition for what she called 'wife battering:

> Wife battering is violence, physical and/or psychological, expressed by a husband or a male or lesbian live-in lover toward his wife or his/her live-in lover, to which the "wife" does not consent, and which is directly or indirectly condoned by the traditions, laws and attitudes prevalent in the society in which it occurs (7).

This definition contains all the agreed upon elements of a feminist definition and is still relevant today.

The differences between a feminist and a social problem definition are apparent in the choices of language. The terms domestic violence and family violence are often used by those adhering to a social problem approach to wife/woman abuse. These terms 'de-gender' the problem, removing the recognition that the vast majority of violence in families is male to female and therefore de-contextualizing the violence (Fine, 1993; Kurz, 1998). For example, as Demie Kurz (1998: 198) explains, many family violence researchers see the family as an equal, gender-neutral system in which "all family members are part of the family system, contribute to family patterns and events and bear responsibility for what happens in a family". This definition places wife/woman abuse within the purview of traditional social service organizations since it does

not require that present social systems be challenged. If the problem is one of individual men and women then the answer is to develop a program which 'cures' whatever difficulties these individuals have, and the problem disappears. There is, therefore, no need to address societal structures.

A feminist approach is indicated in terms such as 'violence against women' and 'wife-battering' (or as this work promotes, wife/woman abuse). These terms reflect the larger structural context rather than focusing on the individual. Therefore structural changes are required to end wife/woman abuse. These types of changes would be difficult to achieve using a mainstream approach. However, grassroots feminists recognized that the needs of abused women for shelter and protection could not be provided by the women's movement alone. This meant that engaging the state was a necessity. However, how one engaged the state and to what extent was open for discussion.

The choice between mainstreaming and disengagement has been a continuing question in the Canadian women's movement. Dawn Currie (1990:85) delineates the mainstream approach that has been applied to legislation:

> feminist campaigns against violence against women increasingly advocated the creation of new criminal offences, the facilitation of arrests, charges, and convictions for crimes against women, and more severe punishment of convicted offenders. As a feminist struggle for justice, these demands are defended on a number of logical grounds: women only want the same kind of justice that has been given to other victims of crime.

As Currie states, women should be subject to the same protections as men, yet such criminalization places women in the role of victim and portrays abused

women as passive, helpless and dependent. Such a portrayal is not only inaccurate, it is dangerous because it reinforces stereotypes of 'helpless' femininity and appeals to the state for services and safety (Profitt, 1996). A woman fleeing an individual 'patriarch' who wanted to control her behaviour now places her trust and life in the state, a 'public patriarch' (Brown, 1992; Evans and Wekerle, 1997; Young, 1990; Gordon, 1990; Currie, 1990). An abstract and supposedly objective 'public patriarch' might prove even more difficult to confront than an individual. In contrast to the labelling of women as victims, some feminists have argued that the women who live through violence are survivors . That is, if one understands the actions of abused women within the context of their lives, it becomes evident that abused women learn to 'cope' with the violence by manipulating their environment, to the extent that it is possible, to reduce the frequency and severity of the violence they suffer. The recognition of abused women as 'experts on their own lives' is the basis of the feminist assertion that effective services must acknowledge and include the expertise of abused women.

Another example of this tension between mainstreaming and disengagement is in the discussion about approaches to state funding of shelters and services for abused women. Women require these services to stay safe and to move beyond their abusive relationships. However, this funding has resulted in a movement in shelters towards bureaucratization and professionalization[19]. Early

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[19] One of the problems with the argument against professionalization is that it is assumed that professional women are not abused or have not experienced abuse. Professionalization may have a conservative effect on women's shelters but this is not necessarily a given.

shelters were often run by volunteers, committed feminists who worked long hours for little pay. Gradually, they were replaced by women who had at least college level training. Professionalism brings some advantages in terms of credibility in the community and at least basic levels of pay for workers, but, it may also bring a standardization to the work that makes it less adaptable and political (Quinby, 1995). Advocacy work is replaced by counselling, which again places the emphasis on changes in the individual woman rather than society.

The above discussion has illustrated the differences that are evident in the feminist and social problem approaches to wife/woman abuse. Feminists have demanded that a gendered definition of wife/woman abuse be accepted by the state. They have done so because the state is integral to the process of defining social issues. Patricia Evans and Gerda Wekerle (1997: 12) argue that,

> Governments are both the targets of these struggles over meaning and the key actors in the ongoing articulation, interpretation, and implementation of claims. Through legislation, regulation, rules, and access to media, governments attempt to gain acceptance for their framing of problems and solutions.

Differing elements of the Canadian women's movement have chosen to take mainstreaming or disengaged stances towards the state. Although a mainstreaming approach has many pitfalls, it has been effective in the attempt to establish a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse in the definition processes of the federal government. However, without the challenge that a feminist definition brings to the issue there would be little change.

4.3 Step One - Engaging the State for Public Recognition.

Public hearings in the form of governmental committees, commission and panels provide an opportunity for the public to be involved in the government's process of defining social issues. In the area of wife/woman abuse, the first of these opportunity came during the 1982 winter session of parliament when the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs was charged with examining the problem of family violence. This all-party parliamentary committee was requested to:

> Examine, inquire into and report from time to time appropriate measures for the prevention, identification and treatment of abused persons involved in intrafamily violence and in particular, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to address the issue of battered wives and dependants and for such other measures in the same matter as the Committee may consider desirable (Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, 1982: 3).

The committee held seven days of hearings from January 25, 1982 to February 18, 1982. It heard from thirteen witnesses, and received twenty-five briefs. Some feminist activists challenged the committee through their presentations. One example is the submission from the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women which provided an explicitly feminist definition of the issue (using the term violence against women). Others took a more mainstream approach, wishing to engage the state by presenting information which fit neatly into existing bureaucracy (Walker, 1990). For example, witnesses such as Trudy Don from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, and Peter

Jaffe from the London Family Court Clinic, provided blueprints for modifications to existing services such as funding to shelters (Ibid: 26:20) and training for police officials (Ibid: 27:6).

The committee responded in May of 1982, with the *Report on Violence in the Family: Wife Battering*. The committee had clearly accepted wife/woman abuse as a public problem. However, the definition they used was limited in scope and did not recognize the oppression of women as a context for abuse.

> We have deliberately chosen to limit our attention to one area, wife battering. By this we mean violent behaviour directed by a man towards a woman with whom he is emotionally involved, and with whom he lives or has lived, whether or not the relationship has received legal sanction as a marriage. We have not limited our investigation out of indifference to the problem of child abuse, the abuse of the elderly, *or the abuse of husbands*[20] (emphasis added, Ibid: 3).

While this report recognized the seriousness of the issue and accepted that wife/woman abuse was a government responsibility, it solidly maintained a social problem management perspective. The committee members accepted that there were some general problems with society's response to abused women, particularly in the socialization of men and women in traditional gender roles. However, a social problem approach was evident in the committee's reliance on existing programs within the federal government. For example, many of the recommendations relied on inserting wife/woman abuse into an existing criminal law framework (Walker, 1990: 69-70).

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[20] However the report does note that the incidence of male to female violence is much higher.

The committee's report did identify wife/woman abuse as a public rather than a private problem and therefore a responsibility of the state.

> This Committee respects and upholds the privacy of the family. However, we find that in the case of wife beating society is justified in intervening to assist the family. To ignore the problem is to ignore society's fundamental obligation to preserve the life and health of its members. Our institutions must occupy themselves with the problem more actively than they have done in the past. The ends to be achieved are diverse, and are determined both by the needs of the victim and the proper response of society towards the batterer (Ibid:15).

As this quote indicates, the committee felt the need to reinforce the sanctity of the nuclear family but to argue that exceptions should be made in the case of violence.

4.4 Step Two - Defining the Problem

The next official opportunity for feminist involvement in the government definition of wife/woman abuse did not come until June 22, 1989, when the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women, struck a Sub-Committee on the Status of Women. Galvanized by the Montreal Massacre,[21] the Sub-Committee on the Status of Women was directed to investigate violence against women in Canada. They adopted the following terms,

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[21] In December 1989, Marc Lepine, shot fourteen young women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal because they had chosen to be engineers, a non-traditional occupation for women (as stated in his letter). This event shook many Canadians who believed that they lived in an essentially non-violent and reasonable society, and increased public demands for government action in the area of violence against women.

> To enquire into the definition, incidence, causes and costs of the problem of violence against women in Canadian society and the response of the criminal justice system, community groups and government to this problem and the role and responsibility of governments in seeking resolutions to it (Sub-Committee on the Status of Women, 1991: 1).

This committee's working definition of violence used feminist language and was broader, reflecting the changes in thinking about wife/woman abuse in the ten years intervening between committees. It placed wife/woman abuse in a context of violence against women in our society,

> Violence against women is a multifaceted problem which encompasses physical, psychological and economic violation of women which is integrally linked to the social/economic/political structures, values, and policies that silence women in our society, support gender-based discrimination, and maintain women's inequality (Ibid: 3).

The Sub-Committee saw thirty-eight witnesses over eleven days from December 1990 to April 1991. There was more diversity in the presenters than there had been ten years ago reflecting the growth of the women's movement in the intervening years. There was representation from aboriginal, immigrant, and francophone women as well as women of colour.

This set of hearings also had a different tone than those in 1982. Feminism was a current that ran through the hearings. The government was recognized as an actor in the area of wife/woman abuse, not only as part of the solution but as an integral part of the problem. The Montreal Massacre obviously had a great impact on both committee members and presenters. Sheila McIntyre, representing the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, commented on how the feminist voice is silenced in politics:

> It also remains politically risky for the small minority of women politicians to be seen as feminists. In this climate, even overtly misogynist and anti-feminist violence such as that perpetrated by Marc Lepine cannot be named without generating a violent backlash against women and feminists in particular (House of Commons, 1990: 4:27).

Ms. McIntyre further argued that the voice of women is generally silenced in our society. Her comments reflected a belief that the violence that women face is embedded within a societal system of oppression and inequality. These hearing were also unique in that the Committee members themselves expressed feminist views. For example, Mary Clancy, a committee member, commented on the apparent resistance to a feminist interpretation of the Montreal Massacre. In her words,

> to say that, yes, those women were killed because they were feminist, has struck a chord right across this country with women. It was almost as if we were not being allowed to mourn, we were not allowed to say that this is what happened to us. I think this is something we all have to be aware of (House of Commons, 1990: 2:26).

In this statement she identified herself as a feminist trying to struggle, as all feminists were, to work through the anger and fear that the Massacre produced.

In June 1991, the Sub-Committee submitted a seventy-four page report, *The War Against Women.* The report made twenty-five recommendations. In contrast to the previous report, *Report on Violence in the Family: Wife Battering* , this one identified the structural nature of the problem calling for society-wide changes from equal representation of girls in sports to mandatory training on masculine dominance for federal judges. As in the previous report, the committee called for a nation-wide public education campaign in the media and schools, but

they recognized that such a campaign would be of little use unless the necessary resources were available for the increased need that such campaigns generate. The report also commented on the importance of involving feminist activists in the provision and monitoring of services to abused women and abusive men. The committee did not accept that the limited role of the federal government in social services absolved it of any responsibility in the provision of resources to abused women. They recommended that the federal government be responsible for initiating talks with the provinces and territories to ensure that such services were available. The final recommendation of the Sub-Committee was a call for a Royal Commission on Violence Against Women to bring the issue of wife/woman abuse to a broader public agenda.

The *War Against Women* was a very different government response to violence against women. The Sub-committee recognized wife/woman abuse as a structural issue as well as a social problem and refused to treat women as victims. Instead, they addressed how violence against women was a human rights issue. This quote clearly indicates that the Sub-committee believed that masculine dominance was an essential element in wife/woman abuse.

> The Committee is convinced that security of the person is a fundamental human right that is denied to too many women in our society. The fact that women are the targets for men's violence is a tragic reflection of the unequal social and economic status of women in relation to men. It is the hope of the Committee that the recommendations in this report will help to redress the systemic forms of inequality that foster and legitimate violence against women (Sub-Committee on the Status of Women, 1991: 55).

The very title of the report, *The War Against Women*, indicated that the Sub-Committee did not see violence against women as an error of omission but one of commission, an issue that should be addressed immediately. The Report was accompanied by a call for a government response within ninety days (which it did not receive). Revealing its controversial nature, the report was not accepted by its own Standing Committee on Health and Welfare Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women (Levan, 1995: 337). Despite this refusal to bring the report into the proper channels of parliamentary debate, it did become public and therefore required a response from the Federal government.

In November, 1991 the government responded to *The War Against Women* with a report prepared by Status of Women Canada, *Living Without Fear, Everyone's Goal, Every Woman's Right*. This document was a transparent attempt to invalidate the *War Against Women*. First, the title of the Status of Women report diffused the intensity of the issue. The allusion to war which emphasized the immediate and intentional danger that women face was replaced with a title that focused on fear, which can be a response to things either real or imagined. The use of the term "everyone" diffuses the responsibility for ending violence away from the federal government (although ending violence is everyone's responsibility).

In addition, each recommendation of *The War Against Women* was redirected in various ways. In *Living Without Fear, Everyone's Goal, Every Woman's Right*, current programs were described as if to illustrate that the

federal government had already responded to many of the recommendations that had been made. For example, recommendation 11 of the Sub-Committee states:

> The Committee recommends that the federal government take the lead role to ensure that secure, long-term funding is available for front-line agencies providing services to assaulted and abused women and girls. Financial support is needed to ensure that services will be accessible to all women in need and sensitive to the needs of women with disabilities, elderly women, and women who are immigrants and/or members of visible minorities." (Status of Women Canada, 1991 : 28)

This recommendation directs the federal government to establish separate, specific funding for services to abused women and girls. Although the provincial governments have constitutional responsibility for social services, there were precedents for federal funding of services (for example, Unemployment Insurance or Old Age Security). *Living Without Fear* answered with:

> While the delivery of services is primarily a provincial or territorial responsibility, the federal government contributes significantly to the support of provincial and territorial programs. Through the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), the federal government cost-shares eligible provincial and territorial expenditures in the areas of social assistance and welfare services. An estimated one quarter of the total CAP contribution to the provinces and territories is used to provide support to victims of family violence" (Ibid: 28)

In answer to the Sub-Committee report's call for resources to meet the needs of women in diverse groups, *Living Without Fear* describes some of the resources that were already available to groups of women who were disabled or immigrants. This infers that the members of the Sub-Committee were not aware of the federal government's initiatives, subtly 'dis'-qualifying them as speakers on the issue. As well, requests for specific, additional funding for "assaulted women and girls" were side-stepped by referrals to existing funding provisions.

The government response thus evaded this request by referring to present funding. Inherent in this response is the idea that the federal government was already doing as much as it could. In addition, there are direct references to the financial concerns that were brought about by the deficit. In its report, the Sub-Committee made a clear request that any public education programme not begin unless adequate resources were available to meet the increased demand for services:

> The Committee recommends that the federal government initiate discussions with provincial and territorial governments to ensure that the community has adequate resources to accommodate the demand for services that will emanate from the multi-media campaign on violence against women.
> (Ibid, 1991 : 7)

Living Without Fear also included a commitment to a public education campaign but without the requested service supports in place.

> In the current climate of fiscal restraint, which affects all levels of government, it would be important that any public education campaign be designed to have minimal impact on the demand for services. During the federal-provincial/territorial consultations on family violence in early 1990, several provinces expressed concern about any federal activity, such as a media campaign, which would increase the demand for services.
> (Ibid)

The failure to provide supports is blamed on federal/provincial divisions of power and fiscal restraints. Instead, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Mary Collins, committed her government to "continue to work closely with her counterparts in the provinces and territories on the implementation of this initiative" and explained that "the public education campaign will be very general in nature and focus on prevention." (Ibid:8).

As the above quote indicates, the government understood that public education campaigns increased demands for service. The Minister suggested that as a compromise a *general* education campaign would be used, implying that such a campaign would not increase service demand (although previous such campaigns certainly had). It appeared that the federal government was quite prepared to go ahead with a public education campaign that could actually create difficulties but were not prepared to commit any additional funding that might have actually addressed the needs of abused women. Finally, prior to the release of *Living Without Fear* the government announced that it would establish a "blue ribbon" National Panel on Violence Against Women in lieu of the Royal Commission called for by the Sub-committee. The panel held less authority than a Royal Commission and had fewer resources available to it, although a $10 million budget was approved.

The members of the Sub-Committee had created a report with an implicit feminist perspective that recognized the culpability of the federal government in the issue of violence against women. It called for strong, direct action to remedy the situation. The federal government responded to this challenge from within by producing a report that diffused responsibility for the issue to other levels of government, emphasized financial problems, offered already existing programs as solutions and subtly disparaged the knowledge of the members of the Sub-Committee. They created an appearance of action on the issue through a public education campaign and the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women.

In August 1991, the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women was convened with a vague mandate - to investigate violence against women in Canada. Nine members - eight women and one man - were appointed to the Panel. They were not elected officials or employees of the federal government. Each member was recognized as an 'expert' in the field of violence against women and self-identified as feminists or pro-feminists. The Panel differed from previous government committees in that they began with an explicit feminist perspective. During 1992, the panel travelled across Canada visiting one hundred and thirty-nine communities and receiving eight hundred submissions. Instead of the traditional approach of hearing expert witnesses and accepting briefs the Panel placed an emphasis on the stories of individual women. However, panel members sometimes questioned this approach.

> At times, we were troubled about our approach. Were we right to opt for flexibility and individual expression over the traditional presentation of briefs? How could we reconcile the need for public validation of existing expertise in the community with the challenge of stimulating a dynamic that would be both interactive and engaging for the community? How could we encourage women to speak out, yet avoid the pitfalls of sensationalism? How could we create an atmosphere that was free of prejudice so that the public could discover and admit to the realities hidden in the silence and suffering of thousands of women? (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993: B5).

The concerns of the Panel were echoed in the voices of feminist activists in the community. The emphasis on submissions from individual women meant that some feminist activists who had been presenting to government bodies for years were shut out of the process. There was also a concern that larger issues and a larger analysis of the issue, that is the place of masculine dominance in

wife/woman abuse, would be lost in the focus on the individual. The fact that Panel members had been appointed by the government, even though they were self-identified feminists, raised questions in the feminist community about whether the Panel members were truly representative of a feminist viewpoint. For example, the lack of diversity[22] on the Panel called into question its legitimacy to speak on the issue of violence against women. Finally, there were many advocates who felt that the $10 million spent on the Panel would have been put to better use providing services for abused women (Levin, 1995).

In the end, in July 1993, the Panel produced a comprehensive, four-hundred and twenty-six page report entitled *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence-Achieving Equality.* A feminist perspective was identified as the central 'lens' through which the report should be seen. The voices of individual women were a central theme in the report and quotes from them were scattered throughout each chapter. The Panel's report included an extensive overview of the issues involved in violence against women followed by a comprehensive blueprint for change.

The report was broken down into five parts. The first part of the report provided a definition of violence against women. Their definition came from the United Nations and defined violence against women as:

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[22] Late in 1991, four aboriginal women were appointed to the panel as an advisory, aboriginal circle. This created difficulties for the panel because their relationship with advisory panels had not been clarified and there were issues around the diversity of the panel. The panel members decided that the aboriginal circle would have equal status with the panel members. Eighteen other people were appointed to an advisory committee, including a judge, two doctors, a police officer and other 'experts' in fields that impacted on violence against women.

> Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether *occurring in public or private life* (emphasis added, United Nations, 1993: 6 as quoted in National Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993: 5).

As well, the report included a section of the United Nations definition, which stressed the oppression of women inherent in violence against women.

> [Violence against women] is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and which have prevented women's full advancement. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men (Ibid).

These definitions put the feminist perspective front and centre and the use of the United Nations as a source gave the definition legitimacy.

The second part of the report, "Experiencing Violence – Forms", covered the many forms of violence against women, including workplace abuse and "under-acknowledged" forms of abuse such as ritual abuse, stalking, and pornography. This section represented one of the most detailed outlines of types of abuse at the time. The third part of the Report, "Experiencing Violence – Populations", attempted to convey the experiences of women who were not usually included in discussions of violence against women: older women, younger women, rural women and women from diverse communities. The sections on Inuit and Aboriginal women were extensive and produced by the circles of Aboriginal and Inuit women who were part of the Panel. Part four of the Report, "Experiencing Violence – Institutions", examined the role that social institutions play in violence against women. The committee stated:

> Institutions must not be perceived as neutral settings that treat and are experienced by everyone in a similar fashion...there is a bias in which social institutions, settings or programs operate to the advantage of one gender, race or class and to the disadvantage of others. Tolerance of violence against women is unquestionably present in the social institutions we examined (Ibid: 195)

This part of the Report examined social services, the health care system, the legal system, the workplace, the military, education, media and culture and illustrated the contribution of each system to the abuse of women. Much of the information was already available in various formats but the Panel Report brought them together and introduced issues such as violence against military wives.

The final part of the Report contained the recommendations of the Committee for an extensive national plan to end violence The recommendations were divided into four major sections: an equity action plan, a zero tolerance action plan, monitoring and accountability mechanisms and a call to action for individuals. The Equality Action Plan made explicit the connection between masculine dominance and violence against women. The writers noted that Canada had made commitments to women's equality both at the national and international levels but they had not been implemented:

> We believe that concrete, practical fulfilment of these commitments along with significant change in key areas of women's lives would make a critical difference in achieving women" equality in our society, thereby reducing women's vulnerability to violence (Ibid, Equality Action Plan, : 5).

What followed was an identification of the 'Key Problems' that the Panel identified in women's equal access to almost every aspect of society as well as recommendations for addressing the problems. Some of the recommendations

were general such as ensuring that human rights legislation had the power to address systemic discrimination, as well as individual complaint-driven cases of discrimination (Ibid, Equality Action Plan, : 5). Other recommendations, such as the enactment of a 'Status of Women Act', were very specific. Altogether, the Equality Plan provided an informed and achievable strategy. The Zero Tolerance Policy focused on the elimination of violence in Canadian society. It included an action plan for Canadian society in general and specific institutions in particular. There were 69 recommendations in the social services sector, 104 in the legal sector, 15 in the workplace sector, 34 in the military sector, 72 in the education sector, 88 recommendations for the media, 23 for religious institutions and 22 specific recommendations for the federal government. The recommendations included directions for new orientations in services. For example:

> There must be a major reorientation of the philosophy underpinning health care delivery from that of piecemeal treatment to a comprehensive model of healing which considers the person as a whole and understands the multi-faceted nature of violence and the complex ways in which all its dimensions – physical, sexual, psychological and social – interact (Ibid, The National Action Plan, : 37).

The Panel also included specific proposals for change and special 'Details' sections which gave concrete examples of how its proposals could be implemented.

Finally, there was an action plan for individuals. This plan outlined the various strategies and tactics that individuals could pursue in their families, neighbourhoods and communities. This section proposed concrete actions within the power of the individual. In total, the Panel made 368 recommendations that

were directed at all levels of society and represented the complexity and pervasiveness of violence against women.

Feminists in the community were critical of the Report. They argued that it was unwieldy, with too many recommendations which were not prioritized. Also there were no recommendations for funding (Levin, 1995) However, I would argue that if the purpose of the Report was to provide a blueprint for the eradication of violence against women, it was necessarily vast in its approach. It could be argued that piecemeal approaches are not effective and what was/is required is a complete commitment to change that encompasses all aspects of society. Although there were sections where priorities and resource allocation were discussed, the intent of the plan was a co-ordinated effort that included all aspects of the blueprint being enacted together rather than in order of priority. Although this approach was idealistic, if eradication of violence was the goal than perhaps it was more realistic than a piecemeal approach.

Another critique already mentioned above was the emphasis of the Panel on individual women, particularly the use of excerpts of women's stories throughout the Report. Lise Gottell (1997:64) argues that this resulted in a portrayal of abused women as victims,

> Enclosed within the Panel's narrative are three specific components: first, an open-ended and virtually unrestrained conception of violence; second, a construction of all women as thoroughly victimized; third, a new basis for the claim to social entitlement - that is women's victimization.

As discussed above, a portrayal of abused women as victims is problematic. But, in contrast to Gottell, I would argue that the time had come to

speak to abused women themselves rather than advocates (although many advocates have been abused). Many women do live through horrors and the inclusion of women's stories intensified the impact of the Report. Including their stories did not automatically identify the women as victims and the recommendations of the Panel did not rely on emphasizing women's entitlement to service based on victimization. Rather the blueprint created was very strongly focused on addressing masculine dominance in all aspects of society.

In sum, the debate between the Canadian women's movement and the state over the public definition of wife/woman abuse occurred, for the most part, in government-appointed bodies at the federal level. Initially, the federal government defined wife/woman abuse as a social problem, occurring between individuals. The *War Against Women* challenged that definition by emphasizing the immediacy of violence and its structural dimensions. The federal government attempted to deflect this approach with *Living Without Fear, Everyone's Goal, Every Woman's Right.* This report reinforced the social problem approach by focussing on already existing programs. However, *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence – Achieving Equality* firmly entrenched a feminist perspective in the public discourse and provided a blueprint for restructuring Canadian society in order to end the oppression of women.

Some feminist activists have questioned whether the reports of the committees and the Canadian Panel have done much to change the lives of abused women. But how an issue is defined is important to how it is addressed and who

retains ownership of both the problem and the solution. As well these reports, particularly *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence – Achieving Equality,* provided evidence of government support for a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse. This was used by feminists at the local level to convince traditional social service organizations of the validity of their approach (see Chapter 5). Although the state had worked to deflect a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse the report of the Panel had established it in the public sphere.

4.5 The State Response: the Conservative Power of Funding

The definition of wife/woman abuse was, for the most part, negotiated at the federal government level and some funds were made available in previously established federal areas of responsibility. At both the federal and the provincial (Ontario) levels of government, funding was directed through existing bureaucratic channels, mitigating the success feminists had in establishing their definition of the problem.

In 1988 the newly-elected Progressive Conservative federal government of Brian Mulroney announced a four year $40 million initiative to deal with family violence. Seven ministries were included in a "new partnership" to combat family violence. Health and Welfare Canada was made responsible for co-ordinating the program, in addition to providing public education, the training of front-line federal workers, and the development of community resources. Health and Welfare Canada also housed the new National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, which was intended to be a national repository of research and information on

family violence (Health and Welfare Canada, 1992). The Secretary of State was made responsible for encouraging community-based projects including conferences, training manuals, research projects and public education, while this agency's Multiculturalism and Citizenship branch focused on the needs of immigrants and the diverse communities. One of the largest projects was Canada Mortgage and Housing's "Project Haven", which was to provide capital funds for the building of new shelters or the renovation of buildings so that they could act as shelters. This program funded the federal portion of the capital cost of shelters sponsored by eligible non-profit organizations. To maintain eligibility for funding, projects had to continue to be operated as non-profit emergency shelters for 15 years (Health and Welfare Canada, 1991).

Under the new plan, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was responsible for ensuring that the special needs of aboriginal peoples and those living in the north were addressed in the areas of public education and awareness, training and program development. The emphasis in the Ministry of the Solicitor General was on improving the effectiveness of the response of the criminal justice system to family violence. This was to be achieved through support for conferences, symposia and workshops. Corrections Canada, a branch of the Solicitor General, began to develop and provide programs for male inmates who were batterers and female inmates who were survivors. For its part, the Department of Justice was mandated to focus on changing legislation as it related to family violence and making the criminal trial and sentencing

process more responsive to the 'victims'[23]. Finally, Status of Women Canada was to act as "watchdog" over the other ministries. After the Report of the National Panel the government made a renewed four year commitment to fight violence against women with an additional $136 million over the four year term, following the same principles as the 1988 announcement.

As can be seen, the federal government had dramatically increased the resources available to address wife/woman abuse through the provision of new services and cost-sharing with the provinces. Shelters were built, crisis lines started and professionals were educated. This meant that abused women now had a place to go and people who would recognize their situation and offer assistance. This was no small change. The abuse of women had become a public issue. However, in reviewing the pattern of funding attained, it is obvious that the increase in resources was funneled through the existing bureaucracy. Very few federal public servants worked from a feminist perspective (with the exception of the Women's programme in the Secretary of State) and the majority of them had not even been sensitized to women's issues through training (Findlay, 1988). So, as the money worked its way through the established channels of funding in each agency, the tendency was to follow the social problem approach already established. Women were seen not as political subjects with rights to safety and security, but rather as victims who required the protection of the state. As well, writers such as Lise Gotell (1997) and Sylvia Bashevkin (1998) have argued, that

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[23] For an examination of the language used to describe women who have experienced

the dedication of resources to wife/woman abuse by the federal government was a public relations exercise. Through this funding the federal government could continue to bill itself as representing the concerns of Canadian women even as it was reducing funding to other social services that were important to abused women (such as housing) and to women's programmes (such as the Secretary of State).

4.6 State Response at the Provincial Level

Although it was useful to argue the issue of meaning at the federal level (success here would be nation-wide), funding issues had to be determined at the provincial level because of constitutional divisions of power. In 1982, the Ontario provincial government held its own set of parliamentary hearings on 'wife battering'[24], but for the most part, it left the decisions of definition and agenda setting to the federal government. Therefore feminist activists had no formal avenue to impact on the approach to wife/woman abuse. Instead they kept the issue of wife/woman abuse front and centre with yearly lobbies of the Ontario government by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses[25]. As well, struggles at the federal level impacted on the provincial level in the form of agreements among provincial ministers, cost-sharing requirements for federal

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wife/woman abuse please see Norma Jean Profitt, 1996.

[24] For a more detailed account of these proceedings please see Gillian Walker (1990).

[25] Personal communication, Eileen Morrow, co-ordinator of O.A.I.T.H. These lobbies, which have occurred every year for the past 25 years are an opportunity for feminist advocates and elected officials to come together to discuss the important issues in the area of wife/woman abuse. O.A.I.T.H. is the provincial body which represents shelters throughout Ontario.

programs and political wrangling that was similar to events occurring at the federal level.

Ontario's first commitment to action on wife/woman abuse was an announcement in late 1983 that the province would dedicate $3.5 million to new shelters, crisis lines and family resource centres. Another $900,000 was tagged for public education. Gillian Walker (1990: 200) argues that this announcement was a response to the 1982 report mentioned above, but she also noted that no response would have been forthcoming without the pressure that was applied by the two Tory women in the cabinet. As well, in 1984 all the provincial ministers responsible for women's issues met to discuss the issue of wife/woman abuse and produced a joint statement committing their governments to address the issue. As a result, in 1985, an additional $400,000 was allotted to fund new crisis lines, a television advertisement for public education and the pilot for a new victim witness program.

The election of a minority Liberal government in 1995 meant that the New Democratic Party held some power to negotiate the direction of the new government and was able to advance its social justice agenda. This included action on women's issues in general and wife/woman abuse in particular. In 1986, the provincial government announced a further $5.4 million to fund counselling and education, develop children's programming and educate the police. When the Liberals were re-elected with a majority in 1988, they increased spending again by $4.5 million. It appears that, like the Conservatives, they understood that

wife/woman abuse was an excellent way to illustrate that a government cared about women's issues.

The Montreal Massacre impacted on approaches to wife/woman abuse at the provincial level in much the same way as it had at the federal level. Wife/woman abuse became a central issue. The federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women met again to address the issue of wife/woman abuse and issued the *Declaration on Violence Against Women* (Ontario Women's Directorate, 1990: 1). In 1990, another $2.2 million was allocated for new shelters so that the money provided by Project Haven (see above) could be accessed on a cost-shared basis. In 1991, the newly-elected NDP government made the largest financial commitment to date, increasing spending in this area by $20.3 million (Praud, 1997). This was due, in part, to the commitment of some ministers, such as Marion Boyd, to a clear feminist agenda including an end to wife/woman abuse (Walkom, 1994: 213). By the end of 1994, the Ontario government was spending $78 million to fight wife/woman abuse.

The division of powers between the federal and provincial governments meant that the bulk of services required by abused women fell under provincial jurisdiction. At the federal level, services for abused women were intended to be the result of the co-ordinated effort of seven ministries. At the provincial level, another seven ministries provided services to abused women (see figure 1, pg. 112). The Ministry of the Attorney General was responsible for three major

programmes – the victim/witness program, the crown/domestic assault program and the emergency legal aid program. The Ministry of the Solicitor General and Corrections provided programs for abusive men, particularly those incarcerated in provincial institutions or on probation or parole. Programs were also provided for incarcerated women who were survivors of violence. Another major focus of this ministry was on the training of police officers and correctional staff to recognize and act on signs of wife/woman abuse. The Ministry of Community and Social Services was granted the bulk of the funding available ($68.6 million) for the provision of shelter services, counselling, crisis lines, childcare, second stage housing and emergency transportation. The Ministry of Education and Training oversaw educational programs in schools, colleges and universities. This overlapped in some ways with the responsibilities of the Ministry of Health which provided pre-service and continuing education to health care providers, particularly those working in emergency rooms. The Ministry of Health also had a Women's Bureau which was responsible for focusing on women's health issues, including violence against women. The Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and the Office of Francophone Affairs provided for the needs of women in diverse communities.

At the federal level of government, resources were assigned to existing ministries. Status of Women Canada was placed in a watchdog role but was given no real power to ensure that the needs of abused women were met. In Ontario, the Ontario Women's Directorate, an advocacy and policy development

programme of the Provincial government, was identified as the umbrella organization for addressing violence against women as well as being responsible for public education such as the "Breaking the Silence Campaign[26]" of the early 1980's. The co-ordination of services for abused women was and continues to be done through the Violence Against Women Prevention Unit of the Directorate which is also formally responsible for allocating specific funding for violence against women. Both the co-ordination of services and control of funding should have provided the Directorate with some power to oversee abused women's services. However, the lines of authority of the Directorate over other programmes were not clearly defined and there was no structure of accountability in place. In terms of funding, the real decisions about resource allocation were made by a co-ordinating committee made up of representatives from the various ministries. In addition, for some of the ministries the specialized funding they received for wife/woman abuse programs was only a small portion of their overall budget. The largest part of the funding for services for abused women were made part of ministry base budgets and therefore outside the control of the Directorate.

At both the provincial and federal level, there were large increases in the amount of resources available to the issue of wife/woman abuse. These increases made it possible to provide desperately needed services. Few other issues received such overwhelming support. Unfortunately, these resources were funnelled through existing bureaucracies and, as mentioned, this resulted in a

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[26] This campaign was instrumental in raising the awareness of abused women and the

tendency to take a social problem approach to the issue rather than recognizing its political nature.

As well, decisions made by both the federal and provincial levels of government had resulted in a fragmentation of service which created three problems at the local level. First, any agency that wants to provide a service to abused women had to deal with a maze of ministries responsible for funding various 'bits' of service. For example, a shelter would have to access funds at the federal level from Canada Mortgage and Housing for capital expenses. If it included a pilot project, for example in education or childcare, it could ask branches of Health and Welfare and the Secretary of State for special funding. For operating expenses, it would have to seek block funding for services such as counselling, a crisis line, and a per diem from the municipal government (cost shared with the Ministry of Community and Social Services). Second, the fragmentation of funding and responsibility has resulted in a patchwork of services that make it easy for women to 'fall through the cracks'. In order to provide relevant services to abused women, communities have to co-ordinate service in some fashion, usually through some form of community council. The formation and operation of co-ordinated community responses to abused women has often been difficult and fraught with conflict. Finally, women's advocates who are fighting for change face a many-headed monster as they have been forced to confront a variety of organizations needed by abused women.

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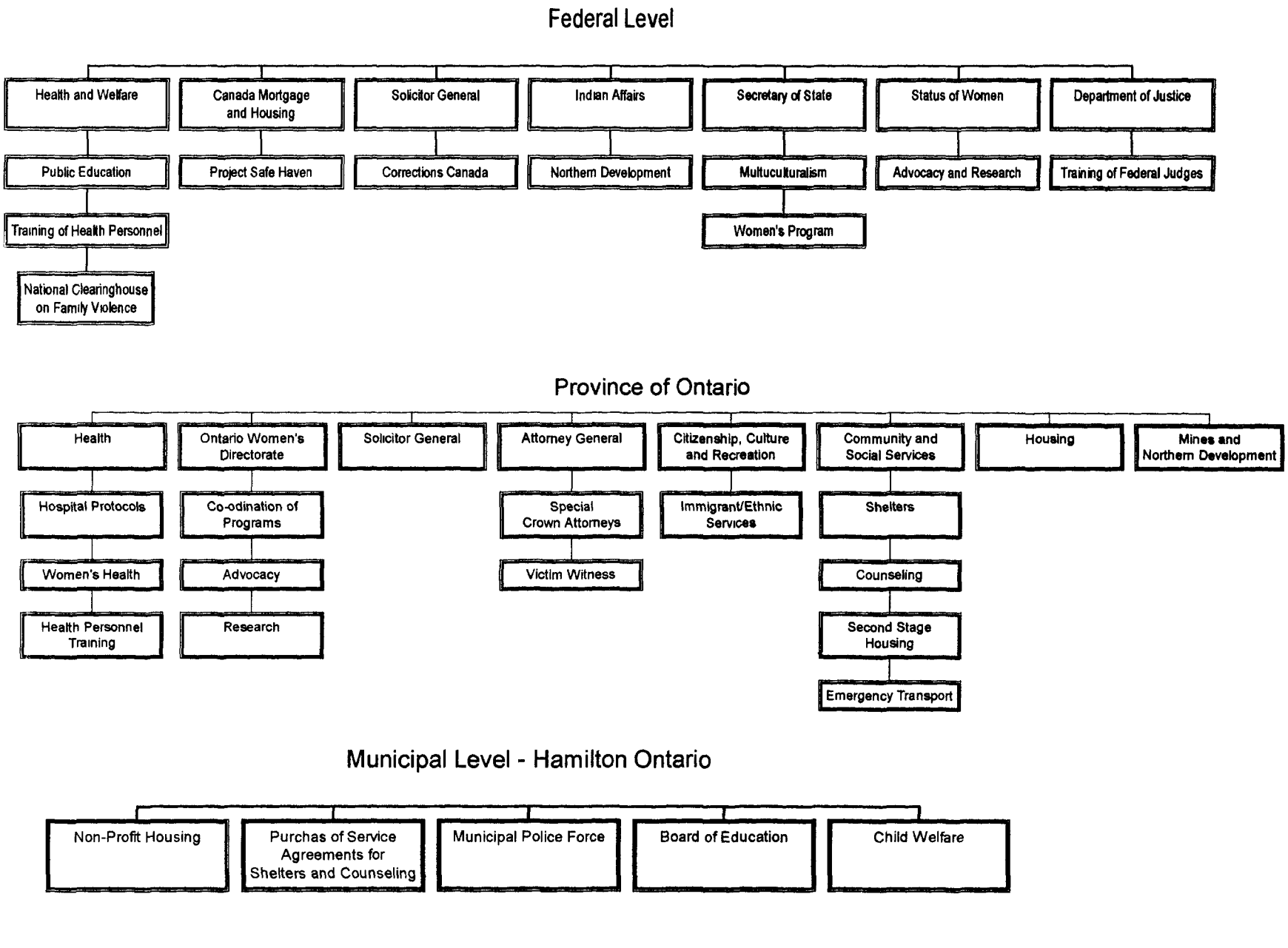
services that were then approached by them.

Figure 1


Federal Level
Health and Welfare
Canada Mortgage and Housing
Solicitor General
Indian Affairs
Secretary of State
Status of Women
Department of Justice
Public Education
Project Safe Haven
Corrections Canada
Northern Development
Multuculturalism
Advocacy and Research
Training of Federal Judges
Training of Health Personnel
Women's Program
National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
Province of Ontario
Health
Ontario Women's Directorate
Solicitor General
Attorney General
Citizenship, Culture and Recreation
Community and Social Services
Housing
Mines and Northern Development
Hospital Protocols
Co-odination of Programs
Special Crown Attorneys
Immigrant/Ethnic Services
Shelters
Women's Health
Advocacy
Victim Witness
Counseling
Health Personnel Training
Research
Second Stage Housing
Emergency Transport
Municipal Level - Hamilton Ontario
Non-Profit Housing
Purchas of Service Agreements for Shelters and Counseling
Municipal Police Force
Board of Education
Child Welfare

4.7 Reverberations at the Municipal Level

When we think of the state we do not usually look to the local level. This is true when we think of government. We often dismiss the municipal level. As Andrews (1995: 99) states:

> Up until the present, the women's movement in Canada has not focused much attention or pressure on the municipal level of government. The principal demands of the women's movement were directed to the federal and provincial governments and maintenance of strong programs at the federal and provincial levels has been one of the ongoing demands of the women's movement.

However, feminist activists in Hamilton were active in local politics challenging the city and regional governments to provide funding for services to women. As well, they lobbied boards of education, the police force, courts, hospitals, welfare services and social service agencies.

The municipal government was, in many cases, responsible for twenty per cent of the cost of many of the services for abused women that were funded at the provincial and federal levels. As well, they acted in the role of funding 'gatekeepers' making the decisions about the allocation of funding. For example, although most of the money came from the federal and provincial levels of government through cost-sharing, the municipalities were responsible for deciding whether shelters would receive money and how much. Thus, although municipal politicians did not hold a great deal of jurisdictional or funding power, they could create difficulties for services by questioning present funding (see next chapter) or keeping a new service from accessing provincial and federal funding. In addition, many of the services for abused women and children were, and

continue to be, provided through third party purchase of service agreements. Counselling services and shelters are examples of these arrangements.

The emphasis on third party service delivery meant that the issue of defining wife/woman abuse became a community wide problem rather than one centred in the municipal government. The fragmentation in services (created by the structuring of funding at the provincial and federal government levels) meant that many communities had a variety of actors who were involved in deciding on community approaches to wife/woman abuse. Communities created co-ordinating committees to ensure effective service to abused women, often at the urging of feminist activists. However, in these committees the feminist voice became only one of many. In some cities this meant that a feminist approach was accepted while in others a social problem approach has been endorsed. . Fortunately, the definition of wife/woman abuse established at the federal level had an impact at the local level by providing validity for a feminist approach. The following chapter illustrates how the issues of meaning and money that had been worked through at the federal and provincial levels were both reflected and re-worked at the local level in one community.

4.8 Conclusion

Defining a problem is extremely important when engaging the state. The success that feminists had, first, in having wife/woman abuse recognized as a public problem, and second, in bringing their definition of wife/woman abuse to

the state meant that it became understood as much more than a social problem. As Gottell (1997: 40) states,

> Suddenly, violence became recognized as a serious problem confronting all Canadian women and victimization was constituted perhaps the most central feature of gender relations. As Pidduck observes, it almost seems as if some odd sort of body snatching had occured; the federal government was beginning to speak in the tones and narrative pioneered by radical feminists such as MacKinnon and Dworkin (Pidduck 1994, 9 as quoted in Gottell).

Although this was a hard won and important gain, defining the problem was not sufficient. Even though the feminist movement also gained ground by securing increased resources for the issue of wife/woman abuse, the state countered through its funding decisions. Money was funnelled through existing bureaucracies. This constrained the impact of a feminist definition. In contrast, if the Status of Women and the Ontario Women's Directorate had been allowed to maintain a feminist perspective and had been given the power to oversee the distribution of funds, perhaps a feminist perspective could have been maintained in the development of services. Feminist principles could have been used to determine which services would receive funds and which would not[27]. Feminists who engaged the state became aware that achieving a feminist definition of violence and wresting resources from the federal and provincial governments was only the first stage of a long and enduring struggle. As mentioned, both acceptance of the feminist definition of wife/woman abuse and the funnelling of

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[27] There was a precedent for this approach in the Women's Programme at the Secretary of State. Feminists who worked here remained connected to their community and were instrumental in providing funding for the creation of new feminist services (Findlay, 1988). In Hamilton, the

funds through existing bureaucratic channels had consequences in the local setting. The next chapter looks at the struggle that ensued there between the women's movement and the state.

Secretary of State provided funds for the Women's Centre, the Rape Crisis Centre and for conferences that brought women together to discuss these issues.

CHAPTER FIVE: MEANING THROUGH ACTION: DEFINING WIFE/WOMAN ABUSE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

This chapter focuses on the local level through a case study of Hamilton, Ontario. Interviews with feminist activists, an analysis of the daily newspaper, *The Hamilton Spectator* and my own observations[28] are used to explore the challenges to the local state made by the feminist activists in the community. The same contests over definition that occurred at the federal and provincial levels were reflected in local communities. Feminist activists, initially taking a mainstream approach, challenged local state and third party agencies to take up a feminist definition. At first, as the issue became accepted as a public problem, feminists were considered experts in this new area. However as wife/woman abuse became more well-known, state and third party agencies began to develop their own approaches. Not surprisingly, they reflected a social problem approach to the issue. This actuality, in combination with several fatal attacks on local women (and the Montreal Massacre), resulted in the emergence of a disengaged approach to the local state in the form of the Justice for Women Coaltion. The success of Justice for Women is analyzed , particularly their success in asserting a

[28] I was a feminist activist in Hamilton at this time but not in the area of wife/woman abuse. As a consequence my view of the events described in this chapter is that of a very interested observer. Essentially I was a very interested outsider.

feminist definition of wife/woman abuse. Much as in the previous chapter, the attempts of the state to contain these successes are also analyzed. The conclusion looks at the rewards and costs of engaging the state at the local level and the effectiveness of combined approaches in successfully beginning to create a form of counter-hegemony.

5.2 Beginnings - Feminist Undertake a Mainstream Approach.

The second wave of the women's movement became evident in Hamilton-Wentworth when the first women's centre opened in 1974. The centre acted as a gathering spot for the community's newly emerging women's movement as women came to the Centre to learn everything from feminist politics to auto-mechanics. The Centre grew and women became more comfortable in their feminism. They were beginning to recognize the immensity of some of the issues they were facing and their analysis of issues was becoming more sophisticated. As they recognized how much work there was to be done many women became interested in specific issues and went on to develop their own physical spaces such as the Rape Crisis Centre (Preston, 1993). For some women, the issue of interest was wife/woman abuse.

Social service providers in Hamilton were ahead of the federal and provincial governments in talking about the issue of wife/woman abuse. The first official statement about the issue in the Hamilton-Wentworth community was produced by Jody Orr, a feminist working for The Social Planning and Research Council . In 1980, Orr produced, *The Support Services Network for Battered*

Women in the Hamilton Area. This report took a feminist perspective. It mirrored the work of Linda McLeod (1980) in identifying a lack of services in the community for women who were victims of violence. Orr's report recommended the initiation of an Ad Hoc Task Force on Battering in order to develop new services and a co-ordinated community strategy.

Despite this early interest in wife/woman abuse it is obvious from the *The Hamilton Women's Resource Handbook* that [29]the services available to abused women were minimal. They covered two-thirds of a page and included four women's shelters: Inasmuch House, run by Mission Services, a fundamentalist Christian organization, the Native Women's Centre, Hope Haven Homes, for women who were believed to be victims of violence because of alcohol or drug abuse - also a fundamentalist Christian organization, and the Y.W.C.A. The average allowable stay in these shelters was under a week (with the exception of the Y.W.C.A. which did not allow children). None of the shelters were secure, that is, they did not have intercoms, bullet-proof glass or self-closing doors and they did not provide specialized services for battered women. Hope Haven was the only shelter identified as a shelter for battered women but their program's goal was to reunite families. The handbook mentions both Family Services and Catholic Social Services (later renamed, Catholic Family Services), but they only

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[29] The Handbook was published in 1981 by the Hamilton Status of Women Subcommittee and the Volunteer Bureau of Hamilton-Wentworth,

offered general or marital counselling rather than specialized services for abused women and abusive men[30].

The first specialized service for women (intended to help them escape abuse) was established in an existing shelter for homeless women. In late 1981, Mission Services bought the house next door to Inasmuch House and opened "Next Door", the first eight bed, residence for 'battered women'. Women in this residence were allowed to stay longer than women in regular shelters and they received specialized services in terms of counselling and information. The residence could only be accessed through the regular shelter. Women could stay at the regular shelter for two weeks during which time they were required to decide if they were returning to their husbands. If they decided not to return, they were admitted to 'Next Door' and received special services. Abused women had only two choices - Hope Haven Homes which encouraged women to remain in their abusive relationship, and Next Door at Inasmuch House which expected them to leave their relationships in order to receive service. Feminists in the community questioned these approaches and believed that a stand-alone feminist based centre would provide an alternative service that would respect abused women and challenge the hegemony of both the oppression of women and the patriarchal nuclear family. Consequently, in the summer of 1981 they held a forum at the Women's Centre to begin to organize the building of such a shelter.

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[30] Marriage counselling was said by feminist activists to be a dangerous practice because if women disclosed details of their abuse in front of their abusers, it often led to even more severe abuse (Stout and McPhail, 227-229).

Donna McElroy, the keynote speaker and a worker at a feminist shelter in Windsor (Hiatus House), explained what a feminist shelter could provide to women in the way of counselling, shelter, advocacy and support. Doreen Pitkeathly (1981: 30) explained that,

> While Hamilton does have two houses that take in battered women--Hope Haven and Inasmuch House--they cannot provide the service a place like Hiatus House does and it is such a place that the Women's Centre wants to establish.

This same group of feminists (including such women as Eileen Morrow and Gwen Davidson who were founding members of Interval House) were also working to ensure that abused women received the services they needed. In December, 1981 these women joined with representatives of state services, such as hospitals, the police, and education, as well as third party social services, to form the Ad Hoc Task Force on Battering (recommended by the Orr Report) to investigate the problem of wife/woman abuse and develop a community plan. In 1984, the Task Force (which included women from the Women's Centre group) released their plan. The Plan identified needs for service by battered women and developed possible responses including the establishment of an additional emergency transition housing, second-stage housing, a Resource Guide for Battered Women, a modular training package for professionals delivered by volunteer trainers, a Volunteer Advocates/Primary Caseworkers Programme, better articulated police and court procedures and policies, ongoing public education and established hospital protocols (Orr,1986: p. 10)

These plans for the establishment of services for abused women were an excellent starting point for the community. However, a lack of commitment by senior management of the member agencies and strongly divergent philosophical perspectives on violence against women (foreshadowing the later conflict between a social problem and a feminist approach) among the members resulted in the disbanding of the Task Force in March 1984 (Ibid: p. 3-4).

With the Task Force defunct, Hamilton feminists continued in their efforts to establish a stand-alone shelter. An important step in this struggle was taken when the Board of Directors of Interval House was incorporated in 1983. One of the first tasks of this board was to convince the Regional Social Services Committee to approve a per-diem in principle so that the group could apply for capitial funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing. The Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Social Services Committee did so in March 1984. However, the activists ran into difficulties when it came to achieving ratification by the full Regional Council.

> We were lobbied against by the other shelters, specifically by Hope Haven and Inasmuch House. We were shocked that they would do this... we had to show [a shelter dedicated to abused women] was necessary and we couldn't say women aren't going to the other shelters because they're horrible...(Activist 5)

Ultimately, after pressure from activists, the full council granted the per diem. Interval House was on its way to being created. The experience was a harbinger of future events. The existing, traditional social service shelters were not about to

support Interval House, which by its very existence, would challenge the status quo, particularly the current distribution of shelter resources.

Feminists were responsible for bringing the issue of wife/woman abuse to public attention.[31] And because of their interest in the issue, they were also the people who appeared to have the most current information. Although no physical building had yet been established, members of the incorporated board of Interval House began to act as advocates for abused women in the community and the press turned to them for responses on issues of wife/woman abuse. For example, in May 1985, Police Staff Superintendent George Frid sparked debate when he stated that women were partly to blame in some cases of wife/woman abuse, citing bad housekeeping and extra-marital affairs as contributing factors. He suggested that in such abuse cases, especially if they were one-time incidents, that the man be required to "take a course for batterers and the women take a course in homemaking skills" (Davey, 1985). Gwen Davidson, the vice-chair of Interval House responded with shock:

> "That really is appalling," said Ms Davidson, who worked with Supt. Frid last year on a task force on battering organized by the Social Planning and Research Council.
>
> "Statistics show that the first time a woman calls a shelter, abuse has happened at least 30 times previously. Whether she's a competent housekeeper or not shouldn't come into it." (Ibid: 1)

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[31] I remember seeing Eileen Morrow selling bricks at a mall in Hamilton every week. These bricks were a fundraiser for the shelter. Eileen spoke with each person who came to her table, educating them about wife/woman abuse issues. Although I was not active in the violence against woman movement I was dealing with issues of violence against women in my various workplaces. Eileen was an excellent source of information.

This designation of Interval House as the home of experts and advocates was to become even more apparent when the physical building was complete.

In April 1986, Interval House opened and became the first feminist, stand-alone shelter in Hamilton-Wentworth dedicated to abused women. It was staffed by a number of women who had been involved in its creation resulting in a knowledgeable and dedicated staff. The shelter became the physical centre for feminist activism in the area of wife/woman abuse since many of the most vocal activists, such as Gwen Davidson and Eileen Morrow, worked there. From this base, the staff of Interval House worked to bring a feminist perspective on wife/woman abuse to the community through public education, particularly in their working relationships. For example, the director of Interval House assisted the director of another women's shelter in establishing appropriate services for abused women from a feminist perspective. She explains the impact that such a mentoring relationship had on her:

> [The director of Interval House] almost daily rescued me when I started here. Almost daily she would call to see what stupid thing I had done now and how she could help me to get out of it. She was a mentor and she spent hours and days and weeks of her time, helping me to set up all of the things I needed to run a shelter for battered women. We had nothing in place when I came in. Not even a policy. Not even an admission criteria, nothing. And I really had to start from scratch. I had some administrative skills. I had no skills in terms of family violence issues. And this woman came to my rescue and spent so much of her time showing me the things that I could do....(Activist 1)

Staff at Interval House were involved in education and advocacy on a daily basis. Each contact provided an opportunity for change.

The issue of wife/woman abuse was new and most people recognized feminist shelter workers as the experts on the issue. For example, staff at Interval House worked to establish relationships with sympathetic judges, lawyers and service providers by sharing their knowledge with them.

> As far as the legal stuff goes, the judges were, especially Judge Vanduzen, very open to getting input from us. They would let us accompany the mother and the mother's lawyer and they would have me in the chamber to kind of talk to me and get some input and kind of learn from me (Activist 2).

Sometimes it was necessary to advocate for women with those local state agencies, such as the police, traditional social service agencies or the schools, that impinged on women's lives. For example, the children of abused women were very vulnerable when attending school since their abusive fathers would often walk in and take the children. Even with valid court papers, many principals were unwilling to "get involved" by restricting the access of abusive men to the school. Interval House staff confronted school staff, educating, advocating and protesting at the same time. As the activist below notes, their hard work made it easier for other shelters and laid the foundation for policies and protocols.

> So as far as child witnessing in Hamilton goes, I think we were at the very forefront because we would take children to neighbouring schools and deal with the principals....Somebody else benefits from that. They can come in and do the nicey, nicey stuff but somebody has to do the taking a hard stand stuff and so we did because a lot of work needed to be done in those days. I mean they have a wonderful policy now...(Activist 2)

This type of education and advocacy work was time-consuming. Women at the shelter needed to access a wide variety of services. Many abused women who accessed shelter services were also using the police, courts, schools and social

services. Women at Interval House[32] were also aware that services should be co-ordinated if they were to meet the needs of abused women. They recognized that they did not have the resources or the power to meet all the needs of abused women. In response to these issues, feminist activists began to re-initiate the community process that had resulted in the Ad Hoc Task Force on Battering.

In 1986, the Ad Hoc Task Force on Battering was reincarnated as the Community Counselling Group. The group was formed around discussions regarding a program beginning at the Elizabeth Fry Society that was intended to support abused women through the court process. Police were referring women to the program after responding to 'domestic violence calls', and the Elizabeth Fry Society was finding that 80 per cent of the women contacting them had no previous experience with any social services. The Community Counselling Group wanted to discuss ways that the community could work together to ensure that abused women were getting the services they needed. In March, 1986, this group, re-named the "Ad Hoc Co-ordinating Committee on Family Violence", organized a symposium to bring together local service providers to discuss the possibility of forming a co-ordinating body to address issues of family violence. Representatives of Co-ordinating Committees from London, Waterloo and Halton

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[32] Although I speak of the women at Interval House there were other women in the community who were taking a feminist approach to wife/woman abuse. Some of them were working at other front-line services for abused women in the city such as Family Services or in other feminist organizations such as the Women's Centre, the Rape Crisis Centre (later known as the Sexual Assault Centre) and the Elizabeth Fry Society. Feminists were also later hired at the other city shelters and they began to argue for a more feminist approach in their organizations (Activist 2 & Activist 5) Still it was the feminists at Interval House who seemed to take the leadership role in activism in the area of wife/woman abuse in Hamilton.

were invited to speak at the symposium. Seventy agencies attended and later that month, 35 of them formed the Council on Domestic Violence. One activist described it this way:

> It was called "the symposium" and we invited forty to sixty groups in Hamilton. You know the police, the Board of Education people, everybody that we thought would interact in any way and have something to do with it. And we invited the cops, you know, John Robinson, the cop from London who started it all, who got the whole ball rolling in terms of charging these guys. And he became a big star, going around and talking about the police charge in London and all the various places. We wanted the police on board because the cops were a problem and the courts were a problem so we thought well, we'll have him come. You get one of their own to talk to them they'll get involved. Well it actually kind of worked. At the end of the symposium, people were asked to sign on to see if they would form the council on domestic violence and people did..... So we actually got the thing going and there were many, many people involved. We were the thing that should be co-ordinated, everybody should be involved, we'd all be at the table talking to each other and anyway that's how the Council on Domestic Violence got started (Activist 5).

The Council consisted of a co-ordinating committee of nine members drawn from three sub-committees which covered the areas that Council members felt were most important: legal, 24-hour response and counseling. Sub-committees met once a month, the co-ordinating committee the same or more often if necessary, while the Council as a whole met four times a year (Council on Domestic Violence, 1989). By 1989, the Council had grown to 42 member agencies and had created five new subcommittees that reflected a growing understanding of abused women's needs - education, housing, dating violence, culturally diverse women's needs and children in violent homes. A wide variety of agencies were represented, covering every area of social service that abused women might access. Agencies were supposed to be represented by agency

directors or other senior personnel so that quick decisions could be made at the table rather than waiting for agency approval. This was intended to overcome the difficulties that had ended the first Task Force.

Women, such as the executive directors of feminist social services (Interval House, the Sexual Assault Centre, Elizabeth Fry and the Women's Centre)[33] and front line workers[34] from shelters, counselling services, and second stage housing were the workhorses of the Council. One program that was heavily represented was the Family Violence Unit at Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth[35]. Although the executive directors of feminist organizations maintained a commitment to the council, other more traditional agencies such as the Board of Education, hospitals and the police began to send front-line staff instead of those with decision-making power.

> Then they began to develop sub-committees and the women at [Interval House] who could [sit on the sub-committees] did. I think at one point we had four or five people on various sub-committees and the council executive. My shelter put a lot of people into that council and it was the front-line, in the end...then you'd have somebody from the Board of

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[33] Interval House is the shelter mentioned earlier in the chapter. The Sexual Assault Centre served the needs of women who had been sexually assaulted. The Centre was run as a collective with a heavy emphasis on advocacy. The Elizabeth Fry Society was a nation wide organization that assisted incarcerated women. The traditional roots of the organization meant that there was some hierarchy evident. The Women's Centre had originally been a centre of radical and socialist feminist activity in Hamilton but by this time it has been taken over by feminists who were more liberal and mainstream in their approach.

[34] The names and activities of the executive directors of feminist agencies in Hamilton were well known and publicized in *The Hamilton Spectator*, the local newspaper, but many front line staff remained relatively anonymous. In an effort to maintain that anonymity I have not named them here. As I note later in this dissertation, feminist activists were ostracized for their protests against agencies in the community. There was some fear among feminists I interviewed that this continues to be the case today.

[35] This program had been developed as a separate unit at the agency and was allowed to operate as a collective. All of the members of the collective were self-identified feminists (or pro-feminists in the case of the two male members), and all of them sat on committees of the Council.

> Education who couldn't make a decision, you know, nice people who wanted to help. And then there were other people who came and sat at the table for two hours and went back to their office and it was just another meeting. That's half of what they did all day long, was go to meetings...they weren't the executive director and their agency couldn't afford the time or didn't feel this was the best use of their time. They went to the meetings and they got the information and that kind of stuff but that was as far as their job description allowed them to take it. I think that front line especially the front line feminist women, put a lot of work into actually trying to get some stuff done (Activist 5).

Although feminists were doing most of the work of the council, they did not have enough votes to hold the balance of power. This proved particularly problematic when it came time to develop a definition of wife/woman abuse. The Council as a whole insisted that it would emphasize co-ordination versus political action and that it would identify the issue as domestic violence:

> The purpose of the Council on Domestic Violence is to co-ordinate a community-wide response to the present situation, to seek improvement of present services, and to work towards the prevention of domestic violence. (Council on Domestic Violence, 1989)

The pamphlet containing the above definition went on to define domestic violence as "any form of abuse including physical, financial, psychological, sexual or emotional assault perpetrated by an adult against *his or her partner*." (emphasis added, Ibid). It is obvious that not only did the Council insist on keeping the term domestic violence in its name, they were explicit in their de-gendering of the problem of wife/woman abuse. Although this was the definition accepted by the majority of the members of the Council, the feminist members continued to insist on a political, feminist definition of wife/woman abuse. They did not agree that violence occurred "against his or her partner". Violence was, they argued,

overwhelmingly a case of men abusing women. At the opposite end of the continuum, some members of the council continued to insist on a definition of violence that blamed individual problems such as drug or alcohol addiction. They argued that the best approach to the problem was family reconciliation. The majority of the members of the Council fell somewhere in the middle, understanding that in the vast majority of cases it was a man who abused a woman. However, these members were unwilling to accept a feminist definition of the issue since this would necessitate a political stand that they felt would alienate more traditional members, particularly those who represented various state agencies and institutions (eg. the hospitals, police, school boards). The feminists had become one voice of many.

The divisions in the Council were making it impossible to achieve the politically aware, co-ordinated response that had been the dream of feminist activists. Like the Task Force before it, the Council was foundering because nothing of any importance could be accomplished due to philosophical differences and an underlying competition for resources. As one member of the Council explains:

> There were probably three camps in the Domestic Violence Council that were very apparent virtually immediately to someone walking in [to a meeting]. And that was what might be characterized by some as the fairly extreme end of feminists, ranging into the middle ground of people who could see the feminist analysis but didn't feel entirely comfortable with some of the positions that were being taken and then at the other end there were shelter representatives and other folks from community groups who were very, very moderate to those folks who would see the preservation of the family as paramount (the need for women to sort of adjust themselves to their violent situation, blaming a lot of the abuse on drugs and alcohol

> as the foundation of violence and quite a strong religious tone within that group as well)... Especially when questions of public activity or funding or new projects undertaken came along, there was a very intense disagreement between the groups. On the one side the powder puff types- they were always very nice but it was very hard to move them from their position, the sanctity of the family overrode everything else that came into the picture and on the other side of things, the advocates of the feminist theory [with] the whole heart and soul analysis were very poor at negotiating. It just made them really mad (Activist 9).

The attempts by feminists to educate the community through co-ordinating bodies such as the Domestic Violence Council resulted in little change and a great deal of frustration. This frustration was intensified when in December 1989, Marc Lepine walked into the Polytechnic Institute at the Univeristé de Montréal and shot fourteen young women engineering students to death, shouting that they were all feminists,

> Every feminist I know remembers where they were when they heard about the Montreal Massacre and how they felt. I was standing in my kitchen and the bottom fell out of my stomach. I grabbed hold of the kitchen counter and thought Oh my God that could have been me. It was a wake-up call, the violence and hatred were real and fourteen young women had just died because of it. After I got over being scared I was furious...(Activist 3).

This quote echoes the feelings expressed by the members of the federal Sub-Committee on the Status of Women. At every level the Montreal Massacre brought the reality of violence against women home to many feminists, including the feminists who sat on the Domestic Violence Council. The arguments over what seemed to be semantics--domestic violence versus wife/woman abuse--had very real consequences for women. They realized that it was essential to ensure

that services in the Hamilton community would come from a feminist perspective and address the needs of abused women.

Examples of local violence further emphasized this urgent need for change. On 27 September 1990, a gunman, Peter Sukkel, chased his ex-wife into a McDonald's restaurant in the city, threatening the staff, patrons and particularly his ex-wife, Lois. While she hid in the basement, police surrounded the building. The stand-off ended when Mr. Sukkel shot himself. The situation was described in *The Hamilton Spectator* :

> An obsessed husband's relentless pursuit of his estranged wife came to a fatal climax in a Hamilton McDonald's restaurant when he failed in a desperate bid to kill her and turned his gun on himself....Two weeks ago, Mr. Sukkel was released from jail after serving 30 days of a 45 day sentence for assaulting her...Three days ago, he lured her into his car on a pretext, and then threatened her with a knife. (Holt, Huges and McNeil, 1990: A1).

Earlier that day, his wife had tried to get him admitted to a psychiatric ward after he had again threatened her with a knife. However, the doctor on call released him, insisting that Lois Sukkel charge him instead. She felt that both she and her husband had been "failed by the system" (Hughes, 1990: A1).

Less than two weeks later, Janice Wright and her friend John Ince, were found stabbed to death by her ex-husband, Willis Wright.

> A mother of three who feared for her life and a friend who tried to help her were stabbed to death last night. Janice Wright, 37, and John Ince, 30, were slain in an east Mountain apartment building shortly after 8 pm...Mrs. Wright, covered in blood ran out of her apartment...The two men who chased her attacker found the victim at the bottom of the stairs...bleeding heavily from her neck and abdomen. (Holt, 1990: A1)

Again there were references to the failure of the system to protect Janice Wright from her homicidal ex-husband:

> Only two days ago, [Janice] told her neighbor, Norma Hare: "Do I have to be killed before something is done?"....Friends say that both deaths could have been avoided if Mrs Wright's fears—expressed repeatedly to police—had been acted upon promptly (Ibid: A1/2).

The next day coverage began of a trial of another femicide. Frank Muir pleaded not guilty to shooting his wife Jeannete Muir, although he had phoned 911 and confessed that he had.

With women falling victim to their partners with little state intervention, feminist activists began to question the ability, or even the willingness of the police to protect women.

> Vilma Rossi, executive director of Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton said violent attacks such as these point to obvious gaps in the system..."In talking with women in the community I'm impressed by how much women do to protect themselves. Women do reach out when at all possible and yet the support isn't there to help them" (Davey, October 10, 1990: C2).

It seemed that women were being murdered on an almost daily basis and the people who were supposed to be protecting them were failing to do so[36].

In the early 1980's, then, feminist activists in the community, particularly the staff at Interval House, were initially accepted as experts in the area of wife/woman abuse. The issue of wife/woman abuse had been ignored so that

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[36] It is hard to convey the anguish that women were feeling about these murders. By this time I was working on a full-time basis with women who were suffering violence. Opening up the daily newspaper became an exercise in anxiety. You always expected to see the name of some woman you knew splashed across the front page, to read that she had been murdered. It was a horrible feeling and from the many conversations I had with other women working on the front-line I came to understand that it was widely shared.

when the issue became public state and third party agencies had no expertise or protocols for dealing with it. Over time they began to develop their own approaches which favoured a social problem response to wife/woman abuse. They then began to express these views in community forums such as the Domestic Violence Council in opposition to the feminist perspective that Interval House staff and others were expressing. Feminists moved from being 'experts' to only one voice among many. Feminists became increasingly aware of the fact that their efforts at public education and co-operation with the community were not saving women's lives. A similar process was occurring in the Vancouver area where a coalition of community agencies brought together by the United Way was successful in minimizing the feminist voice in their community (Barnsley, 1985). The mainstream approach had been a failure and the influence of a feminist perspective was losing ground at the same time as the danger to women appeared to be growing.

5.3 Taking Action - Disengaging to Press for Change

Public education and community co-operation were not having the results desired by the local feminist community. Instead of changing their approach to abused women, it appeared that some services such as the police were clinging to traditional approaches that, as many feminists had argued, supported the abuse of women. Those who supported a disengaged stance argued that the mainstream organizations could not be trusted:

> Big agencies are homophobic, big agencies are racist, big agencies are not responsive to the community. They're part of the power structure, they're part of the problem, they shouldn't be doing this work. This work should be done by the grassroots and done by women. Mainstream organizations should keep their noses out of this. There was a lot of resentment about organizations with power coming in and taking on the issue at a point when there was funding for it when they were nowhere to be seen when there wasn't any funding for it and the work was being done on a voluntary basis by small grass roots groups (Activist 9).

If co-operation was not working then feminist activists would have to shift their approach to more confrontational tactics.

> We had talked and talked and talked. Sometimes we yelled but it had no effect it seemed. We had brought this issue out into the light and we knew how things had to be changed but people, mostly men, like the police or the Board of Ed or the counselling services didn't want to change things. Women were dying and nothing was happening. And we were the ones seeing these women on a daily basis. They didn't have to listen to them cry or watch them go back to a guy who might just kill them. You couldn't just sit back and let these things happen (Activist 12).

The first demonstration, called by activists working with abused women on October 12, 1990, was an impromptu picketing of the police station to protest the lack of police protection for Janice Wright, Lois Sukkel and Jeanette Muir. Thirty people marched in front of the station until Deputy Chief Larson invited a delegation in to talk (Davy, October 12, 1990). Renate Manthei, the director of the Hamilton Women's Centre explained:

> Our focus was to gather respect for the women who died and demand better police protection for women...There are laws in place but not enough is being done. We got a lot of calls from women complaining that they're not getting any response from the police when they try to get help (Ibid).

By the end of the month Police Chief Colin Millar had asked the Solicitor General's family-violence unit to come into the regional police services and assess their process for handling 'domestic violence'.

There had been a shift in the struggle to define wife/woman abuse. Until this time, feminist activists had tried to work with traditional, state-sponsored services to produce a co-ordinated community response. This fragile alliance had been cracking for some time. The protest in front of the police station was the first break, but the relationship was totally severed with the advent of the Justice for Women Coalition.

On February 5, 1989, Guy Ellul stabbed his ex-wife, Debra Ellul to death. He admitted that he had killed his ex-wife but said that he had acted in self-defence even though he had stabbed her twenty-one times, hitting all parts of her body, including her vaginal area. On December 6, 1990, the first anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, Guy Ellul was acquitted. His defence was based on the fact that both Debra and her mother Ruth Williams had harassed Ellul and that Debra had stabbed Ellul first (in the hand). A police officer, and former neighbour of the couple, said that the couple had fought constantly and that he had observed Debra yelling and swearing at Guy. He stated, "There was little doubt in my mind as a police officer that Debbie was pushing Guy to do something" (Morison, November 23,1990: A4). Ellul himself admitted to threatening to kill Debra, the children and himself if she ever left him but said it was "just a phrase." He also admitted to stabbing her but said that he had acted in

self defence and wasn't really conscious of what he was doing (Morison, November 30, 1990: B1). Feminist activists were outraged.

> Eileen Morrow, public educator at Interval House, said many people are angry about the verdict, which she says sends a clear message to abusive men. "He (Mr. Ellul) said he was going to kill her...and he killed her. It sends a real message out to these men that you can kill your wife or partner and get away with it"
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> "People everywhere are just absolutely flabbergasted. They can't understand how this could happen. They're floored," said Ms. Morrow. (Davey, Dec. 15, 1990: B1).

The Ellul defence had called on all the myths that supported wife/woman abuse, particularly that women instigate violence through improper behaviour and that men are not really in control of their violence. Feminist activists had been working for almost ten years to debunk these myths and here they were, alive and well. Consequently when Ruth Williams appealed to the feminist community for help in getting justice for her daughter, they were more than ready to respond.

> So I called the meeting around Ellul case...We decided to call for a meeting with Howard Hampton, the Attorney General, about what the hell are you going to do about this decision. We need an appeal on this and we need you to do something about this. He gave us the meeting. We went to the meeting, the whole bunch of us there. We needed a name for the meeting and [one of our members] came up with the name, Justice for Women. Off we go to the meeting with the Attorney General calling ourselves the Justice for Women Coalition because that's in fact what it was...(Activist 5).

The goal of this group was to push the Attorney General to appeal the Ellul verdict. At the same time, every day during her lunch hour, Ruth Williams kept a vigil in front of the provincial courthouse where the verdict had been delivered. She walked quietly back-and-forth carrying a sign reading "Justice for Debra".

Sometimes she walked alone. At other times she was joined by members of Justice for Women. As well, Coalition members insured that a single red rose always sat on the statue in front of the courthouse – a large bronze statue commemorating the United Empire Loyalists.

Most of the women who made up the new Justice for Women Coalition sat on the Domestic Violence Council and were struggling to bring a feminist perspective there.

> The Justice for Women Coalition was a more radical group than had existed and that exist currently in the community. They were really pushing the boundaries, even about what would be understood as violence against women, of understanding it as male violence against women, not all this spouse abuse, domestic violence, family violence, all those kinds of anachronisms that mask the problem. They were also radical in terms of process, in terms of method--who you would work with and how you would work (Activist 6).

Many of them also worked at the stand-alone feminist agencies or with the Family Violence Prevention Unit at Family Services. A few members worked for traditional social service agencies. This became a problem when the group decided to write a letter to the Attorney General complaining about his lack of action on the Ellul case. One of the members was told by the head of her agency that she could not sign the letter because it was "unfriendly". The Coalition members decided that they could not tolerate this type of control and it was resolved that none of their members would represent agencies. They could only act as individuals.

> That's how the Coalition became an independent, autonomous, political action group because we got into a discussion - what are we going to do about this? We aren't going to be able to do anything if we have to get

> permission! Certain women are not able to do stuff and what does that mean about them being able to participate in the group? They're going to get all this aggravation about who do they represent...(Activist 5).

The creation of the Justice for Women Coalition marked the beginning of a new form of activism for feminists in the community. The members of the Coalition who sat on the Domestic Violence Council began to be more vocal and direct in their challenges to traditional social service agencies on the Council. They argued that the Council was not representative because women of colour, native women, disabled women, and especially women who had been abused did not sit on the council. This challenge echoed similar ones by both feminist organizations such as NAC and government bodies such as the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women (see previous chapter). There were also continuing struggles to establish a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse. Most importantly, members of the Justice for Women Coalition argued that the Council was doing little to actually improve the lives of abused women.

> Initially, I think it was Eileen Morrow who began to ask questions about whether we as a community were being effective at stopping violence against women. Whether it was an effective strategy for the community to be coming - sort of to meet on a monthly basis or a bi-monthly basis to network. What were we doing to stop violence against women? If I remember correctly, Eileen also talked about how that what we may be doing was creating a network of people who knew each other, who were friendly with each other and consequently had more difficulty criticizing each other and maybe this was running counter to our aim of stopping violence against women. And that led to a fairly significant process of self-evaluation; who was at the table, who was not at the table, whether we were being effective or not...(Activist 4).

Another activist talked about the split between front-line workers and executive directors (other than those of feminist agencies):

> What they were interested in doing, I don't think in any way was sensitive to women or kids. I think [the point] was to make the broader committee look like they were doing an awful lot but what they were interested in doing was going to malls , putting a banner up and being able to tell people what domestic violence was all about, what the committee was about....The front line workers had an agenda that was very different than the agency directors. I think the front line workers really tried to make this work and have something positive come out of this that would benefit women and kids. Unfortunately that was not meant to be because whenever a motion was made it would be voted down (Activist 7).

When the Council started to discuss taking on a co-ordinating role for both funding and services, feminist activists on the Council started to work to disband it through challenge and confrontation:

> So the moderates to the right, for lack of a better word, were in favour of the council continuing, and the left and the feminist were in favour of it being abandoned because they felt that it was damaging because of the make-up of [the council]. The positions it was taking were not strong enough as far as [the left and the feminists] were concerned and they felt that it was worse to have mushy positions than no council at all. And there were some people, some of the moderates, who also thought it should be disbanded, not for those same reasons but because it was so fraught with tensions (Activist 9).

The fact that the Council would not take a feminist approach to violence had been problematic since its inception, but feminist activists felt that they could not allow the Council to acquire this much power, particularly the power to make funding decisions, while still maintaining a social problem approach to wife/woman abuse. They continued to challenge, argue and harass, essentially protesting, until members of the Council either agreed with them or gave up in frustration. The Council was disbanded on February 28, 1991 with a tied vote.

Shortly after the disbanding of the Council another sensational wife/woman abuse murder occurred. On 21 March, 1991, George Lovie went to

the home of the parents of his ex-girlfriend, Michelle Edwards, and killed both her parents as they intervened to protect Michelle's escape. This killing shocked the community. It was not an abused woman who had died but her parents, two well-liked, up-standing members of their community. Gillian Walker (1991) describes how a series of brutal wife/woman abuse murders in Vancouver increased public awareness of the issue and produced a consensus that action needed to be taken. A similar process was occurring in Hamilton.

The media power of the Justice for Women Coalition became apparent when two men, Philip Dupuis and Nick Mule, were fired from the Family Services Agency of Hamilton-Wentworth on 30 May, 1991, because they had refused to provide counselling services for abusive men.

> The female workers at Family Services were also very much in agreement [with the men] and [Dupuis and Mule] decided that they would lose their jobs if need be but they would take a stand that they could not lead a group that was not accountable and they had a list of issues that they wanted to raise in order to make [these groups] accountable. They were, very regular contact with women who had partners in group and a lot more sharing of information between the male and female workers and a number of other issues like these. They were disagreed with [by management] right down the line (Activist 7).

For almost a year, feminist activists had been questioning the safety and effectiveness of these services intended to change the behaviour of abusive men.

> Feminists in the community had originally been in favour of the groups for men because we had to do something about them. Even if a woman got away the guy would just find someone else and beat them up. But then we started hearing things from women who had men in the groups. They would ask us what the hell was going on there because the guy was coming home and saying I'm not the problem, I'm in counselling. You're the problem. Or he would come home with some new things he'd learned in the group, new ways of abusing the woman. Then we started hearing

> things about some of the guys who were running the groups. They were abusers themselves. And the damn things didn't work. The research was basically showing that they were useless. Why did anyone want to keep running them (Activist 3)?

On the day that Dupuis and Mule were going to be fired, members of Justice for Women stormed the Family Services' offices accompanied by the media. The firing of the men became national news, putting the issue of batterers' groups in the spotlight. The men were guests on "As It Happens", a popular Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) national news radio program that had listeners in the United States as well as abroad. A community forum, organized by Justice for Women, was held to discuss the firings of Dupuis and Mule as well as the future of men's groups in the city. As a consequence of this forum, the members of Justice for Women took their concerns to Queen's Park where they met with Anne Swarbrick, the provincial Minister for Women's Issues. (Davy, June 27, 1991). The issue was still being discussed in October when an article featuring counselling services for abusive men, appeared in *The Hamilton Spectator*. Lisa Duggan and Kristen Smith, members from the Justice for Women Coalition, argued that the counselling services, particularly groups for abusive men were not only ineffective they were dangerous. Duggan was quoted as saying that the groups were:

> training grounds to make men into more sophisticated terrorists... They hear the other men's stories and learn to hit where you can't see the bruises (Ibid: D2).

Even agencies which provided them were equivocal in their support for men's groups. The most that could be said in favour of groups for abusive men was that

they helped some men, sometimes, but it was quite clear that they were dangerous to abused women. As counselling services in the city did not want to be seen as endangering the lives of women, particularly in the national press, group counselling services to abusive men were suspended by all social service agencies in the city

In November 1991, another glaring problem in the support and services for abused women became evident. *The Hamilton Spectator* ran a full-page story on a police officer, Larry Fodor, who had pleaded guilty to common assault for breaking his ex-wife's nose (Holt, 1991). Fodor had been charged with assault causing bodily harm. If he had been convicted it would have cost him his job. Despite the fact that Fodor had an earlier charge for assaulting his previous partner, he was allowed to plead guilty to a lesser charge, common assault, and was temporarily demoted. At the time that the article appeared, five months after the assault charges were laid, he was expected to return to normal duty which meant that, as a police officer, he would again be handling 'domestic assault' cases. His lenient treatment appeared to be the result of mix-ups and sloppy work by both the police and the Crown. What angered activists most was that he had told his wife when he assaulted her that nothing would happen to him because he was a police officer and it appeared that not much had. It was obvious that not only could women not trust the police to deal adequately with abused women, but they had to worry that the police officer responding to their calls for help might be an abuser himself.

On 2 December, 1991, the members of the Justice for Women Coalition held a press conference to call on the Ministry of the Solicitor General to review the Hamilton-Wentworth police department (Marlin, 1991). Eileen Morrow declared:

> It's a case history of everything that's wrong in the system...It's about a cover-up in the court system. It's about collusion in the justice system and minimizing women's experience in the system. (Ibid: B1)

That night, two members of the Justice for Women Coalition, Vilma Rossi and Kristen Smith, spray-painted two slogans, "Police Protect Their Own" and "Justice for Women Now" on the statue of the United Empire Loyalists in front of the provincial courthouse. The women were not particularly secretive in their work and they were quickly charged with public mischief under a thousand dollars. Their lawyer, Dean Paquette, asked for a discharge:

> [He] noted his clients had acted in the public interest, had paid the cost of removing the graffiti, had no criminal record, had pleaded guilty and that between them had two decades of service to abused women. (Lefaive, 1992: B1)

Nevertheless, the judge fined them $500, noted that the actions of the women were inappropriate, and added:

> Since they wanted to draw attention to the issue of violence against women, he'd help by imposing fines which would give them a reason for a fund-raising drive. (Ibid).

A member of the Coalition, Eileen Morrow responded by saying that "this is not a hobby..women are dying in this community". She also noted that the most common punishment for first time 'wife assault' was either an unconditional

discharge or a fine of $300 (Ibid). This verdict did little to endear the justice system to the feminist community.

Feminist activists in the community had moved from co-operation for the purposes of education and service provision to direct confrontation. This transition stemmed from an increasing frustration with the assistance, or lack of it, that abused women were receiving from social service agencies, the justice system, and the police. Women were dying and the attempts by activists in the community to educate the above or to bring a feminist perspective to the community had failed. The result was the Justice for Women Coalition. But the Coalition was only a small group of women (approximately 10-20 women). It did not include all the feminists in the community who worked with abused women. In fact, many feminists in the community were uncomfortable with the approach of Justice for Women. They were concerned that the confrontational approach would alienate the very service agencies they were trying to change and they were particularly concerned about the response of funders to Justice for Women.

> I think [the conflicts] were really more around what actions would be taken, what the movement was going to be like....if you took funding from the government does that mean you are now co-opted? Those kinds of debates became very either/or. There was never a sense that we need to do it all--demonstrate and also talk nicely to the ministry. I think that a lot of very serious political divisions developed between people who approached it differently, understood it differently (Activist 6).

The community appeared to be more than willing to see feminist activists as advocates for abused women as long as they were co-operative rather than confrontational.

> I think [Justice for Women] scared a lot of people. I think that the original agenda that they had was unclear to people and I think that traditionalists really saw this as a bunch of feminists running around and making alot of waves. [They thought it] was meant to show them up. I think the Justice for Women agenda was a really strong one which was to do some trouble shooting where an injustice had happened and to really make an issue in the community of it. I think, initially, it started off real well. The fact that there was representation by women who were disadvantaged, disabled, who had been victims of violence in some way, workers from agencies, directors from agencies. I think it was a really good cross-section of women in society. So I think the initial idea was a really strong one, a long overdue one. I think what happened though is that the harsher women got, and the more that they got onto their agenda, and the more they wouldn't let things go, then I think the more they got relegated to kind of the bottom rung of things, the more that they weren't listened to and the more that they were not taken seriously. I think, what happened eventually is that they were really seen as a bunch of screaming memees (Activist 7).

5.4 Backlash

As Chapter Two outlined, the state has various ways to co-opt and contain the challenges that feminism can present. These approaches were certainly used in the Hamilton-Wentworth community. Stand-alone, feminist services may have received state funding and had modified their structures to at least appear to include Boards of Directors,[37] but in their daily work they challenged the hegemony of masculine dominance. This was apparent in their attempts to get the community, in the form of the Domestic Violence Council, to accept a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse. In contrast local state agencies such as the police, traditional social service agencies, the educational system and the justice system worked within the Domestic Violence Council to maintain a non-feminist

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[37] Private communication, Vilma Rossi, Eileen Morrow.

definition of wife/woman abuse. This became particularly worrisome when it appeared that the Council would be making decisions about the funding of services for abused women. Activists worked to counteract this by disbanding the Council. Justice for Women provided an opportunity for disengaged political action to feminists who felt constricted by their roles as workers in state-funded agencies, feminist or not. Creating an autonomous group for political action proved to be a very effective way to bring a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse to the community through the media. This group also proved to be very effective at challenging traditional social services, as well as, the local state service agencies in their approach to wife/woman abuse. Although the Justice for Women Coalition was a political action group with no funding and therefore no obligation to the state, many members of the Coalition did work for agencies which were state funded and eventually as the following example of the Sexual Assault Centre makes clear, this proved to make them vulnerable.

Early in 1993, the Sexual Assault Centre ran an ad for a new staff position. The advertisement, which encouraged applications from minority groups including lesbians, had been run by the Centre for numerous job openings over a number of years. On this occasion, however, the ad ran into formidable opposition. The section that offended some people read as follows, "women who are culturally/racially diverse, aboriginal, *lesbian* and/or disabled are strongly encouraged to apply" (emphasis added, Peters, January 12, 1993: B1). Members of the municipal government used the advertisement to question the integrity of

the Sexual Assault Centre. Domenic Agostino, city councillor and chair of the Regional Social Services Committee, threatened the regional funding of the Centre, saying that the sexual orientation issue "belongs in the bedroom, not when you go for a job interview" (Ibid). Another councillor, Bob Charters, said:

> The lesbian designation is too narrow a criterion. If the centre's advertisement had indicated the job was open to applicants of any sexual preference, he would have no difficulty (Ibid)

As noted above, the ad had only "strongly encouraged" the application of several minority groups. There were no exclusions evident in the advertisement. The heterosexism of some councillors became evident in their comments. For example, Councillor John Prentice claimed that lesbians wouldn't know anything about sexual assault because "who would assault them?" Only councillors Dave Wilson and Terry Anderson were supportive of the ad saying that the regional council should "butt out" of the Centre's business affairs (Peters, January 13, 1993: B1)[38]. What was of particular interest was the fact that the ad had been run before.

> That was the ad we always used. It wasn't like it was some kind of big new ad. It's just that somebody noticed it, somebody who, I can't remember if it was an election year or not, but somebody who wanted to make some political hay with it. Certainly, well a group of somebodies, pounced on that like a hawk on a rabbit. The region said are we funding lesbians? The amount of money the region gave the sexual assault centre was not much in the context of their budget (Activist 8).

The outcry over the ad was compounded by a complaint from an anonymous woman who said she had used the services of the Sexual Assault Centre. She

complained in a letter to *The Hamilton Spectator* and on CHCH TV, a local television station, that the counselling she had received was inappropriate. She charged that the centre had a bias against men and the police. The director of the Sexual Assault Centre, Vilma Rossi, responded with concern and a willingness to respond to the woman's criticisms. She stated:

> With feedback she has given us...this is not how counsellors are trained to respond to women...If there are any ways in which we have become sloppy around how we counsel, then we need to be really honest with each other and ourselves and work on getting back in line (Hughes, 1992, p. B1).

Councillor Agostino increased pressure on the Centre by stating that he had also heard complaints about the Centre from three other women. The complaints centred around the Centre's lack of support for the police process for sexual assault victims. Ms. Rossi responded by saying that the policy of the Centre was to support women in reporting their assault to police if this was their wish (Hamilton Spectator, 1993: B3). An activist explains how the approach of the centre could have been misconstrued:

> I was not working at the Sexual Assault Centre at that time but in the feminist circles I travelled in the question was – do you suggest that a woman report to the police or not? If you did, at least you had to tell her how horrible it might be. I could see how this could be misinterpreted as an anti-police attitude. Of course what if they did hate the police? They weren't exactly being helpful at that time. Most of the time a woman who reported went through hell. The anti-man thing was another issue. From a radical feminist perspective (and if you had to call them anything most of the women at the Sexual Assault Centre were radical feminists) it was best to just stay away from men. All men were indoctrinated into the patriarchy to some degree. So you might suggest to a woman that she

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[38] See Ali Grant (1996) for an examination of how heterosexism, in the form of a charge of lesbianism, was used to control women in the Hamilton feminist community.

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[38] See Ali Grant (1996) for an examination of how heterosexism, in the form of a charge of lesbianism, was used to control women in the Hamilton feminist community.

> might want to stay away from men until she had some things worked out. Does that count as being anti-male (Activist 3)?

If women at the Sexual Assault Centre were taking political stands in their work with women, their comments could easily be mistaken for or might actually have been anti-police and/or anti-male. The question is, did this constitute inappropriate counselling for women? And if it did, was it so inappropriate that it required intervention from municipal politicians and the news media?

The Centre decided to be proactive and ask the United Way to provide a review of the services being provided by the Centre (Marion, 1993: B1) This did not stop the criticism from the community. The director of the Social Planning and Research Council, Mike Pennock, made the underlying critique of the Centre explicit when he publicly cautioned the Centre, saying that they were letting their politics interfere with their ability to provide service. He was particularly concerned that the Centre's feminist politics might interfere with its credibility (Marion, Feb. 9: B3). The argument here was that politics and service did not mix. This directly challenged the feminist provision of service to abused women which argued that service without a recognition of politics was useless at best and harmful at worst.

Under increasing pressure, the board of the Sexual Assault Centre began to argue over the balance of activism and service at the Centre. For some, it was impossible to provide a feminist service without a political component yet it appeared that the feminist activism of staff, even in something as innocuous as an employment ad, was jeopardizing funding. Four board members of the Centre

quit, complaining of a difference in philosophies. The support of a more mainstream approach to serving assaulted women is evident in the comments of one of these board members, Suzanne Belanger-Fontaine.

> The feminist position of the centre is only one of an unlimited number of positions held by women...There are as many forms of feminism as there are women...We feel they do not represent us. They do not share our values and beliefs (Peters, March 5, 1993: p. B1)

Vilma Rossi responded by saying that she was surprised by the resignations and that political activism should be permitted to co-exist with the organization's service delivery.

> That's my opinion and that is the opinion supported by the majority at the centre. Political activism is something many members of the public expect us to be involved in...Every single agency that delivers service in this town does so from a certain philosophical bent (Ibid).

The split in the feminist community around direct action and confrontational tactics was resurfacing. As one activist explains, it just didn't make sense to her:

> If for example, you're screaming... legitimately so, that women's services have been under-funded, if your critique is, the system is stacked against women, that in fact you can't have scarce resources, that there are systemic barriers that are going to continue to make [your work] impossible to do...Hitting the potential funder over the head, time and time and time again, doesn't necessarily advance your cause (Activist 11).

Suzanne Belanger-Fontaine expanded the attack on a feminist position when she denounced Denise Davey, a *Hamilton Spectator* reporter, who had written articles sympathetic to the feminist movement in Hamilton-Wentworth[39]. A reporter for CHCH TV questioned Ms. Davey's objectivity and the anonymous person who had made the initial complaint against the Centre accused her of using

her name without permission (this was later found to be false) (Peter, March 6, 1993: p. B3). At the same time, Ms Belanger-Fontaine expressed dissatisfaction with the consultant who had been sent by the United Way. She stated that the consultant (Ms. Monte, had previous connections with the Centre, had been a member of the Board nine years earlier and had participated in a McMaster University research project at the Centre). The director of the United Way was well aware of her employee's previous involvement in the Centre and asserted that "there is not an issue of bias here" (Ibid).

As such examples illustrate, a minority of the Board members of the Sexual Assault Centre were calling into question not only the work of the Centre but also the credibility of other feminists in the city. There were problems at the Centre[40]. It was a new and growing organization experimenting with alternative forms of structure but each and every problem was considered newsworthy and feminists even marginally connected with the Centre were considered viable targets for criticism. In addition, the language that was used tended to demonize the Centre. An ex-contract worker at the centre accused the organization of "brainwashing" women and charged that the director, Vilma Rossi, was too powerful, wielding, "extraordinary political clout". (Peters, March 9, 1993: B1).

The Centre had attempted to deal with complaints about its services by instituting a review of the Centre's policies by a consultant. The coverage by the

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[39] See Davey October 8, 1991; March 1, 1991; October 12, 1990.

[40] For an examination of the difficulties that feminist service organizations may face see Ristock, 1991.

media instigated a more complete review by funders and eventually, the Centre hired Avebury Research and Consulting Limited to completely review the operations of the centre.

> [The Sexual Assault Centre] had to subject itself to a review because that was the only way to clear their names. But the process was ridiculous. Here they were trying to create something new and different and it was going to be a shaky, not working totally well. I have worked at lots of hierarchical organizations that totally suck but because the Centre was different it was easy to attack. Not to say that there weren't problems, there were but they weren't huge and the women would have worked them out on their own if they'd been given time. Instead they were subjected to all this pressure and nobody works at their best like that. It's a miracle they have any politics left in the organization at all (Activist 12).

Running a service organization with a feminist model of structure, such as a collective, was difficult. It was a new structure and as with any new approach, a period of trial and error was to be expected. But the process of working out the kinks in a collective model was side-tracked by the review. Instead of working with the model, it was suggested that the Centre adopt a traditionally hierarchical structure. The problems with the justice system were also to be expected. If the police did not treat a woman with respect or refused to follow up a complaint, the Sexual Assault Centre would protest[41]. This was part of the job of a feminist service which required advocacy and challenge as well as service. The complaints about the lack of accessibility for diverse groups were accurate. However, this lack of accessibility was evident in all social services in the city. It is interesting to note that only the Sexual Assault Centre was called upon to address the issue. The coverage of the review results was also very telling. While

headlines read "Sex assault centre rapped," and "Sexual assault centre criticized by report," a close reading of the body of the article revealed that for the most part clients had a very positive experience at the Centre (Peters, June 21, 1993: A1). The problems in question did not seem to warrant the coverage given and the coverage itself seemed biased.

On 14, January, 1993 it was announced that Eileen Morrow, the very outspoken public educator at Interval House, and a member of Justice for Women, had finished working at the shelter the previous Friday (Holt, 1993: B1). It was later revealed that she had been dismissed by the board without cause[42]. The director, Gwen Davidson, had also been dismissed. Both were founding members of Interval House. At a press conference held several days later, Eileen Morrow declared that she had been fired in an attempt to "shut her up":

> "I have been made the scapegoat, the sacrifice to elements in the community ... who are more interested in their own self-serving agendas than they are in ending violence against women and children" (Davy, January 20, 1993: B1).

In a complete about face, city councillor, Domenic Agostino, who had insisted that the ads of the Sexual Assault Centre be changed, argued that the firing was "none of the region's business" (Prokaska, 1993: B3). By 25 February 1993, three more shelter staff had quit the Centre in protest over the firings and five of the six board members who had made the decision had also left (Davy, February 25, 1993: B2).

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[41] Personal communication with Vilma Rossi, director Sexual Assault Centre.

On March 19, city councillor Domenic Agostino continued to capitalize on the political opportunity presented by the media exposure of feminist agencies by calling for a review of women's services in the community and suggesting that the Regional Social Services Committee should act as the co-ordinating body of said services. Since the Region only contributed a limited amount of resources to these services, these comments were somewhat presumptious (Davy and Peters, 1993: B1). Unfortunately the position of the region as funders meant that they could call organizations to account. Once they had done so other funders followed suit.

The media denunciation of feminist activism continued with an article on 1 May 1993 titled, "The Great Divide", which summarized and sensationalized the disagreements in the feminist community. The Justice for Women Coalition was described as "a bunch of feminazis" who wanted to control the feminist movement in Hamilton. Coalition members answered saying that they were not going to apoligize for being aggressive when it came to fighting violence against women. Comments were also made about the fact that the Coalition members were also front-line workers in feminist social services. Some argued that the members operated with "a lot of power and control" (Peters, May 1, 1993: A7). But Evelyn Myrtie, the former chair of the Hamilton Status of Women Committee, argued that the real problem with Coalition members was the fact that:

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[42] In fact, she was never given any explanation for the firing. Personal communication with

> "Their positions are strong...They challenge the status quo. Many of them have worked as front-line workers in shelters. They have seen the tragedies. They want action, not just talk, talk, talk (Ibid).

These women, who held very little real power in terms of politics, wealth or even prestige, were being portrayed as very powerful and abusive in that power.

The process that had occurred at the Sexual Assault Centre was repeated with the only remaining vocal feminist service in the city[43]. On June 19, the results of a secret *Hamilton Spectator* probe of the Elizabeth Fry Society were published. There were allegations of conflict of interest and a heavy-handed management style. In particular, the report questioned the awarding of contracts by the agency to an ex-convict and ex-client of the agency, Ms. DeMaeyer. This was further complicated by the fact that Ms. DeMaeyer lived with the executive director of the agency, Terry-Lee Seeley. The board of directors stated that any conflict of interest that might be perceived had been declared and acknowledged by the board. All financial dealings had been approved by them (Brown, June 19, 1993: A2). As with other agencies, the Elizabeth Fry Society called for an external review to clear the air. On 17 February, ten members of an eleven member board resigned, citing personal reasons for their resignations and commenting that the review process had strained both their personal and their professional lives (Brown, February 17, 1994: B3). The sole remaining member,

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Eileen Morrow.

[43] The Women's Centre did not receive media attention. With the exception of the protest at the police station the Centre remained very quiet during this time. Members of the Centre were not active in challenging the Domestic Violence Council and they were not members of Just ice for Women. The Centre had chosen to take a service approach in its work with abused women

Nairn Galvin, called an emergency meeting to elect a new board. Within the week, a new ten member board was at work but the accumulated experience of the previous board had been lost.

The review process at the Elizabeth Fry Society should have been an opportunity for the staff, volunteers, and clients at the agency to examine its operations, identify problems and propose solutions. Instead, under media scrutiny, it became a 'political football'. For example, when the review was completed and released, allegations of a cover-up were made in the legislature. The cover-up was attributed to the fact that one of the reviewer's office staff had been a friend of the executive director, Terry-Lee Seeley (Brown, June 1, 1994: B1). Once the report became public, it was difficult to see how it had been whitewashed. It was very critical of the Elizabeth Fry Society, citing many cases of conflict of interest. More critically, a confidential memo that the *Hamilton Spectator* became aware of and reported on, threatened the funding of the Society unless the board acted quickly. An ex-client interviewed by the newspaper charged that sexual assaults involving staff had occurred in the Elizabeth Fry Group Home. Police were investigating this report as well as others. (Brown, June 3, 1994: A1). Although none of the allegations had been proven, by 24 June 1994, the group home run by the Society was closed. In addition, Corrections Canada cancelled the contract they had with the Elizabeth Fry Society to supervise parolees in the community (Brown, June 24, 1993: B1). The review

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instead of political action and advocacy - private communication - Renate Manthei, Executive

process had been a harrowing one for the Board of Directors. Every allegation thrown at the agency was printed in the media. The result was that, despite the fact that the allegations had not been (and never were) proven, two of E. Fry's most important programs were cancelled. The Board attempted to gain a voice for themselves by bringing the review process out into public view but the funders refused and insisted that they meet behind closed doors. The Board asked for several advisors and were denied (Brown, June 28, 1994: B1).

On 22 November 1994, a new independent probe was called. ARA consulting services in Toronto was asked by the various funders to come in and do a complete evaluation of the Society. Terry Lee Seeley was asked to take a paid leave of absence during the probe and eventually resigned. A woman active at Elizabeth Fry at the time describes the review process:

> I think that what those funders did to us at E.Fry was to terrorize us. I think that in the process of trying to get rid of E.Fry (because they did try, I think that was one of the agendas, to put us under) they managed to terrorize almost everybody else in town. We went to meetings that were seven or eight hours long, trying to respond in a documented way to the funders. They asked us to do things that were just unbelievable ... When I look back on it, it makes me think of a prize fight. They would come in and throw this stuff at us, basically beat us up and give us deadlines that nobody would meet. We would protest. We would holler about it. We would point out the injustice but also the incorrect and illegal aspects of it and they would be steadfast because they were going to do this whatever. We would go away and we would fucking do it. We would come back at the deadline with the stuff and they would just look at us. Then they'd go away with it and come back two days later and fax us that we had to do something else...This is also a great tactic on people's part to keep you so busy that you don't get a chance to get your head above ground to see what's going on (Activist 8).

Director, Hamilton Women's Centre.

The Elizabeth Fry Society was totally discredited and decimated.[44] The agency lost an executive director with years of experience. No one publicly asked important questions such as how were reporters at the *Hamilton Spectator* able to access confidential memos or why was the review process not made public despite requests by the board? Contracts were cancelled based on allegations that were never substantiated. Again, there were problems at the agency, just as there were at the Sexual Assault Centre, but they hardly merited the actions that were taken.

Members of the Justice for Women Coalition did not appear to be vulnerable to the state. They received no funding and did not have to abide by any regulations. There appeared to be no way that these activists could be controlled, but, they were, in fact, silenced. How did this happen? First, many of the members of the Justice for Women Coalition worked for feminist agencies that did receive funding from the government. These agencies came under media scrutiny and their validity was questioned.

> The *Spectator* was responsible for fueling and maybe even creating some of the backlash because there was a standing joke about which poor little grass roots feminist group, agency or organization was going to get nailed this week by the *Spectator* exposing something that happens in all places, nothing distinct to feminist agencies or organizations (Activist 6).

Organizational difficulties that most agencies were permitted to deal with internally became public processes. This put the funding and credibility of

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[44] Private communication, Roxanne Johnson, current President of the Board of Directors, Elizabeth Fry Society.

feminist agencies in question. They attempted to address these questions through agency reviews.

Feminist organizations were by definition innovative. Their structures and practices were therefore open to question and there was little written documentation about procedures or written explanations for why things were done in particular ways. Women struggled to keep their feminist ideals, including their collective structures intact, but there was a great deal of pressure to duplicate traditional bureaucratic structures since this would provide instant credibility. The review process also put organizations under tremendous pressure. It was impossible to go through this process and still have time and energy for political action.

> Agency after agency after agency's turmoil was reported in the *Spectator*. Your dirty linen was aired for everyone in the community to see if you made a wrong, or what the community would consider, a wrong move... You wanted to be a feminist agency but you didn't want anybody to know because it wasn't safe (Activist 1).

The attacks on feminist agencies coincided with a growing recognition of the divisions within the feminist community[45]. Women from the margins were challenging the publicly-recognized Hamilton women's movement over their exclusion. The direct action tactics of the Justice for Women Coalition created controversy as some feminist activists felt they threatened a newly-established

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[45] The continuous attacks on feminist services were very distressing. As the quote above indicates most of the feminists I knew, including myself were keeping their heads down. There was not enough information sharing in the community so women were getting their information from the newspaper and this made it difficult to know what to do. It was frustrating that no united response to these attacks could be formed. It is only in hindsight that I have come to understand how devastating these attacks were on the women and organizations that were targeted.

credibility. They worried that they were alienating the very people the movement needed to compromise with in order to provide services to abused women. Members of the Justice for Women Coalition felt that anyone who was not willing to put themselves on the line with direct action was not really dedicated to saving women's lives. When feminists and feminist organizations began to be attacked, the divisions within the community kept many women silent. This contributed to the impact of the attacks on the feminist community. Within the space of one year, all the stand-alone feminist services for abused women in Hamilton had been decimated.

5.5 Impact

Feminist activists evolved from advocates to troublemakers. Initially, they were responsible for raising the issue in public awareness and demanding a response from the state. Local government was willing to assist in the establishment of a physical space, a shelter for abused women. This site was then used as a base for raising issues and public education. Initially the women's movement engaged the local state services in order to acquire necessary resources and educate them in a feminist approach to wife/woman abuse. Women needed the services offered by the state and feminists felt an obligation to educate local agencies in order to ensure that women were receiving proper service. They were accepted as advocates for abused women because there was little knowledge about the issue. However, as the local state services developed their own responses to wife/woman abuse they began to clash with feminist activists. These

services favoured a social problem framework and they worked to establish this approach under the auspices of the Domestic Violence Council. Feminist activists responded by challenging the Domestic Violence Council. They refused to be polite. They argued, stalled and denounced the policies of the Council until it was disbanded.

Activists were angry and frustrated because of wife/woman abuse murders and attempted murders that were poorly handled by the police and the justice system. Some of them created a disengaged political action group, the Justice for Women Coalition. This group moved to direct action: pickets, lobbying, denouncements in the paper, and, finally, civil disobedience. The group received no funding and was therefore less open to state control. However, many of the members of the group worked for agencies that were funded by the state. These agencies were targeted through reviews and threats to their funding. One particularly effective tool was the agency review. The agency review put organizations like the Sexual Assault Centre under tremendous pressure to conform to traditional organizational structures. Agencies were not the only target of the backlash, individual women were fired and/or ostracized.

> And so it [Justice for Women] was really seen as being way out in left field and that you were subversive if you were part of it. It wasn't that you had a good idea and that you really felt strongly and dedicated to women, it was that you were now a subversive because you were involved with all these "hooligans" (Activist 7).

It was hard to get hired in Hamilton if you had been a member of Justice for Women.

There is no doubt that the backlash suffered by feminist activists suppressed challenges to the local state in Hamilton. However, the impact that these women had on the Hamilton community's response to women who are victims of violence has also become evident.

> I found that [the conflicts over men's groups] put a lot of the language of feminism out there and made it a little bit more familiar with most people. So things like safety and accountability that were very much a part of feminist analysis of men's programming began to get out there. People were talking about it a bit more and I think it was in the media (the coverage of it) and also pro-feminist men and feminist women coming out and talking about men's programmes. I think it was a milestone (Activist 10).

The Domestic Violence Council resurrected itself as the Woman Abuse Working Group (W.A.W.G.) in late 1993. As a whole, this group adopted the same feminist stance that the feminist activists on the Council had championed less than ten years ago. W.A.W.G. includes the local police force, the Boards of Education and many other traditional service agencies. This group also recently responded to the McQuire[46] report in a lengthy letter that directly challenged the provincial conservative government led by Mike Harris. An activist explains the importance of groups like Justice for Women.

> I think you always have to have the progressive pulling the others kicking and screaming into a different position otherwise you never move. It's not a very pleasant experience for a lot of people to come through that and there were a lot of very good people on the Domestic Violence Council, who were very well intentioned and found the stress of that group, really,

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[46] *Framework for Action on the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Ontario: Phase 1 Final Report* written by McQuire & Associates for the present Conservative provincial government. This report was intended to create a blueprint for the revamping of services to abused women in Ontario. It was presented on November 6, 1996 and was met with hostility by the violence against women movement in Ontario. It was later retracted by the Ontario government.

> really difficult. But it was almost like it was necessary in order for them to get moved along a little bit further than they were...(Activist 9).

The activism of Justice for Women had also had an impact on men's services. Men's groups are now run only by one agency in the city, Catholic Family Serivces (the next chapter will discuss the process of developing these groups), and, in general, they were and continue to be both safer and more accountable to abused women. The police have reorganized their responses to wife/woman abuse, establishing a Family Crisis Unit (F.C.U.) in 1992, to deal more effectively with 'domestic violence' situations[47]. Despite an effective backlash the impact of the political action taken by Justice for Women was evident.

> Well for me, I come back to the sense that it's not like some of those differences don't exist anymore but I think that the radical really moved people further. I hear people say now what I heard them arguing against seven years ago and it's just taken for granted sort of knowledge and experience now. We had to fight like hell for them to agree to it... I think that's actually helped relations with the police but I think it would be a mistake to say that WAWG and all those members are responsible for that. I think that it was a lot of confrontation that went on with the police in terms of them not laying charges, not following through, how they were treating women on domestic violence calls as well as what they were doing with their own cops who were abusive. That was all getting challenged. I think we really pushed the police so that it's like [Justice for Women] did the dirty work and now we can sit down and have a conversation. I never would have predicted that our relations with the cops would be so good (Activist 6).

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[47] This unit oversees every case of 'domestic violence' to which an officer responds . If a charge is not laid during such a call, the officer must explain why. These cases are then reviewed by the F.C.U.. Officers assigned to this unit are responsible for community liaison with services for abused women in the region and are involved in public education, including officers in their own force.

5.6 Conclusion

Feminist activists first engaged the state with a mainstream approach, public education. In this way, they became 'experts' on the issue of wife/woman abuse. At the same time they were taking a disengaged stance with the creation of Interval House, a feminist, stand-alone shelter, which provided a somewhat disengaged stance (although the funding came from the state). From this base, feminist activists acted as mentors to other shelters and services, became media spokespersons, advocated for abused women and educated third party social services and state agencies (police, schools, etc.). They were integral to the establishment of community co-ordinating committee (the Ad Hoc Task Force on Battering and the Domestic Violence Council). This mostly mainstream approach established wife/woman abuse as a public issue and began to establish a feminist definition of the problem. However, a mainstream approach has some dangers. As third party social services and state agencies began to develop their own expertise in the area they began to co-opt the issue and promote a social problem approach. The feminist definition of wife/woman abuse became one among many.

As activists became acutely aware that their attempts at a mainstream approach had been a failure, they began to develop more disengaged alternatives such as the Justice for Women Coalition. This grassroots group first took on the Domestic Violence Council and contributed to its demise. They were also successful at bringing the police under scrutiny and cancelling the provision of

groups for abusive men. They were beginning to establish a powerful counter-hegemonic position in the community. However, their very effectiveness created divisions within the feminist community and resulted in the targeting of feminist service organizations.

The effectiveness of Justice for Women was contained by a variety of techniques which reinforced the hegemony of state and third party agencies in the community. The Sexual Assault Centre and the Elizabeth Fry Society were vilified in the local newspaper, *The Hamilton Spectator,* and their attempts to answer allegations and deal with problems became part of a media circus that left all feminist organizations 'shaking in their boots'. As Ali Grant (1996: 192) puts it, they were seen as "demonizing transgressive females ....[committing] UnWomanly acts." The women in Justice for Women had crossed the boundaries of 'acceptable' protest and they were punished. These experiences silenced the violence against women movement in Hamilton.

> It's like they disappeared, frankly. Sometimes I wish they were still around...that voice is no longer there...I think some people burnt out and left the movement. I think some people were pushed out. Some people were fired, some people were let go from different positions. Some people did anti-violence work elsewhere. Not in the city very much but elsewhere (Activist 6).

The fragmentation of services created by funding decisions at the provincial and federal levels meant that the definition of wife/woman abuse had to be renegotiated at the local level. In Hamilton, this became an all-out battle with prominent feminist activists and organizations as the casualties. In the end, although they lost the battle, the Justice for Women Coalition won the war.

If we use Suzanne Staggenborg's criteria for movement success: "(1) political and policy outcomes; (2) mobilization outcomes; and (3) cultural outcomes", we can see that in many ways Justice for Women were successful. For example, in many respects, services for abused women in Hamilton, including third party social service organizations, have adopted a feminist perspective on wife/woman abuse (1). Although the cost was high, many activists found that, under the right circumstances, they could be powerfully effective (2). And finally, as a community, Hamilton (at least as it appeared in the *Hamilton Spectator*) would no longer accept wife/woman abuse as a private matter (3). It appeared that the predicted costs of a grassroots approach, alienation and isolation, had occurred but the message had nevertheless been delivered to the mainstream. The next chapter examines how, at least in one organization, this came to be.

CHAPTER SIX: EVOLVING A FEMINIST ORIENTATION – CHANGES IN THE WIFE/WOMAN ABUSE PROGRAMME AT CATHOLIC FAMILY SERVICES

This chapter builds on the substance of the previous chapters drawing on the themes and concepts introduced there and applying them to the micro level of the agency. Using interviews, agency documents and my own observations, Catholic Family Services, a small, traditional social services agency is examined in order to trace how the changes at the federal, provincial and community levels were enacted in this particular agency at this particular time. Although it is important to examine large societal changes, how they emerge at the local level is often what is most relevant for people. In the case of wife/woman abuse, women experience violence at the most micro of levels and this is where they require help (of course, changes at the micro and local levels also impact on large societal changes) In 1980, Catholic Family Services was barely aware of the issue of wife/woman abuse, but, by 1995, they were providing some of the most innovative programs in the province from a feminist perspective and the agency's executive director was a leading member of the Woman Abuse Working Group. How did such an surprising change take place?

The changes at Catholic Family Services mirrored the evolution of the issue of wife/woman abuse at other levels. First, the issue was recognized as a public problem rather than a private issue. Secondly, feminists provided the education and mentoring necessary to begin to understand the issue: they were recognized as experts in the area. At Catholic Family Services this meant that feminists were hired to provide service and became an integral part of the organization. The actions of feminists in the agency and the community illustrate the importance of public education and feminist activism. They indicate, as well, the essential role of the inside 'interpreter' who fashions feminist critiques into acceptable agency alternatives. Of course, the management of the agency, (which as a traditional third party social service was expected to support state hegemony) resisted a feminist definition of the issue. A feminist definition of wife/woman abuse was taken up by the agency but, as might be expected, within constraints. This case study provides an excellent illustration of the Canadian women's movement in a micro form challenging the state at a micro level.

6.2 A Brief History of Catholic Family Services

Catholic Family Services, in its various guises, has been part of the Hamilton social services environment for over fifty years. In 1944, his Excellency, Joseph F. Ryan, the bishop of Hamilton, established the Catholic Welfare Bureau to meet the needs of the Catholic Community (although non-Catholics also received service). The Bureau was responsible for assisting

families with food, necessities, counselling, child welfare and placement services (particularly the placement of war orphans), reunification of immigrant and refugee families, and credit counselling. The agency even had its own credit bureau. Ten years later, in 1954, the Bureau diversified, opening the Catholic Children's Aid and St. Martin's Manor, a home for "unwed" mothers. In 1965, the Bureau changed its name to Catholic Social Services. Catholic Social Services was deeply embedded in the Catholic community, directed by a priest and staffed by sisters, brothers and lay people. In 1977, Catholic Social Services made its first move to become more secularly based when it hired its first non-clerical executive director. During the next ten years specialised services were developed for seniors, developmentally disabled adults and sole support mothers on public assistance. In 1986 Catholic Social Services was accredited by the Family Services Association of Canada and changed it name to Catholic Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth. (Catholic Family Services, 1996). Today, this agency provides a wide range of services to the Catholic and non-Catholic community (see Figure "2"). Although the services provided are diverse, it remains a relatively small agency, particularly in relation to Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth[48]. Catholic Family Services has increased its community base, but it still remains rooted in the Catholic church. For example, the members of the

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[48] Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth is a much larger, non-denominational service. It is very similar to Catholic Family Services in terms of the type of services provided but it has been able to acquire more funding.

board of directors are drawn from well-known and respected members of the Catholic community.

The organization is structured hierarchically and the board of directors is ultimately responsible for all decisions that are made at the agency. The executive director makes the day-to-day decisions at the agency and it is his job to ensure that the mandate of the agency is met. Below the director are the managers for each of the separate programs the agency provides. The manager is responsible for the implementation of the program that she/he manages, including budget, staffing and program development. Each program has its own workers who provide the service. The type of worker and the remuneration they receive varies from program to program. The director cannot be an expert in each area so managers have program control in their area. Altogether, the agency presently employs 34 people.

The focus for this work is on the Clinical Services Unit, better known as Counselling Services or the Counselling Unit. This is the part of the agency which provides counselling to individuals, families, couples and groups. The five social workers in the Counselling Unit work as a team. This means that services are provided jointly and program changes are discussed among the team. Although this somewhat modifies the hierarchical structure of the agency, the manager holds the power to make final decisions (with the approval of the

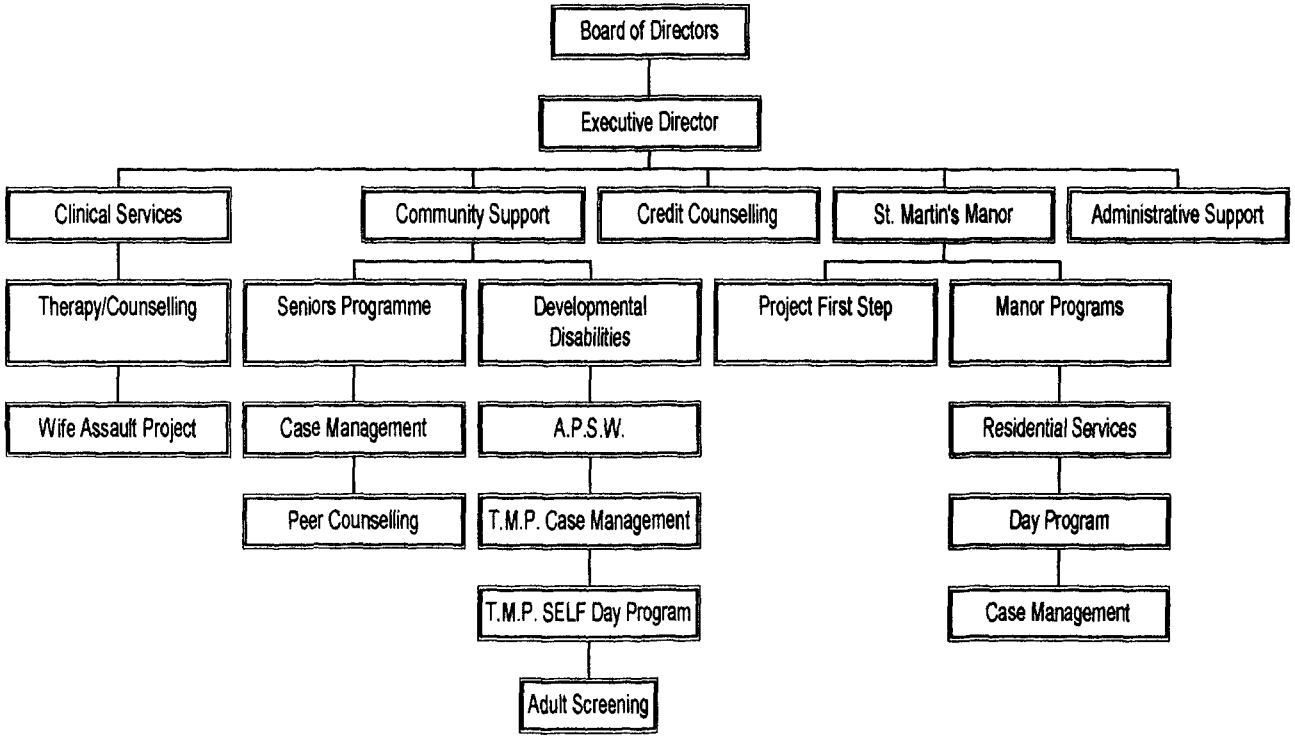
director and the board). The manager might not use that discretion, but it is understood that it can be imposed at any time.

In general, Catholic Family Services has many of the attributes of a traditional organization. It is hierarchical in nature, receives funding from the provincial government and the United Way, and has not actively challenged the regulations or expectations that come with that funding. The Catholic nature of the agency suggests that it would be even more likely to reject a feminist perspective since some of the major tenets of the Catholic faith run counter to feminists ideals.[49] For example, all workers and volunteers at the agency have to agree to follow a code of ethics that reflects the Catholic faith. The most controversial elements of this code include agreeing not to promote abortion, euthanasia or homosexual lifestyles. It is difficult to imagine such an agency taking up a feminist perspective. In fact, in 1980, it supported the hegemonic approach to wife/woman abuse that saw the issue as a private, individual problem.

[49] This is not to say that feminism is totally anti-thetical to Catholicism. There are Catholic feminists who challenge the church (Katzenstein, 1990)

Figure 2

Catholic Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth



6.3 Recognizing the Issue of Wife/Woman Abuse

In 1980, Catholic Family Services, like most of Canadian society, did not recognise wife/woman abuse as a problem in-and-of-itself. Wife/woman abuse was seen as a symptom of other problems, such as family breakdown or alcohol abuse.

> I guess it was the early eighties when [wife/woman abuse] really started to surface as an area that needed focussed attention. Prior to that it was probably there but not recognized (Management 1).

A woman facing abuse would have been expected to find ways to adapt to the violence in her relationship. Often women were blamed for the violence and counselling time would be spent dealing with the woman's perceived inadequacies, perhaps figuring out how a woman could avoid triggering the violence of her partner. Since abuse was seen as a relationship problem, the woman and her partner would be brought in for couple counselling. Couple counselling sessions often provided another avenue for abuse, as partners used the sessions to blame and/or emotionally abuse their partners, sometimes with the assistance of counsellors. If women were open about their abuse in couple sessions, they often paid for it afterwards, as their partners subjected them to physical, sexual and emotional abuse in order to ensure their silence.

> We were getting a distorted picture of couples and what was happening. We were putting women in danger of potential violence. What would happen is they would go home and get the hell beat out of them or something. Of course, understandably, they didn't want to come back to therapy (Employee 6).

Catholic Family Services was not alone in this approach. At this time, the majority of Canadians did not understand the dynamics of abuse or recognise the enormity of the problem. In the early eighties, the approach taken by Catholic Family Services was recognised as proper social work practice (Stout and McPhail, 1998; Pressman, 1989).

In 1982, the abuse of women was becoming a public issue. The federal government had just completed its Parliamentary Task Force on Wife Beating, and the Ontario provincial government was holding hearings on the same topic. In Hamilton, the Social Planning and Research Council had completed its own report on the topic of wife/woman abuse in the city and had established the Ad Hoc Task Force on Battering. At the request of Catholic Family Services' director, one of the counsellors in the Family Counselling Unit sat on the Task Force, thus providing the first formal connection for the agency with the issue of wife/woman abuse. The worker on the Task Force brought her new knowledge of the issue of wife/woman abuse back to the team.

> There were no services for women anywhere in the community at that point....This committee was composed of a lot of women from a lot of different agencies. It was looking at what we could do in terms of offering something for women in the community. [The team member who sat on the committee] came back to the Executive Director and said, this is what I want to do [set up a group for women] ...[The Taskforce] was very active and [Catholic Family Services] needed to provide something in return, not just go and pay lip service (Employee 1).

This combination of outside information (governmental committees, the taskforce) and an inside supporter (the worker sitting on the task force), changed

the perception of wife/woman abuse from symptom to identifiable problem, and workers began to identify wife/woman abuse in their caseloads.

> I listened. [Recognizing wife/woman abuse as an identifiable problem] made sense and then when it made sense I went back and validated it in my own work. I think at that point... it took on a movement of its own. It took on movement because, I mean, how could you go back and do the work the way you did it? You couldn't do it. It'd be like heresy (Employee 6).

As this worker points out, once wife/woman abuse was identified as a problem, one could not 'un-identify' it without breaking the moral and ethical codes of both the agency, which was committed to helping the victims of social ills, and the team members who were trained social workers. Abused women were now identified as the victims of violence at the hands of their partners.

At the same time the federal government announced its first funding commitment directed at abused women--an action followed closely by a commitment of funds by the Ontario government (see chapter four for details). The increases in funding provided an impetus for the development of feminist services. For example, this new money made incorporation of the Interval House board possible. However, traditional third-party social service agencies also developed an interest in wife/woman abuse because it was a growing field.

> It was a growth industry for a while. That's where the funding was and if you want your agency to grow, you tap into that funding. Hell, they weren't doing violence against women work twenty-five years ago. They began doing it when the purse strings got loosened up. So part of it is just, that's where the money is (Activist 8).

As well, public education such as the Ontario Women's Directorate's campaign, "Breaking the Silence", used posters, radio spots and information packages which

identified wife woman abuse as a crime and urged women to break the silence and seek help. As the *War Against Women,* the 1991 report of the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and Women, had stated, public campaigns of this type increased public awareness and resulted in pressures on social service agencies from women looking for service. This was certainly the experience at Catholic Family Services.

> A lot of [the change] was propelled because of the government campaigns about breaking the silence. And that pushed me. It pushed Family Service agencies into having to respond. Workers needed to get some training and heighten their own awareness and sensitivity to the issue and look at how they were going to respond to it. I think there were some community services available and they certainly had to mushroom fairly quickly in response to the demand that that ad campaign was creating (Employee 2).

The front-line workers at Catholic Family Services were becoming aware of wife woman abuse but public education campaigns gave them additional information. The literature from campaigns could be handed to management to support their positions.

6.4 Establishing Specialized Services

The increase in requests for services from abused women combined with the increased knowledge staff were gaining from attending committees and public education resulted in the first specialized response to wife/woman abuse in the form of a group for women called, "You Can't Beat a Woman". Initially, the agency resisted the establishment of any group at all, but as the team member stated above, they needed to create some response in order to appear committed to

the issue and remain a Task Force member. The director finally approved the group but refused to assign enough resources to the project. Therefore, the first group was run by a single social worker with limited experience in issues of violence[50].

> It was basically me. You know, I kind of took off with it then. We started doing some individual work with women. We started doing the groups. Now basically, I started doing the groups because the feeling was that we couldn't afford the manpower. We couldn't have two co-leaders, leading the group so every year I would report to the director and say we need somebody to co-lead. And every year it was thank-you very much we just don't have the manpower, so every year I would just go back at it again (Employee 1).

As well, Catholic Family Services, like the federal and provincial government Standing Committees, responded by characterising wife/woman abuse as a social problem of an individual nature rather than as a political problem resulting from the inequality of men and women in Canadian society. This understanding of the origins of wife/woman abuse was evident in the description of the objectives for the first groups run for wife/woman abuse in the agency. The objectives for the group read as follows,

> 1. To deal with safety and on-going protection issues.
> 2. Helping her understand the impact of violence on herself and significant others.
> 3. Increase her sense of control over her environment and personal empowerment.
> 4. Encourage the honest expression of emotions especially anger, pain and loss.
> 5. Increase interpersonal relation skills." (Catholic Family Services, 1989).

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[50] Groups, particularly those that deal with trauma need two facilitators to operate effeciently. Because of the nature of the trauma, one person leads the group while the other observes and deals with any crises that may arise.

The emphasis was on assisting the woman to change her response to the violence and increase her skills in interpersonal relationships, particularly the expression of her emotions. There was no recognition of the social structures that contributed to the violence experienced by the women. This set of objectives characterised the abused woman as having the individual problems of low self-esteem or a masochistic personality. The abused woman was a victim, but one that contributed to the violence she suffered through personal inadequacy.

Front-line social workers at the agency were aware of their limited knowledge in the area of wife/woman abuse and they began to gather as much information as possible. One of their best sources were the feminist members of the various committees to which they belonged.

> And then all of us had the opportunity and were encouraged by Mike to sit on different community committees representing the agency. So there was a lot of work over the years when we would be sitting on community committees with other people who were working in the area of violence as well. There was a lot of cross-fertilization of information that way and a lot of sharing of philosophy, approaches and attitudes... Eileen Morrow was on a couple of committees that I was on and she just brought a ton of stuff with her and always kept the awareness there and reminded us if we slipped up (Employee 2).

Working on committees provided an opportunity for activists and front-line women to come together and share ideas, language and approaches. The committees provided new ideas and the support to take those ideas and present them to the agency. Once Interval House opened in 1986, staff members there took a more direct mentoring role with workers at Catholic Family Services.

> We knew absolutely nothing. Thrust into a situation without very much training, if any at all, and told to perform and we did. It was people like

> Gwen Davidson at Interval House who gave us things like the power and control wheel[51] You could phone them up and ask questions about anything (Employee 1).

In addition, one of the tenets of the feminist activists was that women who were abused were the best 'experts' on the issue. This position assumed that women were 'normal' people in a terrible situation, doing the best they could rather than neurotic or dependent people who brought the violence upon themselves through their emotional inadequacies (Battered Women Support Services, 1995). Once they had accepted abused women as 'experts' on their own lives, team members began to listen to the women they were serving. One social worker explains how she learned from listening to abused women:

> The thing that I was doing was asking women...what worked, what didn't work, what needed to be added. I would ask them every single time that we went through group. To me that was really important, not to decide that I was the expert and I knew what I was talking about but also to ask women what was working and what wasn't and what they wanted more of and what they wanted less of. Eventually, what I got to with each group was instead of having things so structured, I would ask them at the beginning what are the types of issues that you have to deal with...Women, I think, had much more control in sessions than they used to have when I first began (Employee 1).

The stories that women told in their sessions brought the reality of abuse home to the members of the team and helped them to create more effective groups for the women. Women's personal stories were also effective tools for convincing management of the need for service. Often workers had more information about

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[51] This is a set of two wheels. The first indicates the various types of power and control involved in abuse while the second indicates what is necessary for an egalitarian relationship. They were developed by an anti-abuse program in Duluth Minnesota (Pence, 1993).

the issue than members of management. Consequently, they became responsible for educating the hierarchy from the bottom up.

> I didn't have any knowledge or keen awareness of this problem as I understand it today. It came up through the staff. If anything, I guess, I was wise enough to see that it was a very important thing and we needed to address it as an organization and fortunately we had people that could address it in those days. And, then, laterally, we don't bring people into the organization in the counselling area unless they have some awareness in this area (Management 1).

Front-line staff had identified wife/woman abuse as an issue that Catholic Family Services had to address. With the help of outside sources they began to deliver a specialized programme for abused women. At the same time they were educating the management of the agency about the issue and how it should be addressed.

6.5 Incorporating Issues of Power and Control

The growing knowledge and awareness of the front-line staff and management resulted in two major changes to the counselling programme. The intake procedure was revamped so that abuse issues would be more easily identified and the approach to couples counselling was reworked. Every request that came into the agency for counselling went through an intake procedure. Front-line social workers took turns receiving initial calls to the agency and would ask the person a series of questions in order to identify the issues that had brought the person to the agency. This information would be passed on to the worker who was assigned to the case so that they would have background information for the first session with a client. A general intake form was used and the worker doing

the intake might pick up on issues of violence in the conversation but there were no formal means of presenting the issue. Since many women were reluctant to talk about their abuse, issues of violence often were not recognized until the client was actually seen at their initial appointment. Sometimes it would take several sessions for this information to come to light, if it did at all.

In 1985, the members of the counselling unit team began to formalize specific intake questions around the issue of violence against women. Initially, they used general questions to ask if violence was an issue for women or couples who sought counselling. Having questions specifically related to violence indicated that this issue was dealt with by the agency and provided a space for women to indicate that violence was a problem in their lives. (Burgess and McCabe, 1988: 37). However, asking a woman outright if she identifies herself as abused neglects to take into account the powerful silences that can be generated by abuse. By 1990, the team members had become more sophisticated in their understanding of wife/woman abuse. Not only were abused women reluctant to identify themselves as such, many were not aware that what they were experiencing was abuse. Therefore, if they were asked directly if they were abused, they would answer no. In order to address this issue, non-specific questions that could identify violence without asking directly about it became a part of every intake. Instead of asking women if they had ever been abused, women were asked if they had been called names, been pushed or been denied access to family finances (Intake Form, Counselling Unit, Catholic Family

Services, 1990). This insured that more cases of abuse were being identified at the earliest stages of contact.

This identification of abuse was particularly important in the case of couple's counselling. As mentioned previously, feminist activists argued that couple counselling was dangerous for women because it was often the site for abuse. Even in cases where the counsellor was familiar with abuse issues, the woman was often silenced in sessions. Feminist activists argued that women's safety had to be the paramount issue for counsellors when dealing with couples. In 1986, the approach to couple counselling was revamped.

> We changed the way we did the assessment intake of people. We wouldn't see husbands and wives together if the therapist had any idea [that abuse was taking place]. We started proposing that we have a male and female to do the assessment together and the male worker would meet with the husband and the female worker would meet with the wife. After an initial brief period of time, then the two workers would conference and bring the couple back into the room and give them their feedback and their treatment proposal at that point in time then leave it to the couple to get back to us, whether they wanted to follow it up or not. And at that point in time, a group for women and a group for men was being suggested and offered...(Employee 2).

The new approach to couple counselling was an attempt to provide a safe place for women to disclose abuse. When there was any indication that abuse might be a factor in a couple seeking counselling, the couple would be seen by a male and female social worker. There would be a brief introduction and then the couple would be split with the man seeing the male counsellor and woman seeing the female counsellor. During these one-on-one sessions, the possibility and extent of the abuse of the woman in the relationship would be explored and

service alternatives would be offered to the woman. Once these single sessions were complete the two social workers would meet and compare notes. If abuse was an issue in the relationship, couple counselling would not be offered until the man had received individual or group counselling to stop the abuse. This change in service recognised that the safety of women was of paramount importance.

6.6 The Acceptance of Feminism

Although changes had been made at Catholic Family Services, a feminist approach to wife/woman abuse was not yet evident. Several threads wove together to result in its eventual acceptance at the agency. The struggles at the Domestic Violence Council over how the community would define the issue had a direct impact on C.F.S.. The executive director was a member of the Domestic Violence Council and the arguments made by feminists there had an impact on him:

> I had a leadership role in the early days of the Domestic Violence Council and that whole process was a major educational process for me. We had a lot of outspoken women, people like Eileen Morrow and Vilma Rossi and so on. Although I had difficulty at times with the method in which the message was delivered, you could not, not listen to that message. And you know, that certainly got through (Management 1).

The community, including Catholic Family Services, was recognizing the expertise of feminists in the area of wife/woman abuse. The agency began to hire self-identified feminists for two reasons. First, it was interested in funding for programs for abused women and feminist employees gave the agency some legitimacy in this area. Secondly, it was a social service agency with a growing

number of abused women on its caseload. It needed the expertise of feminist activists to provide adequate programs. One employee remarked:

> I was surprised when they hired me. I mean, I was openly feminist in my interview. This was a Catholic agency, go figure. But they wanted feminists. It brought some kind of, I don't know, credibility to the agency. In those days that meant a feminist (Employee 10).

Three self-identified feminists were hired within a six-month period. With such a small team they had a great deal of influence. This was augmented by their contacts with outside activists and the relationships they developed with each other. This social worker explains:

> I think one of the key elements was collaborating with other people in the community, developing relationships, certainly developing a relationship with [one worker] developing relationships with [another worker] so that my voice was stronger, my voice was heard more clearly (Employee 3).

As indicated by the worker above, it also meant that they felt that they were dealing from a position of strength. I was one of the women hired at this time. Although team members had begun to accept some of the tenets of feminism for working with abused women, they were still unsure of exactly what this approach meant or if it was 'real' social work. The National Panel on Violence Against Women 's public acceptance of a feminist definition of violence against women was extremely helpful in legitimizing the approach that I and the other feminists, as employees of C.F.S., were trying to promote. A colleague of mine commented:

> I can remember buying copy of *Changing the Landscape*. I kept it in my office. It was just so, I don't know, it was nice to have it written down somewhere that feminism was okay that somebody else agreed with how I

> looked at things...bringing it to team meetings was helpful and I lent it to the director (Employee 10).

A feminist perspective of wife/woman abuse began to permeate all aspects of the Counselling Unit. The groups for women began to address abuse as a political issue. The emphasis was not only on assuring women that the violence was not their fault, but explaining this assertion in a context of societal expectations for men and women. The groups were also much less facilitator centred. Women were encouraged to share their strengths with one another. In addition, topics changed from improving self-esteem and relationship skills, to advocacy topics such as how to cope with an unresponsive justice system.

The transformation of the Counselling Unit to a feminist perspective was not unanimously accepted by the front-line workers. One of the most difficult issues for the team was the integration of the feminist idea that abused women, as experts on their own lives, should be in control of their own therapy.

> It was the whole feminist push for clients having power. It changed/shifted the way people were doing things. What I thought, coming from the whole idea of therapy was the relationship of them being my equal evolved over time...There was a push from the community trying to enforce the equality thing before it was ready to be put on (Employee 9).

This worker still believed that the abused women needed her 'expert' help to learn to be the counsellor's equal. This was related to an emphasis on professional credentials.

> There was a rivalry between certain colleagues trying to prove who was more knowledgeable than whom in order to sustain holding the truth. It was about who uses more psychological, clinical, professional social

> 'workish' language than others. But to me that was a way of distancing oneself from the issue (Employee 4).

Team meetings sometimes resembled the now defunct Domestic Violence Council, with feminists arguing that unless you accepted a feminist perspective you could not meet the needs of abused women and might, in fact, be endangering them.

> Those meetings were not fun. The feminists on the team were really concerned about the work that was going on in some places in the agency. Women were not getting what they needed and nobody seemed to want to do anything about it. It was important that women had control of their therapy otherwise we were just imposing our own views on the issue and in some cases this was really damaging because half the time we didn't really understand why they did the things they did. If you asked them then it made sense but half the time we didn't ask we just found some psychological reason for it (Employee 10).

Although a feminist perspective was beginning to gain acceptance at the management levels, it was not a required ingredient in the work of the Counselling Unit. This was very divisive. Some workers were not willing to accept a feminist perspective because it would undermine their designation as experts. I, as well as some of my colleagues, found it difficult to work with counsellors that we felt were endangering women. At one point I refused to refer anyone to groups run by 'non-feminist' workers. It was not until 1993, with the establishment of the Reference Group and the Martha House Project[52], that

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[52] Martha House is a 28 bed shelter for abused and homeless women. It is run under the auspices of the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd, an order of Catholic brethren. Like Catholic Family Services, it had deep and long-standing roots in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Diocese. The shelter was originally run by nuns and only acquired a lay director in the early eighties.

management began to publicly support a feminist perspective in wife/woman abuse. Once they had, workers were expected to adhere to a feminist approach.

6.7 Men's Services

Programs for women had been in place at C.F.S. since 1984 but a recognizable men's program did not emerge until 1988. A men's program was instituted for several reasons. First, Catholic Family Services, as a family service agency, was dedicated to providing service to all members of the family and this included men who abused. Secondly, management and members of the board argued that it did not seem to make much sense to address the needs of women who were abused and ignore the men who abused them. Often women returned to their abusive partners, or, if they did not, their partners often found new women to abuse. Ignoring abusive men left a fundamental part of the issue untouched. Catholic Family Services was also in funding competition with the larger, Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth, and therefore needed to offer a similar range of services to their clients.

The men's group was started in the same way as the women's. A single team member researched and developed a program and was then responsible for implementing it. The men's program reflected a definition of violence that emphasized individual responsibility.

> The group meets weekly for a two-hour session at Catholic Family Services. In the group, the men are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, stop the violent behaviour by learning alternative ways of dealing with stressful feelings, and learn ways to improve/fulfil other areas

> of their lives. Attention is given to identifying the before, during and after cues to violence (Criteria for Service pamphlet, 1989).

This description suggests that if these men could find ways to deal with their feelings and find fulfilment in their lives, they would cease to be abusive. So, while the women's groups were coming to an understanding of wife/woman abuse in a political way, men's groups were being developed in a manner that harkened back to a social problem understanding of the issue. In the men's group, the emphasis was on learning anger management skills and addressing personal inadequacies. The approach was to encourage the men to share their feelings about the abuse and to help them understand how this impacted on their loved ones and themselves. A few men used the groups to stop their violence, but the majority of the men used the groups to share their tactics with each other. Attending the groups also gave men added ammunition in their attacks on their partners. Men went home and told women that their counsellor had decided that the women were the problem. Or, they asserted that they were now seeking help, and, therefore, their partners had nothing further to complain about. Men who had been charged for attacks on their partners received suspended sentences because they were attending the groups. Women whose partners were in the groups stayed in the abusive relationship while the man was in group hoping that counselling would change him.

> T. Quick noted that participation in a Men's Group might result in an abused woman staying longer in an abusive relationship under the hope or expectation that her parnter's group participation will result in a resolution of the battering, and also that men could learn more sophisticated ways largely through emotional abuse and coercion as a result of sharing

> experiences in the Men's Group. Published research in the area, while not unanimous, indicates that therapeutic interventions with men are effective in some but not all cases (June 11, 1991, Family Services Committee Minutes).

The traditional social work approach which respected the men and emphasized growth and healing was not proving effective and increased the danger for men's partners.

Feminists in the community were voicing their concerns with the men's groups and these concerns were echoed by team members:

> [The team] had concerns about the men's group being accountable – not only helping men to take responsibility but also to be clearer about what the men were doing. These men were hurtful to others and the group leaders needed to not get caught up on one, the men's pain, or, two, their suffering or discomfort at being confronted (Employee 7).

As the above report to the Family Services Committee indicates, the management of the agency was aware of the problems with men's groups. Although the board was aware that staff had questions about the validity of men's groups, they continued to support the provision of services to men.

> In general the Committee concluded that the Agency should continue to offer services to abusive men until such time that it is established that such services are doing actual harm (June 11, 1991, Family Services Committee Minutes).

The men's groups at Catholic Family Services were not suspended until after the firing of the men at Family Services had become national news. Like other agencies, Catholic Family Services did not want to be seen as doing anything that was harmful to its clients. However, the commitment to men's services continued. As a member of the management of the agency explained,

> It wasn't comfortable to be identified as probably the only agency in the community that was stupid enough to offer services to men, and, you know, from an intellectual, or even humanitarian point, some of the arguments were pretty compelling. We didn't have the evaluation research that could reasonably establish their effectiveness. There were a lot of guys that weren't benefiting from it and we had financial pressures. We had the feminist analysis. So getting to the strictly intellectual approach, there was lots of rationale for not providing services to men. But the value of operating family services and the value of recognising the
>
> importance of family and relationships in families was probably the key that kept us as an organisation and me personally, in the battle if you will (Management 1).

In summary, the main critiques of the men's groups were that they were not effective, they endangered women's safety, and they were not accountable to women, but the agency remained committed to providing them. Nevertheless, the question was, how could C.F.S. continue with services to men and avoid the public denunciation by feminist activists? The director of Catholic Family Services attempted to address these issues through the formation of the Reference Group. This group was set up to review the programs available to women who had been abused and the men who abused them. The work of the Reference Group resulted in a complete revamping of the agency's services in the area of wife/woman abuse.

6.8 The Reference Group

The Reference Group was established in 1991 and consisted of two staff members from the counselling unit (one of whom was the manager, the other myself), a member of the Board of Catholic Family Services, an advocate from

Martha House (a shelter for abused women), and up to four women abuse survivors who were ex-clients of Catholic Family Services and/or Martha House. The purpose of the group was outlined in the "Reference Group Proposal",

> To ensure accountability for services to abused women and children by providing a forum through which the Board of Directors will receive information and advice on the following matters relating to these services:
>
> (a) sensitivity to and awareness of issues pertaining to services for women.
> (b) Identification of gaps in service, the need for modifications to existing services and the need for new services.
> (c) Planning of services.
> (d) Feedback and evaluation on the effectiveness of existing services.
> (Catholic Family Services, October 17, 1991)

Arguably, the Reference group was established to provide the programme at Catholic Family Services with legitimacy. Its job was to revamp all the programs in the agency and, therefore, give them the seal of approval that survivors and advocates could provide.

> I guess we started by developing a mandate, then refining that, going over wording and contracts and a lot of that. Then the interview process and how that was going to be done and then actually interviewing people for the program and then weeding people out. We would come up with something and then refine it as time went on or change it if necessary. Nothing was ever set in stone until something seemed to be working and it was working well and any issues were worked out. But there always seemed to be things that came up that were worked out later on. And then the program started and we'd monitor. We were monitoring and through that we did some more refining of the program (Reference Group Member 2).

This member of the reference group describes a process of continuous evaluation that was brought to all aspects of the services for abused women and abusive men. Although the management of the agency had developed the Reference Group for

their own purposes, the members of the group brought an even greater feminist presence to bear on the agency.

> I think, to be honest with you, first starting out in the process, I remember thinking that this was an agency--if we look at gender issues in a larger anti-oppression framework--that was just not clued in....But I found a willingness for people to listen and an openness, maybe motivated out of fear (oh my god we're doing men's groups and there's a big group of people running around screaming about them) (Reference Group Member 4).

As this member of the Reference Group makes clear, the agency was hardly a bastion of feminism, but both management and workers were open to learning and listening. And, in this process a feminist definition was explained and developed.

> The reference group was a process which was slow and painful at points. But there was a real willingness to listen and from most players that they were there to learn a feminist analysis. Not that we were sitting there talking about it all the time, but it really affected the decisions we made running the programme. You had to have [a feminist framework] to understand why something like accountability was such a huge issue. Some people were threatened by it because we were challenging their frameworks and I think that's so uncomfortable (Reference Group Member 4).

Naturally, the agency wanted to be careful to contain the Reference Group to the provision of services to women and abusive men. This is even more evident in the description of the group.

> It is expected that the working relationship between the Reference Group and the Board of Directors and its Committees will be based on mutual respect, candour and collaboration. It is hoped and expected that the Reference Group will challenge the agency's present service delivery, advise on unrecognised need, question processes, and propose creative alternatives. *It will be the Board and its Committees' responsibility to consider the character and resources of the agency in the development of*

> *any response.*" (emphasis added, Catholic Family Services, October 17, 1991).

Catholic Family Services, like most agencies in the community, was resistant to the inclusion of survivors in positions of power.

> The Board has a particular role of governance to play and that heavy service user participation would result in self-interest agendas and decisions (Family Services Committee Minutes, April 16, 1991).

Clearly, to the C.F.S. board, abused women stood only in the role of client. Their role was to receive the service provided, rather than to acquire the power to establish what form the service would take. However, pressure from feminists inside and outside the agency, about the lack of abused women's input as well as the acceptance of these issues at the provincial level, necessitated some sort of inclusion. The Reference Group was the agency's response.

> Identifying the need was helpful, but we only did that because we had women in the [Reference Group] who were victims. And that was what we needed. And advocates were important, someone from Martha House who let us know what we needed (Reference Group Member 1).

The Board was concerned about the presence of advocates and survivors in its midst. They did not want to open themselves up to the kind of lobbying that agencies such as Family Services had experienced at the hands of Justice for Women. Hence, despite arguments by feminists in the Reference Group that the group should report directly to the Board, the latter decided that the Reference Group would be an advisory committee. Feminists also argued that members of the group should sit on the Board. Again, this suggestion was set aside with the Board deciding that the Reference Group could recommend members to sit on the

Board subject to the approval process for all Board members. Despite this containment of the Reference group within the structure of the agency, it was an effective force for change. It was exciting to be able to have some influence within the agency. It was obvious that Catholic Family Services needed the members of the Reference Group to provide legitimacy. This gave us some power. The advocates and survivors provided a potent endorsement for the feminist perspective. We worked well as team to create change.

6.9 The Martha House Project

The Reference Group decided that a review of women's services would be their first priority. The Reference Group brought the perspective of survivors, advocates and feminists working within the organization to the table. Together they brought the critiques that various groups in the community had been making about Catholic Family Services to this advisory group and gave them a legitimate voice within the agency. One of the first critiques was that the program was seen as inaccessible.

> There was no availability of service. [Counsellors] were booked for a year. The woman went through a gazillion hoops. Did the waiting period. Sat on the waiting list and finally got to see a counsellor. By that time, half of them had moved on, married someone else and were getting abused again...When you're dealing with an issue of violence against women in their daily lives, they can't wait a year after they try to leave a violent home for someone to help them (Activist 1).

The other important issue was choice. While some women needed intensive individual counselling, others only needed group, while still others needed something that they could attend sporadically. Women needed the strength and

support of women who were in or had lived through the same situation. Most of all, they required information and advocacy, for example, help in figuring out how to get restraining orders and how to get the police to enforce them. Abused women also needed quick access to housing or someone who could help them get custody of their children. The Martha House project was the response that the group developed.

In 1991,the directors of Martha House and Catholic Family Services brought a proposal to the Reference Group for a partnership between the two agencies in order to provide joint services for abused women. As a shelter, Martha House could provide immediate service through their crisis lines and provision of shelter. Martha House, however, did not have the people, skills or time to provide the follow-up and counselling that might assist a woman in establishing herself so that she would not need the services of the shelter again. Catholic Family Services needed the credibility that a shelter would add to its reputation as a provider of services in the area of violence. A partnership with a shelter implied that an agency was listening to women and their advocates. As well, Catholic Family Services needed a solution to its long waiting lists. Last, but not least, the provincial government funders were looking for projects that emphasised community partnerships. Such a partnership would thus be beneficial for both parties.

Why did Catholic Family Services choose a partnership with Martha House? First, Martha House was not a stand-alone shelter. It was, and is, a part of

the services provided by the Brothers of the Good Shepherd, a Catholic organisation. In addition, although Martha House worked from a feminist perspective and had been an advocate for abused women in the community, its staff members had not been publicly critical of the Hamilton community in the way that Interval House or Justice for Women had been. As well, the directors of both agencies were familiar to one another.

The proposal developed by the Reference Group requested two additional staff for the project, one to provide follow-up at the shelter and one to provide counselling services at Catholic Family Services. The feminists in the Reference Group hoped that the co-operation of the two agencies would lead to changes in Catholic Family Services. The shelter, although organised as a hierarchy, was much more open than the structure at Catholic Family Services. The work at the shelter was more immediate and less professionalized. Advocacy played a large role in the work they did with women. This might, in turn, affect the structure of Catholic Family Services and their approach to women.

> Martha House was a much more grassroots organization. The workers there dealt with women in crisis every day, immediate crisis. Not the three months later kind they saw at Catholic Family Services. And Martha House was less formal, more down to earth. Everyone worked together and the women were survivors, people to be learned from. How could the agencies work together and not have an impact on each other (Reference Group Member 3)?

The Martha House project totally re-formed the program for abused women at Catholic Family Services. The combination of a shelter and family service agency provided a range of services to women, including immediate access to

shelter, counselling and advocacy. The program also provided open groups, which women could attend, as they liked, with an emphasis on information and self-help as well as the individual and group counselling that Catholic Family Services had been offering. The shelter expanded its services to include follow-up and an internal, open, issues oriented group. Through an arrangement with a community drop-in centre the groups now provided child-care to any women attending the groups.

This new approach to services to abused women accepted that women were best able to determine what they needed in terms of help so choice was important. One of the team members commented:

> It was important to us that these groups not be viewed as therapeutic (using that word in the strictest sense) kind of environment but more support, peer support and empowerment and participant directed...Women would direct their own groups in a way that they needed (Employee 11).

It is also evident in this report on the project that management supported the principles of choice and women-directed services.

> Women must be able to exercise and have available to them a choice of possible service options. Also they have a right to determine what the services will look like and to inform the process of developing the service response that appears to them to be most appropriate for their needs and circumstances (Wife Assault Project Report, 1994)

The women in the groups became involved in determining the program, thus acknowledging the strengths and expertise of abused women, seeing them as survivors rather than victims.

> Women would direct their own groups in the way that they needed and so we were constantly responding. I don't think we did the same group twice. It was very much fed by what the women wanted to talk about, what mood they were in, what they needed (Employee 11).

Finally, recognizing the structural aspects of abuse, the Reference Group was expected to be involved in the process of change in the community in order to meet the needs of abused women.

6.10 Men's Programmes

Once the Martha House Woman Abuse Support Project was established, the Reference Group began to examine the possibility of establishing a revised men's group. The changes in the programme for men were extensive. The Reference Group struggled with the question of how to provide a group that would be accountable and safe for women.

> The Reference Group provided us with a wonderful opportunity to look at the means out there to create a better men's group. The Reference Group worked on helping us to develop accountability guidelines so that we could start up a men's group that would be safer for women (Management 3).

It was decided that the Reference Group itself would provide accountability to the community since it contained women from the community who were advocates and/or survivors. The focus of the men's group was changed from a helping stance to one of challenge and confrontation. The emphasis would not be on the men and their problems but on the violence, its purpose and the fact that it was unacceptable. The first priority of the group was the safety of women and the

revised objectives for men's groups clearly indicate an understanding of abuse from a feminist perspective:

1. To assist the participant to understand his acts of violence as a means of controlling the victim's actions, thoughts and feelings; by examining the intent of his acts of abuse and the belief system from which he operates

2. To increase the participants willingness to change his actions by examining the negative effects of his behaviour on his relationship, his partner, his children, his friends and himself.

3. To increase his understanding of the roots of violence against women by examining the cultural and social contexts in which he uses violence against his partner.

4. To provide the participant with practical information on how to change abusive behaviour by exploring non-controlling and non-violent ways of relating to women.

5. To work with the participant to become more accountable to those he has hurt through his use of violence by encouraging him to acknowledge his abuse and accept full responsibility for its impact on his partner and others (Catholic Family Services, 1992).

This listing of the objectives shows a recognition of the place of violence in our social structure, the use of violence for control and the total responsibility of the man for his violence.

The intake procedure for the groups changed as well. Men had to access the group voluntarily. All court proceedings must have been completed before the man could be accepted for the group. Catholic Family Services would not provide letters for the men in order to improve their chances in sentencing. As well, any man who entered the group had to admit to his violence and take responsibility for it. If a man was going to enter the men's group, it was

mandatory that one of the men's group facilitators would contact his current partner and any other partners that might still be involved in the man's life (e.g. through visitation with children). These women were contacted and offered service. If they did not want service then the facilitator of the men's group explored safety issues and did initial safety planning with the woman. As well, the facilitator would explain the group process and its limitations and get an assessment of the violence in the relationship from the woman's perspective. Under no circumstances were the men allowed to see the information that the woman provided (Group Services for Abusive Men, 1996)

One of the most important aspects of the group was the instituting of a modified confidentiality process. Men who entered the group had to agree to allow the facilitator/s to provide information to pertinent people, especially his partner - information about his attendance, any use of threats or violence, any reason that the man may have been suspended or terminated from the group and any recommendations that there might be about changes in counselling. The men also had to agree to have the sessions videotaped so that the group could be monitored.

The Reference Group came up with an inventive way to ensure that the groups for men who abused were effective and accountable. They decided that each group would be videotaped and that advocates and survivors would view the videotapes on a regular basis. This would, in effect, give the women the power to

critique the work of the groups on an on-going basis. The women who viewed the tapes were expected to look for the following:

> Is Sexist Language picked up?
>
> Is Rationalisation being dealt with, i.e. men are not permitted to ruminate and excuse their actions?
>
> Is the Focus on all Forms of Abuse, not just the Physical?
>
> Are the Men able to be Open about their Abuse, i.e. Does the Group Leader ask at the beginning of the meeting if there [sic] has been any violence during the past week?
>
> Is there a Contract for completing the Homework?
>
> Do the Group Leaders deal with men who are not working in the group?
>
> Do the Group Leaders treat the men with respect?
>
> (Catholic Family Services, 1992)

These guidelines for monitoring were meant to ensure that the work being done in the group was addressing the abuse of women in a way that confronted the men, insisted that they continue to work on their issues, and prevented the group leader from colluding with the men in their abuse.

> We're monitoring the counsellors, we're not monitoring the men...we're not picking up as many things that are getting missed. I used to say, well, why did you do it this way? Did you pick up on this point that this guy said. Now we're not saying that. It's such that the courses seem to be much better. They're not letting the guys get away with things (Reference Group Member 1).

With the new set of guidelines, the men's groups run by Catholic Family Services were the most progressive in the province. This is particularly

exceptional since the men's programme ran counter to many social work principles.

> Well social work ethics is for confidentiality. It wouldn't be ethical to contact the partner of somebody that you're working with. You should keep that confidential. I mean, also there is the idea of self-determination. You believe the client, whatever they say, you're where the client is at. Well that's not a very healthy or safe way to work with the men (Employee 3).

The agency, with prodding from the Reference Group, accepted feminist principles over traditional social work ones in order to provide safety to abused women. The process of working in the Reference Group was marvellous. The combination of feminist activists inside and outside the agency was very effective. Often social workers inside the agency had done our work in some isolation from crisis services such as shelters. In our privileged position we did not recognize some of the most pressing needs for abused women. The fact that we could develop programs that more effectively met their needs was very satisfying. Working to change the men's groups was more difficult. It was evident that they would continue so it seemed best to make them as safe as possible but feminist activists continued to question their effectiveness. I left the agency shortly after the process of revamping the men's groups was completed.

6.11 Constraints on Change

Although the agency changed a great deal over the fifteen-year period, it changed within constraints. The hierarchy of the agency essentially stayed intact. Advocates and survivors were allowed to provide input but only in an advisory

capacity. They were not given access to decision-making power. Hierarchy is an effective tool for constraining change. One worker pointed out how having to work under a hierarchy affected her ability to act as a feminist advocate:

> Well, the message that I've gotten over the last five years is if you are a feminist and you rant too much, you are breaking the rules. We need to go and be feminists but in slow motion and that motion is determined by the agency. And the agency is determined by other forces such as the church or the board of directors. I don't know because you cannot deal with feminism without dealing with abortion. You cannot deal with feminism without dealing with lesbianism and the right to exercise our sexual orientation (Employee 4).

This worker speaks about how difficult it is to make change in the agency because although it was dedicated to helping abused women in the best way possible, and even management had begun to use and accept feminist language and definitions, they were not yet ready to apply those ideas outside of the framework of 'helping abused women'.

Another worker talks about the difficulty of pointing out problems 'at the top'.

> It's fine to say we have family violence and we're going to help individuals. You don't rock the boat too much, do you? But if you turn around and you say, we need great societal change or, for example, you say, well you know, the executive core of most agencies are white, male-dominated, you are making a pretty powerful statement. I think when it is that kind of talk it sends a chill through. It starts making people nervous (Employee 6).

The feminist critique of society was only acceptable when it focused on the violence women suffered. This is also evident in the containment of the perspective within the Counselling Unit and more recently the Martha House Project.

> Well I think that it's interesting that in the agency the counselling unit is the one strong feminist perspective. That as a whole the agency does not have that perspective and I think that I've noticed that most directly when I've been at a staff meeting and Tony talks about the work that we're doing or he reports back to what has happened at a manager's meeting. I don't think the other units know what he's talking about. So I think that that's an interesting issue as well, that the counselling unit is somewhat isolated in the regard (Employee 3).

Allowing the Counselling Unit to operate in an independent manner from the rest of the agency allowed for creativity and flexibility. It also meant, however, that the changes in the Unit did not filter through to other programs although issues of violence are relevant wherever women receive service and issues of women's inequality are relevant wherever there are women. For some workers this was even evident in the interior design of the building

> I think you walk in this building and there's that crucifix hanging in the lobby and I mean it's very Catholic. It oozes this masculine, male, professional, not emotional or connected. If you look at qualities that women have and that women can bring to workplaces, it almost looks squelched there. You know they're not part of the environment and the air, you know, the whole view of the place (Employee 10).

Initially, change was stalled at the agency because of a lack of funds. Of course, this can also be seen as a way to slow the development of services. For example, when women's groups were first suggested, a single worker was responsible for developing and providing them. Service could be provided but it was the responsibility of the worker to ensure that this happened:

> I guess the sense I got was, I'm trying to think of it, was that if there was going to be a resistance, it would be a kind of resistance, not on the principle of having the group but maybe who was going to run it, how would we run it, on procedures and stuff (Employee 6).

In the early 1990's, Catholic Family Services experienced funding cuts much like other agencies. Cuts to service were particularly difficult for the area of wife/woman abuse because of the pre-existing lack of service. Also, as women became more aware of the issue more of them decided to seek assistance. So, as the need for women's services continued to rise, the ability to provide those services was reduced. Long waiting lists essentially meant that women were denied service. The Martha House Project meant that abused women were getting immediate service, but waiting lists in other areas that also benefited from a feminist perspective (for example, women suffering from childhood sexual abuse), remained long. This was "solved" through an overall reduction of service to women through the implementation of restrictions in counselling sessions which were capped at twelve. Although this was an adequate amount of time to deal with most general counselling issues, it was not enough to address the after effects of violence against women. Those women who needed help with issues relating to childhood sexual abuse or who chose not to access the services of the Martha House project were restricted to twelve weeks. As well, there were only two workers assigned to the Woman Abuse Support Program. With unlimited and immediate access the rule, it was likely that new waiting lists would develop unless these women were willing to work beyond normal requirements. There is some evidence that this is indeed happening.

Reduction in funding also meant a reduction in training. Therefore, workers did not have the resources to follow the most recent trends in provision of

service to either women or men. As well, they had less access to community support for changes in the program or to stand against changes such as reduced services. Workers are expected to spend almost all of their time on the provision of service. As one worker explains, the focus on service provision means that workers no longer have time to think:

> The Western mentality that time spent thinking on the job was no longer valid. You know doing professional reading and research isn't cost effective because you've got this long waiting list and you've got stakeholders saying how much is it going to cost and how much is it going to benefit. So there's a major impact in terms of spending more on any kind of a new programme. There was a major impact and it wasn't just cutbacks. There was just less money to go around and to validate keeping the same number of staff people (Employee 2).

The days of developing new and effective programs or even revamping the old programs were over. The only changes that were supported were changes that could save money. Evaluation and improvement were now luxuries.

Finally, the move to re-open the men's programs meant that the focus of the agency was divided. Even if one accepts that men's programs are effective (and most would argue that they are very limited in their impact), they still draw resources away from the services that are provided to women. If a worker is spending time providing service to men, they are not available to women who might need the service. The logic is that women's needs are met by the Martha House project. However, one of the choices available to women was long-term counselling, available at Catholic Family Services. Workers are now spending more time counselling men and less time with women so waiting lists for this service are developing again.

6.12 Conclusion

> I think the changes are genuine. I have seen and heard the change in the language used in the agency and language is the ticket to identifying what is going on. I have heard my director and my supervisor advocating on behalf of women who are victims of violence. They really are (Employee 4)

The services provided to abused women and abusive men at Catholic Family Services were transformed over a relatively short period of time. The agency which had originally supported the hegemonic position of ignoring wife/woman abuse moved to a social problem approach when the issue became publicly recognized. But what is truly notable is that the agency eventually moved to a counter-hegemonic position, which supported a feminist perspective. Although this was done within the constraints of hierarchy and management resistance, the counter-hegemonic position is maintained today despite the pressures brought to bear by the current Harris government in Ontario. This illustrates that the development of counter-hegemony is possible and that the state, in its farthest, most micro levels, is most certainly contestable. The feminists were successful (again using Staggenborg's (1995) criteria). They *changed the policies* of the agency in terms of service provision to abused women and abusive men. This was particularly noteworthy in the programme for abusive men where established principles of social work were usurped in order to provide safety for women. Although clear *mobilization outcomes* are not evident, the feminist social workers in the agency effectively used the mobilization of activists in the community to create change. Perhaps the feminist perspective that is apparent in the service

provided to abused women will increase mobilization. Finally, in a small way, the women working within the agency had changed the *culture* of the agency.

The combination of mainstreaming and disengagement, that is 'insiders' and 'outsiders' was particularly effective. This reflects the success of Dale and Foster's (1986) welfare workers. The feminists working for the agency interpreted the challenges of Justice for Women, fashioning a programme that incorporated a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse within the agency but doing so within agency boundaries. This questions, again, a hierarchy of actions. In the case of Catholic Family Services, it was not whether a mainstreaming *or* a disengaged approach would be most effective, rather, both approaches were necessary for success.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS: CONSTRAINED VICTORIES AND VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

I began this project with a question. How had the management at a very traditional organization like Catholic Family Services been convinced to accept a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse? I believed that if I could figure out how this had been accomplished I could "bottle it" and distribute the means for a feminist revolution. Of course, when I began to examine this change in detail I realized that the confluence of events which had made such a change possible were extremely complex (I would need a very large bottle). They included changes that had occurred at every level in Canadian society. And the changes were not entirely positive. Positive changes had been constrained and in some cases had come at a cost.

What I did learn is that in order to understand change we must use expanded definitions of the state and the women's movement. And, as a movement, to create change, we must be open to a wide range of tactics enacted simultaneously. The fact that abused women can now receive feminist services from the most unlikely places is a triumph of the determination, courage and talent of a wide diversity of women acting in a variety of sites. As well, how we define what we want, that is the use of language, is central to making that change.

I have also found an interesting perspective in doing this research. Examining events in which I played a part has allowed me to straddle the positions of activist and academic as well as interrogating my locations as a mainstream and disengaged activist. In conclusion, I would like to offer a summary of what an analysis of these changes can add to the feminist endeavor.

7.2 The Possibility of Change

There is no doubt that the Canadian women's movement has had success in the area of wife/woman abuse The efforts of feminist activists at all levels of Canadian society have resulted in an astounding increase in the options available to abused women. There have been successes in *policy and political outcomes.* At the federal level a feminist definition/framing of the issue of wife/woman abuse was achieved through a continuous effort to present feminist material to a succession of public hearings. *Changing the Landscape*, the report of the National Panel on Violence Against Women, provided a feminist blueprint for change in Canadian society, endorsed and paid for by the federal government. In Hamilton, after many years of struggle, a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse has been whole-heartedly taken up by the community co-ordinating committee (Woman Abuse Working Group) for service providers in the area of wife/woman abuse. At the micro-level, Catholic Family Services, a traditional social service agency has moved from providing service that protected male dominance in the nuclear family to developing innovative feminist defined programs. This has

resulted from the interplay of pressure from feminists inside and outside the agency. There has also been success in terms of *mobilization outcomes.* In Hamilton, not only have feminist services for abused women been established but non-feminist organizations have been convinced to accept a feminist perspective. Many male members of senior management in the city, including the director of Catholic Family Services and the chief of police have been active in championing a feminist perspective on wife/woman abuse in opposition to the provincial government. Finally, there have been *cultural* outcomes. Wife/woman abuse was once a very private event. The accepted response was to consider it a "family problem", that is, best ignored. Although there is little evidence that the incidence of wife/woman abuse is decreasing, the supports available to women who experience abuse have increased dramatically. This is not to say that there are adequate resources as yet only that circumstances for abused women seeking to escape have improved.

7.3 Thinking About the State

How have such changes been possible? The state has been a central element in this work as it has been for the women's movement in Canada. The state is fragmented and mutable, diverse, pervasive and constantly changing. It is this mutability that makes challenge possible. At the federal level, the women's movement worked to change positions on wife/woman abuse through the established political machinery of social problem definition (ie. parliamentary and public hearings). In these rather small venues the presentations of activists had a

great deal of impact. Their definition of wife/woman abuse although not completely accepted across the totality of the state impacted state practices in various ways at various levels.

The fact that Canada's government is constitutionally structured into three layers is evidence of one of the 'fractures' that marks the state. Different responsibilities are assigned to the federal, provincial and municipal level (what I have called the macro, mezzo and micro levels). There is a continued interplay between various levels of the state. When Claire Reinhelt (1995) speaks of the ability of the state to move forward in one area while retrenching in another, it is possible that she had just returned from a federal/provincial summit on just about any social issue. These fractures have created difficulties as well as opportunities for feminist activists. For example, they could concentrate their energies on the federal state when establishing a definition of wife/woman abuse thereby having an impact nationally. On the other hand, in order to address funding it was necessary to address each province.

This ability to contradict itself in order to diminish change also occurs horizontally. The best example is the very divergent works - *The War Against Women* and *Living Without Fear.* Bureaucrats in the Status of Women offices created a defense against the progressive work of elected officials in another department. This is also an illustration of the dangers of incorporating feminists into the state. Status of Women was intended to be a progressive force for

women's equality in the government, but, instead, it was used to delay this process.

The diverseness and pervasiveness of the state is most apparent at the local level where all three layers of government coalesce to create a maze of services, regulation and control. The decision to funnel new funding for wife/woman abuse services through the existing bureaucracy created a 'many-headed monster' for activists trying to establish new programmes. Although this does have some advantages in terms of long-term stability of funding (it is harder to attack if it is spread around), this arrangement created a great deal of work for activists at the local level. It also meant that the struggle to define and frame the issue of wife/woman abuse had to be taken up again both at the local level in Hamilton and at the micro level at Catholic Family Services.

7.4 Thinking about the Women's Movement

For the changes to occur at Catholic Family Services many different aspects of the women's movement were involved. Stand-alone feminist organizations brought alternative approaches to wife/woman abuse to the city of Hamilton. Feminists from caucuses, organizations, government and even individual women were important in presenting a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse to public hearings. Mainstream feminists integrated feminist principles into their organizations and grassroots groups provided the pressure to enforce such changes. A wide diversity of forms, approaches and tactics were required for feminist activism to be effective. However, some forms of action

were more costly than others. The members of Justice for Women, who were so effective at pushing for change found that they paid for those changes through losses in their personal lives. As a woman's movement, it should be one of our goals to end such martyrdom. The women who were fired and the organizations that were attacked should have been able to count on an army of outraged women to come to their defense. Deciphering why we have abandoned some of our more outrageous and effective members is an important question for the Canadian women's movement. We also need to know how to avoid such behaviour in the future.

7.5 How do we Create Change: Mainstreaming and Disengagement?

The choice between mainstreaming and disengagement has been a primary issue for the Canadian women's movement. Feminists were the ones who brought this issue to light. As such, they were considered as the experts in the area for several years. At the federal level this meant that they were the presenters at public hearings and eventually were called upon to be the experts on a National Panel on Violence Against Women. In Hamilton, their designation as experts brought them coverage in the paper and legitimacy as public educators and mentors. At Catholic Family Services, feminists were hired in order to develop programmes at the agency. This role of 'expert' gave feminists a great deal of influence in defining the issue of wife/woman abuse. During this period, mainstreaming was very effective.

Eventually, other agencies, without a feminist perspective, began to develop their own expertise in the area and assert their own views. For example, in Hamilton, the Domestic Violence Council developed as an arena where a larger number of more traditional state and third-party agencies could outvote the feminists to establish a social problem approach to wife/woman abuse. Once this was established the Council attempted to gain control of funding and service provision. In the face of this, feminist activists moved to a more and more disengaged stance. Justice for Women was an attempt by some feminist activists in the Hamilton area to create a disengaged alternative to fight for political change. This approach was extremely effective for the support of masculine dominance inherent in state and traditional third-party organizations, particularly the police. The Coalitions members were responsible for forcing changes in the local police force and suspending the provision of services to abusive men. There are two evident problems with the disengaged approach. The first is that although it is effective in pointing out problems with the state, it is not capable of providing an avenue for change. It is impossible to embarrass and publicly critique an agency one day, and then sit down with them the next to plan for new programs. The second problem is that it is almost impossible to be totally disengaged from society as the backlash in Hamilton so dramatically illustrated.

The case study of Catholic Family Services illustrates how disengaged and mainstream positions can complement each other. The outside challenges to the agency from feminist activists provided an impetus for change. For example, the

actions of the Justice for Women Coalition against men's groups resulted in the closing of services to men at Catholic Family Services. This pressure was also the impetus for the development of the Reference Group. Their job was to redevelop the group in a way that would not open up the agency to public criticism. The Reference Group created a new space in which the feminist perspective could be brought to the agency.

It is just as important to recognize that outside challenges alone were not sufficient to create change. Having feminists inside the agency to interpret outside demands and create programs acceptable to the agency was critical. Catholic Family Services could have ignored the challenges of outside feminist activists for change but inside feminists provided a way of 'saving face', that is, bringing feminism into the agency without totally abandoning agency culture. The 'reasonable' feminists could be trusted to apply feminist principles to the agency's work particularly in contrast to 'unruly' women like the members of the Justice for Women Coalition. Although this may seem somewhat objectionable, if the goal is to provide feminist service to women who need it then Catholic Family Services was a success.

It is important to note that unexpected events created opportunities for change. The Montreal Massacre shook the Canadian belief that we were a kinder, gentler nation than our neighbours to the south. At the federal level it required some kind of response from the government. The National Panel and an increased funding commitment were the response and they meant that a feminist

definition was publicly accepted and new services could be developed. In Hamilton, the Massacre, in combination with local femicides, resulted in an openness in the community to discuss issues of wife/woman abuse. Local femicides also highlighted the failures of the police in dealing with abused women. This provided an opportunity for feminist activists to challenge the practices of the police and demand change.

As mentioned above, there was an inter-relatedness in changes occurring at the various social levels. The process of framing and definition that was occurring at the federal level had an impact on the agency. The recognition of wife/woman abuse as a public issue resulted in an increase of requests for service at the agency. Public education campaigns, in particular, raised awareness of the problem in the front-line staff and helped women to recognize that what they were suffering was abuse. Therefore two simultaneous processes were occurring: staff were recognizing more abuse in their caseloads and more women were coming to the agency and identifying that the issue they needed help with was abuse. Specialized services resulted from this combination of increased demand and awareness. Increased funding resulted in the development of a stand-alone shelter in Hamilton that could act as a base for mentoring and public education. Front-line staff at Catholic Family Services were exposed to a feminist perspective and brought back new ways to deliver service. The changes in couple counseling resulted from the challenges that feminists were making about the dangers of this type of counseling for abused women. Funding was also a carrot for agencies,

Catholic Family Services included, to develop programs for abused women and their abusers. In order to develop such programs expertise was required and the recognized experts were feminists. Feminists were hired for this purpose and then became a 'fifth column' in the agency.

It is evident that the process of change in these instances was one of overlapping, interacting events, creating the knots of intersection that Sheila Rowbottom (1989) described. These intersections became opportunities for change. In future, activists could take some instruction from this illustration. It is important to use tactics that are multi-layered and multi-directional. It is not useful to debate the choice of ~~about~~ mainstreaming or disengagement. Both are important and necessary for change to occur. Therefore, the question is not should we engage the state but rather when and in what manner. In addition one must be ready to take advantage of unexpected events, be prepared for backlash and maintain one's optimism in the face of apparent failure. Finally, in thinking about change, it is essential to remember the importance of language.

7.6 Naming Our Tragedies - Wife/woman Abuse

The findings of this project support the work of Nancy Fraser (1990) and Dominique Masson (1997) who argue that language ~~was~~ is important to women's issues and has material consequences. The struggles to define wife/woman abuse bear this out. It is tempting to ignore language, focusing instead on the changes you wish to accomplish. But what we call an issue is extremely important. It is interesting to note that it was traditional social service and state organizations that

supported (and in some cases continue to support) the use of the term domestic violence. This term allows people to continue to believe that this type of violence is gender neutral. There continue to be researchers and professionals who argue that women are as violent as men. The absence of an understanding of masculine dominance supports this continuing delusion (Currie, 1998).

The use of the term wife/woman abuse counters this trend. The use of the gendered term 'wife/woman' allows for no confusion about the embedding of violence within our masculine dominant society. And the term 'abuse' identifies the fact that the violence has a particular purpose. It is not random or the result of an outburst. I would suggest that this term could provide a basis for clarification of what is meant when we are talking about the violence that women suffer in their permanent, intimate, adult relationships with men.

7.7 Constraining Change

Change does not occur in a straight line. It is naive to expect (as many of us did in the seventies) that the oppression of hundreds of years will be overturned in a matter of decades. The process of challenging hegemonic ideas and systems of domination is often constrained by the actions of the state. This occurs in several different ways. First, it may be done directly. When the Sub-Committee on the Status of Women produced The War Against Women, it was met with Living Without Fear, an attempt to discredit this most challenging report. At the local level, in Hamilton, government funders called feminist service agencies to task through the review process. Agencies such as the Sexual Assault Centre and

the Elizabeth Fry Society were forced to undergo state inquisitions where their practices were minutely scrutinized. Such intensive investigations would be difficult for any organization to undergo, but feminist organizations were young and innovative and therefore more vulnerable. Activists who had 'crossed the line' in their challenges to the state were fired or found that the agencies they worked for were under attack. This silenced not only the activists themselves but other feminists in the community who were afraid of the same thing happening to them. This resulted in a 'chill' over feminist activism in the area of wife/woman abuse.

The state is able to retrench more indirectly through funding provisions. There is no doubt that the vastly increased allotment of resources to the area of wife/woman abuse is a product of successful challenges by the feminist movement. However, how these funds are allotted and the strings attached to them provide opportunities for the state to diminish the gains established by social movements in general and the feminist movement in particular. In the area of wife/woman abuse, the fact that funding was dispersed through existing bureaucratic channels had a conservative effect on change. First, most bureaucrats had not been sensitized to the issue of wife/woman abuse and only a small minority were feminist. Therefore, feminist funding criteria were not established. This meant that feminist organizations were able to access some of the new money but many other traditional organizations did as well. At the local level the result was that a variety of organizations were providing service to

abused women from diverse perspectives. As a consequence, at the local level feminist activists spent a great deal of time in public education trying to establish a feminist definition of wife/woman abuse. This was assisted by the public acceptance of such a definition at the federal level. In Hamilton, the fragmentation of services resulting from federal and provincial funding decisions necessitated the creation of a co-ordinated community response. Feminists found themselves as one voice among many and had to move to an increasingly confrontational position in order to get their point across. This eventually resulted in the acceptance of a feminist perspective at the local level but at great cost to individual feminists and their organizations.

Funding was also used as a form of constraint at C.F.S. The shortage of resources in the agency, also a consequence of funding, was used to slow the development of new programmes for abused women. Funding, or more precisely the lack of it, continues to be used today to constrict the growth of services in the area of wife/woman abuse.

The above illustrates that it is not necessary for the state to actively resist change. The bureaucratic structure of the state provides an automatic brake on change at all levels. If the federal and/or the Ontario provincial governments had elected to develop and provide funding from a feminist perspective, the struggles at the local level could have been avoided. One advantage of those struggles, however, is a more genuine community commitment to a feminist perspective. This is illustrated in the willingness of the community co-ordinating committee

(Woman Abuse Working Group) to challenge the cuts proposed by the Ontario government to wife/woman abuse services.

7.8 Trying to Do it Differently - Methodology

Finding the balance between academic and activist has been a very difficult task. The material of this project certainly appealed to the activist in me. I had worked with abused women and lived through the events in Hamilton so I was determined to resist the abstraction of women's experiences for my own purposes. Such abstractions constitute another barrier between activists and academics. It is difficult to see your blood, sweat and passion reduced to theoretical terms. However, abstraction is an necessary part of theory building and theory building is a necessary part of planning in activism.

The activist in me responded emotionally to references about the Montreal Massacre and the femicides in Hamilton. I clearly remembered the outrage I felt as women died and kept dying while nothing seemed to change. This made the actions of Justice for Women appear obvious.

The academic in me worked to develop a theoretical perspective on the changes I was investigating. With historical perspective, it is no surprise to me that the activists in Justice for Women, and their agencies, were targeted. They made a habit of making powerful people uncomfortable. At the time of the agency attacks I felt conflicted and helpless to challenge the review process that was occurring at feminist agencies. A theoretical perspective on the issue explains the purpose of such reviews and provides an opportunity to question

them from a political perspective. I would not hesitate to protest such reviews in the future. Theoretical development has also provided me with some perspective on the question of mainstreaming and disengagement. This work begins to develop a theoretical framework for political action tactics. We should begin to explore when and how various approaches are effective in creating change.

In my research practices I have worked to maintain the objectivity that Margrit Eichler (1989) suggests. I have been transparent in my process and in revealing my values. This, in combination with the variety of methods I used to do my research, gives the work validity but the goal of replicability is more difficult. If someone else were to talk to the same people and read the same documents, I am confident that they would reach similar conclusions. However, in many ways events I have explored are particular. Hamilton was unique in the energy of its feminist activists, particularly in the area of wife/woman abuse. In turn, Catholic Family Services is a unique agency with its own history, culture and physical location. It is likely that the same approach with a different agency in a different community would yield different results. This does not negate the findings which relate to feminist activism. These include: the real possibilities for change; the importance of simultaneous action on many levels; the rejection of a hierarchy of approaches and the awareness of the power of the state to constrain change.

In conclusion, I would like to offer some suggestions for the future. While this work presents an optimistic vision of the ability to change social

processes, the advent of a neo-liberal government in Ontario has meant that such change is more difficult. I do not think that this negates the lessons herein, but it may mean that even greater efforts at co-operation and support are required. As well, experiences will differ according to the context provided. Although feminists in Hamilton were able to establish a feminist framing of wife/woman abuse, in other cities and towns this has not happened. It would be helpful to replicate this study in communities both where feminists were successful and where they were not.

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