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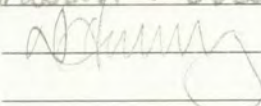
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**ON THE SIDE OF ANGELS:
LESBIAN ACTIVISM IN LOS ANGELES, 1970-1990**

BY

Yolanda G. Retter

B.A., Liberal Arts, Pitzer College, 1971

M.A. Library Science,
University of California, Los Angeles, 1983

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
AMERICAN STUDIES

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 1999

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DEDICATION

To the butch and femme lesbian resisters who were "out" and about when it was not safe.

To Lesbian Feminists, Los Angeles, my first lesbian community.

To Lesbians of Color, Los Angeles, my first political familia.

To various Latina lesbians (LALAS), compañeras en la lucha y en many good times.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is one expression of a lifelong lesbian journey and so I wish to acknowledge (in somewhat chronological order and in some detail), many of those who were important and/or helpful to me as I passed through various stages of my life, my political work and the dissertation marathon:

To my mother Yolanda Vargas, who flew airplanes in Perú in the 1940s, and who passed on to me a sense of orgullo about being Latina. To my father Henry Retter who passed on an interest in history, and whose socioeconomic position in El Salvador in the 1950s, engendered in me a practical relationship to power and an oppositional attitude toward abuses of power.

Chata Larín, Violeta Sabater, Dee Gardner and Susan Brackin, who will always have a place in the chronology of my heart. Ann Sheffer and her activists friends. Mrs. (Rita) Horelick, Mary Gail Horelick, Mr. (William) Higgins and the late Ms. (Margaret) Addis who kindly saw me through the "sturm and drang" of closeted lesbian adolescence. Mary Ford and Faith Runner, my high school lesbian cohorts, who had the ovaries to come out before I did.

The energy circulating in San Francisco during the heady days of 1968-1969. Mr. (Albert) Schwartz, at Pitzer College, whose class on the sociology of deviance in 1969, provided me with the first sign that being lesbian was not pathological. Pitzer College where I learned about "community." Marylynne Slayen (Morgan Stewart) for all the fun and support at Pitzer. Vivian Rivera, my first compañera, and her mother, Ernestine Rivera, my most accepting "mother in law."

Mary Kelly, whose radical lesbian sojourn "catalyzed" me from "gay" lesbian to radical lesbian. Jeanne Córdova, lesbian activist and historical cohort, with whom I share generational memories of "We shall overcome." Doris Davenport and Maria Díaz, diosas. Cynthia Barry and Bonney Tracey, all-weather friends for decades. Judy Messer, Lindsay Ralphs and Joan Nixon for their generosity and to Judy also, for her engineering feat. Elena Popp for supporting my hope that "sisterhood is possible." Cheryl Sammarco a good and loyal friend. John Regan (Claremont) and Camille Brown (UCLA), minds of wide range. Lorna Pinney, transpersonal coach. Reina Attias, a good and supportive therapist. All my former compañeras, notably Kelly, Carmen, Rebecca and Linda, each in her own way.

The Dean at UNM, and a number of people (too numerous to name) who have kept me out of harm's way. John Waiblinger for access to a portion of the Akashic Records - the Internet (courtesy of USC). Karin Quimby and John O'Brien for supporting my work as a lesbian history and visibility activist. Walter Williams for a long residency at USC's Center for Scholars and for various academic opportunities. The Institute for the Study of Human Resources, for a dissertation grant. Marylyne Slayen for offering to underwrite the "official" copies of this dissertation.

All those who offered good wishes throughout this process. The music of Cesaria Evora, Azúcar y Crema, Mozart, Pete Seeger and others, who provided inspiration and ánimo. The devas who kept various computers working, and Osa, mi perra, who kept me company on many late nights.

To Lauren Jardine, Bettina Aptheker, Doris Davenport and Mr. (Albert) Schwartz, for being willing to read portions of the dissertation. Gracias also to Lillian Faderman who was willing to serve on my committee and to the late and missed, Jerry Davis who agreed to serve on my committee. To Sheila Peterson Hamlin who was patient with formatting questions and who referred me to Susan Pinter during a stressful formatting moment.

All the veteranas and one veterano who offered their testimonio on lesbian, feminist and gay activism for this study.

My committee: Jane Young who took the time to read 800 pages of the original draft and subsequent drafts, and who provided supportive and helpful advise regarding content, presentation and connecting sentences (although I am still inclined to write non-fiction in "bullets"). In the midst of mourning the loss of her compañero, Jane continued to read drafts of the dissertation and offered in/valuable support. Muchísimas gracias. Jane Caputi who wanted me to organize the dissertation by themes, who was supportive beyond the call of duty during a department civil war in 1992, and who although busy, remained on my committee after leaving UNM. Diana Rebolledo who was also supportive during my UNM days, and who wanted fewer quotations, more native research analysis, and more lesbians of color history. Emma Pérez, querrera lesbiana, and tireless advocate on behalf of the story of this lesbian movement and mujeres everywhere.

Nora Benjamin for spiritual counsel. Leslie Rand Golden, my compañera, and DCTF (dream come true femme), for her love, support and kindness.

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ABSTRACT

During the 1970s and 1980s, Los Angeles was one urban location where the struggle for lesbian rights and lesbian community was publicly and energetically pursued by a movement of diverse individuals and groups. This generation of politicized lesbians was formed by the confluence of various socio-historical currents and informed by experiences in other social movements. For almost ten years, lesbian activists across the United States engaged in unprecedented institution-building and political activism. The backbone of this underfunded movement was made up of a host of dedicated volunteers. This community history used the methods of oral histories and an analysis of the content

of community-produced publications to identify women, places, events and dynamics that made up this specific movement in Los Angeles. It used the framework of social movement theory and sociological perspectives to analyze the macro dynamics of a movement for civil rights and the micro dynamics of a diverse community. Micro dynamics that were examined included institution-building, political activism, internecine conflict, the activism of lesbians of color and the effects of personal relationships on a politicized community. Since the researcher is "native" to the community in question, the study also examines issues related to methodology and insider (native) vs. outsider (cross-cultural) research.

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PREFACE

The intellectual purview of American Studies is the infinite variety of United States culture, and although lesbians have always been a part of this nation's complex heritage, prejudice and power differentials, have in general, precluded overt acknowledgment of their myriad contributions.¹ The writing of this community² history is motivated by a wish to counteract the tradition of lesbian invisibility. Toward that end, it recounts and examines the activism of certain politicized sectors of the diverse Los Angeles lesbian community, during a specific time period.³

From the standpoint of a native researcher and using the methods of oral history and content analysis, I sought to identify people, places and events important to this community, and to analyze the actions of women who individually and collectively, publicly advocated for the civil rights and well-being of lesbians during a specific time period. This study also acknowledges the efforts of pre-Homophile and Homophile women and men whose brave efforts paved the way.⁴

Los Angeles was the site of many memorable lesbian (and gay) projects and events, and its history in this area can be compared to or contrasted with that of other cities such as New York, San Francisco and Chicago. A community history focusing on lesbian activism in Los Angeles is timely as part of a body of work that represents a new phase in

lesbian and gay historiography, that of lesbian and gay activism and culture in specific cities.

Recent community histories and ethno-histories include lesbian and gay San Francisco before 1970 (Boyd, 1995); Atlanta lesbian feminists (Gable and Chesnut, 1997); pre-Stonewall, Buffalo, New York lesbian bar culture (Kennedy and Davis, 1993); Toronto lesbian feminists (Ross, 1995); and lesbian and gay Philadelphia between 1948-1972 (Stein, 1994). This new wave of city-specific studies will eventually generate a database useful to researchers wishing to compare and contrast various locales and time periods as a method of identifying historical, cultural and geographical patterns in U.S. lesbian (and gay) history.⁵

Like other community studies, this one is indebted to the work of scholars and researchers like Katz (1976, 1983) whose pioneering work unearthed extensive evidence of a lesbian/gay presence in the United States during the past 400 years;⁶ it also acknowledges the contributions of those who have presented additional evidence in their overviews of U.S. lesbian and gay history (D'Emilio, 1983), and lesbian history (Faderman, 1991).⁷

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

We need to know that we are not accidental, that our culture has grown and changed with the currents of time, that we, like others, have a social history comprised of individual lives, community struggles, and customs and language, dress, and behavior - in short, that we have the story of a people to tell (Joan Nestle, 1987, 110).

The mobilization of the "second generation"¹ of politicized U.S. lesbians and homosexual males took place in the context of national socio-political ferment that began full force in 1955 when African American Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Fourteen years later, on a hot summer night in June of 1969, patrons of Stonewall, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, NY, refused to go to the back of the police van.²

The riot that followed this refusal was a critical incident in a series of events that took place in the interstices of U.S. culture over a period of four hundred years. Prior to the Stonewall riot/uprising, sporadic acts of individual resistance by homosexuals had paved the way for the collective efforts of the Homophile groups of the 1950s. Stonewall galvanized Homophile activists and homosexual "newcomers" who were veterans of other social movements, into creating the next phase of pro-homosexual activism.³

The social process that gave impetus to the Gay

Liberation movement⁴ was analogous to a geological process. Sociologist Ralph Turner once likened the dynamics of social movements to those of an earthquake:

...there is a slow but imperceptible movement deep beneath the ground which continues for a period of time without compensating adjustments at the surface. Eventually so great a tension is built up that there is a sudden slippage at the surface, along an established faultline, releasing the accumulated tension in the violence of an earthquake...the underlying change has already occurred ...the earthquake is merely a corrective adjustment... (1974, 27).

The social movement released by the "corrective adjustment" of Stonewall, shares similarities with (and owes an important debt to) the Civil Rights Movement. But unlike the latter, which had a significant institutional base (i.e., black churches and colleges) and moral leverage behind it, lesbians and gays had a small institutional base and little or no moral leverage from which to organize and influence social policy, practice and attitudes.

The politicization process of U.S. lesbians (and gays) was managed under extremely adverse conditions. This "break boundary"⁵ was reached after years of varying attempts to organize against widespread oppression, without benefit of a "broad indigenous base,"⁶ and while laboring under near monolithic opprobrium and forced invisibility.⁷

Lesbian Community Dynamics

Some participants in the second wave of lesbian activism (1970-1980), were veterans of the co-gender (Gay

Liberation) and feminist (Women's Liberation) movements. Some had also participated in other social movements dating back as far as the 1940s. For all these activists, the 1970s was an exciting decade, a time when as "out" lesbians they negotiated new (politicized) identities, participated in collective challenges to oppression and developed a complex institutional base.

Like other social movements, the lesbian activist movement in Los Angeles can be analyzed from the point of view of its internal dynamics. Salient dynamics include institution-building, political activism, internecine conflict, the inability to deal with "difference," and the political effects of personal relationships on a relatively small community.⁸ Although these dynamics were also present among lesbians in the Homophile movement, I will limit my examination to their manifestations in and effects on various sectors of the lesbian activist movement in Los Angeles between 1970-1990.

As lesbians mobilized politically, they also began to develop a complex institutional base. In Los Angeles and across the United States, lesbian institution-building in the 1970s was comprised of support groups and coming-out groups; community centers, publications, cultural productions, businesses; and woman-only gatherings. These institutions formed the nucleus of a politicized community.

Within that politicized community/environment, the L.A.

lesbian feminist movement passed through three stages during the 1970s. The first was separatist⁹ and a response to the sexism of both heterosexual and gay males. The second was also separatist but based on an ongoing desire to develop a woman-focused and woman-supportive culture. The final stage was marked by the inclination of some segments of the lesbian activist community to continue working within lesbian-focused projects and culture, while others became involved in the co-gender movement of the 1980s, or retired from the activism arena altogether.

Most of the lesbian institution-building during the 1970s and into the 1980s was carried out by volunteers who "passed the hat" to fund their projects. The movement's momentum was sustained by an ethos that affirmed a positive identity ("gay is good"); supported collective empowerment ("sisterhood is powerful") and utopian visions ("Lesbian Nation"); and encouraged overt political action ("out of the closets and into the streets").

Inspired by experiences in and the gains made by other civil rights movements, these activists used their new institutions as both a source of personal support and empowerment and as a base from which to collectively lobby for a lesbian agenda. Their political activities included support of lesbian, gay, feminist and women's causes and opposition to war and violence against women. Most of these women were white, under forty years of age, and from a

variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

In the midst of institution-building and political mobilization, Lesbian Nation¹⁰ quickly divided into many ideological sectors which variously shared, shaped and opposed one another's agendas. Throughout the decades, differing viewpoints in lesbian communities across the United States sparked interest, ignited debate, and at times exploded into "the lesbian civil wars" (Retter, 1997, 327). These internecine struggles first took place with gay males over sexism, and with heterosexual feminists over lesbophobia, and later with other lesbians over issues of roles, monogamy, separatism, sexual style, class, anti-Semitism and ageism.

At the root of some of these divisions were the different developmental paths that women had traveled on their way to becoming aware of their lesbianism and negotiating a lesbian identity. Researchers have touched upon these differences by classifying lesbians as "born" or "made." Lillian Faderman differentiated between "old gay" (lesbians who felt that they had always been lesbians) and "new gay" (those who saw their lesbianism as a political choice) (Faderman, 1984).

Barbara Ponse divided lesbians into "primary" and "elective," respectively (Ponse, 1978); and I have used the terms "life-long" and "catalyzed," respectively (Retter, 1987). This difference in "origins" and "identity

negotiation" between what in this study I call "lesbian feminists" and "feminist lesbians,"¹¹ led to disparate viewpoints on issues such as monogamy, butch/femme, same-sex marriage and whether or not lesbianism is an "essentialist" identity, a political choice or a social construction.

Over the years, irreconcilable differences between segments of the community led to both diversification and division. Thus, the history of this movement and its diverse communities is a record of positive individual politicization (identity redefinition) and relative success in advocating for our collective right to be a legitimate part of the larger culture. It is also a record of personally painful and politically costly divisions.

The fourth dynamic was an inability to deal with "difference." Sociologist Arlene Stein, for example, contends that the challenges posed by "lesbians of color, working class lesbians and sexual minorities," contributed to the decentering of the movement (Stein, 1992, 47). Issues of class and race were ignored or denied while "politically incorrect"¹² sexual styles were condemned or suppressed. The inability to develop theory and praxis around these issues had a significant negative impact on the movement.

The fifth dynamic at play within lesbian communities across the country, was/is "Lesbian Loveland,"¹³ a phenomenon sometimes mentioned in a humorous context in

community circles under other names, but one which has not been addressed by researchers. How personal relationships impact the political and historical record is a generic historical phenomenon. The case of Henry VIII wanting to divorce and remarry, and the religious and political consequences of his libidinal inclinations, is one example.

In lesbian communities, which are relatively small compared to the larger culture, the waxing and waning of relationships sometimes had (and still has) consequences that politically affected the community. For example, the intimate relationship between a lesbian powerbroker and a White House insider led (at a politically propitious time in 1977), to the first official meeting between lesbians and gays and White House officials.

In addition to the five micro dynamics I have mentioned, the lesbian feminist movement was also faced with the impact of various macro dynamics. These included an ambivalence (often felt by social movement groups) about whether to assimilate or continue agitating for radical social change, and whether to view institutionalization as a sell-out tactic or a survival strategy.¹⁴ On a larger scale, beginning as early as the 1960s for some, and the late 1970s for others, all civil rights groups and movements had to cope with the waning of the social movement impulse that had begun in the mid-1950s.

Either in response to a changing political climate, or

as part of a macro process, in the late 1970s, the lesbian/gay movement moved from "protest to politics." This shift was signified by the use of money and its companion, influence, to gain political concessions at local and state levels, even while facing continuing rejection at the federal level. These gains were seen by some as benefitting all lesbians/gays and by others as attempts to buy the movement off and reward a small group of gay and lesbian powerbrokers. On the cultural front, the emergence of "lesbian chic"¹⁵ in the 90s, signaled that the "politics of style" had upstaged the politics of protest.

This change from protest to style is partly driven by another macro dynamic - generational differences. Sociologist Philip Abrams defined a sociological generation as a group of people "...of approximately the same historical age who have shared certain politically relevant experiences and created a new world of politics on the basis of those experiences" (Abrams, 1982, 258).

Thus it is that the world view and collective behavior of Queer Nation dykes, "Generation X," and "lesbian-identified bisexual women," who came out or came of age after the mid-1980s, is often at odds with the perspectives of lesbian generations who endured the "bad old days" of bar raids, and a lack of collective identity and power, and who then experienced the high of the "collective coming out" process.

The heyday of lesbian activism (the 1970s) took place a decade after the heyday of the Civil Rights Movement. Some activists have argued that since that time the lesbian and gay movements, have moved toward assimilation and institutionalization (Kilhefner, 1979). Others argue that the lesbian feminist movement is not dead, that it is in a state of "abeyance" (Taylor, 1989).¹⁶

A third viewpoint asserts that lesbian activists have evolved from focusing on lesbian issues in the 1970s, to alliances with co-gender issues in the 1980s, to a concern with global issues such as the environment, in the 1990s (Torie, interview).¹⁷ Thus, as we approach the Millenium, the lesbian community continues to experience torsional forces generated by diverse and divergent ideological viewpoints.

Goals and Methodology

The goals of this exploratory ethnohistory were to assemble a "first level" record and to generate a "first level" interpretation of the "who, what, when, where and so what" of a diverse lesbian community during a specific period of time. First level approaches are in order when too little is known about a specific issue, or a community or culture and its dynamics. In such cases, more time is spent on unearthing and gathering information and making preliminary conjectures than on comparing and analyzing data and developing theory.

Two methods were used to gather information for this study. The first was oral histories, a technique often used to gather information on groups about whom too little has been recorded (Gluck and Patai, 1991; Kennedy and Davis, 1993). The second was a thematic analysis of the contents of community newspapers and ephemera from the time period in question. Content analysis in this case was not the usual quantitative analysis performed on primary documents, it was instead, a tool used to identify and/or confirm important community themes and to cross-check information obtained from oral history interviews.

Other methodological considerations in this study were "naming," documentation, and "outing." To groups with a tradition of enforced invisibility the "naming of names" is one method of confirming (and affirming) the existence of individuals (both famous and not) and of a community (Newton, 1993). Also important to groups whose history and origins are insufficiently documented, is the careful recording and annotation of sources so that data can be verified and a historiographic database developed (Katz, 1976).

When trying to identify and research their own people, lesbians and gays are faced with several unique predicaments. One is that, unlike most other under-recorded groups, lesbians and other "sexual outlaws" have good cause for remaining invisible or anonymous. Since homophobia still

looms large in the psyches and daily reality of most lesbians, researchers must pause before naming names and presenting new information about women who may not have publicly declared themselves as lesbian.

When Gloria Hull was editing the diary of African American writer and activist, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, she found evidence that Alice's "woman-identification extended to romantic liaisons with at least two of her friends" (Hull, 1984, 191). Hull was in a predicament since the owner of the diaries, Dunbar-Nelson's niece, was reluctant to disclose that information. In the end, Hull decided to adhere to the tenets of the Black feminist critical approach which "requires rigorous truthfulness and 'telling it all'" (Hull, 1984, 193). This decision cost Hull the niece's goodwill and friendship (Hull, 1985, 20).

This was a case in which the niece's reluctance to "out" a deceased person had to be measured against the importance of providing a "full record" of a woman's life. Hull's decision to include information about Dunbar-Nelson's lesbian-like attachments is a type of remediation effort meant to counteract the all too common practice of altering, censoring or destroying lesbian evidence.¹⁸

In the present study, the issues of "outing" (the involuntary disclosure of sexual orientation), were managed by using public records (community newspapers) and obtaining permission from those interviewed to be placed in a public

record (a dissertation). Although, those interviewed were "out" in the community and publicly active during the time period in question, requests for anonymity and editorial control over interviews were honored.

The data was analyzed using models from both sociological perspectives and social movement theory. Sociology is useful in analyzing the resistance of pre-homophile lesbians and some aspects of the homophile movement that do not fall within the definitions of social movement activity. Social movement theory is useful in analyzing portions of the homophile movement and the post-Stonewall movement because at that point, homosexual activism fits under definitions of social movements.¹⁹

This community history is presented both chronologically and thematically. Works such as that of Boyd (1995), D'Emilio (1983), Faderman (1991), Kennedy and Davis (1993), Ross (1995) and Stein (1994), will serve as models of organization, style and presentation. The present study diverges from the aforementioned ones in that it was conducted by a "native researcher"²⁰ who was also an active participant in portions of the movement during the time period in question (1970-1990).

My Position in This Study

This community history is the work of a researcher/activist who is female, bi-cultural, of mixed ethnic heritage (Peruvian/German), and who was raised with

relative socio-economic privilege in Latin America and the United States. Since I am a lifelong lesbian, and a Latina, my "native" relationship to the lesbian and ethnic experience precedes my involvement with the movement, while my political involvement precedes my research interests.

Ideologically, I am a "separatist lesbian" and as a lifelong lesbian, I call myself "an essentialist modified by social influences." Both standpoints are a form of resistance and strategic essentialism.²¹

Due to the damage done by outsider research in homosexual, people of color, and women's cultures, and due to my membership in portions of these communities, I argue that it is important to examine and articulate the differences, advantages and disadvantages of both the native research and the outsider research standpoints and to place them in the service of social change.²²

My native researcher position raises some of the issues related to this specific research perspective, such as the pros and cons of "familiarity," "entree," and "trust" (Stephenson and Greer, 1981). On the issue of familiarity: I "grew up" politically in various sectors of the Los Angeles lesbian activist movement. I was a participant in many of the events that marked this movement's historical and sociological progression.

My participation included active membership in two groups, Lesbian Feminists and Lesbians of Color. I also

gained "participant familiarity" with other groups, such as Califia and Lesbianas Unidas, and "political familiarity" with lesbian groups such as Southern California Women for Understanding (SCWU), and feminist groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW).

I participated in the lesbian activist movement most often as an advocate (a "gadfly on the body politic") for lesbians and in opposition to sexism, homophobia, racism and elitism (both inside and outside the movement); as a project organizer; and (somewhat more uniquely) as the person who on many occasions was in charge of security for movement conferences, marches, etc. My experiences as an itinerant community worker in the past now provide me with a significant knowledge base regarding groups, spaces, events, issues, individuals and dynamics.

Regarding the issues of entree and trust: I was a known entity to all of my narrators. The people I interviewed were/are friends, acquaintances, political allies and some are former political adversaries. My encounter with them was not as an outsider gathering unknown information or as a stranger cultivating trust in order to be entrusted with information.

Instead, my encounter was as "one of us," encouraging others to testify and contribute their personal and political voice/testimonio to the record.²³ Toward this end, I asked my political peers and historical cohorts to provide

information about their politicized activities during a specific time period, as well as their thoughts about community dynamics.

In this study, I was an insider engaged in a community project - to record, highlight and preserve a portion of the history of the second generation of lesbian activists. As native researcher Bonnie Zimmerman noted in her analysis of lesbian fiction, "I write not as an outsider looking in, but as an insider looking around" (1990, xvii). Thus, this study is partly an autobiographical record of my "participant experiences" in the Los Angeles lesbian activist movement.

As a researcher, I do not claim objectivity because I agree with Patricia Hill Collins and others who contend that we are all embedded in our own world views (1990, 33, 218). I tried to counter my biases by including the testimony of a cross-section of primary witnesses.

Like Kennedy and Davis, I attempted to "find the appropriate balance between recognizing that our results are constructed - that they are shaped by our own cultures' questions and our personal perspectives, as well as the consciousness and position of our narrators" (1993, 15-16). I consider my work to be continually in progress and open to new information and analysis.

Alice Walker wrote that "The truth about any subject only comes when all sides of the story are put together, and all their different meanings make one new one. Each writer

writes the missing parts to the other writer's story. And the whole story is what I'm after" (quoted in Hill Collins, 1990, 37). In the spirit of Walker's call to fill in conceptual, ideological and historical gaps, I argue that native research, like feminist and progressive research, challenges oppressive dichotomies, the enterprise of domination and single-minded views of culture and should be welcome because after all, the whole story, difficult and complex as it might be, is what we ought to be after.²⁴

Chapters

Chapter One contains the introduction, which is a discussion of the major themes of this study. Chapter Two is a review of the literature of social movements. Chapter Three outlines the research questions, the methodology used to gather and analyze the data, and examines issues related to lesbian, feminist and native research. Chapters Four, Five and Six examine the three phases of the lesbian feminist decade (1970-1979). Chapter Seven discusses lesbian activism in co-gender settings during the 1980s. Chapter Eight discusses lesbian-focused activism during the 1980s. Chapter Nine examines how woman-focused lesbians fare in the Gay/Queer 90s. Chapter Ten discusses the movement's legacy.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORY

The consolidation of identity and community in the 1970s in the context of a predominantly white, middle-class lesbian feminist movement, has yet to figure strongly in the study of contemporary social movements...and the almost 25-year history of lesbian theorizing and institution building has fallen largely outside the feminist [and the general] scholarly gaze (Ross, 1995, 8).

Introduction

The lesbian activist movement in Los Angeles was both a generational and an historical phenomenon. Part of its uniqueness or perhaps even its plausibility was due to its location within what Strauss and Howe called a "social moment." These moments occur when "people perceive that historic events are radically altering their social environment" (1991, 71). They arise under two conditions: "...*secular crises*, when society focuses on reordering the outer world of institutions and public behavior; and *spiritual awakenings*, when society focuses on changing the inner world of value and private behavior" (1991, 71).

According to this scheme, "social moments" arrive every 40-45 years, or every 2 generations (1991, 35). In this chapter, I will discuss patterns of cycles, generations and "social moments" in relation to the lesbian feminist movement, as well as how specific social movement theories and models can help explain the origins, dynamics and fate of this specific movement.

Generations, Cycles and Social Movements

Those who created and sustained the lesbian activist movement across the United States were part of a specific social generation. Social generations are entities created from a myriad of shared socio-historical experiences:

...a social generation cannot be defined in biological terms and in definite age groups, but has to be defined in terms of common and joint experiences, sentiments and ideas... [The members] of a generation feel themselves linked by a community of standpoints, of beliefs and wishes...a social generation consists of people of approximately the same historical age who have shared certain politically relevant experiences and created a new world of politics on the basis of those experiences (Heberle quoted in Abrams, 1982, 258).

Sociologist Philip Abrams also noted that at some historical junctures, a generation is affected not only by its own collective developmental path but by larger historical forces:

The social organization of the life cycle creates moments of more or less acute exploration - searching the environment to create a unity of meaning between the self and others. But it is historical events that seem to provide the crucial opportunities for constructing new versions of such meanings. Such opportunities are seized, in turn, most vividly and imaginatively by those who are most actively in the market for such meanings [identities] (Abrams, 1982, 256).¹

Although small in numbers, those in the market for "new meanings" during that social moment of the 60s and 70s, were loud, visible and difficult to ignore.²

According to some students of history and cultural patterns, the generation of 60s and 70s idealists and iconoclasts could have been predicted. Using the theory of

cycles, researchers Strauss and Howe examined historical and generational patterns in United States. They proposed that the nation has passed through 18 **generations** and 5 **cycles** (starting in 1584 and ending in 2069) (1991, 35). During each cycle, four distinct types of "**peer personalities**" manifest in a repeating sequence within a corresponding **era**.³

The four recurring personality types are "Idealist," "Reactive," "Civic," and "Adoptive" (1991, 35). The four eras are: "Awakening" (i.e. the 1970s), "Inner-Driven" (i.e. 1990s), "Crisis" (i.e. 1930s), and "Outer-Driven" (i.e. 1950s). Since each cohort lasts 22 years, the complete cycle takes approximately 90 years (1991, 35).

Members of the Homophile movement, born between 1901 and 1924 during the "Great Power Cycle," belonged to the "G.I. Generation," and were "Civic" personality types. Homophiles born between 1925-1942, were also part of the Great Power Cycle, but belonged to a different generation (the "Silent Generation,") and personality type ("Adaptive").

The bulk of Gay and Lesbian Liberationists and radical feminists was born between 1943 and 1960 as part of the first phase of the "Millennial Cycle." They were dubbed the "Boom Generation" ("Idealist" types). The years during which the Boom generation was most active politically (1967-1980), constituted another phase of the "Millennial Cycle," a time

of "spiritual awakening," symbolized by the counterculture and consciousness revolution.

Lesbian feminism (which evolved from various social movement streams) was, in general, a movement of Boom Generation lesbians who came of age between 1963 and 1970. The youthfulness of the movement was a mixed blessing. On the one hand there was a surfeit of energy and idealism. On the other hand there was an unwillingness to take direction and a willingness to be dogmatic.

In an article written 20 years later, activist/author Rita Mae Brown described the high price of youthful arrogance and concomitant internecine conflict:

...we overstated our case. We yelled too loud and too often [especially at one another]. We saw people and issues in polar extremes and missed the subtle differences. We exploded with energy often undirected. We thought because we were on the side of the angels that surely this would be easy... the defeats broke many a heart not hardened to the give-and-take of life in the political trenches. We forgot to value one another. This especially is a weakness of the young. We didn't know how special we were (Brown, 1995, 46).

Brown's hindsight and regrets are part of what Strauss and Howe call the "endowment agenda" of each generation. This is an unfulfilled goal that will not be stayed. Thus, while,

idealist generations [which includes baby boomer lesbian feminists]...typically come of age attacking elder-built institutions before retreating into self-absorbed remission, [they] later mature into uncompromising... moralists (Strauss and Howe 1991, 39).

Strauss and Howe predict that in their later years, Boomers will be inspired to lead moral crusades as a way of re/solving the 1960s and 1970s, and that they will reach their peak moment of "national leadership around 2005" (1991, 397).

In contrast to the Boomer Idealists, members of the 13th Generation ("Reactive" types), born between 1961 and 1981, are described by Strauss and Howe as "shocking on the outside, unknowable on the inside" (1991, 319), and "they are proud of their ability to poke through the hype and the detail..." (1991, 323). Strauss and Howe also note that this cohort "is the most aborted generation in American History" (1991, 324), and that its members are committing suicide more often than other generations (1991, 326).

The gaps between lesbians of the 1970s and 1990s is a gap between "Idealistic" and "Adaptive" types. A similar phenomenon manifested in the 1920s, between veteran suffragists (Idealists) and their daughters (Adaptives).⁴ As Jo Freeman, a Boomer activist noted

...the young women [of the 1920s] inherited a legacy of female independence but without the political context in which it had been born. So instead of social problems, they attacked social conventions. They drank, they smoked, cut their hair and engaged in the real sexual revolution of the 20th century (1975, 19).

The symbol of the post-Suffragist era rebellion was the "flapper." Seventy years later, 13th generation lesbians (including chic lipstick lesbians), are rebelling (also

outside of a political context), against the ideological conventions of their 1970s activist fore-sisters.

In comparing 1990s lesbians with 1970s lesbians, sociologist Arlene Stein re/interpreted the attitudes of the 13th Generation as a positive consequence of the work done by their older Boomer sisters:

By struggling to de-stigmatize lesbianism, and by forging institutional spaces within which it could flourish, lesbian feminism was largely responsible for creating the conditions under which a new, more mainstream and less radical lesbianism would eventually take root. This new lesbian freedom is testimony to the success, rather than the failure of the old (quoted by Cragin, 1997, 319).⁵

The 60s and 70s as Social Moments

In 1968, the Radcliffe senior who delivered her class' commencement prayer alluded to the forces coiled within some members of the Boom generation: "We do not feel like a cool, swinging generation - we are eaten up by an intensity that we cannot name" (quoted in Strauss and Howe, 1991, 302). These forces found fertile ground within some young people and their older allies, and gave rise to a combination of anti-establishment feelings and a search for new values. This search in many cases focused on holding the government (and their parents) to the principles of what Keniston called "creedal American values."⁶

What caused this generation to embark on such an intense search may have been its location in a social moment or what Philip Abrams called a "double construction." In

such cases, catalysts such as

...war, revolution, crisis or liberation, [serve] as the cornerstone for a new account of the configuration of society as a whole...[at those times] life history and world history coalesce to transform each other. Identity is made within that double construction in time (1982, 256).

During the 1960s and early 1970s, many social activists seemed to be surfing within the vortex of Abrams' "double construction" and one of Strauss and Howe's "social moments." This vortex was a meeting point of socio-political movements and a counterculture consciousness which offered what Whalen and Flacks called "a framework of commitment" to a variety of participants (1989, 10).

This framework was based on a vision of personal change coupled with social action (Whalen and Flacks, 1989, 13). Another student of the 1960s movements, Doug McAdam, also noted that "One of the most distinctive aspects of the 60s was the twin emphasis on personal liberation and social action" (1989, 749).⁷

Whether in response to larger forces or as a consequence of an identity development stage, 60s and 70s activists were driven by a vision of a better world, and this inspired many to work overtime on behalf of specific causes. A study done by Whalen and Flacks with "activists" and "non-participants" who had been students at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) during the heyday of activism (circa 1970), provided evidence of this pattern. They found that the lives of activists had been

focused on the "barricades" where they were "linked by a shared sense of political and cultural identity, by their sense of being part of the movement (however vaguely this community was defined)" (1989, 46).

Attendance at the barricades was driven by what Whalen and Flacks called "Visions of the Apocalypse" or the sense that real revolution was at hand and that the system could be replaced by a more equitable and just one. According to Whalen and Flacks the mood then was "Now anything [is] possible" (1989, 69). Activist Richard Goodwin recalls: "Those were heady days when we thought we were going to change the world" (quoted by Boggs, 1991, 55).

Lesbian activist Martha Shelley remembered that in the early days of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF),

...we felt that the struggles of all people should be united...we had the feeling that the revolution was just around the corner and that we were part of the vanguard...we were young and idealistic and wonderful and brave and naive...(Marcus, 182, 183).

Similar feelings were expressed by several lesbian feminists who participated in this study, and by respondents in other lesbian community studies (Chesnut and Gable, 1997; Ross, 1995).

The commitment of activists at UCSB was, according to Whalen and Flacks, strengthened by "Face-to-face relationships in small groups" (1989, 100). Similarly, within the lesbian movement, interactions in places like women's bookstores and clinics, and women's land and

festivals, also promoted commitment and solidarity.

Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp observed that during the 1970s, women's/lesbian/feminist literature, poetry, and music were effective methods of spreading activism and sisterhood. At the 1979 March on Washington rally, they noticed that women from different parts of the country, "...joined in to sing and sign when lesbian performers came on stage, while gay men in the crowd, lacking such unifying rituals, seemed to wonder how all of the women knew the words (1993, 49).

For some movements, the end of the 1960s was the end of their heyday years. However, for women and lesbians and gays, whose radical movements did not emerge until the late 1960s, the 1970s were the high point, a time of "promise and exhilaration, rather than a period of dashed hopes and desperation" (Halter, 1989, 99). In Los Angeles, the lesbian feminist grassroots movement was at its height between approximately 1970, when in the wake of feminism, lesbians separated from Gay Liberation and other social movements, and the late 1970s, when the co-gender movement re-emerged.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

The socio-political ferment of the 1960s and 1970s inspired a plethora of analyses and theories on the origins and dynamics of collective behavior. Previous theories which regarded collective activity as dysfunctional and oppositional (The Collective Behavior School), were replaced

by those that analyzed social movements from the point of view of mobilization and management of resources (Resource Mobilization Theory).

In the 1970s, a third group of models emerged, which viewed collective behavior as complex politicized activity (Civil Rights Models). Some theories of that period were articulated by former participants in the movements they studied (Flacks, 1989; Freeman, 1975). In the 1980s, a set of perspectives emerged which focused on developing a collective consciousness and praxis in a postmodern environment (New Social Movement models).⁸

While the focus of each set of perspectives varied, they had one characteristic in common - they almost totally overlooked lesbian (and gay) activism. In addition, the presence and contributions of lesbians in most social movements have been consistently ignored both by the movements themselves and those studying them. This oversight is partly gender-based for, as social movement researchers Guida West and Rhoda Blumberg have noted, "gender analysis is lacking in social protest analysis" (1990, 7).⁹

Along with gender bias, there is homophobia. Even as lesbian studies has become more acceptable in the academy, scholars still seem reticent to write about a movement that some had participated in. Those who were worried about their futures in homophobic academic environments reported on the neighborhood (feminism) but avoided the house (lesbianism).

While some contemporary feminist authors devote chapters (Echols, 1989), or weave the lesbian presence throughout their analyses (Whittier, 1995), full-length treatments of lesbian feminist activism such as Becki Ross' (1995), are few.

Although several doctoral students during the 1970s (Furgeri, 1977; Grevatt, 1975) researched the subject of lesbian feminism as a social movement, after that period, almost twenty years passed before a new generation of doctoral students (Ross, 1995) and some researchers (Taylor and Whittier, 1992) showed interest in the subject. These new lesbian/feminist perspectives integrate ideas from the Civil Rights and New Social Movements models with concepts derived from dynamics specific to the lesbian, feminist (and gay) movements.

Lesbian Feminism

In her study of the United States Women's Movement, Jo Freeman described feminism and lesbian activism as:

...a strategy for action...(one) that fused purposive and solidary incentives...one did not have to wait for the revolution; one could revolutionize one's own life now...it was an over act of commitment which provided a political strategy which was consonant with women's traditional style but avoided the onus of traditional institutions (1975, 141).

In the United States, the lesbian feminist movement was made up of members from what Freeman (1975) called the "second" (younger) branch of the Women's Movement, veterans of other social movements including the Homophile movement,

and newly "out" women from various sectors of society. For lesbians who knew themselves as lesbians before the lesbian feminist movement emerged, and who were veterans of other social movements, having their own movement was in the words of one activist "like coming home" (Lillene, interview).

According to Arlene Stein, lesbian feminism emerged out of "the most radical sectors of the women's movement in the early 1970s." It was an effort "to reconstruct the category 'lesbian,' to wrest it from the definitions of medical experts and broaden its meaning"; it attempted to "forge a stable collective identity around that category and to develop institutions which would nurture that identity"; and finally, it "sought to use those institutions as a base for the contestation of the dominant sex/gender system" (1994, 33, 37).

Sociologists Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier note that lesbian feminism envisioned a utopian feminist society; it held gender oppression to be the primary basis of other forms of oppression, and it emphasized the commonalities of women's oppression as a class via the method of consciousness-raising (1992, 108).¹⁰

Like other nationalistic movements described by sociologist Herbert Blumer, the lesbian movement also had its origins "...in distressing personal experiences in which individuals [were] made to feel inferior because of the subordinate status of the people to which they belong[ed]"

(1974, 20).

The lesbian feminist movement was initially what Herbert Blumer called a "movement of wide range," or one that was "...likely to be carried on by many unknown and obscure people who struggle in different areas without their striving and achievements becoming generally known" (1974, 5).

In general, the movement was racially homogenous across the United States, and in Los Angeles (and I suspect elsewhere), it was (contrary to common belief) heterogenous in terms of class. The lesbian feminist movement was organized in loosely structured groups that supported a "fuzzy" division between leaders and members.

Jo Freeman's analysis of the consequences of a lack of structure in the radical portions of the Women's Movement were applicable to lesbian feminists, as was her observation that a resistance to structure caused feminist groups to "form and dissolve at an accelerating rate, creating a good deal of consciousness and very little concerted action" (Freeman, 1975, 143). Freeman summarized the result of "structurelessness" as "good for personal change" but "bad for institutional change" (Freeman, 1975, 145).

Nationally, the network of lesbian feminists groups was connected in the segmentary, polycephalous and reticulate style articulated by Gerlach and Hine (1970). According to Margaret Grevatt, the lesbian feminist movement consisted of

"many parallel groups in good communication, but with no control or coordination between groups" (1975, 82). These groups were loosely allied across the United States via a "gut" ideology that Grevatt called a "felt need to band together" (1975, 82).

In those loosely organized local groups, the decision-making style of choice was "consensus," an idealistic, time-consuming method of decision-making, which often went awry. It existed in parallel with the reality of whoever gets it done gets to make the decisions and may be taken to task later (Whan in Jay and Young, 1972).

This dichotomy was a consequence of an ambivalence toward power and leadership found within most lesbian groups. Baker (1982) and Hicks and McCoy (1979) contended that ideological differences about leadership had dramatic consequences on the structure and fate of the feminist and lesbian feminist organizations they studied.

Baker argued that the eventual dissolution and restructuring into collectives of the organization she studied, was due to the incompatibility of the bureaucratic styles of some members, with the radical feminist ideology and informal organizational style of other members (Baker, 334).¹¹

In her study of lesbian feminism, Grevatt also noted that, "except for the issues of separatism, the issue of leadership was the focus of the most consistent battles

within the lesbian feminist movement" (1975, 284).

I suggest that differences in leadership and decision-making style were often class-based. By this I mean that women with privileged class backgrounds and women who were upwardly mobile, were often most guilty of dictating terms to others. Those who did not come from those classes and/or who had more egalitarian inclinations were put off by dictatorial, "in crowd/out crowd" dynamics. The problems related to leadership and power were discussed, but their possible class-based origins were not.

Although conflicts drained the movement, lesbian feminists still managed to accomplish many tasks on a wide variety of fronts. Without access to the "indigenous" resources available to other movements, an informal network of volunteer lesbian feminist activists created a significant national institutional base. At that time, many activists could afford to put in long, unpaid hours for the cause, because many were then outside the traditional labor market (Chesnut and Gable, 1997, 252). This factor, together with the adrenalin generated by the novelty of the movement, allowed it to expand at an unprecedented rate for almost ten years.

The *Whole Woman's Survival Catalogue*, which was published in 1973, contained an impressive record of spaces and projects developed within feminist boundaries in the course of only a few years. Although The *Catalogue* listed

lesbian projects, the terms "feminist" and "women" were most prevalent.

In spite of this attempt to downplay the lesbian presence, those who knew who was involved in building and maintaining those spaces and projects, read between the lines and saw an extensive record of lesbians working both alone and in collaboration with heterosexual "sisters."

Along with volunteer energy, the movement needed some sort of procedural plan. In one of the earliest studies on lesbian feminism as a social movement, Grevatt (1975) hypothesized that five steps were needed for this type of movement to be successful:

1. An *analysis* of the dominant culture and how it oppresses a group along with a proposed *alternative* on which to focus hope and energy;
2. The development of a *positive individual and collective identity* (often this step is made difficult by the intentional erasure of the group's history on the part of the dominant culture);
3. The organization of an effective *unifying and protective structure*, usually a social movement (this step is made more difficult if the group is coping with numerous internal struggles).

According to Grevatt, a *separatist stage* might be necessary in order to complete the first three steps and many movements never progress beyond the third step. The fourth step is the *formation of coalitions* with the goal of effecting significant social changes; and the last is

planning a *strategy* for "action in coalition" and carrying the plan to completion (Grevatt, 1975, 3-7).

When Grevatt compared Lesbian Feminism to other social movements she found the former to be problematic. Although made up of individuals labeled as "sexual deviants," the movement aligned itself with feminism rather than with gay liberation; it advocated and made wide use of the controversial strategy/ideology of separatism; it was anti-structure and anti-leader; and it had no formal program of action.

Grevatt attributed the problematic dynamics of Lesbian Nation to women's negative experiences in the sexist New Left, women's socialization, confusions over the definition and meaning of power, the political inexperience of many lesbian feminists, and heterogenous class backgrounds that led to conflicting styles of leadership.

Grevatt also noted the importance of ideology in relation to a movement's dynamics. She defined ideology as "the value-system and the interpretation of events that is unique to a particular social movement" (1975, 206). Grevatt outlined lesbian feminist ideology as follows:

1. sexism is the primary oppression.
2. heterosexuality is its most important tool.
3. the personal is political.
4. lesbianism is the positive, energizing expression of total political commitment to other women.

5. the lesbian/feminist is a woman-identified woman.
6. women have a proud heritage, which contains distinct themes of lesbianism.
7. the future society must be totally recreated and restructured (Grevatt, 1975 209-210).

Grevatt's outline is vulnerable to challenge. For example, lesbians of color, would find serious fault with it because it did not consider the issue of "difference." Those whom Echols (1989) called "politicos," would object to it for privileging "cultural feminism."¹² Differences in ideology caused frequent conflicts and the inability to form a coherent national movement.

Lesbian Feminist Theory

In the midst of activism and institution-building, there were various attempts to articulate a theoretical basis for the movement. In 1970, the New York group Radicalesbians [sic] produced "The Woman-Identified Woman" manifesto. The statement's basic points described the lesbian as the signifier of women's resistance to the patriarchy and argued that women-identified women (politicized lesbians) were the best hope for creating social change:

A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion...[a lesbian] is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society...cares to allow her...lesbian is the label...that holds women in line...by virtue of

having been brought up in a male society we have internalized the male culture's definition of ourselves...only women can give each other a new sense of self...It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation and the basis for the cultural revolution..." (Teal, 1970, 183).

This manifesto did not treat lesbianism as simply a political choice. It represented a view later held by many cultural feminists and life-long lesbians.

Another viewpoint was developed by "The Furies," a Washington D.C. lesbian separatist collective, made up of white women from various class backgrounds (including some former members of Radicalesbians) (Echols, 1989, 388). According to Alice Echols, the collective's newspaper, also called *The Furies* "contained some of the most powerful and insightful writing to be found anywhere in the movement" (1989, 228).

In the first issue of *The Furies*, Ginny Berson articulated one of the bottom lines of lesbian theory: "Sexism is the root of all other oppressions, and lesbian and woman oppression will not end by smashing capitalism, racism and imperialism" (Berson, 1972, 1).

Berson also made a distinction between lesbian identities based on sexuality and those based on politics: "Lesbianism is not a matter of sexual preference, but rather one of political choice which every woman

must make if she is to become woman-identified and therefore end male supremacy" (Berson 1972, 1).

Some might interpret this statement as a call for women who wanted to be part of making meaningful social change, to become lesbians. It can also be seen as suggesting that there is a difference between lesbianism as a "political choice" and lesbianism as an "inner drive."

Categorizing lesbianism as a political choice and distancing this choice from a context of "sexual preference" was a problem for some who were lifelong lesbians and/or those who did not want lesbian sexuality relegated to the closet. Some felt that theoreticians who focused on lesbianism as a political choice, did so as a strategy to win the support of homophobic heterosexual feminists.

Along with an analysis of sexism and lesbianism, The Furies collective also produced analyses of class issues and the dangers of cultural politics ("cultural feminism"). Furies member Nancy Myron extended Ginny Berson's argument by postulating that economics was the underpinning of sexism, "Class is one of the main pillars that keeps the male power system standing sturdy" (Myron, 1972, 2).

In the same issue of *The Furies*, Coletta Reid brought up the topic that would later divide lesbians along "cultural feminism" and "politico" lines. Adopting the

latter perspective, Reid warned about ideology that emphasized the personal over the political.

She argued that ideology must be "...a theory that will guide our actions so we don't waste time and energy on projects that leave women's oppression basically unchanged..." and she criticized "cr groups [which] too often stayed at the level of recounting personal experiences of oppression..." (Reid, 1972, 6).

Politico theoreticians increasingly condemned what they saw as a retreat to "personal solutions" and the abandonment of political activism. Those whom they called "cultural feminists" ignored these admonitions arguing that any overt lesbian activity was political.¹³

The politico stance may have been inspired by New Left theories of class oppression as the basic oppression. Yet, the tenet of lesbian theory that found the largest following (in white-dominated groups), was that sexism rather than capitalism, was the root of all evil.

More PC Than Thou

Beginning in the 1980s, as the lesbian feminist movement went into abeyance, ideological disputes moved to the academy, where they were debated under the terms "essentialism" (one is "born" with certain traits and/or certain identities have always existed); "cultural

lesbianism/feminism" (women are better than males and lesbians must create their own reality away from the y chromosome); "identity politics" (membership in certain marginalized groups determines how one identifies politically); and "social constructionism" (culture and identity are social, plastic constructions) (Hogan and Hudson, 1998, 149-152).

Although I will discuss these concepts in the context of lesbian social movements, I also note that these debates were (are) part of a larger contentious discourse in the fields of cultural studies and queer studies.¹⁴

Essentialism/Social Constructionism

Essentialism maintains that one may "be born" with certain traits and inclinations, and that there are significant and perennially manifesting differences between groups of people based on gender, race, etc. Because this type of theory has been used as a way to oppress and keep selected groups "in their place," marginalized groups such as lesbians, women and people of color, have long been suspicious of essentialist postulates.

However, of late, some feminists like Kathryn Anderson et al, acknowledge that basic differences between gender, for example, may exist: "with time, the fact of difference has become inescapable...fifteen years ago such an assertion

by feminist scholars would have been virtually unthinkable" (1990, 109).

While feminist scholars may only now be acknowledging or becoming brave enough to publicly articulate these perceptions, many lesbians have for some time argued that there are indeed "inescapable" and significant differences between females and males.

In their study of lesbian feminist activists, Taylor and Whittier found that:

Perhaps the strongest thread running through the tapestry of lesbian feminist culture is the belief that women's nature and modes of relating differ fundamentally from men's...our interviews suggest that the belief that there are fundamental differences between women and men is widely held by individual activists (Taylor & Whittier, 1992, 113).

According to that study, the majority of women who embrace a lesbian feminist identity, interpreted lesbianism within the framework of radical feminist ideology, and were inclined toward what Steven Epstein calls "modified social constructionism" (in Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 117).

I argue that "feminist lesbians" were more likely to subscribe to essentialist notions about their same-sex preferences because they had consistently known themselves as lesbians often at a young age, before they had a theoretical framework to work from or a support system to depend on. "Lesbian feminists" on the other hand, were more

receptive to ideas of social constructionism because as adults they had experienced the process of self-redefinition and a change of identity.

Within this multifaceted debate, women of color have generally positioned themselves on the side of strategic essentialism and identity politics, even when they criticize the shortcomings of both stances. Historian Emma Pérez contends that strategic essentialism is "...practiced resistance against dominant ideologies that silence and or/model [as in 'model minority'] marginalized groups..." (Pérez, 1994, 105).

Leila Abu-Lughod, argues that cultural feminism's assertion that females and males are different is a form of "reverse orientalism." But, Abu-Lughod also contends that in the hands of the dispossessed, essentialism can be a strategic weapon, and concedes that the essentialism of cultural feminism "may be provisionally useful in forging a sense of unity and in waging struggles of empowerment" (Abu-Lughod, 1991, 145).

Identity Politics

Diana Fuss defined identity politics as "the tendency to base one's politics on a sense of personal identity" (1989, 97). Those who affiliate with certain political viewpoints based on their membership in oppressed/marginalized communities are not welcome in

contemporary Cultural and Queer Studies departments and debates (Bourne in Yuval-Davis, 1994, 420). It has been noted that critics of essentialism and identity politics are most often white academics (Buechler, 1995).

Those defending strategic essentialisms are generally women of color and unreconstructed lesbian feminists. They argue that the attacks on essentialism and identity politics are driven by forms of individual and collective imperialism.

Antonia Darder, the editor of a bi-cultural anthology, contends that these criticisms are rooted in critics' self-interested defense of their own political and cultural territories:

In conventional critical debates about culture, there is generally a tremendous uneasiness when there is any effort to seriously explore notions of cultural consciousness and the merits of knowledge that is rooted in the lived cultural experiences of marginalized communities. Often this uneasiness seems to stem most directly from an overarching commitment to protect Western assumptions of individualism, objectivity, and universal truth which deceptively conceal institutionalized structures of entitlement and privilege embedded in critiques of identity politics that intentionally and unintentionally, function as a means to silence marginalized groups (Darder, 1994, 4).

To the charges that identity politics is apolitical "retreatism" and self-indulgence, Lourdes Torres, counters with the assertion that: "Identity politics as conceived by women of color means a politics of activism, a politics

which seeks to recognize, name, and destroy the system of domination that subjugates people of color" (Torres, 1993, 275).

White lesbians like Taylor and Raeburn also support the contention that identity politics is a form of "high risk activism" (1995, 252), while Rosalind Brunt cautions that the standpoint may also help steer us away from old mistakes:

unless the question of identity is at the heart of any transformatory project, then not only will the political agenda be inadequately rethought, but more to the point, our politics aren't going to make much headway beyond the left's own circles... (quoted in Yuval-Davis, 1994, 421).

In another study, Taylor and Raeburn (1995) found that the personal lives, work and general activities of those based in identity politics are all "sites" of political expression and contestation. In effect, these activists are putting themselves on the line in a multitude of contexts. As a result, they endure disapproval, harassment, etc., from homophobes, and (I add), from some quarters of the lesbian and gay communities.

Contrary to the assertions of many social constructionist academics, identity politics is not a retreat from the public world of socio-political struggle into presumably safer spaces of self, lifestyle and culture. Identity politics (or life politics) is a form of high-risk

activism, a strategy of challenging dominant relations of power (Taylor and Raeburn, 1995, 254).

Cultural Feminism

In her study of radical feminism, Alice Echols defined "radical feminism" as a "political movement dedicated to eliminating the sex-class system." (1989, 6). It's unwelcome sister was "cultural feminism," which Echols defined as a "countercultural movement aimed at reversing the cultural valuation of the male and the devaluation of the female..." (1989, 6).

According to Echols, "...radical feminists were typically social constructionists who wanted to render gender irrelevant, while cultural feminists were generally essentialists who sought to celebrate femaleness" (1989, 6). Echols also maintained that cultural feminism (read lesbianism) was to blame for the decline of "radical" activism beginning in the mid 1970s.

Politicos argued for example, that a focus on "CR," (consciousness-raising) led to an inclination to favor personal over than political solutions. Yet during the early 1970s, consciousness-raising groups inspired thousands of women to reinterpret their personal experiences in collective and structural terms and then to take action by joining their sisters in various venues of the women's

and/or lesbian movements. To this day the "valorization of personal experience continues to have a profound impact" on women (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 119). This stance is one supported by feminists of color (Collins 1990; Combahee River Collective 1983; Darder 1994; hooks 1994).

In challenging Echols' assertion that cultural feminism was an insidious virus run amok in the lesbian community, Nancy Whittier pointed out that cultural feminism was always in our midst (indeed was crucial to the development of lesbian identity, community and culture) and therefore should not be blamed for the demise of a certain type of "radical lesbian politics" (Whittier, 1995, 52).

In order to account for this loss, Whittier suggested that we look instead at external societal factors. Lesbian feminist communities in the mid-1970s faced an increasingly conservative climate and a backlash aimed at both lesbians and gays, a turn of events that resurrected the co-gender movement. The lesbian movement also suffered from a consistent lack of financial resources and a surfeit of internecine conflict. As lesbian feminists grew older, burn-out and the desire to "settle down" also thinned the ranks of the movement.

As to the charge that cultural lesbianism is apolitical, Whittier pointed out that since domination includes cultural hegemony,¹⁵ resistant cultural strategies

especially during times of movement "latency" must be considered political (Whittier, 1995, 251).

Thus, what feminists/lesbians like Echols overlook is that beginning in the 1980s, the locus of social control changed so that "Social control, which once operated within political and economic spheres, has been extended to the cultural" (Epstein, 1990, 49). Epstein also contends that under such conditions, "the realm of culture, once relatively autonomous from the sway of state power, has merged with the realm of political economy, and 'cultural' struggles have become as important as any other" (Epstein, 1990, 49).¹⁶

Maintenance Structures

Collective Identity

In postmodern cultures, activists must be content with local rather than national activism (although some informal national networks like the Green party do exist). In the case of unreconstructed lesbian feminists and woman-focused lesbians, contemporary activism takes place within woman-focused forms of cultural and political maintenance structures.

Taylor and Whittier contend that regardless of whether activism is waxing or waning, lesbian feminist communities promote and sustain collective identities. Like New Social

Movement theorists, they argue that during certain time periods (i.e. the 1990s), "...identity can be a fundamental focus of political work" (1992, 118).

Taylor and Whittier defined collective identity as "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences and solidarity" (1992, 105). They identified three basic elements of a collective identity:

1. A sense of group belonging that develops when individuals feel that a shared characteristic (lesbianism) has become important;
2. A consciousness or cognitive framework from which to mobilize.
3. A conscious opposition to the dominant/hegemonic order (1992, 110).

Building on the work of Gerson and Peiss, Taylor and Whittier proposed three analytical concepts useful in understanding how collective identity is constructed in social movements. These concepts can also be used to examine the structure and ideology of lesbian feminist communities:

1. **Boundaries** are "social territories" or the "social, psychological and physical structures that establish differences between a challenging group and dominant groups" (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 111). Lesbian Feminism developed these boundaries by creating separate women's spaces and a separate culture guided by woman-identified values (Taylor and Rupp 1992, 112).¹⁷

2. **Consciousness** is made up of "the interpretive frameworks that emerge out of a challenging group's struggle to define and realize its interests" (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 111). At the core of lesbian feminist consciousness was/is the view that heterosexuality is an institution in the service of patriarchy and that lesbian relationships and institutions subvert this system (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 114).

3. **Negotiation** is comprised of "the symbols and everyday actions subordinate groups use to resist and restructure existing systems of domination" (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 111). This practice also implies the valorization of everyday life and here we see the influence of the principle that our private and public lives are intricately intertwined ("the personal is political").¹⁸

Social Movement Community

Taylor and Whittier pointed out that "commitment to the politics of direct action distinguishes members of the lesbian feminist community from the larger population of lesbians" (1992, 120), and Denise Lockard also noted a distinction between the general lesbian population and the lesbian activist community (1985, 94).

The stance that appealed to a relatively small but vocal, activist segment of the lesbian population, was a

combination of politicized identity, community and culture (Whittier, 1995, 252). This combination generated what Taylor and Whittier call a "Social Movement Community," which they defined as "...a network of individuals or groups loosely connected through an institutional base, multiple goals and actions and a collective identity that affirms members' common interests in opposition to dominant groups" (1992, 107).

Lockard also identified characteristics of the lesbian community which lend themselves to the formation of Taylor and Whittier's Social Movement Community:

...interacting social networks; a group identity based on sexual preference; subcultural values (which are basically feminist in origin); and an institutional base of organizations and settings which provide places and structures for lesbian interaction (Lockard, 1986, 94).

Lockard contends that this institutional base "serves to support group identity, spread the values of a subculture, and provide some degree of continuity and structure beyond the social networks" (1986, 94).

Abeyance Structures

Nancy Whittier noted that radical politics are difficult to carry on in unfriendly or conservative environments, especially if portions of the radical constituency are "otherwise engaged" for example, working within the system (Whittier, 1995, 52). According to Verta

Taylor, under those conditions, a movement (or what is left of it) may adopt an "abeyance"¹⁹ stance and structure which sustains it. This position also provides a link between upsurges of activism by "...promoting the survival of activist networks, sustaining a repertoire of goals and tactics and promoting a collective identity that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose" (Taylor, 1989, 762).

Precedents for these abeyance structures are found in movement halfway houses (Morris, 1984) and voluntary associations (Jonassen, 1978, 334). Before and during the Homophile movement, variations of these networks (discussion groups, publications, gay-straight dialogues), maintained and nurtured the potential of new forms of lesbian and gay political struggle until the more propitious 1970s. Similarly, in the apolitical or "localized" 1990s, lesbian feminism persists within a new series of abeyance structures.

According to Whittier and Taylor, lesbian communities, spaces, projects and politics are presently "...a type of social movement abeyance structure that absorbs highly committed feminists whose radical politics have grown increasingly marginal since the mass women's movement receded" (1992, 122).

Ironically, long after Lesbian Feminism has been accused of ruining the radical lesbian movement by

advocating personal solutions over political action, it is the lesbian feminist Social Movement Community that in the 1990s (a somnolescent socio-political time), provides a politicized "abeyance structure" for veteran lesbian activists and "perplexed" younger lesbians. Examples include lesbian archives, lesbian-only groups, women-only festivals and spaces, and lesbian web sites on the Internet.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

"All research is political" (Oakley, 1981, 54).

This community history of a time and locale-specific lesbian activist movement is part of a body of work now being produced by the second generation of lesbian and gay researchers. The first generation is represented by those who unearthed extensive evidence of a lesbian and gay presence in the United States during the past 400 years (Katz, 1976, 1983); and Lillian Faderman (1990) and John D'Emilio (1983) who provided overviews of Twentieth century lesbian history and a history of lesbian and gay activism, respectively.

The research conducted by the second generation is narrower in scope, focusing on specific communities and time periods thereby providing future researchers with a new level of information (Boyd, 1995; Buring, 1997; Howard, 1997; Kennedy and Davis, 1993; Ross, 1995; Stein, 1994).

For this community history, I used data gathered through oral histories and content analysis. Using the first method, I conducted a series of interviews with primary witnesses.¹ As part of the interview, I asked each narrator to answer a series of questions that focused on their socio-economic background and political activism.²

The second method used to obtain data was a

qualitative, thematic analysis of the content of various Los Angeles lesbian and feminist community publications. This was done to identify or corroborate themes of importance to the community between 1970-1990.

The specific themes I was concerned with were institution-building, political activity and internecine conflict. I also took special notice of the presence and contributions of lesbians of color, since their history and activism, especially during the 1970s, was under-recorded by the white-owned publications that made up the bulk of the lesbian and feminist press.

Because I was a participant in a number of the groups and events named in this study, the standpoint of a native researcher in general and the implications of this standpoint in cross-cultural research will also be discussed in this chapter.

In this study I made use of recent community studies and ethnographies of lesbian and gay culture and activism as sources of comparative data and methodology (Beemyn, 1997; Buring, 1997; Howard, 1997). Works like that of Faderman (1990) and D'Emilio (1983) were used to provide a macro context of Twentieth Century lesbian history in the United States.

Throughout the study, social movement models and sociological perspectives were used as the theoretical framework from which to analyze the origins and development

of the movement in question (freeman, 1975; McAdam, 1982). I also made use of qualitative and interpretive content analysis methods (Reinharz, 1992, 151) and standard data analysis methods (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a basic guide for both the interviews and content analysis:

1. Who were these lesbian activists? What were their cultural/political antecedents? What motivated them to participate in various social movement(s)? What has become of them?

2. What political/cultural activities did these women engage in during this time period?

3. What were the issues/themes of major importance to the Los Angeles lesbian activist community?

4. What were the sociological/political stages of the feminist lesbian/lesbian feminist movement in Los Angeles between 1970-1990?

5. How did various segments of the lesbian activist movement clash and/or work together?

6. What were lesbian of color activists doing, either in coalition with or in parallel with white lesbian feminist activists?

7. What was the significance of these political and cultural activities on a personal and collective level? What difference/contribution did the Los Angeles lesbian activist

movement make, locally and nationally?

Methodology Issues in Lesbian Historiography

Lesbian Origins and Invisibility

Historian Martha Vicinus noted that lesbian history is "currently under-theorized and under-researched" (1994, 57), and both she and other researchers have identified some of the unique obstacles that impinge on the field's efforts to obtain the data from which theory can be developed. Arguably the most problematic is that "lesbian history is in the peculiar historical position of having to prove the very existence of its subject matter" (Doughty, 1979, 77).

Does evidence of same-sex genital activity determine whether or not a woman can be called a lesbian? If a woman does not identify with the term "lesbian" in the present or if she did not specify that as an affiliation in the past is she a lesbian?³

Although evidence of lesbian and/or lesbian-like behavior and relationships can be found throughout the historical record (Donoghue, 1995; Katz, 1976, 1983), lesbian researchers must also contend with assertions from social constructionist academics, that lesbians (and gays) as a class and/or identity did not emerge until sometime during the late 19th century or early 20th century.

The second obstacle is that large amounts of evidence have been lost or suppressed. Although the history of women

and people of color has also been lost, the records of these two groups are substantial in comparison to those of lesbians, gays and other "sexual outlaws."

Papers, photos and diaries containing lesbian evidence have too frequently been destroyed or sanitized by protective and homophobic relatives (Emily Dickinson's), researchers (Eleanor Roosevelt's biographer) and lesbians themselves (Freeman, 1998). Even members of other marginalized groups hesitate to make this facet of a woman's life known (Hull, 1984, 1985).

Due to this pattern of evidence tampering, researchers in the field of lesbian history have had to develop the ability to read between the lines. Frances Doughty and others have outlined some of the signs that add up to what she calls "patterns of evidence" For example, did the woman spend her life in the company of women and/or a long-time companion? Did she spend her life working on behalf of women? Did she make certain critical statements about male culture? Did she make use of coding (for example certain dress or terminology) that is understood by others "in the life?" Is there an "obligatory great man" in the picture who doesn't quite fit? (Doughty, 1979, 77-78).

The third barrier is anonymity. A witticism heard in feminist circles in the 1970s asserted that "anonymous was a woman," and this phenomenon encompasses lesbians as well. Due to this tradition of invisibility, researchers like

Esther Newton consider the use of names "and real details whenever possible" to be a "must in gay historical work." She warns that, "every proper noun I omit diminishes the store of information for those who will read my work and build on it" (1993, 304). Since lesbians (those of color in particular), have lived, worked and loved for the most part behind a screen of anonymity both chosen and imposed, names help researchers follow a trail and they also fill in spaces in the mosaic of our diverse history.

Lesbian (and gay) researchers have handled the challenge of both protecting their narrators and providing historical data by using a variety of methods partly based on the politics and desires of the groups and individuals they are working with (Newton, 1993; Ross, 1995).

In her study of Cherry Grove's old-time lesbians and gays, Esther Newton did not "out" living people, and tried to "minimize social friction" on controversial subjects, by using pseudonyms (1993, 304). Newton used names if the person was deceased, owned a business that advertised itself as gay, or if the person had been identified in print as gay. She also specified the orientation of those who were "straight."

Moving along on the political and historical continuum, we find that all but one of Ross' narrators (lesbian activists from the 1970s) wanted their names to appear in Ross's book. She noted that her narrators "...argued for

visibility on strictly political grounds as a way of lesbianly [sic] calling pride [sic] in themselves and their community" (1995, 18).

In the present study, no "outing" was intentionally done. I was guided by permissions from narrators, by any requests for anonymity and in general (as was Newton), by the public nature of names that appeared in public records such as community newspapers.

If a woman is now a lapsed lesbian (a "hasbean"),⁴ and possibly embarrassed by and/or secretive about her lesbian past, I asked permission to name her (if she was accessible). Including these women in the lesbian history record is important because a number of them contributed in significant ways to lesbian and feminist causes and their names once appeared in a lesbian context in community publications.

However, regardless of where each woman now locates herself on the "lesbian continuum" (Rich, 1993, 239), I have obtained permission to use the name of anyone not named in a public record. When they were not accessible, or wanted anonymity, I have used "X" as their last name.

I want to emphasize that many of the women quoted or named, were generally "out" in most facets of their lives, and these women deserve to be remembered individually and collectively, as a countermeasure to the long tradition of lesbian invisibility.

Naming also counters the common practice in historical research whereby collective phenomena are most often studied from a macro or "great person" perspective. At that level, only the names of "leaders" are placed in the printed record, "to the neglect of people at the community level who undertook the bulk of the work and endured most of the risks" (McLeod, 1991, 1).

Methodologies Used In Other Studies

The sources used to reconstruct lesbian (and gay) history include primary and secondary materials located in archives, libraries and private collections, as well as oral histories obtained during the course of the research process (Boyd, 1995; D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1991; Kennedy and Davis, 1993; Newton, 1993; Ross, 1995; Stein, 1994). However, due to the lack or loss of lesbian-specific historical data, traditional sources are not always useful. Becki Ross has noted the difficulty of elaborating a same gender erotic heritage" (1995, 7) and thus, lesbian researchers' dependence on "bricolage - a process of piecing together fragments from disparate and incomplete sources" which "attests to

In this section I will briefly review methodologies used in other lesbian, feminist and gay community studies, as a way of illustrating both the use of methodologies and how problematic issues were managed.

One of the earliest examples of the use of document

analysis in combination with oral histories in lesbian history research, is the dissertation by Margaret Grevatt on lesbian feminism as a response to oppression. Grevatt's data came from "a detailed examination of the movement writings of lesbian feminists" in combination with interviews with ten women who "appear to have functioned in a leadership capacity within the movement" (1975, 4).

In her study of a 1970s Toronto lesbian feminist organization, Becki Ross used archival resources, noting that these included an "eclectic mix of fiction, poetry, coming out stories, fiction and manifestos published in the 1970s by largely white, middle-class lesbian feminists in the small scale, feminist, lesbian and gay press" (Ross, 1995, 16).⁵

Some of the problems faced by lesbian (and gay) researchers are similar to those faced by researchers in other subject fields. Problems include reliability and access. The factor of time is also always at play, whereby women disappear, die or forget information.

Esther Newton (1993), who studied lesbian and gay residents of Cherry Grove, Fire Island had not lived at The Grove during the years she was researching. She managed the issue of reliability by cross-checking narrator's recollections with those of other narrators, and by comparing narrator data with local newspaper reports, and where possible, with other written sources. Conflicting

accounts were handled as different points of view.

Difficulties in accessing narrators belonging to specific groups was an issue noted by Franzen (1996), Kennedy and Davis (1993) and Whittier (1995). In her study of Albuquerque lesbians, Trisha Franzen found that "It was easier to find lesbian feminists willing to be interviewed, as working-class, and older lesbians and lesbians of color were far more reluctant to talk with me" (1996, 893).

Kennedy and Davis noted that the "groups with which we had the least direct contact were also the ones with which we had the least success in finding narrators" (1993, 18). They had difficulty accessing lesbian of color and "fem" narrators. Their study on lesbian culture in pre-Stonewall Buffalo (NY) working-class bars was also impeded by the lack of "documents on working class-community, culture and identity" (1993, 15).

Kennedy and Davis posited that between 5 and 10 narrators are needed to develop an analysis that will not be drastically altered by each new story (1993, 23). In a related observation, Newton noted that "The major events and themes of each historical period generally emerged after two or three interviews, allowing me to shape questions for succeeding narrators" (1993, 302).

Nancy Whittier who conducted a study on the "persistence of the radical women's movement," examined the documents of radical feminist organizations (in Columbus,

Ohio) as a method of identifying the leaders of organizations. Whittier then tracked down and interviewed "core activists" from the heyday of radical feminism (1960s and 1970s), and from the 1990s (Whittier, 1995, 10).

A number of women in Whittier's study were acknowledged lesbians, and, as in many other cities, were part of the backbone of that city's network of feminist organizations. Whittier noted that she offered confidentiality to her narrators, thereby providing "only general information about speakers" and at times, "less than complete background information about particular situations" (1995, 11).

In this study (Retter), the ages of the narrators range between 40 and 75, approximately 20% are women of color or of mixed ethnicity. They come from various class and educational backgrounds and their present incomes vary. One of my narrators asked for anonymity and several provided some of their information "off the record." All of the lesbian narrators were active in the Los Angeles lesbian community during the 1970s and/or 1980s and some are still involved in various forms of social activism. All are acquaintances or friends met during the course of my own twenty-nine years of political activism.

Over the decades, I have worked collaboratively with some of these women, and have had confrontations with many of them (generally over issues of elitism and racism). In the case of old adversaries, the fences have either been

mended or time has smoothed the differences enough for each of us to acknowledge that the other, although possibly misguided, was often sincere in her efforts on behalf of lesbian causes.

Methodologies Used in this Study

Oral History

You don't have anything if you don't have the stories (Leslie Marmon Silko, quoted in Garcia 1994, 70).

According to Raquel Rubio-Goldsmith, oral history interviews themselves become primary source material, providing themes and direction for theoretical thinking and the development of a conceptual framework. By including a variety of perspectives, they provide the counterpoint to traditional "one-voiced" history. In addition, the interview involves the interviewer in an inter-subjective interaction (1990, 163). These observations were made in the context of Chicana history, but they are germane to lesbian history as well.

The testimony provided by oral histories is of crucial importance in "recovering the voices of suppressed groups" (Gluck and Patai, 1991, 9), and "documenting the experience of the invisible" (Kennedy and Davis, 1993, 15).⁶ The depth and detail of most oral histories may also allow access to what is often not superficially obvious or recorded in print. For example, using interviews, Becki Ross was able to

access information about the internal workings of various lesbian collectives, including consensus decision-making, the dynamics of "trashing" and the problems of leadership and membership.

As primary documents, interviews can be used to corroborate printed documents (and vice versa), as when Kennedy and Davis "juxtaposed all interviews with one another to identify patterns and contradictions" and then checked "other sources, such as newspaper accounts, legal cases and labor statistics" (1993, 21).

Sometimes, however, juxtaposition will not yield an unequivocal answer, as in the debate about whether or not a lesbian said to have been present at Stonewall, helped incite the riot. One source claims she was there and energetically resisted the police (Fouratt in Duberman, 1993), while another is skeptical of that claim (Rodwell in Duberman, 1993). As Newton (1993) and Allen and Montell (1981) have suggested, in the event of conflicting testimony, a researcher can choose to allow each viewpoint to speak for itself.

In addition to providing corroborative evidence, oral histories enhance the historical record. This quality is important at a time when "official" historical accounts have been criticized for providing a "lack of multiple perspectives" (Newbill, 1993, 15). Using the Civil Rights Movement as an example, McLeod observed that the traditional

focus on leaders and prominent organizations provides "an incomplete picture...because it fails to capture the broader base of commitment and actions from which the national [Civil Rights] Movement drew its strength" (1991, 3).

Oral histories also enhance the historical record by providing subjective perspectives. According to Allen and Montell, while written records "speak to the point of what happened, oral sources almost invariably provide insights into how people felt about what happened" (1981, 21). This may include recollections that are heavy with emotional memory (Brody, 1985; Chesnut and Gable, 1997, Ross, 1995).

A number of lesbian researchers have intentionally taken steps to protect the value of the subjective, emic data provided by their narrators. In her study of lesbians in a Toronto lesbian organization, Ross was careful to safeguard "The meanings that LOOT members themselves attributed to public lesbian culture in the 70s" (1995, 18).

In their study, Kennedy and Davis, found that oral history allowed their lesbian narrators "to speak in their own voices of their lives, loves and struggles" (1993, 15). Jill Wittmer, whose dissertation was based on information from twenty-three "life story narratives" of lesbians living in Washington, D.C., noted that in her study "lesbians are given their own voice in the articulation of their personal existence and life experience" (1995, 1).

Although rich in texture, the data provided by oral histories have been criticized as "too subjective and idiosyncratic" to be historically valid. However, as Patricia Hill Collins has pointed out, research is conducted by human beings embedded in their own world views and thus, no standpoint is neutral (1991, 33, 218).

Contemporary researchers have begun to challenge the espoused objectivity of traditional historical documents which after all, were also selectively produced by individuals embedded in their own biases (Willson, 1986, 254). That challenge has widened the scope of what is considered "valid" historical data.

Even as the scope widens, researchers must still take certain precautions. For example, some warn that narrators may "perform" for the researcher and this factor must be considered as a possible source of distortion (Newbill, 1993, 74). This factor is illustrated during cross-cultural research, when natives narrators may choose to "spin tales" as a form of resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1991).

Another factor, one noted by Nan Boyd in her study of lesbian and gay San Francisco, was "community scripts." One example provided by Boyd is how "coming out stories function as a genre or public script through which individuals insert selected details from their private histories" (1995, 29).

Boyd also cautioned about what she called "the impact of master narratives on the production of oral history"

(1995, 30). By this she meant that narrators (in this case lesbians and gays), used the past to explain the present, by privileging certain stories, such as that life became unilaterally better for lesbians and gays after Stonewall.

Although factors related to subjectivity, performance, community scripts, filtering and the fading of memory must be considered as possible drawbacks in oral history, the method is an invaluable tool for gathering levels of data impossible to find in printed or written documents. Increasingly, others seem to agree, for as Craig Newbill noted, in recent years there has been "a more universal acceptance of oral history as a form of primary source material" (1993, 57).⁷

Content Analysis

The cultural products of any given society at any given time reverberate with the themes of that society and that era (Weitz quoted in Reinharz, 1992, 145).

Prior to the 1950s, lesbian and gay history most often had to be inferred from laundered biographies, closely edited letters and community folklore. The absence of lesbians and gays in the historical record was accentuated by their invisibility and/or negative portrayals in the mainstream media.

Thus, pre-Stonewall, community-generated periodicals such as *The Ladder* (published by the Daughters of Bilitis between 1956 and 1972), served as vehicles for the discrete

dissemination of information to dispersed and isolated homosexuals, and to the incipient activist lesbian/gay community. These publications chipped away at what historian John D'Emilio called a tradition of "silence, invisibility and isolation" (1983, 1).

Lesbian community newspapers, periodicals and broadsides both reflected and reinforced a politicized identity and supported collective action. Like the publications of other oppressed communities, they served as an organizing device, one that "orders, shapes and directs the consciousness of its readers...[this type of] newspaper or periodical is not only a collection of facts and attitudes, it is a social experience, and its continuing publication is itself a political process" (Chrisman, 1973, 15).

Another noteworthy function of these publications is to provide unique historical information about the communities that produced them. Since information by and about oppressed groups (i.e. women and people of color) is often missing from standard history books and official records, community-generated publications have become valuable primary sources.

According to June Purvis, community-generated publications "...offer commentary, from a variety of political perspectives, about events at the time..." (1992, 287). Thus, using the method of content analysis, a researcher can deduce what the important themes and issues

among specific groups were during a specific time period.

Sociologist and feminist Shulamith Reinharz, defined content analysis as "the study of a set of objects or events by counting or interpreting the themes contained in them" (1992, 147).⁸ She added that in feminist research four types of data sources predominate and easily lend themselves to this method: written records, narratives and visual texts, material culture, and behavioral residues (1992, 147).

The method of content analysis has been qualitatively applied by several researchers to at least one lesbian publication. Rose Weitz (1984) analyzed the content of *The Ladder*, DOB's official publication (1956-1972), as a method of tracking the political changes undergone by the organization. In another study, Esterbeg (1994) used *The Ladder* to gather evidence about how lesbians managed negative conceptions of homosexuality.

In the present study, I gathered data from the content of various Los Angeles lesbian and feminist periodicals about themes (issues) that were important to the local and national lesbian activist community during the 1970s and 1980s. The categories of themes that I searched for were: institution building (including culture), political activism, the lesbian civil wars, the activities of lesbians of color, and the political impact of personal relationships on the community.

When analyzing these publications, one must remember

that the "lesbian universe" consists of various communities, including sectors that identify as "politicized" (Lockard, 1985). It was this last group, represented primarily by white activist lesbians of various class backgrounds, that received the greatest amount and depth of coverage in lesbian and feminist publications during the time period in question. Since the majority of lesbian publications were owned and managed by white lesbians, the ethnic bias of their coverage is not surprising.

An analysis of *The Index to Lesbian Periodicals* which lists the contents of 42 lesbian periodicals published in the United States between 1968 and the early 1980s, corroborates the assertion that this inclusion/exclusion pattern was standard across the country. Entries on lesbians of color individually or as a group under any term (i.e. "Third World Lesbians") are relatively few, while references to white-dominated activist groups and events and individual white women are numerous in this 413-page book (Potter, 1986).⁹

Native Research

Ethnographic research carried on in one's own society may be the sine qua non for anthropology itself (Wolcott, 1988, 3).

Prior to the 1970s, research on homosexuals was generally conducted by outsiders who subscribed negative views of homosexuals (Krafft-Ebbing, 1943; Caprio, 1954), and their "findings" helped to re/enforce social controls

against this group. In the 1950s and 1960s some friendly outsiders (Evelyn Hooker), closeted insiders (Donald Cory), and researchers who did not specify their sexual orientation (Sawyer, 1965; Sweet, 1968), began to conduct their own studies.

Since the 1970s, it is predominantly "native researchers" who have studied the history and culture of lesbian and gay communities (Boyd, 1995; D'Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1991).¹⁰ Unlike ethnic cultures, contemporary lesbian and gay communities run less risk of being exploited by outsider researchers because to do research in this field is to run the risk of being labeled homosexual, and as D'Emilio (1989) pointed out, in academia, this is more of a liability than an asset.

The research method advocated by those "native" to a socio-cultural setting is known variously as "native anthropology" (Jones, 1982) and "indigenous anthropology" (Fahim and Helmer, 1982). Anthropologist John Gwaltney noted that this method incorporates "...traditionally ignored perspectives into theory building..." (1981b, 48). I argue that native research is a viable research method for any culture or community that has traditionally been studied and marginalized by outsiders. Under these categories I include lesbian culture, history and community.

Native research is an emic methodological response to centuries of intrusion, exploitation, appropriation and

misrepresentation.¹¹ Its challenge extends to what has been hitherto considered a progressive field method, and one that many white feminists are still partial to - "participant observation."

In participant observation, rather than "objectively" observing from afar, the researcher immerses herself in the cultural and physical environment she is studying, hoping to acquire an accurate understanding of that culture. Later, she often presents this information to outsider colleagues and readers. Spradley contended that a participant observer had two purposes: to "engage" and "observe" (1980, 54).

However, like all methods, participant observation has its limitations. One of them is the assumption that an "outsider" can become an "insider" through sheer sincerity, perseverance, and perspicacity.

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney argued that,

It is unfortunate that "participant observation," the traditional and much-heralded field method of anthropologists, implies an illusion that the anthropologist either becomes a member of the society or immediately gains the "inside" feel of the culture...I think it is presumptuous, or even condescending to think that the "natives" consider anthropologists, who may stay a year or two, as members of their own society (1984, 585).

Critics of participant observation argue that the socialization process of a participant observer is significantly different from that of a native researcher, and that this difference is crucial. The key difference between insider and outsider research rests on the factor of

what Stephenson and Greer call the "degree of nativity" (1981, 14).

Native research advocates argue that while the research activities of insiders and outsiders may be the same, the cognitive and experiential point from which insiders and outsiders begin, is significantly different and that difference has a major and under-researched impact on cross-cultural research.

Kirin Narayan explained the difference between insider and outsider researchers as one of nativity and chronology:

Instead of learning conceptual categories and then through fieldwork finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have pre-existing experience, absorb analytic categories that rename and re-frame what is already known. The re-framing essentially involves locating vivid particulars within larger cultural patterns, sociological relations and historical shifts" (1993, 678).

Another significant difference between the native researcher (NR) and the outsider researcher (OR) standpoints is that the former is often motivated by more than intellectual curiosity and academic rewards. Native researchers are often committed to (involved with, rather than distanced from), their research because they feel a responsibility to use it as a tool for social and economic change in their native cultures and communities (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Benoune, 1985; Lewis, 1973). As an example, lesbian researchers Kennedy and Davis declared that, "uncovering our hidden history was a labor of love, and restoring this

history to our community was a political responsibility" (1993, xvi).

Pros and Cons of Native Research

The upside of the native researcher standpoint includes an understanding of a community's social reality based on minimal cues. For example, lesbian researcher Cindy Cleary (1981) noted that many outsiders have erroneously perceived spinsters as simply "odd" women who could not find a man. She pointed out that a number of these either did not want a man or preferred women, and in some cases were involved in long-term relationships with other women.

Questions by insiders also tend to be less "asymmetrical" and are less likely to "exoticize" the natives (Lewis, 1973). Diane Lewis observed that outsiders too often ask questions that they would not ask members of their own culture. For example, an outsider researching lesbians might focus on lesbian separatism and how a separatist views males, rather than (also) ask questions about what a separatist's hopes and aspirations for women are.¹²

Another difference is that insider knowledge of the community's dynamics and history allows the native researcher to provide information when a narrator experiences a memory lapse, and to "flag" information that seems incongruent. While conducting this study, I was (on various occasions), able to fill in a gap in a narrator's

memory and/or to question information that I knew to be contrary to the printed record and/or my own memory.

Another advantage of native status is access. Altorki and El-Solh argued that in gender-segregated heterosexual societies, indigenous female fieldworkers may have certain advantages, such as more flexibility in where they are permitted to go and what questions they are permitted to ask (Altorki and El Solh, 1988; Nakleh, 1979). Lesbian communities are a variation of gender-segregated societies and thus, being a biological female is an advantage when seeking entree to certain sectors of the lesbian community.

While an insider knowledge base is an advantage, a surfeit of familiarity or information also has a downside. This includes taken-for-granted assumptions, and having so much information that one cannot decide what is important (Altorki and El Sohl, 1988). Ohnuki-Tierney points out that although native researchers are in an advantageous position for understanding the culture's "emotive dimensions of behavior...the intensity can be an obstacle in discerning patterns of emotion" (1984, 584).

This problem is shared by outsider researchers, for as Shulamith Reinharz noted, when the researcher "'goes native' she cannot detach herself from her experiences," which have become "precious and cannot be analyzed" (1991, 167).

Other challenges faced by native researchers include community expectations that the researcher *will/must* present

the community in a good light (Stephenson and Greer, 1981). Insider researchers may also find it difficult to maintain social distance. For example, Kennedy and Davis reported that they "...could not make a clear separation between work and personal life" (1993, 193). Another difficulty faced by insiders who remain connected to the community is that they cannot avoid the consequences of their choices (for example, what they wrote about the community).

Challenges faced by both insiders and outsiders may include developing the skills necessary to avoid internecine conflicts and pressures to "take sides" in a dispute (Stacey, 1991; Kennedy and Davis, 1993). Another pressure which they have in common is the with/holding of sensitive information (Cassell, 1977). When Nancy Whittier, studied a group of radical feminists, she acceded to requests for confidentiality, thereby she says, providing "less than complete background information about particular quotations or giving only general information about speakers" (1995, 11).

Although I have enumerated advantages of the lesser known insider perspective in some detail, it is also true that the outsider perspective has its own advantages. In a critique of outsider anthropology, Diane Lewis also acknowledged that "an outsider can perceive things that are so deeply ingrained they escape the insider; he can stand back and delineate alternatives simply because he is not

involved" (1973, 587).

In a much cited essay, anthropologist Robert Merton challenged the validity of native research arguing that, "informants will not hesitate to make certain private views known to a disinterested outside observer...the outsider has "stranger value" (quoted in Reinharz, 1984, 181).

Based on the literature and my own research experiences, I argue that the insider has "familiar value," but agree with those who contend that some information will be more readily given to the outsider and some to the insider. For example, according to Diane Wolf, Tixier y Vigil (a Chicana) and Elsasser (an Anglo), found that their Chicana narrators were more open about sexuality with a female Anglo interviewer, but they spoke more freely about discrimination with a Chicana (1996, 15).¹³ Thus, in cross-cultural research, those trying to obtain a maximum amount of useful data might consider collaboration as a preferred methodological approach.¹⁴

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LESBIAN FEMINIST DECADE , I

One must probably find the humility to admit that the time of one's own life is not the one-time, basic, revolutionary moment of history, from which everything begins and is completed. At the same time humility is needed to say without solemnity that the present time is rather exciting and demands an analysis (M. Foucault quoted in Quinby, 1995, 31).

The political, social and cultural influences of modernity "loosened" traditional compliance with a number of values long adhered to by United States citizens, especially those in the middle classes. This loosening also generated individual "identity re-framing" and collective activity in a number of "depreciated" sectors of the population. Beginning in the 1950s, political mobilization which had traditionally taken place on behalf of the economically oppressed, re/focused onto those deprived of their civil rights. The successes of the Civil Rights Movement inspired other oppressed groups including homosexual women and men.

At first working alone and in small groups and later, in formally incorporated non-profit organizations, homosexuals worked as they could to organize against oppression and on behalf of their civil rights. Historian John D'Emilio noted that what began as an oppositional attempt to safeguard private sexual preferences, turned into a movement to promote collective liberation: "In attempting to build a politics based on sexual preference, the homophile movement in effect helped create the community

that later, was able to sustain a liberation effort" (1983, 249).

The contrast between a homosexual's overt value as a contributing member of society and her/his often secretive life as a "pervert," generated a sense of status inconsistency and feelings of cognitive dissonance.

Ontological inconsistency coupled with societal upheavals then in progress, led some to redefine their status from one of a "spoiled identity" to one of an aggrieved minority. In her study of the Women's Liberation Movement, Jo argued that,

It is only when disputes that result from personal changes are translated into public demands that a movement enters the political arena and can make use of political institutions to reach its goals of social change (1975, 5).

In the 1950s, in the midst of the McCarthy Era, homosexuals began to mobilize against a tripartite system of oppression (legal, medical and religious) (Katz, 1976, 7). They founded the first lasting homosexual rights groups (Mattachine, 1950; ONE, 1952; Daughters of Bilitis, 1955). They called their incipient social movement the Homophile movement. Homophile organizations lobbied the agents of social control, worked with allies to improve the lot of homosexuals, and through their own publications, reduced the isolation of some, and supported the political activism of other homosexuals.

During the 1960s, many soon-to-be members of the new

Gay Liberation movement came of age (if not maturity), in the midst of a series of structural strains, a loss of confidence in the system, increased expectations, and experiences in other social movements. Members of the younger generation of homosexuals, especially those who were veterans of other social movements, were more oppositional than their Homophile predecessors. Thus, the Stonewall "riot," one of those "specific sparks that ignite protest" was both timely and inevitable.¹

Stonewall

The riot/revolt at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, New York, has been recounted in a number of sources (Duberman, 1994; Marcus, 1992). Tradition has it that "The Stonewall" was a drag queen bar, but drag queen Rey "Sylvia" Rivera, recalls that he and his friends were not welcome there. Morty Manford then a student at Columbia, remembers that "The place attracted a very eclectic crowd. Patrons included every type of person: some transvestites, a lot of students, young people, older people, businessmen" (in Marcus, 1992, 200).

The riot took place on the evening of the funeral of gay male icon Judy Garland. According to cultural critic Daniel Harris, the resilient and tragic Judy was "the ultimate bellwether of the docile gay masses" (1996, 175). However, during this time of social ferment, there were, running in parallel with their docile brothers, gay men who

were inclined to be more defiant.

The latter group included drag queens who identified with the "invincible personas" of battling screen divas like Joan Crawford and Bette Davis (Harris, 1996). On June 28, 1969, the crowd outside the Stonewall contained a surfeit of those who, although sad about Judy, were mad like Davis and Crawford.

It was a muggy night with a full moon. Ira Kushner, was fifteen at the time, and remembers standing outside the Stonewall, participating in a memorial for Judy. The police arrived shortly after midnight. According to Kushner, first they arrested younger gay males on the street and then they entered the bar (Harakas, 1994). When the patrons were roughly hustled into the street, there was an unexpected reaction on the part of the crowd - resistance.

The resistance encountered by the police came from individuals belonging to groups which during this era of social upheaval, were most likely to have confronted the agents of social control. They included drag queens, student activists, street people and butches.²

Rey Rivera who was already involved in other social movements, recalls that "that night everything clicked." He told himself, "Great. Now it's my time. I'm out there being a revolutionary for everybody else, now it's time to do my own thing for my own people" (interview in Marcus, 1992, 191).

There is also evidence that a lesbian may have contributed a well placed spark. Activist Jim Fouratt recalled that, "...a bulldyke ...was inside giving the cops a lot of lip about their rights and how the cops should get out...they handcuffed and arrested her (in Duberman, 1994, 196). According to Fouratt, when she objected, she was hit and put into a police car. She promptly extricated herself from the car, released herself from the handcuffs and started rocking the police car.

Fouratt's memory of the dyke is discredited by some (Rodwell in Duberman, 1994, 197), but dyke or no dyke, at one point the audience exploded. The police were showered with coins (a symbol of the bribes paid by the bars to the police), stones, an uprooted parking meter, fists and insults. The queens turned the melee into street theatre, hurling sexual repartee at the police, and forming a chorus line, singing "We are the Stonewall girls..." At one point the bar was set on fire, reinforcements were called and thirteen people were booked (Duberman, 1994, 202).

Gay Liberation

In the days following the riots, homophile groups "at odds with each other over strategy" held meetings, trying to take advantage of the incident as an organizing opportunity (Lige and Jack, 1969, 3). Soon after, the co-gender Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed as a radical, co-gender, homosexual advocacy group. Its name signified solidarity

with "Third World" movements like the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. Following the example of New York Gay Liberation, groups with the same name (GLF), sprang up around the country. Their intention was to create and maintain a radical, political social movement on behalf of homosexual rights.³

Los Angeles gays and lesbians formed the Southern California Gay Liberation Front in December, 1969. It was the first "in your face" gay/lesbian political action group in that city. According to Homophile pioneer Harry Hay, "Gay hippies and college students were at the forefront of the new organization, and many of the homophile generation followed in fascination" (quoted in Timmons, 1990, 230).

Following the conventions of counterculture philosophy, GLF groups had no central coordinating entity. They were all autonomous and loosely connected in the "segmented, polycephalous and reticulate," form described by Gerlach and Hine (in Freeman, 1975, 135). As the Gay Liberation movement proliferated, GLF groups communicated through personal networks, the new Gay Liberation media and through increasingly larger and more public conferences.

When the first anniversary of Stonewall arrived in 1970, one writer in the gay press asked, "Where do you send the congratulatory telegram, the Happy Birthday greeting in commemoration of a year of astounding and unprecedented progress toward equality under the law and universal dignity

for homosexuals in America?" (Teal, 1971, 321). The answer was, everywhere.

At an ERCHO (Eastern Regional Coalition of Homophile Organizations) meeting in Philadelphia in November of 1969, Ellen Broidy of the NYU Student Homophile League and Craig Rodwell of the Homophile Youth Movement, proposed that the "Annual Reminder" (the Homophile picket of federal government buildings on July 4th) be moved to New York City and be called the "Christopher Street Liberation Day" (Teal, 1971, 322). The suggestion was approved and gay communities in other geographic locations were encouraged to hold similar celebrations.

In New York, an estimated crowd of 10,000 people showed up to commemorate Stonewall. In Los Angeles approximately 1200 people marched along Hollywood Boulevard, while close to 2000 watched. Activist Karla Jay, then living in Los Angeles, recalled the first L.A. parade,

I seem[ed] to be one of only nine or ten women...who had the courage to march, despite the fact that my friend Del [Whan] and I leafleted all the lesbian bars...of course it still wasn't quite safe to come out, and the parade was also an act of defiance against our oppressors... (Jay, 1983, 10).

Activist Del Whan remembers that she helped carry the GLF banner during the parade, "...[and] the worst we got was jokes...there were smiles, happy, loving smiles everywhere. Karla [Jay] marching behind us was the cheering section...I have never felt happier or prouder in my life..." (Whan, 1971, np)

Another participant, Sharon X, expressed the feelings of many lesbians and gays who only a few years before would not have dared to gather publicly, let alone stage a parade to celebrate their new found pride:

We were all so happy that we had a permit to actually march, and it was frightening too, because it was the first time that people were watching us from the streets, in some places they were five and six deep... (Sharon, interview).

This celebration was held at a time when splits over gay male sexism were already developing in co-gender Gay Liberation groups across the United States (Chesnut and Gable, 1997, 254; Marotta, 1981, Chapter 9; Martin, 1994; Teal, 1971, 187).

In an effort to increase lesbian membership in the predominantly male Los Angeles GLF, Del Whan, June Herrle and Virginia Hoffding organized the GLF Gay Women's Caucus (GWC). Eventually (and following the example of women who had left the sexist New Left movement to form the feminist movement), lesbians left Gay Liberation and Homophile groups to form their own movement.

Sharon X's experiences illustrate the evolution of gay lesbians toward a lesbian-focused movement. She recalled that in GLF,

[I] found for the first time in my life a place where I felt really involved and felt a sense of developing sisterhood and brotherhood, but at the same time also very, very rapidly, I was developing a sense of what it meant to be a woman and the need to split from men (Sharon, interview).

In October, the GWC separated from the GLF and renamed

itself the Gay Women's Liberation Group. The group sought a new meeting place and was welcomed by Carol Downer, a heterosexual feminist and pioneer in the self-help (health) movement and her co-workers at the Los Angeles Women's Center (LAWC) on Crenshaw Boulevard (Moravec, 1990).

Phase I: Lesbian Liberation, 1970-1972

Before Stonewall, the institutional base of lesbian culture was limited. In Los Angeles and other geographic locations it generally consisted of bars, private homes, strips of beaches and softball fields (Nestle, 1989; Newton, 1993). When Gay Liberation emerged onto the social movement scene, the opportunities to expand the lesbian cultural and political base multiplied exponentially.

Institution-building provided what Taylor and Whittier called "boundaries" or "social, psychological and physical structures that establish differences between a challenging group and dominant groups" (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, 111). These self-contained environments both affirmed individual lesbian identity and fueled collective activism.

Los Angeles lesbian activists included "red diaper babies" who had grown up in politicized environments; some had participated in the Civil Rights and Student Movements, before "finding home," in the lesbian movement; some were lifelong lesbians who had participated in the homophile movement; others had come out after joining the Women's Movement.

For some, the new movement provided a welcome relief from ontological contradictions. Shirl Buss found that her feelings made more sense in the context of lesbian feminism,

It wasn't until feminism and the gay pride movement kicked in that I started finding a framework that explained my feelings and helped me to accept my feelings and to honor them...I gravitated toward the lesbian and feminist community because it made me feel whole and made me feel sane in a certain way... (Shirl, interview).

Jeanne Córdova, a self-identified butch and former DOB member, was also transformed by her exposure to lesbian feminism. Years after she first became involved in the burgeoning lesbian feminist movement, she wrote that,

Feminism healed the core contradictions of my life. [It] said I was clearly a woman, but that I could be any kind of woman I wanted to be...a free woman who refused to be defined by the rules of patriarchy... (in Nestle, 1992, 282).

The new lesbian liberation movement used skills and strategies learned in other social movements including the value of community publications, the use of confrontation and media manipulation, and the value of collective pride. Like GLF and many radical feminist groups, lesbian activist groups were grassroots based, loosely organized, and without a central organizing entity (Whittier, 1995, 5).

Across the United States an informal network of lesbian activist groups energetically participated in an unofficial but ubiquitous 2-point program: advocacy (both protest and lobbying) for lesbian civil rights; and unprecedented institution-building within their own local

communities. The latter included centers, conferences, publications, businesses and cultural creations.

The two point program was fortified by the new ethos of "coming out." Declaring to oneself and to others that one was a lesbian was good for self-esteem, it inspired others to come out and the influx of new activists helped fuel the movement (Raphael, 1974, 109). For much of the 1970s decade, lesbian institution-building in Los Angeles proceeded at a rapid, exuberant pace.

The Los Angeles lesbian activist movement of the 1970s can be divided into three phases: in the initial separatist phase, lesbian-focused groups and all-purpose centers staffed by volunteers were the norm; during the second separatist phase, groups and centers focused on fewer issues or areas of service, a few projects found funding and lesbian culture blossomed; during the final phase lesbians and gay men joined forces to combat the Moral Majority backlash.⁴ At that point, portions of the lesbian movement switched from grassroots and separatist organizing to co-gender "leverage advocacy."⁵

Over the years, both in Los Angeles and in other locations such as Chicago (Brody, 1985) and Atlanta (Chesnut and Gable, 1997), diverse agendas sparked interest, ignited debate and sometimes exploded into intra-community conflicts or "the lesbian civil wars" (Retter, 1997, 327). During this decade Los Angeles lesbians fought one another over sexism

and worker-boss disparities at the Gay Community Services Center, sexual style and the white lesbian community's indifference to racism. These conflicts had a marked impact on the activist lesbian community in Los Angeles. It divided lesbians, damaged organizations, reduced the coherent energy available to work on an issue, and left more than a few with "activist PTSS."⁶

In this chapter and in the next two chapters I will discuss the dynamics of groups, projects, events, and internecine conflicts that comprise the history of the first decade of lesbian political activism and institution-building in Los Angeles.

Gay Women's Service Center

After separating from GLF, lesbians began to form their own support/activist groups and some engaged in projects that served the specific needs of lesbians. During this initial phase, two centers and one radical lesbian group formed the nucleus of the emerging Los Angeles lesbian movement.

The first project was the idea of Del Whan, a lesbian who had experienced the loneliness of the isolated lesbian when she first arrived in Los Angeles. Del recalled that "Most gay women such as myself were still lonely or taking pills or alcohol...There was a huge gap between gay militancy and gay reality" (Whan, 1971b, 3). In December of 1970, she rented a storefront in Echo Park on Glendale

Boulevard and set out to address the gap.

Shortly after, some of her political sisters in the Gay Women's Liberation Group (which had been renamed Lesbian Feminists), took Del to task for not consulting with the group about her plans to rent the storefront (Whan in Jay and Allen, 1977). Their disapproval reflected the lesbian feminist ambivalence toward leadership and power. While theoretically espousing the benefits of individual empowerment and no hierarchy, in reality, lesbian groups always had some type of control group. Those outside the de facto leadership group risked disapproval if they acted independently (Moravec, 1990, 101).⁷

In spite of Lesbian Feminist disapproval, Del and a handful of women proceeded to open what is thought to be one of the first lesbian social services center anywhere, the Gay Women's Service Center (GWSC). The GWSC offered rap groups, referrals, classes, dances, pot lucks and temporary housing. The women who came to the center ranged in ages from 15-60 and included teen runaways and women in the professions. Most were white, a few were women of color (Raphael, 1974, 57).⁸

Like most (underfunded) lesbian projects, GWSC did not last long. It closed in September of 1972, but during the time it was in operation, "hundreds of women" availed themselves of the services it provided. The demise of the GWSC was attributed to reasons that would soon become a

familiar refrain, "...as with many organizations, there were not enough women to share the responsibility of the work involved in providing these services" (LT 11/72,16).

Daughters of Bilitis

While the GWSC struggled to bring social services to lesbians, Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), an organization founded in the shadow of the McCarthy era (1955), was attempting to "retool" itself to fit an "out" and confrontive 1970s movement. In the summer of 1970, DOB abolished its national structure in favor of "a loose federation of virtually autonomous chapters" (Teal, 1971, 189).

The reason given for this change was that the widely dispersed chapters were hard to manage from one central location. However, there may have been other factors at play. For example, according to Don Teal, within the organization, "... a feeling of militancy was growing, brought especially by younger women who were flocking to join the organization" (Teal, 1971, 189).

In October of 1971, DOB's Los Angeles chapter, which had operated intermittently since the 1960s, rented a storefront on Vermont Avenue and provided space for meetings, lectures, social events and therapy groups (one co-led by a Latina). In early 1972, it was announced that "due to the high overhead" the chapter would be leaving its Vermont location, but that some members wanted to continue

with DOB activities (LT 1/72, 14).⁹ After closing its center, DOB Los Angeles ceased operations.

By the time the DOB center closed, the chapter's newsletter, *The Lesbian Tide* (*The Tide*), was almost 6 months old. One can follow the progression of the chapter's efforts to adapt to the fast moving current of political events by noting the changes in its newsletter.¹⁰ On the inside front cover of the first issues of *The Lesbian Tide*, one finds the statement that DOB is "a nonpolitical, non profit organization" with the goal of "the actualization of personal pride in the lesbian" through education (LT 8/71).

In November, 1971, the inside of the front cover described DOB as a "community of gay women" and a "social service organization" working "on behalf of the community" and "dedicated to changing society's negative stereotypes of the lesbian by presenting and interpreting our cause."

In January, 1972, *The Tide* announced that it had been granted independence from DOB and was now a "working collective." Finally, in March, 1972, a notice on the inside of the front cover of *The Tide* announced that it was an "independent, lesbian/feminist magazine."

Lesbian Feminists

The third Los Angeles lesbian activist group to emerge during the first phase, was born out of the confluence of lesbianism and feminism. In February of 1971, the Gay Women's Liberation group had been renamed, Lesbian Feminists

(LF). As noted in *The Tide*, "Lesbian Feminists is a women's liberation group with an emphasis on lesbian oppression" (LT 5/72, 11). The membership of LF was made up of lesbians new to the lesbian feminist movement (feminist lesbians), and feminists who had just come out (lesbian feminists).¹¹ Most LF members were white, between the ages of 20 and 35 and came from various class backgrounds.

Unlike DOB and GLF lesbians, LF lesbians were heavily influenced by feminist analyses of sexism as the "root oppression" and by calls for equal rights for women. Some of its members also identified as progressive leftists or socialists. Lesbian Feminist ideology promoted "Consciousness-Raising"¹² for personal change and political activism for collective change.

Lesbian Feminists was a high energy group which met on Tuesday nights at the Los Angeles Women's Center on Crenshaw Boulevard. Sometimes the small meeting room barely held the large crowd. Sharon X recalls "...being the chairperson of this group of 40 or 50 women who were sitting on this floor, and [it] was wonderful!" (Sharon, interview). The core working group was made up of perhaps fifteen women who carried out the planning and implementation of a variety of projects which many more participated in. Because the group was energetic and visible, it projected a presence larger than its numbers (personal recollection).

In the tradition of what sociologist Herbert Blumer

called a "General Social Movement" or a movement of "broad range," Lesbian Feminists worked on behalf of various progressive causes. They helped organize gay-straight dialogues; hosted a popular Saturday night coffeehouse as an "alternative to the bars" (LT 9/71,16); helped picket the Sybil Brand (County Jail) "Daddy Tank"¹³ and participated in anti-Vietnam War activities.¹⁴ Some of their projects were also political responses to personal issues. When one of the group's members was kidnaped while hitch-hiking and was raped, LF organized a "Sisters-Give-Rides-to-Sisters" campaign (personal recollection).

In lesbian feminist groups, alliances with gay males were replaced with a desire for alliances with heterosexual feminist women. The latter however, were not as keen to reciprocate. At the time, lesbians (whom NOW leader Betty Friedan dubbed "The Lavender Menace"),¹⁵ were perceived as a threat to NOW's efforts to gain adherents and support from the larger society.

In order to protect themselves from the Lavender threat, some NOW members tried to subvert lesbian participation in the organization. *The Tide* once ran a feature story on the travails of New Jersey DOB president Jan Rubin, who had tried to "join the lesbian movement with the women's movement in our state" (LT 12/72, 3). As Rubin's efforts gained momentum, NOW restructured its New Jersey system with the intention of excluding her.

At the memorable New York Women's Strike march and rally (August 26, 1970), there was no lesbian speaker on the program. Lesbians attributed the omission to homophobic feminists who considered lesbianism to be a "side issue" of a "special interest group," which was considered to be "a continuing source of embarrassment to the [women's] movement" (Jay, 1983, 177).¹⁶ Yet, as one reporter observed:

Despite [the] resistance they encountered in women's lib groups, the larger percentage of active lesbians have chosen women's liberation as their primary point of identification and gay liberation second, thus bringing the gay struggle into the heart of the women's movement (in Teal, 1971, 182).

Lesbophobia notwithstanding, members of Lesbian Feminists and others worked with Los Angeles NOW lesbians to prepare a pro-lesbian resolution for the feminist organization. At one point, Lesbian Feminists used their regular Tuesday night meeting to decide who from the group would speak on behalf of the pro-lesbian resolution at the next NOW meeting. Lolly X and Liz Stevens were chosen because they were articulate and their appearance and demeanor was unthreatening (personal recollection).

The NOW resolution outlined the numerous problems associated with being a lesbian in this society and criticized the organization's reluctance to support women who had supported their heterosexual sisters on issues like abortion.

The resolution proposed that:

...NOW [recognize] the double oppression of women who are lesbian [there was no mention of race or class]...That a woman's right to her own person includes the right to define and express her own sexuality and to chose her own lifestyle...That NOW acknowledge the oppression of lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism (NOW Conference Program, 9/71, 15).

The Los Angeles chapter passed the resolution in May and carried it to the National Conference held in Los Angeles in September, where as Resolution #128 it was passed without amendment. Resolution #129, addressing the concerns of lesbian mothers was passed after it was amended. The passage of Resolution #128, was considered a first and important victory for lesbian rights because it came from the most influential and visible feminist organization in the United States.

The Lesbian Movement Diversifies

By the spring of 1971, three groups (LF, GWSC and DOB) offered services and activist opportunities for Los Angeles lesbians. At that point, it was suggested that since each group represented a different ideology, an umbrella organization might serve to maximize available energy and minimize potential conflicts, and so The Intergroup Council was formed.

During the summer of 1971, the Council produced the "Lesbian issue" for *Everywoman* (EV), a feminist Los Angeles newspaper. This was a significant breakthrough since the periodical was publicly circulated and was not a lesbian

publication. The issue contained articles by lesbians on diverse subjects including socialism, old(er) lesbians and the recent Gay Women's West Coast Conference.

The Council was instrumental in organizing the conference. It was a landmark Los Angeles event and also an example of lesbian coalition-building. The number and geographic diversity of the 350 women who attended the June, 1971, conference surprised Joan [Robins] who reported that "women pulled in from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Portland, even Boston..." ([Robins], 1971, np).

The conference's intra-group dynamics reflected both the enthusiasm generated by a gathering of 350 lesbians and the tension generated by ideological splits. In one workshop, a lesbian mother's group agreed to form a union to work on behalf of more favorable child custody laws, while in another, arguments broke out between the "old gay" and "new gay" women over gender roles and sexual identity.

During the conference (and before we knew the term), "politically correct" detectors were on alert. Joan reported that when an erotic lesbian movie was shown, there was debate as to whether it was educational or simply on the program because "some of the women who planned the conference dig porno flicks" ([Robins], 1971, np).

During the time set aside for criticism and suggestions, it was noted that "third world women weren't

fully represented."¹⁷ Joan observed that at the Saturday night dance "The \$1 at the door for people who didn't pay the \$3 registration fee was capitalistic and unfriendly." On Sunday, lesbians marched in the Christopher Street West parade and got into "hassles" with male monitors who insisted on calling them "girls" ([Robins], 1971, np).

Joan summarized the conference by noting that although,

...many concrete proposals did not come from [the conference], more basic things were established: realizing we are a nationwide gay women's movement, meeting one another, seeing the differences in politics and perspectives, learning what's happening around the U.S., getting it on... ([Robins], 1971, np).

After experiencing the dynamics of several lesbian conferences, it became clear to many activists that even if consensus was reached regarding agenda, strategy or direction, it would be difficult to implement any decisions because there was seldom enough congruent energy to follow up with. Women who came to enjoy the lesbian ambiance and opportunities for networking were less disappointed.

By 1972, the Council had grown significantly, and after adding groups from other cities in Southern California, it changed its name to the Southern California Coalition of Lesbian Organizations (LCSC). By September, key members of the Council had moved on to other political activities and the LCSC disbanded. Some had gone on to work with the co-gender state-wide California Committee on Sexual Law reform (CCSLR). Such was the rate of growth of the lesbian (and

gay) movement,¹⁸ that by 1972, some activists felt that "The time was right to attempt to form a national gay organization" (LT 9/72,10).

Various regional conferences were held, but due to internal power struggles, a national organization did not materialize. At the third regional conference of the National Conference of Gay Organizations (NCGO), held in Sacramento, California in October, 1972, the lesbian caucus introduced a resolution (which passed), to disassociate itself from the NCGO. At this meeting, lesbians also announced plans for a west coast lesbian conference to be held in Los Angeles in 1973.

Gay Community Services Center

While L.A. lesbian activists were actively promoting their own movement, some lesbians were active in a new co-gender agency, The Gay Community Services Center (The Center). The Center was founded in 1971 and it's ideological base was a mix of Gay Liberation Front, Counterculture and New Left values. Although many lesbians at that time felt that the "male energy" at The Center was not conducive to co-gender collaboration, some, with the goal of opening doors for lesbian services, decided to work at the agency (personal recollection).

This group of lesbians included former GLF member June Herrle, GWCS veterans Mina [Robinson] Meyer and Sharon Raphael, and newcomers like Lillene Fifield, Susan X, Delene

X, and Betty Taylor (personal recollection). Although uncomfortable in the male-dominated environment, Mina and Sharon joined "hoping to help strengthen and enlarge the women's program" (Raphael, 1974, 71). The former was elected to the Board of Directors while the latter became director of research and also facilitated rap groups.

Mina was also instrumental in helping to create the Center's first women's health clinic, "I said they couldn't open their VD clinic unless we could open the women's clinic at the same time..." (Mina and Sharon, interview). According to Mina, this "first," has been lost in history:

When Laurie Jean [the Center's CEO] opened the new [Audre Lorde] clinic [in the 1990s] she billed it as the first clinic...[but] ours was the first for lesbians at The Center...Jane Patterson [M.D.] got volunteered, we had all lesbian nurses and technicians...we also have to give credit to the women at the Feminist Women's Health Center...they trained the staff and helped us get started even though it wasn't their clinic... (Mina and Sharon, interview).

Another Center lesbian project that has slipped from the collective memory is the Sisters Liberation House. In 1972, working with the Lesbian Coalition, The Center sponsored a housing program in a large turn-of-the century residence on Oxford Avenue in Los Angeles (Sisson, 1972, 1). During the ten months of its existence, "Sisters" housed lesbians newly arrived in town, women "on disability," young lesbians with limited resources and women newly arrived in Lesbian Nation.

The demographics of the house were unusual for the time

because they cut across class, ethnicity, generations and sexual orientation. Although neighbors complained about the noise, the un-mowed lawn and the "gayly colored rags" that served as curtains, Sisters blithely persevered in its mission to provide affordable housing and space for community meetings and political gatherings (personal recollection).

As time passed and The Center grew, some lesbians working at the agency, grew disenchanted. According to Lillene Fifield, who was then on The Center staff, when grant money started coming in, The Center "...had to go...to a more hierarchical structure to deal with issues of accountability and responsibility" (quoted in Ocamb, 1997b, 23).

For others like Mina and Sharon, issues related to sexism and hierarchies became unbearable and in 1973, they left the Center. At the time, Mina explained that,

...The Center is more in keeping with models in the gay movement...I feel it [The Center] is a positive endeavor, but there is a gap in consciousness between the place and feminist oriented lesbians in the women's and or lesbian movements ([Robinson and Raphael], 1973, 22).

Mina also noted that at one point she and several men had attempted to have the "boss worker dichotomy" abolished, but failed. This was the first public break between lesbians and The Center, and was a portent of troubles to come.

The Westside Women's Center

When the Los Angeles Women's Center closed, and the group Lesbian Feminists disbanded, lesbian activist energy drifted to The Gay Community Services Center (The Center) and to the feminist alternative, the Westside Women's Center (WWC). The latter had opened in 1972. The WWC was a typical first phase community center and struggled (in true lesbian/feminist tradition) to provide everything to everyone on next to no funds. Services included a self-help clinic, a Women's Liberation School, rap groups and "gay-straight" dialogues.

The WWC also collaborated with women from The Center and former members of Lesbian Feminists, to organize the "First National Lesbian Kiss-In" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The event was a means to affirm lesbian visibility and was also an assertion that lesbians should have the same rights as heterosexuals to be affectionate in public.¹⁹

Lesbians at the WWC also made significant contributions in two areas that were problematic for women. The Radical Feminist Therapy Collective (RFTC) founded in 1972 critiqued traditional psychotherapy as a "method of social control" and worked to "help women take back their power" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 60). For several years, the collective offered contact raps, problem-solving groups, community mediations and training. They also came to wield power in

certain segments of the community.

Shirl Buss, who participated in the RFTC, noted that these women,

...were pioneering new turf theoretically and it was very exhilarating but they got intoxicated with their own sense of power and their own radicalness [sic] and I think it ended up backfiring on them...they ended up contradicting themselves... (Shirl, interview).

The collective eventually split into those who planned to continue with the work and those who thought it was time to stop. According to Gudrun Fonfa, a former collective member,

The split was over us having become therapists instead of revolutionaries...I was definitely on the side of those who thought we had ceased to become a force for good in the community...and [I] wanted us to voluntarily dissolve [the RFTC]...some thought it should continue...some didn't think they were doing anything wrong... (Gudrun, Interview).

Gudrun recalled some of the dynamics that illustrated the problems that the community had with issues of leadership and power,

...instead of being [a] revolutionary group, the RFTC became a group that had a lot of power in the community. They knew everyone's secrets. We were in a position to define what was politically correct...the theory was solid and the practice was mostly okay...this wasn't about what later...[was] called the "lesbian police" or the "pc police"...we tried...[to open] people's eyes to the smallest things [like shaving their legs]. There were no "shoulds," we just assumed everyone would jump on the bandwagon...we didn't think anyone would chose to shave their legs (Gudrun, interview).

The work of the RFTC dovetailed with that of another group which some RFTC members also belonged to - The Fat

Underground (FU). The FU was formed in 1972 by a group that included Aldebaran [Vivian Mayer], Judy Freespirit and Lynn Mabel-Lois (Mayer, 1983, xiii). The group was galvanized into radical action by the death of Cass Elliott (a member of the musical group "The Mamas and the Papas"). Cass' demise was partly attributed to the pressures and stresses of dieting (Judy Freespirit, personal communication).

After Cass died, Fat Liberation members set out to raise the consciousness of the L.A. lesbian community about our attitudes toward fat, "looksism" and "ageism." The "Fat Liberation Manifesto" written by Aldebaran and Judy, demanded respect for fat women and an end to both the mistreatment of fat people and to the abuses perpetrated by the diet industry (Freespirit, 1983, 52).

Fat Underground meetings provided a consciousness-raising space where women could re/define their oppression around issues of appearance and size, and also raise their awareness about how they, like most people, had internalized the "slim and young" standards disseminated by the media.

According to one former FU member, the women of the Fat Underground,

...were very intellectual, very politically active and had a great consciousness about body image. Many were Jewish. I felt like I had found my people. I had spent a lifetime being oppressed as a fat woman, I learned to see that this was part of women's oppression. We were very militant. We did all kinds of demonstrations, educating within the lesbian community, [we] interrupted medical conferences. We were a force to be reckoned with...we didn't allow diet soda at the [Westside] Women's Center

[laughter]. It was a wonderful time... (Gudrun, interview).

Fat Liberation had an important impact on the Los Angeles women's community. One widely-read guide to feminist resources noted that, "The consciousness about fat oppression that pervades the Los Angeles feminist community is the direct result of the fat problem-solving group [The FU]" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 60).

The women at the WWC and in the RFTC and Fat Underground provided valuable services and "CR" (consciousness-raising) opportunities to many women. Yet, some felt that both groups were resistant to views that differed from their own, and that some members had misused their power. In the mid-1970s, community power struggles that included the WWC management collective erupted during a conflict with The Center and further illustrated how issues of authority and power were problematic in most lesbian feminist groups.

Lesbian Media

The cause of a social movement benefits from media coverage. Attempts to disseminate news of the lesbian movement were impeded by the reluctance of feminist, gay and mainstream publications to print lesbian-focused material. According to a *Lesbian Tide* news item, of sixty women's publications then extant, "only five...devote editorial space to lesbian issues and activities" (LT 2/72,10).

Lesbians across the United States set out to remedy

this gap by publishing their own periodicals. Los Angeles was the home of the first recorded lesbian publication in the United States. Between 1947-48, Lisa Ben (a pseudonym and anagram), then working as a secretary at a movie studio, typed 5 copies of *Vice Versa* twice, and discretely distributed it to her friends. Using this labor-intensive method, she published nine issues. The response was positive and Lisa was "astonished to find so many potential subscribers to 'America's gayest magazine'" (Ben, 1983, 623).

Nine years later (in 1956), *The Ladder*, DOB's official publication was founded in San Francisco and became the first (semi) publicly distributed lesbian magazine in the United States. A number of women remember buying it at selected news stands, while one first saw it on her heterosexual sister's coffee table (Jeanne, interview).

In Los Angeles, the new wave of feminist and lesbian publications began in the late 1960s with *Everywoman* (EV) and *Sister* (ST) (the latter was also known by other names). Both had lesbians and soon-to-be lesbians on staff. *The Lesbian Tide* (LT) founded in 1971 by Jeanne Córdova and friends as the L.A. DOB Newsletter, was the first publicly circulated lesbian publication in Los Angeles, and the first in the United States to have the "L" word on its masthead.

Compared to the burgeoning gay male media, the number of lesbian publications and their readership was small.

According to a news item in *The Tide*, in early 1972, "The lesbian press in the US [has] a circulation of 14,000...the male homosexual press [has] a total of 135,000..." (LT 2/72,10).

Limited readership notwithstanding, lesbian community publications provided a conceptual coherence to the community and to the movement. They also served as vehicles for disseminating information over a wide area. Lesbians depended on these publications to find out what was happening in the movement, and to feel a sense of connection to the evolving concept of lesbian community and Lesbian Nation.

Lesbian publications also reached those who might not be willing to come to meetings or marches but who read the publication in the privacy of their homes. The contents of these newspapers and magazines reflected the ideology of the day and during this time were a source of inspiration to lesbians in the closet and activists in the struggle.

One limitation of the 1970s lesbian press, was its lack of coverage of lesbian of color issues. Most lasting publications were owned and/or managed by grass-roots, white activist women who were uninformed about and/or uninterested in lesbian of color issues, thus the coverage of issues specifically relevant to lesbians of color was severely limited for most of the 1970s.²⁰

Another area that received little coverage during the

1970s was culture. This was not an oversight, it had more to do with a lag. Although culture is a prerequisite for the formation of community (Lockard, 1985), and helps to politicize oppressed and invisible groups (Cohen & Dyer, 1980), in Los Angeles, lesbians seem to have focused on political action and support group development before they actively engaged in developing lesbian-specific cultural productions. It wasn't until 1973, that music and the graphic arts became a visible and important part of the L.A. lesbian community. Before that time, lesbian artists in any medium were seldom mentioned in lesbian publications, and calendars of community events listed few artistic ones.

Civil Wars

When Los Angeles activist lesbians recall this decade they express a mixture of elation and frustration since many were involved in and/or affected by the lesbian civil wars. Interviews with members of a Chicago lesbian newspaper collective (Brody, 1985), and lesbian activists in Toronto (Ross, 1995) and Atlanta (Chesnut and Gable, 1997), suggest that during this time period, similar conflicts also took place in other cities.

In Los Angeles, internecine conflicts during the 1970s centered around lesbian feminist opposition to gay male sexism, "transexuals," socialists, monogamy and butch/femme role-playing. What these targets had in common was that they were all perceived as reflecting heterosexual and

patriarchal influences in the lesbian community.

At first, gay lesbians and feminist lesbians argued over whether lesbians should ally with sexist gay males or lesbophobic heterosexual feminists. In the summer of 1970, DOB leader and former homophile activist Del Martin wrote a public letter listing the reasons why gay male culture was as oppressive to lesbians as the heterosexual culture was to all homosexuals. She berated her gay brothers for not coming to "grips with the gut issues" and asserted that "Until they do, their revolution cannot be ours..." (Martin, 1994, 41).

Inspired by feminist theory and turned off by gay male sexism, lesbians began forming their own groups. During the first phase of the lesbian activist movement, many lesbians, adopted a separatist stance in reaction to gay sexism and heterosexism. What were perceived as "outsider" (male) influences were resented and resisted.

The first major public controversy was over "transsexuals" in the lesbian movement. It began in November of 1972, when the San Francisco Daughters Of Bilitis (SF DOB) chapter voted to eject a pre-operative MTF (male to female) transsexual from the organization. The person in question was Beth Elliott, who had been vice-president of SF DOB. According to a *Tide* article, Beth "is well known in California as a lesbian feminist activist, writer and singer" (Córdova, 1972b, 21).

After the SF DOB vote, *The Tide* Collective sent a

telegram to the chapter stating that lesbians and transexuals shared a "common oppression...based on society's insistence that we perform certain roles...", and assured DOB that,

...none of us is free until all of us are free
...please advise our transexual sisters that,
that if they are not welcome in the liberal city of San Francisco, they are most welcome in the city of L.A. (LT 12/72, 29).

The following year at the West Coast Lesbian Conference in Los Angeles, organizers welcomed Beth, and Beth's presence became the object of a heated battle, one that disrupted the proceedings.

The next conflict was over socialists in the midst. In 1971, *The Tide* reported on a conference where the SWP (Socialist Worker's Party) succeeded in voting down a motion that linked abortion and freedom of sexual expression. The motion was dismissed as a "specific lesbian demand" (McLean, 1971, 3). Although the SWP was homophobic, its members were encouraged to participate in other activist groups with the goal of gaining adherents for the SWP and influencing other movements.

During the 1970s, the SWP was a constant (and for some annoying) presence in the L.A. lesbian movement. According to Joan Robins, in the early 1970s, the SWP infiltrated the Los Angeles Women's Center and did obtain control for a short time. Shortly after, NOW left the Women's Center because "...they thought the Center was too far left. They

pulled out in the midst of a fight with the SWP women ...[NOW women] had their security clearances to worry about" (Joan quoted in Moravec, 1990, 99).

Carol Downer agreed that the SWP presence precipitated the NOW exodus but added that NOW women also wanted more "organization and structure" (Moravec, 1990, 99). Although NOW women at The Women's Center were put off by socialists, in Lesbian Feminists, socialist lesbians like Rita Goldberger were regarded as dedicated workers for lesbian causes (personal recollection).

Socialist lesbians sometimes felt caught between an allegiance to the SWP which had a sophisticated analysis of class and race, and the feeling that the SWP was not progressive on issues of sexism or homophobia. In the Lesbian issue of *Everywoman*, the author of an article on socialism and lesbianism argued that "the working class is the only political force capable of bringing about socialism due to its critical relationship to the means of production," but she also noted the prevalence of homophobia in the SWP and concluded that their recent support of lesbian issues was "opportunism at best" (Miriam 1971, np).²¹

While battles against "outsiders" (e.g. transexuals, SWP) were in progress, lesbians also turned a critical eye on one another. Monogamy became an issue when lesbian feminists (more so than feminist lesbians), rejected the

practice of role-playing and proclaimed another ideal in relationships, that of non-monogamy or open-ended relationships (Munson and Stelboun, 1999).

According to Sharon Raphael this ideal was not to be confused with the "free sex" philosophy popular in the counterculture (Raphael, 1974, 59). This anti-monogamy perspective was based on a feminist criticism of marriage and the nuclear family as oppressive to women (Raphael, 1974, 61)

The anti-monogamy stance appealed to a variety of lesbians. Some had been "burned" in heterosexual and lesbian relationships; others were trying to forego "ownership" and "possessiveness"; some were following the dictates of the community's perceived leaders; and some had been in long-term lesbian relationships and wanted to try something new.²²

In general, lesbian feminists, who had been married and had come to lesbianism through feminist groups, were more likely to espouse non-monogamy.²³ Feminist lesbians on the other hand, generally had longer histories as lesbians and were less averse to the idea of partnering because they had had fewer societally-approved opportunities to be in a same-sex couple relationship (Raphael, 1974, 62).

Concomitant with the struggle over monogamy was the issue of role-playing. "New" lesbians attacked "old" lesbians, accusing them of imitating heterosexuals in their

butch-femme styles. Ironically, at this time, "dyke" (butchy) attire was de rigeur: blue jeans, work-shirt, short hair and sensible shoes or boots (Simone, interview).²⁴

Lesbian feminist antipathy toward butch/femme was also due to the signifiers of sexuality inherent in the latter style. Some felt that public "flaunting" of lesbian sexuality would harm efforts to form alliances with heterosexual (lesbophobic) feminists. Thus, in an attempt to gain acceptance from the heterosexual feminist community, radical lesbian theory conflated lesbianism with feminism, in effect downplaying lesbian sexuality (Smith, 1989).

According to sex activist Gayle Rubin, during that time, "the ability to justify lesbianism on grounds other than feminism dropped out of the discourse" (quoted in Nestle, 1992, 305). In the 1980s this stance would contribute to a major civil war between sexual liberationists and cultural feminists (Duggan and Hunter, 1990; Rich, 1985). In the lesbian community sex wars, potential flash points included the issues of S/M (sado-masochism), butch/femme, sexual styles, and pornography and its connection to violence against women.

Conclusion

During the first phase of the lesbian activist movement in Los Angeles, many lesbians left the Gay Liberation movement and the heterosexual feminist movement, and began to organize lesbian-focused centers and support groups.

During this and subsequent phases, lesbians engaged in political activism on behalf of their own cause and the causes of other oppressed groups. Los Angeles lesbian or lesbian-dominated groups like the Radical Therapy Collective and The Fat Underground, developed theory and praxis around issues that were important to women.

As the community institutional base expanded, internecine conflict intensified. Arguments broke out over perceived heterosexual influences in the community (i.e. "transsexuals," roles, monogamy). Issues of class were debated and then set aside. Lesbians of color issues were ignored and few lesbians of color participated in white-dominated groups.

The movement was dependent on volunteer energy and when the initial wave of excitement died down and women burned out, the movement seemed to falter. However, as the second and third phase will show, lesbians refocused, and the movement was re-energized and continued, albeit in somewhat different form.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LESBIAN FEMINIST DECADE, II

Phase II: 1973-1976

So they created a...community by living in certain neighborhoods, operating businesses, by meeting in bars...by inventing fests and celebrations; in short by organizing socially, culturally and politically (Castells 1983, 143).

Less than two years after Stonewall, an article in *The Advocate* noted that "It's hard to get women active in the gay movement" (AD 4/14/1971, 6). Some argued that this was because lesbians were increasingly averse to working with sexist gay males. Yet, a year later, even after months of energetic lesbian-focused activism and institution-building, to some it seemed that lesbians in general, did not want to commit to any movement, including their own. Del Whan reported that a friend had complained that "All of the old (lesbian) groups are dying! Nobody is coming to meetings any more" (Whan, 1972, 22).

An article in *The Tide* blamed the demise of many Los Angeles centers and groups on a lack of structure and organization (Córdova, 1973b, 11), while Bonnie Zimmerman, former member of Chicago's *Lavender Woman* collective, attributed the short life-span of most lesbian groups to a "natural" process, "...almost every community project has a lifetime. It's born, it comes to maturity, it dies. I can only think of a couple of projects that ran on more than

four or five years" (quoted in Brody, 1985, 82).

I argue that the underlying cause of the demise of many lesbian groups and projects was the reliance on volunteers who, due to the stresses of internecine conflict, eventually "burned out" and left. Lack of funding also ensured that most lesbian institutions were short-lived.

In the midst of eulogies, apathy and burn-out, there were those who argued that we had "only just begun." The editors of the *Woman's Survival Catalogue* (WSC), were optimistic and excited about the network of feminist, women's and lesbian (the last was mentioned but not stressed), projects that they had found as they traversed the United States: "What struck us during our trip in the summer of 1973, and in fact what launched the first catalog was the proliferation of survival institutions and women's cultural alternatives" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1973, 191).¹

What the editors of the WSC saw emerging was a second wave of activism that had a character different from the first wave. Whereas before, we had dreamed of all-purpose centers that would provide services to all women and from which we would go forth to fight all types of oppression, now lesbian groups and projects were more focused on lesbian needs. During this phase, the institutional base of the Los Angeles lesbian community expanded due to both the increasing numbers of women coming into the movement, and to divisions that led to the creation of new projects and

groups.

Across the U.S., lesbian literature, music and businesses proliferated and there was a growing interest in lesbian history. In the academy, some departments grew more willing to offer classes in lesbian and gay studies. In other positive developments, the first "out" lesbian (Elaine Noble) was elected to the state assembly in Massachusetts (1974), and cities like Berkeley passed gay-protective ordinances.

There were also legal gains in areas such as child custody, and one landmark case was won by a Los Angeles lesbian feminist.² At a federal level (in 1974), Bella Abzug and Ed Koch first placed a proposal before Congress that would "broaden the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include protection against discrimination based on 'sexual orientation, sex or marital status'" (quoted in Hogan and Hudson, 1998, 648).

UCLA Conference

Another indication of the growth and increasing acceptance of the lesbian movement was the size and site of the 1973 West Coast Lesbian Conference. It was organized by a group called Lesbian Activist Women (L.A.W.), which included Jeanne Córdova, Barbara McClean, Rita Goldberger, Karen Pressley and Sally Anderson. The conference site at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), was secured by then UCLA Dean and now California State Assemblywoman,

Sheila Kuehl.

Over 1800 women from 26 states and 4 other countries came to an event that was exhilarating for some and frustrating for others. On the evening of Friday, April the 13th, with a full house in Moore Hall, the first of several highly charged arguments erupted. At issue was the presence of an MTF (male-to-female) pre-operative transgender person (Beth Elliott), who was also scheduled to sing.

Sharon Raphael recalls that Beth had a history in the lesbian community and "she did such a good job of passing...she was natural, she dressed like the rest of us and didn't try to caricature women..." (Mina and Sharon, interview). Although Beth had been voted out of the San Francisco Daughters of Bilitis (D.O.B.) chapter the year before, Sharon noted that she was "liked and accepted" by members of the Los Angeles conference organizing committee (Raphael, 1974, 73).

Others however, reacted in a visceral manner. According to Barbara McClean's conference notes, one woman shouted: "He tried to rape me four years ago. He is not a woman, he is not a lesbian!..." (McClean, 1973, 36). Sharon Raphael recalled that "there was a mob atmosphere evolving...I wanted to protect her [Beth's] personal safety at the same time that I agreed with what Robin [Morgan] was saying..." (Robin wanted Beth out) (Mina and Sharon, interview). Sharon felt that the conference organizers were responsible for

this melee because, even though they were aware of the prior DOB conflict, they had accepted Beth's offer to raise money and to sing at the event. In the end Beth sang and "several hundred women walked out" (ST 5/73, 1).

According to various accounts, another division occurred between "those who had come to the conference to celebrate lesbian culture and those who came to organize at a political event" (Mina and Sharon interview). For example, Barbara McClean noted that Kate Millet was not going to say anything political, "...she just wanted to read love scenes while Robin [Morgan] was only going to talk politics, no poetry, just politics..." (McLean, 1973, 35).

Although this difference anticipated the cultural feminist/politico³ split of later years, for some like Sharon, the differing agendas were not a problem, they were a sign of diversity and choice:

There were two different camps and levels of awareness...one was people who really wanted to focus their energy on a big cultural event and the other group was more interested in getting the lesbian agenda into the women's feminist movement agenda. It was wonderful because you could experience both...you could be anything you wanted to be...you had the sense that this was a mini Lesbian Nation and you were living it out on the campus of UCLA for that weekend... (Mina and Sharon, interview).

On Saturday morning, Robin Morgan, then a "rising star" in the feminist movement, gave a keynote speech which set the tone for "political correctness" at the conference. According to Joan Nixon, Robin delivered both what Barbara

McClellan called "an hour and a half of hate" and what Joan also heard as a call for unity (Nixon quoted in Brody, 1985, 65). Robin supported the ouster of Beth, called for exclusive alliances with the feminist movement; criticized the organizers whom she felt were under the influence of socialists;⁴ and referred to strict separatists as "elite isolationists" who "fall into the personal solution error" of the "lifestyle cop-out..." (quoted in Córdova, 1973, 21).

Robin's list of concerns was vague about racism. Although L.A. lesbians of color were not yet militant about racism within local lesbian feminist groups, women of color from other areas were. A statement from the conference's Black Caucus asserted that "Racism is here. We don't like it and we don't want to see it anymore, particularly from our lesbian sisters..." Reference was also made to (white) D.O.B. activist Del Martin, who in her travels across the country had "...not seen one lesbian organization that has successfully dealt with the issue of racism..." (LT 6/73, 19).

At the conference, members of Seattle Radical Women (SRW), a socialist group, seemed to be the only ones aware of and concerned about class and race issues. SRW supported "unification around 'our identity as women'" and called upon lesbians to treat the issues of race and class as "top priorities" (Córdova, 1973c, 25).

SRW women also criticized the lack of support shown by

white women during conference debates about racism: "When the opportunity arose to make a stand in support of our sisters of color...the majority of our sisters were unable to make even a simple statement against racism...There were many excuses offered..." (Gipple, Issacs and Williams 1973, 22).

Barbara McClean who like many was naive about race issues, noted with some surprise that:

...race and class - has really been a big issue at the conference. There are women who are saying that these issues should have top priority in our movement...Cindy Gipple (from SRW) says that ethnic women should be the vanguard of our movement (McLean 1973, 40).

Cindy's opinion was not shared by those who felt that the arguments over race were divisive. One letter by Stacey Fulton noted that "Many sisters who attended [the conference] were discouraged by the polarization and angry dialog, particularly that stemming from the issue of racism in the movement..." (LT 8/73, 18).

A report by Cheryl (no last name) contended that the lesson of the conference was that "sexual preference alone is not basis enough to build a unified political movement..." (Cheryl, 1973, 1). At the same time, she noted that "...there were more than 1200 of us there in what was the largest gathering of up front lesbians in the history of this country and possibly the world..." (Cheryl, 1973, 1).

Cheryl proposed that the next large gathering of lesbians should be "for a festival, a rite of love, a

cultural event...[something] which will emphasize that which we have in common - our love for women," and suggested doing away with conference formats and their necessary evils: workshops, keynote speakers and resolutions "which by [their] very structure artificially divide us along pre-patterned political lines...." (Cheryl, 1973, 1).

An unidentified woman from San Luis Obispo (California) who was also troubled by the conference's dynamics, attributed the collective discord to individual idiosyncracies. She felt that "the experience of the conference was the experience of the Lesbian in our society." She argued that what had disrupted the conference and separated the participants "came from within each of us, our own pain, fear, anger and expectation..." (LT 6/73,10).

At each subsequent large political lesbian conference, the proceedings were disrupted by internecine conflict. When these events did not include cultural programs to provide some modicum of relief and sisterhood, participants often went away feeling drained and disappointed.⁵

Centers

Alcoholism Center for Women

During this phase, general purpose women's centers were (with one exception), replaced by centers with more specific missions. The first of these new types of centers was the Alcoholism Center for Women (ACW). As early as 1970, Del Whan, self-identified as a recovering alcoholic, had tried

to address lesbian isolation and the need for alternatives to the bars by opening the Gay Women's Service Center. However, in addition to social alternatives, there was a need for recovery and community education programs.

At the time, according to lesbian activist Brenda Weathers, self-identified as a recovering alcoholic, there were "no official statistics documenting the incidence of alcoholism in the lesbian community" (Córdova, 1975a, 12). Brenda estimated that "the statistic of 20-30% (in the average population) also holds true for lesbians" (Córdova, 1975a, 13). Brenda explained that the socio-political position of lesbians in a sexist society compounded the characteristics of an alcoholic profile which included, "low self esteem, feelings of inadequacy and a sense of isolation and loneliness" (Córdova, 1975a, 12).

In 1973, grant writer and social worker Lillene Fifield collaborated with Brenda Weathers and others to obtain a \$1,000,000 (over three years) grant from the National Institute for Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA). The grant was submitted under the auspices of the Gay Community Services Center (Córdova 1975a; Lillene interview; Weathers 1996).

When the grant was approved, *The Tide* noted with alacrity that, "it marks the largest and most comprehensive funding ever given on behalf of women alcoholics and it is also the first federal monies to be awarded to a program

which emphasizes services to lesbians" (Córdova, 1975a, 12). Unlike traditional recovery programs that were insensitive to the special experiences and needs of lesbians, the Alcoholism Program for Women (APW) was designed to "follow up the 'dry-out' period with special program emphasizing gay and feminist self development and awareness" (Córdova, 1975a, 12).

Not long after the APW received the NIAAAA grant, it separated (amidst controversy), from The Gay Community Services Center and changed its name to the Alcoholism Center for Women (ACW) (Weathers 1996). Since its inception, ACW has diligently delivered information on substance abuse prevention, and offered recovery programs for thousands of women of all sexual orientations. It is now one of the oldest surviving funded lesbian projects in the nation. Many lesbians have worked or volunteered at ACW and have received related benefits from this association.

Sharon X, a recovering alcoholic, recalls that ACW served as a catalyst for lesbian activists who had worked in the movement as young adults and were now ready to move into another life stage: "ACW brought in all kinds of other people, attorneys, counselors, social workers, and that changed my perspective. We started becoming professional adults..." (Sharon, interview).

The Woman's Building (WB)

The second "center" to emerge during this phase was the

Los Angeles Woman's Building (WB), co-founded in late 1973 by three feminists including lesbian and art historian, Arlene Raven. The WB was a timely response to increased interest and activity in the area of women's art.

The WB was preceded by Womanspace, a women's gallery and cultural space also co-founded by Arlene in early 1973 (LT 2/73,5). Womanspace inspired heterosexual and lesbian artists and cultural workers. After one Womanspace exhibit, art critic Norma New York asserted that: "No one can argue that women haven't come through with an art show and exhibition center that rises above back yard amateurisms and street fair art." Even luminaries like Anais Nin came to do readings (New York, 1973, 13). Soon after it opened, Womanspace celebrated "Lesbian Week" with a full program of activities.

During this time period, lesbian artists in Los Angeles were developing both a public presence and what Arlene Raven called a "lesbian sensibility in art" (Raven, 1977, 19). According to Arlene, the lesbian aesthetic derived from the isolation faced by those on the margins. She argued that the lesbian perspective was not unique, "...like other minority perspectives - [it] quintessentially symbolizes the feeling of encapsulation, aloneness and isolation experienced by any individual who is willing to confront the human condition" (Raven, 1977, 20).

Arlene contended that a lesbian sensibility was

connected to all levels of a woman's being, "...lesbian sensibility is an active manifestation of the transformation of personal identity, social relations, political analysis, and creative thought..." (Raven, 1977, 21).

Finally, Arlene argued for the importance of a collective environment in which to develop this aesthetic,

...lesbian sensibility arises spontaneously in a community in which woman-identification is the structure and content underlying creative activity...We increase our control and power when we form communities and express our point of view through the institution of community (Raven, 1977, 20, 22).

In November of 1973, Arlene, Sheila de Bretteville and Judy Chicago, founded the Los Angeles Woman's Building (WB). It was modeled after the Woman's Building at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The founders of the new WB wanted to "create a public space where the current artistic and cultural accomplishments of women could be presented and appreciated" (WB 10th Anniversary Program, 1983, 2). Its first location was at the former site of The Chouinard Art Institute near Alvarado Street and its second was on Spring Street.

The WB provided space for art programs (e.g., The Feminist Studio Workshop), events (dances, lectures) and for a time, businesses (Womantours, Sisterhood Bookstore). Although the Building was a generic feminist organization, lesbians were always a key part of the management and programming team. According to Terry Wolverton, the WB,

...was an organization that fairly successfully
...accommodated lesbian and feminist heterosexual
points of view, not always without debate, but there
was a commitment to that being there and I think
[that was] partly because it was co-founded by
lesbians and heterosexual women (Terry, interview).

Throughout the life of the WB, lesbians worked with non-lesbians in programs (Women's Graphic Center) and on projects (Incest Awareness Project). They also produced lesbian-specific programs and exhibits such as "An Oral History of Lesbianism" (1979) and The Great American Lesbian Art Show (1980). However, like many white-dominated projects, the WB did not attract or retain many women of color. Terry Wolverton, who later worked to remedy the situation, recalls that "the problem in terms of cultural representation was that it was founded by three white women, so from there everything we could do would be remedial" (Terry, interview).

Groups

Los Angeles Women's Union

The second wave of Los Angeles lesbian groups included politicized organizations with leftist leanings, lesbian feminists who met at campgrounds, and closeted professionals who met with dominant culture powerbrokers. Two of them were not specifically lesbian, but because their members and leaders were predominantly lesbian, I mention them here.

In February of 1973, a news item in *The Tide* noted that: "The women's movement in L.A. is neither visible nor accessible to most women nor has it had a definite

direction" (LT 2/73, 9). A visit by members of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union inspired efforts to correct the course of the L.A. movement.

Plans were made to form a group similar to the one in Chicago. The new group, the Los Angeles Women's Liberation Union, announced that it would serve as an umbrella for groups and collectives and pledged to work to "end sexism, racism and economic exploitation" (Sisson and Wilds, 1973, 9).

The lofty goals of the Union were not realized. Two months after it was organized, a letter signed by eight lesbian feminist activists observed that the Union's principles were "basically socialist." The signers declared that having "...seen the formation of a socialist women's group," they wished the group well and offered to work "on issues that further the struggle towards women's liberation," but argued that a true women's union in Los Angeles was still not a reality (ST 5/73,10).

Califia

Several years after the Los Angeles Women's Union failed, another attempt to create community was more successful. In 1975, Marilyn Murphy and Betty Brooks attended Sagaris, "a feminist educational institute in Vermont" (Murphy, 1983 138). Although Sagaris had been rent by conflicts over power differentials between paid teachers and paying students, Betty had come away with the thought

that the idea of Sagaris was sound and could be improved upon (Murphy 1983; Kirkwood 1975, 1).

In 1976, Betty, Marilyn and others founded a group called Califia. Its intention was to "recreate the magic of Sagaris while correcting what we perceived to be its problems" (Murphy, 1983, 139). Califia took its name from the legendary Black Amazon goddess for whom California was named. According to Marilyn, the "[Califia] Collective members belonged to the sisterhood-is-powerful, personal-is-political, and the free-our-sisters-free-ourselves, radical feminist persuasion" (Murphy, 1983, 139). The founding collective members were all white and of various ages and class backgrounds.

Califia organized week-long camps where women lived and learned together in a politicized environment. The camp organizers went to great lengths to provide for anticipated needs and to prevent the usual problems. They offered a "feminist primer" session that included a basic feminist vocabulary and the basics of "CR" (consciousness-raising) etiquette. Late night conversation was offered as a way to deal with the day's unfinished business. There were no work exchanges, women were hired to cook, do childcare, to sign (AMESLAN), and to do lifeguard duty at the pool. Unlike Sagaris, collective members received no salary.

The Califia collective also tried to address issues related to class and race. The collective decided that

"issues which often divide and separate us from each other, should be highlighted by specific collective presentations" (Murphy, 1983, 145). The class workshop underscored the role that that issue played in many women's lives, and how class differences "cause difficulty in the personal and political relationships among women" (Murphy, 1983, 145). The workshop also helped many to acknowledge that "frequently women who think of themselves as middle class are from working class backgrounds" and that the origin and effects of this cognitive dissonance should be addressed (Murphy, 1983, 148).

At the class workshop, an inventory sheet was provided so each woman could determine her probable class background and if and how she had tried to "pass." This work was preparation for the "Passing Game" which was developed by Mary Glavin as a method of breaking the silence about the injuries of class. During the game, women from privileged class backgrounds were required to be "silent and listen non-defensively" (Murphy, 1983, 149). Later each group met separately to "process."

Many working class women remember the class workshop as a transformative experience. Simone Wallace recalls that:

I grew up in a very poor working class family, my mother was so ashamed that she went around telling everyone that we were middle class so then I was confused. When I went to Califia, Marilyn Murphy did her wonderful workshop, I mean I could cry about that because that was so meaningful...that's where I learned about my class background and it changed the way that I saw the world from that moment on...

(Simone, interview).

Marilyn noted that the class presentation worked "well for working-class women" but was much less successful in helping middle class women move from "from guilt and resentment to understanding and positive action" (Murphy, 1983, 149).

In the racism workshop, it was white women of all classes who had difficulty moving out of guilt and resentment. As Marilyn noted in understated fashion, "the white racism presentation has also had a stormy history" (Murphy, 1983, 150). According to Joy Fisher, at the first Califia week-long camp, "There were no more than two or three black women present, and CR groups on racism reported that the discussion degenerated into intellectual generalization" (Fisher, 1976, 4).

After Maria Díaz and Gloria Rodríguez attended the 1978 Califia gathering, they began to recruit women of color to come to subsequent Califia gatherings and to organize the racism workshop. From that time on, women of color led the Califia racism workshop. Those who attended the intense workshop went away feeling either traumatized or transformed (personal recollection).

The process took a toll on women of color. Maria Díaz remembers the frustrations that she and others felt when working in Califia and other white-dominated groups:

I remember feeling isolated, feeling hurt, feeling terribly lonely and not really understood...for

example, the Califia group...sounded like they were really into this [anti-racism work] and that they really understood it...They really didn't understand it [racism] and they were hearing me only because I was presenting it in ways that were softer...my message was strong yet it didn't shake them, didn't move them, it didn't do a...thing until I was able to work with the LOC [Lesbians of Color] group that included women such as yourself [Yolanda Retter] and some of the other women that we know...you know the poet [Doris Davenport]... (Maria, interview).

Califia's imperfections notwithstanding, it must be said that it succeeded in some unique areas. According to Marilyn, during the course of 10 years, more than 2000 women attended Califia retreats. In that number, 25% were women of color, 25% Jewish, 20% heterosexual, 10% disabled, 40-50% working class, and almost half the women were over 40 (Murphy, 1983, 140). The diversity represented by these percentages was higher than that achieved by other white-dominated groups or organizations in the L.A. feminist and lesbian community.

Having experienced a number of Califia gatherings and workshops, I do agree with Marilyn's assertion that "Califia was a dynamic experience which changed their [the participants'] lives or renewed their political fervor, gave them a focus for political action or enlarged their world view or taught them hard truths about themselves" (Murphy, 1983, 138).⁶

Southern California Women For Understanding

While many women were happy at Califia, some lesbians, especially those in white collar professions, felt the need

for a more sedate and discreet group, and they found it in Southern California Women For Understanding (SCWU). Founded in 1976, SCWU emerged from the Whitman-Radclyffe Foundation (WRF), a co-gender organization founded in the early 1970s.

Founding SCWU member Myra Riddell recalled that when the first woman (Betty Berzon) was (finally) voted onto the WRF Board, Betty suggested to Myra that they start a women's caucus. According to Myra, the money the WRF women's caucus generated in L.A. was sent to headquarters in San Francisco but, "they didn't send it back...there was no communication..." (Myra, interview).

At one point, the WRF women sent three women to talk to the organization's Board, but according to Myra, "they [the men] didn't even acknowledge their presence, they went right ahead with their Board meeting..." (Myra, interview). The women came back and said "this is a lost cause," a meeting was called at Betty's house and she, Myra, Terry De Crescenzo, Pat Denslow, Jane Patterson, and others founded SCWU (Morgan, 1986).

Myra recalls that the *raison d'être* of the new organization was that,

...women were not participating in the gay movement...and there were lots and lots of women out there who were career women, who were successful, who had money, who had influence, and they needed to be brought into the movement... (Myra, interview).

SCWU was designed to be an educational organization aimed at dispelling myths about lesbians. Its other purpose

was "...to provide a safe place where women could begin to get involved in the movement..." (Myra, interview). At one point the organization acknowledged that its target audience was (but was not limited to) "...middle-income, 30-plus lesbians" (SCWU 12/95,1).

Although SCWU provided a safe environment for many white women, it was not overly concerned about the comfort of women of color. Myra recalls that "we didn't do any specific reaching out to any ethnic group...it was just 'y'all come, this is what we want to do and your energy is needed..." (Myra, interview).

According to Myra, there were a few women of color among the SCWU members,

There were a handful of black women, a handful of Latinas...I don't think there was a single Asian woman...we had one woman who was Native American...she didn't stay in L.A....[she] had come over from New Mexico... (Myra, interview).

There were a few women of color like Ruth Waters in the Whitman-Radclyffe group, but none in the SCWU founders group.⁷ Myra acknowledged that the issue of too few women of color in the organization "was one of the issues that was brought up again and again" (Myra, interview).

Another issue was the "cliquishness" of the organization. Two community consultants (who were also veterans of Califia racism workshops), were hired to address this and other issues in SCWU. One of them (a woman of color) observed that "We had all this heavy duty

consciousness which was a little more than SCWU was used to...we really tried to push them on the issues of racism, classism...they did decentralize... (Maria, interview).

Despite its shortcomings, SCWU can be credited with a number of important contributions to the lesbian movement. Some members had connections in high places and knew how to use them for the benefit of the community. When SCWU invited Jean O'Leary, co-chair of what was then called the National Gay Task Force, to speak at the Los Angeles Convention Center, the site was booked at no cost, courtesy of L.A. Councilman Joel Wax.

When a small group of lesbians and gays had their first official meeting at the White House in 1977, Myra Riddell was among them. During the "No on 6" (Briggs) campaign, SCWU hosted three cocktail parties at the upscale Century Plaza Hotel; one for community leaders, another for the press and a third for politicians, a strategy that Myra feels helped turn the tide against the homophobic initiative (Myra, interview).

As a result of SCWU's high profile involvement in the NO on 6 Campaign, its membership increased dramatically and the organization continued in high gear into the 1980s. Myra remembers that SCWU,

...organized the first Lesbian Rights Award Banquet...the first banquet where a woman was honored...then as time went by other organizations began to recognize that there were lesbians in them who deserved to be honored...[the SCWU banquets] were big splashy events... (Myra, interview).

Representatives from SCWU also appeared before the monthly meeting of the Southern California Broadcasters Association to talk about lesbians and discrimination and they also lobbied the fifth estate, "...they had never printed the word lesbian in the newspaper, through our efforts... they began to use the 'l' word...they'd been using 'gay' for a while... (Myra, interview).

At its peak, SCWU was the largest lesbian organization in the country with approximately 1400 members and 6 chapters. However, by 1995, the organization was faced with a significant decline in "membership, funds, participation and attendance" (SCWU 12/95, 1). At one meeting of concerned members, "someone" reminded the group that,

SCWU's dilemma is not new and pointed to the case of Daughters of Bilitis, which for many years was the only game in town. It served as a viable group for closeted lesbians...until the times changed and its members no longer needed it (SCWU, 12/95, 14).

By 1997, the future of SCWU, according to some observers was uncertain (Myra, interview).

Other Institution-Building

Violence Against Women

During the second half of the 1970s, along with groups that addressed specific issues and served specific segments of the community, there was one movement that rallied around a set of related issues. The movement to curb violence against women addressed rape, pornography, domestic violence

and sexual abuse. Lesbians working with heterosexual women, were in the forefront of raising consciousness and developing resources in those areas.

The first issue addressed by this movement was rape which, according to the *New Woman's Survival Sourcebook*, was "...introduced to our movement at the New York Radical Feminist Speak-Out and Rape Conference in 1971" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 216).

The editors reported that since that time,

...anti rape centers, rape hotlines, rape patrols, and self-defense courses have been organized; police departments and hospitals have been forced to revise their procedures, [and] public consciousness on the issue has been raised (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 216).

By 1975, 31 states had at least one rape hotline (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 219).

In 1973, an article about the newly formed Los Angeles Women's Union noted that one of its member groups was the Anti-Rape Chapter, which in collaboration with the Anti-Rape Squad at the Westside Women's Center, "has spearheaded a coalition to set up a rape-crisis counseling service, strengthen anti-rape laws and educate to combat the notion that the victim instead of the rapist is the criminal" (Sisson and Wilds, 1973, 9).

The article also announced that a city-wide conference had been held in June with the purpose of establishing the Los Angeles Coalition Against Assaults Against Women (LACAAW) (Sisson and Wilds, 1973, 10; ST 6/73,1).

After several years of lobbying, LACAAW received state funding and opened the Los Angeles Rape Crisis Center which provided a 24-hr hotline, counseling to victims and significant others, and a community education program (LT 3/76,33; Joan interview). Former Lesbian Feminist member, Joan Robins was one of the prime movers in LACAAW and, with Valerie Nordstrom, a woman of color, Joan managed LACAAW's first office.⁸

LACAAW was a pioneer in the field of sexual assault prevention and treatment. Volunteers and staff offered counseling to victims/survivors, accompanied women to hospitals and police stations; worked with the media to change stereotypes; worked with hospitals, police and the courts to change how victims were treated; offered classes in self-defense and trained hundreds of volunteers to provide these vital services.⁹

Along with treatment services, women could learn prevention skills which included training in self-defense. A grass roots pioneer in the area of self-defense and women's sexuality was Betty Brooks. Betty organized Women Against Sexual Assault and for years was a one-woman self-defense, consciousness-raising and training system, teaching hundreds of women how to protect themselves (Robins, 1974, 1). Self-defense skills was one method of increasing a woman's ability to handle assault and harassment, especially at night.¹⁰

During this time period, "Take Back the Night" marches and rallies affirmed a woman's right to be out after sunset. One "Take Back the Night" march which wended its way along Hollywood Boulevard, was organized by a coalition of eighty-two feminist, gay, lesbian and community organizations. The world-famous street was chosen as the march route because it featured a concentration of problematic symbols, including an adult theater and several adult bookstores; Frederick's of Hollywood (a shrill version of Victoria's Secret); and several sexist billboards (Córdova, 1980, 15).

The third movement against violence against women was more controversial. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) was organized in 1976 by a group of community activists that included Suzann Gage, Lynn Heidelberg, women from the Feminist Women's Health Center and other activist groups. Originally, it's goal was to shut down the movie "Snuff," which depicted a woman being mutilated and murdered (London, Heidelberg and WAVAW, 1976, 4). The group's pickets and lobbying actions contributed to the decision by distributors to withdraw the film from Southern California theatres.

After the "Snuff" victory, the group turned its sights on a controversial billboard on Sunset Boulevard which featured the Rolling Stones' record album "Black & Blue." It depicted a chained woman proclaiming that she enjoyed her bound and battered condition. Atlantic Records agreed to

remove the offensive image, but the night before it was to be removed, guerrillas spray-painted it, an action that received national media coverage (*Time* 2/7/77, 58). The centralized nature of the recording industry and its willingness to market increasing numbers of depictions of women as the objects of violence, made it a timely target.

When WAVAW's agenda spread to include the issue of pornography, the group found itself in the middle of a major civil war. In 1979, an article by Susan Brownmiller, entitled "Free Speech vs. Pornography" raised the basic issues of what would later be called the "lesbian sex wars" (Duggan and Hunter, 1995). Brownmiller explained that:

The feminist objection to pornography is not based on prurience...we are not opposed to sex and desire...[the objection] is based on our belief that pornography represents hatred of women, that pornography's intent is to humiliate, degrade and dehumanize the female body for the purpose of erotic stimulation and pleasure... (Brownmiller, 1979, 4).

Brownmiller also asserted that,

...these images...have nothing to do with the hallowed right of political dissent. They have everything to do with the creation of a cultural climate in which a rapist feels that he is merely giving in to a normal urge, and a woman is encouraged to believe that sexual masochism is healthy, liberated fun... (Brownmiller, 1979, 4).

One rebuttal to Brownmiller's argument (often made by proponents of free speech), was that the curbing of pornography could easily lead to censorship that would include the suppression of lesbian texts and images. The issue surfaced for a second, more acrimonious round in the

1980s.

The fourth component of the anti-violence movement focused on domestic violence. In 1974 a state-wide conference on battered women was held in New York (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 214), and in 1976, lesbian activist Del Martin wrote what was described as "the first study of wife battering in the United States" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 215). In Los Angeles, activism around this issue began at the end of the decade and lesbians like Kerry Lobel played a key part in establishing and operating battered women's shelters.

The last activist sector to emerge out of the anti-violence movement focused on the issue of sexual abuse. At a 1971 Rape conference, Florence Rush had discussed "child molestation" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 217), but in Los Angeles, it was not until 1979, that Ariadne, a Social Art Network sponsored an "Incest Awareness Project" (LT 11/79,28).

Once again, lesbians were in the forefront of efforts to change attitudes and provide services. The new ethos around this issue supported disclosure, discussion and action. At the L.A. Woman's Building (WB), women who now called themselves "survivors" rather than "victims," began to organize a series of exhibits and performances with the intention of raising community awareness about the issue.

In 1979, the WB co-sponsored the Incest Awareness

Project. According to Terry Wolverton, lesbians and heterosexual survivors worked together to,

...challenge the views in popular culture that incest was a titillating subject used to sell movies. The group tried to re-educate the media, offering them facts and figures and worked to improve the quality of mental health services...L.A. was among the first to really tackle that issue (Terry, interview).

Health

Lesbians have long felt uncomfortable when dealing with non-lesbian healthcare givers who are covertly and overtly homophobic, as well as those who assume that one is heterosexual and for example, inevitably ask about birth control. Like other women, lesbians have also had to put up with sexist comments and insensitive behavior on the part of male health care providers.

Alternatives to the mainstream healthcare system emerged in the early 1970s. The L.A. Feminist Women's Health Center was a pioneer health alternative set up to educate all women about their bodies, and to encourage them to take more responsibility for health care decisions. Lesbians were in the forefront of the women's health movement and with pioneers like heterosexual feminist Carol Downer, worked to improve health care for all women.¹¹

In 1973, an article in *The Tide* noted that there were two feminist clinics in L.A. where lesbians could get good health care, The Feminist Women's Health Center on Crenshaw Boulevard and The Women's Gynecological Clinic at The Gay

Community Services Center (Block, 1973, 8).

Along with lesbian-sensitive physical health care providers, there emerged a core of lesbian-sensitive mental health care providers. In the early 1970s, the Radical Feminist Therapy Collective (RFTC) played this role for portions of the lesbian feminist community. More conventionally trained lesbian therapists also filled the gap. In the late 1970s, a group of lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual therapists opened the Feminist Women's Therapy Center (FWTC). In the 1980s, when the feminist movement was on the wane, the FWTC was re-named the Los Angeles Women's Therapy Center.

According to Myra Riddell, "...by and large therapists have played a really important part [in the community]...I was one of two open lesbians in the 1950s [the other was Betty Berzon]..." (Myra, interview).

Myra noted that lesbian therapists offer(ed) "...a safe place, someone who understood...[so one did] not have to deal with those issues with a therapist, that's one of the biggest things that we brought to the lesbian community..." (Myra, interview). Since identity issues are a concern of many lesbian clients, a therapist that is "out" serves as a role model for the client. With an "out" lesbian therapist, the client's process of dealing with lesbian-related issues is often less difficult.

The downside of lesbian therapy includes "dual

relationships" or managing the dynamics of being both a therapist and a member of a relatively small community. Social events were a source of stress to some therapists who felt they had to choose between possibly seeing a client in a non-therapeutic setting, and curtailing their social lives.¹² To others like Myra Riddell, this was not a problem. Myra noted that, "...we really do live in a very small community...there are lots of interactions...[you need therapists] that can relate in lots of different capacities... (Myra, interview).

One of these capacities was dealing with the boundaries inherent in client/therapist relationships. In the 1990s, after several lesbian therapists were found guilty of having abused these relationships, boundary violations became a community concern (LN 8/90, 1).

Spirituality

Along with ministrations for the body and psyche, lesbians looked for spiritual support systems that were lesbian and woman-sensitive. Those looking for alternatives to homophobic religions found it in organizations like the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) founded in Los Angeles in 1968 by Troy Perry and friends, as the first "out" gay church in U.S. history.

As in most co-gender organizations, lesbians in MCC had to fight for visibility in what was perceived as a male-dominated organization. By 1973, there was progress. An

article by one of the church's women ministers noted that at one MCC conference "...[compared to] last year's sparse representation of women delegates and ministers, this year's floor had a decidedly feminist bent" (Smith, 1973, 23).

During the conference, participants voted to thenceforward delete references to God and the male pronoun from the MCC by-laws and during MCC services.

MCC was also supportive of other religious groups. It offered meeting space to Beth Chaim Chadashim (BCC), the first gay/lesbian Jewish congregation in the world, which was founded in L.A. in 1972. Sharon Raphael recalled that she and her partner Mina

...went to the second [BCC] meeting when it was still at MCC. I became social action chair and Mina was the treasurer...we were not as religious as some of them...we wanted to help...it was already a male dominated thing. We had a good time. We did a lot of speaking engagements to the Jewish community... (Mina and Sharon, interview).

After their experiences at The Center, Mina and Sharon's tolerance around certain issues was limited. According to Sharon, "at a certain point the more religious people took over, they wanted to build a temple...we respected that but it wasn't what we wanted to do..." (Mina and Sharon, interview).

Mina noted that she and Sharon were more interested in social action: "I couldn't see spending money on prayer books when people were still hungry..." Mina in particular, worked to get BCC affiliated with the reform branch of

Judaism: "I was part of the group of people who met with Rabbi Herman the head of Hebrew Union College...we asked to be affiliated so he worked with us on that..." (Mina and Sharon, interview).

While Jewish lesbians and gays organized their own congregations, Catholics seeking an alternative to the homophobia (and misogyny) of the Roman Catholic Church, founded Dignity in 1969. However, while gay churches and temples provided spiritual sustenance to many lesbians, some who mistrusted male deities and male ministers, looked further.

The editors of *New Woman's Survival Sourcebook* noted that,

...this past summer of 1974 we observed a subtle but quite definite addition to [women's concerns], evident throughout the country - a widespread and surging interest in what we can for the moment loosely call the spiritual aspects of life...though this development is most highly advanced in the Southwest and the West coast, we found that wherever there are feminist communities, women are exploring psychic and nonmaterial phenomena... (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 191).

While Lesbians of color selectively integrated religious beliefs and cultural icons (i.e. La Virgen) into their own spiritual practices, many white women were drawn to a spirituality based on pagan traditions that focused on goddess worship. What was called "women's spirituality" emerged at a time when politicians were worried that radical activism was being replaced by cultural feminism (Kuhner, 1974; Weisstein and Booth, 1976).

In Los Angeles, Z Budapest, a refugee from the 1956

Hungarian Revolution, offered Wicca¹³ to lesbian feminists, challenged stereotypes of witches and declared that "The craft isn't just religion, it's a life-style" (Budapest, 1974, 8). In answer to those who criticized spirituality as apolitical, one Wicca proponent, Cheri Lesh, wrote an article entitled "Wicca is rebellion, not mysticism" (Lesh, 1977, 19). In the early 1970s, Z and friends founded a women's coven. According to Joan Robins, an early member, the group "was designed to give women spiritual power...by naming it the Susan B. Anthony Coven #1, we were trying to link it to the feminist movement" (Joan, interview).

Z also owned The Feminist Wicca, a store where occult supplies were sold and Tarot cards read. In February of 1975, after reading the cards for an undercover police woman, Z was arrested for "fortune telling." One reporter for *Sister Newspaper* noted that "There are hundreds of psychics in the L.A. area, many who advertise in newspapers, and they are not arrested. It is apparent that Z was singled out for her political activities as a feminist organizer of women as witches" (Diehm, 1975, 3).

Supporting the assertion that Z was singled out, was Louise Hubner, who had once received a proclamation from a county supervisor naming her "Official Witch of Los Angeles" (Córdova, 1975b, 31). Louise acknowledged that she had "been paid by radio stations, national magazines and L.A. City officials to tell fortunes and cast spells." She declared

that "when I hear of a witch being arrested I know there's a little more going on...there are *other reasons*" (quoted in Córdova, 1975b, 31).

Z's trial briefly united diverse segments of the lesbian community. Shirl Buss noted that Z's trial was "where witches met politics...it sort of brought everybody together...people thought she was being oppressed and persecuted" (Shirl, interview). Z's attorneys argued that "Z was a spiritual leader engaged in religious activities" (Diehm, 1975, 1) but, as one of her attorneys, Marge Buckley later explained, "we were apparently unable to convince the jury that Z was acting out of religious, rather than business interests" (quoted in Córdova, 1975b, 3).

Z was found guilty, given a suspended sentence, fined, placed on probation and forbidden to read the Tarot cards in public. Later, when new evidence showed that business licenses were being issued to others for the explicit purpose of "tarot card reading," an appeal was filed, but Z's conviction was upheld (LT 3/80,7). Z continued her practice and activities in the L.A. area until she moved to Northern California where she continue(d/s) her work.

Businesses

Community studies show that institution-building on the part of marginalized groups includes dreams of financial independence from the mainstream oppressor (Morris, 1984, 288), and although lesbians have always owned businesses, it

was not until the 1970s that some tried to combine their politics and their livelihood. The first to do so across the U.S. were women's bookstores, and Sisterhood Bookstore which opened in L.A. in 1972, became a local prototype for this new approach. Two of the original owners had been deeply involved with the Westside Women's Center and carried their politics into this new venture.

Like other women's bookstores across the country, Sisterhood became a local community institution. It served as a "safe" woman's space, as a community bulletin board (the owners were privy to community news and gossip and set aside a small room for flyers and announcements), and it was a venue for readings. During this time lesbian literature emerged from its long night of sad endings and tales of self-hatred. Readings at L.A. area women's bookstores such as Sisterhood, Page One and Sojourner, celebrated lesbian relationships (*Patience and Sarah*), identity (*Sappho Was a Right-On Woman*) and community (*Lesbian Nation*).

Although Sisterhood survived for 27 years, most businesses that catered to the lesbian community were short-lived. However, during the second phase of the lesbian feminist decade, lesbian-owned or managed businesses, albeit short-lived, proliferated.

Community businesses included: a restaurant (The Women's Saloon); a contracting company (Building Women); The Feminist Credit Union; a travel agency (Womantours) which

still operates under another name; an auto repair garage (Dianic Mechanics) and a directory founded by four lesbians to promote businesses owned and/or run by lesbians and heterosexual women (*The LA Women's Yellow Pages*).

The economic difficulties faced by most of these businesses had roots in the politics of the community. For example, at The Women's Saloon (a restaurant and bar), ambiance, service and fare had to be carefully balanced in order to meet the standards of the politically correct (one debate centered around whether or not to ban "Sweet N' Low").

Another source of difficulty lay in economics. Activist Shirl Buss, later a co-owner of Building Women, pointed out that "most feminist businesses and projects are dealing in the realm of luxury or novelty items [while the] sources of my basic needs [are] male controlled" (Buss, 1976, 5). In other words, community women with limited incomes had to pay the utility bills before they could buy a woman's liberation pendant.

In addition to limited incomes, the policy of "pay more if you can, less if you can't," forced lesbians offering services and products, to work outside the community in order to make ends meet. Gahan Kelly, a founding co-owner of Sisterhood Bookstore was of the opinion that "The women's movement took a natural course toward creating an alternative culture and lifestyle which is mainly reflective

of radical lesbian feminist ideals..." (quoted in Diehm 1975, 1). This idealism lacked the financial power to help make most of these alternative businesses viable.

History and Culture

Part of the process of developing a positive identity is acquiring a knowledge of one's heritage. Yet, mainstream culture has generally ignored lesbian-specific activities and contributions, thus making the task of knowing our history, more difficult.

Examples of how lesbians were/are erased from all levels of history abound. In 1974, an article in *The Tide* referred to a history collective meeting in an unidentified city. The unidentified author noted that,

This...collective has given me the insight that we lesbians have no written history. Not that we didn't exist, but straight society found...many excuses for not writing it up when some dyke did something fabulous (LT 4/74,14).

As an example, the author offered the case of a group called "The Gay Revolution of Women," which received no credit in a Planned Parenthood Rape Crisis Handbook for their role in organizing a rape crisis center. According to the author, lesbians had been responsible for a large turnout at a sexual assault community meeting. One result of the meeting was that "...the rape crisis center got the gas needed to become a reality" (LT 4/74,14). Lesbians had also volunteered to become counselors to rape victims and to organize self-defense classes. The author noted that

lesbians were understandably "...touchy about that deliberate exclusion that leaves us...without memory, pride or song" (LT 4/74/14).

The New Women's Survival Catalogue (NWSC) was another example of how lesbian contributions were minimized. The editors included lesbian listings in a low-key manner. They did not give credit to lesbians for the breadth and depth they gave to the women's movement. One can assume that the editors of the NWSC and Planned Parenthood had the same reasons for omitting or downplaying the contributions of lesbians. They were worried about acceptance and its effect on the bottom line.

The omission of lesbians from the historical record was part of the omission of women in general. In 1968, after Laura X [her chosen surname] heard a male professor ask "...is there enough about women to fill a quarter course?" she published a pamphlet titled "Women in World History," and founded The Women's History Research Center in Berkeley (Grimstad and Rennie 1973, 140). According to the NWSC, materials documenting the women's movement "began to pour in," overwhelming the Center (which was located in Laura's house).

When Laura incorporated as a non-profit, she was for a short time, able to generate as much as \$100,000 a year through grants and government funding. At the time, this was an unheard of sum of money for a grassroots women's project.

Before computers and industrial strength photocopiers, volunteers and work study students valiantly sorted and catalogued the materials (including lesbian ones), answered reference questions and published educational materials.

Laura X's work inspired other women to address the gaps in male-focused history. In Los Angeles, The Feminist History Research project initiated by Sherna Gluck and Ann Forfreedom announced that it would gather "... oral histories of surviving suffragists and historical documents of the period between 1910-1930" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1973, 142). During that time, the first Woman's Heritage Calendar appeared and provided a wealth of information on women and their contributions to history and culture.

In 1973, with the founding of the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in New York, lesbians began to proactively unearth, collect and preserve their history. The LHA announced that its mission was to "gather and preserve records of lesbian lives and activities so that future generations of lesbians will have ready access to materials relevant to their lives" (Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 240). The LHA materials were housed in activist femme Joan Nestle's apartment.

In 1974, Chicago lesbians set up the New Alexandria Library to "preserve some of our woman-knowledge and make it freely accessible to all women, with a first priority being to meet the educational and informational needs of lesbians"

(Grimstad and Rennie, 1975, 240).

In May of 1975, one hundred and fifty women gathered at a camp near Los Angeles to participate in The Lesbian History Exploration. The project's intention was to,

...recreate our history drawn from many sources ...[including] research on known lesbians and lesbian communities of the past, personal testimony about the ways we have lived as lesbians, first-hand accounts of movement history, historical fantasy, mythology, recreations of our past, [and] stories about 'lost women' (Bingham, 1975, 10).

Because the event focused on lesbian topics, many who attended felt that they could, for the first time, experience a sense of their own (lesbian) history.

While some activists were unearthing lesbian history, others were engaged in creating lesbian cultural productions. Cultural critic Karin Quimby suggested that the emergence of lesbian culture was a positive reaction to the dearth of lesbian images, music and words in dominant culture representations (personal communication, 1997).

In 1974, a *Lesbian Tide* article noted that "The cultural spotlight is shining now on music, dances, concerts, jam sessions, [and] rehearsals..." (Doczi, 1974, 30). Lesbians like Evan Paxton were the driving force behind a number of memorable productions. Her credits include The Lesbian History Exploration weekend, two lesbian talent shows and "Lesbian Night" at the Santa Monica YWCA.

During this phase, "women's music" came into its own. Meg Christian, one of the earliest self-identified lesbian

recording artists defined women's music as, "...generally any music that speaks honestly and realistically to women about their lives..." (Christian and Berson, 1974, 5).

The term "women" as a euphemism for "lesbian" was used to circumvent homophobia. This strategy attracted a wider audience to non-separatist cultural events and helped sell a larger number of records and books. While objectionable to some, the ploy seemed to work and had its positive points. Ginny Berson of Olivia Records (which was temporarily based in Los Angeles), noted that "[women's] culture, particularly the music, has done a tremendous amount of good in terms of getting the message of the women's movement out to people in palatable form" (Berson, 1974, 27).

At first, musicians offered a mix of old and new. One article in *Sister*, noted that, "Many performers still sang popular and traditional songs, but they often changed pronouns, phrases or entire stanzas to give them more relevance [sic] to those who sang and heard them" (Farrell, 1975, 12).

Women's music festival audiences appreciatively welcomed performers whose music and lyrics they could relate to. At concerts lesbian audiences enjoyed "their music" in the company of "kindred spirits," and for several hours, one could pretend that Lesbian Nation was a reality. It was during some of these concerts that the elusive feeling of "communitas" manifested.¹⁴

Contributing to this wave of "woman's" culture were a number of talented L.A. lesbians. Maxine Feldman recorded the first publicly sold lesbian record ("Angry Atthis") (LT 7/76, 7).¹⁵ An article in *The Tide* noted that Maxine "is a lesbian, a revolutionary, and a singer of very good feminist and gay songs." She had been appearing as the opening act for the activist comedic team of [Patty] Harrison and [Robin] Tyler at a number of local Southern California colleges (Morgan, 1973, 10).

During one appearance in Ventura, California, Maxine was introduced as a lesbian singer, and the manager immediately ordered "...that dyke off the stage." In her inimitable manner, Robin Tyler, told the audience what had happened, explained that dykes must be "something Nixon was bombing in Vietnam," and asked the audience of approximately five hundred people if they were glad that Maxine was there. According to *The Tide*, "All but a handful stood and gave Ms. Feldman a standing ovation" (Morgan, 1973, 10).

Other local talent included Sylvia Kohan whose signature song was "Moon Over Venice;" Diane Lindsay, who was trained as a classical musician; Phranc, a folk-singer still in her teens (and still singing in the 1990s); Vicki Randle, one of the few women of color on the L.A. women's concert circuit in the early 1970s; and the band "Six Women," which included several women of color and lesbians.¹⁶

Another musical group, The New Miss Alice Stone Ladies Society Orchestra took its name from "a picture of a real ladies orchestra long ago" (Robins, 1975, 20). The group was musically well trained, and dressed in Victorian costumes and sporting names like Clara Net, delivered music, humor and fun. Later, a collective of women which included Sylvia Kohan, formed the L.A. Women's Community Chorus (open to women of all sexual orientations) (McDonald, 1977, 3). The Chorus' annual concert was a popular event into the 1980s.

Beginning in 1974, concerts became a regular part of the lesbian social/cultural scene. Barbara Mclean of Womantalent produced the memorable "Margie, Chris and Vickie Concert" at the Embassy Auditorium in 1974. The price of admission to this musical feast was only \$3.50. A review by Annie Doczi praised the musicians for their politically correct interactions, "they shone collectively and individually and not at all competitively" (Doczi, 1974, 1).

Annie also acknowledged that she had "...been groping around lately for some kind of cultural/political synthesis or illustration and that last night's music was a glimpse of one" (Doczi, 1974, 1). She noted that when the audience "...flamed into a two wave applause for 'Beautiful Soul,' belted out the chorus of 'Best Friend'...and caught its breath at 'Something Just Begun,' it was...clear that the music was enough and was what counted..." (Doczi, 1974, 26).

Perhaps not surprisingly, as we "moved up the ladder," we began to miss the "old days." Annie noted that the elegant Embassy event had evoked a sense of nostalgia in her as she recalled the days of "the ramshackle church hall with the shaky sound system and last-minute publicity..." She missed "...having the process be part of the product..." and concluded that "...the art of the barricades isn't slick [but]...in its freedom from patriarchal plushiness, it is holy" (Doczi, 1974, 17). Annie's feelings reflected the ambivalence of wanting to move upward and outward, while keeping a grassroots spirit.

The change from ramshackle to more upscale was welcomed by lesbians who saw the change as a business opportunity. When the demand for lesbian/women's music reached a certain level, Olivia Records stepped in to fill the niche. Olivia was established in 1974 in Washington D.C. by veterans of the Furies Collective.

An early Olivia press release spoke about the proliferation of women's music, its goals of providing women with access to the recording industry, and of creating an egalitarian working environment using the format of a collective. Although there were no women of color in the founding collective, the group affirmed that "we recognize the importance of working out class, race and age differences among all employees..." (LT 4/74,18).

In November of 1974, Olivia announced that it would be

moving to Los Angeles, where it was felt the environment to support a recording company was more developed. It noted the existence of "two established women's concert production companies, a woman's building and a huge community of musicians" (LT 11/74, 19). Olivia also announced the release of its first album, "Meg Christian: I Know You Know." The record received good reviews both for technical quality and content, and one of the cuts, "Ode to a Gym Teacher," became a community "classic."

In the mid 1970s, "politically correct" Olivia, whose collective membership included former die-hard separatists, hired an MTF (male-to-female) transgender recording engineer. When this was discovered, controversy erupted. Letters from irate lesbian feminists arrived at *Sister* (ST, 6/77, 6). Resilient Olivia weathered the storm and continued to provide recording opportunities for lesbian (and other) musicians who were more concerned about the quality of the product than the chromosomes of the sound engineer.

The Olivia incident was not an isolated one. Since many activist lesbians considered all aspects of lesbian existence to be political ("the personal is political"), cultural productions (and their producers), were not immune to scrutiny and controversy.

At the First National Women's Music Festival in Illinois (1974), for example, there was a division between musicians who wanted their art to stand alone and those who

considered their music to be part of their politics.

In spite of ideological differences, the number of women's music festivals continued to grow as did the number of records sold. Several community publications also emerged to cover the new "women's music" scene, including *Paid My Dues* and *Hotwire*.

Film, Theater and Radio

As part of the lesbian cultural "naissance," lesbians began to produce and direct low-budget films. These productions were meant to counteract invisibility and stereotypes in mainstream films. In 1972, Jan Oxenberg, made "Home Movie," an autobiographical film on the subject of "growing up, coming out and being a lesbian" (Rydbeck, 1976, 2). The film was widely shown, partly because there were so few films like it, and it became a classic in its genre. *The Tide* called it "An un-compromised work..." (Rydbeck, 1976, 2), and in a *Tide* interview Jan warned that while "women's culture is an antidote to the problems of mass culture...it must not become so generalized that it's simply mass culture emanating from the women's movement" (Rydbeck, 1976, 3).

Jan's work was distributed by Iris Films, a three-woman collective based in L.A. and made up of Cathy Zeutlin, Frances Reid, and former Lesbian Feminists member, Liz Stevens.

Trying to be politically correct, Iris addressed the shortcomings of the group, "We, so far, have no specific

means of maintaining our accountability to poor women, minority women, and other less privileged women, but we are committed to finding these means..." (ST 10/75,1). Iris' best known film was "In the Best Interests of the Children," an early documentary on lesbian families.

Along with film, lesbian culture began to generate theatrical and radio productions. The performance group "Bread and Roses" offered political commentary through comedy, songs and skits that satirized the many "isms" the community was struggling with. On the radio, the National Public Radio station, KPFK, offered programs like "Lesbian Sisters" and later "I AM R U."

Revitalizing the Movement

During this phase, as lesbian culture was waxing, politics seemed to be waning. The Sisterhood Revival Collective (SRC), a short-lived community group, symbolized sporadic attempts to re/unite and re-energize grassroots political energy in the lesbian community. The SRC's purpose was "...to renew/recharge the commitment of feminists to the liberation of all women and to bring other women into the struggle with us..." ([Sisterhood Revival], 1976, 13).

The organizers of the SRC were also concerned about what they perceived as a rising incidence of internecine conflict,

...it seems to us that [lesbian] feminists are becoming isolated from the community at large, forgetting who and what our real enemies are,

focusing our anger instead, on other feminists. In addition our isolation and our in-fighting makes it difficult for new feminists to find and work with us ([Sisterhood Revival], 1976, 13).

The SRC announced a public meeting for January 1977. The meeting was held and the group continued to meet for a time, but the energy quickly dissipated. At one meeting of the SRC, Linda Torn attributed the loss of political energy in the community to an overdeveloped interest in cultural activities. In her comments one can see part of the basis for the clash between "political" and "cultural" lesbian ideology. Linda argued that,

The emphasis on women's culture...has been detrimental...A lot of women [recently] came into the community when women's culture was the thing...[but] when I first started going to meetings there was anarchal [sic] feminism. That was radical feminism. In CR [consciousness-raising] groups I learned and developed theories, and I know that most women now aren't getting that (Torn quoted in Sisterhood Revival, 1976, 5).

The Revival was the last notable attempt to bring renewal and unification to the L.A. lesbian activist community. By the mid 1970s, the lesbian feminist movement had diversified into a new level of complexity. At that point, although collaboration between certain groups was sometimes possible, the days when all groups could fit under one umbrella organization for even a short period of time, were gone. In addition, culture rather than radical political activity seemed to engage the interest of Los Angeles lesbians.

Although the SCR failed in its mission, it did inspire

attempts for one last hurrah in the "all-purpose, underfunded women's/lesbian center" department. In 1977, lesbians on the Westside of Los Angeles, opened Womonspace,¹⁷ in a small house, on Hill Street (Land, 1/77, 30). Womonspace was located in the former site of the Westside Women's Center (WWC) which had recently "relocated." A WWC press release referred to the general decline in radical feminist (lesbian) activism: "The past two years have seen a decline and dispersal of radical feminist organizing..." (LT, 1/77, 30).

Womonspace was the last direct descendant of spaces like the Los Angeles Women's Center, The Gay Women's Service Center and the Westside Women's Center. It was the final example of its genre: idealistic, underfunded, and organized and staffed mostly by lesbian activist volunteers.

Civil Wars

The civil wars of the second phase of the lesbian activist movement in Los Angeles, centered around issues of sexism at The Center and S/M (sado-masochism), and there was also debate over cultural feminism and its oppositional sister, lesbian separatism. The first two issues left deep impressions on those who participated in the conflicts, and especially on those who were trashed for being "politically incorrect."

The first civil war was fought over issues of sexism and worker/manager power differentials at The Gay Community

Services Center. I will recount the war in some detail because it was a complex series of events that had a great impact on those involved.

When The Gay Community Services Center (The Center), first opened in 1971, many lesbian feminists declined to participate saying that it was male-run and sexist (personal recollection). To the argument that as long as women did not get involved it would remain a male-run organization, critics countered with the well-taken point that it was twice the work to try to deliver services to lesbians while fending off the sexism of males. In addition to its shortcomings around gender, The Center was also criticized for its increasingly bureaucratic structure.

An article written by Mary Molina in early 1975 indicates that trouble had been brewing since the previous November when The Center Board of Directors had instituted a management team without "input from GCSC workers or notification that the action was being considered" (Molina, 1975, 1).

Adding to the tension were ongoing discussions about starting a separate lesbian center. Center staff members Daphne Hatfield and June Suwara were part of this discussion group, but the former resigned after she was appointed to The Center's management team. When June chose to keep both affiliations, she was charged with having a hidden agenda, and was refused a place on the management team.

In the midst of growing controversy, the recently funded Alcoholism Program for Women (APW), requested and received permission from its federal granting agency to leave The Center and become an independent entity (Lillene, interview; LT 9/76, 36; Weathers, 1996).

The Center moved closer to a crisis after Alicia Maddocks, a Latina who was The Center's treasurer, became troubled by her observation that the agency "had either taken or borrowed \$15,000 from some of its funded sources to cover expenses" (LT 7/75,36). Daphne Hatfield explained that a large organization can "run on a deficit budget due to the varied ways in which they receive their funding" (LT, 7/75,36). Federal and county funding agencies were contacted and they sent auditors. After the audit, the county made recommendations for tighter controls, promised closer monitoring and gave The Center "the green light to continue managing the audited programs" (LT 7/75, 38).

After the audit, a number of Center workers were fired for purportedly sending defamatory information packets to funding agencies. In response, a strike was called and picketers took up their posts outside The Center's new building on Highland Avenue.

Attorneys for the workers argued that they had been fired for organizing and not, as alleged by The Center, for substandard job performance. Those fired became known as the "Gay/Feminist 11." The group charged The Center with being

"sexist, racist, classist and patriarchal" and they sought legal counsel (LT 7/75,37).

Center Board member and gay activist Morris Kight was said to have interpreted "recent worker demands and questioning of fiscal procedure as 'insurrection' and called upon the GCSC Board to maintain a 'firm stance' against such [behavior]" (ST 5/75,11). Soon after, four more workers who were attempting to organize a Center union were also fired. By June, 1975, The Center management team had been replaced by a team comprised of Lillene Fifield, Ken Bartley and Don Kilhefner.

Workers who chose to stay at The Center were excoriated as "scabs," and some endured name-calling, tire-slashing and ostracism. Lillene Fifield recalls that "For one solid year, anytime I showed up anywhere [at a lesbian event] I was turned away...I was totally ostracized..." According to Lillene, what finally broke the monolithic policy, was the action of a Woman's Building Board member who saw Lillene being turned away at a WB event. The former brought the matter to the WB Board, and persuaded them to insist on a policy that welcomed all women regardless of their political views (Lillene, interview).

So intense was the intra-community animosity generated by the conflict that even those who tried to stay neutral were penalized. Jinx Beers recalls that the group Lesbian Activists declined to take sides, contending that both

parties were guilty: "...we see things that are wrong on both sides. They're equally guilty of stepping on each other's toes and of not being feministic [sic]" (Jinx, interview). According to Jinx, after Lesbian Activists voted to be neutral, they were "thrown out of the Westside Women's Center" (Jinx interview).

Gahan Kelly, a member of the group that ran the Westside Women's Center (WWC) confirmed that "If someone applied for "resident status" at the WWC, it was pretty much up to us if they would be accepted. We turned down [the group] Lesbian Activists..." (Gahan, interview).

Several of the women I interviewed had been associated with the WWC. Some remembered that the group Lesbian Activists was not considered "feminist enough." No one recalled that the decision not to admit Lesbian Activists to WWC membership, had also been based on the former's decision to stay neutral about the Center Strike.

The decision to keep Lesbian Activists out of the WWC, caused something of a backlash. A letter by Barbara Stratton in the August issue of *Sister* (which was then located at the WWC), condemned the newspaper's position, calling the staff "...hypocrites, oppressors, pigs!" Stratton quoted the policy on the back page of *Sister* which stated that the WWC is "a non-partisan organization whose purpose is to serve all the women of Los Angeles" (ST 8/75,14).

By September, the policy that had routinely appeared on

the back cover had been changed. It now stated that *Sister* was a newspaper publishing information on the women's movement, that it was an open forum, but reserved the right to edit or reject any material (ST 9/75/12).

In early August, the WWC had announced that since it supported the strikers, any "women who knowingly cross the picket line will not be allowed to organize, lead or teach activities in the WWC..." Exceptions to this policy included those crossing the line for journalistic purposes (Doczi, 1975, 26).

In September, 1975, a letter by Aldebaran, a WWC representative, tried to counter criticism against the WWC by explaining that "many women who decided against Lesbian Activists consider that group's work to be harmful to women and to lesbians" (Aldebaran, 1975, 6).

Aldebaran noted that after comedian Mort Sahl called for death to gay people, Lesbian Activists supported his right to free speech.¹⁸ The WWC women also objected when a member of Lesbian Activists crossed The Center picket line to attend a Christopher Street West (Gay Pride) Parade meeting. Aldebaran stressed the importance of worker and lesbian rights and stated that Lesbian Activists' stance of neutrality made it "hard for us [at the WWC] to trust them as allies" (Aldebaran, 1975, 6).

After the WWC voted to exclude Lesbian Activists, *Sister* and *The Tide*, who were also members of the WWC,

followed suit. A notice on page four of *Sister*, stated that it would not accept advertising "from groups....siding with the management structure of the GCSC controversy..." (ST 7/75, 4). Two months later, *The Tide* adopted a similar policy but denied that it was engaging in censorship, explaining that it had published letters from all viewpoints on the subject of the strike.

The Tide also explained that although willing to adhere to an open forum policy in reporting the strike, its advertising policy had to reflect its politics and therefore they would not accept Center ads or ads from any group or individual supporting The Center (Tide Collective, 1975, 30).

The Tide's policy may have been influenced by the fact that its publisher, Jeanne Córdova, had worked at the Center and was supportive of worker demands. She had also been a Center Board member. Eventually she was fired, removed from the Board, and joined the plaintiffs.

In October, 1975, the staff of *Sister Newspaper* reiterated its support for the fired workers and announced that they would not accept ads, announcements or calendar events from either The Center or any organization which actively and knowingly tried to break the boycott. Although, *Sister* was still willing to print letters that "express different points of view," they announced that ads from Lesbian Activists and The Metropolitan Community Church

(MCC) would not be printed and that "if some people see this as censorship, so be it...." (ST 10/75,3).

By that time and in response to their exclusion from community publications, Jinx and friends had started their own publication. Jinx recalls "I said, if we can't be in their paper, we'll start our own..." (Jinx, interview). The first issue of *The Lesbian News* appeared in August of 1975.

The strike caused divisions within the lesbian community and emotional hardship for both the workers that were fired and for those women who chose to stay at The Center. But the strike continued. In July of 1976, a *Tide* article noted that after 14 months,

...both sides remain stalemated. There is a lawsuit pending, the boycott is still going on and the community is still divided. Angry feelings and confusions about the strike still divide us at women's events, and former friends are still not speaking...we call upon the [Center] Board...to make a reconciliation proposal for the strikers. We ask that the gay feminist 15 receive such a proposal with openness and concern for unity and principle... (Tide Collective, 1976, 20).

Negotiations to end the strike had begun in September, 1975. A memo by the strikers explained that, "...the central issue...has always been a labor issue...the strikers have wanted The Center to respond to their demand for some kind of work democracy and input into management..." (Doczi, 1975, 26).

The Center wanted the strikers to call off the lawsuit, the picket line and the community boycott and insisted on contesting the unemployment filings of the first 9 workers

fired. Six days into the process, negotiations broke down and, although The Center stopped contesting the unemployment claims, it continued to refuse to participate in a public forum to debate the issues (LT 11/75,19).

The strike was finally settled in August of 1978. The Center announced an out of court settlement, revised its personnel policy and acknowledged that the workers "were terminated in a manner inconsistent with personnel policies and procedures then in effect" (LT 9/78,36). Sylvia Patton, the plaintiffs' attorney, was of the opinion that the anti-gay backlash then being generated by Anita Bryant and the Briggs Initiative, was a factor in The Center's decision to settle, "...I think there was a feeling of wanting to unify in view of the attack against us" (LT 9/78,36).

Years later, those who remembered the strike, still spoke of it as a traumatic event.¹⁹ None of the women that I interviewed, who had been involved with the strike, felt that Lillene had been singled out,²⁰ or that anyone had acted in bad faith by refusing membership to Lesbian Activists.²¹

When Joan Robins was asked (almost 20 years later) what the strike had been about, what she remembered was the workers. According to Joan, The Center would not allow the workers to,

...have any voice in running The Center...these were leftist people who were being kicked out...the women had been trying to get a stronger voice for lesbians in The Center...Myna [Robinson/Meyer] and Sharon

[Raphael] had gone through this before... (Joan, interview).²²

The Center strike polarized the lesbian community. Groups like the Westside Women's Center, *Sister Newspaper* and *The Lesbian Tide*, had the power to impose sanctions, and did so, explaining that they were motivated by principle. Sanctions continued even after the picketers were no longer at their posts. Those who crossed the picket line without prior approval, could be reported to the pro-strike contingent.²³

Since lesbians felt powerless to affect decisions at The Center, it may be that they turned against lesbians who were affiliated with it. Years later, some still regarded Lillene with animosity. while Jinx was dismissed as not having been political enough to understand the issues (personal communications). The event became lodged in the community psyche. It was a morality play from which the moral has yet to be extracted.

Sado/Masochism (S/M)

In Los Angeles, the equivalent of the acrimonious arguments over separatism in Chicago (see Brody, 1985), were the civil wars over sado-masochism (S/M). In late 1976, *The Tide* opened public debate on the issue by publishing a transcript of a workshop entitled "Toward a Feminist Expression of Sado-Masochism" (LT 11/76, 14). Strict feminists were not amused, and at conferences, if S/M groups

were allowed to present their point of view at all, they had to contend with women ready to argue against them.

Pro-S/M groups like Samois in San Francisco, argued that S/M "is a form of sexual dissent," while opponents like Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) in L.A. countered with the assertion that S/M promoted pornography and anti-women violence (LT 11/79,25).

Samois was a group made up of lesbians whose primary identification was as sexual liberationists, while WAVAW was made up of women who primarily identified as lesbian feminists. At issue was the charged matter of sexuality. One of the questions was: Should women be free to explore this complex area or should they resist patriarchal attempts to exploit this volatile area?

Via letters and articles in the community media, lesbians engaged in a lively dialogue on the subject. Wicca high Priestess Z Budapest counseled that "...the SM orientation is bad magic...we do not consider SM to be a spiritual act. While we have no trouble accepting that some sisters like pain, we...find it limited and decadent to seek pleasure in pain" (LT 5/77, 26).

Cerriweden Fallingstar (self-identified as a witch and practicing priestess) took exception to Z's stance, noting that witches should not judge other sisters since according to Isis: "All acts of love are sacred to me" (LT 5/77,26).

Barbara Ruth offered a mixed perspective:

...SM as a liberating practice is only possible for women within a lesbian feminist context...as a lesbian-feminist I believe it would be extremely destructive for any woman to play either role in an SM relationship with a man (Ruth, 1977, 10).

As with most problematic issues, the community did not reach consensus over the issue and the issue would reemerge in the 80s as part of the "lesbian sex wars."

Separatism/Cultural Feminism

Lesbian separatism is the issue that generates the greatest amount of opposition across gender, class, and sexual orientation lines. Lesbians, gay males and heterosexuals of all colors will spontaneously come together in alliance against it. Because the standpoint is uncompromising in its challenge to male supremacy, it activates subliminal anxiety in people uncomfortable with its challenge. As Julia Penelope noted, "...Lesbian separatism is a subject bound to arouse anger and hostility not only in men but also in women. We are all afraid of it, but for different reasons" (Penelope, 1988, 45).

Julia recalled that this hostility was not new and that both lesbians and gays had difficulties with it as far back as the days of Gay Liberation. At that time, she had written that,

Lesbian separatism has been and remains one of the most painful issues within gay liberation organizations. I say painful because it is difficult for a lesbian to put aside her neo-humanistic ideal that "we're all human beings, after all" (Penelope,

1988, 44).

Julia also noted that, "...gay males have too often interpreted lesbian separatism as a personal rejection rather than seeing it as one part of the generalized anger of women who have to live in a male-dominated culture" (Penelope, 1988, 44).

Unlike Chicago, where according to Michal Brody (1985), lesbian separatists actively fought over political correctness, in Los Angeles, the heyday of separatism was less acrimonious. In Los Angeles, many lesbian activists for a time identified as separatists, either ideologically or because they lived their lives without much meaningful interaction with males (Judy, interview; Shirl, interview).

For some, separatism was a logical progression and for others a logical revelation. For many it became a "stage" from which they later felt they had evolved to other points on what Adrienne Rich called the "lesbian continuum" (Rich, 1983).

Los Angeles activist Gahan Kelley defined lesbian separatism as "building an alternative culture/society based on values we've just begun to explore (i.e. woman-identification)" (Kelley, 1976, 29). *Lesbian Tide* publisher Jeanne Córdova explained the varieties of separatism circa 1973, as "a political direction that calls for economic, psychological, cultural, [and] emotional separation from men and all they have created" (Córdova, 1973, 19).

Michal Brody, a veteran of the Chicago lesbians separatist wars recalls that,

...the concept was in a process of constant refinement...the fundamental core...was separation of women from men...there was too much frustration and aggravation involved in trying to work or deal with men. Sexism once perceived, became intolerable..it became urgent to understand the meaning and essence of womanhood as only we could define ourselves... (Brody, 1985, 184).

While most lesbians of color objected to separatism on the grounds that it was racist and classist, those lesbians of color who identified as separatists maintained that regardless of color, males were sexist; and that regardless of sexual orientation, white women were racist (see Lee in Hoagland and Penelope, 1988).²⁴ Some lesbians of color also disagreed with assertions that separatism was not relevant to lesbians of color and that it was an escapist route used only by privileged-class women.

In an interview with Michal Brody, Loretta Mears (an African American lesbian and former member of the Lavender Woman collective), objected to how the presence of lesbians of color in separatist groups was "minimized or ignored":

Years later I read stuff in the women's press about how separatism doesn't have any meaning for dark women, and how it's only for middle-class Jewish women and white women, and I'm going - "Wait a second, that group we were in...there were three black women in that group." So I really get angry when women - dark women or light-skinned women - talk about how early separatism and separatism now doesn't have anything to say to dark women, or that we didn't have anything to do with the theory and ideas that got developed...I know the kind of impact we had. Dark women have a herstory in lesbian separatism, and it should not be minimized or ignored (in

Brody, 1985, 129).

Several years later, as the lesbian feminist "impulse" subsided and the co-gender movement re-emerged, separatism and cultural feminism became targets for co-gender lesbians and former separatists. Lesbian and feminist "politicos," criticized cultural feminists for being more interested in woman-identified projects than in mobilizing the masses toward political change. Their criticisms often conflated lesbian-focused lesbians, lesbian separatists and cultural feminists. Shugar (1995) noted this conflation and Taylor and Whittier contended that the attack on "cultural feminism," was really an attack on lesbian feminism (1992, 107).

In 1976, the LA LA LA (Los Angeles League for the Advancement of Lesbianism in the Arts) cultural event at the Woman's Building, which was an example of rare co-operation between white lesbian groups, was criticized for its cultural feminist focus.

In an article titled "Culture Without Politics is Just Entertainment," Penny Grenoble, who covered the event for *The Tide*, noted the lack of "real" political content in the "LA LA LA" program:

...culture can be defined... in the limited sense of art and artistic expression, or as a lifestyle. [At the event] what we got was culture in its limited definition - [since] most of the performances took traditional forms...and used established methodology. The content expressed lesbian love, anger, commitment, but...there were no radical forms presented there. The weekend's presentations

neglected the political aspects of the lesbian lifestyle, neglected to represent that spectrum of the community whose contribution is the advancement of the political goals and social condition of Lesbians... (Grenoble, 1976, 7).

At this point in the movement's process, there was a growing division between "political lesbians" and "cultural lesbians." More women seemed to favor the latter position, possibly because, after women concluded that "revolutionary" changes were not imminent, they moved toward creating spaces (outside the patriarchy), where they could feel safer and more comfortable.

Adding to the confusion was the practice of conflating separatism with cultural feminism/lesbianism. Activists like Bonnie Zimmerman (who once identified as a lesbian separatist and still considers herself a lesbian feminist), tried to articulate the difference between the two.

Bonnie explained that separatism's primary goal was the creation of political theory and alternative institutions designed to bring about socio-political change. Cultural feminism on the other hand, was characterized by its effort to define a "uniquely female nature, vision and artistic expression" (Zimmerman quoted in Shugar, 1995, 187).

Critics of cultural feminism like historian Alice Echols, argued that cultural feminism had turned its focus from "opposing male supremacy to creating a female counterculture..." and that its goal had changed from one of social to one of individual transformation (1989, 5). The

splits between the "politicos" who blamed capitalism for women's oppression, and radical lesbian feminists who blamed it on males, continued into the late 1970s.

Conclusion

During the second phase of the lesbian feminist movement, lesbians continued to develop their institutional base. Funding from outside sources had been considered unlikely during the fi(r)st phase, but as tolerance on the part of outsiders and political savvy on the part of lesbians (and gays) increased, some funding became available for projects that fit into established public policy categories. Examples included the Alcoholism Center for Women, which focused on substance abuse and prevention, and the lesbian-friendly Woman's Building which promoted the arts.

During the second phase, new affinity groups served specific needs. They included grassroots organizations like Califia; groups for women who wanted a comfortable and discreet social environment like SCWU; and the earliest known Los Angeles political lesbian of color group (Lesbianas Latinamericanas, 1974).

Lesbian activists grew more confident about their right to be "out and about" and this was signified by the public venues in which they gathered. For example, they met at universities (the West Coast Lesbian Conference at UCLA), at various camps (Califia), and at the L.A. Convention Center

(SCWU forum).

During this time, lesbians from various sectors engaged in a protracted altercation with The Center, a conflict that spilled out into the lesbian community where it created serious divisions. The issue of sexuality surfaced as a controversy over S/M.

Lesbian activists who had been working for the cause since the early 1970s, now had half a decade of experience in the areas of institution-building, political action and internecine conflict. A number of those who did not burn-out or grow disappointed, moved into a new phase of activism.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LESBIAN FEMINIST DECADE, III

Third Phase: 1977-1979

One of the mistaken notions of queer theory is that lesbian feminism in the 1970s was all intolerance [of others] and indifference to sex! We need a history of that decade that will capture the fun, the high spirited sense of sexual self-discovery, the euphoria of community building, and the wonder of finding our numbers large and growing larger. The laughter of the 1970s should not be forgotten (Cruikshank 1996, xii).

The final phase of this decade was characterized by increased lesbian visibility and the growing influence of co-gender groups. The phase began with the government-funded International Women's Year Conference held in Houston, Texas in 1977, where lesbian delegates (many from Los Angeles) and their allies worked overtime to gather support for a pro-lesbian resolution.

The resolution passed by a wide majority. Jubilant lesbians returned to L.A., where they founded a national lesbian organization and then went to work to defeat Proposition 6, also known as the Briggs Amendment (a ban on gay schoolteachers). Since the proposition did not distinguish between lesbians and gay men, many lesbians set aside differences with gay males and joined the effort to defeat the proposition. This intense co-gender collaboration marked a turning point for lesbian activism in Los Angeles.

Lesbian Visibility: IWY

In early 1977, news came of plans for a national conference, sponsored by the White House as part of International Women's Year (IWY). Jean O'Leary then co-chair of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF), alerted L.A. lesbians about the upcoming state conferences in which delegates to the national IWY conference were to be elected (Diane, interview). Los Angeles activists immediately moved to gain a voice in the California proceedings scheduled to take place at the University of Southern California (USC). After having seen the list of proposed delegates and ascertaining that only two were lesbians, activists went to work to elect lesbians to the IWY California delegation.

Jeanne Córdova proposed that the pro-lesbian slate (which included both lesbians and heterosexual allies), be printed on orange paper as a reminder of orange juice queen Anita Bryant's anti-gay campaign (Diane, interview). The "Orange Slate," as it was called, won by a large margin. It included thirteen "out" lesbians and many supportive heterosexual women and women of color.

Part of the credit for stopping the Anita Bryant/Phyllis Schlafly forces at USC, was given to several busloads of gay men who were enlisted by Diane Abbitt and Bobbi Bennett, to attend the conference and vote for the Orange Slate (Bobbi, interview; Diane, interview).

The Tide reported that IWY delegations in 26 states

also adopted "pro-gay resolutions" (Córdova, 1977b, 10) and that "out lesbian delegates numbered 57, with the highest number from California" (LT 11/77, 17).

Radical and moderate lesbians joined together to gain a voice at the USC and Houston conferences. Liz Stevens, formerly of Lesbian Feminists, spoke for some former separatist lesbians when she said, "...we usually don't participate in electoral politics, but we saw the Bryant-Schlafly coalition as an immediate threat to our most minimal demands and we wanted to stop that" (quoted in Córdova, 1977a, 8).

The Orange slate enthusiastically made its way to the IWY Conference. Held in Houston, in November, 1977, the event was memorable for many who went as delegates, observers or staff. There were nearly 2000 delegates and thousands of observers (LT 9/77, 10).

Inside the Thomas Convention Center, there was non-stop activity and many participants also attended the "Seneca Falls" cultural program (named after the site of the historical Women's Conference of 1848). The program provided "...around the clock entertainment and educational program featuring speeches, poetry, readings, karate demonstrations, etc." (LT, 9/77, 10). Outside the Convention Center, lesbians demonstrated, marched and raised consciousness through performance art.

On the conference floor it was clear that lesbians and

lesbian-friendly feminists far outnumbered the right wing, lesbophobic delegates. Anti-feminist and anti-lesbian delegates were so outnumbered and outmaneuvered that, at one point, the chair asked the "pro-plan" (progressive) women to let their opponents speak.

Even though the pro-lesbian forces were in the majority, Los Angeles lesbians spent four non-stop days lobbying, caucusing and strategizing on behalf of the "sexual preference resolution" which called for an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation, reform of penal codes and the enactment of lesbian-protective legislation (National Plan of Action, 1977).

The conference dynamics provided many sociologically memorable moments. Judy Freespirit noted that the conference marked the first time in history that large numbers of "out" lesbians mingled with straight women in an intense environment. As a result, many of the latter shed some of their ignorance, fear and lesbophobia. Judy recalled that during the first days of the conference:

...the straight women were terrified-looking waiting in line with us [for the bathrooms]...and as the days went by they got more and more relaxed, and more and more friendly, and less uptight, and I thought from my perspective that was probably the most important thing that happened (Judy, interview).

However, Judy's "biggest thrill" at Houston was an incident that nineteen years later was still a very emotional memory. On the first night of the conference Judy and friends were in a hotel room watching television. She

recalls that the reporter "was talking about the fact that women were gathering from all over the country, to come to this conference and the reporter said, 'there seems to be a large contingent of lesbians."

For Judy and friends, those simple words had a tremendous significance because,

...that was the first time in my life (and I was in my late 30s), that I had heard the word "lesbian" on the news in a matter of fact [way] and we all shrieked. It wouldn't be anything now...but that was a major breakthrough, for it to be matter-of-factly said...I was crying, it was so huge and I just know that people wouldn't understand it now...I'm getting teary right now...years later we [sic] can still feel it... (Judy, interview).

Meanwhile, in another conference venue, Jeanne Córdova, who is of Irish/Mexican descent, was reminded of her estrangement from part of her heritage:

...I had no pencil or paper to describe how oddly sad I felt sitting quietly in the back row of the Latina caucus; sadness for me, a Latina by birth who doesn't know her heritage...sad when I introduced myself as the Latina liaison from the lesbian caucus and was hushed by one of their leaders... (Córdova, 1978a, 12).

This conference marked the first time that women of color were visible at a large political gathering. Many were veterans of other civil rights movements where sexism had kept most of them behind the scenes. While watching women of color at work, Jeanne had an epiphany about why lesbians of color were not numerous in white-dominated lesbian groups:

...the plight of undocumented workers is for Chicana activists perhaps more relevant than the freedom to abort...the poverty of Native Americans makes the Equal Rights Amendment look like a luxury

item...welfare rights touches black women in a way that "sexual freedom" doesn't begin to (Córdova, 1977b, 10).

On the day of the scheduled "pro-lesbian" resolution vote, the government liaison called an emergency meeting of security personnel and told us that he had information that if the lesbian resolution didn't pass, "the lesbians are going to riot." I was working as a sergeant-at-arms and I told him that I knew some of these women and that I would investigate. The lesbian delegates and observers laughed and assured me that the only riotous sign would be the hundreds of balloons they planned to set free if the resolution passed (personal recollection).

Before the "lesbian resolution" vote, Betty Friedan provided an emotional moment, when she apologized for past lesbophobia. She also spoke in support of the resolution, which shortly after, passed by a wide majority. As Judy Freespirit reported,

...If you didn't see the reaction [in person] at the conference or on television there is no way to describe the feeling of that crowd when the sexual preference resolution finally passed. The air was electric for an hour before it ever got on the floor...when the final vote was taken, hundreds of balloons [that said "we are everywhere"] went up to the ceiling and thousands of women cheered and danced in the aisles...it was an incredible high, so much so that even the most cynical among us forgot for the moment that what we had won was not our rights...that a body of women had [simply] voted to send a resolution to Congress and [to] the President saying we should have civil rights... (Freespirit, 1978, 14).

Although the resolution was not binding, the fact that

it passed meant that lesbians had persuaded several thousand feminist women to approve a pro-lesbian resolution at a government-sponsored, high profile gathering. Jeanne Córdova, who had been in the middle of the decision-making process, enthusiastically declared that, "...Houston did what [Anita] Bryant, the gay movement and the women's movement couldn't do for lesbians. It said the word 'lesbian' loud and clear over the front pages of most major newspapers in this country..." (Córdova, 1978a, 10).

Not everyone who attended the conference was as upbeat as Jeanne. Judy Freespirit found it difficult to express her feelings about the complexities of the event, "I could say it was frustrating, exhausting, exhilarating, maddening, fun, even at times boring, but none of these words really answers the question...how was Houston?" (Freespirit, 1978, 4). For some, like Kathleen Webb, the conference had not been inclusive enough. She noted that few lesbians had spoken on behalf of other issues "...except Del (Martin) for battered wives and Ginny Apuzzo to strengthen the rape resolution" (Webb, 1978, 16).

Kathleen had gone to Houston hoping to participate as a community member in the decision-making process of the lesbian caucus, but was disappointed:

...The lesbian caucuses I attended weren't strategy planning sessions, they were briefings. The plan had already been laid out before we got there. New York heavyweights and the IWY commissioners had organized the pro-plan strategy and the women from NGTF [had] mapped out the lesbian participation... (Webb, 1978,

16).

Back in L.A. there would be no discussion about the lack of community input at the Houston conference, partly because by then, many of the L.A. lesbian powerbrokers had ridden off to save California from the Briggs amendment.

Lesbian Visibility: No on 6

The Briggs Amendment was part of an emerging homophobic backlash. The backlash had started in early 1977, after the Dade County Florida City Council had passed a "pro-gay" ordinance. Almost immediately, former beauty queen, singer and then orange juice promoter, Anita Bryant vowed to get the measure rescinded and did so through a voter referendum.

In August of 1977, John Briggs a California State Assemblyman with gubernatorial aspirations, took his cue from Anita and announced that he was gathering signatures to put an anti-gay Proposition on the 1978 California ballot. The initiative provided for,

...filing charges against schoolteachers, teachers aids, school administrators or counselors for advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging or promoting private or public sexual acts defined in Section 286a of the [California] Penal Code between persons of the same sex...[and] prohibits hiring and requires dismissal of such persons... (ST 10/78, 2).

The Briggs Initiative or "Proposition 6" as it was also called, exploited stereotypes of homosexuals as child molesters. Part of this perception was based on the reputation of NAMBLA, a group that advocated(es) man-boy relationships. However, as N.O.W. spokeswoman and action

coordinator Shelly Mandell explained, incidents of adult-child sexuality in the schools most frequently "have been heterosexual [male] advances towards children..." (LT Córdova, 1977c, 35).

Briggs' first 100,000 signatures were invalidated because the wording of the petition he was circulating was incorrectly typed (LT 12/77, 6). Eventually his supporters managed to collect the 300,000 signatures needed to place the measure on the November, 1978 ballot. At first Briggs seemed to be on the way to victory (LT 7/78, 16).

Even before the IWY Conference, Los Angeles lesbians had begun to work against the initiative. Some formed the "Ad Hoc Committee for Lesbian Rights," and although the strike against The Gay Community Services Center was still in effect, strikers agreed to work in coalition with Center staff as long as the latter did not try to dominate the group (McDonald, 1977, 6).

On another level, the "Gay Guerrillas" provided instructions on how to impact Tropicana, an orange juice company that supported Bryant. They suggested that in stores, a 3-inch nail could be used to puncture Tropicana juice cans at the rate of 5 cans per 6 seconds (LT 9/77,15).

Lesbian feminists pitched in and formed "Lesbian Feminists, Los Angeles;" Jewish lesbians joined "Jews Against Briggs;" and Olivia Records contributed to the cause by releasing "Lesbian Concentrate," a collection of lesbian

songs and poetry. Some lesbians like Sallie Fiske (who had been in the closet), joined the cause and paid a price for coming out. Sallie, served as the Publicity Chair of the "Southern California No On 6 Committee" and lost her job at Channel 13.

The Briggs crisis marked the first time since Gay Liberation that lesbians and gays from various ideological sectors of the community had worked together. During a discussion on coalition politics, Jeanne Córdova called for a new co-gender (lesbian/gay) alliance to fight Briggs:

It's a new time, a time for coalition politics. We are getting reports from all over the country of lesbians joining in coalition with gay men. Many of us, myself included, haven't worked directly with gay men in many years...one of our roles in coalition politics is to make gay men understand that lesbians will be visible in this struggle (Perspectives, 1977, 36).

Foremost among the visible women was Gayle Wilson, a successful real estate agent and popular AA speaker. According to one source, she walked into the "No on 6" campaign headquarters which was in the doldrums due to the defeat of pro-gay propositions in other states, and asked how much they needed "to win this one" (Córdova, 1983, 20).

Gayle's feats included raising \$45,000 during one women's fund-raising luncheon. When the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce endorsed the Briggs Initiative, Gayle got on the phone and produced a significant number of "hotel and limousine cancellations." The following day, the Chamber met in emergency session and voted *against* the Initiative

(Córdova, 1983, 20).

Lesbians were also visible in The New Alliance for Gay Equality (NEW A.G.E.), a group composed of "politically and financially influential groups and individuals" (LT 7/77, 34). Originally organized to fight for gay-friendly legislation in Los Angeles, the organization later turned its energy toward defeating Briggs (LT 7/77, 34). NEW A.G.E. produced a Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary concert at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. A crowd of 5700, spanning the sexual orientation spectrum attended (Overton, 1978, 21; ST 8/77,1;). NEW A.G.E. was also instrumental in eliciting the support of people with influence and money. One result was that Hollywood luminaries in general, turned out against Briggs.

Opponents of the amendment included Angela Davis and even (then) California Governor Ronald Reagan. According to Diane Abbitt, Reagan was persuaded by one of his closeted advisors to oppose the measure on the basis of privacy principles (Diane, interview).

As part of the anti-Briggs resistance, SCWU organized several upscale social events where mainstream powerbrokers from the political arena, the media and Hollywood, mixed with "out" and closeted gays and lesbians dressed in formal attire. Gone were the blue jeans preferred by grassroots Gay Liberation activists.

Mixed (gay and non-gay) gatherings allowed closeted

lesbians and gays to be politically involved since no one could be sure who was "straight" and who was not. As a result, more closeted people with money and access to power, decided to come out, and their presence contributed to a change in the style of a new co-gender movement.

Powerbrokers from various non-gay constituencies were duly impressed and offered unprecedented support and money.

In November, the initiative was defeated 58% to 42% (LT 1/79, 10, 13). Twenty days later, Harvey Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone were assassinated by disgruntled former San Francisco City supervisor, Dan White. The following year, Ronald Reagan was elected President, and while California lesbians had been busy defeating the Briggs Amendment, the national effort to pass the ERA had foundered. In spite of, or due to, some of these setbacks, the Briggs campaign repositioned lesbian and gay activism.

After Briggs was defeated, some lesbians reconsidered their separatist positions. Rosalie Nichols affirmed that she was still a separatist but now thought "...it necessary to work in coalition with gay men on limited projects of mutual benefit" (quoted in Duke, 1977, 13). At a victory party, Ivy Bottini, who had been a key anti-Briggs organizer, asserted that "I loved working with those men! Let me tell you, I will never again be a separatist!" (SCWU, 11/78,1).

Some lesbians who had been working in co-gender groups

acknowledged that white men knew more than most women about how to acquire, manage and use power, and they studied the former in order to learn the game (Diane, interview). Even grassroots activist Judy Freespirit acknowledged that lesbians could learn something from males "I was a separatist for five years, but I am beginning to see that we don't have all of the patriarchal skills they [some males] have and we can learn from them" (Perspectives, 1977, 36).

Some of these "born-again" co-gender lesbians soon found new venues for their activism. In 1977, David Mixner, a veteran activist and political advisor was inspired to create the first gay PAC (political action committee). The name of the group, Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (MECLA) was intentionally innocuous so as not to threaten potential supporters and allies (Diane, interview), and MECLA soon became an influential force in Los Angeles mainstream politics.

This new breed of gay and lesbian activists used strategies different from those used by grassroots and separatist groups. They used "leverage advocacy" which included entreaties and deals over lunch, telephone calls, small group meetings, use of personal and professional connections, and the creation and collection of political debts.

With the defeat of the Briggs Amendment and the creation of an upscale co-gender activist constituency, the

lesbian and gay grassroots movement (following patterns of social movement theory), went into abeyance.

Grassroots activists had served the purpose of providing mass mobilization and strategies. Although they had tirelessly advocated on behalf of lesbian and gay rights, they had never gained access to the power structure and to levels of government where legislative and funding decisions were made.

The new wave of "elitist" gays and lesbians, on the other hand, generally dispensed with mass organizing techniques and carefully restructured the public perception of who gays and lesbians were (what they wore, where they lived, what they did for a living, and how they addressed the issues). Sometimes using the threat of not being able to control their more radical siblings if the power structure did not deal with them (Bobbie, interview), this elitist phalanx pried open new doors on behalf of gay and lesbian rights.

These activists worked on many levels: behind the scenes they participated in high level meetings between gays and heterosexuals; in public they lobbied against anti-gay initiatives and produced events that favorably impressed mainstream powerbrokers and voters. Some operated nationally through organizations like the National Gay Task Force and locally through groups like MECLA, and using this new approach they gained new levels of access and political

influence. One result was that in 1979, the L.A. City Council passed an ordinance protecting lesbians and gays from specific discrimination (ST 9/79, 1).

Civil Wars

During this final phase, racism was the major struggle among grassroots lesbian activists. Among "elitist" lesbian groups, the issue was not seriously addressed and the ethnic composition of their membership reflected their lack of interest. Most activist lesbian groups in L.A. were white-dominated and although they did not exclude anyone, in general, few lesbians of color felt comfortable in these groups. Their discomfort was based on seeing few faces of color and feeling pressure to choose between issues (i.e. race over sexual orientation).

During my interviews with white activists, I asked how many women of color had been in their groups and I asked about the race wars. Although white women are now more conscious of racism, many still display a superficial understanding of the issues. When they try to remember names of lesbians of color in their groups, they often have to stretch or acknowledge that there were few or none.¹

Simone Wallace explained that the members of her Jewish support group were all Azkhenazy: "...We knew that as white women we had internalized racism and women of color had internalized anti-Semitism...in our naivete for a while we didn't know how to talk about it... (Simone, interview).

Until the late 1970s few white women seemed concerned about this widespread inability to talk about racism in the lesbian community.

During this decade community publications like *Sister Newspaper* and *The Lesbian Tide* published little material by and about lesbians/women of color. The exception to this "whiteout" was information on women of color who had defended themselves against male violence and were in prison or on trial (i.e. Joan Little, Yvonne Wainrow, Inez Garcia). Another exception was the July 1974 issue of *The Tide* which focused on "Third World Women." In an "Open Letter to Our Third World Sisters," The Tide's staff acknowledged that "It limits us that often our Third World consciousness has not measured up to our Lesbian and feminist consciousness..." (LT 7/74, 15).

In Los Angeles, collective concern about racism in the white lesbian community and the lack of lesbians of color in most lesbian groups, did not begin to manifest until the late 1970s. The change can be attributed to several factors: lesbians of color organized political groups that demanded to be heard and included; the National Lesbian Feminist Organization founding conference (held near L.A.), passed a groundbreaking resolution that called for ethnic, racial and class parity on decision-making committees; and Califia's well-attended anti-racism workshops allowed new perspectives to filter into the white lesbian community.

Even before racism became part of the white lesbian activist discourse, lesbians of color had begun to organize among themselves. Their efforts reflected the complexities of their multiple relationships with their own ethnic communities, the white lesbian communities and the gay/lesbian communities of color.

Their organizing pattern in L.A. was to create lesbian of color groups in the 1970s; join co-gender gay/lesbian groups in the early 1980s (Gay Latinos Unidos, Asian Pacific Gays); and create a new wave of lesbian of color groups later in the decade (Lesbianas Unidas, 1984; Asian Pacific Lesbians and Friends, 1985).

The first known "out" lesbian of color group in Los Angeles was Lesbianas Latinamericanas which met in Highland Park in 1974 for a short period of time (LT 7/74, 15; personal recollection). The second known group was Debreta's, a social network for women of color organized in 1977 by Deborah Johnson and Bobreta Franklin (then a couple). Debreta's main purpose was to provide comfortable social events, but their brochure indicates that,

...Debreta's is also concerned with issues that affect the civil rights of its clientele. Its staff participates in political processes aimed at insuring your personal freedoms (Debreta's brochure, nd).

As time passed, Deborah, who had been involved in the Briggs campaign and was welcome in white powerbroker circles as an articulate, presentable and "non-angry" lesbian of color, tried to balance an activist agenda and a social

agenda. In 1981, an article written about the group, explained that,

...Debreta's has not, as a whole involved itself in any political activities except the "No on 6" campaign. As individuals we are extremely active politically, but it is our ultimate desire for Debreta's to be the social environment that you turn to after the meetings, when you want to relax, have some fun or meet interesting people (Johnson and Franklin, 1981, 14).

In 1978, the emerging lesbian of color agenda received unexpected assistance from Jeanne Córdova. Returning from the IWY conference, Jeanne was eager to harness the energy and enthusiasm that had been generated in Houston, where she had "...heard pockets of lesbians excitedly discussing the possibility of national organizations, federations and networks" (Córdova, 1978a, 10). In January of 1978, *The Lesbian Tide* announced that L.A. lesbians would host the "founding convention of the national lesbian organization" (LT 1/78, 19).

The National Lesbian Feminist Organization (NLFO) founding conference was held in Santa Monica, California in March, 1978. Shortly after the conference began, a white delegate from Colorado asked where the women of color were. African American activist Margaret Sloan was one of the few women of color present as an official delegate. The chagrined organizers promptly recruited (as voting delegates), women of color who were there as observers and staff (personal recollection).

After long and contentious debates about racism, it was

resolved that in the NLFO "a minimum of 50% of all women involved in the level of planning and decision-making be women of color of various class backgrounds..." (*It's About Time* 5/78, 4). The 50% policy set a precedent for other organizations (i.e. Califia) and although the NLFO did not last long, as delegates and veteran lesbian activists, Mina Robinson [Meyer] and Sharon Raphael noted

For the first time in our experience, white lesbians were forced to deal with the issue of parity for women of color in a concrete way (Robinson [Meyer] and Raphael, 1978, 1).

Shortly after the conference, a number of lesbians of color who had been at the conference, joined with others to form the group Lesbians of Color (LOC). The purpose of the group was to,

...facilitate [the] personal, social, cultural and political growth of its members...to maximize our effectiveness in the wimmin's [sic] community...[and to fight] against all forms of oppression (LOC flyer, nd).

The group was comprised primarily of Latina and African American lesbians (personal recollection).

Those who were involved in the first years of LOC were happy to finally have a politicized lesbian group they could identify with. One former member of LOC, Flying Clouds (Chickasaw/Cherokee), wrote a letter to *Off Our Backs* in which she noted the importance of this type of group:

...I do get very angry with [the] mostly/entirely white lesbian community...the few of us [women of color] who are there, they overlook and pretend we are just like them. That's why the...Lesbians of Color group in Los Angeles was such a wonderful

experience for me. There Black, Latina, Indian were trying to stand together, are standing together..." (OOB, 6/79, 26).

From 1978 until the mid 1980s, LOC was the most active and visible lesbian of color group in Los Angeles (Maria, interview). LOC offered a space for lesbians of color to meet and socialize; members of the group presented anti-racism workshops in the community and at Califia camps; advocated for inclusion of lesbians of color concerns in white-dominated groups; worked in coalition with other progressive causes and worked to mitigate lateral prejudice between lesbians of color.

Although many white-dominated groups and organizations chose to ignore LOC and similar groups, there were those who for sincere or expedient reasons tried to make use of what was being offered. In some cases, lesbians of color and white lesbians worked together because they had a vision that (to quote a button I once saw), "sisterhood is possible."

Some lesbians of color worked across ethnic lines because the resources were in the hands of the white groups and the former wanted to liberate a share of resources for their communities.² However, ambivalence on both sides created a steady tension that often left white lesbians feeling that they couldn't win, and often left lesbians of color feeling that they were wasting their time (María, interview).³

March on Washington

The grand finale of this event-filled decade took place on October 14, 1979. As early as 1970, Leo Skir reported that at a fractious GLF meeting in New York, "...a girl wearing a Taurus emblem...was talking of the March on Washington." Skir's response: "...a gay march? Why not?" (*Ladder*, 10/70, 12).

In 1971, a letter to *The Advocate*, from one Elver Barker in Des Moines, Iowa took up the subject in more detail:

...Years ago, in the slow-moving homophile movement, we tossed around the idea of a homosexual march on Washington...we shelved the thought because we knew such a project would fizzle with not enough Gays having the courage to discard their masks (AD 5/12/71, 22).

Now, Barker felt, times had changed:

...the younger-generation Gays are our salvation...A successful homosexual march on Washington is possible today. Even if only 2500 attended, it would be significant...special effort could be made to have delegates from every state call on their Senators and Representatives...the time has come for a Homosexual March on Washington! (AD 5/12/71, 22).

Two years later, a coalition of Illinois and New York groups announced plans for a national convention to plan "a national march on Washington for gay rights..." (Goldberger, 1973, 6). The coalition disbanded amidst "internal conflicts, disunity between lesbians and gay men, and charges of racism and classism..." (LT 10/73, 13).

Five years later, the idea resurfaced in various locales. Before he was assassinated, Harvey Milk had called

for a march "to gather in Washington..." Another suggestion to march on July Fourth was nixed by David Mixner, a veteran of Proposition 6 and the anti-war movement. Instead, Mixner suggested a day in April or mid-November, when the weather would be cooler and Congress would be in session. He also offered advise on how to manage the logistics and obtain the best publicity (LT 1/79, 19).

In November of 1978, *The Tide* announced that "In following historic tradition set by the anti-war, black and women's movement[s], it appears that gays will now have their day in Washington" (Córdova, 1978b, 17). The march's main goal was to support "national gay civil rights legislation" (Córdova, 1978b, 17). However, disagreements about its timeliness and doubts about the ability of organizers to generate a large turnout, generated ongoing resistance from more conservative co-gender groups.

In spite of the resistance, grassroots activists went ahead with plans for the march and at a meeting in Houston it was decided that "'Third World' women, followed by white lesbians, would lead the march" (LT 9/79,12). The group also decided that all levels of group decision-making required 50% female representation, and that march committees had to have co-gender chairs (ST 9/79/1). Slowly, the momentum began to build. In September, *The Tide* announced that "Non supportive organizations have changed their mind or are silent...[and] national figures [now] endorse the march..."

(LT 9/79, 12).

The March's broad-based list of demands included the repeal of anti-lesbian and gay laws; passage of a comprehensive federal lesbian/gay rights bill; an executive ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation or affectional preference within the federal government, military and federal contracts and housing; an end to discrimination in child custody cases involving lesbian/gay parents; and the protection of lesbian and gay youth from harassment at home, in schools and other social environments (LT 9/79, 12). Lobbying of Senators and Congressional representatives was scheduled for the day after the march.

As plans for the March continued, people of color prepared for the "First Third World Gay and Lesbian Conference" to be held at Harambee House Hotel near Howard University. According to one source, over 500 people attended (Tsang, 1980, 11). Audre Lorde was the keynote speaker. The energy at the conference was high, since this was the first time lesbians and gays of color had convened a major gathering. Adding to the energy was the prospect of having a visible lesbian/gay people of color presence at the March (personal recollection).

At this conference, intragroup conflicts were graciously set aside for the sake of the larger goal. After the Asian caucus met, Tana Loy spoke at a general meeting of conference participants. She explained that,

We [Asians] had some difficult feelings amongst [sic] ourselves in the sense of where we felt left out. But we want to say right now that the strength that comes from being here and being out with you is the thing that is keeping us here and keeping us thinking about unity (Loy, 1980, 11).

Loy also noted that although some Asian lesbians and gays were at risk for deportation, they still planned to participate in the March.

On the following day, lesbians of color led the march and Juanita Ramos (Juanita Díaz-Cotto) of the Comité Homosexual Latinoamericano, and a member of the New York State and National March Organizing Committee, was a speaker at the rally (LN 11/79,1).

Another speaker, Arlie Scott, reminded listeners that gays and lesbians had always worked on behalf of other social movements:

...We have walked with you in Memphis...marched in Selma...burned with you in Boston...been clubbed with you in Chicago...[been] jailed with you in Three Mile Island..." (Scott, 1979, 18).

Now, Arlie declared, it was our turn. She underscored the tenor of the times and the direction of the movement by asserting that "in the 80s we are moving from gay pride to gay politics..." (Scott, 1979, 18).

The API and UPI reported that 50-75,000 people attended the march. Contingents came from Belgium, England, France, Holland, New Zealand and Mexico. A representative from Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry's office, proclaimed the nation's first "Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week, October 10-

17, 1979" (LT, 11/79,18). Lesbians numbered approximately 40% of the marchers, and reporter Lynne Shapiro noted that "few tensions between men and women were evident...most commented on the feeling of community and even family" (Shapiro, 1979, 19).

As Lynne left the rally site, she was momentarily surprised by a voice she heard. Her response symbolized the basic spirit of what the march had been about:

...As I left and walked across the National Mall to the Capitol, I heard Kate Millett calling, "I love you, I love you," [and] I imagined that her voice was coming from the gold [Capitol] dome and was the voice of my government (Shapiro, 1979, 19).

The march was about acceptance and equal rights.

After the March, *The Tide* enthusiastically declared that,

...It seems if one wants to be registered as a legitimate social force in America, one must sign the Washington DC guest book with a long march. Our movement has now done so and in doing so has come of age. As we continue our work into another decade, we can look back and be strengthened, realizing perhaps [that] all things are indeed possible (LT 11/79, 19).

Conclusion

For Los Angeles lesbian activists, the first decade of the post-Stonewall lesbian movement offered many opportunities for political and personal identity development. We came out of the closets individually and developed a politicized collective ethos. The social movements we worked in served as social laboratories, offering apprenticeships in politicization through

participation in rap groups, marches, conferences, cultural productions, educational panels, publications and lobbying (Raphael, 1974, 127).

The lesbian activist movement promoted institution-building that included lesbian-only spaces and gatherings; lesbian culture and community-based lesbian-owned businesses. Although Los Angeles can be credited with a number of lesbian "firsts,"⁴ gains on many fronts paralleled those in other geographic areas in the United States where energetic lesbian activists were also at work.⁵

Along with progress and moments of *communitas*, there was also much to criticize and regret. Los Angeles lesbian activists spent a lot of time and energy fighting amongst themselves. Issues of importance to lesbians of color were generally ignored until late in the decade.

Most of the groups and centers established in the 1970s did not outlast the decade. Most had been badly funded and had depended on volunteers who inevitably burned out; many were resistant to reasonable structure and some imploded from cliquishness. Lesbian businesses that were financially dependent on the community had a short life (Córdova, 1979).

Over-commitment to a multitude of causes often left lesbian activists without enough energy or resources to work on lesbian-specific issues, while internecine conflicts also drained the movement's energy. Bonnie Zimmerman attributed lesbian inability to create a "real revolution" partly to a

propensity for "translat[ing] our personal feelings into political arguments" (in Brody, 1985, 88).

Lauren Jardine contends that the movement's "sturm and drang" could perhaps be attributed to the natural life course of a movement: "...the early 70s through the mid-70s was a period of adolescence which is always a period of great volatility and excitement and attempts to establish independence and personhood...[and of wanting] to be a recognized entity..." (Lauren, interview).

In spite of numerous growing pains, many who experienced the excitement of an evolving social movement, consider this decade to be unforgettable. After years of individual and collective repression and working for social movements not our own, the combination of being "out," politically proactive and part of a nascent public lesbian culture, created a heady feeling and liberated a surfeit of energy.

Like their counterparts in the social movements of the 1960s, lesbian activists of the 1970s felt hopeful, and thought that changing the world was possible (Lillene, interview; Judi, interview; Shirl, interview). And so it is, that when veteran activists like Robin Tyler and Patty Harrison look back on this decade, they describe it as "the golden era of lesbianism" (Robin and Patty, interview).

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CO-GENDER 80S: BOYS AND GIRLS TOGETHER

Introduction

In the 80s we are moving from gay pride to gay politics (Arlie Scott, 1979, 18).

In the late 1970s, the backlash signified by Anita Bryant, the Briggs Amendment and later, the murder of San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk, galvanized veteran activists and more conservative, prosperous, hitherto closeted gays and lesbians, into action. In an article in the *Lesbian News*, Jeanne Córdova pointed out that,

...Inadvertently Prop 6 played a major part in the (further) development of the California Gay Community...The Briggs initiative received so much media publicity that thousands of middle class professional gays and lesbians...came out of the closet with their checkbooks (Córdova, 1986, 10).

This new wave of lesbian and gay activists who had money and power or access to both, also had a new style of protecting and advancing the lesbian/gay agenda. In planning against the Briggs Amendment, those running the campaign "...realized quickly that their strategy would have to include big money, media ads, professional management and influential non-gay spokespersons" (Littwin, 1979, 168). Suits, pantsuits and dresses replaced blue jeans at upscale fundraising events and leverage advocacy replaced street demonstrations.

In 1982, an article in the *LA Weekly* noted that "In L.A. the standard seems to have passed to a new generation

of moderate gays, solidly middle class, who have chosen to play politics by the established rules of the game...In LA, gay activist means a black-tie dinner at \$100 a head" (Altman and Wray, 1982, 8).

Grass roots veterans cringed at the suggestion that now "L.A. gays are more likely to throw cash than a picket line at a potential problem" (Altman and Wray, 1982, 8).¹ While significant gains were made by the new phalanx of co-gender powerbrokers, some felt that these new players had redirected the focus of the movement from social change to assimilation. Lesbian-focused lesbians also felt that the move toward co-gender activism had had a negative impact on lesbian-focused activism.

I have divided the decade of the 1980s into two chapters. In this chapter I will examine lesbian activism in activist co-gender environments, and in the next chapter I will examine lesbian-focused activism during the 1980s. As in the decade preceding, dynamics within the lesbian community were affected by the community's relationship with the gay and co-gender communities and the larger society.

In this decade, there was a significant loss of lesbian-focused projects; there were many gains wrought by the co-gender movement; and the AIDS epidemic had a significant impact on both gays and lesbians. Civil wars were fought over racism and sexual styles. This decade also saw the emergence of the lesbian baby boom and "lipstick lesbians." Although lesbian-focused projects continued,

during this decade it was co-gender projects that received substantial funding, media attention and community energy.

MECLA and Its Co-Gender Siblings

The Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles (MECLA) along with the short-lived NEW A.G.E. (New Alliance for Gay Empowerment), played a pivotal role in defeating the Briggs Amendment. The membership of both groups overlapped somewhat, and, after the Briggs defeat, MECLA assumed the role of L.A.'s prominent gay/lesbian advocacy group. It was the first gay and lesbian PAC (political action committee), and it did not endorse candidates. Instead, MECLA gave money to candidates who were "supportive of human rights in general and gay rights in particular" (McManus, 1979, np).

An article by Susan Littwin described MECLA gays as still talking about a movement, but she also noted that "faded denims have given way to pinstripes, and the group is taking its place in the lineup of the city establishment, right alongside labor, downtown business, blacks and Westside Jews" (Littwin, 1979, 168). At first, MECLA members were all white males, but Peter Scott, business partner of MECLA's founding father, David Mixner, is credited with successfully advocating for the inclusion of women (Diane, interview).

For ten years, MECLA was arguably the most influential political entity working on behalf of gay and lesbian rights in Los Angeles. In 1979, Mayor Bradley told those present at

the annual MECLA fundraising dinner at the Century Plaza Hotel, that "you have made it respectable for politicians to stand up and be counted." The keynote speaker that night was California State Assembly Speaker Leo McCarthy (McManus, 1979, np).

In general, MECLA had a better relationship with mainstream powerbrokers and the gay and lesbian elite, than it did with grassroots sectors of the community. During one community altercation over the closing of gay bathhouses (an action favored by MECLA), John O'Brien, a Gay Liberation Front veteran and grassroots activist, argued that MECLA members "care more about their relations with the straight bourgeois politicians than about the rights of the majority of Gay and Lesbian people" (*The O'Brien Report*, 12/85,1).

MECLA also had a better record of co-gender participation than it did in the area of multi-ethnic participation. Its ten-year brochure shows that many women were on the board of directors and on the board of governors, but few members of either gender were people of color.

In 1983, Charles Stewart (co-chair of The International Association of Black and White Men Together), sent a letter to U.S. Congressman Julian Dixon, indicating that "MECLA had no minority members on its outgoing Board of Directors, nor are there any minorities on its newly elected Board." Stewart noted that while MECLA was doing outreach to gay Republicans, "no similar outreach to minorities currently

exists" (Stewart, 1983, np).

Over the next decade, MECLA's recruiting pattern remained basically the same: outreach to and inclusion of gay/lesbian powerbrokers, more males than females, and few people of color. The founding leadership of MECLA eventually stepped down and, in some cases, leading members were lost to AIDS. The successors of the original "golden" group did not have the political savvy or connections of their predecessors and by 1990, the MECLA star had begun to fade.²

During the time period that MECLA exercised influence at political levels, The Gay Community Services Center carved out a niche as L.A.'s premier provider of social services to the gay (and lesbian) community. In 1980, The Center announced that it had received federal funds to buy a new building.

A year later it qualified for "the combined federal campaign." This meant that it could receive donations from payroll deductions of federal employees world-wide. With increasing confidence The Center applied for and received donations from Fortune 500 corporations such as Transamerica, Chevron, and General Telephone.

The Center also tried to improve its image in underserved sectors of the community by hiring more people from those constituencies. In 1985, Center staff included 58 salaried employees, of which 40% were women and there was an increase from 0% to 25% people of color in administrative staff (it was not clear if the people of color were line

staff and/or administrators) (LN 4/85,6). In the mid 1970s, an ad appeared in the *Lesbian News* announcing a part-time position in women's services at The Center, but it was not until the 1980s that a full-time women's program was established to provide lesbian-specific services (LN 8/82,1).

In spite of the availability of lesbian programming at The Center, there was always a strong undercurrent pressing for unilateral co-gender programming. After the La Rouche anti-AIDS amendment was defeated in 1986, the lesbian program at The Center added several co-gender groups. A notice for one such group sponsored by Lesbian Central explained that "[since] the New Right will not differentiate on the basis of gender...men and women will be working together to combat the current political crisis..." (LN 9/86,18).

As part of the move toward co-gender politics, local and national co-gender organizations sought to recruit lesbians, especially veterans from campaigns like "No on 6." Some organizations signified their politically correct intentions by changing their names to reflect a co-gender commitment. In 1980, the Gay Community Services Center became The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. A few years later, Terry de Crescenzo a social worker, was elected as the first lesbian president of the Center's Board of Directors.³ Several years later, the organizers of Christopher Street West, the annual Los Angeles Gay Pride

parade, changed the event's name to Gay and Lesbian Pride Celebration, in order "to recognize the significant role of women in the community" (LN 11/87,10). National organizations like the National Gay Task Force, became the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Youth Services

Because young people have few legal rights, those who find themselves in oppressive situations face daunting obstacles. According to a source at The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "Suicide is the leading cause of death among lesbian, gay and other sexual minority youth" (quoted in the LN 9/89,26).⁴

According to the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Education Commission LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) youth have a high incidence of substance abuse and homelessness, a high drop-out rate and are the second largest target group for hate crimes. There are also indications that lesbian youth are at risk for contracting AIDS. One study in New York City found that "fifteen out of twenty adolescents who identify as lesbians report having both female and male [sexual] partners" (Hunter in Jay, 1995, 57).

In 1984, Virginia Uribe founded Project 10 in Los Angeles, "in response to the unmet needs of adolescent lesbian/gays in the educational system" (Project 10 web site). Since that time similar support groups have been formed in a number of high schools in the area.

In the 1990s, the L.A. Unified School District established a Gay and Lesbian Education Commission to support and oversee efforts to reduce the pressures that LGBT adolescents deal with in school environments. These pressures included being harrassed and sometimes beaten by other students (Glover, 1998, B1).

The needs of lesbian and gay youth were also addressed by projects developed at The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, and notably by GLASS (Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services). GLASS was founded by social worker Terry De Crescenzo. The organization opened its first group home in 1985 and by 1993, had four houses. According to *OUT Magazine*, in 1993, the GLASS and Center LGBT residential youth programs were the only ones in the entire United States.

Media

The first chapter of The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) was founded in the mid 1980s in New York and the L.A. chapter formed in 1988. The organization's goals were to raise consciousness in the Hollywood entertainment industry, and to change media portrayals of lesbians and gays. GLAAD became a fast track addition to the lesbian and gay activist armamentarium.

GLAAD persuaded the *New York Times* "to change its editorial policy to use the word gay" (GLAAD web site, <http://www.glaad.org/glaad/accomplishments.html>). Meetings between GLAAD and Hollywood film studios resulted in more

frequent consultations, sensitivity workshops for the industry, and improved images of lesbians and gays in films. Even Hallmark cards cooperated with this new trend by removing (at GLAAD's behest), the word "lesbian" from its list of proscribed words.

GLAAD is now a national organization, which focuses on monitoring and improving media portrayals of lesbians/gays, works with media professionals toward that goal and promotes lesbian/gay visibility through educational campaigns. In 1992 "Entertainment Weekly" named GLAAD as "one of Hollywood's most powerful entities" (GLAAD web site).

Whether as examples of controversial fare or as part of the diverse U.S. culture, lesbians and gays began to appear more frequently on talk shows. Among the topics that lesbians on these programs discussed in the 1980s were lesbian sperm banks (1982); lesbian nuns (1985); teen lesbians and their mothers (1989); and lesbian separatism (1988).⁵

Prime time shows lagged behind their more sensationalist talk show siblings, but in 1988-89, "Heart Beat" cast the first lesbian couple as a regular part of the program; and in 1991, "L.A. Law" hosted the first lesbian kiss on prime time television (GLAAD 1991, 43).

March on Washington

The second gay/lesbian March on Washington focused on the AIDS epidemic and a highlight was the exhibit of the

AIDS Memorial Quilt. Perennial issues of gay/lesbian rights, and emerging issues such as same-sex marriage were also part of the agenda. Unlike the first March in 1979, this event was organized from the top down. Prior to the March, approximately 2500 couples participated in a mass 'wedding' performed by Los Angeles lesbian Dina Bachelor (!) (now Dina Evan). The ceremony was meant as a "protest of religious and social barriers against homosexual relationships" (LN 11/87,1).

In the 1970s, lesbians, especially those who had come from a heterosexual background, regarded marriage as a patriarchal institution meant to oppress women. In the 1980s, the formal acknowledgment and celebration of lesbian relationships became more acceptable. One survey found that "many [lesbian and gay] couples are honoring their relationship with wedding rituals" (LN 12/88,24).

Part of the March program also included a civil disobedience action on the steps of the Supreme Court building. The action was meant to call attention to demands for gay rights, and the need for more government funding to fight the AIDS epidemic. As expected, arrests were made.

An estimated 200,000 people participated in the March and many stayed for several days after in order to meet with and lobby legislators. Reflecting on the effect of the huge numbers of lesbians and gays who had come to Washington for the March, Marilyn Murphy described the heady feeling of being (for once) in a numerical majority:

We were surrounded by our sisters and brothers... the presence of more than a quarter million visiting lesbians and gaymen [sic] was overwhelming...we filled the shops, the restaurants, the hotels, the museums and streets...we were everywhere and we loved it! (Murphy 1987,1).

Shortly after the March, activists began discussing plans for an event that would nationally and publicly celebrate lesbian and gay pride on an annual basis.⁶ In 1988, activist Jean O'Leary announced that "We need...an annual event to celebrate life, one that will help renew our commitments to one another..." Jean explained that "no matter how far in the closet or out of the closet we are, we all have a next step" and so National Coming Out Day was set for October 11, 1988 (LN 10/88,1; LN 5/88,26).

The annual event became an effective way of raising consciousness and encouraging people to come out in various areas of their life. Between 1990 and 1993, Lynn Sheppard (who had relocated from Los Angeles to Santa Fe), managed the project. During her tenure it grew to include 50 states and six countries. In 1993, NCOD became a special project of The Human Rights Campaign (personal communication, 1997).

Gains and Setbacks

Where once homophobia within the federal government ran unchecked, by the 1980s, we seemed to have some recourse. Following complaints from a right-wing organization and members of Congress, that The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence was "pro-lesbian," the Justice Department suspended a grant it had given to the organization.

True, lesbians had always been a core part of the movement against domestic violence. For example, in L.A., Kerry Lobel, was a pioneer activist in the domestic violence movement and served as the Executive Director of the Southern California Coalition on Battered Women. It was a sign of the times that an agreement was reached behind the scenes, and a substantial portion of the original \$600,000 grant, was eventually re-approved (LN 10/85,38).

Where once we attended political conventions and had no voice in the proceedings, circumstances were changing. In 1976, 4 open lesbians and gays went to the Democratic National Convention; by 1980, the number had grown to 86 open delegates from sixteen states; and in 1988 almost 100 "out" delegates were counted (LN 8/88, 28).

At the 1980 Convention a gay rights plank was added to the party Platform and two sexual orientation non-discrimination clauses were added to the party's Charter. Unlike the Platform, the Charter was a "permanent document." The gay/lesbian highlight of the 1980 Convention was when Melvin Boozer (a gay African American), was nominated for Vice President. Mel spoke (for 15 minutes on national television) about gay rights. Three years later, the Democratic party approved a gay caucus.

Where once we had given money to and voted for liberal and gay-friendly candidates without expecting much in return, now gays and lesbians began to expect a quid pro quo. This expectation was reinforced by an item in *US News &*

World Report in 1984, which estimated that there were 17 million potential gay and lesbian voters, the seventh largest voting block in the U.S. (in Richards, 1992, 225).

Taking note of MECLA's success in the political arena, gays and lesbian across the United States moved to capitalize on the power of money in the political process. Working on the principle that, "The essence of political power is the ability to raise campaign funds...", the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) was established in 1980 as a national PAC "to assist congressional candidates that are committed to justice and civil rights for sexual minorities" (LN 5/82, 15).

Legal progress was also made in the workplace. In the early 1980s, the National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA) then presided over by Jean O'Leary, filed a lawsuit against Pacific Telephone & Telegraph, a California telephone company. The suit charged that lesbians and gays had been denied employment or suffered harassment and been fired due to their sexual orientation. During the process, it was revealed that the company had "a formal, written policy prohibiting the hiring and promotion of gay men and lesbians" (LN 2/86,4). After years of litigation, NGRA won the case and a 3 million dollar settlement.

Gains were also made in the area of domestic partnerships and immigration rights. In 1984, Berkeley, California, became the first city in the U.S. to grant domestic partner benefits to gay city employees. Meanwhile,

the courts told the Immigration and Naturalization Service that suspected gay aliens would no longer be questioned regarding their sexual orientation, and that "henceforth only those individuals who self-identify themselves as homosexuals to immigration personnel will be subject to exclusion" (LN 10/80,16).

Gains were offset by various setbacks engineered by what became known as "The Moral Majority."⁷ In 1981, the Family Protection Act (FPA) drafted by members of Congress, emerged as a rallying point for the backlash being led by the Moral Majority. According to The Gay Rights National Lobby, the FPA was "an omnibus 'shopping list' for the Moral majority...[and] includes not only a number of anti-Gay provisions, but also sections which are anti-woman, anti-black, anti-labor and anti-teacher" (La Rose, 1982a,1).

In another attempt to silence lesbians and gays, the Congressional Macdonald Amendment prohibited the use of Legal Services Appropriations funds for litigation that "promoted, protected, or defended homosexuality," and it was later amended to decline funding to cases that sought to legalize homosexuality (in Rutledge, 1992, 172). Not willing to be left on the sidelines, Jesse Helms sponsored HR 5922, legislation opposed to communism, homosexuality, abortion and teenage promiscuity. The bill died in committee (LN 8/82,20).

Even sports events were politicized when the organizers of the first Gay Olympics were told by the U.S. Olympic

Committee that they could not use the word "Olympic," unless they agreed to turn over all funds gathered from the event to the U.S. Olympic Committee. The Committee refused to grant an exemption as they had in the past for the "Special," "Police" and other Olympics. The event was renamed the "Gay Games," and the first one took place in San Francisco in 1982 (Miller, 1995, 449).

People of Color

During the 1980s, the issue of affirmative action within the lesbian/gay community emerged with great force. People of color organized their own groups and then demanded full membership in gay and lesbian projects. Los Angeles advocacy groups included the short-lived MEGLE (Multi Ethnic Gay and Lesbian Exchange), Asian Pacific Lesbians and Gays, and Gay Latinos Unidos (later Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos). The Black Gay Leadership Forum (now the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum) was founded in 1988, and one of its original lesbian members was L.A. area resident Ruth Waters.

In response to pressure by lesbian/gay people of color groups, some white-dominated organizations made efforts to address charges of racism. The Center began offering anti-racism workshops and announced that it would "...strengthen its affirmative action employment policy by giving priority to people of color in filling six new staff positions" (LN 1/83,6). The goal was to increase the percentage of people

of color at The Center from 21% to 35% during 1983. MEGLE members met with Center representatives and suggested a task force to address affirmative action (LN 5/83,3).

In June of 1983, The Center established the task force. Six months later, The Center announced that it wanted to conduct an affirmative action audit, and that people of color were expected to raise the \$6000 to pay for it. Amidst outraged reactions, Deborah Johnson, who was on The Center Board, and who served as the liaison to people of color, agreed to raise the money. She met with skeptical MEGLE representatives to ask for support. Some felt that it should not be people of color (POC) who raised the money "to pay for racism," while others felt that asking "rich white males [to pay for the audit] was not a sign of commitment" on the part of POC (Schmidt, 1984, 31).

The audit was not funded. It was not until the late 1980s, when then Center CEO Torie Osborn asked Deborah to return as a consultant, that the audit was conducted. One result was that affirmative action measures aimed at reducing sexism and racism at The Center, were implemented in serious fashion (Deborah, interview).

Acceptance or Assimilation?

As we moved through the 1980s, the changes that new forms of activism had wrought were signified by events held at mainstream venues; by the (re)expansion of the lesbian/gay agenda to include global issues such as nuclear

disarmament; and by evidence that a growing number of non-gays and non-lesbians, either supported or tolerated us.

Nationally, a 1989 Gallup poll found that 47% of respondents supported legalizing same-sex marriage, up from 33% in 1987 (LN 12/89,28). In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state to pass a gay rights statute, and in 1989, the U.S. Post Office issued a special Stonewall commemorative postmark. In Los Angeles, Adelle Starr and other parents, founded National Parents and Friends of Lesbians And Gays (1981). In 1988, UCLA lesbians founded the first "out" lesbian sorority in the U.S. - Lambda Delta Lambda.

As lesbians and gays gained more acceptance from portions of mainstream society, the gap between grassroots lesbians/gays and their movement powerbroker counterparts, increased. In a letter to *The Lesbian News*, Ann Esterson expressed dismay over an incident that took place during one political demonstration:

While the LA-DE-DA Lessies in their Saks suits courted the press and smiled for the cameras, the rest of us in our Goddwill grubbies and torn tennies marched until our feet ached and shouted until our voices waned. My feeble attempts to make my views known to a member of the media were quickly aborted by someone who whisked him away to meet the "Press Liaison" (LN 6/80, 1).

Penny Hawkins agreed with Ann's views. In a letter to *The Lesbian News*, Penny noted that:

The article struck a familiar chord. I'm afraid there are a lot of women who feel the same way. In my experience in the lesbian community, I see the same women doing the work in organization after organization, and the same, few, elite women taking the spotlight... (LN 7/80, 12).

In an article in *The Lesbian News*, Ann explained that although she was happy about the changes this "upper echelon" group had helped to bring about, she was concerned about their lack of connection with other sectors of the (lesbian/gay) community,

I can in no way discount the fact that the upper echelon helped bring about major social and political changes within the homosexual society. Money and power are indeed great weapons in making issues that have previously fallen on deaf ears finally heard... (but) we no longer support each other in an all consuming manner... (Esterson, 1980, 3).

Although, personal experience leads me to differ with Ann's assertion that we supported each other "in an all consuming manner," I do agree that there was an increasing gap between what I call the formerly-in-the-closet-limolesbians, and the out-for-a-long-time-grassroots lesbians. This gap was supported by differences in ideology, style and goals. The latter wanted to maintain a grassroots approach and work for social change, while the former felt they could fight for a lesbian/gay agenda and assimilate into the larger culture.

La Rouche

Amidst signs of growing acceptance, the Moral Majority backlash found ways to threaten the gains made by lesbians and gays. The most serious threat in California during the 1980s was Proposition 64 (The La Rouche Initiative), which would have allowed state officials to "order an individual to undergo mandatory AIDS testing" (LN 9/86,7).

In addition, persons suspected of being HIV positive could be kept from school, restricted from traveling, and in some cases be isolated "in camps or institutions." Although lesbians were (are) overall, the demographic group at lowest risk for contracting AIDS, it was pointed out that the Right Wing would not differentiate between lesbians and gays (LN 9/86,7).

The L.A. gay and lesbian community began to organize. Fundraising was considered by lesbian and gay strategists to be the key to defeating the amendment. David Mixner, the "NO on 6" strategist, estimated that it would take \$3.2 million to defeat Proposition 64. According to one report, the community managed to raise 2.3 million dollars. Of that amount, a quarter was estimated to have come from lesbians.⁸

Ivy Bottini and Eric Rofes were co-chairs of "No on La Rouche," while Diane Abbitt was the co-chair of "Stop LaRouche/No on 64." Celebrities were enlisted, lesbian feminists joined a group called "Lesbians Against Fear and Ignorance," and many non-lesbian and non-gay groups also joined in opposition to the measure. Jeanne Córdova, the Media Chair of "No on LaRouche", called Proposition 64 "the first citizen referendum on AIDS in the country" (Córdova, 1986, 32). The La Rouche Measure was defeated 72% to 28%.

At the victory party, Eric Rofes reminded the crowd that "We could not have made it without the lesbians," and asked if the men would be there for lesbians and women in the future, supporting issues like "Take Back The Night"

marches, the ERA and reproductive rights. The crowd roared a "Yes!" (Córdova, 1986b, 32).

The sound of the roar was heard by a number of skeptical lesbian ears. Although Jeanne Córdova was happy about lesbian contributions to the anti-La Rouche campaign, others wondered why the lesbian community never gave as much to lesbian-specific causes. Jinx Beers pointed out that during the campaign, donations to lesbian projects and other groups "virtually dried up for several months" (Beers, 1986, 32).

More troubling was Jinx's observation that "our only lesbian center, Connexus, was all but devastated by the lack of financial support [during] these last two-three months" (Beers, 1986, 32). While some argued that Reaganomics was to blame, some lesbians were convinced that LaRouche had and AIDS was draining the limited lesbian financial and energy pool.

History Archives

As the lesbian (and gay) movement progressed, activists became more aware of the importance of recording and preserving lesbian (and gay) history. By the 1980s, a number of archives were engaged in the work of gathering, preserving and organizing lesbian and gay materials. Pioneer work in this field was done by a gay man, Jim Kepner.⁹

In 1942, Jim began to collect evidence of gays and lesbians throughout history, buying the little overt

material that was available. He also painstakingly read between the lines of newspaper reports, obituaries and diaries and made increasingly educated inferences about homosexual life and history.

Jim's collection became the National Gay Archives and later the International Gay and Lesbian Archives (IGLA). In the mid-1990s, IGLA merged with the ONE Institute. Although a number of lesbians have, throughout the decades, been affiliated with IGLA, it was not until 1997 that an ongoing, visible lesbian presence was established. At that time, the lesbian materials in the Archives were placed in a separate collection managed by lesbians within the larger archives (The Lesbian Legacy Collection). ONE/IGLA is now affiliated with the University of Southern California library.

Los Angeles is graced by the presence of not one, but two, lesbian archives. In 1981 in Oakland, Cherrie Cox, Lynn Fonfa and Claire Potter founded the West Coast Lesbian Collection (LN 11/81,15). Six years later, when the collection founders were searching for a new home for the collection, Connexus agreed to adopt it. It was moved into the Altadena home of June Mazer and Bunny McCullough. When June died in 1987, the collection was renamed the June Mazer Lesbian Collection and Bunny managed it until her own death in 1989. When Connexus closed in 1990, the Mazer continued as an independent non-profit in a West Hollywood location.

Co-Gender Lesbians in the Ascendant

In 1988, Torie Osborn, who had worked within The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center in various administrative positions, was hired as the Center's first lesbian CEO. In this new position, Torie steered the agency on an expanding financial course, and also moved to address issues of sexism and racism in the agency. She was more successful with the first problem because as a woman she had "native" experience with the issue, could articulate its complexities, and personally understood what changes had to be made and how (personal recollection).

To handle the issue of racism, Torie was astute enough to procure "native" expertise. With the help of people like Deborah Johnson, Cheryl Mendoza and Phill Wilson, Torie increased the number of people of color employed at The Center, and made the work of addressing racism, a priority (personal recollection).

To handle the demands of logistical details, daily dysfunction and internecine conflict within the agency, Torie depended on people like Cheryl Mendoza and Lauren Jardine (personal recollection). Like all strong personalities, Torie has her detractors, but shortcomings notwithstanding, Torie's tenure may, in retrospect, come to be regarded as The Center's "golden era"; a time when it was more than a struggling grass roots operation and before it moved into its current bureaucratic stage (a move that may be necessary to ensure its survival).

Conclusion

The decade of the 1980s was perceived as a mixed blessing for lesbians and gays. The heady feeling of the 1970s was gone. Some felt that the gains we made had created a false sense of security. In an article reviewing the 1980s, *Lesbian News* Publisher Deborah Bergman noted that,

...it is hard not to see the suffering and defeats as looming larger than the victories in the struggle for equal rights for lesbians and gay men. We are gaining some ground in public opinion but we are losing at the voting booth and in the courts (Bergman, 1989, 1).

Deborah also contended that many lesbians and gays were growing complacent and thus, did not notice that they were still under attack. She felt that now,

...most (urban) lesbians and gay men can if they want, seek out others and carve comfortable lives for themselves without the isolation, guilt and deceptions that gay people in previous generations endured. The result is that many of us lack the motivation to work for changes (Bergman, 1989, 28).

Torie Osborn felt more optimistic, pointing to the "margins [percentages] and events." As an example, she cited the election of New York City Mayor David Dinkins, who "paid considerable attention to supporting gay rights during his campaign" (quoted in Bergman, 1989, 28).

Although there was reason to be optimistic about the gains that gays and lesbians had made in mainstream culture, in the minds of many lesbians, a question lingered. According to one source, at one point, Torie was moved to ask: "Are we the gay wing of the women's movement, or the women's wing of the gay movement?" (Rutledge, 1992, 357).

Her question suggested that lesbians, even those who were working for a co-gender agenda, were still not satisfied with or certain about the political prognosis for lesbians both within and outside of the co-gender movement.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CO-GENDER 80s: LESBIAN ACTIVISM

A new paradigm is developing in the interstices where variety, multiplicity and eroticism are difficult to control (Barbara Christian 1990, 341).

During the 1980s, lesbian volunteerism, the mainstay of underfunded lesbian projects was waning; lesbians were being recruited into a co-gender agenda; and the co-gender movement/community seemed inclined toward assimilation.

Within changing and adverse socioeconomic and political circumstances, some lesbians continued to work directly for lesbian needs even as their efforts produced diminishing returns. For example, in 1981, several meetings were held in order to organize an umbrella organization for lesbian/feminist organizations in Southern California, one that would include "women from all races, classes and sexual preferences" (Urist, 1981, 1).

Over 100 women representing one hundred seventy-five women's activist groups (some represented more than one group), attended a day-long gathering, sponsored by Califia. Proposed suggestions included encouraging "...more third world women to participate" (Urist, 1981, 1).¹ As was the pattern, the first meeting was well attended and attendance exponentially declined at each subsequent meeting.

Yet, even as the energy of the grassroots lesbian movement was on the wane, the improved financial status of lesbians who worked in the mainstream economy coalesced with

the skills of lesbians who had gained skills in co-gender (gay/lesbian) projects and organizations. In Los Angeles, this combination provided the resources to create a unique lesbian center. In other areas of lesbian activism, and in spite of an ongoing lack of funds, lesbians continued their efforts to address the needs of lesbians in particular and women in general.

Centers

Commonground

In 1982, Christi Kissell, bright, energetic and barely out of her teens, was hired as the women's issues advocate at the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. Christi promptly organized a fundraiser for Lesbian Central (as the Center's lesbian program was called) and awarded Purple Hearts to lesbians who had distinguished themselves by serving the community.

Later that year, Christi's volunteer Women's Advisory Committee was "fired" by The Center administration. Christi's partner, Katherine Bouton wrote a letter condemning the Center's "attitudes, policies and budgetary disregard toward lesbians" (LN 10/82,28). Later, Steve Schulte explained that the "firing" of the Advisory Committee (when he was CEO at The Center), was motivated by philosophical differences (LN 3/84,38).

After leaving The Center, members of the defunct advisory committee regrouped to organize a lesbian center to be called Commonground. Christi, who was the spark behind

the effort, explained her intentions in an open letter to the community:

I have been told that it is crazy to organize a women's center in 1983, that it is no time to launch such a large and important endeavor. I have been warned that these tough economic times will serve to undermine any such effort...[but] a new generation of feminists is rising, bringing with it new insights into a changing world... (Kissell 1983, 30).

Christi was charismatic, and she and her friends, managed to fill a local Sheraton Hotel ballroom for a Commonground fundraiser. They also produced several issues of *Commonground Magazine*. Unfortunately, the momentum was soon lost and the proposed center did not come to fruition. Yet, the efforts of the Commonground women were not entirely futile, as events a few years later would show.

Connexus Women's Center/Centro de Mujeres

The next effort to create a lesbian center came out of new (or renewed) conflicts with The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. A year after Commonground, over half of the paid staff at The Center signed a statement of "no confidence" aimed at The Center's Board of Directors. The signers felt that the Board was out of touch with the needs of the community, and not accountable to "the community they serve" (LN 3/84,32).

A central concern of the signers was that the search for an executive director had been reopened in spite of the presence of one candidate whom they felt "has more than two decades of social service experience in both high level

administrative and fund-raising functions and is a woman of color" (LN 3/84,32).

Del Martínez, the candidate in question, was a close friend of Lauren Jardine's. Lauren had succeeded Christi as the coordinator of Lesbian Central. Feeling that the white male establishment at The Center had once again "dissed" lesbians (one of color), a group of women with significant connections met in May of 1984 to discuss a new lesbian center (Lauren, interview).

In an editorial in *The Lesbian News*, Jinx Beers supported the move to create a lesbian center noting that,

I've been kicking around this community for a while now, and frankly, I don't see a lot of difference in how Gay men act toward Lesbians, although I admit they tend to say things differently... (LN 7/84, 22).

Jinx wondered whether after years of trying to work within a co-gender movement, lesbians had been shortchanged and might be in need of their own center,

...the energy that has been spent in the last 10 years unsuccessfully attempting to bring Lesbians and Gay men together had been spent upon ourselves, what Lesbian institutions could have been built by now? There have been a couple of attempts, but they failed through lack of support, both financial and physical (LN 7/84, 22).

In a letter to *The Lesbian News*, Terry de Crescenzo, disagreed with Jinx, pointing out that the "current upheaval" was different from the one that had led to the strike against The Center in 1975. Terry acknowledged that the most obvious similarities "are the continuing struggle between men and women and between workers and management,"

but noted that, due to the 1975 "upheaval...the struggle for women's services at GLCSC has been won and the battle for women in leadership positions has just begun." She optimistically concluded that "perhaps [by] 1993 GLCSC will have a female presence in their chief executive spot as well as on the Board..." (LN 9/84,34).²

Lesbians who were dissatisfied with The Center continued to meet, and eventually founded Connexus Women's Center/Centro de Mujeres (CX), the first (and only) well funded lesbian center in L.A. history.³ Lauren Jardine, who became CX's first director, later explained CX's purpose:

The need for quality services that would reach a variety of women was simply not being provided by the Center...[so] in May 1984, a group of primarily business women met to discuss possibilities... many lesbians are in a much different financial and socio-economic position than they were ten years ago in terms of being able to support a service center as well as a social center... we hope to offer more than social services [a business and entertainment complex was part of the dream] (Jardine 1985, 47).

Connexus' mission was "to promote the social, psychological, political, economic, educational and spiritual well being of Lesbians" (CX Newsletter 5/90, np). SCWU stepped in as the fiscal sponsor until CX got its non-profit status.⁴ One sign of the amount of initial support Connexus garnered, was the comment made to Lauren at CX's first fund-raising event, that "every power dyke in town is here" (Lauren, interview).

In January, 1985, Connexus officially opened its doors on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood, with Del

Martínez as Chair of the CX Board. At its peak, the agency was a \$240,000 a year operation, and its location, was, for a lesbian center, upscale.

During its six years of existence, its services, groups and projects included those that lesbians had been trying to provide since the Gay Women's Services Center in the early 1970s: referrals, rap and support groups, counseling, a counseling internship program, a Business and Professional Women's Alliance, a monthly coffeehouse, well-attended dances and a monthly newsletter. CX also collaborated with other lesbian and women's organizations on behalf of lesbian causes.

In spite of its attempts to please all of the lesbians, all of the time, CX was still criticized by segments of the community. One of the ongoing topics of debate was the issue of race. Lauren recalled that,

When I would speak to so-called wealthy upper class women, I would be told 'your organization is just for women of color, it's a downwardly mobile women of color organization,' and when I'd try to fundraise in the women of color communities, I would be told that we were an upwardly mobile, upper class, white women's organization (Lauren, interview).

Unlike most other white-dominated lesbian and gay organizations, CX made sincere attempts to address concerns about race. In a Letter to *The Lesbian News*, Lauren noted that,

One of the criticisms early on was that we were not doing very well including racial minorities in terms of the planning stages of Connexus....we've worked very hard to remedy whatever our lacks

were... (LN 5/85,47).

In the letter, Lauren also mentioned that there had been "many" women of color at the first organizing meetings. I attended one of those meetings and noticed that there were few women of color present. In addition, those women of color who were there, did not represent a cross-section of the lesbian of color community.

As a result, a letter of concern was sent to CX by Lesbianas Unidas and several other groups. Del and Lauren agreed to meet with representatives from those groups. After that meeting some of those women became actively involved in CX, serving on the Board and on standing committees.

By 1985, at least four women of color were on the CX Board of Directors. In 1986, at the behest of Board member, Laura Esquivel, the CX Latina Advisory Committee was formed. Out of this committee came the Latina Lesbian Support Group, a bilingual coordinator position, the East L.A. program, the Latina Lesbian Mental Health Conference and Laura Aguilar's photo-essay on Latina Lesbians.

All three CX board presidents were lesbians of color, and all were Latinas (Del Martínez, Pat Martel, Carla Barboza). It may have been due to the initial meeting with Del and Lauren that Latinas affiliated with the group Lesbianas Unidas became the most visible lesbians of color at Connexus. In addition, perhaps the name "Centro de Mujeres," sent an unintended signal that Latinas were more welcome.

While managing conflicting interests among lesbians, Connexus, unlike lesbian centers of the 1970s, maintained a cordial relationship with the gay male community. One reason was that CX was located in the new, gay-friendly city of West Hollywood (a source of CX funding). Another reason was the impact of AIDS. Lauren noted that CX "maintained a separatist, autonomous, anti-[male] stance until 1986, when AIDS really began to be an obvious fact in our community..." (Lauren, interview).

At one point CX supported a blood drive for AIDS and, later, when CX was facing a financial shortfall, a fundraising campaign in the Gay men's community netted \$10,000 for CX. Although welcome, \$10,000 was a miniscule amount when compared to what gay men donated to The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center each year. It was also a minimum gesture considering the energy many lesbians devoted to fighting the AIDS epidemic.

Groups and Projects

During the early 1980s, SCWU reported that as a result of their role in the Briggs campaign, its "special interest programs are bursting [at] the seams" (LN 6/80,4). The organization opened an office and hired its first paid staff person (later Executive Director), Jean Conger, who had experience as a national-level N.O.W. activist.

Lesbian affinity groups had an easier time surviving in this environment than lesbian businesses did (Córdova,

1979). Among those that survived, was Building Women which was an outgrowth of Handywomen, a federally funded project at the Ocean Park Community Center. In the late 1970s, the program had taught women basic construction skills and later, veteran Handywomen and others formed Building Women (BW). As a licensed contracting company, BW did work both inside and outside the community until the late 1980s.⁵

Another long-term survivor was/is the "Catch One Club." Its owner, African American lesbian Jewell Williams, combined business with community service. For scores of lesbians, Jewell's became an entryway into the lesbian community. "...there are many women who came to Catch One on the night they turned 21 and were ushered into a world of political activity and social support" (Podolski, 1989, np). After Jewell started on a 12-step program, the club, not incongruously, offered meeting space to AA groups.

Although many lesbian groups and projects disappeared, some mixed (lesbian/heterosexual) activist projects like the movement against violence against women, continued on a number of fronts. In 1980, several thousand people attended one "Take Back the Night" march and rally, and Women Against Violence Against Women picketed the movie "Dressed To Kill," and were joined by numerous groups.

The Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW) founded in 1973, continued its work, providing a hotline, counseling and referrals and community education and prevention. They also offered education and training

programs, and self-defense workshops which were sometimes funded by local government sources (LN 2/83,5).

Sexual abuse was another issue that lesbians and heterosexual feminists continued working on together.⁶ Terry Wolverton, a writer and performance artist, affiliated with the Los Angeles Woman's Building, noted that "Los Angeles was among the first to really tackle the issues...[of sexual abuse]" (Terry, interview). In 1979, the Incest Program at The Center offered a support group for survivors, and training for those wanting to facilitate groups. Lesbians at the WB were instrumental in developing graphic and performance art that addressed these heretofore "undiscussible" issues.⁷

At the Alcoholism Center for Women, Program Director Clarissa Chandler emphasized the connection between incest, battering and alcoholism. During Clarissa's tenure at ACW, workshops related to incest were instituted as a regular part of the agency's program.

In the area of domestic violence, a coalition of battered women's shelters was formed in 1976, and by 1984 the coalition included 30 shelters and 350 organizations.

In Los Angeles, the issues of domestic violence, gender, race and sexual orientation came together in the case of L.A. lesbian activist Marilyn Murphy's sister, Sharon. According to an article written by Marilyn, Sharon had been married to poet Maya Angelou's son Guy (Clyde) Johnson. According to Sharon, Guy had beaten her on several

occasions, at least once in front of their son.

After Sharon "came out" she left her husband. Later, when she could not afford the attorney fees for her custody battle with Guy, Sharon fled from California to Texas. There she found work in a battered women's shelter. In an effort to locate Sharon, Maya Angelou hired a detective Laura (aka "Laurel") Kaufman to attend one Califia camp-out in 1982. At the event Laura tried to gather information about Sharon (Murphy 1986b, 53).

In a *People Magazine* interview, Angelou asserted that Sharon had fallen into the company of "radical militants who hate men and Blacks" (Murphy 1986a, 52). Finally, in 1985, Sharon's former lover, Susan Orliss, turned Sharon in to the authorities. When the Austin battered women's shelter staff where Sharon worked tried to talk to Angelou about her son's violence, "she covered her ears and said...that her son is a 'real man' and would not hit a woman" (Murphy, 1986a, 52). Marilyn noted that Angelou was herself a survivor of domestic violence.⁸

Matters became more complicated when the Los Angeles Coalition Against Violence Against Women, appointed Angelou to their Board of Directors. This went against the organization's conventional policy, because Angelou lived in North Carolina rather than Los Angeles. Angelou became an instant expert on child abuse and traveled around the country lecturing on the subject (Murphy 1986, 52).

While lesbians had been working against violence

against women perpetrated by males, a related issue, one closer to home, had gone unaddressed. In a 1982 article in *The Lesbian News*, Kerry Lobel, Executive Director of the Southern California Coalition for Battered Women, brought up an issue that had heretofore not been "discussible" within the community, and that was violence in lesbian relationships.

Kerry pointed out that "Lesbians have been reluctant to acknowledge the existence of lesbian battering relationships within our community" (Lobel 1982, 1). Kerry later wrote the first book on the subject, *Naming The Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering* (1986).

Notices for groups for battered women began to appear in *The Lesbian News*. Groups for batterers were few but Lesbian Central offered one (LN 9/87,6).⁹ Although the subject of violence between lesbians became more public, the problem remained and was underscored in 1994, when Loretta "Ret" Collier, a well-known member of SCWU, was shot and killed by a former partner.

Health

Los Angeles-based therapist and activist Myra Riddell has noted the importance of "out" lesbian therapists who serve as role models and make the process of dealing with lesbian issues easier for a client (Myra, interview). Yet, sometimes these lesbian role models are susceptible to the consequences of boundary blurring.

One example in Los Angeles, was the case of Judy Doyle, a high profile activist and therapist who had once been president of SCWU. Judy's license was revoked "for alleged sexual misconduct with a [former] client" (LN 8/90,1). At least one other therapist faced charges from former clients and also lost her license. Although there were others whose behavior was questionable and who were never held accountable (personal recollections and conversations), in general, lesbian therapists render a valuable service to the lesbian community.

In response to boundary problems, a conference on boundary dilemmas in psychotherapy was sponsored in 1987 by Women in Psychology. In that same year, a committee of the short-lived Association for Lesbian Psychotherapists (ALP), led by Sharon Siegel, produced a report ("Ethical Standards and Practices in The Lesbian Therapy Community"). The report offered ethical and culturally sensitive guidelines for lesbian psychotherapists.

The area of health care provision that was sensitive to the needs of lesbians was addressed by activists working at various Los Angeles health centers and in lesbian clinics. Although the "L" word was not part of any women's clinic name, at least four of them were founded, co-founded and/or managed by a core of lesbians conscious of the health care needs of lesbians specifically, and women in general.

The oldest self-identified lesbian health clinic now extant was founded in 1985 by Suzann Gage, a long time

health activist.¹⁰ According to one of its brochures, Wholistic Health for Women "provides a drugless, self help approach to well woman health care." The clinic is an example of a professional service based in a grassroots ideology. Since public funding for lesbian health care services is not abundant, Suzann's clinic survives by also serving the health care needs of heterosexuals and gay men.¹¹

Another health issue that re/surfaced in the 1980s, was substance abuse. According to one source, lesbians and gays are, due to internalized homophobia, more prone than the general population to alcoholism (Fuchter in Jay, 1995, 333). During the 1980s, increasing numbers of lesbians "came out" as recovering substance abusers, and many gave credit to the Alcoholism Center for Women and 12-Step (AA) programs for their survival and recovery.

The complex of substance abuse, its relationship to sexual and other abuse, and the effects of marginalization, needs further investigation. I would argue that over the decades, part of the damage we did to each other during our discordant community processes was based on varieties of what Terry Wolverton called "no recovery" (Terry, interview). This meant that women brought individual problems into the group dynamics of a political process. The results were inevitably detrimental to the group's espoused goals.

During the 1980s, "12-step" awareness became an overt

part of lesbian culture. At festivals and some dances, "chemical free" areas were cordoned off, and in the general lesbian community, lesbians in recovery and their allies, tried to implement the 12-step program's suggestion that we base our personal (and political) behavior on "principles before personalities."

Spirituality

For some, Los Angeles lesbians were neither political enough, nor spiritual enough. While radical lesbians decried the lesbian movement's turn toward "cultural feminism," Z Budapest left for Northern California explaining that the L.A. community was not (financially) supportive of her work. Public spiritual activity in Los Angeles proceeded at its own pace. During the 1980s several well attended women's spirituality conferences were "produced" by lesbian psychotherapist Linda Barone. In Malibu, Malka, presided over the Universal Goddess Center. In Highland Park, The Followers of the Great Mother offered spiritual gatherings and classes.

The founders of the Moon Birch Coven, Felicity Artemis Flowers and Ruth Barrett, offered classes on women's spirituality, including one addressing the split between politicos and cultural feminists: "Reconciling Feminist Politics and Spirituality." A member of the Moon Birch Coven, Anastasia Dolfina, announced the formation of a group for Black women.

Another group, "De Colores" started out as an MCC (Metropolitan Community Church) outreach group in Canoga Park. Lucia Chappelle, an African American graduate of the MCC Bible College (who later became the groups' pastor), recalls that at one point, "De Colores" began "a real odyssey exploring women's spirituality in Christianity and this you know raised hackles in the lesbian community and within the church as well" (Lucia, interview).

According to Lucia the work,

...crystalized in the music. We rewrote many hymns, we became a singing group, we sang in churches...[and lesbians] heard in the music, [the] translation into lesbian identified language and lesbian consciousness...[the response of women was] "I know that song, I understand that spirit, this is a new understanding of that spirit" (Lucia, interview).

For co-gender politics, a gay and lesbian version of EST emerged. "The Experience" as it was/is called, was marketed so that upscale gays and lesbians would find it attractive. Its cost at the time, was on a par with some New Age and Corporate workshops (\$300 per weekend). Those who marketed the course, announced that high profile lesbians had "acquired" "The Experience," which was described as "an extraordinary workshop about love, power and commitment" (LN 7/89,5).

Aging

As activist lesbians grew older, support groups and organizations were formed to meet their needs. Community groups for those over 30 were offered (some of us recalled

that in the 60s we had been warned not to trust anyone over 30!). In 1981, The Center offered a support group for lesbians over 35. By 1986, the age limit for a similar group was 40, and by 1987, one had to be 60 to attend the "Old Lesbians Conference."

Mina Meyer and Sharon Raphael who had helped co-found the Gay Women's Center in the early 1970s, and had tried to establish a lesbian presence at The Center, became pioneers in the field of lesbian/gay aging. They helped organize the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Gerontologists and the Association's first national conference (1981). In 1986, although falling short of the age requirement, Mina and Sharon were invited to be on the First Old Lesbians Conference Organizing Committee and later, Mina was hired as the Conference Coordinator.

A press release for the conference states that the purpose of:

...calling together old lesbians age 60 years and over is to explore who we are, recognize our pioneering role, name our oppression, celebrate all that we represent and make our presence a force in the women's movement...lesbians have not looked to the system to support our lives...We have always invented our own lives and in doing so have helped expand and liberate the meaning of being a woman. We are inventing our own aging (LN 10/86,35).

The conference held at California University State Dominguez Hills, where Sharon had established a Graduate Gerontology Program in 1979, was attended by over 300 women (Mina and Sharon, interview). Out of that conference came OLOC (Older Lesbians Organizing for Change), a national

organization.¹²

The choice of the word "old" over the word "older" is another example of the lesbian feminist penchant for "pushing the envelope." OLOC contends that the use of the word "old," like the use of the word "fat" in the Fat Liberation movement, is a consciousness-raising device used to counteract stereotypes. Vera Martin, a woman of color and chair of the OLOC steering committee, pointed out that there is a difference between "aging" and "ageism." The former does not deny the aging process, while the latter is full of negative messages about size, appearance, youth and ability (Vera, interview).

By challenging stereotypes in the area of aging, OLOC contributes to the welfare of lesbians. One study by Rothblum, Mintz, Cowan and Haller, concluded that "physical changes that accompany aging may have fewer [negative] consequences for lesbians...in the arena of personal relationships" (in Jay, 1995, 64). Another study by Sang, Warshaw and Smith concluded that "the patriarchal dichotomy between work and relations, or for that matter, the rest of life, does not hold for lesbians" (quoted in Jay, 1995, 71).

Working outside the "patriarchal dichotomy," a number of lesbian activists have developed new approaches for enjoying the golden years. They have formed retirement communities that consist of individual dwellings in an environment that also provides a sense of community. A number are dedicated travelers whose itineraries include

conferences and women-only gatherings. I argue that this ability to sidestep stereotypic patterns of old age is partly a result of decades of fending for ourselves, and developing positive responses to the challenges of being marginalized.

Disability/Differently Abled

In an anthology on "disabled dykes," the editor called attention to the cognitive gaps between the disabled and the abled: "Amongst anti-ableist writers and activists, there is a consensus that non-disabled persons generally regard disabled persons as asexual beings" (Tremian, 1996, 15). She also pointed out that if sexual identities mark a lesbian identity, then to regard disabled lesbians as asexual, wipes out the latter's claim to identity.

The editor also argued that leading lesbian and feminist theorists "uncritically accept the notions of 'ability' and 'disability' as prediscursive, ahistorical, and objective ones" and that they,

...neglect to problematise [sic] how relations of power *naturalize* conceptions of ability and disability, ableism and disableism, have already structured their work (Tremain, 1996, 15-24).

In Los Angeles, the movement to organize on behalf of disabled and differently-abled lesbians had its strong advocates. Sheryl Kaplan who worked for deaf rights, and wrote several articles on disability for *The Lesbian News*, raised consciousness by providing examples of language offensive to disabled people, such as "turn a deaf ear,

blind to the truth and paralyzed with fear" (Kaplan, 1983, 35).

Sheryl pointed out that signers for concerts were not appropriate since "deaf women do not share hearing women's appreciation of music..." (Kaplan 1982, 28). She also added that while overcompensating at music concerts, we were ignoring the signing needs of deaf women in rap groups and community meetings (Kaplan 1982, 12).

In the mid 1980s, The Los Angeles group, Deaf Sisters of Sappho, was a social and political organization for deaf and hearing lesbians "comfortable in a sign language environment" (LN 9/85,1). Sign language classes were increasingly offered by community groups and programs.

In another area of disability rights, writer, activist and lesbian of color, Ayofemi Folayan attempted to raise community consciousness about accessibility, particularly for people in wheelchairs. The disability movement was another example of how oppression in any area became part of the cognitive framework of the politically correct (without quotation marks), lesbian politic.

Culture

Music

During the 1970s and 1980s, the phrase "women's music" was a euphemism for music primarily produced by lesbians. The women who recorded for women's labels and performed for female audiences were generally lesbian. Examples included

Alix Dobkin, Chris Williamson, Margie Adam, Linda Shaw, June Millington and Vickie Randle. During the 1980s, the sale of "women's" music (although miniscule in comparison to mainstream record sales), became relatively profitable.

By 1980, 800,000 records and tapes had been sold. By 1983 lesbian-owned, Olivia Records had produced 14 records by 7 artists and distributed the recordings of 6 others. Olivia's distributors had sold almost 1 million records.

As record distributor Betsy York noted in her "Hot Notes" column in *The Lesbian News*, in 1984, "lesbian music" was thriving. At that time, Betsy listed 20 women's music festivals in the U.S. and Canada.

As lesbian-produced music grew more popular, it progressed into some problematic phases. In early 1987, Karen Merry (who had bought Betsy York's distributorship and taken over *The Lesbian News* "Hot Notes" column), reported that after a Holly Near and Chris Williamson concert, several lesbians who had gathered at a dance club, expressed anger about the lack of herstory, women's culture, politics and "good 'ole lesbianism" expressed by the performers during the concert.

Karen noted that, "a lot of expectations have come to rest on a few performers...when the performers chose to just perform and not include public affirmations of lesbianism, some concert goers feel a loss, almost a betrayal..." (Merry, 1987a, 18). This was an example of the perennial debate between those who believe that art is (should be)

political, and those who create "art for art's sake."

Later that year, Karen announced that "changes in our industry are causing me to expand beyond Women's music." She mentioned the new compact disks, admitted that she didn't have a CD player, and wondered if readers were buying them (Merry, 1987b, 23). She then explained that Redwood Records and Olivia Records had decided to go to "dual distribution" in order to "obtain greater visibility and sales." This meant that money would be going primarily to distribution companies owned by men, a decision that would negatively affect Karen (Merry, 1987b, 23).

On the upside Karen noted that for

...15 years we have marketed the concept of women's music...the political and social conscience in our music sets us apart from the basic lack-of-substance top 40. [Now] people snicker less and take more seriously the selling of records by our women's music artists (Merry, 1987, 23).

By November, Karen expressed concern over the very existence of women's music and the culture it had birthed and nurtured. She wrote an article on the subject of "wither women's music" (Merry, 1987c, 25). Several years later, it was clear that the heyday of that generation of "women's music" was over.

In 1992, in an article on the waning of "women's" music, Lori Medigovich explained that, in the same way that

...rock'n roll reverberated through the 60s, women's music provided the soundtrack for the women's movement in the 70s. Today, nearly 20 years after Alix Dobkin's "Lavender Jane Loves Women" became the first in this genre, the music and its singer still inspire, uplift and encourage

lesbians. But there are distressing signs that women's music is waning - concert audiences are shrinking, record sales have fallen and the number of women's music labels has dwindled... (Medigovich, 1992, 33).

Some lesbian musicians like Vickie Randle found mainstream jobs (in her case on "The Jay Leno Show"), but most continued singing to smaller women's audiences and in non-lesbian venues such as het(erosexual) coffeehouses. In the late 1980s, resilient Olivia Records, ever ready to find new venues for its music and ways to keep the treasury profitable, diversified and produced the "1st Women's Music Cruise in History," which sailed to the Bahamas in February of 1989.

In Los Angeles, local musical talent during the 1980s included groups such as "Dell Street" and "Maiden Voyage." "The Cherry Cokes," whose trademark was "girl music" of the 1950s presented as comedy, were popular (LN 5/86, 58).

While female disk jockeys were in demand for lesbian dances, they had to carefully balance their musical programs to satisfy the tastes of a diverse crowd. Cora Holland, a woman of color and owner of Lady Day Disco, seemed to provide the right mixture. Less willing to be a crowd pleaser was Barbara Lum, also a woman of color, an astute businesswoman, and the power behind Joy Sound.

Also spreading lesbian culture through the medium of public radio at Pacifica's KPFK, were women like Jody Cattogio, Helene Rosenbluth, and Lucia Chappelle. By 1989, the gay and lesbian "IMRU" radio show was in its 12th year

at KPFK.

Along with music there was also laughter, and although the stereotype of lesbian activists is that we are humorless, lesbian comedians do exist (as does lesbian humor). Local examples include Karen Williams, who is now nationally known. She was once a member of Lesbians of Color and is a Califia veteran. In the late 1980s, Monica Palacios' brand of risqué chola comedy found a receptive audience. Another "local girl who made good" is Ellen de Generis who performed at a Connexus Business Alliance meeting long before she appeared on prime time tv (Jeanne Córdova, personal communication, 1997).

Films

The first Los Angeles International Gay and Lesbian Film and Video Festival was held in 1982. It soon became a popular vehicle through which to showcase lesbian and gay cinematic talent. The festival signified that a critical mass number of films were being made by "out" lesbians and gays. Their work represented a dramatic break with tradition. The growing acceptance of these films encouraged some mainstream studios to risk money on similar ventures.

The history of lesbian films made by mainstream studios can be divided into three phases. The first consisted of movies like "The Children's Hour (1961)," "The Fox" (1968) and "The Killing of Sister George" (1968), all of which presented lesbianism in a sorry and tragic format. With "Personal Best" (1982) "Lianna" (1983) and "Entre Nous"

(1984), we entered a phase where the lesbian characters were more developed and there were fewer, bad-lesbian-must-die-endings. However, we still had to overlook scenes that catered to male and mainstream markets.

Carol Schmidt's review of "Lianna" was enthusiastic, "It is so good to finally have a film we can brag about, and send our relatives to see without having to explain away the bad parts first" (Schmidt, 1983b, 39). Another reviewer was lukewarm and felt that while "Lianna" (directed by a male) deserved an "A" for effort, "we are deserving of something more" (Wells, 1983, 41).

That "something more" was provided by the "cross-over" movie produced by an "out" lesbian. The breakthrough film was Donna Dietch's "Desert Hearts." Donna who lived in Venice, California in the early 1970s, graduated from the UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) film school. Before "Desert Hearts" Donna produced several documentaries including "Woman to Woman" and "The Great Wall of LA."

The subject of the latter film was the acclaimed, multi-panel mural portraying the diversity of Los Angeles history, a project masterminded by Judy Baca, a Latina (lesbian) artist. In 1976, Donna, Judy and Christina Schlesinger, co-founded SPARC (Social and Public Arts Resource Center). SPARC has become a major progressive art resource in Los Angeles.

Donna independently raised the \$1.5 million to produce and direct a film adaptation of Jane Rule's *Desert of the*

Heart. The film was well received. Reviewer Carol Schmidt noted that "Desert Hearts",

...was certainly a film in which a viewing lesbian could slip right in and identify with ...[I remember] going to a fundraiser for 'Desert Hearts' back around 1979 and never quite believing that it would come about...this film makes me very proud to be a lesbian (Schmidt, 1986, 58).

Arlene Stiebel wrote that the film was "the most lesbian sensitive mainstream movie...we have seen" (Stiebel, 1986, 59).¹³

Los Angeles was also the home of filmmaker Silvia Morales, who describes herself as a "Chicana, mestiza, filmmaker who has loved women" (Silvia, interview). In 1978, as a graduate film student at UCLA, she wrote and produced the documentary "Chicana," a celebration of the role of Chicana and Mexicana women in Mexican and U.S. history.

She has since produced a segment of the acclaimed PBS series, "Chicano! The Mexican American Civil Rights Movement," and various PBS and Showtime programs. She was nominated for Emmys for a segment of "A Century of Women" and for "Faith Even to The Fire." The latter documents the struggles of three U.S. nuns against the racism, misogyny and classism of the Catholic Church.

Although progress was being made in the area of film, during the 1980s, the general pool of funding for the arts was growing smaller. In spite of this loss, lesbians continued to develop the lesbian aesthetic. In 1980, a collective of white women at The Woman's Building began work

on a national lesbian art exhibit to be known as The Great American Lesbian Art Show (GALAS). Around the U.S., women responded to the idea of concurrent lesbian art events. According to Terry, as part of GALAS "there were shows in [places]...like Lawrence, Kansas, Winter Park, Florida and Chicago..." (Terry, interview).

Trouble arose when Lesbians of Color (the L.A. group) took issue with the small number of lesbians of color (the generic group) represented in the GALAS show. After various conversations and meetings, the GALAS collective agreed to do broader outreach and added more lesbians of color to the exhibit. With the help of Nancy Taylor at The Center, the GALAS project also scheduled exhibits at diverse venues, including "Loveland," a bar frequented by women of color.

Los Angeles lesbian artists working during this decade included Nancy Fried who created figures and women-focused scenes made out of hand-painted dough; Lili Lakich who worked in the medium of neon; and Alicia Austin, an illustrator of fantasy themes. Local lesbian of color artists included Asungi whose work depicted African-derived images of goddesses and women; and Judy Baca, whose work focused on "public art" and Chicana/o history and culture.

In the medium of photography, Vaughan Rachel has recorded portions of the L.A. lesbian community since the 1970s; Bee Ottinger and Sheila Ruth, photographed L.A. lesbians in the early 1970s; E. K. Waller, who does not identify as lesbian, also produced a remarkable photographic

record of the L.A. feminist and lesbian community during the 1970s.

Nancy Rosenblum chronicled L.A. lesbian history in the 1980s and Laura Aguilar gained fame for her photographic series of Latina Lesbians in the late 1980s. Becky Villaseñor photographed lesbian events during portions of the 1990s; and in 1993, the work of L.A. photographer Sunny Bok appeared on the cover of *Newsweek's* "lesbian issue."

Politics

During this decade the election of "out" candidates and the appointment of "out" activists at all levels increased. Diane Goodman, then a law student, and Chair of the L.A. ACLU Gay Rights Chapter, was appointed to The L.A. City Commission of the Status of Women. Myra Riddell was appointed to the L.A. County Commission on the Status of Women in 1979, and in the early 1980s, defeated homophobic attempts to keep her from becoming the Commission's President (Myra, interview).

Lynne Turner was appointed to the L.A. Board of Education Commission for Sex Equity, and was also elected (as an open lesbian) to the L.A. County Republican Central Committee, coming in first in eighty-nine of the precincts. She was also elected President of the Log Cabin Club "the local gay Republican club" (LN 7/80,4). Los Angeles gay and lesbian Democrats also had an organization, the Stonewall Democratic Club. There, Vice Presidents Jeanne Córdova and

Ivy Bottini helped to establish a women's issues task force.

In the early 1980s, Jackie Goldberg, while still in the closet, ran for the Los Angeles Board of Education and won.¹⁴ When Jackie decided to run for the L.A. City Council in 1993, she was persuaded to come out. She explained that she had stayed in the closet to protect her son, who by that time was old enough to manage the consequences. She made history when she was elected as an out lesbian and she continues as a progressive presence on the Council. In Santa Monica, Judy Abdo, an open lesbian, won a seat on the Santa Monica City Council, and later served as mayor of the city.

In nearby West Hollywood, Valerie Terrigno also made history. She had been co-chair of the Stonewall Democratic Club and a member of the West Hollywood (WH) incorporation committee. When WH overwhelmingly voted to become a city, Valerie ran for a seat on the new WH City Council, and won the largest number of votes. The new five-person Council included Valerie and two gay men. The Council elected her to head "the first city council in the country with an openly gay majority" (LN 2/85,6). As head of the first WH City Council, Valerie was also the city's first mayor.

In April of 1985, it was announced that Valerie was being investigated on charges of mismanaging funds when she was CEO of a non-profit agency, and she was eventually indicted for embezzling \$11,000 in federal funds. Valerie denied any wrongdoing and contended that the charges were politically motivated.

There were many discussions about the political damage Valerie's indictment would have on the gay and lesbian agenda, as well as conjectures that she had been targeted by political enemies within the community. Several lesbians testified against her and Valerie was found guilty of embezzlement. Under state law she had to resign from her Council seat after she was sentenced, and did so in 1986.¹⁵

Legal

During the 1980s, the legal system began to treat lesbians and gays in a more even-handed manner. In 1980, the California State Supreme Court ruled that "being openly gay is a political activity protected by the California Labor Code Section which prohibits employers from regulating or trying to influence the political activities of employees" (LN 7/80,8).

In a noted Los Angeles case, the California courts ruled in favor of same-sex couples. In 1983, two lesbians of color, Zandra Rolón and Deborah Johnson (then a couple), made reservations at Papa Choux's restaurant for a Valentine's day dinner in one of the restaurant's private couples booths. When they were refused service by the management because they were a same sex-couple, they sued.

Media coverage was assured when media-savvy L.A. attorney Gloria Allred, accepted the case. At first the courts refused to force Papa Choux's to seat the couple. In March of 1984, an appellate court declared that the

restaurant was guilty of discrimination and issued an injunction. The restaurant closed the booths rather than seat same sex couples and later went out of business.

Backlash

Running parallel to the gains made by lesbians (and gays) was a persistent backlash. In 1980, in Long Beach, California, the U.S. Navy filed charges of lesbianism against eight women on the ship "USS Norton Sound." A third of the sixty-one women on the ship were eventually investigated on similar suspicions.

Susan McGreivy, formerly of Lesbian Feminists and at the time, the Lesbian/Gay rights attorney for the Southern California Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, provided legal aid for the accused and all but two of the cases were eventually dismissed (Roberts, 1981, 74-76).

In 1982, Betty Brooks' class at California State University Long Beach (CSULB), was canceled after complaints from "Christian" women about her "Women and Bodies" course. Three other lesbians (two professors and one staff person) also lost their jobs due to homophobia (Brooks and Sievers, 1983). Heterosexual Professor Barry Singer also came under fire for his "tolerance of homosexuality," and resigned after thirteen years of teaching at CSLUB.

By October, 1982, UCLB's women's center was closed, Betty Brooks had been reinstated, and the ACLU had filed a lawsuit to protect the women's studies program and to

prevent the dismantling of the women's center (LN 10/82,3). Three years later the suit was still pending. In the end, the women's center was reinstated and Betty was allowed to teach in the university extension program. It was a qualified victory and was traumatic for a number of those involved in the case (personal communication, 1998).

The backlash against lesbians was part of the backlash against women in general. In 1980, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was three states short of the needed thirty-eight, and no state had ratified the amendment since 1977.

Throughout the decades, lesbians both "out" and in the closet had worked with non-lesbian women and sympathetic males to pass the ERA. One example was the thirty-seven-day water fast observed by Los Angeles lesbian Dina Bachelor; Laguna, California bookstore owner Zoe Ananda; ex-Mormon Sonia Johnson and several others in support of the ERA's passage in Illinois (Bachelor 1985, 39). Although Congress granted a two-year extension until June 30, 1982, the deadline arrived and the ERA did not pass.

CIVIL WARS

The civil wars in the Los Angeles lesbian activist community, during the 1980s, centered around unresolved subjects (racism and "eating our own"); some unresolved subjects with new twists (the sex wars) and new subjects with old twists (AIDS, lipstick lesbians and the lesbian baby boom).

Racism

Ongoing dissatisfaction with racism (and classism) in white organizations, and a desire for environments that were more culturally comfortable, led lesbians (and gays) of color to continue organizing their own groups and organizations.

Whether, lesbian or co-gender, these groups served a dual purpose: they offered social spaces in which to be with ethnic "familia," and they served as political wedges to force attention toward the serious matter of racism in the white lesbian and gay communities. To a lesser degree the groups also challenged homophobia in their own ethnic communities.

Persuaded and pressured by groups like Lesbians of Color, women's and lesbian groups began to organize anti-racism workshops and task forces. In 1980, the Lesbian Task Force of N.O.W. offered a racism workshop, and after the GALAS controversy, Terry Wolverton organized "a CR group for white women who want to explore racism in their lives" (LN 10/80,6). Terry recalls that it was originally supposed to run for 12 weeks and "we ended up going for 3 years" (Terry, interview; Wolverton, 1983).

In July 1980, shortly after the GALAS show, White Women Against Racism (WWAR) was formed. The group included Carol Schmidt, Norma Esfeld, Robin Podolsky and Shirl Buss (LN 3/85,33). WWAR members met in support groups, participated in anti-racism workshops and took turns writing a column in

The Lesbian News. Throughout its existence, WWAR was the target of derisive comments by those who felt that WWAR women were self-righteous and "pandering" to lesbians of color.

Efforts to work with white and heterosexual groups were problematic for lesbians of color, because for them issues of race, gender, class and homophobia intersect in an indivisible manner. Thus, joining one group often meant that one would be pressured to subscribe to that group's priorities. For example, Chicanos demand/ed primary allegiance to La Raza, while white lesbians expect/ed a primary allegiance to women's issues. In addition, regardless of their class background, women of color were almost inevitably assumed to be working class and treated accordingly by white activists.

In the 1980s, lesbian of color activists, like Barbara Smith began to articulate the complexities of the intersection of oppressions. Barbara argued that,

...the concept of the simultaneity of oppression is still the crux of a Black feminist understanding of political reality...and is one of the most significant ideological contributions of Black feminist thought (Smith, 1983, xxxii).

Deborah King, added that "the necessity of addressing all oppressions is one of the hallmarks of Black feminist thought" (King, 1988, 43). She also pointed out that "The modifier 'multiple' refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions, but (also) to the multiplicative relationships among them as well" (King, 1988, 47).

In Los Angeles, the problems posed by the intersections of gender and race were illustrated by the Marielitos boatlift. In 1980, Fidel Castro decided to let discontented Cubans leave Cuba. In the end the exile boatlift also included "undesirables" such as homosexuals and people released from jails and psychiatric hospitals. The boats carrying approximately 30,000 people left from the Cuban Port of Mariel, thus the name "Marielitos" (*Time*, 1980, 14).

When the Marielitos arrived in the U.S. they were immediately quarantined. The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) tried to expedite the release of homosexual refugees in the holding camps by finding them sponsors, jobs and housing. Carol Waymire wrote a letter to *The Lesbian News*, asking for help for the refugees. She explained that mainstream churches were reluctant to deal with gays and lesbians and that several hundred of them were still in holding camps. Many were afraid to come out "for fear of violence from other Cubans" and because they feared they would not be sponsored if they came out (LN 10/80,2).

Sandy Tate, owner of Feminist Horizons, a local lesbian business, also wrote a letter to *The Lesbian News* explaining that she had called MCC to inquire about the Marielito relocation program. She had ascertained that out of approximately 4000 homosexuals, only 400 were lesbians.

Sandy argued that while MCC had never actively campaigned for lesbian mother custody cases or for the Norton Sound women, they were now actively working for a

group of refugees made up mainly of gay males. She noted that "Once again, we're asked to rescue mostly men." She asked, "What men donate to the ERA, rape crisis centers...[and] where are the fundraisers to benefit lesbian women?" (LN 10/80,18).

Since most churches declined to help gays and lesbians, in this case it seemed appropriate that MCC should shoulder the job of relocating the refugees. However, Sandy was right in pointing out (several years before the AIDS crisis), the discrepancy between the support given to male causes by lesbians and the negligible "pay back" by gays to lesbians.

Public debate on racism within the activist lesbian community was exacerbated in 1980 after *The Tide* printed an interview with Sirani Avedis, an Armenian-American lesbian musician. During the interview, Sirani made various statements about racism in the lesbian community, for example: "...White women have no business singing about race unless they do what they have never done: sing about what it's like to be white and oppressive..." She also commented on anti-Semitism in the lesbian community (Avedis, 1980, 4).

A number of letters to *The Lesbian News* written in response to the Avedis interview, expressed dismay over her comments, calling her thoughts and feelings "racist."¹⁶ On the other side of the argument, Lisa Lamphier's letter, pointed out that, "As white women of the movement, to deal with our racism would take about one-tenth of all the energy we use to avoid it" (LT 5/80,18).

While the activist lesbian community argued about the intersections of race and gender, the race wars spilled over into what are considered to be non-politicized venues - lesbian bars. In late 1979, after several Lesbians of Color (LOC) members were asked for three pieces of identification and were refused non-alcoholic beverages, Lesbians of Color voted to picket The Palms bar in West Hollywood.

In June of the following year, one Lorraine Althea wrote a letter about problems she had with the Palms staff and management. She felt that some of the incidents had been racially motivated. *Lesbian News* editor, Jinx Beers, dismissed some of Althea's allegations and noted that she (Jinx) had been chastised by some readers for printing Althea's letter in the first place (LN 7/81, 15).

One letter from a reader argued that the Palms staff could not always be on perfect behavior, and chastised Althea for referring to the waitress as too old, and for saying that the waitress had no business working at "the Palms since she was not a lesbian (LN 7/81,15).

Another letter signed by "MPTYT" (More People Than You Think) described Althea's letter as "boring," referred to her as a "Negro," and asserted that her (the writer's) "group stopped going to The Palms because there were too many blacks coming in." The writer also informed *The Lesbian News* that "The WWAR [White Women Against Racism column] in your May issue made my piles bleed" (LN 7/81,16).

As expected, several WWAR members wrote to express

their objections to "MPTYT's" letter (LN 8/81, 22). A letter by Nancy McConn (who may have been a member of WWAR), warned that hatred of blacks could easily lead to hatred of gays (LN 8/81,23).

After each incident, letters to *The Lesbian News* illustrated the resentment and lack of understanding about racism that was prevalent in the lesbian community. Although some lesbians of color were quick on the draw with the "race card," in most cases, white women were just as fast with the "excuse card."

Another memorable battle in the race wars took place in a venue commonly thought to be exempt from political animosity - a cultural event. In 1980, veteran activist and comedian, Robin Tyler organized the West Coast Women's Comedy and Music Festival which was the West Coast equivalent of the Michigan Women's Music Festival.

Shortly after the event opened for its second year, women of color compiled a list of concerns: no sliding scale, lack of women of color on the planning committee and oversights regarding Latin America Solidarity Day.

On Saturday night two spokeswomen for women of color addressed the audience and then according to one report, Robin "emotionally spoke at length...[and] countered charges of racism and classism with the fact of her working class Jewish heritage" (Lemiux, 1981, 1). Naomi Littlebear, a Chicana with The Dyketones group, was asked to read a statement prepared by women of color. For some reason, the

statement was not read and at that point a group in solidarity with the grievances of women of color, walked out.

Behind the scenes, a Lesbian Loveland power struggle was also in progress. Robin and Torie Osborn were in the middle of a relationship breakup, and each felt the other was creating trouble as a ploy to gain ownership of the festival (Robin and Patty, interview; Torie, interview).

On Sunday morning Bernice Reagon of Sweet Honey in the Rock spoke eloquently about resolving the "isms" that had manifested during the festival. Reagon suggested that coalition politics was one way to bridge the gaps, but she also warned that such work was not easy:

Coalition work is not done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate [its] success on whether or not they feel good when they get there. They're not looking for coalition, they're looking for a home! (Reagon, 1983, 359).

Later that day, a calmer Robin, responded that "I heard the women last night, and I know we gotta deal with it" (quoted in Lemieux, 1981,1).

After the festival, the group Jewish Feminists wrote to *The Lesbian News* in support of the "wommin of color" and critiqued the "classist nature of the festival's administration" while also noting that Robin (who is Jewish), had been the target of stereotypes around money, power and aggression (LN 11/81,1).

Another letter by Anne Johnson and friends was not so even-handed. That group asserted that the "majority of [white] women there opposed the demands and the demonstration and the horizontal hostility and divisions they [the women of color] caused..." (LN 11/81,1).

Highly charged arguments over race and class at a cultural event, demonstrated that no matter where lesbians chose to gather, we took our political grievances and individual dysfunctions along. No space was free from the inevitable conflicts that mistrust, denial, power differentials (and Lesbian Loveland) generated.

Although there were many arguments over race during this time, some organizations within the social services sector of the lesbian community did try to address the complexities of the issue. Connexus and ACW (Alcoholism Center for Women) were the organizations that, during the 1980s, led the way in developing programs to serve the needs of women of color. Connexus provided funds for an East Los Angeles office which provided outreach, referrals, a support group and counseling for Latina lesbians. It also sponsored the first Latina Lesbian Mental Health Conference in 1987.

One of the most significant programs for lesbians of color came out of ACW in the late 1980s. Under Clarissa Chandler, the Coordinator of Prevention Services, ACW began to develop programs that addressed the needs of both lesbians of color and survivors of sexual abuse.

In 1986, the State of California awarded ACW a contract

to provide prevention services to "Black and Hispanic" (sic) lesbians (LN 5/86,10). The new program took its name (Lapis), from Lapis Lazuli, "a precious blue gemstone used in healing rituals to create clarity" (*Lapis Newsletter*, 5/96,1). Since that time, the Lapis program has provided education and prevention programs in the area of substance abuse. Working creatively, Lapis outreach workers sometimes networked with underfunded lesbian of color groups, providing meeting space, resources, and technical support.

Lesbians of Color Organizing

In the midst of race skirmishes, lesbians of color continued to form groups and develop projects.¹⁷ Lesbian of color groups and projects reflected the diversity within communities of color. Los Angeles groups during the 1980s, included Comadres (made up primarily of former Califia participants); a Black women's support group at ACW; Makeda, an African American lesbian group, and a "Black women's support group" at Connexus.

In 1982, the Califia Women of Color Collective held its own weekend camp (Silva, 1983). In 1986, the "La Plaza" column first appeared in *The Lesbian News*. It was described as a "central bulletin board for news, events, announcements and information of interest to the Latina community" ([Retter] 1986, 1). "La Plaza" was the first ethnic interest column published in *The Lesbian News*.

Other lesbian of color groups during the 1980s,

included an Asian Pacific support group, that evolved into the "Asian Pacific Lesbian Support Group," and later into "Asian Pacific Lesbians and Friends." Co-gender groups with active lesbian participation included "Raices Latinas" in Long Beach, "Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos" and "VIVA." The last was a co-gender network of lesbian and gay Latinos interested in the arts. While there are many urban Native American Indians in the L.A. area, there is no public record of a lesbian and/or gay group from that community in Southern California.

To illustrate the variety of issues lesbians of color groups tried to address, as well as the types of projects they supported, I will use the group I am most familiar with, "Lesbianas Unidas" (LU). The group came out of "Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos" (GLLU) and its purpose was to provide "a support group and to address the specific needs of politicized, feminist Latina lesbians (many of whom were also lesbians separatists)" (LU 10th Anniversary Program, 1994).

Some of LU's original members were also members of GLLU, including Geneva Fernández, Tommy Escarzega, Laura Esquivel and Eileen Pagán. In 1983, Laura and Geneva attended the Lesbians of Color Conference to recruit lesbian members for GLLU, and they were soon joined by Vicky Delgadillo, Irene Martínez, Rita González and Lydia Otero. Lydia and Laura later served as Presidents of GLLU. They served their respective terms during the heyday of GLLU, a

time when the organization enjoyed prominence within the co-gender lesbian/gay community.

During its first ten years, LU sponsored the annual Latina lesbian retreat and several Spanish and English rap groups; marched on the 25th anniversary of the Chicano Moratorium and marched against the Simpson Mazolli Bill (an anti-immigration bill); launched the annual Dia de La Mujer/International Woman's Day event at Plummer Park (1989); and participated in the First Lesbian Encuentro in Mexico (1987).

The group also contributed money to causes such as Project 10 (a support network for high school lesbians and gays); a hospital in Nicaragua; a lesbian group in Mexico who needed help after the 1987 earthquake; and the First Lesbian and Gay Conference for Youth (which was held in Los Angeles). LU also worked to end racism in white-dominated lesbian and gay organizations by working as staff, serving on Boards and committees and offering workshops to combat racism.¹⁸

The group Lesbians of Color was also active during this time period. In 1982, after the Califia Women of Color Retreat, Lesbians Of Color (LOC) members decided to organize the first national lesbians of color conference. A group of African Americans, Latinas, mixed ethnicity lesbians and one Korean-American lesbian, began the labor-intensive process of making the conference happen (personal recollection).

The conference, held in Malibu in September of 1983,

was attended by over two hundred women from various states. The list of workshop presenters suggests that a broad spectrum of political and ideological viewpoints (including the heterosexual one) were included. As in most lesbian conferences, there were those who were happy to be in the company of other lesbians of color for a weekend of discussion, learning, intercambio, music and fun.

Others however, were troubled by what they felt were unaddressed political issues. Nancy Reiko Kato of Radical Women (Seattle) and a member of the Merle Woo Defense Committee,¹⁹ felt that "the gathering had shortchanged women who came for serious political discussion and active proposals that they could take back to their communities" (Reiko Kato, 1999, 30).

Noting that heterosexual women and light-skinned women "came under fire" Nancy asserted that "the anti political atmosphere at the conference gave rise to...lesbian separatism and cultural nationalism, both of which express capitulation to racist and sexist divisiveness" (Reiko Kato, 1999, 31).

In a letter to *The Lesbian News*, Barbara Forrest, a light skinned woman of mixed ethnicity, and Lyhve Oakwomon (sic), an African American, explained that, like most heterogenous gatherings, the "conference reflected our social, political and economic reality..." (LN /84, 39). They also noted that although there were difficult moments, and "the Conference may not have met all the needs of

everybody there...nobody seemed in a big hurry to leave" (LN 2/84, 39).

Thus, it can be seen that LOC gatherings faced some of the same dilemmas as white-dominated lesbian gatherings. Should we concentrate on the political or the cultural? Could we develop a coherent lesbian of color agenda and implement it? Who was "allowed" to attend these conferences? Because of these ongoing dilemmas, it was easier to please the women who came for the company of other lesbians, and to rest, enjoy and share lesbian culture. The women who came to organize around pressing political issues were inevitably disappointed.

After the conference, LOC members experienced burn-out similar to what Jeanne Córdova (1973) and Robin Tyler (1981) experienced after their conflict-laden events. The amount of energy expended to organize the conference and the criticisms received, sapped the energy of the group. Lesbians of Color (LOC) continued meeting into the late 1980s, but after the 1983 conference, the energy level of the group was never quite the same (personal recollection).

The group's inability to continue was exacerbated by a phenomenon that I call "lateral prejudice" and most call "horizontal hostility." This factor of prejudice between women of color groups, always lay underneath the surface of LOC's dynamics and was both color and class driven. These differences were never resolved and negatively affected the dynamics of this and other multicultural groups.²⁰

In the case of Latinas, differences between those living in the U.S. and those living in Latin America, caused problems at international conferences. At the First Lesbian Encuentro in Mexico City (1987), some Latin American women objected to the presence of U.S. Latinas, because the former felt that the latter were agents of "imperialist" attitudes (Elena Popp, personal communication, 1997). The Latin American critics included women from privileged backgrounds, who themselves might have been guilty of oppressive class practices.

During this time period, L.A. lesbians of color participated in several events that did manage to circumvent the usual conflicts. One was the "4th International Lesbian and Gay People of Color Conference" which took place in November, 1986 at the Ambassador Hotel in L.A. The list of presenters spanned the broad spectrum of the diverse people of color community, and this was one conference where internecine conflict did not upstage the proceedings.

Another event that was generally harmonious was the annual afternoon gathering of lesbians of color, first organized by Lesbianas Unidas in 1989. By the 1990s, the event known as the "International Women's Day Celebration," had been inherited by a coalition of L.A. lesbian of color groups. The event, held into the late 1990s at Plummer Park in West Hollywood, came to symbolize the presence of L.A. lesbians of color and their ability to work together for a day of cultural sharing and networking.

The increasing visibility of lesbians of color extended beyond the immediate community into the worlds of publishing and academia. The first anthology by women of color, *This Bridge Called My Back* was compiled by lesbians Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1981). Doris Davenport, then living in L.A. and finishing her Ph.D. at the University of Southern California, was a contributor. Her essay "The Pathology of Racism: A Conversation with Third World Wimmin," generated knowing nods in some quarters and consternation in others (Davenport, 1994, 220).

Toward the end of the decade, other anthologies by lesbians of color began to appear. Among them was the first Asian Pacific Islander lesbian anthology, *Between the Lines* (1987) and *Compañeras*, the first Latina lesbian anthology (1987). The latter included an essay by L.A. lesbian Zulma Durán.²¹

In academia, lesbians have always been a significant presence. In general, even if professors choose to stay in the closet, they are supportive of individual lesbians who pass through their departments. Although some academics began to come out in the 1970s, it wasn't until the next decade that some began to build careers partly based on lesbian-focused or lesbian-sensitive research.

While braving sexism, racism and homophobia, "out" lesbians of color like Hortencia Amaro (UCLA) began to make a mark in the field of alcoholism research, and Vickie Mays (UCLA) began her research on issues affecting African

American lesbians.

However, after years of activism in the community and the academy, historian Emma Pérez, a former member of Lesbians of Color, expressed the feelings of many weary lesbian of color academics: "the institutions will remain as they are despite our years and years of intervention..." (personal communication, 1998).

Doris Davenport also has reason to be tired. She taught at several universities but found that her: "...assets (dedication to teaching, a sense of humor, commitment to students, and a knowledge and passionate love of multiethnic literatures) were turned into liabilities" (1994, 216). Doris' personality does not suffer fools wisely and she paid the price (personal recollection).

In general, the small pool of politicized lesbians of color in academia found/find themselves worn out by demands from colleagues, students, university committees, conferences, publishers and the often recalcitrant (sexist, classist, racist and homophobic) systems they work/ed in.

Anti-Semitism

Like lesbians of color, Jewish lesbians have labored under the pressures of multiple identities. Both groups of lesbians receive little support from their communities of origin. In a study of Jewish lesbians, one narrator noted that,

As a lesbian I get no validation within Judaism. I have no ceremony or validation for my love

relationship, no joy in my knowing myself. I have no Bat Mitzvah for becoming a lesbian, no celebration of my knowing my identity (quoted in Rubenstein and Mathews, 1980, 101).

Writer and activist Elly Bulkin, who has for some time worked on the issues of anti-Semitism and racism, noted that "For white Jewish women, unlike for women of color, the initial question is not presence, but visibility" (Bulkin, 1984, 145). Sisterhood Bookstore co-owner, Simone Wallace attributed this invisibility to internalized oppression: "It was part of our internalized self-hatred as Jews...[especially] the Ashkenazy Jews, we just thought that we weren't a special group..." (personal communication, 1998)

Although L.A. Jewish lesbians were cognizant of the multiple oppressions they lived under as women, Jewish people and lesbians, they did not collectively organize around their identity or against anti-Semitism until the late 1970s. The earliest recorded lesbian Jewish group (before the mid- 1970s), was the "Jewish Gang of Lesbians" in San Francisco (Bulkin, 1984, 98).

The earliest mention of the Jewish lesbian experience in *The Lesbian Tide* was a poem by Evan Paxton. The poem expressed Evan's attempts to meld the Jewish and Lesbian experience: "Who could say I have broken faith? There's a woman in my bed, and chicken soup on my table..." (Paxton, 1973, 23).

According to Simone Wallace, the development of a

Jewish lesbian identity was part of a complex process,

Those of us who were developing our lesbian identities started developing all of our identities, whether it was as single mothers, child of a [holocaust] survivor, alcohol consciousness... [we thought] if we're going to become proud lesbians, we can become proud Jews, we can take all of our identities out of the closet (personal communication, 1998).

Elly Bulkin observed that taking the issue of racism in the lesbian community out of the community closet also allowed the issue of anti-Semitism to come out. Bulkin noted that it wasn't until the "...late Seventies, after the women of color had made racism an open and critical issue and we began to address it [racism] more seriously, were anti-Semitism and Jewish identity tentatively explored" (Bulkin, 1984, 94).

By the late 1970s, Jewish lesbians were collectively active and visible. At the Third International Conference of Gay Jews in L.A, "sexism was a dominant theme" and women successfully lobbied to add the word "lesbian" to the conference name (LN, 6/78, 21). During the successful fight against the Briggs Initiative in 1977-78, Jewish lesbians joined the resistance as "Jews Against Briggs." In 1979, a contingent carrying a "Jewish Lesbian Feminists" banner, marched in the L.A. Gay Pride March (LT 5/80, 27), and the group Jewish Feminist Lesbians met at Womospace (ST 9/79, 10).

A unique contribution toward defining Jewish lesbian identity was a study of Los Angeles Jewish lesbians

conducted in 1980, by two graduate social work students, Sandra Rubenstein (a native researcher) and Carole Mathews (an outsider researcher).

Their intention was to "document the existence of this neglected subgroup within the Jewish community" (Rubenstein and Mathews, 1980, 79). Their interviews with twenty women yielded data on many facets of Jewish lesbian identity and community. However, their questionnaire did not ask about anti-Semitism in the lesbian community.

The process of developing a collective Jewish lesbian identity and resistance to anti-Semitism in the lesbian community was significantly influenced by two events. The first was the First Jewish Feminist Conference, held in San Francisco, in 1982. According to Leslie Levy,

The atmosphere...was electric, reflecting an awareness that we were on the edge of something new: to create what it was to be Jewish/lesbian/feminist. No longer would we be defined by others. Over 1000 of us came together, the overwhelming majority of us lesbians, for three days in which we laughed, cried, fought, played, sang and danced...Six years later, I credit this historic event for the depth of pride with which I carry my Jewish identity (in Torton Beck, 1989, 148).

The second defining moment was the publication of *Nice Jewish Girls* in 1982. For Simone Wallace and her cohorts, the book:

...had a huge significance, we had a day-long symposium with all the Jewish lesbians in the [LA] community and we all read the book and talked about our feelings of how amazing it was that suddenly we existed, we were visible. [This was] because a book was now out that was naming, identifying and defining us, and it was a very, very wonderful moment (personal communication, 1998).

Although a collective Jewish lesbian identity took some time to develop, individual Jewish women were always in the forefront of lesbian and co-gender activism as an examination of the lesbian activist movement across the U.S. will show.²²

The contributions of Jewish lesbians were made in the midst of anti-Semitism that was never widely acknowledged. In 1977, Alix Dobkin, producer of the first "out" lesbian record album and Lisa Cowan, her partner at the time, were interviewed by *The Lesbian Tide*. During the interview, Alix asserted that "Anti-Semitism exists in the women's movement," and that it was so institutionalized that it was subtle (Dobkin and Cowan, 1977, 13).

Subtlety was aided and abetted by the lack of a collective Jewish lesbian awareness. Years later, lesbian activists like Joan Robins did not recall having problems with anti-Semitism in the L.A. lesbian community: "I didn't notice any back then...I don't think it was obvious to me" (personal communication, 1998).

Anti-Semitism was/is institutionalized not only in the white lesbian community but in lesbian of color communities. The interplay between racism and anti-Semitism was articulated by African American lesbian activist Cheryl Clark, who noted how Jewish women and women of color used their specific privilege to oppress each other:

When white Jews are racist toward people of color, I see them as advancing their privilege as white people. And when I am anti-Semitic in response...I am

advancing my privilege as a non-Jew. Each of us is exploiting the other's vulnerability in a racist, anti-Jewish system, and using our privilege in that system (in Bulkin, 1984, 103).

Although cognizant of the pressures created by the intersections of oppression, L.A. Jewish lesbians, with few exceptions (i.e. Robin Podolsky), did not work closely with lesbians of color. Lesbians of color did not feel supported by Jewish lesbians, and the former were divided over whether or not Jewish women should be included in their groups.

At the National Lesbian Feminist Organization founding conference held in 1978, one argument centered around a Jewish lesbian who insisted that she belonged in the woman of color caucus. Mina Robinson [Meyer] and Sharon Raphael who wrote an article about the conference, were of the opinion that the "white Jewish woman should not have been seated as part of the women [sic] of color delegation" (Robinson and Raphael, 1978, 10).

Although Jewish lesbians were individually among the most engaged activists, during the 1970s and 1980s, they (as well as non-Jewish lesbians), wrote little about anti-Semitism in the lesbian community, as an examination of the *Lesbian Periodical Index* will show. Jewish lesbians who struggled against multiple "isms" relied on a fortitude inherited from centuries of persecution. As one of Sandy and Carole's respondents affirmed,

I really identify with the struggling that Jewish people have been throughout history and it makes me somehow not afraid to struggle for things I believe in too. It has given me a sense of powerfulness

[sic] in that I'm not easily defeated (Rubenstein and Mathews, 1980, 107).

Class issues

In the anthology *Out of The Class Closet* (1994), editor Julia Penelope argued that while social and economic class are not "easily equated in the U.S.," privilege "still determines what any of us may aspire to." She defined privilege as "access to resources, social, economic, educational" and asserted that "the resources available to us limit the future we can imagine for ourselves" (Penelope, 1994, 53).

During the 1970s, grassroots lesbians and feminists discussed issues of class at conferences and published articles in the community media. Some of the articles were written by individuals who had suffered from the inequities of class, others by those who had been made aware of class issues through contact with progressive, "New Left" and socialist ideologies. In Los Angeles, articles on class appeared in *Sister Newspaper*, but did not cause much comment. Listings in the *Lesbian Periodicals Index*, show that during the 1970s, *The Lesbian Tide* accounted for fewer than ten articles on the subject. After the 1970s, the issue was seldom mentioned in the L.A. lesbian press.

Although public discussion was scant, class differences had a significant but unacknowledged impact on the community. Class differences manifested in most group dynamics. Many a group fell apart when women argued over

what were in effect, class-based structures and attitudes (Baker, 1982; McCoy and Hicks, 1979).

Diane Germain, a San Diego activist, provided a story to illustrate basic conflicts between middle class and working class lesbians. At one Califia gathering, Marilyn Murphy (working class) was sitting with Betty Brooks (middle class). According to Diane, Marilyn "had collected all the parts of a tasty lunch, including a precious piece of cake." While the two were talking, Betty reached over with her fork to help herself to a piece of Marilyn's cake. Marilyn loudly protested: "Don't touch my cake!" Betty countered with, "Well, there's plenty of cake in the kitchen."

Diane explained that based on her working class experiences, she (and others present) responded to Betty's assertion about there being more cake, in the following manner: "No, no, no we all thought, including Marilyn. It had not been our experience that there is any more cake in the kitchen." Diane noted that the difference between "plenty of cake" and "never enough cake," exemplified how class-based attitudes about abundance and scarcity caused conflicts between working class and privileged class lesbians (personal communication, 1998).

Los Angeles lesbians who had first hand experience with class oppression, never gathered the momentum to confront the community over classism in the way that lesbians of color did over racism. Diane Germain recalls that "Everyone was frightened by the bad news of class problems and it was

not obvious what we could do to fix them. It seemed that we [would have] had to give up what little we might have...in order to help women with even less" (personal communication, 1998).

In the Los Angeles lesbian community, Marilyn Murphy was the most visible anti-classism activist. Her awareness around this issue, together with that of women like Mary Glavin, significantly informed the class workshop developed by Califia. The workshop was the most meaningful effort made by Los Angeles lesbians to address this issue and it had a marked effect on many women who had suffered from the inequities of class.

While class oppression was an issue that cut across ethnicity, lesbians of color also found themselves dealing with assumptions about class that white women had acquired from Leftist and Conservative analyses about "underdeveloped" countries.

Since most "underdeveloped" countries are "people of color" countries, white lesbians in the U.S. often conflate/d color with class oppression (poverty). Lesbians felt uncomfortable discussing issues of class in the United States, because (like racism), this often entailed face-to-face confrontations. It was safer to be concerned about class issues at a distance, for example in countries like El Salvador (personal conversations and recollections).

Sex Wars

In the 1980s, incompatible viewpoints about and approaches to sexuality re/surfaced and turned into major conflicts. These conflicts were part of a war taking place on a larger stage where the characters included both lesbians and heterosexual women. As Duggan and Hunter explained,

...from 1980 to 1990, a series of bitter political and cultural battles over issues of sexuality convulsed the nation - battles over the regulation of pornography, the scope of legal protections for gay people, the funding of allegedly "obscene" art, the content of safe-sex education, the scope of reproductive freedom for women, the extent of sexual abuse of children in day care centers, the sexual content of public school curricula and more (Duggan and Hunter, 1995, 1).

These battles were partly based on ideological differences left over from the prior decade. Lesbian feminists continued to criticize perceived heterosexual influences in the lesbian community, including butch/femme and the newly "discussible" practices of S/M (sado-masochism). Heterosexual feminists were critiquing practices and representations that they felt encouraged violence against women. In this battle, they were joined by a number of lesbian feminists.

Lesbian critiques of certain forms of sexual style have been taken by some to mean that lesbian feminists were averse to sexuality. Ruby Rich noted that "during the boom days of the 1970s, the issue of sexuality would not have emerged as particularly significant. Absence was its

strongest evidence" (Rich, 1986, 526). I argue that this absence must be qualified.

The lack of public discourse about lesbian sexuality during this time period can be partly attributed to the desire to ally with homophobic feminists; a desire to avoid disapproval from the general public; and the ambivalence that some lesbians felt toward sexuality that was associated with phallocratic patriarchy (Cragin, 1997, 293).

True, some lesbian couples did experience "lesbian bed death,"²³ and some survivors of sexual abuse felt that lesbian relationships allowed them more freedom to abstain. However, in general, as data from a number of studies and my own personal recollections of the L.A. lesbian community indicate, lesbian feminists were not averse to sexuality.²⁴

Joan Biren (JEB), who was part of the Furies Collective during the early 1970s, recalls that "The idea that we (The Furies) weren't sexual has been greatly exaggerated. We were raunchy" (quoted in Douglas, 1990, 189).

In three in-depth interviews with Atlanta lesbian feminists, Beca Cragin found no indications of "prudishness, asexuality, or any kind of enforced party line on sex. In fact what seems to have occurred in Atlanta in the seventies was widespread non-monogamy" (1997, 291).

Anthropologist Gayle Rubin, a radical sex activist and theoretician, recalls that the lesbian feminist 1970s included both sexuality and exploration of non-monogamy,

...There has been a lot of revisionist history portraying [lesbian feminist] communities as asexual or puritanical. The one I lived in was neither. It was a hotbed of passion, and there was also a politics that saw sexual jealousy as a manifestation of patriarchal property relationships. We argued against monogamy and the assumption that sex with others would break up couples (quoted in Miles and Rofes, 1998, 134-135).

What sexual liberationists now refer to as "prudishness and asexuality" was not simply a disdain of sexuality, it was an oppositional, resistant stance. As Cragin noted, "the sex that lesbian feminists were critiquing at that time...was heterosexual" (Cragin, 1997, 293).

The sexuality that heterosexual feminists were critiquing was focused on pornography and other depictions of violence against women. Beginning in the 1970s and into the 1980s, lesbians joined with non-lesbian women to support a number of initiatives meant to curb violence against women.

Since there were marked differences between lesbians and heterosexual women in the area of sexuality, this created a complex set of circumstances. At one point, some lesbians publicly proclaimed their interest in and right to engage in S/M, and to explore all manifestations of sexuality. Since lesbian feminists had developed an ideology that equated S/M with patriarchal influences (violence against women), a lesbian civil war broke out.

Heterosexual feminists who were averse to S/M did not face the same community resistance from female heterosexuals

who were S/M practitioners. This difference is partly due to the size of the lesbian community (small) compared to the heterosexual feminist community (large). The former were more likely to know each other and be able to take each other to task in various community settings. The latter, on the other hand, usually took each other to task, not in community settings but in organizations (i.e. Women's Commissions).

Differences between lesbians and non-lesbians were also based on a form of asymmetry. For example, lesbianism is a resistant political philosophy and often, a resistant sexual practice. Feminism however, is not symmetrically equivalent to lesbianism, because most heterosexual women are in the unenviable position of challenging the patriarchal system, while remaining sexually attached to males.²⁵

During the 1970s, the lesbian/heterosexual asymmetry led to tenuous alliances and frequent conflicts between lesbians and heterosexual women. In the 1980s, lesbians and non-lesbians joined together to fight violence against women. However, at the same time, conflicting ideologies related to the charged topic of sexuality (especially S/M), within the lesbian community, led to conflicts between lesbians.

Sado-Masochism (S/M)

In Los Angeles, the community battles over S/M which had emerged briefly in the late 1970s, exploded in the 1980s

and set the tone for the lesbian sex wars.²⁶ Somewhat like Camille Paglia explaining the return of the repressed in the heterosexual arena, Ruby Rich argued that, "...the emergence of S/M is lesbian feminism's own return to the repressed as the uneven power relations that had to go sub rosa in the emotional life [of lesbians] have returned at the level of the body to be acted out physically" (Rich, 1986, 536).

In 1981, S/M proponents placed one of the first public notices for a "lesbian feminist S/M support group." It comes as no surprise that the meeting place was not in a feminist venue, but at the National Gay Archives in L.A. (LN 7/81,2). In 1984, "Leather and Lace" announced that it was "a lesbian-oriented, s/m, b&d [bondage and discipline], d&s [dominance & submission] support and social group," meeting at the Open Quest Institute. It welcomed women "of all experience levels with positive and neutral attitudes toward S/M" (LN 5/84,10).

Politically correct and concerned lesbians wrote to *The Lesbian News* protesting this blight on the community. At conferences "pc" lesbians refused workshop space to S/M groups. In cases where the former allowed S/M groups to present a workshop, the room was filled with women who had come to argue (personal recollection).

Groups like Women Against Violence Against Women (WAWAW) argued that S/M promoted pornography and violence against women, while pro-S/M groups like Samois, asserted

that "S/M is a form of sexual dissent" (LN 4/83,31).²⁷

In L.A. the resistance against S/M was organized by groups like the "Los Angeles Coalition Against Assaults Against Women" (LACAAW) and "Women Against Violence Against Women" (WAVAW). According to Ruby Rich, many women in these organizations were lesbian feminists and their opposition to violence and to pornography led to "...the related opposition to lesbian sadomasochism, with a virulence heightened by their outrage at the practice being labeled as feminist" (1986, 531).

In a related local development, Los Angeles WAVAW objected when Suzann Gage, a sexual libertarian and founding member of "Women on The Sexual Fringe," (Gage, 1983, 31), included WAVAW in her list of former group affiliations. In a letter to *The Lesbian News*, representatives of WAVAW stated that they did not want Suzann using the group's name since WAVAW considered Suzann's involvement in controversial sexual freedom groups to be incompatible with its ideology. They asserted that WAVAW was "...opposed to any and all forms of violence against women, in any context, public or private" (LN 7/83,35).

Suzann informed *Lesbian News* readers that ironically, it was she (and Lynn Heidelberg) who had been instrumental in founding L.A. WAVAW as a vehicle to protest the movie "Snuff," a film that depicted blatant violence against women (LN 8/83, 43). Suzann also noted that when Julia London took

over as WAVAW coordinator, she and Julia had created a slide show whose goal was to raise awareness about violence against women.

To counter WAVAW's denunciations, Suzann as a representative of "Women on the Sexual Fringe" wrote a letter to *The Lesbian News* explaining that "as angry as we were in early WAVAW with images of violence against women, none of us was willing to condemn anyone's personal consensual sexual practices" (LN 8/83, 43). In an article on feminism, S/M and violence against women, Suzann argued that "the feminist struggle for sexual liberation and against violence against women are not mutually exclusive nor contradictory (Gage, 1983b, 29).

Others, including Lynn Heidelberg wrote letters in support of Suzann's work both in WAVAW, and on behalf of women and lesbian rights. Lynn argued that WAVAW was so caught up in lecturing about men's sexuality that they were not able to "listen to what women are asking and saying about our own sexuality" (LN 8/83,43).

Letters debating the S/M controversy poured into *The Lesbian News*. For Jill Crawford the answer was simple, "S/M cannot be feminist" (LN 12/83,36). A letter from Arlene Rosenthal agreed with Jill, noting that,

...S/M is a topic that has taken up much space in most of our lesbian and women's periodicals and journals. Do what you want but don't call it feminist. Heterosexual relationships are S/M as there is no equality there...[those who practice S/M are] playing out their own hetero hang-ups,

[but] with other women (LN 11/83,37).

Carol Schmidt tried to examine both sides: "I forced myself to read the Pat Califia series in the *Gay Community News* and surprise, she was not a weirdo, she had a feminist perspective." Carol wondered if it "might...help to physically play out these shifting power arrangements to learn more about them..." She also wondered how to "separate S/M from Penthouse type porn" and whether or not to "throw away sex because men abuse it." Carol concluded that although she did not want to see a regular column on S/M (in *The LN*), she did want "an open airing of the issue" (Schmidt, 1983, 28).

The other side of the issue was taken up by women like Jody (no last name), whose letter explained some of the positive aspects of S/M. Jody noted that one survivor of sexual abuse "used S/M as a safe positive arena to work through her past and take her power back" (LN 11/83,37).

One "name withheld" disagreed with another letter's assertions that there was a correlation between "fisting" and subsequent loss of bladder control; and also asserted that there was no correlation between children who were abused and adults who practiced S/M (LN 12/83,36).

Strict lesbian feminists felt that politically correct definitions and boundaries around sexuality and identity were coming undone. Supporting this feeling was the revelation by Arlene Rosenthal that "some lesbians were

having sex with gay men" (Rosenthal, 1983, 37).

Another worrisome factor was the information provided by *Lesbian News* columnist "Daphne De Dyke," that even in the 1970s, S/M practices had been at play in some of the most politically correct lesbian environments. In an article on the importance of femmes, she wrote that,

...In the middle years of the last decade, a collective of femmes ran things in the lesbian feminist movement in L.A. They included the RFTC [Radical Feminist Therapy Collective] who [sic] decided whether or not you were politically correct...one of them, Jane, said "S & M was only for femmes who knew their power" (De Dyke, 1989,30).

The repressed had returned with a vengeance and lesbian feminists were hard pressed to integrate newly emergent sexuality perspectives with specific political ideology. Although some lesbian feminists and feminist lesbians tried to be liberal, the general sense in the community of lesbians who did not practice S/M was that S/M was a bad habit (Lewis and Adler, 1994).

As with other complex subjects (i.e. lesbian battering), the opposing party threw the proverbial baby out with the leather. For example, although lesbian relationships (like heterosexual ones), were fraught with power struggles, the unchallenged assumption in lesbian feminist ideology was that if a male was not present, inequality and power struggles would balance out.

The existence of violence in lesbian relationships was one clue that power differentials, life stresses, childhood

sexual abuse (usually perpetrated by a heterosexual male), and other factors significantly affected lesbian relationships. Yet, the suggestion from S/M lesbians that we should at least investigate the meaning of power in lesbian relationships, went unheeded.

Pornography

While the lesbian S/M battles raged, a related conflict arose. On one side were lesbians who were also feminists and who thought that pornography was a contributing factor to violence against women. The other side included lesbians, (some self-identified as feminists), who supported free speech and sexual freedom and were afraid of the consequences of an anti-pornography ordinance.

According to Duggan and Hunter,

...the first confrontations in the porn wars were between anti-porn groups and Samois, a lesbian S/M group in San Francisco. These early confrontations migrated from the West Coast throughout the US, from culturally marginal organizations to mainstream ones, from feminist venues to legislatures, courtrooms and national media (Duggan and Hunter, 1995, 6).

Later, when anti-pornography feminists in academia and women's and lesbian organizations "began drafting and campaigning for legislation directed at regulating pornographic expression...a heated, intense and rancorous debate ensued" (Duggan and Hunter, 1995, 68). The debate lasted until the late 1980s "...when most feminist opinion came to oppose the use of this kind of legislation in anti-

pornography campaigns" (Duggan and Hunter, 1995, 68).

Pornography was defined in one anti-pornography ordinance as "the sexually explicit subordination of women graphically depicted whether in pictures or words" (Duggan and Hunter, 1995, 65). Indianapolis was the first city in the country to adopt an anti-pornography ordinance (LN 7/84, 20). It was based on a model originally passed by the Minneapolis City Council and later vetoed by its mayor (Duggan and Hunter, 1995, 25).

According to one news report, the Indianapolis measure was framed in a civil rights context, and was the work of Andrea Dworkin, radical lesbian activist, and Catharine MacKinnon, feminist activist. Both were said to subscribe to the "radical feminist analysis" that pornography is a form of violence against women (LN 7/84,20).

In Los Angeles, the L.A. County Commission on the Status of Women, led by Commission member Myra Riddell, brought an ordinance based on the Indianapolis one before the L.A. County Board of Supervisors. As expected, the L.A. group, "Women on the Sexual Fringe" argued that although "...much pornography is sexist, racist, physicalist and promotes violence against women...we do not think that banning pornography will end the violence against women..." (LN 5/85, 49).

Many testified against the ordinance at a November 1984 hearing, and some expressed concern that the homophobic

"Moral Majority" would use the ordinance to suppress lesbian and gay and feminist publications and educational materials. Those who opposed the measure suggested that education rather than censorship was the answer. According to Myra, no vote was taken (Myra, interview) and according to both Duggan and Hunter (1995, 26), and *The LN* (8/85, 61), there was a vote. In either case the ordinance was never passed.

Butch/Femme

While lesbians fought in the pornography and S/M wars, the butch/femme (B/F) tradition quietly maneuvered through the ideological mine fields of the lesbian feminist community. The public "trashing" of butch/femme persisted into the 1990s.²⁸ This was partly due to the lesbian feminist perception that butch/femme was simply based on the "top/bottom" duality of S/M, on power differentials and imitations of heterosexuality.

It is difficult to explain to an outsider what "butch" and "femme" is, since it is more than the stereotype that the former takes out the garbage and the latter cooks. As long-time lesbian femme activist Joan Nestle explained about butch/femme relationships in the 1950s:

...Butch-femme relationships as I experienced them were complex erotic statements, not phony heterosexual replicas. They were filled with a deeply lesbian language of stance, dress, gesture, loving, courage and autonomy. None of the butch women I was with, and this included a passing woman, ever presented themselves to me as men... (1987, 100).

Butches were/are the historical signifier of lesbian

presence, because unlike femmes, they are the women that don't "look right." In terms of appearance, they refuse to fit into patriarchally-defined fantasies of femininity. Joan Nestle argued that historically, "...Butch/femme women made lesbians visible in a terrifyingly clear way...their appearance spoke of erotic independence, and they often provoked censure from their own community and straight society" (Nestle, 1987, 108).

Sally Munt also noted the importance of the butch as the public signifier of "lesbian":

...Butch is the recognizable public form of lesbianism; despite the media hype of chic femme in the early 1990s, it [butch] communicates a singular verity, to dykes and homophobes alike. Butch...is the gospel of lesbianism; when a butch walks into the room, that space becomes queer (Munt, 1998, 54).

In addition to signifying an oppositional lesbian presence, butch/femme also suggests complex class and race factors that have not been integrated into Lesbian Feminist or "PomoHomo" (queer studies) analysis. Lisa Walker noted that,

While white lesbians may be oblivious to the range of sexual styles among women of color, [Audre] Lorde's work indicates that women of color are acknowledging and theorizing butch and femme identities as well as styles that do not fit the traditional categories of "role play." Writings by women of color that address how issues of racism intertwine with issues of sexual style, confirm the presence of a hierarchy of visible signifiers of difference that [white] radical theories of subjectivity are still unable to evade (*Signs*, Summer, 1993, 887).

While resisting assimilation and rejection, Butch/femme

individuals have also been influenced by the changing lesbian politic. During the 1970s, some butches assimilated lesbian feminism into their personal and political personas. According to butch-identified Jeanne Córdova,

...Feminism healed the contradictions of my life. Feminism said I was clearly a woman, but that I could be any kind of woman I wanted to be...this sounded great...more workable...more enhancing than my former analysis of myself as an unrequited transsexual (Córdova, 1992, 282).

Jeanne's ideological travels during the early 1970s also included a foray into what she called the "androgynous imperative" (1992, 283). When roles and butch/femme culture were rejected, androgyny (which ostensibly sought a balance between a lesbian's male and female sides), became a temporary "politically correct" goal for lesbian feminists in Los Angeles and other cities (Cragin, 1997).

Joan Nestle, an unreconstructed lesbian activist femme, remained steadfast during the 1970s. Using the work of Albert Memmi on colonized Algeria, Joan Nestle observed that the inclination to "trash" butch/femme culture especially during the 1970s, was an example of how the colonized often try to get along by turning on those among them who are resistant:

The colonizer's power enforces not only daily cultural devaluation but also sets up a memory trap, forcing us to devalue what was resistance in the past in a desperate battle to be different from what they say we are (Nestle, 1992, 141).

In the more tolerant climate of the 1980s, butches and femmes began to organize their own support groups. The

Butch/Femme Network (a social/support group) had as a goal "...to bring butch/femme dynamics out of the closet and celebrate [its] cultural legacy" (LN 10/89,7). In the mid-1980s the short-lived Jaded Butch League (JBL) met at the same time as their counterparts, The Steel Magnolias (Córdova, 1992, 286).

In the 1990s, the advent of the activist, iconoclastic co-gender group "Queer Nation," made it easier for members of the LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) communities to embrace a multitude of sexual styles and so, rather than being the one overt signifier of the lesbian presence, butches and femmes (for, against and indifferent to S/M) became one part of the public lesbian landscape (Swann, 1990a).

Bisexuality

The final twist and turn in the sex wars labyrinth of the 1980s was bisexuality. During the separatist phase of the lesbian feminist movement, bisexual women had been, (unbeknownst to most lesbian feminists), part of the community. During that time, women who identified as bisexual, may have felt that in order to remain in lesbian feminist groups, they had to keep this part of their identity secret.

Many lesbians felt that bisexuals were afraid to commit to the lesbian path and that they were in fact aiding and abetting the (male) enemy. Lesbians like Marilyn Murphy (LN

4/89,27) and Diane Germain (LN 9/89,1) argued that bisexuals could leave the arena of political struggle whenever the stakes got too high. The issue of women who related sexually to males and called themselves "lesbian" exacerbated the conflict.²⁹

Some lesbians wanted bisexuals to identify themselves as bisexuals before (rather than after), they began keeping company with a lesbian. Bisexuals argued that they would be rejected out of hand if they did this. When Marilyn Murphy "trashed" bisexuality in her monthly *Lesbian News* column, Suzann Gage and friends sent a letter, responding on the side of sexual freedom for women, "The issue is every woman's right to engage in consensual sexual practices regardless of the form they take" (LN 3/83,35).

Contemporary efforts to organize bisexuals can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s in cities like New York and San Francisco (Raymond and Highleyman in Tucker, 1995, 333). But it was not until the 1980s, that according to Trnka and Tucker, "bisexual activism blossomed with hundreds of groups springing up in major cities and on college campuses everywhere" (in Tucker, 1995, 11). This movement was also an outgrowth from and a reaction to what Udis-Kessler calls the "lesbian feminist monoculture" (in Tucker, 1995, 24).

In 1980, bisexual women in the L.A. lesbian community began organizing a support network. One group, called Arete,

announced its meetings in *The Lesbian News* (LN 10/80,6). A few years later, Sharon Sumpter, who was a moving force in L.A.'s bisexual women's movement, announced meetings of "Both Sides Now," "...a support, social and educational organization run by and for bisexual women" (LN 4/83,1). As the co-gender wave melted the edges of "lesbian monoculture," Sharon led a bisexual group at Connexus, and later organized "Advocates for Bisexuals."

Although this study focuses on lesbians, I mention bisexual women like Sharon Sumpter because they seemed to hold a primary allegiance to women, were willing to identify themselves as bisexual and were involved in the lesbian activist community. At the same time, they held to the principle that sexuality was a complex phenomenon, one which ought not be limited to any gender or lifestyle.

Eating Our Own

For lesbians politically brought up on ideas of community, collectives, equality and non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal organizations, the concept of leaders has always been a problematic one. This ambivalence was illustrated in the 1970s by attacks on movement "stars,"³⁰ and later by battles fought within community organizations, which then spilled out into the public arena. In a number of cases, these conflicts brought down a number of "leaders." As Carol Schmidt, a NOW member involved in one such case plaintively noted, "feminists hurt each other a lot" (Schmidt, 1983a,

34).

Terry Wolverton, also recalled the effect of what she called (individual) "lack of recovery" on many lesbian groups:

...women did things to each other that were really based on no recovery...how many collectives broke up because of bullshit, how much political work couldn't go forward...women had authority issues that they didn't have any way of dealing with... (Terry, interview).

The case of Ginny Foat illustrates how some women were both transformed by feminism and triturated by feminists as personal and political conflicts were played out in the activist arena. Before Ginny found feminism, she had been married and according to Ginny, her second husband had repeatedly beaten and humiliated her. Later, when Ginny's husband went to jail for killing a man, she left him and eventually moved to California.

In 1977, she was arrested for allegedly helping her husband rob and kill two men in 1965. After her arrest, the state of Louisiana declined to prosecute. By that time, Ginny had become active in the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), and had risen through the ranks to the position of California N.O.W. President, a powerful post within the organization. When Ginny ran for the office of national Vice-President of N.O.W., a "whisper campaign" related to the old Louisiana charges arose. After she was narrowly defeated, she let it be known that she was planning to run for the National NOW Board (Jean, interview; SCWU

12/83,1).

Shortly after, Shelly Mandell, a friend and NOW colleague, contacted authorities in Louisiana regarding the old charges, and soon after the case was reactivated. Shelly later explained that she was doing a background check for L.A. Councilman Marvin Braude, whom Mandell worked for, but Braude denied requesting such a check. Shelly also maintained that she was trying to protect N.O.W. from embarrassment in the event that Ginny ran for national NOW office.

Ginny was arrested at the Burbank Airport in 1984, at a media event complete with circling helicopters and "men with machine guns stationed on the rooftops..." (Schmidt, 1984, 1). Ginny's friends in N.O.W. and in the lesbian community argued about how best to defend her (Foat, 1985; Hawkes, 1986; Jean, interview). Her trial began in Louisiana in November, 1983. The defense maintained that she was an example of the battered wife syndrome in which the victim loses her sense of self and complies with the batterer. According to Hawkes (1986), some who knew Ginny when she was younger and some who had worked with her in N.O.W., found it hard to believe that anyone could control her.

In the end, the six woman, six man jury deliberated for less than two hours and declared her "not guilty" (LN 12/83,1). After the trial, Ginny filed a lawsuit against Shelly Mandell and twenty-five others, for "intentional and

negligent infliction of emotional distress, invasion of privacy and civil conspiracy" (LN 2/84,1). Ginny did not return to N.O.W. Supporters and long-time N.O.W. activists like Jean Conger, felt so disappointed and "burned out," that they too, left the organization (Jean, interview).

Ginny's case is an example of the "undertow" forces at work within most groups and organizations, especially those which are ambivalent about hierarchical structure and authority figures.

Valerie Terrigno, the first mayor of West Hollywood, was another case in point. Some time after Valerie resigned, an investigative article in a Philadelphia gay publication (Dwyer and Brooke, 1985), raised questions about the internal community dynamics that led to Valerie's downfall. Of paramount interest was the conduct of gay activist Morris Kight who had been President of Crossroads, the organization Valerie had worked for.

According to the article, whereas certain unorthodox procedures in management and personnel matters had been routinely overlooked, after Morris and Valerie had a falling out, and the latter became Mayor of West Hollywood, The FBI suddenly became very interested in the alleged mishandling of a Crossroads federal grant. The investigation led to Valerie resigning from her position as Mayor, a trial and Valerie's subsequent disappearance from the gay and lesbian political scene.

Not all "leaders" came to such dramatic endings, but throughout the years, those in the forefront often paid a heavy price for their position.³¹ With perhaps one exception (Harvey Milk), strong personalities in both the lesbian and gay movement often came/come under private and public fire, and no national lesbian/gay leaders with a popularity similar to for example, Martin Luther King's, have not emerged.³²

Sherry McCoy and Maureen Hicks, who studied power in the L.A. lesbian feminist community concluded that in these groups, there was "...very little room for the exercise of power or leadership, because one must be constantly on guard lest efforts at giving direction and offering suggestions be seen as usurpation of a less vocal woman's power..." (1979, 210).

They also noted that lesbian feminist groups faced the "difficult task" of struggling "for a stronger, more realistic and workable view of power," one that allowed for both separateness and individuality and cooperative alliances (Hicks and McCoy, 1979, 210).

Diane Abbitt, a veteran of NOW and co-gender (gay/lesbian) politics, observed that women had a harder time working together than men did. She noted that,

Men can fight among themselves, but out on the field...they want to win...women don't want to win, they want to be singular...there's always struggling for position, for power... (Diane, interview, 1997).

Thus it was that unresolved ambivalence toward authority was translated into unresolved ambivalence about leadership and structure, and this had a negative impact on lesbian and feminist group dynamics and activism.

AIDS

In October of 1982, a National Gay Task Force press release noted that two gay males had been appointed to the Committee of Experts (a Federal health panel) which was to advise the Federal government "on the increasing incidence of Acquired Immune Deficiency (AID)" (LN 9/82,24). Early in 1983, the Gay Rights National Lobby reported 691 cases of and 278 deaths from the disease (LN 1/83,31). By 1985, 8,797 cases had been reported "with half already dead" (Miller, 1995, 440).

As money and energy began to pour into the effort to stave off the epidemic, the lesbian community began to divide over this issue. Due to the highly charged nature of the issue, public debate was discouraged. Those who objected to the disparate attention paid to gay male issues, were, with few exceptions, reluctant to make public statements. Those who did, were taken to task by both gay males and lesbians.³³

Lesbian objections to joining the AIDS movement were based on the same reasoning that in 1980 had caused Sandy Tate to challenge the amount of energy being put into the Marielitos (over the Marielitas). Some lesbians wanted to

know, when do lesbian issues come first? They pointed out that funding for lesbian issues always came second to funding for gay issues. They expressed resentment at being stampeded toward supporting what was widely perceived as a "gaymale" issue.

Part of this resentment was based on lesbian perceptions of gay males as generally promiscuous and irresponsible. As early as 1984, Fran Longfield had pointed out "...[the] large difference in a gay man's lifestyle and value system, from a lesbian's..." (Longfield, 1984, 32). She asked her lesbian sisters why they were so intent on "rescuing gay men from their responsibility and putting such a guilt and burden trip on lesbians?" (Longfield, 1984,32).

The traditional lack of social and health care services for lesbians, when compared to the massive response to the AIDS epidemic, became a contentious but little debated (in public) issue.³⁴ Carol Neuerman cited the actions of a Los Angeles male health clinic who according to Carol had "reneged on offers to cooperate with female health care providers in setting up a subsidiary program for women..." (Neuerman, 1987, 35).

As the AIDS epidemic raged, Jinx Beers, who had just sold *The Lesbian News*, surprised the community. In her last editorial as publisher of the LN ("Is AIDS a lesbian issue?"), Jinx asserted that AIDS was an issue that was "...tearing our community apart" (LN 9/89,37). Jinx argued

that AIDS was different from threats like the Briggs Amendment "which truly would have effected [sic] both men and women..." (LN 9/89,37).

Jinx also pointed out that some lesbians were taking advantage of the situation:

There are certain lesbian "leaders" who have taken on the AIDS issue and pushed it in the community as a lesbian issue. They have been smart enough to see that as male leaders succumb to AIDS, a power vacuum will be created that they can step into (LN 9/89,37).

Jinx warned that the rush to join the AIDS movement had had an adverse effect on lesbian institutions. According to Jinx, the move had,

...devastated many sectors of the lesbian community. Massive amounts of both woman-energy and woman-money has and continues to hemorrhage out of the lesbian community into the men's community...we are supporting men to the detriment of our own established service organizations...do you think the boys would do the same for us?...Having a friend or loved one die of AIDS is a tragedy but no greater than having someone die of cancer, a car accident or alcoholism. We don't dismantle our organizations in order to work against those lethal causes (LN 9/89,37).

Jinx suggested that lesbians "reconsider your priorities when you start to volunteer or reach for your checkbook" (LN 9/89,37).

Response (to Jinx's article) from various community quarters was swift and intense and made good copy for Deborah Bergman, the new owner and publisher of *The Lesbian News*. One letter, signed by women affiliated with The Center and MECLA, expressed a sense of "stunned disbelief." Calling

the AIDS epidemic "a holocaust" (a term some Jewish people objected to), they asserted that "we can and must support both" (lesbian causes and AIDS) (LN 10/89, 1).

However, by that time, Lesbian Central (the women's program at The Center), had closed and there had been no lesbian health clinic at The Center for some time. This type of evidence made some lesbians skeptical about assertions that lesbian-specific issues were as important as the one that was devastating the gay male community.

Jinx's editorial also inspired a letter from the Connexus leadership, which if truth be told, was caught between compassion for dying gay males and the knowledge that energy directed toward the AIDS epidemic, would be energy drawn away from lesbian-specific needs. Trying to be even-handed, they pointed to the historical pattern of lesbians failing to maintain their own institutions, arguing that many lesbian organizations "struggled, faltered and too often failed long before the specter of AIDS emerged" (LN 10/89, 23).

They suggested that lesbians felt an ambivalence about supporting their own organizations, arguing that, "Lesbians are not used to or comfortable with giving to themselves..." (LN 10/89,23). Soon after, CX itself fell victim to this ambivalence.

Along with criticism came support for Jinx's position. Shirley Cohen's letter noted that the Briggs initiative

...forced lesbians and gay men in[to] a marriage of identities, and as wives have always done, even we lesbians fell into the old trap, duty bound to support our 'partners' throughout sickness and health...Gay men have rarely come to womyn's or lesbians' aid in support of our organizations and the community seems to be losing womynenergy [sic] and money and participation (LN 10/89,23).

Shirley also suggested that if men had/have to take responsibility for contracting AIDS, then women would have to do the same for failing to maintain their own organizations.

While some lesbians were critical of the attention (energy and money) given to AIDS, others joined organizations working against the epidemic. When ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) was formed in 1987, lesbians of all ages and ideological backgrounds joined this radical direct action group. ACT UP chapters around the country gained fame (and notoriety) for "staging theatrical, confrontational street demonstrations to press for better treatment for people with AIDS" (McBeath, 1990, 1).

Lesbians who joined ACT UP sometimes felt compelled to defend their decision to join a group that was not lesbian-focused. Some explained that they had been deeply affected by the deaths of gay men they knew, while others felt sympathy for the discrimination that AIDS patients had to deal with. Still others asserted that gay men in ACT UP were truly supportive of lesbian and feminist issues (McBeath, 1990, 39).

As gay males continued to die, lesbians (as Jinx had

predicted), filled the personnel gap not only in social and health services, but as administrators in positions formerly held by white gay males. By the 1990s, the most powerful lesbian/gay (co-gender) organizations in the United States: The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center (Los Angeles), The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Human Rights Campaign Fund, all had female CEOs.

Baby Boom

As the second generation of lesbian activists and heterosexual feminist activists who had not borne children grew older, their biological alarm clocks went off. The August 1987 issue of *MS Magazine* noted that a "baby bug" was circulating among heterosexual women and lesbians. Notices of support groups for "wanna be" lesbian mothers and programs offering alternative methods of conception began to appear in community publications (LN 10/80,5).

Public discussion in lesbian publications served to illustrate the complex parameters of this new development. In 1982, a press release noted that "With an increasing number of lesbians conceiving children by donor insemination, legal experts are trying to sort out legal complications." The notice was placed by The Lesbian Rights Project (LRP), a non-profit public interest law firm in SF, founded in 1978 to assist lesbian mothers (LN 8/82,18).

One *Lesbian News* reporter pointed out that, "...The legal aspects of donor insemination have yet to be clarified

in the courts...the cases that have been argued have concerned visitation rights by donors of sperm and the custody of children born to single women and Lesbians (La Rose, 1983, 14).

In Los Angeles, healthcare provider Suzann Gage, wrote a letter to *The Lesbian News* stating that "increasing numbers of lesbians are becoming pregnant through the method of artificial insemination" (LN 8/85,46). Yet, she noted, lesbians still had to deal with homophobia and sexist attitudes when using mainstream sperm banks. To counter this situation, Suzann had set up a community sperm bank (LN 8/85,46).

Arguing against the baby boom trend were two lesbian mothers (and former heterosexuals) who were influential in the lesbian feminist community. Marilyn Murphy, mother of four, wondered why lesbians were so intent on having babies and disagreed with those who asserted that they were having babies "to produce the next generation of liberated children" (Murphy 1986d, 34).

Marilyn argued that such a stance "...is self-delusion" and that the real reason lesbians wanted babies was no different from that of heterosexual women. Lesbians like everyone else, she contended, "...want to love and be loved by someone forever, no matter what..." (Murphy, 1986d, 34).

Marilyn concluded that the inclination to have babies was a response to "...that all pervasive teaching that

having babies is the most fulfilling activity a woman can undertake," and mother Marilyn argued (after the fact), that she could not "...think of any 'good' reasons for having babies and [could] think of many for passing up this 'womanly' activity..." (Murphy, 1986d, 34). She counseled that if one insisted on going down this path, then artificial insemination was the recommended method of separating reproduction from the sexual/erotic life of lesbians.

Sonia Johnson, author, presidential candidate, former Mormon, and the mother of three sons, argued that motherhood tied lesbians to the patriarchy and that women have been socialized to want children. She suggested that being childless allows more freedom to challenge the patriarchy and thus lesbians without children, "...have been wild, untamed, unwilling to be coerced" (Johnson, 1989, 25).

Sonia was concerned that most lesbian mothers and mothers-to-be did not mind that artificial insemination produced a higher percentage of males, an assertion challenged by Suzann Gage.³⁵ Although future lesbian mothers had assured Sonia that they would rear their boys differently, she was skeptical about their ability to overcome centuries of hegemonic influence.

In spite of these arguments, lesbians availed themselves of a variety of methods to conceive children. Like most mothers, they did not care if their offspring was

male, as long as the child was healthy (personal conversations). By 1985, the first book on the subject was available in women's bookstores (*Considering Parenthood: a workbook for lesbians*).

Like many heterosexual couples with children, lesbian couples with children, also broke up. But unlike heterosexuals, the non-biological parents/mothers were faced with a legal vacuum that allowed no custody or visitation rights if the biological mother refused her former partner's wishes in this area.

In 1990 the National Center for Lesbian Rights reported that it had more cases where lesbians were fighting other lesbians over child custody, than cases where lesbians were battling heterosexuals for child custody. By the late 1990s, the lesbian child custody battles grew more acrimonious as in the case of actress Amanda Bearnse and her former partner (O'Connell, 1997a).

Lipstick Lesbians

In the wake of increasing acceptance by the dominant culture and assimilationist tendencies within the co-gender (gay and lesbian) culture, the emergence of "lipstick lesbians" activated subliminal issues related to roles, styles and generational ideologies. These were all grist for new community battles. In the L.A. lesbian movement the public conflict started when Marilyn Murphy disapprovingly wrote about women at a dance, whom she had seen wearing t-

shirts that read "lesbians for lipstick and high heels" (Murphy, 1986c).

M. C. Rodríguez wrote back announcing that she had been one of those women, and wondered why Marilyn hadn't said anything when she saw her at the event. M. C. Rodríguez explained that for her, a woman of color, the t-shirt message touched upon both cultural and butch/femme issues:

...from the Latina perspective, please be advised that we natives (Indians) like to paint ourselves...I sold out for a while. I wore the politically correct dress code in the lesbian feminist community...I exchanged my high heels for tennis shoes and lost my zapatiado which gave [me] the rhythm for my navigation through this world...I know of the oppression in the items you mention.... I'm just letting you know some of the other reasons some Latina lesbians wear them (LN 9/86, 35).

Another letter to *The Lesbian News* noted that although women (even lesbians) still struggled with issues of appearance, some lesbians now felt free enough from sexist oppression to choose how they would look (LN 7/86,46).

Dara [Nancy] Robinson, former member of Lesbian Feminists and an artist, was supportive of this trend, noting that some lesbians, "are making up and dressing for themselves and other women...there are wonderful creative possibilities in dress and make up...we need diversity" (LN 8/86,31).

Mari Taggart agreed with Dara, explaining that,

...I used to view makeup as part of sexism, but after enrolling in a cosmetology school

my views about makeup are changing
...as my ideas changed I was afraid
to wear makeup for fear that my politically
correct lesbian friends would object...(but)
I'm wearing makeup to have fun (LN 8/85,56).

In the 1980s, Carolyn Clone emerged as something of an arbitrator of style in portions of the lesbian community. Originally from England, she had served a stint in the Hollywood movie industry and later become an entrepreneur specializing in lesbian clubs. As *The Lesbian News* noted she "goes for glitz and glamour" (Swann, 1989c, 1).

At Carolyn's clubs, style was more important than political correctness and her clubs were very popular with lesbians who wanted to "look good." Carolyn's assertions about appearance struck a chord in various segments of the diverse lesbian community. She argued that:

...we(lesbians) settle for something less than we deserve in many areas...(and) it's got to change. I think its going to happen by (sic) what I call the new gay women's movement...I understand the feminist thing...it was an incredible moment. But it can't always stay the same...we are as good as men. It's all in the presentation...in the gay parade they always show the dykes on bikes from San Francisco. They look like ugly men...the general look for women is going toward this androgynous, young dyke look...an unkempt look is not real[ly] acceptable... (quoted in Swann, 1989c, 27).

Portions of the community nodded in agreement with Carolyn while others re/affirmed the lesbian feminist stance regarding the perils of "looksism." When the president of U.C.L.A.'s lesbian sorority, Allison Adler referred to lesbians in Santa Cruz as "dogs with a bunch of armpit hair," the sorority received a letter from the U.C.L.A.

graduate lesbian support group protesting the "perpetuation of an oppressive standard" (LN 7/88,31).

A generation gap had set in, one that shared similarities with the suffragist/flapper gap of the 1920s. Back then, the suffragists may have seemed dogmatic and dour, while the flappers seemed less interested in social problems, and more interested in personal liberation, especially in the area of sexuality. The new generation gap would grow wider in the Queer 1990s.

Conclusion

During the 1980s, lesbian-focused lesbians continued to try to maintain and/or salvage various lesbian projects. Their efforts were blocked by desertion in the ranks, internecine conflict, and by the move from direct activism to leverage advocacy and "lifestyle" lesbianism. As we moved into the 1990s, lesbians and other "sexual outlaws" faced a number of questions: Would we assimilate, fight for social change or do a little of both when we weren't too busy, too tired or too complacent?

In any case, what would lesbian-focused lesbians choose to do about developing a new lesbian agenda along with a support system to implement it? How could this scenario develop in the face of thinning ranks, little funding and diverse, often contentious ideologies?

CHAPTER NINE

THE GAY 90S: THE MOVEMENT IN ABEYANCE

We are always in a political movement, but not always in a political movement phase of a political culture (Sarah Hoagland, 1996).

In 1988, a Los Angeles lesbian of color separatist was the subject of what became a controversial interview when she expressed her misgivings about the sexual behavior of gay males and the lack of support that lesbian needs receive.¹ Nine years later, after reading the interview, a former high profile Latina lesbian activist wondered: "If we had known what we do now, would we have worked harder for lesbian causes?" (personal communication, 1997).

Although some lesbians *had* spent years "working harder" for lesbian causes, without the surfeit of volunteer energy that had built and sustained it, the Los Angeles lesbian/feminist institutional base gradually eroded.² As studies by Chesnut and Gable (1997), Cragin (1997) and Ross (1995) show, this pattern of erosion was at work across the U.S.

By 1990, according to sociologist Arlene Stein, the lesbian-focused movement had been "decentered" (1992, 1). Sociologist Verta Taylor suggested that it had gone into a state of "abeyance" (1989), or what social movement theorists Meyer Zald and Roberta Ash called a "becalmed" condition (1969, 473).³

In Los Angeles, four events symbolically framed the end of the heyday of the lesbian-focused movement. The first took place in 1989, when the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center announced that it would close its women's program (Lesbian Central). Several years later, Julia Salazar, a Center staff member, explained that Lesbian Central had been doing a lot that could have fit in under a number of other programs, and that some Center programs were "getting off the hook in terms of serving women" (quoted in Swann 1991, 1).

In response to concerns that co-gender programming might not be sensitive to lesbian needs, Julia explained that the co-gender approach de-ghettoized lesbians, and that the presence of The Center's first female CEO (Torie Osborn), supported efforts to create a lesbian-friendly environment (Swann, 1991, 1).

The second event took place shortly after Jinx Beers quietly announced (on page 12 of *The Lesbian News*), that she had sold the publication. After Deborah Bergman became *The LN's* editor, she applied a radical makeover to the plain-looking publication. Splashy, sometimes provocative covers and ads, signified the end of a 1970s-style lesbian feminist publication, and the emergence of one which with an eye on the bottom line, wanted to appeal to a wider spectrum of lesbian tastes.

The third major event was the announcement in September

of 1989, that, due to a "summer slump in donations and a lack of energy which has plagued L.A. feminist and lesbian organizations this summer, Connexus is in a financial crisis." The agency relocated to offices on La Cienega Boulevard, cut staff salaries, and formed a "Save Connexus Task Force" (LN 9/89,14). Five months later, in February of 1990, Connexus closed its doors. Its demise supported the contention that lesbians could not keep their institutions afloat.⁴

The final major sign of the denouement of the movement in Los Angeles, was the closing of the lesbian-friendly and lesbian-managed Woman's Building (WB). When the WB closed, Terry Wolverton observed that "This signals the end of an era." According to Terry, the end came because "The idea that there should be one gathering place for women, feminists, lesbians and artists had become dated" (McBeath and Medigovich, 1991, 41).

Terry reflected on the dramatic changes that had taken place in the lesbian community, pointing out that it was not "coincidence" that the WB was closing only a year after CX had closed. She exhorted lesbians to do "some soul-searching" and to "ask themselves what they are doing to support these institutions and if they want these institutions to exist" (McBeath and Medigovich, 1991, 48).

The answer to Terry's question was to be found in the micro dynamics taking place in the community in response to

macro dynamics taking place in the larger society. Like other social movements of the 1960s, and for some of the same reasons, the adrenalin-sustained and underfunded lesbian activist movement had a short life-span.

The findings of sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian concerning the stresses that over time lead to the demise of most social movements, are also applicable to the lesbian activist movement. Turner and Killian noted that in the midst of the

...wear and tear of participating in a continuing struggle...neither the accomplishments of a movement nor the satisfaction of participants live up to the heroic and romantic expectations that play some part in the initial motivations of most active adherents (1972, 354).

The fatigue and desertion rates that sapped the lesbian feminist movement were exacerbated by an array of external and internal pressures and shifts. External pressures included the "natural" course of movements of "wide range," the demise of the social movement impulse in general, and changes in the economy. Internal stresses included the wear and tear that came from "politicizing the personal," the inability to deal with "difference," the lack of a funding base, and life changes undergone by participants.

Politicizing the personal originally meant that all our actions have a political/collective significance that must be taken into account. This tenet however, was too often used by leaders and "pc" lesbians to browbeat and coerce dissidents. The "pc police" existed in every lesbian

community.

The inability to deal with "difference" (especially racial and sexual), seemed entrenched in the psyche of the community.⁵ For example, many white women thought that if they noticed a "difference" in another woman's skin color, they were being racist. They did not understand that they had to learn when to notice similarity and when to notice difference.⁶

This uneasy relationship to difference and the inability to develop a politic and praxis around it came back to haunt the white lesbian movement. As Audre Lorde explained,

It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize these differences and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior... (quoted in Zimmerman, 1996, 248).

Activist fatigue was exacerbated by the movement's inability to financially support a movement that was based on resistance to "crass materialism." Sociologist Arlene Stein noted that the movement was

Born of the counter-culture, [lesbian feminism] was partially conceived as a challenge to crass materialism. Throughout the seventies while some gay men were busily carving out commercial niches in urban centers, many lesbians scoffed at such activities, and chose instead to build a non-sexist, non-materialistic world... (Stein, 1995, 480).

Many activist lesbians of the 1970s, may have been inclined toward a non-materialist ethos because "voluntary simplicity" was the only way to maintain a grassroots,

underfunded movement. At the time, some were willing to live on a basic economic level in order to have more time to devote (volunteer) to the movement. Like their cohorts in other cities, Los Angeles lesbian activists of the 1970s (in particular), postponed induction into "adult" life.

However, in the more unfriendly political and economic environment of the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of the "formerly-living-on-the-economic-edge" lesbian activists, who were by then in their 30s and 40s, began to want more than the basic necessities.

Torie Osborn recalls that, "My politics didn't change, I wanted more money" (Torie, interview).⁷ Whalen and Flacks found that in the University of California Santa Barbara activist community, "Everybody got tired of being poor" (1989, 148). They observed that for many activists, "It is difficult to formulate life directions rooted in the notion that one could live simply on a low income and thereby be free to do good work" (Whalen and Flacks, 1989, 115).⁸

Data gathered from community studies in other urban areas, suggest that the problems and changes experienced by the L.A. lesbian activist community also took place in locations like Chicago (Brody, 1985); Toronto (Ross, 1995), and Atlanta (Cragin, 1997).

In analyzing the stressful dynamics at work within the Chicago-based *Lavender Woman* newspaper collective, Michal Brody identified patterns similar to those found by Turner

and Killian. Brody observed that

Many communities experienced a euphoric coming together followed by a period of intense activity. When conflicts arose, as they inevitably would, over priorities, or strategies, or even just what to name the baby, bitter struggles often occurred. These wars, as they were called in some places, caused many women to withdraw, while the energy of those who remained was severely depleted. Once this fatigue set in, the momentum could not be sustained, and unless a new inspiration burst forth to start the cycle all over again, the endeavor would disperse (quoted by Hoagland in Penelope and Wolfe, 1993, 536).

Becky Ross' study of LOOT, a Toronto lesbian feminism organization, provides evidence that like other lesbian activist organizations, it too was affected by clashes over expectations and internal struggles. According to Ross,

LOOT disappointed women for two basically different reasons...for some it was not the warm, friendly group that could satisfy expectations of nurturance, while for others, it was not the energetic, assertive group that could satisfy interest in effective, independent action (1995, 207).

Ross found that a number of her narrators "pinpointed the combination of locked ideological horns and lost organizational drive and focus" as the cause of LOOT's demise (1995, 200). One former LOOT participant noted that the factor of life cycle changes also contributed to the attrition rate: "We just got older...[women] reassessed their priorities and did more for themselves instead of for the movement" (1995, 200).

Members of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) which was formed in 1972 and lasted until 1994, offered testimony similar to that of their LOOT counterparts. Some

felt that what caused the "decentering" of lesbian feminism had to do with the Reagan years, the proliferation of other lesbian/gay organizations, and the maturing of a generation (Chesnut and Gable, 1997).

Saralyn Chesnut, who conducted an insider study of the ALFA community, recalled that the changes within that group

...had a lot to do with getting older...most of us were in our twenties in the seventies. If we had jobs...they weren't careers...our priority was...being lesbian-feminists. That was really the center of our lives...and [later you] grew up and dealt with your issues...I don't know what else you can do...It would have been ridiculous for us to go on living in broken-down houses and not making much money... (quoted in Cragin, 1997, 320).

In Los Angeles, the former Director of Connexus Women's Center/Centro de Mujeres (CX), expressed sentiments similar to those of LOOT and ALFA members. To some, CX was too radical, for others, too conservative. Some felt it was too white while others felt it was catering to women of color. Reflecting on Connexus' demise, Lauren Jardine recalled that, the "core of savvy women" who ran CX, eventually "burned out." She also contends that the internal climate of the lesbian activist movement changed:

...there was an increased gap between donors who didn't use many services and the 'walking wounded' who did not have the money but used the services; [then] AIDS happened...[at that point] "separatism" even "autonomy" became an ugly word. Women with money went back to The [LA Gay and Lesbian] Center and its high end women's fund raisers...lipstick lesbians and younger women did not want to deal with lesbian oppression, and they gravitated toward Center projects, AIDS, ACT UP AND Queer Nation, [toward] co-sexual, fluid gender groups and activism. Gay queer became chic when stars were

claimed by big name organizations like HRC [Human Rights Campaign]...This was all part of the overarching demise of the 60s human rights/protest movements. The post modern punkers wanted theater, not politics (personal communication, 1998).

Jeanne Córdova, veteran of the Los Angeles lesbian, Gay Liberation and co-gender movements, dated the waning of the lesbian-focused activist movement to the time of the Briggs initiative:

I date the beginning of the end of lesbian feminism in California to 1976...[it] was derailed when the gay movement in California was called upon to raise millions to defeat its first state-wide ballot initiative [The Briggs anti-gay teacher initiative]. Lesbian feminism died along with other radical ideologies when the women's and gay movement became a reformist civil rights movement (sic). After this time many lesbians took up civil rights issues which are essentially reformist/liberal. At this time, [the] late 70s, the gay male and lesbian middle class began to come out, initially with their checkbooks, and soon thereafter to take leadership of the women's [lesbian] and gay movements" [personal communication, 1998].

By 1990, lesbians were still coming of age and coming out, but their attitudes toward activism were different from those of their predecessors. The new generation of lesbians had not experienced collective monolithic oppression, and were not living during a social movement era. In addition, gains made by their fore-sisters took the edge off of homophobic oppression. In a more permissive environment, the pressure to rebel politically against the status quo is reduced.

Generational attitudes toward activism are also related to social memory. In his book on "how societies

remember," Paul Connerton noted that:

Across generations, different sets of memories, frequently in the shape of implicit background narratives, will encounter each other, so that ...the different generations may remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the memories of one generation locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation... (1989, 3).

To illustrate this phenomenon, Connerton provided an example from Proust, where the latter relates the dynamics of an encounter between a veteran of the Paris scene and a newcomer. According to Connerton,

...their conversation was unintelligible because the two of them had lived in the same social world but with an interval of twenty-five years...when it came...to their seeking to exchange a socially legitimate currency of memories - their vocabularies had nothing in common (1989, 3).

In effect the two characters were trying unsuccessfully to communicate at what Connerton called "the intersection of incommensurable memories" (1989, 3).

In the late 1990s, four living generations of lesbian activists, are also faced with "incommensurable memories." Each carries specific group memories and "implicit background narratives." Their memories and narratives are informed by the social context of their specific time and the role each generation played. The first generation" (Homophile lesbians) built the foundation and the second (lesbian feminists) built the stage. In turn, the third generation (co-gender lesbians) "polished" the stage upon which many fourth generation (queer) lesbians would rather

dance than make speeches.

The Gay 90s

Queer Notions

In the late 1980s, a new generation of activists came out of the co-gender movement. Their approach to activism was exemplified by Queer Nation, a group that blazed onto the scene in 1990. The word "Queer" was meant to affirm "difference" while "Nation" was meant to promote "unity" (see Berube and Escoffier 1991, 13).⁹

Queer Nation was supposed to provide a non-assimilated safe haven for all sexual outlaws. However, according to Sally Munt, it became mired in a sexual liberation ethos that was appropriated for other purposes: "Queer activism ...tried to deconstruct the homo/hetero binary but all too often it was assimilated by the dominant urban bourgeois discourse of the polymorphously perverse and thus failed politically..." (Munt 1998, 3).

Queer Nation also lacked an ability to accommodate diversity. Both ACT UP (whose heyday was between 1987 and the early 1990s), and Queer Nation (which was most vibrant during the early 1990s), fell victim to an inability to deal with internal divisions based on gender and race. Queer Nation activist Maria Maggenti expressed alarm over her realization that based on the dynamics she had seen in that group, it was likely that,

The map of the new Queer Nation would have a male

face and that mine and those of my many colored sisters would simply be background material (Maggenti, 1991, 20).

While receiving mixed reviews in the activist arena, queer notions found a more receptive environment in academia. There "queer studies" replaced "lesbian and gay studies" in academic departments where "discourse theory," "cultural studies" and "social constructionism" reigned. This change was problematic for lesbian-focused lesbians.

One basic problem lay in the new discipline's approach to the study of the lesbian/gay experience. Bonnie Zimmerman explained that

Lesbian feminism proceeds from an analysis of gender interests which situates lesbians primarily as women rather than homosexuals, thus distinguishing it from gay theory which proceeds from an analysis of sexual identity and interests (a difference noted by Eve Sedwick) (Zimmerman, 1996, 270).

As in the activist arena, lesbians in the academic queer world found themselves at risk for becoming "background material" or invisible. As Bonnie noted, "Queer theory can be argued [so as] to obliterate lesbianism as a specific identity, subject position or signifier..." (Zimmerman, 1997, 166).

In this queer academic and political environment, lesbian-focused lesbians and community-oriented gay males, also face a growing gap between "inaccessible" academic articulations and the quotidian struggles of homosexual existence (Escoffier, 1990).

In queer culture (as in the larger culture), lesbians

face an environment where sexism (woman-hating), racism, classism, ageism and the inclination to make most lesbians invisible in academia, the media and the gay movement, persists (Grocock, 1995, 191).

Efforts to maintain a lesbian-specific presence and agenda in queer and heterosexual environments are often met with assertions that lesbian-focused lesbians hate men in general, and lack compassion for their gay brothers in particular.

In addition to criticism, lesbians have to deal with appropriation. In the gay 90s, "lesbian," is an identity or label much in demand. We now have MTF (male-to-female) transgender people who are "lesbians," bisexuals who call themselves "lesbians who sleep with men," and gay males who want to be "honorary lesbians."

In queer cultures, differences between lesbians and gays are often discounted (as were differences between women and males in other social movements) and labeled "essentialist." Inevitably, when the differences are downplayed, the needs of lesbians are typically relegated to non-priority status (as the needs of women were in other social movements).

While lesbian energy is welcome, even expected on behalf of gay and queer causes, payback is minimal. Jackie Winnow, a cancer activist who has since died, once pointed out at an AIDS conference that although lesbians had spent

years helping their gay brothers, few people paid attention to lesbian needs:

No one takes care of women or lesbians except women or lesbians, and we have a hard time taking care of ourselves, of finding ourselves worthy and important enough to pay attention to. Why doesn't the lesbian and gay community mobilize around the urgent needs of women and lesbians? Why don't we even consider our needs urgent? (Winnow, 1989, 12).

While woman-focused lesbians face heterosexism and homophobia, lesbians of color, continue to face the intersections of oppression. Jewell Gómez observed that, "Women are still struggling to avoid being subsumed under male prerogatives. Black gay men and lesbians don't trust white organizations...[and] gay men still can't say 'feminist' without smirking" (Gómez, 1989, 56).

Entrenched attitudes in the gay male community, reinforce the lesbian ambivalence toward gay men. In 1987, Celia Kitzinger noted that historically, "Many lesbians have left the 'mixed' gay movement in protest of gay men's sexism, obsessive sexual activity, phallogentrism, and lack of political awareness" (1987, 103). According to Victoria Brownworth, in the 1990s, lesbian relations with the co-gender/queer movement, continue to be tenuous (Brownworth, 1994, 38).

Even co-gender lesbians are concerned about the divide. Torie Osborn, who had been optimistic about the reduction of gay male sexism during the 1980s, observed that, "there has been a rise in sexism, and now there is no women's safety

net of organizations" (Torie, interview).¹⁰

Tenuous relations exist during a time when the entire lesbian/gay community faces the perennial question of whether lesbians and gays should try to assimilate or remain "separate but equal" (acculturate).

As early as 1979, Don Kilhefner, an activist since the 1960s, a member of Radical Fairies, and a co-founder of the Gay Community Services Center, took issue with what he saw as a trend toward assimilation. Don criticized gays and lesbians for being more interested in looking at "institutions we've created and what titles we hold, rather than who we've become as human beings." He pointedly asked, "where is the soul of our movement?" (Kilhefner, 1987, 122).

The debate between a social change inclination and an assimilationist one is exemplified by a recent in-house struggle at the Alcoholism Center for Women in Los Angeles (ACW). Some community outreach workers felt that the agency was moving away from its original lesbian-focused, grassroots treatment model (personal communication, 1998). This was in response to suggestions by ACW managers that the agency move toward a woman-focused, clinical, professional model. In this case "woman-focused" is partly an attempt to move away from the problematic word "lesbian," in order to maintain fiscal viability. After a flurry of community discussion and concern, the conflict disappeared from public view.

Another example is the name change of the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, which in 1996 became the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. The excised phrase "community services," was a symbol of the 1960s grassroots spirit that was at the core of the original motivation for creating The Center.

The changes and losses experienced by the lesbian movement were part of a larger pattern - the loss of the social movement impulse in general. As in other civil rights movements, the portions of the lesbian (and gay) movement that survived were those projects and organizations that were able to obtain money and support from sources within and outside their specific communities.

In many cases, the trade-off was institutionalization and bureaucratization (Moss, 1997). Few lesbian projects were able to continue in a socio-economic and political atmosphere in which volunteerism was on the wane and there was a general (continuing) lack of interest in funding projects that addressed lesbian-specific needs.

What's a Sister to Do?: Lesbians in the 90s

At the end of the 1990s, veterans of the lesbian activist movements of the 1970s and 1980s have moved into managing mid-life concerns. At the same time, younger generations of lesbians and lesbian activists struggle to make sense of a postmodern mosaic of contradictions.

While Boomer lesbians grew up in a field of idealism

and a dogmatic certainty about what was right and wrong, members of "Generation X" (Strauss and Howe's 13th Generation), must learn to navigate in what Arlene Stein calls an "indeterminate" social environment:

We are the lesbians of Generation X, continuing defiantly to celebrate our lives in a pessimistic age...the urban lesbian culture blossoming at Red Dora's [a San Francisco cafe and performance space], combines a feminist optimism and sense of women's entitlement born in the 70s, with a radical pessimism and feeling of inefficacy born in the Reagan era (Stevens, 1994, 9).

Emily Gold (born in 1971), noted that compared to young lesbian activists of the 70s, her generation of lesbians "has many more distractions" and no social movement context to use as a focus. Emily grew up in a Los Angeles lesbian activist household during the heyday of the movement: "I remember much more of a community [in the 70s]. I remember looking for something like that [in the 90s] and being disappointed, that that was not happening any longer" (Emily, interview).

The "indeterminacy," of the younger generations of lesbians is a mixed blessing. On one hand,

...the new lesbianism deconstructs the old, perhaps overly politicized or prescriptive notion of lesbianism by refusing ghettoization, acknowledging internal group differences, and affirming the value of individual choice when it comes to style and political and sexual expression (Stein, 1995, 481).

The downside is that indeterminacy as signified by lesbian chic, and style lesbianism, de-politicizes lesbian existence. Arlene Stein observed that "It could be argued

that lifestyle lesbianism promotes assimilation over separation, style over substance, and is a sign of our growing conservatism" (1995, 481).

Within this indeterminate environment, the lesbian infrastructure that exists/persists in 1999, consists of a number of "traditional" institutions such as centers, bookstores, lesbian archives, affinity/support groups, women's music festivals, and women's land projects. Lesbian bars, including the 1990s versions known as "girl clubs," are also part of the surviving network of lesbian-specific spaces and projects. Women-focused services in which lesbians still play a major role include health clinics, battered women's shelters and rape hotlines.

There are also many non-political activities, such as the Dinah Shore Golf Tournament in Palm Springs, California, which has become a de facto lesbian event due to the thousands of lesbians who attend (Van Gelder and Brandt, 1997). In Los Angeles, the annual Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center Women's Dinner is an established upscale event that mixes lesbian visibility with lesbian lipstick and lesbian chic. Tickets to the formal event cost \$175 and "hardcore" politics are downplayed that night.

New arrivals on the lesbian landscape include lesbian retirement communities (Florida, Arizona, Washington); dyke marches (in a number of cities); a network of direct action groups (i.e. Lesbian Avengers);¹¹ and Internet web sites

(i.e. Lesbian Org; Lesbian History Project). According to sports fan Lydia Otero, Women's National Basketball League games are also considered lesbian-friendly environments (personal communication, 1998).

This network operates within a mainstream environment that offers lesbians a mixed reception. We have made progress politically. In 1991 there were 52 openly gay elected officials across the United States and in 1997, there were 130. In Los Angeles, Sheila Kuehl, who in the 1960s played the character Zelda on the TV series "Dobie Gillis," was elected to the California State Assembly in 1994, and has served as Speaker Pro Tem. Along with elected officials, the number of ordinances banning discrimination based on sexual orientation, increased. In the mid-1990s, these were in effect in 87 cities and counties (Witt, Thomas, and Marcus, 1995, 474).

In the area of culture, some lesbians achieved "cross-over" success, signifying a greater acceptance, at least among consumers of "mainstream" popular culture. Lesbian chanteuse k. d. lang [sic] appeared on the cover of *Vogue*, while Melissa Etheridge and her partner were on the cover of *Newsweek*. Frances Reid formerly of L.A. (a co-founder of Iris Films, a 1970s lesbian film distribution company), and her partner Deborah Hoffman, were *both* nominated for an Oscar for separate documentary films in the same year (1994). Ellen De Generis finally came out in 1997, and

although her show left the air after the 1998 season, she paved the way for future prime time lesbian characters.

Lesbian businesses that have availed themselves of mainstream marketing tools are doing well. Several years ago, *The Wall Street Journal* published an article on openly gay business women. The article mentioned, Olivia Cruises, an outgrowth of Olivia Records (which was partly an outgrowth of "The Furies," a separatist 1970s collective). In 1992, Olivia reported \$4 million in revenue (Marsh, 1992, B2). In the same article, the editor of the *Bay Area Career Women's Newsletter*, expressed the feeling of some "fourth generation" lesbians, "I've never felt bad [about] being a lesbian" (Marsh, 1992, B1).

Amidst wider acceptance within the larger culture, divisions still extant within the diverse lesbian community, suggest that attempts to create a unified national lesbian network/community are not likely to succeed. The last attempt was made at the National Lesbian Conference in Atlanta in 1991 which over 2500 women attended.

The proceedings were immediately sidetracked or refocused (depending on one's viewpoint), by concerns over race, class and logistical oversights. As an *Off Our Backs* report on the conference noted: "The lack of immediate common ground... made it clear that no national lesbian organization would be born in Atlanta" (Sharon, Elliott and Latham, 1991, 1).¹²

At the Conference, former National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Director, Urvashi Vaid asserted that although "The lesbian agenda [represents] radical social change," lesbians have no national lesbian movement through which to implement this agenda. She noted that the Atlanta conference "is a mirror to the current state of our movement - many different communities not working together with each other, but splintered..." (quoted in Sharon, Elliott and Latham, 1991, 19).

Although there was much arguing (as usual) in Atlanta, the wide variety of lesbian women who attended the conference, suggests that lesbian-identified women are still alive and well (Minkowitz, 1991, 39). They may be contentious and divided, but they are still active in a variety of venues.

In the United States, lesbian activists of all generations and political persuasions now live within a world that requires adaptive strategies different from those of the 1970s. In 1970, Donald Schon, a city planner, presciently wrote about coping with what we now call postmodern society. He observed that "Throughout our society we are experiencing actual or threatened dissolution of stable organizations and institutions, anchors for personal identity and systems of values" (Schon, 1970, 15).

Schon suggested that during such times "ad hoc networks become a permanent rather than an interim expedient" (1970,

192). Within this loosely connected network, operates the "learning agent," a person able to cope with this large-scale "paradoxical combination of tentativeness and resolution" (Schon, 1970, 236).

Almost thirty years later, chapters of the Lesbian Avengers and the web sites of lesbian Internet activists reflect this new strategy. These grassroots, mobile, low budget, "ad hoc" efforts are comprised of "free agents," able to move quickly and improvise in ways that at times are both a "throw-back" to the 1960s and an adaptation to the technological milieu of the 1990s.

In the 1990s, unreconstructed lesbian feminists and feminist lesbians, remain outlaws within mainstream, co-gender, queer and "lesbian chic" circles. Sheila Jeffreys observed that, "Lesbian feminists are the bad girls who fail to love the male frame of mind..." (1994, 471). These "bad girls" are, persistent and continue to advocate for lesbian-specific issues, long after many lesbians have left the field or changed their priorities.¹³

Where Have All the Activists Gone?

In a study of 1960s activists, Doug McAdam (1989) found that twenty years after their social movements had dissipated or gone into abeyance, many of these activists continued with some form of social commitment. According to another study of 1960s activists (Whalen and Flacks), this pattern was especially true of the activists that "had been

most engaged" (1989, 62).

In his book on "aging political activists" from the socialist sector, David Shuldiner notes that "there is...a small but growing body of literature that addresses the lives of aging activists who carry on what has been a lifetime involvement in social movements" (1995, 29).

The generic characteristics that Shuldiner identified (through in-depth interviews with four socialist activists) are applicable to aging lesbian activists:

All claim adherence to the core ideological belief that has fueled their lifelong activism: an abiding commitment to the overall outlook and goals of socialism [lesbian/co-gender rights]. But over the years...and following a period of reflection, they have undergone what is arguably a process of 'disengagement'...These have included: a distancing from previously held dogma, doctrines or political positions; a literal disengagement from specific organizations; and a withdrawal from...the social world in which those committed to the same political outlook and organization lived and interacted (1995, 31).

In the paragraphs that follow, I provide examples of the varieties of adaptation and dis/re-engagement found among former Los Angeles lesbian feminist and feminist lesbian activists:

Jeanne Córdova developed a financially successful guide to gay and lesbian businesses in the L.A. area, writes for various community publications and lends a hand to lesbian and gay projects. Torie Osborn is the CEO of a progressive philanthropic foundation and says that her main concerns are issues of poverty and the environment. Robin Tyler continues

to combine her production skills with activism. She initiated the planning for the year 2000 LGBT March on Washington.

Vera Martin who worked with the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, and who served on the Connexus Board of Directors, moved to a lesbian "retirement" community in Arizona. She is coordinator of the national steering committee of OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change). Del Whan worked for children's services for several decades, until, worn out by the dysfunctions of that system, went to work in a foster care agency that serves Latinos. She says she is "more radical than ever" in her concern about the environment (Del, interview).

Sharon Raphael is chair of the Aging Program at California State University Dominguez Hills. She and Mina Meyer are also activists on behalf of lesbian and gay aging. Lydia Otero teaches history at a community college and is enrolled in a Ph.D. program in history. Emma Pérez teaches at the University of Texas, El Paso, and continues to be active on behalf of women and lesbians of color. Sharon X and her partner have been long-time, lesbians voices in a gay and lesbian homeowners association.

Pam X, one of the few Asian Americans active in the lesbian feminist movement of the 1970s, is an attorney with a government agency. Diane Abbitt continues to practice law, markets an environmentally friendly automotive technology

and has served on the Board of the Human Rights Campaign. Diane's former partner Bobbi Bennett, works as an attorney and serves on the board of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Shirl Buss lives in Sausalito and is an architect concerned with community planning.

Judy Freespirit lives in Oakland and continues her work on behalf of Fat Liberation issues. Simone Wallace continued to co-own Sisterhood bookstore, until it closed in July of 1999. Simone's daughter, Emily, is a second generation lesbian and works for Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl. Lauren Jardine and Jean Conger live in Hawaii and work as consultants to non-profits. Before moving to Hawaii, Jean served as the Executive Director of the L.A. Women's Foundation. Jinx Beers, manages the business interests of her partner, artist Alicia Austin.

Laura Esquivel is enrolled in a graduate program in political science, and works as a field representative for L.A. City Councilwoman and "out" lesbian, Jackie Goldberg. Terry Wolverton teaches writing and serves on the reconstituted L.A. Woman's Building Board. Suzann Gage continues to provide women's health services at her clinic. Marsha Salisbury, a popular member of Lesbian Feminists works as a graphic artist and volunteers her skills to lesbian projects. Lillene Fifield is a social worker in private practice.

Maria Díaz is an acupuncturist practicing in New

Mexico. She recently organized a project that provides emergency relief health services in Honduras. Doris Davenport is in restful seclusion in Georgia, where she continues to write. Vickie Randle plays in the band on "The Jay Leno Show" band. Ginny Foat founded an organization that cares for babies with AIDS. Valerie Terrigno lives and works in the L.A. area. Ivy Bottini is a real estate agent, and is active in MCC (Metropolitan Community Church).

Marilyn Murphy and Irene Weiss retired to the same Arizona lesbian community as Vera Martin. Lisa Ben still lives in the L.A. area, graciously consents to interviews, and asserts that her pioneer lesbian publication "Vice Versa," was no big deal. Flo Fleischman who has been a lesbian activist since the 1940s, serves on the Board of the International Lesbian and Gay Archives and is the founder of Phoenix Encore, a group for old/er lesbians.

As time passed, we also began to lose some of our own. In Los Angeles, Johnnie Phelps was active in N.O.W. for many years. According to her partner, Grace Bukowski, Johnnie also helped organize the defense for the Norton Sound women. As Chair of the Board of ACW, she helped the agency to gain historical status for its buildings. She continued to lend a hand to lesbian causes until her health prevented further participation. Johnnie died in December of 1997 (Grace, interview).

Tony Carabillo served for many years in N.O.W. on a

local and national level. She, her life-partner Judy Meuli, and June Csida, compiled *A Chronology of Feminism* (1993). Toni died in 1997. Jan Holden, another veteran of the heyday of N.O.W. feminist/lesbian politics, died in July of 1998.¹⁴

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF THE MOVEMENT

Lesbian feminism grew out of the particular conditions of its moment in history, conceived of itself as a political theory and strategy, and has subsequently been caricatured in ways that need to be reevaluated and, ultimately rejected (Bonnie Zimmerman, 1997, 160).

During the 1970s and 1980s, lesbian activists of various political persuasions created spaces (for work, play and living), services and culture. They also fought, laughed, "politicked" and sometimes enjoyed moments of "communitas," as they went about the business of developing a woman and lesbian-identified ethos. Laboring without significant outside support, lesbians, especially during the 1970s, worked alone and with heterosexual feminists to create (with a dearth of funds and a surfeit of volunteer energy) a woman-affirming institutional base and informal national network that has not yet been analyzed and evaluated as a notable, perhaps unique phenomenon.

For those actively participating in the lesbian movement, the adjectives "intense," "exciting," and "empowering," describe the first decade of the post-Stonewall lesbian movement.¹ The movement's effects on individual activists can be inferred from testimony provided by narrators in recent community studies.

Joan Robins, a high profile Los Angeles lesbian activist during the 1970s, remembers those years as "a time

of activity, ferment, excitement, coming out, [and] new possibilities" (personal communication, 1998). Estilita Grimaldo, one of the few lesbians of color who has worked (since the 1970s), in both white-dominated and lesbian of color groups in L.A., recalls "the excitement of the times, of coming out, of learning and of seeing so many women becoming strong and powerful" (Estilita, interview).

The Atlanta women that Chesnut and Gable interviewed, "most now in their forties and fifties, all remember the 1970s as a period of intense activity and excitement" in the "Little Five Points" lesbian feminist neighborhood (1997, 255). One of Chesnut and Gable's respondents recalled that, "For many women who came out or [lesbians who] came of age during the lesbian-feminist movement...the possibilities had never seemed so limitless" (Chesnut and Gable, 1997, 252). One of Ross' narrators also recalls that "[it felt like] the world [was] our political workshop" (Ross, 1995, 201-202).

For Atlanta lesbians, the 1970s lesbian-feminist community, especially ALFA (Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance), was both a physical place and a group of people who shared a set of values and a way of life.² As in other urban locations,

Community members concentrated their time and commitment on political causes rather than on jobs (much less careers), were downwardly mobile, lived communally, and formed businesses and organizations with collective or cooperative, rather than hierarchical structures (Chesnut and Gable, 1997, 252).³

The women of LOOT gave testimony similar to ALFA participants. Former members felt that LOOT offered a place in which to develop pride in one's lesbian identity, and where one could use the concept of lesbian feminism as a basis for cultural and political organizing.

According to Ross, LOOT's major contribution was to provide "an alternative to previous forms of lesbian social organization and the naming of the category 'lesbian feminist' as a basis for cultural and political organizing..." (1995, 206). Data from a number of studies, suggest that this characteristic manifested in other locations (Cragin, 1997).

Although LOOT was, like most lesbian activist organizations, a white-dominated organization, at least one lesbian of color thought of it as a refuge. Kado (Mohawk) observed that,

I look at the older lesbians and I say, 'Thanks, because if it wasn't for them, I probably wouldn't be alive today...I couldn't run to the native community...I always ran to the lesbian and women's community. It was a family. I could feel it. If they wanted to fight, fine. What family doesn't have fights? (quoted in Ross, 1995, 202).

The intense experiences of the lesbian activist movement and the social movement era, indelibly marked lesbian-focused activists of the 1970s and 1980s. Long after LOOT was gone, it continued to have an effect on former members. An one woman explained,

There is [still] a lesbian community, though [now] there's not a particular place I can go and find

everyone sitting there. I still have that image [of community], and LOOT has given me that image, that anchor and a sense of worth and value...and [it] all works very strongly against the invisibility which is the nature of our oppression (quoted in Ross, 1995, 203).

Some found that the movement provided a lifelong context from which to advocate on behalf of oppressed groups or social causes. For example, Joan Robins who has been living in New Mexico since she left Los Angeles, was involved in a long battle against developers who wanted to close a bridge in the northwest section of Albuquerque.

Joan and her partner Denise Wheeler (who succeeded Lauren Jardine as Connexus Director), were one of the first lesbian couples in Albuquerque to register as a domestic partnership. At her job as a medical social worker, Joan brought up the issue of insurance coverage for same-sex partners, a benefit that her union now offers (personal communication, 1998).

Lesbian activists like Joan worked to create opportunities not only for themselves, but for those who came after. By "pushing the envelope" Homophile and lesbian feminist activists created opportunities for younger generations of lesbians to come out. As Veronica Groocock noted, "It is easier to be out now...There is greater understanding and awareness. Prominent role models made it easier to be out....if dykes hadn't walked through London in the 1970s, Martina [Navratilova] couldn't have come out and said 'I'm gay'" (1995, 197).

Emily Gold credits lesbian activists of the 1970s with laying the "groundwork," and creating a "dialogue that led to change." She feels that the movement of the 1970s, enabled 1990s lesbians to be more "diverse," "visible" and out in larger numbers. Emily describes lesbian feminists of the 1970s as "courageous, self-empowered, [and] making changes...I think of [the] positives, not negatives - they were pioneers" (Emily, interview).

Lesbian feminist/activist theory and praxis had a significant effect not only on individuals and lesbian groups, but on other social movements and to some extent on the psyche of the larger culture. As Jackie Winnow pointed out: "Without [lesbians] the women's movement would not have addressed homophobia and heterosexism and the lesbian/gay movement would not have addressed sexism..." (Winnow, 1989, 11).

Taylor and Rupp noted the influence of lesbian feminist thinking on direct action peace movements which have adopted the concept of "revolution as an ongoing process of personal and social transformation [and an] emphasis on egalitarianism and consensus decision-making..." (1993, 52). They also point out that the "radical feminist analysis of rape" has shaped efforts to combat anti-gay/lesbian violence; and that the AIDS movement has been influenced by "the radical feminist definition of control of one's body and access to health care as political issues" (Taylor and

Rupp, 1993, 52).

A major and under-noted contribution was the movement's emphasis on examining any and all aspects of a woman's existence. No ontological stone was left unturned. Diverse and divergent issues such as sexual abuse, "looksism," racism, how to raise male children, S/M, and consensus decision-making, were all part of the collective discourse.

Sometimes the analysis was not complex, and often the differences between participants were not bridged. Yet individually and collectively, the practice of seeking more conscious theory and praxis, created a level of discourse and reflection not found in other social movements. The willingness to discuss and analyze, although stressful, expanded the ability of individuals and groups of women to identify, acknowledge and make use of their power.⁴

Lesbian activist culture led the way in articulating the constellation of changes that was needed in order for significant social change to come about. In her essay "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," Cheryl Clarke, a lesbian of color, noted the importance of this contribution:

If radical lesbian-feminism purports an anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-woman-hating vision of bonding as mutual, reciprocal, as infinitely negotiable, as freedom from antiquated gender prescriptions and Lesbian proscriptions, *then all people struggling to transform the character of relationships in this culture have something to learn from lesbians* (italics hers) (quoted in Hogan and Hudson, 1998, 362).

The contributions of the lesbian and heterosexual

feminist movements have until recently been discounted or ignored both in academia and in the mainstream culture. Recent studies give belated credit to feminists (without specifying that many of these women were lesbians) (Boggs in Smith, 1991, 67; Whalen and Flacks 1989, 139).⁵

What lesbian activists contributed to various movements is easily overlooked. One reason is due to a phenomenon that Evans also observed in relation to the Women's Movement. She argues that the practice of decentralization "hid from many radical women the impact of their ideas" (Evans, 1979, 226).

Nancy Whittier contends that "the survival of radical feminism has been largely invisible to scholars because the movement has never had a centralized or national organization but is based in grass roots, loosely organized groups. Thus, any study of radical feminism is, by necessity, a local case study" (1995, 5). Whittier's argument is applicable to studies of lesbian activism.

Another reason for the oversight is the combination of sexism and lesbophobia, which as Ross (1995) and others have pointed out, persistently ignores or erases the presence and contributions of lesbians in any situation or historical period. This pattern is also found in accounts of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, where women in general, were relegated to second-class status and low visibility.

A third reason is that subsequent generations are inclined to devalue their predecessors. A fourth reason is

that many "PomoHomo" academics feel compelled to ignore or disparage the significance and contributions of lesbian feminism (Cragin, 1997).

Due to both sexism and lesbophobia, most social movements, including the co-gender gay/lesbian movement, welcome(d) lesbian energy but were (are still) often reluctant to support lesbian-affirming politics. In cases where lesbians "dare" to affirm lesbian-focused ideology, advocate for women-only spaces, and challenge the "isms" that surround their "culture," a backlash is often the price.⁶

In the late 1990s, amidst an absence of mass mobilization, a surfeit of postmodern paradigms, and a co-gender LGBTI culture, many argue that the feminist and lesbian movements are defunct. Some like Taylor and Rupp, however, assert that "the demise of a radical lesbian feminist organization may represent less the 'death' of radical feminism than a movement of members and resources to a new local movement core" (1993, 40).

This repositioning is a response to contemporary socio-political conditions in the United States. It is also an example of the persistence of lesbian consciousness. One of Ross' narrators compared the hardiness of the lesbian movement to a hydra "It is this ability - to send out shoots when the above-ground portion of the plant is trampled on - that characterizes the lesbian movement.." (quoted in Ross,

1995, 199).

Since the mid-1970s, the lesbian movement has endured its share of trampling. Due to both its shortcomings and its threatening stance, lesbian-focused activism is an easy target.⁷ Like all spirited causes, it made some unique contributions and made many mistakes. An analysis of its character and legacy yields mixed reviews.

During the 1980s, critiques of lesbian feminism turned into a dogmatic onslaught on the part of "born again" co-gender lesbians, "socon" (social constructionist) academics and "PomoHomo" (queer theorists). After years of attacks, Bonnie Zimmerman argued that,

The discourse of lesbianism - specifically lesbian feminism - has been all but silenced. This leads to the appropriation of our work and ideas (including feminism itself) without any recognition or citation of sources, the vilification of our values and continued existence, and the appalling misrepresentations and historical constructions of the past twenty years... (Zimmerman, 1996, 274).

More recently, a new generation of lesbian scholars has begun to challenge negative analyses of lesbian feminism. After studying a Toronto lesbian feminist organization, Becky Ross acknowledged that "...the theoretical, personal and political enterprise of white, middle class, lesbian nationalism twenty years ago commands both respectful reclamation and rigorous reflection" (Ross, 1995, 231). Efforts at reclamation and reflection must also include lesbians of color who were active in the lesbian, feminist, and co-gender movements.

This re/evaluation of lesbian feminism is taking place in the midst of the problematic "lesbian chic" presence. This 1990s variety of "style lesbian" should not be confused with the lipstick lesbians of the early 1980s. Some of the latter (the ones I knew), were lesbian femmes and activists. They dressed to please themselves and/or their butch partners. A number were lesbians of color, whose lesbian communities seemed more accepting of butch/femme culture (Walker, 1999).

Lipstick lesbians were also always present in bars and other "non-political" sectors of the community, but regardless of their politics or lack thereof, lesbianism was at the core of their lives and identities.

What is different in the 1990s is that lesbian femmes who do not live in a "social movement moment," are more often expressing themselves *in* a social context rather than *from* an individual or collectively political context. These lesbians are easy to conflate with het(erosexual) femmes for the benefit of dominant culture voyeurs (Van Gelder and Brandt, 1997), as part of what Rebecca Rugg calls "vile assimilationism" (1997, 175).

Rugg uses the example of personal ads in Los Angeles lesbian publications to illustrate this assimilative trend, one that also has racist and "looksist" connotations:

In Los Angeles, the white lipstick lesbian culture is assimilationist and butch-hating. [True], there are thriving communities of color in LA some of which

are fiercely butch-femme, but in the mostly white lesbian world of glossy magazines and West Hollywood, most personal ads come with the caveat 'no butches' or no drugs, no dykes'...strings of exclusions in personal ads echo a long-standing practice in the gay male personals...the equations implicit in these strings are indicative of trends in nationwide conservative lesbian and gay identity politics (Rugg, 1997, 175).

These trends are not new. In 1979, activist Don Kilhefner expressed concern over assimilation and consumerism in the gay male community. According to Don, the price gays (and lesbians) pay for this path is that they become "dispirited people" (Kilhefner, 1987, 126).

The long-range effects of the lesbian chic trend are not clear. After all, although Flappers were distressing to their older suffragist sisters and mothers, they also injected a lively, oppositional perspective into what may have been a dour, dogmatic, atmosphere. The downside of celebration is that participants (like the people of Troy), may lose sight of serious political threats.

Cultural critic, Stuart Ewen cautioned that "when power is at stake, a politics of images is no substitute for a 'politics of substance'" (quoted in Stein, 1995, 482). Margaret Cerullo warned that the multiple lifestyles strategy, the one that calls for "pluralism of sexual choice" is not "an adequate response to the one lifestyle that has all the power - heterosexuality" (quoted in Stein, 1995, 482). Some lesbians, not only separatist ones, have warned that when lesbian chic becomes the signifier for

lesbian existence and experience, de-politicization is part of the price (Cragin, 1997, 293; Stein, 1995, 482).

Conclusion

In 1999, we can marvel at the gains that lesbians, gays and other sexual outlaws have made since 1924, when Henry Gerber tried to organize the first-known pro-homosexual group in the United States. Yet we also know that the increased tolerance for lesbians and gays is even more tenuous than that extended to heterosexual people of color. As activist Urvashi Vaid noted, "in the state of virtual equality...we are at once marginal and mainstream, at once assimilated and irreconcilably queer" (Vaid, 1995, 4).

In this environment, women-focused lesbians are marginalized by the larger culture as "queer" and by the co-gender movement as not gay [male] friendly. Yet, in spite of the criticisms, this variety of lesbian continues to resist entreaties to join the co-gender and queer agenda, because as Arlene Stein noted neither can compensate for "real, persistent structural differences in style, ideology and access to resources among men and women" (1992, 50).

Lesbians who do not want to assimilate, must also resist the entreaties of a homophobic, objectifying society that privileges lesbian chic. Finally, many lesbians of color continue to resist demands from both their brothers of color and their white sisters to choose between oppressions.

While lesbian feminism as a mass movement may be in

abeyance, those who are not armchair observers of the lesbian movement or playing on the narrow courts of discourse theory, know that lesbian-focused activists, are still engaged in work that is both identity-supportive (personal/cultural) and concerned with social change (political). I argue that in a patriarchal world, any type of assertive activity on the part of lesbians and women is a form of political action.

This preliminary study is part of my own commitment to politicized action, specifically on behalf of lesbian visibility and lesbian history. In it I have chosen to highlight and reflect on portions of the history of the lesbian activist movement in Los Angeles.

It is a "native-controlled" community history written both to record and remember those who were there, and to share the experience with those who were not.

In this study I try to convey a sense of the events and dynamics that took place between 1970-1990, and how some of those who participated in this specific socio-historical process, felt about what transpired.

I did not intend to position this history of the Los Angeles lesbian activist movement within any specific theory. This choice is partly a resistant gesture toward an academic environment whose pretenses are signified by abstruse theories and outsider-controlled methodologies.

This choice is also an oppositional response to the

surfeit of analysis generated by the fields of cultural studies and literary criticism. While those approaches have a place in the spectrum of analysis, they have un/wittingly prioritized logical consistency and witty argument, while ignoring, deriding, or appropriating other approaches to exploring and explaining the diversity of *lived* woman-focused lesbian experience.

The story of lesbian activism in Los Angeles, like the story of lesbian activism in other cities, deserves to *also* be told outside of the camp contexts (and contests) of discourse theory. When our herstories are recounted and analyzed, they ought to project the heart of what transpired even at the risk of being dismissed by some as simply "interesting bedtime reading" (Case quoted in Boyd, 1995, 11).

Risks of dismissal notwithstanding, I choose to align myself with the sentiments of long-time lesbian femme activist Joan Nestle who wrote that: "...much of what I call history others will not. But answering that challenge of exclusion is the work of a lifetime" (1987, 10).

Out of fashion or not, Lesbian Feminism and her problematic, resistant sisters, Lesbian Separatism and Cultural Feminism, were and remain politicized stances opposed to the dominant symbolic.⁸

During the 1970s and through portions of the 1980s, these "lesbianisms" created an environment that supported

the development of politicized identities as well as the boundaries within which a series of local Social Movement Communities developed. These diverse and often-contentious communities provided a base from which activist lesbians engaged in political action on behalf of themselves and a number of other socio-political causes.

Today in the form of an abeyance structure, Lesbian Feminism continues to provide a woman-focused base and a thread of continuity for segments of both the lesbian and women's movement (Wheeler, 1995, 34). Taylor and Rupp contend that, ironically, the traits of cultural feminism [lesbianism] that are criticized as essentialist, separatist and as lifestyle inclinations, are the very same "elements" that during latent periods, "...sustain and nourish feminist activism" (1993, 41).

Like other New Social Movements, Lesbian Feminism attempts to integrate the personal and the political, and asserts that in postmodern society, the cultural *is* political. Unlike New Social Movements, Lesbian Feminism contends that around the world, sexism is the "root" oppression. Its ideological base continues to assert woman-identified values, the value of separatism, the "primacy of women's relationships and feminist ritual" (Taylor and Rupp, 1993, 34). Its operative base provides (modified) "boundaries" within which can still be found support systems such as special-interest groups, direct action groups, web

sites, and women-only spaces and gatherings.

Amid the criticisms, let it be remembered that once there was a vibrant movement that put women first. In a world that was (is still) bent on undermining women, that kind of prioritizing and commitment, deserves respect and study. Regardless of what terms are used to describe (or disparage) the lesbian activist movement, its spirit persists within the generational cohort that created it during a "social moment" in United States history. It persists as a vision, an ideology, a submerged network and as a significant contribution to the tradition of resistant consciousness and pro-woman advocacy. Blessed Be.⁹

NOTES

PREFACE

1. For examples of lesbian accomplishments and contributions, see Richards (1990).

2. Allan Johnson defined community as "...a collection of people who share something in common...without necessarily living in a particular place. It can be a feeling of connection to others, of belonging, an identification ..." (1995, 42). A community is most often diverse and divided, thus one definition cannot encompass all members/participants.

3. A note on terminology: I refer to the 1970s as the "Lesbian feminist decade." Not all lesbian activists identified as "feminist," this was especially true of those lesbians of color who associated the term with racism and classism. In this study I use the term "lesbian activists" to include both those who identified as feminists and those who did not. I use the term "lesbian feminist" for those who felt comfortable using it.

4. For a history of the homophile movement see Katz (1976 and 1983) and D'Emilio (1983).

5. According to Beemyn: "local studies are better able to consider the impact of race, gender and class differences upon the lives of gays - distinctions [that are] frequently ignored in texts that take a broader historical approach" (1997, 2).

6. Some argue that although homosexual behavior has existed throughout history, the identities "lesbian" and "gay" are late 19th/early 20th century "constructions." I argue that lesbian behavior has always existed **and** that women who consistently felt a primary affectional (sometimes sexual) inclination toward females, thought of themselves as "different" and marginalized. These feelings in themselves constitute an incipient identity.

I say this as a lifelong lesbian who when young felt "different," but who did not have a theoretical or political framework from which to analyze what I felt. Abnormal psychology was the only framework readily available in the early 1960s, when I was a teenager. In spite of societal disapproval, my unwillingness to give up my feelings, gave rise to a resistant, incipient identity. It was a method of managing cognitive dissonance. On another note, Marilyn Frye observed that, "lesbian suppression is so strong that if it weren't inherent in some, it would have disappeared" (in Zimmerman, 1996, 56).

7. The title of this study comes from a phrase I found in two different statements, one by a nationally known lesbian activist (a) and the other by a Los Angeles-based lesbian activist (b):

a. "We thought because we were on the side of the angels that surely this would be easy... the defeats broke many a heart not hardened to the give-and-take of life in the political trenches. We forgot to value one another. This especially is a weakness of the young. We

didn't know how special we were" (Rita Mae Brown, 1995, 46).

b. "Johnnie [Phelps] was a good ally to have, and Toni [Carabillo], L[os] A[ngeles] NOW and activists on the side of the angels, could always count on Johnnie to be a willing fighter against all odds" (Judi Meuli, 1998).

CHAPTER ONE NOTES

1. The "first generation" of lesbian activists included individual resisters before Stonewall, such as Lisa Ben who in 1947-48, singlehandedly typed and distributed the first known lesbian newspaper in the U.S., and homophile movement activists like Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon who in 1955 helped found Daughters of Bilitis, the first known lesbian organization in the U.S.

2. For an oral history of the Stonewall riot/rebellion, see Duberman (1994).

3. Some argue that the Stonewall "riot" was not perceived as a watershed event when it took place, and that time has assigned it undue, mythological importance (See Rechy in Beam et. al., 1999). I argue that for the Baby Boom generation of activists and their older allies, the aftermath of Stonewall was a catalyzing process. Stonewall became a defining symbol for a new generation of activists.

4. The distinction between "lesbian" and "gay" was drawn during the 1970s, when lesbians felt that their agenda was being subsumed under a male agenda in "gay liberation." Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex peoples,

movements and histories share characteristics. In this lesbian-focused study, I will sometimes use the phrase "lesbian (and gay)" or "lesbian/gay," but will not discuss similarities or contrasts with the gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities in any detail.

5. According to Kenneth Boulding, a "break boundary" occurs "Where the system suddenly changes into another or passes some point of no return in its dynamic processes" (quoted in McLuhan, 1965, 38).

6. Aldon Morris (1984) used this phrase in his study of the Black Civil Rights Movement.

7. The severity of these conditions can be inferred from the labeling and punitive treatment of homosexual behavior over the centuries (see Bayer, 1981).

8. Data from studies of other U.S. lesbian activist communities show similar patterns at play during the time period in question (see Brody, 1985; Chesnut and Gable, 1997; Ross, 1995).

9. Separatism is "The belief that women must and should separate from men politically and personally in order to accomplish the goals of a feminist revolution" (Shugar, 1995, xi). I define it as the standpoint that opposes world-wide misogyny in all its overt and subtle manifestations, while supporting the empowerment of women on all levels.

10. Jill Johnston's book, *Lesbian Nation*, inspired the metaphor, dream or fantasy of a space inhabited by

lesbians where we all lived in harmony and abundance in a woman-focused culture.

11. "Lesbian feminists" were newly arrived to lesbianism, had often come through the feminist movement, and generally had a heterosexual past. "Feminist lesbians" were often "life-long" or "long-time" lesbians who had little or no heterosexual history and had been newly influenced by feminism. Since there was no "official" distinction made at that time, I generally use the "term of choice" employed during the 1970s ("lesbian feminist"), when referring to either set of activists or to the movement in general.

12. "Politically incorrect" (PI), was a term used to critique and/or deride "party lines" within the lesbian community. "Politically correct" (PC) originally meant an action or value that reflected socio-political awareness. The terms surfaced in the lesbian community in the late 1970s, long before they found their way into ma(i)nstream culture (personal recollection; Post, 1994).

13. This term was suggested to me by Toni X, a member of the group Lesbian Feminists in Los Angeles. Saralyn Chesnut and Amanda Gable also noted that they once heard the owner of a women's bookstore (Carol Sejay), suggest that "someone should study how attractions and relationships have affected feminist projects" (quoted in Howard, 1997, 281). Similar examples can be found in the

histories of other social movements, depending on how forthcoming the authors are.

14. For a brief discussion of "assimilationism" and "confrontationalism" see Hogan and Hudson (1997, 48).

15. According to Becca Cragin, "The term 'lesbian chic,' describes the members of a newly emerging subculture (of young, urban, fashion-conscious lesbians); a social phenomenon (a sudden fascination and glamorization of lesbianism by the dominant culture); and a snowballing proliferation of media images..." (Cragin, 1997, 287). For other articles on lesbian chic, see Brownworth, 1997; Cole, 1994; Kasindorf, 1993; Latimer, 1996.

16. According to Verta Taylor, "the term 'abeyance' depicts a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in non-receptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another" (1989, 761).

17. I use first names when quoting or referring to my narrators or women I know, because I do not want to adhere to the academic/male convention of referring to people whom I know, by last names. I do however, use last names, when citing a written work or referring to someone I don't personally know.

18. For one discussion of how lesbian history is tampered with, see Wiesen Cook (1979).

19. A social movement consists of a significant

number of individuals banded together for a common purpose or in protest, over a period of time and espousing a shared set of values. Morris Zelditch noted that "Normal politics is the politics of the recognized, established interests, the politics of 'members.' Movements are the politics of 'non-members'" (1978, 1515).

20. The native research process is qualitatively different from that of the cross-cultural participant observer (see Narayan, 1993, 678). The implications of both positions will be discussed in the chapter on methodology.

21. For a discussion of strategic essentialism, see Pérez (1994).

22. I used the work of native researchers and theoreticians from marginalized communities (i.e. Gwaltney, 1981; Hill Collins, 1990) to analyze my position as a native researcher.

23. Testimonio "represents an affirmation of the individual subject...in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginality, oppression or struggle" (Beverley in Smith and Watson, 1992, 103).

24. I expect that like many dissertation writers before me, I will, in retrospect, be mortified about the final product. One consolation is that ongoing research and feedback will allow me to improve the study.

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

1. David Riesman's, *The Lonely Crowd*, first published in 1950, was subtitled "a study of the changing American character." Although Riesman did not specifically anticipate the social upheavals of the 60s and 70s, he noted that significant changes were taking place at the core of U.S. culture (1953, 298). For another attempt to identify and analyze large-scale patterns in U.S. history see Brown (1992).

2. Strauss and Howe estimate that "screaming radicals and freaked-out 'hippies' represented just 10 to 15 percent of their generation" (1991, 309). Lipset and Ladd estimated that "as many as 350,000 students became radicalized during the sixties" (Fendrich, 1973, 161).

3. The one exception to this pattern occurred during the U.S. Civil War (Strauss and Howe, 1991, 90).

4. The bulk of the Suffragist generation belonged to what Strauss and Howe called the "Missionary Generation" (Idealist types), born between 1860 and 1882. In 1920 when U.S. women won the vote, members of the suffragist generation were between 38 and 60 years of age.

At that time, flappers were generally young adults and part of "The Lost Generation" ("Reactive" types), born between 1883 and 1900. Both Boomers and Missionaries are "idealist" types; while the 13th generation born between 1961 and 1981 (the young adults of the late 20th century),

are "reactive" types, like the young adults and flappers of the 1920s.

5. Jeanne Córdova (a Boomer), who was old enough to remember the "bad old days," waxed poetic about the boldness of 13th generation lesbians:

Gone were the seedy little back room bars, gone even were our lesbian feminist neurotic attachment to gymnasiums as entertainment zones [in the 70s, gyms were one affordable venue where lesbian dances were held]...lipstick lesbians' rejection of the gay ghetto is in fact a turf-claiming statement about women's entitlement to the rest of the world... [they] never lived their late teens and early formative adulthood under the kind of oppression we did...I still cringe when I see a cop car in front of a lesbian bar. Now-a-days, that car was called by some irate lesbian who thinks the police work for her!... (Icon 12/95, 8).

6. Under "creedal American values," Keniston included "free speech, citizen's participation in decision-making, equal opportunity and justice" (in Anderson, 1969, 230).

7. Although critics of the "consciousness movement" charged its adherents with "self-obsession," Arthur Stein argued that while the "emphasis [was] placed on self-reliance and taking more responsibility for one's life and actions" there was also a concern with social ills (1985, 8).

8. The term "Postmodernism" was coined in the 1970s by Charles Jencks "to describe a specific school of architecture" (Solomon, 1988, 211). Postmodernism is a fundamental shift from a manufacturing to a service economy and knowledge and information are its most important

commodities (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991, 146). It "represents a new mode of perception fostered by an age of instant communication" (Solomon, 212); and rejects the centering structures that have long given meaning to human history (Solomon, 216).

9. Carroll observed that "the most comprehensive analyses of patriarchy as a political system are written by radical, socialist, anarchist and lesbian feminists..." but these voices are often left out of the mainstream academic discourse (in Miller, 1991, 144).

10. For the origins of consciousness-raising (CR), see Echols (1989, 83). N.O.W. activist Ginny Foat, wrote that "[CR] opened your eyes to the personal and political significance of attitudes and practices that you might never have questioned before...the second vital service of consciousness-raising was to end our isolation. We found out we weren't alone, and that was the beginning of power" (1985, 149).

11. See also the work of British psychiatrist Wilfred Bion (1961), on how undercurrents or subtexts cause group conflict and dissolution.

12. According to Alice Echols, "politicos" attributed women's oppression to capitalism and their primary loyalty was to the left. The "radical feminists" argued that "gender rather than class was the primary contradiction." They rejected both the politico assertion that a "socialist

revolution would bring about women's liberation and the liberal feminist solution of integrating women into the public sphere" (1989, 3). This group "succeeded in pushing liberal feminists to the left and politicians toward feminism" (1989, 4).

In the early 70s radical feminism was eclipsed by "cultural feminism" which turned its focus "from opposing male supremacy to creating a female counterculture." Although envisioned as a culture of active resistance, the stance became "an end in itself...the focus became one of personal rather than social transformation" (1989, 5). Echols did not discuss how these ideologies (also) manifested in the lesbian activist movement.

13. Taylor and Whittier argue that the term "cultural feminism" erases the presence of lesbians and obscures the fact that a great deal of criticism aimed at cultural feminism is really aimed at lesbian feminism (1992, 107).

14. Of late some academics contend that this debate is outdated.

15. Paraphrasing Gramsci, Barbara Epstein, defined hegemony as "a contest for ideological and cultural leadership, one that was "of crucial importance at a time when popular compliance was required for the system to function, and when the seizure of power was not possible" (Epstein, 1990, 51).

16. Melucci noted that "New Social Movements" operate as

signs, in the sense that they translate their actions into symbolic challenges to the dominant codes (1989, 12).

According to L. Kauffman, feminist strategy includes the appropriation and re-codification of cultural signs (Kauffman, 1990, 73).

This is the same strategy used by artists from colonized cultures. They re/appropriate signs and symbols from their own and the invader cultures, and turn them into cultural statements filled with humor, sardonic wit and politicized commentary (see Olalquiaga, 1992, 75).

Gay activist Jeffrey Escoffier contends that the latest paradigm generated by gay and lesbian studies is grounded in cultural studies and consists of "absorption into signs, meanings, interpretation, and art" (1992, 21).

17. Lesbian "boundaries" share similarities with Sydney Plotkin's concept of "enclave consciousness." In discussing neighborhoods, he notes that certain types of "communities ...all too often draw their militance and strength from feelings of encirclement, entrapment and estrangement..." (1991, 5). Like other marginalized groups, lesbians (individually and collectively) understand the feeling of being surrounded and invaded by outsider/dominant forces.

Over the years lesbians have created enclaves (spaces) where they could feel safe from hetero-patriarchal encroachments, while at the same time experiencing the

ambivalence (anxiety) that comes from being on the margins. See Myra Ferree for strategies used by feminists to maintain boundaries and challenge male dominance (1985, 94).

18. This phrase was coined by Carol Hanisch (see Echols, 1989, 382).

19. For a definition of "abeyance" see Taylor (1989, 761).

CHAPTER THREE NOTES

1. All but three of my narrators identified as lesbian. One identifies as bisexual, another as a heterosexual feminist (Sherna Gluck), and one was a gay male who was an activist since the 1940s.

2. For a list of questions asked in this study, see Appendix B.

3. Historian Blanche Wiesen Cook defined lesbians as, "Women who love women, who chose women to nurture and support and to form a living environment in which to work creatively and independently..." She also argues that since "genital proofs" (sexual activities) are not required to confirm heterosexuality, they should not be required to confirm lesbianism (Cook, 1979, 64).

4. A "hasbean" is a former lesbian (Faderman, 1991, 361).

5. Marc Stein's study of Philadelphia lesbian and gay activism from 1948-1972, used oral histories, newspapers and magazines, the organizational papers of political groups,

court documents, information in Freedom of Information Act searches and the personal papers of individuals (1994, 6).

Jo Freeman used a combination of interviews and documentary research in her study of the second wave of the women's movement. Her study was an example of native research. Freeman noted that she was a participant in "the younger branch of the Chicago women's liberation movement from 1967 through 1969" and that from 1970 to 1974, she followed the progress of the movement as an "engaged observer" (1975, xii-xiii).

6. Oral histories are related to other forms of personal and collective testimony. These include "testimonio" (see Beverley in Smith and Watson, 1992); "resistance literature" (see Harlow, 1987); and "biomythography" (see Zimmerman 1990; King, 1992).

7. According to Craig Newbill, the oral history enterprise has benefitted from a growing interest in social history, an interest that "helped shift the focus from national to regional, from public institutions to private life and from statecraft to popular culture" (1993, 55).

8. Bernard Berelson defined themes as "an assertion about a subject matter" found in the text of a document (1952, 18) and Brown noted that the assertion must be recurring for it to become a theme (quoted by Budd, 1967, 48). According to Berelson: "The theme is among the most useful units of content analysis...because it takes the form

in which issues and attitudes are usually discussed" (1952, 139).

9. Under the heading "Third World Lesbians" there are 15 items; under "Lesbians of Color," there are 5. Margaret Sloan, an African American lesbian active in both the communities of color and the white movement is cited under her own name 8 times, with a "see also" reference to "poems." "Chicana lesbians" has 1 item; while "Native American lesbians" has 3. If one searches for individual women of color, the numbers increase somewhat, but since there are no "see also" references, one must already know their names.

Those who compiled *The Index* worked within the limitations of the content of the publications they indexed. I will add that the assertion by those writing the introduction that "class and race are discussed in almost every issue" is not, based on a study of the number of entries related to those two issues, accurate (Potter, 1986, vii). In a 413-page book, covering 42 publications, there are two-plus pages on "racism" and one page on "class and classism."

In Los Angeles, *The Lesbian Tide* printed few articles on either subject. *Sister Newspaper*, a Los Angeles feminist (mostly lesbian-run) publication not included in *The Index*, did publish a number of articles on class and on race, but little on race issues in the lesbian community.

10. Arguments that insiders are the best interpreters of lesbian life come from both "natives" and outside researchers. It was Radclyffe Hall's "...absolute conviction that such a book could only be written by a sexual invert, who alone could be qualified by personal knowledge and experience to speak on behalf of a misunderstood and misjudged minority" (Katz, 1976, 397).

In her 1915 study of "feminine inversion," Stella Browne concluded that her observations "...would probably be much more illuminating had they been recorded by an observer who was herself entirely or predominantly homo-sexual (in Katz, 1976, 384).

In 1947, researcher Albertine Winter concluded that, "There is a paucity of information on the subject of lesbianism, and further research and investigation is urged, especially research which is conducted by women" (in Weinberg, 1972, 391).

11. Exploitation is not the monopoly of outsiders. In Altorki and El Solh (1988), Khouri criticizes the tendency of the Arab bourgeoisie and bureaucratic elite to "transform the people into folklore and tourism" (see also Baca Zinn, 1979; Harlow, 1987; Lewis, 1973).

12. Toward the goal of improving cross-cultural research, Jake Hale, an FTM (female-to-male) transgender person, made the following recommendations to outsiders writing about transgender people. For the purposes of this

analogy I have substituted the word "native(s)" for the word "transgender(ed)":

...interrogate your subject position; beware of exoticizing the native; don't erase the native voices by ignoring what we say and write; don't totalize us by representing native discourses as monolithic; don't uncritically quote non-native experts; don't toss in references that are politically correct but not part of a substantive point; ask yourself what your interest in the natives tells you about yourself; consider our criticism of your work as a gift (Hale, 1996).

I note here that while gender and race/ethnicity are often focal points of both native and outsider research, both perspectives often side-step the issue of class (see Reinharz, 1991, 365).

13. I have had a number of discussions with white academics about issues related to outsider access. Many are defensive about their inability to gain access to women of color narrators, and are skeptical about my contention that certain types of topics (i.e. racism) will not be candidly discussed with them. To those who may be interested, I offer two (of several statements) made by native researcher John Gwaltney's narrators, about outsider researchers:

...We would be some fancy fools to tell [an outsider] anything that would help him sock it to us...white folks don't know a damn thing about us and that is the way it should stay (1981b, 54).

...I know some people you should speak with... They would never tell any white man anything of any importance...You see we are a polite people...we smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person, because knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what he is missing (Gwaltney 1981b, 58).

14. Shortcomings and limitations of this study include:

a. A focus on activism and activists that were recorded by the white-owned lesbian media, and on lesbians of color and white-dominated lesbian groups that I was a member of. This focus left out a number of groups/events not recorded by the media and/or ones that I did not know about. b. Because the study is about activism, it does not include lesbians who did not participate in that arena. c. I have a less complex understanding of subjects such as classism and anti-Semitism which are "learned" rather than "native" issues to me. d. I have chosen to emphasize the narrative over the analytical and theoretical approach.

CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

In this and subsequent chapters, the titles of often-cited periodicals will be abbreviated in the text citation as follows:

AD	Advocate, The
EV	Everywoman Newspaper
Ladder	The Ladder (DOB publication)
LN	Lesbian News, The
LT	Lesbian Tide, The
OOB	Off Our Backs
SCWU	Southern California Women for Understanding Newsletter
ST	Sister Newspaper

When the item quoted in the text is a news item, press release, announcement, etc. and lacks an author's name, the item is simply referred to by publication, month, year and page number. For example: (LT, 2/72, 5).

1. For a sociological analysis of the process whereby a group of people with a "spoiled identity" coalesced into a social movement, see Retter (1998).

2. A report in *The Advocate* noted that it was young people who rioted (Lige and Jack, 1969, 3).

3. Activist Martha Shelley recalls the early days of New York GLF as ones in which participants thought their agenda should include the agendas of all oppressed people, and that their efforts would promote widespread social change:

...those of us in GLF felt that the struggles of all people should be united...we had the feeling that the revolution was just around the corner and that we were part of the vanguard... (in Marcus, 182, 183).

4. See Flora Davis (1991) for similar patterns in the women's movement, especially Chapter 8.

5. What I call "leverage advocacy" uses techniques of behind-the-scenes persuasion, uses social and political connections, creates and collects on political debts, makes us of subtle threats of civil disturbances and, when necessary, actually uses grassroots mass mobilization and civil disobedience. As in other social movements, the success of leverage advocacy is partly based on foundations built (in this case) by repression era activists (homophiles) and social movement era radicals (GLF, Lesbian Feminists).

6. What I call "activist PTSS" is a wide-spread, under-investigated phenomenon. It is based on emotional trauma derived from the stresses of being involved in social movement activities. For its manifestation in other social movements see Turner and Killian, 1972, 354, and Coles in Turner and Killian, 1972, 355-360.

7. Elaine Sinclair from NY DOB decried the harsh treatment endured by women who took the initiative without the consent of those in power (Sinclair, 1971, 14). Simone Wallace, a member of the Westside Women's Center collective remembers that sometimes the community group dynamics were like "...junior high school all over again, it was like the in crowd and out [crowd]..." (Simone, interview).

8. According to Sharon Raphael, the GWSC "... had 'Gay Women's Service Center' printed on the door and the window" (Raphael, 1974, 54) - a daring gesture for that time. Mina Meyer also recalls that the center was listed in the telephone white pages and that one day she got a call from an anonymous woman at the telephone company who said "They tried to drop it [the listing for the GWSC] out of the directory and I'm making sure that it stays in" (Mina and Sharon, interview).

9. See above for key to abbreviations of periodicals often cited in the text of this and subsequent chapters.

10. DOB's national publication, *The Ladder*, experienced similar ideopolitical changes. See Weitz, 1984b.

11. See Chapter 1, note 11, of this study for the difference between *lesbian feminist* and *feminist lesbian*.

12. For background on consciousness-raising, see Davis, 1991, 87-89.

13. The "tank" was where the overt and suspected lesbians were held. One report on the questionable

conditions at the facility revealed that "If a woman...wears her socks up ('masculine behavior') instead of neatly turned down, she is subject to being sent immediately to the Daddy Tank" (Kelly, 1972, 8). Another report stated that "women in the daddy tank have the least (sic) privileges, the filthiest jobs; [and] get thrown in lock-up without warning..." (LT 7/72,1).

14. Many so-called progressive anti-war groups did not welcome lesbians (or gays). After lesbians led the gay contingent at a major peace march in Los Angeles, Lesbian Feminist member Rita Goldberger waited three and a half hours to speak at the rally. She was repeatedly passed over in favor of other (non-lesbian) speakers.

15. Radical lesbians including Rita Mae Brown, adopted the term and formed a group by the same name ("Lavender Menace"). The group conducted its first "zap" (guerrilla action) at the Second Congress to Unite Women (New York, 1970). The group seized the stage and distributed their now classic lesbian feminist manifesto, "The Woman-Identified Woman." They were also able to persuade participants to include discussions of lesbian issues in the conference workshops (Hogan and Hudson, 1998, 346-347).

16. Not all feminists or heterosexual women were homophobic. When Gloria Steinem spoke at Hollywood High School in January of 1972, she acknowledged that the "great lesbian controversy" was still raging within heterosexual

feminist groups. She added that "lesbians are at the cutting edge of change...they have much to teach us...they dare to live without roles" (Zecha, 1972, 14). Shirley Chisholm, an African American Congresswoman who was running for President stated that, "Homosexuals are individuals and human beings. We must recognize and protect the liberties of all peoples..." (Córdova, 1972, 3).

17. As increasing numbers of women came into the lesbian movement, women of color were generally absent. Those (few) of us who belonged to racial or ethnic "minority groups" and worked in white dominated groups, were aware of individually experienced racism. However, many of us were not yet politicized around racism in the lesbian communities, in the same way we were about sexism and lesbophobia in other communities. There were only a handful of women of color in Lesbian Feminists, and fewer still in DOB, the GWSC and later at the Westside Women's Center (WWC) (personal recollection).

18. According to Castells, "in 1969 there were 50 gay organizations and by 1973 there were over 880" (1983, 142).

19. The kissing began at "high noon" with approximately 75 people gathered, including supportive feminist heterosexuals, onlookers of various persuasions and several television crews (Coleen, 1973,1).

20. Lynne X, who is African American, worked on *The Lesbian Tide* during its early years. Jeanne Córdova,

publisher of *The Tide*, is of Mexican and Irish descent. At the time, she did not identify as a "woman of color."

21. When my socialist friends would assert that class was the root of all evil, I would counter with: "After you take it from the Rockefellers, you'll have to take it from the 'fellers." Many lesbians left the SWP due to the organization's sexism and homophobia.

22. See for example, Julie Lee (1973, 21). Julie was a feminist lesbian who had been in a long-term relationship with a woman. After becoming involved in the lesbian movement, she became an advocate of non-monogamy.

23. In a poem titled "Monogamy" (LT 5/72,4), a woman named Debbie (no last name), humorously illustrated the issue of monogamous emeshment:

"How are you today?
We are fine.
What have you been doing lately?
Oh, we've been doing a lot of things.
Are you going to the party?
Oh, we might and we might not."

24. The May, 1972 cover of the *Lesbian Tide* provides an excellent visual example of the "uniform of the day."

CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

1. *The Woman's Survival Catalogue* (1973) and the updated version, *The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook* (1975) are excellent primary sources for those wanting to study the breadth and depth of institution-building in the (generally white) women's and lesbian movements during the first five

years of the 70s. Another source useful for studying the lesbian institution-building between 1970 and 1979, is *The Lesbian Periodicals Index* (Potter, 1986). For lesbian land projects, see Cheney (1986).

2. In December, 1973, lesbian mother, Linda Chaffin of Torrance, Ca., lost a child custody battle to her parents. In 1975 she was represented by law student Cheryl Bratman who with the assistance of attorneys, won a decision in Chaffin's favor. This was a first (Córdova, 1975,20).

3. For the difference between "cultural feminists" and "politicos," see Echols (1989).

4. Part of this socialist influence at the conference was due to the Lesbian Loveland factor. In 1972 Lesbian Tide publisher Jeanne Córdova began dating then-radical socialist, Sally Anderson. Years after the West Coast Lesbian Conference, Jeanne explained that,

...I didn't know that I had fallen under the influence of Trotskyism as much as I had, so we put all this Trotskyist material in the registration packet and when our guests came and looked at it they knew it was SWP propaganda and they thought we did it on purpose and they hated it because they thought the SWP had been selling out feminism (in Moravec, 1990, 50).

5. During this decade, there were several events that garnered wide community support and were dissent-free. They were not lesbian specific, and they were cooperative efforts between heterosexual and lesbian feminists. These included a gathering to celebrate 53 years of woman's suffrage (1973); the August 26th, Women's Day March (1975); and The "Alice

Doesn't" march and rally on October 29, 1975.

6. For other articles on Califia see Diane Germain (1983) and Carmen Silva (1983).

7. Women of color in SCWU included Estilita Grimaldo, a Panameña and Gladys Benjamin, a Jewish Cubana. Both were early members of SCWU's Steering Committee (Estilita, interview).

8. Several years later, after an altercation over management-worker power differentials which mediation did not resolve, Joan says she "fired" herself, "[I]...never stepped foot in the Rape Hotline Center again...I sort of went on a hiatus from the women's movement" (Joan, interview).

9. When funding for rape prevention and treatment became available, a two-tier structure developed within the L.A. movement to combat sexual assault. One was made up of the grassroots organizers who set up and ran community-based hotlines, worked long hours for small salaries and depended on volunteer rape counselors to deliver services.

The other group was made up of Ph.Ds. and MSWs working at the Didi Hirsch Community Health Center. The latter were able to obtain relatively large grants to analyze the statistics that the hotlines provided. The researchers needed the statistics provided by the hotlines to obtain grants and argue for policy changes. The hotlines, benefitted from the research findings when they sought

funding. Although both were needed, there was resentment on the part of hotline directors who felt that the researchers received higher salaries, basked in the media limelight and did not "do time" in the trenches (personal discussions and recollection).

10. Martial arts instructors in the Los Angeles area included Beth Austen who was head of an Aikido dojo (early 1970s), and Patty Giggans of Karate Women (1980s).

11. Carol Downer and Lorraine Rothman were arrested for practicing medicine without a license, after they suggested to a woman that she could use yogurt to fight a yeast infection. Carol opted for a trial and was acquitted (see Córdova, 1973a, 4; Davis, 1991, 232-233).

12. As a member of the short-lived Association of Lesbian Psychotherapists, I proposed that many a "curandera" lives among the people of the (small) community she serves. Thus, like Myra, I suggested that as long as we observed ethical boundaries, we ought not be afraid of interacting in non-therapeutic settings with "clients." Therapists who ascribed to psychanalytic-derived methods such as power differentials between client and therapist, were not comfortable with this suggestion.

13. Wicca, sometimes spelled Wicce, is, according to Z Budapest, "The ancient law of women's wisdom" (Budapest, 1974, 8).

14. According to Joan Cassell, *Communitas*

...can be experienced at rallies and 'actions,' when a woman is marching with other women, surrounded by indifferent or hostile spectators; it may appear late at night when a small group of exhausted feminists is racing against a deadline to complete a project." This feeling of intense intimacy and trust, this "communion of mutually supportive women" can be an intoxicating experience (Cassell, 1977, 153).

Some instances where *communitas* manifested include: portions of the West Coast Lesbian Conference (1973), The Margie, Chris, Vickie concert in Los Angeles (1974), the First March on Washington (1979), The National Lesbians Of Color Conference (1983) and the second LA Dyke March (1995).

15. Lisa Ben's 45rpm record, a lesbian adaptation of "Cruising Down the Boulevard" and "Frankie and Johnnie" was advertised in *The Ladder* (August, 1960, 25).

16. Women's music was most often composed and performed by white women and it did not speak about the lives and cultures of lesbians of color. Although their numbers were small, women of color musicians always added a missing dimension to the music program. During the early 1970s, women of color musicians (not all lesbians) included Carlotta Hernandez, Linda Bragg, and Ajida in the group Bebe K'Roche; Case (a Latin rock group); Liberty Mata in the group Isis; Naomi Littlebear (in the group Izquierda) and Mary Watkins and June Millington. Linda Tillery was the first woman of color to join the Olivia collective.

17. Womospace on Hill Street, is not the same as Womanspace, the art gallery/center on Venice Boulevard.

18. Jinx recalls that although she supported Sahl's right to free speech, she was part of a group that took offense at the content of his remarks. The group occupied the television studio and staged an overnight sit-in (Jinx, interview; see also LT 5/75,15).

19. In an interview with Del Whan, Gahan Kelley recalled "...the GCSC strike, that was awful. It divided the community. to this day there are people who won't be in the same room with each other because of the strike" (Gahan, interview). Although the audiocassette of this interview is dated 1976, it sounds as if Gahan is talking about an event that took place in the past. In 1976, the strike was still in effect. In any case, Gahan's sentiments were shared by others.

20. According to one of the plaintiffs, Lillene and Daphne provided (to the Center Board), a list of Center workers who were active in organizing against the Board (personal communication, 1999).

21. In August, 1998, I presented a slide show on Los Angeles lesbian history. I told the audience that *The Lesbian News* was founded after the group Lesbian Activists was denied access to the community media. Donna Cassyd, who was in the audience and who had worked on *Sister Newspaper* during that time, said that what she remembered was that Lesbian Activists had picketed *Sister*. She explained that *Sister's* stand against The Center, and those who did not

support the strike, was "on principle." I explained that I had traced the public record using both *Sister* and *The Tide*. Donna disagreed with my analysis that other factors and dynamics in addition to principle, had been at work.

22. For Joan, participation in the strike had been motivated by Lesbian Loveland dynamics:

I got involved with June [Suwara] just as the strike started and she was like a ringleader of the strike...I'd never been inside The GCSC...[that summer] we'd spend all morning and afternoon in bed and then we would go to the picket line from four o'clock to six o'clock... (Joan, interview).

23. Crossing the Center picket line was serious business as the following anecdote shows: One day I walked into the Center to get gas money for a confidential errand I was doing on behalf of the Center prison program. Travis Foote, who was part of ACW's management team was also there. She saw me and left. Knowing what the political climate was, I followed her back to ACW. When she got there, she ran into the building to report that I had crossed the picket line. What *she* was doing at The Center, never came up. I went into ACW and found Marisa, a woman of color on staff. I explained that I was on an errand I could not discuss, but one that ACW would, no doubt, totally approve of. I added that this kind of "tattling" could under different conditions, be very hurtful and even deadly. When I saw Travis years later, she was quite cordial and did not seem to remember the incident.

24. In 1974, the issues of race, gender and sexual orientation collided in the psyche of the Los Angeles

lesbian community. Patty Hearst, daughter of a newspaper magnate was kidnaped by a group called the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). The SLA group included Camilla Hall aka "Gabi" and Patricia Soltysik, aka "Soya" and "Mizmoon."

According to Judy Freespirit, "Mizmoon" had attended the 1973 conference at UCLA. Camilla and Patricia had once been in a lesbian relationship and were somewhat connected to lesbian networks in several parts of the U.S. They also were involved in various social causes, including prison reform.

At some point they joined the SLA. Patricia, who according to one source, was bisexual, was thought to be on intimate terms with the head of the group, an African American male (McLellan and Avery, 1977). Lesbian communities across the U.S. were ambivalent about SLA activity (Brody, 1985, 72; Córdova, 1974, 16). In L.A. some did not support the violence that the SLA had engaged in (LT 6/74,22), while others approved of the SLA demand that the wealthy Hearst Corporation give free food to poor people. In May, 1974, Patricia, Camilla, two other women and two males, died in a shootout and fire that engulfed the Los Angeles house they had barricaded themselves in.

CHAPTER SIX NOTES

1. When interviewing a former member of Chicago's *Lavender Woman* (LW) collective, researcher Dana Shugar found that the woman's "lack of memory" about why and how African-

American lesbians set up their own section in LW, "sits strangely in a narrative that recalls nearly every disagreement and certainly every strongly felt emotion" (1995, 75). Shugar's interpretation of this phenomenon is telling: "...I suspect that the vagueness of [her] memory had more to do with the fact that African American women used this section to challenge white lesbians' racism than it did with an actual inability to remember how such a section began" (Shugar, 1995, 75).

2. I worked with white-dominated lesbian groups to liberate resources for lesbians of color, and with co-gender gay/lesbian groups to liberate resources for lesbians.

3. Some unresolved issues between lesbians of color and white lesbians are based on resentments generated by what I call "cultural cannibalism." This includes use of Native American/Indian and African-derived practices in white lesbian rituals, and the adoption of Native American/Indian names by white women. Another practice is what I call "color collecting." This includes the objectification/exoticizing of lesbians of color by white lesbians (i.e. "I just love Hispanic women, I love their brown skin"). It also includes the practice of consistently dating women of color from a specific group.

Many women of color do not bother to communicate their concerns about racism to white lesbians, but do so to other women of color. In the 1970s and 1980s, white lesbians

generally only heard our misgivings at highly charged anti-racism workshops. However, since the percentage of white women who attended these workshops was as a whole, small, most white lesbians were not (are not) aware of (or concerned about), the deep and persistent divide between the races.

At anti-racism workshops and at conferences, many white women still try to sell us the "we are all women under skin, so why can't we get along?" approach. I suggest that that assertion may be true on Thursday, but that today is Monday, and we cannot avoid the hard work between here and there, if we plan to get to Thursday. See also Gómez (1997).

4. Los Angeles Lesbian "firsts" between 1970 and 1979 include: The first lesbian publication to have the "L" word on its masthead, (*The Lesbian Tide*, 1971-1980); and one of the longest surviving lesbian newspapers (*The Lesbian News*, 1975-). Creating the first (or second) known "gay" women's services center the (GWSC); being home to one of the longest-lasting women's bookstores co-founded by lesbians (Sisterhood, 1972-1999); hosting the first large lesbian conference (1973).

Los Angeles lesbians wrote the first successful proposal to create the first (and now one of the longest-lasting) alcohol recovery, education and prevention programs for lesbians (ACW). A lesbian law student in L.A. was instrumental in winning one of the first child custody cases

in the nation (1975). L.A. lesbians helped persuade NOW to pass a pro-lesbian resolution (1971), were instrumental in getting the IWY pro-lesbian motion passed (1977), and helped defeat the first major anti-gay proposition (The Briggs Initiative, 1978). They also organized one of the first "out" lesbians of color groups (1974), and the National Lesbian Feminist Organization founding conference (1978).

Los Angeles lesbians were instrumental in founding the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW), which organized the city's first funded community rape hotline. Los Angeles Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) was one of the earliest groups founded to protest media portrayals of violence against women. When domestic violence became a public issue, lesbians like Kerry Lobel worked with heterosexual women to obtain public funding for a network of battered women's shelters. Later, Kerry was also at the forefront of the movement against lesbian battering.

Los Angeles lesbians contributed theory on "looksism" (The Fat Underground) and therapy (The Radical Feminist Therapy Collective). Toward the end of the decade, it was lesbians at the Women's Building and the Gay Community Services Center, that were key activists in the movement to challenge the silence and secrets around sexual abuse. Other Los Angeles "firsts" include the first known lesbian publication in the U.S. (Vice Versa, 1947-1948), and the

first National Lesbians of Color Conference (1983).

5. For comparisons with lesbian activism in Chicago, see Brody (1985); for Atlanta see Chesnut and Gable in Howard (1997).

CHAPTER SEVEN NOTES

1. In the late 1970s, money in unprecedented amounts became available to fight homophobic threats and to develop and maintain co-gender projects. Judy Freespirit noted that this period saw the advent of the first paid gay (and lesbian) career activists (Personal communication, 1997).

2. In 1990, a small group of former MECLA leaders formed ANGLE (Access Now for Gay and Lesbian Equality). Membership was by invitation. According to David Mixner, the group raised "tens of thousands of dollars" for a number of political candidates who after meeting privately with an ANGLE committee, passed political inspection (Mixner, 1996, 202).

3. Terry who also served as Vice-President of The Center Board, pushed the Board to add the "L" word to the Center's name. When Terry insisted that the word "lesbian" precede the word "gay," she was told by the white, male Board President that the acronym LGCSC would sound like "some sort of Mexican dance, like 'El GCSC'." He agreed to support a move to add the "L" word if it came after the "G" word (personal communication, 1997).

4. According to Delia Rios (1997), the statistic that

lesbian and gay youth are three times as likely to commit suicide than non-homosexual teens is not an inference based on data. Rios noted that the statistic was an estimate made by social worker Paul Gibson who in 1989, wrote part of a task force report on teen suicide for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Joyce Hunter, a long-time youth LGBT youth advocate says that a trustworthy percent has not yet been determined. Gibson says he stands by the basic figure, and that what is most important is that homosexual teens are at high risk for suicidal behavior.

5. In 1988, a panel of seven lesbians appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show. Three were self-identified separatists, including one woman of color from Los Angeles. The separatists were the targets of criticism from both homophobic audience members, and lesbians who had watched at home, and who didn't like the separatists' appearance and politics (personal recollection).

6. According to Lynn Sheppard, a close associate of Rob Eichberg, the founder of "The Experience," Rob conceived the idea and "had been talking with some of us for years about [it]." Rob and Jean O'Leary (the latter was then head of National Gay Rights Advocates), announced the idea at the gay and lesbian "War Conference" in February, 1988 (personal communication, 1998).

7. One bumper sticker from that time period pointed out that "The Moral Majority is neither."

8. At the victory rally Jeanne Córdova "quipped" that this amount represented the "largest lesbian fundraiser ever" (Córdova, 1986b, 32).

9. Jim died in Los Angeles, in November, 1997, after a short illness.

CHAPTER EIGHT NOTES

1. At this time the term "lesbians of color" had not taken root in the minds of most white lesbian activists.

2. The first lesbian CEO, Torie Osborn was hired in 1988.

3. How Connexus got its name: At an organizing meeting at Del's house, Susan Schreiber and Judith Wright suggested that the new center should be named "something like what connects us, Connexus." I suggested that another x should be added to the name since the double "xx" chromosome was female, and that "Centro de Mujeres" should be added as a sign that we were committed to diversity (Personal recollection).

4. Later, SCWU moved their office next door to Connexus on Santa Monica Blvd in West Hollywood. At the time Jean Conger, SCWU's Executive Director and Lauren Jardine, Connexus' Executive Director, were in a relationship and this Lesbian Loveland connection facilitated collaborative efforts between the two organizations.

5. Since the 1970s, lesbians (both out and in the

closet) have played a prominent role in helping to create opportunities for women in the trades. Support groups and apprenticeship programs were developed to help maximize recruitment and retention of women in the trades. A Los Angeles lesbian (now lapsed), was one of the first women in the U.S. to attain journey level status in the electricians' union (personal recollection).

6. The incidence of sexual abuse has yet to be accurately determined. There are indications that the problem affects large numbers of women of all sexual orientations. Some mental health professionals and survivors agree that an estimate of 80% would not be too high (personal conversations). To illustrate the scope of the problem in the female population I have on several occasions, asked co-gender classes of between 19 and 50 students to raise their hand if they *do not* have a story to tell. In each class, only one or two women raised their hand(s).

By "sexual abuse," I mean everything from dealing with a male exposing himself, to ritual abuse (and I also include abuse perpetrated by women). Sexual abuse and its life-long effects are costly due to related consequences in the areas of domestic violence, substance abuse, and health and emotional problems. The prevention and treatment of sexual abuse has yet to become a public policy priority.

In 1978, an article in the *Lesbian Tide* excerpted data

from a brochure prepared by a N.O.W. Child Sexual Abuse Task Force and the Gay Rights Chapter of the American Civil Rights Union. Point: One study done in Oregon in the 1970s, found that 85-90% of the perpetrators were males who were "steadily employed, often married with children of their own" (Perspectives, 1978, 6). Point: 90% of all molestations are perpetrated by adult males on minor females (Perspectives, 1978, 6).

7. One debate in the areas of sexual abuse and rape, centers on the approach to victimization and recovery. Kimberly Caldwell, a black lesbian and survivor of incest and rape (LN 8/84, 35), and Shela (sic) Anderson, a therapist (LN 7/84, 36), both objected to certain statements made in an article by Shyrl Rice (LN 7/84, 28). They felt that Shyrl (who had also written articles on "Incest and its devastation") (LN 2/84, 30-31; 3/84, 28-30), was "blaming the victim."

Like Louise Hay who is noted for her work with people with AIDS, Shyrl was promoting the concept of empowerment through the often misunderstood concept of "responsibility." Hay sees responsibility as a means of (re)gaining power over a negative situation and one's life. The debate between those who see responsibility as a way of empowering survivors and those who see the approach as "blaming the victim" continues.

8. Sharon was sentenced to 5 years probation, 45 days

at an honor farm and 250 hours of community work at a center that helps families of missing children. She was also ordered to pay Maya Angelou \$100 a month for 5 years to reimburse her for the \$6000 Angelou had spent on detectives. Sharon was allowed visiting rights (Murphy, 1986b).

9. I facilitated this group while I was Director of Lesbian Central. While my lesbian feminists sisters were entrenched in the standard that the guilty party is the one who hits first, I felt that the issue was more complex. I did not think that lesbian battering, which was exacerbated by childhood sexual abuse and substance abuse issues, could be solved by simply focusing on one partner as the perpetrator and the other as the victim.

Lesbian battering was further complicated by the perception (both within and outside the community), that butches and lesbians of color were more violent than femmes and white women. The complexities of these stereotypes were illustrated in the case of a butch lesbian who was accused of murdering her African American lover (Galst, 1995).

10. The Westside Women's Health clinic is older than Suzann's clinic. Founded in the early 1980s, it was considered a "lesbian/women's clinic." Although the clinic is still in operation, it currently does not identify itself as lesbian-oriented.

11. One sign of changing attitudes toward lesbian health care was a grant from the National Institute of

Health for a national lesbian health needs survey (LN 12/86, 16).

12. The OLOC membership includes women who for the past three to five decades have been activists on behalf of social causes, including lesbian and women's issues, and who in their 60s and beyond, continue to develop new socio-political paths. For examples, see the film "Silver Threads," an article on lesbian aging by Shevy Healey (1995) and The OLOC Reporter, Fall, 1999, 8.

13. Donna later directed "The Women of Brewster Place" (LN 10/89, 3).

14. The first "out" lesbian to run (unsuccessfully) for a seat on the Los Angeles Board of Education was Sally Anderson (LT 2/73, 12).

15. Valerie was sentenced to 60 days in a half-way house, 1000 hours of community service and 5 years probation. She also had to repay almost \$7000 to FEMA and the City of Los Angeles (Washington Blade 5/2/86, 11).

16. The difference between prejudice and racism still hasn't "computed" in the minds of most white people. Racism is prejudice plus the power to implement prejudice and/or the opportunity to benefit from it. As William Bland explained: "being prejudiced is having ideas and preferences about different groups whether they be founded on stereotype [or not]. Racism relates to the actual power to be oppressive to a group based on the prejudice" (quoted in

Kingston, 1998, 1998, 40).

17. For a study of lesbian of color activism in Los Angeles and New York, between 1969 and 1994, see the Dissertation by Alice Hom (in progress) at Claremont Graduate University.

18. While attempting to integrate groups dominated by white feminists and lesbians, lesbians of color also worked to gain a voice in feminist, non-lesbian, women of color groups. The events at the The National Hispanic Feminist Conference in San Jose, illustrate some of the dynamics of this process (see Díaz, Amaro and Pérez-Córdova, 1980).

19. Merle Woo was denied tenure at Berkeley allegedly because of her radical politics (she was/is a socialist), her lesbianism and her support of student issues (LN 8/82,19). A lawsuit was filed and years later she was reinstated but again denied tenure. She now teaches at San Francisco State and is in poor health.

20. In 1980, an LOC subgroup for Latinas met for a short time. Latina lesbians felt the need to hold meetings where they could speak Spanish, listen to Latin music and relate to other hermanas. This was also a method of managing the unaddressed issues of lateral prejudice within the larger group. The "ladder of prejudice" was never-ending. In addition to racism from the larger culture, lesbians of color had to deal with the lateral prejudice between lesbian of color ethnic communities. Then, within their (our) own

groups there were issues of class, skin color, language, etc.

21. In Los Angeles, Aleida Rodríguez and her partner at the time, (Jacqueline De Angelis), co-edited several issues of *Rara Avis*, a journal of poetry. Local lesbian of color poets included Emma Pérez, Doris Davenport, Aiesha Jones and Thelma Thomas. I also want to note here that in 1984, Jeannette Silveira, then living in L.A., began publishing, *Lesbian Ethics*. The journal was meant to initiate "...a serious inquiry into our ethical foundations ...(since) there is inherent in lesbianism an ethic that separates us from the heteropatriarchal mainstream..." (MacPike, 1985, 56). Jeannette currently lives in Albuquerque.

22. Notable lesbian activists who are Jewish and who have been mentioned in this study include: Martha Shelley, Ellen Broidy, Joan Nestle, Robin Tyler (nee Arlene Chernick), Evan Paxton, Sylvia Kohan, Phranc, Arlene Raven, Simone Wallace, Cheryl Bratman, Myra Riddell, Betty Berzon, Joan Robins, Mina Robinson (Meyer), Sharon Raphael and some members of the Radical Feminist Therapy Collective and the Fat Underground.

23. Lesbian bed death: "the diminishing of genital sexual activity" (Laird, 1999, 72). According to Laird, various studies have found that lesbians who have been together for more than a few years, report less genital activity than other types of sexually active couples (i.e.

gay, heterosexual). Laird suggests that perhaps, many lesbians are more interested in exploring intimacy and alternatives to male definitions of sexuality ("penetration and orgasm") (Laird, 1999, 72).

24. One night in 1972, while I was the manager of the Sisters Liberation House, some of us decided to make a chart of who had slept with who that month. If we had tried to chart this topic over the course of a year, we would have run out of paper early in the process!

25. White lesbians are also in an asymmetrical quandary: fighting against homophobia and for same-sex rights (in alliance with sexist gay males), is not the same as fighting against sexism and for gender equality (in alliance with homophobic feminists). Lesbians of color are always faced with the race factor.

26. In locations such as Atlanta, the pornography and S/M wars were not as contentious (see Cragin, 1997, 305).

27. For pro and con views of S/M see *Coming to Power* (1981) and *Against Sadomasochism* (1982)

28. During the 60s, homophile lesbians in DOB also tried to "redeem" or dis-associate themselves from those who persisted in the butch/femme tradition (see Smith, 1989; *The Ladder*, various issues).

29. For a letter addressing some of these concerns see *The Lesbian News*, March, 1991, 54.

30. Before Rita Mae Brown ascended to the pantheon of

feminist deities, she wrote an essay explaining the difference between leaders and stars. "The lesbian movement and the women's liberation movement have confused leaders and stars...a star is a woman acclaimed as a leader by the media...a leader comes from the ranks of the movement..." (Brown, 1972, 20). The media toyed with feminist leaders while the movement tore them apart. During that time, one interview with Kate Millett in *The Lesbian Tide* was titled "Celeberity [sic] is a Death Rite" (Millett, 1975, 3). L.A. had no lesbian stars of national magnitude, but the trashing of "leaders" still went on.

31. Various lesbian elected officials have expressed concern about the amount of pressure that was put on them by the LGBTI communities. Elaine Noble, the first elected, out State legislator (1974-1978), noted that "Because I was considered the gay politician, I had not only more work, but got more flack, more criticism, more heartbreak from the gay community than from the people who elected me...If I were straight they [the LGBTI communities] probably would have thought that half of what I did was... terrific" (quoted in Rayside, 1998, 270). California State Assembly member Sheila Kuehl, seems to navigate the "multiple agenda" waters with less wear and tear.

32. For one discussion of why "Gay leaders don't last," see Jernigan (1988).

33. After I expressed my separatist views about various

subjects including AIDS during an interview with *The Advocate* (Retter, 1988), a number of gay males (and their lesbian friends), wanted me fired from my job as Director of The Center's lesbian program.

34. Sociologist Beth Schneider who has been tracking lesbian involvement in the AIDS movement, found that "Many lesbians have responded to the [AIDS] crisis with energy, time and money, but many lesbians (sometimes the same ones) resent that gay men who rarely showed any interest in women's health, now expect total commitment from lesbians..." (Schneider 1992, 171). Lesbian resentment is exacerbated by news that some gay men are now engaging in unsafe sex or what they call "barebacking" (see Peyser, 1997, 77).

35. In a letter to the LN, Suzann Gage explained that at her insemination clinic, insemination seemed to foster a "50/50 chance of having a girl or a boy" and she noted that sperm banks "have concurred with our experience" (LN 12/89,17).

CHAPTER NINE NOTES

1. See [Retter], 1988.

2. Activist Lydia Otero noted that when money became available for projects such as substance abuse and AIDS, many community members went to work in these projects, abandoning many worthwhile volunteer projects. They argued that their paid work qualified as activism (personal

communication, 1998).

3. Becalmed condition: "after achieving some growth and stability, [a movement's] goals are still relevant to society but its chances of success have become dim" (Zald and Ash, 1969, 471).

4. At the last CX dance (held at Friendship Auditorium), the mix of women present, suggested to me that against the odds, CX had succeeded in attracting a heterogenous sample of L.A.'s diverse lesbian community to a social event. During its short existence, CX had been most successful in working with white and Latina lesbians. It had also managed to raise the funds for a six figure operations budget (unusual for lesbian centers anywhere), and it had set a brief but inspiring example of what lesbians working together could do.

5. According to Michal Brody: "The strength of that identity [lesbian] was so fragile in those early days that we put enormous pressure on ourselves to forge a unity in lesbianism that disregarded anything else...when the time for conflict arrived, we had become so intensely involved in one another that the pain of discord was almost unbearable; and we had ignored the major differences for so long that we had no skills or common language to work with" (Brody, 1985, 15).

6. The late poet Pat Parker offered the following advice to white people who wanted to befriend her: "The

first thing you must do is to forget that i'm [sic] Black. Second, you must never forget that i'm [sic] Black" 1993, 470).

7. Torie Osborn's life path is one example of the pattern of changes undergone by a number of lesbian activists. In the late 1960s, while in college, Torie was active in various social movements. In the 1970s, she was active in the lesbian movement. In the early 1980s she went back to school, got an MBA, and went to work for the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. In the late 1980s, she became the first lesbian CEO of The [L.A.] Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. In the mid 1990s, she was the CEO of The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force for a short time, and now is the CEO of a progressive L.A. philanthropic foundation. Reflecting on her process, Torie explained that although her politics remained the same, "I wanted more money, and [to] be more professional, [I] got sober, some [of it] is age stuff" (Interview, 1997).

8. Some like myself, who ascribe to what Duane Elgin (1981) calls "Voluntary Simplicity," would beg to differ with this assertion. One can choose to live frugally as a method of being able to "afford" the practice of engaging in unpaid or low-paid activism with groups that do significant work and which have little or no funding.

9. For some veteran lesbians, the word "queer" generates a sense of *deja vu* back to the early 1970s, when

the term "gay" was supposed to include both female and male homosexuals. When lesbians saw how easily they were subsumed "under" the male agenda, they insisted on two terms ("lesbian" woman and "gay" man).

The flashback comes from sensing that in "Queer" environments lesbians are once again being subsumed under a y chromosome agenda. For those reasons, Amelia Hart expressed her aversion to the term "Lesbigay," explaining that, "The word is offensive to those of us who worked to claim 'lesbian' as our name, as our identity and as a reflection of our pride in our heritage" (Hart 1994, 19). The latter term may also offend Transgender and Intersex people.

10. Ironically, it was Torie who in 1989, officially dismantled Lesbian Central (LC), the lesbian-focused program at The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. She says that "LC stood in the way, it didn't fit." She felt that "it was time for women's services to be de-ghettoized...LC was a vestige of a separatist era...when you [Yolanda Retter] were there, LC still had vibrancy...it died a natural death after you left" (Torie, interview). Torie recalls that a male board member told her, "A woman has to kill the lesbian program." She closed LC with the intention of requiring that other programs at The Center serve the needs of lesbians (Torie, interview).

11. Six women founded Lesbian Avengers as a direct

action group in New York City in 1992. They use guerrilla tactics and humor, and espouse a combination of "pc" and "pi" ideology and politics. Their zaps and actions "established a new tone for lesbian politics - a post-ACT UP lesbian movement" (Schulman, 1994, 282). A number of cities now have Lesbian Avenger chapters and the wide range of activities of The San Francisco chapter, is an example of the postmodern style of lending a hand in many places over a period of time, rather than an in-depth dedication to a few issues (see also Wolfe, 1997).

12. One long-time activist of color who attended the 1991 Atlanta conference, noticed a troublesome new phenomenon. She saw lesbians of color using their power against other lesbians of color (personal communication, 1997). I also saw this tendency in a Los Angeles intra-agency dispute in 1998. In that case, women of color in administrative positions were "at odds" with grassroots line staff who were also women of color. In the end, the latter "chose" to leave the agency.

13. Arianne Haley expressed the commitment of unreconstructed woman-focused lesbian activists:

When all other women have given up hope; when all other women have silenced their voices; we will still be there, wearing our pink [sic] triangles and working for the equality of all women. Lesbians were at the start of the movement. Lesbians will be there to the end..." (quoted in Rothblum et al, 1995, 75).

The "pink triangle" is a reference to the triangle worn by male homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps. Lesbians were

said to have worn a black triangle, the one reserved for "asocials."

14. The community locally and nationally has also lost women to suicide: (i.e. Terri Jewell and Jean Swallow) and to homophobic homicide (i.e. Roxanne Ellis and Michelle Abdill).

CHAPTER TEN NOTES

1. Even in abeyance, lesbian activism, like lesbian relationships, is still an intense experience. As Leslie, my partner, who came out when she was 39, observed, "One year as a lesbian is the equivalent of three in the heterosexual world, maybe four" (personal communication, 1998).

2. Chesnut and Gable described the Atlanta lesbian group as "primarily young, white, [and] middle class" (Chesnut and Gable, 1997, 252).

3. Downward mobility was in some cases a choice made by lesbians who were willing to earn less money in order to have more time to work in the movement. The blue jeans and workshirt uniform was a resistant gesture to "dressing for the man." It was also convenient/practical attire for those living on the land or "taking care of business" in the city. Our sometimes literally "ramshackle" structures were a result our inability to raise funds, both from the lesbian community and from outside funding sources (see Magnus, 1998). With the short-lived exception of Connexus, L.A. lesbians did not financially support lesbian-specific

institutions.

4. In response to the "trashing" of lesbian feminists on an Internet lesbian mailing list, Barbara Bennett offered the following testimony:

Because of the women's liberation movement I have learned to take parts of my car apart...to explore my sexuality, to bear children when I wanted children, to dream and to realize many of those dreams. Learning to love women has helped me learn to love myself, and learning to love myself has made me ever so much more productive. Struggleing [sic] out of hetero-patriarchy has led me to question my place in the world in relation to other classes, races, cultures and different physical abilities; a deeply enriching experience, one I am very grateful for... (Euro-Sappho Mailing List, April, 4, 1997).

5. Arthur Stein noted that "Among the significant developments of the 1970s was the rapid expansion of the feminist movement" (1985, 12); while Linden-Ward observed that "The real legacy of the sixties was the internalization of feminism and other social ideals by many who did not join N.O.W. or other movements, let alone identify with radicalism" (1993, 443).

6. Auchmuty, Jeffreys and Miller noted that "Liz Stanley is firm in her conviction that lesbians are oppressed not because we are homosexual but because we are women who threaten patriarchal society by choosing not to prioritize men" (1992, 103). Any pro-woman assertions or unwillingness to collude with oppressive male behavior or demands are often interpreted as "male-hating" or "male-bashing." Reactive responses come from all segments of society, including the heterosexual, gay male, MTF, co-gender lesbian

and liberal lesbian sectors.

The conflict surrounding Mountain Moving Coffeehouse in Chicago, a woman-only space, offers an example of how advocating for women and women-only spaces is perceived as a threat. In that case, a MTF (male to female transgender person) insisted on attending events at the Coffeehouse. Ironically, the Chicago Chapter of the Lesbian Avengers (which does not allow men), wrote a letter in support of the MTF person. Musician and long-time lesbian (separatist) activist, Alix Dobkin wrote an article indirectly referring to the incident (Dobkin, 1998). Writing about Passover, Alix referred to the slavery of Jews in Egypt, and noted that the enslaved have no privacy or right to deny access to the "master." She also argued for the right of women to have their woman-only spaces, safe from the intrusions of Y chromosomes.

As a result of the article, Alix was "dis-invited" to speak at the Philadelphia Dyke March, another irony, since Dyke Marches are supposed to be events that an alternative to male-dominated Gay Pride parades. A third irony is that a few years ago, when the Michigan Women's Festival was rent by arguments over whether or not MTFs could attend, Alix visited the "Trans" camp in order to dialogue. See "The Alix Dobkin Free Speech Fight" web site at [http://www.grrtalk.net/dykefeminism/articles.html]

7. Bonnie Zimmerman (1997, 163), once wrote a tongue-

in-cheek description of the stereotypes used to describe a
1970s lesbian feminist:

"flannel shirt androgyne,
closed minded, antisex puritan,
humorless moralist,
racist and classist ignoramus,
essentialist utopian"

8. Dominant symbolic: "a corpus of attitudes,
expressions, discourses, and the value espoused in them..."
(Chow, 1993, 100).

9. I purposely end this study with a phrase brought
into the lesbian community during the 70s, by Wicca women.
It was (and still is) used to "seal" or affirm a hope,
endeavor or "work."

APPENDICES

A. List of Narrators

B. List of questions asked during interviews

APPENDIX A: LIST OF NARRATORS

All interviews were conducted by the author, with the exception of Gahan Kelley who was interviewed by Del Whan in November, 1976. All interviews were conducted in the Los Angeles area with the exception of Maria Díaz and Joan Robins, whom I interviewed in New Mexico.

Alix Dobkin 1996
Bobbi (Roberta) Bennett 1997
Deborah Johnson 1998
Del Whan 1996
Diane Abbitt 1997
Emily Gold 1998
Estilita Grimaldo 1996
Grace Bukowski 1998
Gudrun Fonfa 1997
Irene Martinez 1998
Ivy Bottini 1996
Jean Conger 1996
Jean O'Leary 1995
Jeanne Córdova 1995
Jinx Beers 1996
Joan Robins 1993
Jim Kepner 1996
Judy Freespirit 1996
Karla Jay 1996
Laura Durán 1998
Lauren Jardine 1995
Lillene Fifield 1994
Lucia Chappelle 1997
Lydia Otero 1995
Maria D. Díaz 1993
Marsha Salisbury 1996
Mary Smith 1998
Mina Meyer [Robinson] 1995
Myra Riddell 1995
Patty Harrison 1995
Robin Tyler 1995
Sharon X 1995
Sherna Gluck 1995
Sharon Raphael 1995
Shirl Buss 1996
Silvia Morales 1998
Simone Wallace 1996
Suzann Gage 1998
Terry Wolverton 1995
Torie Osborn 1997
Vera Martin 1998

APPENDIX B: LIST OF QUESTIONS ASKED DURING INTERVIEWS

1. Age
2. Ethnicity
3. Class background
4. What country did you grow up in?
5. When did you come out: to yourself, into the lesbian activist movement?
6. How did you get involved in the movement?
7. What groups, events were you involved in?
8. How did being a part of the movement affect you (personally, politically, etc).
9. What were (for you), some of the most memorable moments and issues of the movement during the 70s and 80s?
10. What do you feel were your contributions to the movement?
11. What political, cultural, spiritual activities are you involved in now?
12. What are your thoughts about the issues between lesbians of color and white lesbians?
13. Are lesbians born or socially constructed?
14. What are some of your thoughts about butch and femme?
15. What are some of your thoughts about separatism?
16. What are some of your thoughts about the lesbian civil wars? Which ones do you remember?
17. Other comments, topics.

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