

ABSTRACT

Title of Document:

CRAFTING QUEER IDENTITY,
BUILDING COALITIONS, AND
ENVISIONING LIBERATION AT THE
INTERSECTIONS: A RHETORICAL
ANALYSIS OF 1970S LESBIAN-
FEMINIST DISCOURSE

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This study examines how lesbian-feminists navigated the competing pressures of identity politics and coalition politics and confronted compounding frustrations, divisions, and exclusionary practices throughout the 1970s. Specifically, the study attends to the ways lesbian-feminists rhetorically recalibrated their identities in and through coalitional relationships with such social movement communities as women's liberation, gay liberation, and anti-war activism. In the process, they were able to build coalitional relationships with activists from other movements while retaining a space for articulating and bolstering their lesbian-feminist identities.

This study accordingly examines lesbian-feminist published writings and speeches given during conferences, marches, demonstrations, and political rallies between 1970 and 1980 to reveal how they crafted a space for lesbian-feminist politics, identity, and liberation from *within* coalitional relationships that also marginalized them. The project intersects the theories of public address, social movement rhetoric, intersectionality, identity politics, and coalition politics to examine the strategic interaction between coalition politics and identity politics in lesbian-feminist activism. In

particular, recalibration allowed lesbian-feminists to strategically capitalize on intersectionality in order to negotiate the tension between identity creation and coalition formation. Using the rhetorical strategy of *pivoting* to feature certain aspects of their identities with the various coalitions in mind, lesbian-feminists increased their visibility. They did so not only for the sake of promoting shared political goals and legitimizing lesbian-feminism, but also to confront social movement members on issues of exclusion, homophobia, and sexism.

As a result, *lesbian-feminism* came to hold a variety of meanings for women working in the second-wave women's liberation, gay liberation, and anti-war movements. At times, lesbian feminists upheld a separatist, vanguard ethic, which was defined in *opposition* to other identities and movements. Though empowering and celebrated by some as more ideologically pure, separatist identity formations remained highly contested at the margins of lesbian-feminist identity politics. With those margins clearly defined, lesbian-feminists strategically pivoted to enact political ideologies and preserve identity from *within* coalitional relationships. In the process, their discourse revealed a great deal about the relationship between identity politics and coalition politics in the context of U.S. social protest in the post-1960s era.

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by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2012

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To Kathy

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, to my advisor Shawn Parry-Giles, you coached me through this dissertation and in the process, prepared me for a lifetime of scholarship and archival research. Thank you for always offering sports metaphors to help me put every challenge into perspective. From the 5k of coursework, to the marathon of comprehensive exams, to the triathlon of a dissertation, you have been my solid source of support, intellectual growth, and feminist solidarity throughout my graduate career.

To all of the members of my dissertation committee, your support throughout this process has been invaluable. Trevor Parry-Giles, you have been an important source of support, laughter, and collaboration throughout my graduate career at Maryland. James Klumpp, you have been a true colleague through this process. Thank you for pushing me to think in new ways. I always felt empowered and re-energized after our meetings. Kristy Maddux, your feedback has always pushed me to think about my process as a rhetorical critic in new and practical ways. Your support has been central to my growth as a scholar. And to Nancy Struna, thank you for your positive attitude and friendly critique. You were an important part of my dissertation process.

This project would not have been possible without the help of many archivists and volunteers who managed the archival collections I used for my study. My sincere thanks go out to Rebekah Kim at GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, Angela Brineskele at the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives in West Hollywood, Mike, Chris, and Loni at ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles, the staff at San Francisco Public Library, Alexis and other volunteers at Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn,

Yvonne Carignan and the volunteers at the Historical Society of Washington, the librarians at the Library of Congress (especially in the Rare Books Division, the Microfilm Room, and the Manuscripts Division), Lynda Leahy, Sarah Hutcheon, and the wonderful women working two tables away from me at the Arthur Schlesinger Library on the History of Women at Radcliffe Institute in Cambridge, Brenda Marston and her colleagues in the Human Sexuality Collection at Cornell University Library, and Weatherly Stephan at the New York Public Library Rare and Manuscript Division. Finally, my thanks go out to Charlotte Bunch for opening her home to me and granting me access to her personal collection of speech files.

I would not have been able to complete the extensive archival research for this project without the generous financial support from several organizations. My thanks go out to the Phil Zwickler Charitable and Memorial Foundation for awarding me a 2011 Phil Zwickler Memorial Research Grant to support my work at the Human Sexuality Collection at Cornell University Library. I am grateful to the board members of the Organization for Research on Women and Communication (ORWAC) for granting me a Research Development Grant Level II to fund my archival research in Los Angeles. I would like to extend my thanks to the University of Maryland Graduate School and the Department of Communication for jointly financing a Summer Fellowship Grant to fund my research in San Francisco. Finally, thank you again to the Department of Communication for providing a Dissertation Support Grant and Course Release Fellowship to help me progress during crucial stages of my project.

My deepest thanks go out to my communities of scholars, friends, and family that sustained me intellectually and emotionally throughout this process. Thanks to those who

have pushed me in my own queer rhetorical scholarship, including Karma, Chuck, Tom, Heather, Michael, Erin, Jon, Emily, Dan, and many others. Thanks to all of my friends from 2010 NCA Doctoral Honors Seminar who continually support my work and celebrate every milestone with me, especially Natalie, Vincent, and Peter. Thank you to Maria, Julie, Michelle, and Genevieve for offering feedback on my writing at critical early stages. Thank you to my phenomenal group of current and former Maryland and Colorado State colleagues: Mara, Tim, Terri, Tiffany, Elizabeth, Sean, Jade, Belinda, Jessie, Beth, Mark, Tom, Ben, Heather, and Jim.

Thank you to all of my friends (you are all my family) for holding me in your hearts, celebrating the milestones, comforting me in low moments, and keeping me laughing all the way through. I could not have done this without you. Thank you Mara and Brendan, Lanae and Laura, Adam, Beirne, and Wes, April and James, Liz and Jackie, Dina and Jen (Finkelmark!), Sarah and Andy (the Funs!), Laura, and Heidi. Special thanks go to Katie, Campbell, Adam, and Beirne for sheltering and feeding me during research trips.

Thank you to my family. Mom, Dad, Evan, and Kyle, you never stopped believing in me. Thanks for taking my random calls and listening to me work through ideas. You all are the best. To the Patti family and the Plate family, your love, pancake suppers, and pie kept me going. To my little darlings Kirby and Yoda, your company and snuggles supported my spirit throughout my entire graduate career.

To my partner and best friend, Kathy, thank you for your never-ending love. Your faith in my ability to see this project through truly sustained me. You have been my rock and inspiration. I love you the most.

Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	vi
List of Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	1
1. Rhetoric, Identity, and Coalition: Creating Visibility in Social Movements	98
2. More than Women-Identified Women: Unpacking Lesbian-Feminist Identities in the 1970s	142
3. Building Coalition and Bolstering Identity: Lesbian-Feminists, Anti-War Activism, and Gay Liberation	234
4. “We Are Everywhere:” Lesbian-Feminist Visibility and Coalition Politics at the 1977 National Women’s Conference	313
Conclusion	402
Appendix A: Special Collections Consulted	433
Appendix B: List of Lesbian-Feminist Periodicals	435
Bibliography	436

List of Abbreviations

CGA	Chicago Gay Alliance
CLGR	Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights
CSLD	Christopher Street Liberation Day
CSW	Christopher Street West
DOB	Daughters of Bilitis
ECHO	East Coast Homophile Organizations
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
GAA	Gay Activists Alliance
GLF	Gay Liberation Front
HAL	Homophile Action League
IWY	International Woman's Year
LFL	Lesbian Feminist Liberation
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
NACHO	North American Conference of Homophile Organizations
NBFO	National Black Feminist Organization
NOW	National Organization for Women
NWPC	National Women's Political Caucus
SIR	Society for Individual Rights
WATW	Women and the War
WCLC	West Coast Lesbian Conference
WIW	Woman-Identified Woman

Introduction

It was the summer of 1977. Speaking to a crowd in San Francisco, Del Martin called upon her audience to support International Woman's Year and to send delegates to the National Women's Conference in Houston later that month. She asked her audience to consider the shared struggles of women and the gay community, linking concerns about the fate of the Equal Rights Amendment and gay civil rights:

Houston will be the next major battleground for human rights. It will mark the showdown of the Equal Rights Amendment, a fight neither the women's movement nor the gay movement can afford to lose. If the ERA fails, it will also be a failure for gays. If the country can turn its back on women who comprise 53% of the population, you can rest assured there will be little support for a bunch of queers who constitute only 10%.¹

For Martin, as for her partner and fellow activist Phyllis Lyon, coalition building was crucial to winning political and civil rights battles. Yet the relationships among these coalitions exhibited significant strain and ideological division, particularly as Martin and Lyon located themselves simultaneously within both the gay movement and women's liberation movement.

Jeanne Córdova similarly articulated the possibilities and limitations of coalitions a few years earlier in a speech at the Fifth Annual Anti-War Convention in 1972.

Córdova positioned lesbians and gay men as important allies for the anti-war movement.

She stated:

I am here tonight to speak about war. The war that I, as a gay woman face every day of my life, and the war in which so many Vietnamese and American people

have faced the last days of their lives. These are the SAME wars. Fought on different battlegrounds, camouflage [sic] with different illusions and myths, but perpetuated by the same principles.²

Uniting the oppression facing gay men and lesbians in the United States with that experienced by the Vietnamese, Córdova not only called upon the anti-war movement to fight the Viet Cong and the U.S. military but also the homophobia internally plaguing the anti-war movement. Her speech acknowledged the presence of lesbians and gay men and also shed light on the homophobia and exclusionary practices they faced within the anti-war movement itself: “We come to you and we come to our oppressors (and to those of you who may be both!) as angry, strong, and proud GAY women and men.”³ For Córdova, coalitions were tenuous, yet offered the crucial possibilities for gay men and lesbians to fight homophobia and oppression collectively in partnership with other U.S. social movements. Together, these examples demonstrate a range of lesbian-feminist perspectives on coalition politics that competed for ascendancy with identity politics during the 1970s, a decade that witnessed a significant growth of lesbian-feminist organizing, theorizing, and strengthening.⁴

Contextualized within the 1970s and the lingering politics of civil rights and New Left activism, this project examines the U.S. political discourse of lesbian-feminists who confronted ideological fallout resulting from coalition building and identity politics. They did so as lesbians and feminists at the intersections of gay civil rights, women's liberation, and other civil rights movements of the period.⁵ Recognizing the contested political and ideological terrain, many scholars and activists argued that lesbian-feminists had two basic options—either join with gay men to combat discrimination based on

sexual orientation or align with women involved in the emerging women's liberation movement.⁶ Much of the public discourse reveals, however, that lesbian-feminists forged a third interstitial space: crafting their own movement and identities while forging coalitions with other feminist, gay, and civil rights activist organizations. Yet, this group of women, identified as lesbian-feminists, were neither politically nor philosophically monolithic.⁷ Examining 1970s lesbian-feminist protest rhetoric consequently reveals a range of voices and the divergent protest strategies that such women employed to pursue local and national social change. Tensions between identity politics and coalition politics became more visible by the late 1960s. Lesbian-feminists sought to mobilize despite these tensions and negotiate legitimate spaces for a collective lesbian identity while selectively establishing coalitions with other social movement organizations in the pursuit of civil rights advancements more broadly.⁸

The history of lesbian social movement organizing in America is complex—a complexity enhanced by the multiplicity of identities at stake in such activism and the interlocking constraints facing activists as a community. In addition to systemic political, legal, medical, and religious barriers, these constraints included sexism within the homophile and gay liberation movements,⁹ homophobia within women's liberation and cultural nationalism movements of the time (e.g., Black, Chicano, American Indian), and classism and racism that permeated many New Left, gay liberation, women's liberation, and lesbian-feminist groups. Such challenges of identity and coalition practices evidenced the ways in which lesbian-feminists were marginalized within some coalitions on the grounds of sexuality or gender. Lesbian-feminist groups practiced exclusionary politics as well, however, often marginalizing persons of color, lesbian mothers, women

of lower (and upper) income status, as well as transgendered or transsexual individuals.¹⁰ This project interrogates the struggles involved in simultaneously working to build identities and coalitions and examines the ways in which lesbian-feminists also created productive spaces to craft identities and practice “interstitial politics.”¹¹ To understand how lesbian-feminists fought for gender and sexual justice in the 1970s, it is important to trace the historical context of the gender, sexual, economic, and racial oppression they faced both from dominant ideological forces and from within social movement groups that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s.

Historical and Hegemonic Definitions and Conceptions of Homosexuality

Early organization of gay men and lesbians in the 1950s did not happen by chance; the preceding decades witnessed shifts in gender roles in public life and cultural understanding of homosexuality.¹² Nascent fears about sexual inversion at the turn of the twentieth-century were fueled by challenges to gender roles and traditional norms of femininity that accompanied the suffrage question and shifts in expectations associated with manhood.¹³ These anxieties emerged precisely as feminists and “New Women” capitalized on expanding opportunities for economic and educational independence that provided freedom from marriage, motherhood, and other traditional gendered obligations.¹⁴

By the mid-twentieth century, a constellation of “elite discourses” reinforced by doctors, state and municipal authorities, and religious leaders, through medical research as well as legal precedent and legislation, furnished the majority of authorized knowledge about homosexuality.¹⁵ The concordance among the “institutionalized taxonomic discourses” shaped hegemonic cultural definitions of lesbian and gay sexuality and, later,

identity.¹⁶ Thus, as cultural prescriptions regarding “sex roles” naturalized and normalized heterosexuality, they defined homosexuality as an unnatural, abnormal perversion and provided an amply supported structure for disciplinary practices.¹⁷ Over the course of the twentieth century, dominant constructions of gender and sexuality developed and intensified, consequently shaping the ways in which women came to understand their own sexual identities. Lesbian-feminist activists in later decades not only needed to address the salient political and civil rights questions of the day, but also the enduring and contested constructions of “woman,” “homosexual,” and “lesbian” that emerged from the confluence of hegemonic discourses.

The medical model of homosexuality developed over time, beginning with sexological research in the late nineteenth-century. Sexology flourished as an academic field with the rise of the German university model in the nineteenth century and provided an avenue by which homosexuality could be formally studied.¹⁸ As a result, sexological researchers established the notion of the “sexual invert,” a formulation of medical and psychological understandings of homosexuality conflating sex, gender, and sexuality. The invert offered a unitary model of deviance that worked from the perception of an individual as “trapped” in the body of the other gender.¹⁹ The construction of the invert provided a distinct image around which cultural, medical, and legal conceptions of homosexuality converged with moralistic and religious discourses to discursively and materially uphold a “heterosexual imperative.”²⁰ As understood through the terms provided by medical discourse, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cultural assumptions of sexual deviance relied on visual markers of sexual or gender deviancy, marking effeminate men and “mannish” women as the epitomes of sexual inversion.²¹

Stereotypes of female masculinity and male femininity under the rubric of inversion provided a visual grammar for authorities in their efforts to maintain the boundaries of propriety and, ultimately, for queers in their attempts to find one another in an oppressive culture.²²

For men, economic and social shifts at the end of the nineteenth century resulted in the replacement of restrained Victorian manhood with a pugilistic masculinity, Gail Bederman maintains.²³ This transition from the “over-civilized middle-class businessman” to the “rugged,” “primitive,” frontier masculinity epitomized by the cowboy or rancher who lived the “strenuous life” constructed the effeminate man as the foil for newly dominant constructions of masculinity.²⁴ While effeminacy did not equal sexual inversion or homosexuality, visual markers drew from both popular cultural sources (e.g., men’s physique magazines), as well as from within gay and lesbian subcultures during the early twentieth century. For gay men in New York City, George Chauncey argues that the effeminate “nance” or “fairy” was visible and recognizable on the basis of an established set of codes within the community of gay men long before 1940.²⁵ Yet, because dominant conceptions of homosexuality were often predicated on male homosexuality, the visual grammars of gender performance and presentation ironically offered some lesbian women more leeway through invisibility.²⁶

Despite a lengthy history of women who loved women in the United States, the “lesbian” emerged over time through a variety of circulating authoritative medical, legal, and vernacular discourses.²⁷ Romantic friendship and female companionship were commonplace in America by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, perhaps best known through the “Boston Marriage.” Yet such relationships between women were

later heavily scrutinized as increasing media attention and wider circulation of medical and sexological discourses contributed to a growing concern about female closeness as potentially sexual and inappropriate, particularly in conjunction with other rejections of traditional femininity (e.g., cross-dressing).²⁸ Warnings against deviance and same-sex desire were extended to women promoting a feminist agenda in support of suffrage and other social reforms during the turn of the twentieth century.²⁹ Anti-feminists in particular warned about the “masculinizing” or “coarsening” effect that the elective franchise would have on women and womanhood with the rise of the public and political work of the New Woman; even feminists themselves were concerned with notions of incommensurability between femininity and feminism.³⁰ Thus, despite the lengthy history of romantic and erotic attachments between women, a growing concern about deviant sexual behavior changed perceptions of romantic friendships by the early twentieth century.³¹

After the First World War, the image of the “mannish woman” crystallized with Stephen Gordon, the main character in Radclyffe Hall’s, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928).³² A tragic lesbian figure in “the most famous and most widely read lesbian novel,” Gordon made the life of the female invert visible; her story also warned of the sadness and incompleteness of life as a result of acting upon or acknowledging such desire.³³ Moreover, the cultural prominence of “mannish” stereotypes rendered feminine lesbian women invisible as they conformed to societal standards of femininity. As gender roles and expectations adapted to wartime needs at home and abroad, sexual perversion, inversion, and lesbianism were conflated with other immoral sexual practices like

prostitution and criminal activity as part of a broader cultural desire to contain female sexuality during a time when roles and expectations were expanding.³⁴

By the time of World War II, the emergence of psychiatry strengthened established medical and cultural definitions of homosexuality predicated on certain modes of behavior and sexological definitions. Influenced, in part, by their affiliation with the military, psychiatrists wielded new authority to define and classify homosexuality as a mental disorder—classifications that were later codified in the first version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) in 1952.³⁵ The psychiatric turn in the medical model of homosexuality reinforced the criminal statutes used against gay men and lesbians across the country, despite the sensational release of the Kinsey reports in 1948 and 1953 that revealed widespread same-sex sexual behaviors and practices among men and women in the United States.³⁶ The combination of a strengthened psychiatric definition of homosexuality and criminalization associated with sodomy laws in the United States provided multiple avenues for “sexual surveillance” and discipline.³⁷ For gay men and lesbians, finding and creating community occurred in a context of constant peril and cultural restrictions.

In spite of such threats and obstacles, the World War II years were significant to the history of gay and lesbian activism and community building in the United States; military service and mobilization on the home front provided new sex-segregated work and social environments. The war fostered a vibrant underground gay and lesbian bar culture off-base³⁸ and provided lesbians and gay men with opportunities to find each other in new same-sex environments including units, foxholes, and the military base machine-yard. For many women in particular, military service, both at home and abroad,

offered freedom from the confines of traditional female domesticity.³⁹ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis contend that the war significantly impacted the emergence of lesbian identities.⁴⁰ In their collection of oral histories with working-class lesbians living in Buffalo, New York, the authors confirm that the war was a “critical period” for shaping lesbian identity when the once diffuse lesbian community “stabilized and flourished.”⁴¹ The war helped gay men and lesbians find each other and build community around shared sexual identity, resulting in a “watershed” moment for lesbian and gay rights.⁴²

Finding and establishing community occurred at great risk, however. The military’s concerns about lesbians increased the practice of witch-hunts and lesbian-baiting on U.S. military bases.⁴³ “Indoctrination lectures” within the military training regimen warned of the dangers associated with predatory and sexually-aggressive lesbians who preyed on unsuspecting, innocent women. The military chaplains and psychiatrists told female recruits that giving in to such advances signaled mental and moral depravity.⁴⁴ And, although military service functioned as a primary means for many marginalized groups to achieve expanded citizenship rights by showing their allegiance to the nation, for gay and lesbian men and women, such service often resulted in dishonorable “blue” discharges from the military. Discriminatory practices were codified with the passage of the G.I. Bill, the first legislative act that explicitly excluded gay men and lesbians from the privileges associated with military service and citizenship.⁴⁵ Consequently, gay men and lesbians returning home faced fewer educational and economic resources; the stigma of dishonorable discharge negatively affected their return to civilian life and exacerbated the already constant of persecution.

In the face of ostracism, some gay men and lesbians did not return home, choosing instead to settle in urban centers or off-base locations with an established gay and lesbian bar culture.

The “gay bar” provided crucial space for identity and community development, in spite of the ever present risk of police raids and legal challenges by state and local liquor boards. Nan Alamilla Boyd argues that the war expanded the bar culture in San Francisco in order to “accommodate the influx of gay and lesbian military personnel.” Dating back to the 1930s, she contends, bars created a community base from which to mobilize political activity, fostering communicative networks established among still “hidden” gay male communities.⁴⁶ While the bars provided crucial spaces within which gay men and lesbian women could find one another, they also provided easy targets for the police to arrest homosexuals en masse. Police departments and special vice squads targeted, raided, and arrested patrons of gay and lesbian bars, entrapping gay men and publishing the names of those arrested for cross-dressing and other charges associated with homosexuality.⁴⁷ For many gay men and lesbians dishonorably discharged from the military or arrested in police raids of bars, these years heightened awareness of their marginalized status.

The increasing concerns about homosexuality in the military and in commercial bar spaces following World War II expanded to include government service as well.⁴⁸ In the wake of the Kinsey reports that revealed the increased prevalence of same-sex sexual behavior, psychiatric and governmental officials still considered homosexuals mentally unstable and “emotionally unsuitable” for employment.⁴⁹ The ideological assumptions and practices associated with “domestic anticommunism” conflated homosexuality and

sexual deviancy, making “sexual transgression tantamount to treason.”⁵⁰ In an effort to codify these conceptions, the Senate formed committees to study and implement policies ridding the government of homosexual deviance and influence, exigencies that were heightened with the commencement of the Cold War.⁵¹ Senators Keith Wherry, a Republican from Nebraska and member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Clyde Hoey, a Democrat from North Carolina and member of the Senate Investigating Subcommittee, took leading roles in purging homosexuals from posts in the federal government. After six months of secret hearings, a report from the investigating committee held that “sex perverts” were “poor security risks and prime targets for espionage agents.” The State Department was specifically targeted for “mishandling” nearly one hundred cases where officials allowed employees to resign “for personal reasons” rather than noting the charges of lewd and indecent conduct in their permanent employment file.⁵²

Presidential discourse strengthened the conflation of homosexuality or “sexual perversion” with communism in response to the work of the Senate committees. In April 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed Executive Order 10450, which prohibited homosexuals from federal employment, citing their vulnerability and susceptibility to blackmail and sexual perversion as threats to national security.⁵³ One section of the Executive Order detailed the range of behavior or information that could be used to determine whether the “service of the person being investigated [was] clearly consistent with national security,” including:

- 1) Any behavior, activities, or associations which tend to show that the individual is not reliable or trustworthy.

- 2) Any deliberate misrepresentations, falsifications, or omissions of material facts.
- 3) Any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, *sexual perversion*.
- 4) Any illness, including any mental condition, of a nature which in the opinion of competent medical authority may cause significant defect in the judgment or reliability of the employee, with due regard to the transient or continuing effect of the illness and the medical findings in such case.
- 5) Any facts which furnish reason to believe that the individual may be subjected to coercion, influence, or pressure which may cause him to act contrary to the best interests of the national security.⁵⁴

While the executive order only once explicitly named “sexual perversion,” the discourse of mental illness and concerns about coercive tactics—the same ones used by local vice squads to entrap, interrogate, and expose gay men and lesbians—implicitly targeted homosexuals for federal persecution. The executive order resulted in purges of gay men and lesbians from various federal offices and strengthened the continued threats against visible gay community life in Washington, D.C. in particular.

The constellation of medical, cultural, political, and legal discourses constructed the definitions of homosexuality. Such definitions supported the structures of sexual discipline and containment that oppressed and disciplined gay men, lesbians, and *anyone* who challenged gender norms of the era. Military witch-hunts and blue discharges, the

development of vice squads, and the merger with Cold War foreign policy rhetoric demonstrated the deep and far-reaching power of those structures and discourses. And yet, despite the hardships that gay men and lesbians endured, those very challenges created the ground on which they began to forge a stronger sense of community and identity within the context of the Cold War.⁵⁵ By mid-century, battles for the right to patronize and congregate in particular public and commercial spaces, for the right to serve in the federal government, for the ability to walk down the street without risk of arrest, for the very right to *be* gay or lesbian and create community, unquestionably shaped the earliest homophile organizing.

Mobilizing Against Hegemonic Definitions of Homosexuality

In the face of mounting threats of bar raids, police entrapment, publicized arrests, and medically diagnostic discourses, gay men and lesbians organized “in defense of themselves.”⁵⁶ Thriving bar-culture nourished early political activism among gay men and lesbians; the establishment of formal “homophile” organizations in the 1950s also provided the early framework for what became a national network of gay and lesbian organizations in the 1960s.⁵⁷

During the 1950s, three organizations were established that provided educational assistance, referrals to various social services, and a place to gather without threat of arrest. In 1951, Harry Hay, Chuck Rowland, Bob Hull, James Gruber and Konrad Stevens established the Mattachine Society in response to the police threats against gay men in Los Angeles.⁵⁸ The organization initially hosted discussion groups dedicated to “unify[ing] isolated homosexuals” and raising the consciousness of attendees regarding their status as an “oppressed minority.” Later, Mattachine developed guilds within and

beyond California and expanded into academic studies of homosexuality, tracking vice squad arrests, and notifying others of entrapment practices.⁵⁹ Women were members of Mattachine, even assuming leadership positions in the San Francisco Bay area chapter; the primary networking, organizing, and other work related to the organization, however, still occurred in male-dominated circles.⁶⁰

That changed when four lesbian couples, including Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, founded Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in 1955, often considered the first lesbian rights organization in the United States.⁶¹ In the inaugural issue of the DOB's periodical, *The Ladder*, Martin listed several of the group's goals:

- 1) Education of the variant . . . to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society; by sponsoring public discussions . . . to be conducted by leading members of the legal psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.
- 2) Education of the public.
- 3) Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists, and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.
- 4) Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes, . . . and promotion of these changes through the due process of law in the state legislatures.⁶²

These goals, while limited to blending in with mainstream heterosexual society, were apropos for the 1950s, purposed with giving lesbian women a space of self-exploration

and a means to build community. By carving out a safe social space to gather, DOB provided an alternative to bars and alcohol, relying instead on coffee klatches, often known as “gab-n-javas.”⁶³ Though the organization remained small, several other DOB chapters were established in other cities across the country by 1959, including Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, and Providence.⁶⁴

Homophile organizations such as DOB, Mattachine, and the Los Angeles-based ONE Inc., formed for the purposes of education, self-help, and community building—a difficult task during the Cold War era of the 1950s and early 1960s.⁶⁵ Each strove to achieve its educational and rhetorical goals by publishing and distributing periodicals despite the risks of censorship and imprisonment. The primary publications from the groups included the gay male-focused *ONE*, published by ONE Inc., *The Mattachine Review*, published by Mattachine Society, and DOB's aforementioned monthly magazine, *The Ladder*.⁶⁶

These organizations gathered together a small community of supporters across the nation by way of subscriptions; yet, their membership was limited because many feared the consequences of receiving such homophile publications.⁶⁷ In fact, the early homophile groups made legal gains in the wake of harsh penalties for distribution of “obscene” material through the U.S. Postal Service. In 1954, for example, when the postmaster refused to distribute *ONE* because it was “obscene, lewd, lascivious, and filthy,” the organization successfully fought the objection by ultimately taking the case to the Supreme Court.⁶⁸ Legal threats were compounded by the practice of publishing mailing lists, akin to police blotters, which in effect exposed the presumably deviant readership of publications that addressed lesbian and gay audiences.⁶⁹ In one instance,

Lyon and Martin explain that when informed of an upcoming raid on the Mattachine offices where they published *The Ladder*, they hid their mailing lists in the back of their car to protect the identities and addresses of their closeted readership.⁷⁰ These specific threats amplified the challenges of connecting, educating, and expanding the communicative network for gay men and lesbians during the 1950s and 1960s as the lesbian and gay organizations moved from mobilization activities to a more heightened period of activism.

Envisioning Liberation through Identity: Social Movement Activism of the 1960s

The 1960s was a decade of significant cultural changes and challenges, often remembered as a time of “turmoil”⁷¹ and as an era that held the youthful promise of revolution. The decade was shaped by social movement activism and the presidential administrations of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon.⁷² Social movement activism emerged in opposition to civil inequalities and injustices and to increasing foreign policy exigencies dominated by the country's increasing involvement in Vietnam. These pressures sometimes resulted in legislation. Responding to civil rights agitation and pressure from congressional leaders, for example, President Johnson finalized efforts to pass the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.⁷³ Other presidents like Nixon chastised those who questioned their policies (e.g., his “Vietnamization” speech in 1969). Indeed, over the course of the 1960s, the country witnessed an increase in social movement activities involving African American civil rights activists, black nationalists, Chicanos, student movement activists, New Leftists, farm workers, anti-war protesters, feminist and women’s liberationists, and homophile and gay activists. These movements challenged the dominant structures of power to

eradicate inequalities relating to race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. As Todd Gitlin explains, this was an era where identity politics reigned, when America “spawned identities in abundance.”⁷⁴ Jill M. Bystydzienski and Steven P. Schacht contend that identity politics attend to the need for “particular self-identified groups to have a ‘room’ of their own within, or even outside of, more broadly defined movements.”⁷⁵ Grounded in identity politics, movements offered activists a sense of empowerment through creating a shared, collective identity based on similar experiences.⁷⁶

For some, the surge of identity politics during this decade catalyzed a crucial political cultural shift away from coalition work on behalf of a common good. Gitlin laments the movement away from the interests of a liberal democratic notion of “equality” toward a more divisive, sectarian, “us versus them” mentality of activism rooted in an identity location.⁷⁷ In addition to questioning the long-range political efficacy of identity politics, its critics also identify the limitations of creating a collective on the basis of a singular, static identity construct rooted in problematic binaries.⁷⁸ Others add that identity politics fail to consider movement activists who affirmed multiple identities, “promot[e] divisiveness,” and discourag[e] coalition politics.⁷⁹

As many of the movements during the 1960s mobilized against racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic oppression, these same inequalities emerged within the movements themselves; women, lesbians, gay men, and people of color struggled with the limits of identity politics. New movements created on the basis of identity often resulted from troubled and oppressed experiences within the activist movements of the 1960s, leading many women, including women of color and lesbians, toward new political and feminist consciousness. Consequently, the civil rights movements, the New

Left, the homophile and gay rights movement, and women's liberation provided political experience and new opportunities for activists in the 1970s, many of whom felt stymied by sexism, racism, classism, or homophobia.

The African American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which included black nationalist groups like the Black Power movement, were plagued internally by sexism and homophobia. Those oppressive forces silenced and limited black women and gay men who had long helped lead and sustain the movement.⁸⁰ The sit-ins, boycotts, and nonviolent protests of the African American civil rights movement during the 1950s reflected the political collaboration between prominent African American leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Bayard Rustin. According to John D'Emilio, Rustin dedicated himself to King's "emergence as a national leader," and was instrumental in implementing the March on Washington. And yet, his homosexuality and communist ties made him a threat to the civil rights ideas and activism advocated by King, with Rustin targeted by the FBI and civil rights opponents, including Strom Thurmond.⁸¹ D'Emilio contends further that during 1963 and 1964, King "debated with his advisors whether it was safe to bring Rustin onto the staff,"⁸² evidencing Rustin's ongoing battle over the "stigma of his sexuality identity." Rustin was prevented from being named director of the March on Washington "in no small part because of his homosexuality—and the fear that it would be used to discredit the mobilization."⁸³ Persistent homophobia within the African American civil rights movement and its leadership prevented Rustin from rising to a more prominent status, further demonstrating the silencing, exclusionary, and divisive power of such sexual discrimination.

Homophobia and sexism worked in tandem with the rise of Black Power, impelled by the release of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. By the mid-1960s, some black civil rights activists had grown impatient with the nonviolent and reformist strategies associated with equality and coalition politics and epitomized by King and Abraham Joshua Heschel.⁸⁴ Many transitioned toward a politics based on racial identity that celebrated notions of Black Power, which emphasized “self-determination and self-definition.”⁸⁵ Black Power’s racial-solidarity ideology strengthened in response to Moynihan’s report, which argued that “women’s familial authority” or “Black matriarchy” resulted in the “emasculatation of Black men” and “pathological Black families.” The reassertion of black male leadership presented the means to address such problems.⁸⁶ The report simultaneously supported militants’ emphasis on male leadership in the black community and within the home, reinforcing traditional gender roles. It called for black women to support the movement from within the home by giving birth and raising future militant leaders. Anne Valk argues that some women involved with WOMB, an extension of Black Power, took up the call by focusing on “fertility and nurturing that is necessary for black family and community growth.” Others bristled at the sexist and heterosexist implications of Moynihan’s report.⁸⁷ As such, the report dually provided a basis for solidarity and division among black liberation activists, particularly among the movement’s female activists.

It was in response to sexism within the African American civil rights and black liberation movements that women started to create their own organizations, including the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), The Black Women’s Liberation Group of

Mount Vernon/New Rochelle, New York, Black Women Enraged (BWE), and the Black Women's Liberation Committee of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (later the Third World Women's Alliance).⁸⁸ Many of these groups promoted a sense of identity politics, focusing on racial and gender identity as key aspects for membership. When opportunities for generating coalitions presented themselves, members often grew concerned about external, primarily white, threats to the movement. Valk notes that conventions that advocated coalition building, like the Radical Peoples Constitutional Convention (RPCC) in 1970, ultimately "bred contempt" and led to "retrenchment" within the confines of identity politics advocated by the Black Panther Party and others.⁸⁹ For these activists, engaging in alliances with women's liberation, gay liberation, or other New Left movements, threatened the very future of racial identity solidarity.

Inspired by the ongoing civil rights activism, the student movement crystallized in the early 1960s with the establishment of the New Left's Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the publication of "The Port Huron Statement."⁹⁰ The statement captured the New Left's central idea of "participatory democracy" and "catapulted SDS to national prominence." The student movement extended beyond SDS, however; John McMillian and Paul Buhle define it as a "loosely organized, mostly white student movement that promoted participatory democracy, crusaded for civil rights, and protested against the Vietnam War." Through participation in organizations like SDS, women found opportunities to engage in radical political activism during the 1960s. Such experiences with activism fed the later radical feminist consciousness-raising efforts of the late 1960s into the 1970s.⁹¹ Despite its stated tenets and ideals, however, the New Left also reified a politics of exclusion. The conflicts among members of multiple social

movement groups demonstrated the tension between politics rooted in identity and an emphasis on coalitional strategies. Paired with the early rise of women's liberation and radical feminism, these organizations and intersecting social movements provided the key sites of inter-movement controversy and support for identity politics during the decade.⁹²

The vibrant and increasingly radical social movements of the 1960s offered activist avenues for many gay and lesbian women; such groups also shaped the second decade of homophile activism that likewise moved toward a more radicalizing identity-based politics by the decade's end. Internal battles over identity politics and coalitional strategy gradually increased as the homophile movement experienced generational change.⁹³ Conflict over ideology pitted more radical/revolutionary commitments against reformist strategies as the younger generation undervalued the radical activism that preceded them.⁹⁴ For instance, in 1962, owners and employees of gay bars in San Francisco formed the Tavern Guild to “fight the system,” keeping a lawyer on retainer for anyone arrested in a raid.⁹⁵ The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, established in 1964, also “challenged concerned clergy and theologians to reevaluate their concepts about human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular.”⁹⁶ In addition, the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) reached out to gay men and lesbians regarding their rights and political status while attempting to educate members of the legal profession about homosexuality through the distribution of their handbook.⁹⁷ Radical and newly militant notions of identity politics also were emerging within powerful coalitions and among homophile organizations formalized by groups like the East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO) and the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO).⁹⁸

Within this increasingly radicalized context, the tactics of more senior homophile activists, still embroiled in ongoing battles for civil rights locally and nationally, likewise exhibited radical qualities. For instance, Barbara Gittings and Frank Kameny spearheaded the fight for the right of homosexuals to be a part of the civil service by picketing the White House. They also battled to eliminate homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* by directly confronting the American Psychiatric Association at annual meetings and creating supportive structures within the organization.⁹⁹ Similarly, in 1968, Kameny harnessed the popularity of civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael's phrase "Black is Beautiful" by coining the slogan "Gay is Good" later used by NACHO as the movement mantra.¹⁰⁰ These fights characterized the radical activist work of the older generation, often perceived by the younger generation as "assimilationist" among those who called for revolution and liberation by the end of the 1960s. During this period, gay men and lesbians visibly, vocally, and sometimes violently fought back against the various forms of oppression. According to historian Barry Adam, the rise of the New Left movements "engendered a militancy in the gay community that overturned the homophile approach" and the youthful Beat generation settling in bohemian districts of San Francisco and New York City "gave new life" to those places.¹⁰¹ New militancy, however, also intensified the ongoing abuse and raids on queer spaces.

By 1969, several high-profile police raids on gay bars fed an increasingly radical perspective on gay activism, culminating in the popularly identified watershed moment in the history of gay and lesbian activism, known simply as Stonewall—the uprising at the Stonewall Inn of Greenwich Village in November of 1969.¹⁰² While the importance of Stonewall in queer history is well supported and deserved, several historians destabilize

its centrality in three key ways. First, efforts have been made to re-center the narrative celebrating the bravery and activism of gender-queer and transgender people of color who were centrally involved in the riots at the Stonewall Inn.¹⁰³ A second set of efforts to de-center Stonewall point to key events that occurred in other locations some four years earlier. In challenging the persistent Stonewall-centric memory involving the “linear progression from homophile to liberation movement activism,”¹⁰⁴ Nan Alamilla Boyd argues that the police raid of a 1965 New Year’s Day costume ball in San Francisco sponsored by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual was a significant turning point for the gay community. Likewise, Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons mark the 1967 police raid of the New Year’s Eve gala at the Black Cat in Los Angeles and the first meeting of the Gay Liberation Front as evidence of historical watershed moments before Stonewall.¹⁰⁵ A third challenge disrupts its use as a marker of present and future queer activism. Scott Bravmann depicts Stonewall as a “queer fiction of the past,” which he critiques for eliding other identities and reifying the centrality of the gay male political subject within the gay liberation movement. While Bravmann and others work to privilege and recover the roles and voices of queers of color in the events at Stonewall, lesbians and lesbian-feminists constitute another key set of voices erased by the prominence of the Stonewall narrative. Thus, while the events at Stonewall galvanized a new, younger generation of activists, it did not change women’s marginalized existence within these new activist organizations.¹⁰⁶

Lesbians continued to face rampant sexism within homophile and fledgling gay liberation organizations, much like women in the New Left, civil rights, and cultural liberation movements and organizations. Not only did organizing often occur in gay male

networks, but lesbians within the organizations were often tasked with stereotypical “women’s work” (e.g., typing, cleaning, bookkeeping).¹⁰⁷ The perceived invisibility of lesbians during the earlier decades of activism had contributed to a sense of division between gay men and lesbians, complicating the unification of the community apart from issues they faced together, including discrimination in employment, public accommodations, and in medical and psychiatric diagnostics.¹⁰⁸ As the homophile reform movement shifted towards liberation and militancy throughout the 1960s, lesbians continued to face discrimination on the basis of their sex. These struggles over the empowerment and constraints of identity politics along with the possibilities and complexities of coalition politics in the activist era of the 1960s presaged the challenges of the 1970s.¹⁰⁹

The rise of the women’s liberation movement posed an ideological challenge to the sex roles and power relationship between men and women and produced internal strife among gay and lesbian homophile rights activists. For some lesbians, feminism was an obvious next step away from gay liberation because it “provided a legitimate site from which lesbians could critique the ‘institution of heterosexuality’ and create a positive self-identity.”¹¹⁰ D’Emilio notes that the development of a feminist consciousness “allowed DOB members to reinterpret the conflicts that occasionally erupted between them and gay male activists.”¹¹¹ Documenting the continued sexism in the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), activist Karla Jay accentuates “the sexism of some of the men,” which for her constituted “the biggest obstacle toward immediately and completely immersing myself in GLF.”¹¹² Similarly, when Jean O’Leary brought lesbian-specific issues (e.g., child custody struggles, visibility within the gay movement) to the attention

of male members of the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA) in New York City, the dismissal of her concerns as “trivial” “grievances” led O’Leary to leave the organization and establish the Lesbian Feminist Liberation (LFL). The situation for lesbians had not changed with the turn toward militancy and liberation.

Women’s liberation significantly impacted established homophile groups like Daughters of Bilitis, the largest organization for lesbians in the country. As some lesbians assumed an increasingly radical feminist political perspective, they encountered significant resistance from other DOB members. In addition to the limitations of national DOB’s narrow and “traditional” forms of political organizing, other concerns, including local chapter control, feminism, and issues of inclusion (e.g., transsexual membership), divided DOB members in chapters around the country.¹¹³ While some members saw the organization as an ideal space for lesbian-feminist activism, others considered it primarily “an organizational home for lesbians, aside from their feminist concerns.”¹¹⁴ These debates animated the development of new groups as DOB started to dissolve. For instance, when younger lesbian-feminist women revived the Los Angeles chapter in 1970, Jeanne Córdova served as the president and editor of the *LA DOB Newsletter*. Yet due to differences over feminist political goals, issues of inclusion, and a desire to build coalitions with other movements, Córdova left DOB and started the Lesbian Tide Collective and the lesbian-feminist periodical, *Lesbian Tide*. As similar shifts toward lesbian-feminist activism occurred in New York, these conflicts ultimately resulted in the dissolution of DOB.¹¹⁵ Such collapse reveals the challenges of difference and identity, inclusion and exclusion, coalition building and single-issue activism facing lesbian-feminists within both gay liberation and lesbian homophile organizations.

As sexism and internal division plagued white lesbian members of gay liberation, racism compounded those obstacles for lesbian women of color. Reflecting back, Barbara Smith explains, “Lesbians and gay men of color have been trying to push the gay movement to grasp the necessity of antiracist practice for nigh on twenty years.”¹¹⁶ Black gay men and lesbians shared a similarly long history, dating from 1920s Harlem to their often forgotten membership in civil rights and black liberation organizations.¹¹⁷ And yet, by the 1960s and 1970s, membership in gay rights organizations simultaneously provided new options for activism and renewed struggles associated with identity politics. At this time, many black lesbians were experiencing sexism within civil rights and black liberation movement organizations.¹¹⁸ They also reinterpreted their political involvement with both gay rights and civil rights movements through the lens of a developing feminist consciousness.¹¹⁹ Their shared experiences in multiple movements would later materialize in groups like the Combahee River Collective, established in 1977 as one of the first black lesbian-feminist organizations. The members of the Combahee River Collective produced a collective statement that crystallized arguments for a critical analysis of the social status quo by recognizing the intersections among racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia.¹²⁰ The earlier struggles for lesbians and lesbians of color were not limited to homophile, gay liberation, and civil rights movements, however, as they encountered obstacles within the women’s liberation movement as well.

Women’s Liberation, Ideological Purity, and the “Lesbian Issue”

Though feminist activity continued throughout the years after suffrage and through World War II, the emergence of the second wave of feminism occurred largely due to an intensifying ideological conflict and “rebellion” within established social

movements.¹²¹ Benita Roth argues that Black, Chicana, and white women faced sexism and gender oppression from male counterparts in the civil rights, black liberation, Chicano, and New Left movements, which “led to the emergence of organizationally distinct racial/ethnic feminisms” during the 1960s.¹²² Responding to sexism in the black liberation movement, for instance, black feminists took advantage of the “cracks in the social movement” to bring attention to “Black women’s race, class, and gender concerns.”¹²³ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues that the rhetoric of the women’s liberation movement involved stylistic and substantive elements, which coalesced “as a persuasive campaign, stylistically reject[ing] traditional notions of rhetoric; built upon the notion of ‘the interrelationship between the personal and the political.’”¹²⁴ This rhetorical action did not necessarily include all women or all feminists, however, as Lisa Flores points out in her study of Chicana feminists, leaving some to create their own spaces.¹²⁵ Still, Campbell’s analysis of women’s liberation rhetoric reveals the internal conflicts and tension that remained even after decades of feminist activity in the United States.¹²⁶

Like the earlier woman’s rights movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, conflict over strategy and ideology plagued women’s liberation during the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, it was this very conflict that helped generate the activism that ultimately urged the movement forward. The establishment of the National Organization of Women in 1966 provided a national platform for liberal feminists focused on personhood, equality, and a series of issues such as equal pay for equal work, childcare, and abortion rights. The feminist values espoused through the formalized organizational structure focused the effort on these moderate, pragmatic approaches, making changes within the system. Even as an organizational leader in women’s liberation, NOW practiced a politics

of exclusion by actively silencing lesbian voices in the development of plank issues and by purging lesbian leaders of NOW chapters in the late 1960s. The so-called “lesbian issue,” along with ideological differences and persistent homophobia, drove a wedge between members of the women’s liberation groups throughout the 1970s and undergirded exclusionary practices.¹²⁷ Many feminists during that time, including Betty Friedan, were concerned about a visible and vocal lesbian presence in the U.S. feminist movement. As Friedan explained her “conservative” viewpoint in the *New York Times* magazine, “It was both hurting and exploiting the women’s movement to try and use it to proselytize for lesbianism because of the sexual preference of a few . . . creating a sexual red herring that would divide the movement and lead ultimately to sexual McCarthyism.”¹²⁸ NOW leader Dolores Alexander explained that lesbianism was an “explosive issue;” that being called a lesbian “intimidated women,” she claimed in an interview with journalist Judy Klemesrud, and could “reduce them to tears.”¹²⁹ Several lesbian-feminists fought back, with Ginny Vida and Jean O’Leary of Lesbian Feminist Liberation calling Friedan a “fear-ridden anachronism, dividing women with her slanderous attacks on her lesbian sisters.”¹³⁰

By 1968, other feminisms and feminists branched out to pursue more radical perspectives, goals, and tactics, by establishing groups with varying organizational affiliations and political investments, including embracing lesbian membership.¹³¹ For example, the Redstockings were established as a radical women’s liberation group that affiliated itself with the radical GLF. Rita Mae Brown founded the group after she resigned from the NOW National Board when her calls to consider lesbian issues were repeatedly ignored. The Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH)

started as an “early politico group founded by Robin Morgan” and others on Halloween in 1968 and developed into a “guerilla theater and action group” specializing in zaps, which involved public demonstrations designed for high-visibility and media attention.¹³² Ti-Grace Atkinson also formed the radical feminist group known simply as The Feminists in 1968 to take on key oppressive institutions including marriage, love, and sex.¹³³ Some groups were more vocal in their denunciation of heterosexuality and subsequent embrace of lesbianism. These groups represented a stark contrast to the liberal, structured, feminists of NOW.¹³⁴

Even as lesbian-feminist activists struck up new coalitional affiliations with gay liberation groups, battles with sexism ultimately inspired their separatism. After working with the GLF, for example, the Redstockings quickly grew frustrated with the male-domination and sexist treatment by gay men and split off again to form the Radicalesbians.¹³⁵ They also created a subgroup called The Lavender Menace Group, taking its name from Betty Freidan’s dismissive quip about “‘the lavender menace’ that was threatening to warp the image of women’s rights.”¹³⁶ By 1971, Rita Mae Brown moved to Washington, D.C. to join Charlotte Bunch, Joan E. Biren, Ginny Berson, and others to establish the radical lesbian-feminist group called the Furies Collective.¹³⁷ In the first issue of the group’s short-lived periodical, *The Furies*, Ginny Berson explained the group’s broader goal of “building an ideology which is the basis for action,” in order to maintain a radical analysis of the patriarchal system—a system to which, she argued, other feminists “fell prey.”¹³⁸ The Furies considered themselves vanguards of the broader movement, unencumbered by the requirements of hetero-patriarchal society. As Sheila Tobias later reflected, “Logically, there ought to have been a natural alliance between the

two: feminists fighting for every woman's right to her personal sexual preference and lesbians recognizing how important the achievement of even a bare-bones feminist agenda would be for all women."¹³⁹ This alliance was not the case, however, as evidenced by the lesbian purges from the NOW chapter in New York and the NOW National Board.

By the early 1970s, lesbian-feminists, old and young, who sought social change in the United States faced multiple and compounding constraints in their pursuit of social change. On the one hand, they faced significant constraints from society writ large in the form of medical, legal, and cultural discourses that sought to define and confine them under the rubrics of traditional notions of gender and heterosexuality. At the same time, however, while working in the very organizations and communities seeking change, they experienced persistent and oppressive sexism, homophobia, racism, and classism. And internally, they practiced their own politics of exclusion by privileging the political activism of white, gender-normative, lesbian-feminists of economic means. Consequently, lesbian and lesbian-feminist women faced a complex political terrain as they positioned themselves to fight back on multiple fronts, engaging in both coalitional politics and the struggle for common identity and political purpose.

Project Details

The history of homosexuality, social movement activism in the 1950s and 1960s, and subsequent struggles over identity and membership form a nexus for a rhetorical examination of the ways in which lesbian-feminists navigated and constituted identities within the contested spaces of the gay, women's, civil rights, and liberation movements.¹⁴⁰ This study contextualizes lesbian-feminist discourse within the history of

U.S. social movements of the twentieth century, with particular focus on the political contestations of the 1970s and the shifting public conceptions of gender and (homo)sexuality associated with the protest activities of the gay and woman's liberation movements.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following two research questions. First, *how did lesbian-feminist activists rhetorically constitute identities and coalitions over the course of the 1970s and leverage them to strategically confront external and internal ideological constraints, political obstacles, and competing appeals to identity politics?* This question implicates the complexity of social movement politics as ideological and political dissent generated a myriad of rhetorical opportunities for lesbian-feminists to work within other movements in order to bolster their own identity politics. To answer this question, I examine the development of identity constructions lesbian-feminists articulated across an ideological spectrum in order to understand the competing definitions of "lesbian-feminist."

Second, this study seeks to analyze *how lesbian-feminists engaged in and responded to exclusionary politics and practices, assessing the ways in which such practices subsequently enabled and constrained lesbian-feminist protest rhetoric, identity construction, and coalition building?* This question acknowledges the prevalence of exclusionary practices and oppression in other social movements and recognizes that lesbian-feminist groups were not immune to such politics. As such, this study considers the ways in which lesbian-feminists constituted their own identities and unique lesbian-feminist liberation movements at the nexus of coalition politics and identity politics in

order to seek full citizenship status and/or renegotiate boundaries of lesbian identity and community in the United States.

As a public address study, this project concentrates on the ways in which lesbian-feminist women across the country engaged in a rhetoric of social protest by examining their published writings and speeches given during conferences, marches, demonstrations, and political rallies between 1970 and 1980. In the process, I analyze primary sources gathered from a variety of U.S. archival depositories, including the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Historical Society (San Francisco, CA), the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives (Los Angeles, CA), the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives (West Hollywood, CA), the Rainbow History Project at the Historical Society of Washington (Washington, D.C.), the Lesbian Herstory Archives (Brooklyn, New York), The New York Public Library (New York City), the Human Sexuality Collection at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY), and The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America (Cambridge, Massachusetts). The recovery effort focused on locating speeches, speech fragments, and essays produced by a wide variety of women who identified or worked as lesbian-feminist activists representing the broad range of contested fronts of feminist ideology and political strategy (e.g., liberal, radical, separatist) within the lesbian-feminist community. By covering this range of lesbian-feminist voices, this study addresses the lacunae in the historical and rhetorical trajectory of feminism and lesbian-feminist protest during the period.¹⁴¹ It contributes to a growing body of scholarship about lesbian-feminist history and the on-going recovery project of U.S. public address, which seeks to locate, publicize, and examine the discourse of marginalized individuals.¹⁴²

Extensive scholarship in history, sociology, American studies, women's studies, English, and political science, has concentrated on lesbian and lesbian-feminist history and activism by detailing lesbian identity and community development,¹⁴³ social movement organizing,¹⁴⁴ cultural production (e.g. lesbian-feminist publishing, lesbian pulp fiction, and women/womyn's music),¹⁴⁵ oral histories, biographical, and autobiographical accounts of movement activists.¹⁴⁶ Other studies also trace the ideological and political shifts of lesbian-feminist activism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with some attending to the feminist and lesbian activism beyond the coastal urban centers of New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and others seeking to recover the histories of lesbians of color, specifically black lesbian activists.¹⁴⁷ By addressing geographic, spatial, racial, and class disparities in feminist historical scholarship, such studies contribute to the growing literature on lesbian-feminist histories, cultural production, identity formation, and social movement activism.¹⁴⁸ While much scholarship has focused on lesbian and lesbian-feminist social and political organizing, Amin Ghaziani's *Dividends of Dissent* examines organizational conflicts among lesbian-feminists and gay men that resulted in multiple lesbian and gay marches on Washington.¹⁴⁹ Even this extensive scholarly corpus fails to take seriously the important role of lesbian-feminist protest rhetoric.

In spite of successful LGBTQ rhetorical anthologizing and expanding scholarship that utilizes speeches as sources for historical evidence, the need for a concentrated rhetorical analysis remains.¹⁵⁰ As Charles E. Morris III notes, a number of anthologists have uncovered a great deal of discursive and political production for historians and rhetorical scholars to appreciate and critically analyze.¹⁵¹ Even with these efforts, he

argues, the critical work of rhetorical analysis still needs to continue. And, while some studies reference public speeches and remarks made by gay and lesbian activists at highly visible events like the marches on Washington, the majority of the rhetorical analyses have turned to figures deemed central to queer history; with a particular emphasis on gay white men, a trove of public discourse from lesbians and lesbian-feminists remains virtually unexamined.¹⁵² Such exceptions include Lester Olson's work on Audre Lorde's speeches and Lisbeth Lipari's intertextual and intersectional analysis of Lorraine Hansberry's letters to *The Ladder*, which have begun to fill the gap within queer public address scholarship.¹⁵³ Beyond these focused studies, however, the majority of scholarship has treated speeches and public discourse either as evidence of lesbian-feminist cultural production or lesbian-feminist theorizing; other studies ignored such discourse altogether.¹⁵⁴

While lesbian rhetorical production within a queer historical context remains understudied, rhetorical scholars have long investigated the discourse of feminist and women's liberation activists. Following several foundational historical surveys of women's public address, Campbell's foundational treatment of the "rhetoric of women's liberation's" oxymoronic status in 1973 inspired scholars to follow suit in order to understand the complexities of so-called "second wave" feminist political rhetoric.¹⁵⁵ Rhetorical scholars began to examine lesbian-feminist discourse in the context of the feminist movement. Katherine Kurs and Robert Cathcart's early study acknowledged lesbian-feminism as part of women's liberation in the twentieth century and characterized lesbian-feminist rhetoric as "the source of rhetorical confrontation within the existing male system, a system which, for lesbian-feminists, included all the reformist groups and

many of the radical feminists.”¹⁵⁶ Their study, while helpful in establishing the importance of lesbian-feminist rhetoric, characterizes it solely within the context of second-wave feminism and interprets it as singularly confrontational. Tate’s study offered additional perspective on lesbian-feminist rhetoric by taking a constitutive approach.¹⁵⁷ More recently, Kristan Poirot has analyzed how lesbian-feminist activists like Kate Millet rhetorically navigated their relationship with the mainstream media in the 1970s¹⁵⁸ and how radical/lesbian-feminists contained the possibilities for liberation through woman-identification rhetoric.¹⁵⁹ Even as these studies have filled important gaps, in line with the broader recovery project within feminist public address scholarship, such work did not include an expansive focus on the contributions of lesbian-feminists.¹⁶⁰ A concentrated rhetorical approach to the lesbian-feminist public discourse from the 1970s has yet to be conducted, especially as such activist leaders traversed the contentious terrain of coalitional and identity politics.

My study thus addresses significant gaps in both LGBTQ and feminist historical and rhetorical scholarship. Lesbians and lesbian-feminists are often rendered invisible within the narrative of LGBTQ history, in part because many worked within other social movements (not always openly as lesbian), joined feminist collectives and organizational chapters around the country, or worked primarily within gay rights and liberation organizations that have received minimal attention.¹⁶¹ Within dominant feminist historical narratives, lesbian-feminists are often pigeonholed as radical, separatist feminists.¹⁶² While many ascribed to those political and ideological commitments, such a narrative undermines those who worked within liberal feminist circles or strove to build coalitions with other social movements. By emphasizing the centrality of language and

rhetoric to the history of such activism, I seek to recover and analyze the voices of lesbian-feminists in an effort to *queer* feminist history and U.S. public address, featuring the role of lesbians in gay liberation and civil rights activism. Identifying and tracing the rhetorical strategies lesbian-feminists employed in order to make their voices heard during the 1970s and beyond emphasizes the rhetorical possibilities that emerged despite (and in some cases due to) significant historical, political, and social constraints.

Theoretical Framework

This project will analyze the protest rhetoric of 1970s U.S. lesbian-feminists through the critical lenses of public address, social movement rhetorical theory, identity politics, and coalition politics.¹⁶³ In the process, the study assumes a constitutive perspective on rhetoric and its role in individual and collective identity formation for the purposes of social movement organizing and activism. First and foremost, my analysis of lesbian-feminist discourse begins with the perspective that “rhetoric matters” for understanding the contours of public life, political history, and social change.¹⁶⁴ I situate such public discourse in its multi-layered historical context in order to trace how the ideas, themes, and strategies regarding lesbian-feminist identity, social change, and activism circulated and shifted throughout the 1970s.¹⁶⁵ I turn to lesbian and lesbian-feminist archival materials as the source of the majority of my texts for analysis to challenge and contribute to the canon of U.S. public address. Embracing feminist and queer theoretical interventions and affirming commitments to intersectionality, I take the ideological turn by centering lesbian-feminist discourse, sexuality, and power, critically analyzing the historically marginalized voices of women and lesbians in the process.¹⁶⁶

Over the course of its history in the United States, “public address” has traditionally been described both as “a field of scholarly inquiry and a canon of great speeches.” As Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan explain, the field and study of public address has developed over time from a Neo-Aristotelian focus on platform oratory to a Wraghean study of speeches as indices of “intellectual history,” to its contemporary expansion to texts and contexts more broadly conceived.¹⁶⁷ Ernest J. Wraghe’s focus encouraged scholars to go beyond studying individual speeches *in situ* with a primary concern about persuasive efficacy by tracing the evolutionary “history of ideas” as expressed within a particular historical context.¹⁶⁸ The voices examined within this study contributed to a variety of political ideas associated with identity, collective action, and social change.

This study also utilizes social movement rhetorical theories to understand the ways in which lesbian-feminists agitated for social change within the interlocking contexts of U.S. cultural histories of gender and (homo)sexuality.¹⁶⁹ Social movements can be defined as collectives seeking to change, transform, or “reconstitute” societal norms, values, or power structures.¹⁷⁰ Taking a rhetorical perspective positions rhetoric as central to such efforts, focusing on the “rhetorical dimensions” of social movements by analyzing their “themes, strategies, arguments, ethos, values, [and] rhetorical forms.”¹⁷¹ J. Michael Hogan adds that such an approach “widens the scope” from a focus on individuals or leaders to “the analysis of argument on a large scale,” and the “collective, evolutionary, and dialectical processes” by which social movement discourse develops.¹⁷² Development does not necessarily occur in a linear fashion, however, as early social movement scholarship echoed sociological models of linear, progressive “stages” that

Leland M. Griffin named “inception, development, and consummation.”¹⁷³ Rather, assuming a collective, evolutionary, and dialectical approach to social movement rhetoric considers the shifts and changes over time, not necessarily within the confines of a progressive narrative. Stephen Lucas further contends that studying discourse “as temporal processes rather than static objects” and locating such analysis within multiple contexts allows scholars to more fully engage with the complexity of social movement rhetoric.

By utilizing John Angus Campbell’s conception of multi-layered “interlocking” and historically emergent contexts, I invoke these cultural histories as powerful and central contexts in the 1970s.¹⁷⁴ I am concerned with how these contexts enabled and constrained lesbian-feminist social movement activism in widely divergent ways, ultimately contributing to the diversification of strategies emergent from various coalitions with often-divergent ideological commitments. Thus, by simultaneously considering texts *and* multilayered contextual features, such an analysis is positioned to consider both “the *practice* of public culture” as lesbian-feminist activists sought out a variety of ideological commitments, coalitions, and collectives, and the “importance of textualizing ideas within a culture” in order to understand the nuances of those rhetorical practices.¹⁷⁵ This study will mark the development, shifts, and changes of lesbian-feminist ideas in the space of an eventful decade by focusing on speeches, written discourse, and archival materials that inform such discourse authored by several activists over the course of the entire decade.¹⁷⁶

Given its focus on primary sources, this public address study of lesbian-feminist discourse necessarily implicates the concept of public and public-ness. First, the notion of

public is embedded within the traditional emphasis on public address on orally delivered, written, and circulating discourse *in public*. This emphasis has called into question how the distinction between “public” and “private” is complicated over time, particularly for women. Feminist scholars have centrally challenged the veracity of a dichotomous relationship between public and private. In public address scholarship, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp explicate and re-frame the dichotomy between public and private when it comes to women’s public address.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, Susan Gal argues that notions of public and private are “tools for arguments about and in that world” with ideological implications.¹⁷⁸ Other scholars emphasize an audience-centered and constitutive perspective to study how rhetoric *creates* publics. Michael Warner differentiates the “social totality” inherent in the usage “*the* public,” with “*a* public,” which refers to a concrete audience to which discourse or a performance is directed.¹⁷⁹ Drawing upon Warner’s distinction, this study focuses on lesbian-feminist discourse that obliquely addressed “the public” by arguments addressing multiple social movement audiences or publics.

Queer studies have complicated the terms public and private as implicated in the lives of LGBT people. For lesbians and lesbian-feminists, the very notion of public was freighted with social, political, emotional, and material consequences. At the same time, as Lisa Duggan explains, during the 1970s gay liberation’s “emphasis of political activism shifted away from arguments for privacy as autonomy, and toward public visibility and publicity.”¹⁸⁰ The notions of what was public and private in terms of 1970s lesbian-feminist discourse is dually complicated by the governing norms associated with sex, sexuality, and gender, as their activist work sought to affirm “the personal is

political” and challenge those very norms. By studying public discourse, this study examines speeches, essays, and other discourse, some of which took place in public, was circulated to publics, communicated the existence of “a public” (e.g., lesbian-feminists), to call a public—lesbian-feminists—into being. Embedded in any consideration of public, public-ness, and publicity is the operation of power.

The ideological turn has challenged public address and social movement scholars to consider the importance of ideology, oppression, and power to texts and contexts. Accordingly, scholarship has brought issues such as gender, race, class, sexuality, nationalism, and colonialism to bear on historical and contemporary public address.¹⁸¹ The ideological turn calls upon scholars to “unmask and demystify the discourse of power.”¹⁸² Those taking the ideological turn have contributed to the field by re-theorizing conceptions of rhetoric in terms of ideology and power, confronting the discipline’s construction of the largely white, male, and heterosexual canon of public address as it privileges some voices at the expense of others, and even challenging the very notion of a canon itself.¹⁸³ By interrogating singular historical narratives and interpretations with a specific eye to discursive absences or silences, ideological critique animates the queer project in public address.¹⁸⁴

Queer theory and scholarship within rhetoric and public address brings sexuality from the margins to the center of scholarly analysis in order to “affirm otherness and difference,” challenge the dominance of heteronormativity, and fill a silent void surrounding LGBT and queer histories, experiences, and public presence in the U.S. culture.¹⁸⁵ Two definitions of *queer* animate this scholarship—as a definition of a sexual identity and as a theoretical perspective. In the first instance, queer can be used to denote

a non-normative sexual identity, in part to reclaim the painful epithet used against those who self-identified, or, at least, were perceived as gay or lesbian.¹⁸⁶ In the second case, queer theory works to “debunk fundamental identity categories by focusing on the historical, social, and cultural constructions of desire and sexuality intersecting with other identity markers, such as race, class, and gender, among others.”¹⁸⁷ Some scholars embrace queer theory by turning their focus to recovering and taking seriously gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer “material texts, performances, spaces,” histories, and voices to disrupt what Gust A. Yep calls the “violence” perpetrated by heteronormativity.¹⁸⁸ Morris answered Yep by calling for scholars to *queer* rhetoric and, more specifically, public address,¹⁸⁹ turning to queer sexuality as an analytical “prism” for public address research.¹⁹⁰ Specifically, as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people have been violently and systematically obscured or erased from the historical record, an important element of the queer turn in rhetorical studies and public address concerns the “recovery” of queer voices and identities from the past. Such an approach challenges the heteronormative practices of the archive and of the discipline while interrogating the processes of domination, exclusion, and political activism.¹⁹¹ This project aims to contribute by centering the rhetoric of lesbians and lesbian-feminist activists in their engagement with the social, political, and cultural landscape of the 1970s.

Given that this study is concerned with the ways that lesbians and lesbian-feminists utilized rhetoric to constitute individual and collective identities, I take a constitutive approach to examine the ways in which rhetoric shapes subjectivities, historical events, movements, and identities.¹⁹² I address and contribute to what James

Jasinski and Jennifer Merceica call the “interior” and “exterior” trajectories of constitutive criticism by studying the “multiple and competing constitutive rhetorics” in lesbian-feminist discourse.¹⁹³ Jasinski and Merceica argue that the majority of constitutive work focuses on “textual interiors” or “various discursive forms which inhabit or reside in the text” in order to “uncover the text’s constitutive capacity and its potential to shape audience identity, communal values, and social reality.”¹⁹⁴ In this analysis, I pair a concern with rhetoric’s interior with a text’s circulation and its role in ongoing debate within a community.

While the analysis of constitutive rhetoric within a text remains central, Jasinski and Merceica contend that scholars should also consider rhetorical “exteriors.” The notion of “exterior,” or processes of “reception, circulation, and articulation,” acknowledges rhetoric as a “force in history” and supports the assumptions of Campbell and McGee that meanings are historically emergent through specific texts that, taken together, comprise a larger textual corpus for analysis.¹⁹⁵ By analyzing interiors and exteriors, I trace multiple and often competing constitutive invitations for identity and coalition formation as they occurred *within* texts and circulated *among* lesbian-feminists.

Thus, the ways in which identities are constituted within texts and then subsequently circulated and contested in other texts is a key dimension of constitutive rhetoric and my study of lesbian-feminist identity and coalition politics. Definitions of identity, with a keen eye on the role of rhetoric, offer initial insight into the possibilities and challenges associated with political activism around such constructs. Lisa Duggan defines identity as “a narrative” that “structure[s] and give[s] meaning to personal experience;” though “never static, monolithic, or politically innocent . . . they become

contested sources of authority and legitimation.”¹⁹⁶ Collective identities, according to Duggan, “forge connections among individuals and provide links between past and present, becoming the basis for cultural representation and political action.”¹⁹⁷ Similarly, Amy Gutmann theorizes “identity groups” as “politically significant associations” whereby group identity “provides a basis for individuals to develop a sense of their own interests in democratic politics.”¹⁹⁸ For members of social movements, rhetoric can constitute a “collective political identity,” through what Richard Gregg calls the consummatory or “ego-function,” whereby rhetorical messages are directed internally to form a cohesive group identity in an effort to effect social change.¹⁹⁹

Rhetoric thus offers one means of contesting the legitimacy, boundaries, and political goals of given individual or collective identity or identities. As such, the constitutive approach attending to identity stands to contribute to the literature attending to the tense relationship between identity politics and coalition politics in U.S. social movements. Specifically, just as rhetoric has the potential to constitute identities and posit them as the basis for collective political organizing, rhetoric can also constitute coalitional relationships with other movements or other members internal to a group or community.²⁰⁰ Jill M. Bystydzienski and Steven P. Schacht define coalitions from a sociological perspective as “fluid sites of collective behavior where the blending of multiple personal identities with political activism interacts with structural conditions to influence the development of commitments, strategies, and specific actions.” By investigating the ways in which activists imagine and construct coalitions, such an analysis opens a space for scholars to investigate the rhetorical dimensions of coalition building.

As these definitions demonstrate, rhetoric plays an important role in the formulation of individual, collective, and political identity groups. But, because of the multiplicity and contradictory nature of identities, individuals who find themselves at a nexus of multiple identities often feel pulled between the competing political commitments of different identity groups. Rhetorical scholars have explored the ways these intersections and challenges can be discursively navigated. Lisa Flores, for instance, offers a spatial metaphor of “homeland” to demonstrate how Chicana feminists articulated the complexities of their shared identities.²⁰¹ The identity function of constitutive rhetoric is thus complicated when social movement leaders attempt to appeal to narrowly-defined identities. Multiple identities demonstrate the limitations of the consummatory function of social movement rhetoric, and provide a helpful way to investigate the possibilities and challenges associated with constitutive rhetorics for lesbian-feminists and lesbian-feminists of color.²⁰² Furthermore, echoing Thomas Rosteck, Kent Ono, and John Sloop, this project analyzes vernacular discourses from within oppressed communities as individuals and groups worked to constitute identity and create social change by confronting powerful discursive formations in historical context.²⁰³

Finally, to attend to the complexity of multiple identities, this study utilizes *intersectionality* to examine the rhetorical constraints, possibilities, and limits of identity within the U.S. political context of the 1970s. Intersectionality represents an “analytical strategy,” “systematic approach,” and theoretical framework to understand the lives, behaviors, and discourse “rooted in the experiences and struggles of marginalized people” that highlights the ways in which “social groups are positioned within unjust

power relations” to “[add] complexity to formerly race-, class-, and gender-only approaches to social phenomena.”²⁰⁴ Coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1991, the concept of intersectionality built upon what Frances Beale called “double jeopardy” in 1970 to characterize the contemporary and historical experiences of African American women in the United States.²⁰⁵ The concept recognizes how an individual’s multiple social locations may impact social movement constituencies.²⁰⁶

By emphasizing “multiple axes of identity and multiple dimensions of social organization—at the same time,” intersectionality allows for the exploration of complexities of individual and group identities, “recognizing that variations within groups are often ignored and essentialized.”²⁰⁷ By considering the intersectional experiences and rhetoric of lesbian-feminists, I address concerns about the “lip service” paid to sexuality in communication scholarship deemed intersectional. Wenshu Lee laments that sexuality as a dimension of oppression has been routinely ignored.²⁰⁸ As a result, dimensions of oppression and identity, depending on their salience, must be accounted for in an *integrative* way. In other words, they need to be mutually constitutive—informing one another on individual and structural levels in order to move beyond an “additive approach,” merely pointing out “the mantra” of gender, race, and class.²⁰⁹ Utilizing intersectionality in this way accounts for “important complexities [that] have been lost as [scholars] have tried to narrow experiences and identities into singular and homogeneous nouns or monolithic, all-encompassing adjectives.”²¹⁰

Gloria Anzaldúa’s bridge metaphor captures this mutually constitutive relationship by emphasizing the “transformational” power of intersectionality, transcending an oppressive focus on *constraints* to consider the *productive* power of the

interstices. For Anzaldua, the bridge provides the connection and space of production or rhetorical invention, echoing what Kimberly Springer calls “interstitial politics.”²¹¹ Consequently, intersectional analysis challenges the persistent “splintering” “division” narrative of women’s liberation and lesbian-feminist history of the 1970s by considering the productive and generative power of the in-between spaces.²¹² This approach also considers the ways in which power materialized both externally and internally within lesbian-feminist groups through exclusionary practices that oppressed other lesbian-feminist members.²¹³ Toward such ends, intersectionality works in tandem with ideological criticism and theories of identity politics to understand how identities are multiple, contested, fluid, and imbued with power.²¹⁴

Informed by the theoretical perspectives of public address, social movement rhetoric, identity, intersectionality, and coalition politics, I argue that lesbian-feminists rhetorically built their activist communities and identities by merging identity and coalition politics. They navigated the competing pressures of identity and coalition as they engaged in women’s liberation, gay liberation, and anti-war movement activism. In those movements they faced compounding frustrations, divisions, and exclusionary practices throughout the 1970s. Despite those constraints, I contend that they rhetorically *recalibrated* their identities in and through coalitional relationships with those social movement communities.²¹⁵ By doing so, they were able to build coalitional relationships with movement activists who focused on homophile/gay liberation, third world liberation, black liberation, anti-war activism, and women’s liberation while retaining a space for articulating and bolstering their lesbian-feminist identities. They did so by using the rhetorical strategy of *pivoting* that allowed them to feature certain elements of their

intersectional identity with particular coalitions and different identity elements with other coalitions. Through such strategic pivoting, lesbian-feminists crafted a space for lesbian-feminist politics, identity, and liberation from *within* coalitional relationships that marginalized them. With gay liberation audiences, for example, lesbian-feminists frequently referred to their minority sexuality as a shared common ground, but frequently used that common ground to launch a critique of sexism and homophobia. In this way, while they articulated their coalitional unity and strength with gay men, lesbian-feminists sought to elevate the argument in ways that accounted for gender discrimination. As a result, *lesbian-feminism* came to hold a variety of meanings for women working in the second-wave women's rights, gay liberation, and anti-war movements. For some, lesbian-feminism was at its heart a feminist identity, for others, it was an identity rooted in an entirely different history of gay and lesbian activism, and for others, it provided a mode of advocating for broader anti-imperialist political goals. In the process, their discourse revealed a great deal about 1970s lesbian-feminist activism, intersectionality, and the relationship between identity politics and coalition politics in the context of U.S. social protest.

Chapter Precis

Engaging in the project of queering public address, I examine the ways in which lesbian-feminists sought to realize social change discursively through a focus on identity and coalition politics. Chapter One explores the tension between identity politics and coalition building within movements for social change. More specifically, it unpacks the rhetorical, historical, and theoretical work on identity politics in contrast and in light of coalition-based political strategies. By centering rhetoric within processes of identity,

subjectivity, and building coalitions, this chapter draws upon Aimee Carillo Rowe's concept of "coalitional subjectivity," which assumes that identities are already rooted in a politics of coalition and relation.²¹⁶ I further expand upon that concept by considering constitutive rhetorics of identity *in* coalition within the context of historical movements for social change. The chapter unpacks the generative power of the interstitial spaces—to form coalitions and craft new ground for identity formation. Finally I examine the particular identity challenges that LGBT activists addressed during the formative time of the 1970s. I focus on questions of *visibility* in addition to class, race, and gender *normativity* as they complicate the identity formation process for social movements. Considering how visibility and normativity operate on both tacit and explicit levels thus illuminates the multi-layered and complicated process lesbian-feminists ultimately faced in rhetorically constituting identities and building coalitions.

Chapter Two explores the process of identity formation and contestation among lesbian-feminists over the course of the decade. Starting with the Radicalesbians manifesto "The Woman-Identified-Woman," (WIW) I argue that while the "woman-identified-woman" offered an initial statement of lesbian-feminist identity in 1970, it was not the only constitutive rhetoric available for lesbian-feminists across the United States. In particular, because lesbian-feminists identified with movements *other* than and *including* women's liberation, they crafted articulations of identity in terms of those coalitions. They defined lesbian-feminism in the face of constraints like racism, heterosexism, and sexism within those coalitions and expanded their constitutive options for identity. I identify the 1973 West Coast Lesbian Conference as a touchstone where competing identity rhetorics emerged simultaneously, revealing how lesbian-feminists

sought to define themselves and their movement on their own intersectional, contested terms.

Chapter Three examines lesbian-feminist activism that affirmed the importance of identity politics, coalition politics, and co-gender activism. Analyzing the coalitional strategies at work in lesbian-feminist discourse during the 1970s reveals the complex rhetorical negotiations and struggles that took place at the intersection of identity politics and coalition politics. Specifically, I argue that coalitional relationships provided a means for lesbian-feminists to re-articulate their presence by using a pivotal strategy. Lesbian-feminists strategically *pivoted* to navigate the tension between coalition and identity politics, and *recalibrated* their identities in and through coalition.²¹⁷ With anti-war and gay liberation audiences, lesbian-feminists paired coalitional arguments with subtle recalibrations of identity to confront exclusionary practices in those two social movements. They elevated the terms of anti-war and gay liberation arguments in ways that accounted for gender, and at times, sexuality.

Chapter Four examines the National Women's Conference in observance of International Women's Year (IWY). Even at an unprecedented government-sponsored gathering of women in feminist and women's history, lesbians were still considered a *distraction* and *threat* to the political future of the Equal Rights Amendment and the goals of the conference itself. I contend that lesbian-feminists transformed the rhetorical constraints around the National Conference into a rhetorical opportunity for making a case for their own identity as U.S. citizens *through* coalitional politics. They enhanced their own visibility as coalitional partners with women's rights activists and countered the (expected) conservative backlash rhetoric. Captured in the phrase, "We are everywhere,"

lesbian-feminists bolstered their visibility to call attention to their historical and contemporary presence within American womanhood. This visibility signified radical political power and exemplified the strategic use of intersectionality to affirm difference, build coalitions. Even though not all lesbian-feminists agreed on the correct path for achieving social change (i.e., liberal/establishment vs. radical/liberationist perspectives), they all politicized their collective visibility at IWY. By engaging in an internal and external approach to activism at IWY, lesbian-feminists confronted the sexist and homophobic rhetoric by foregrounding their identities and demonstrating the generative power of coalition politics.

The concluding chapter addresses the two primary implications of this analysis. First, it unpacks the concept of *rhetorical pivoting* as it emerged in lesbian-feminist discourse as a flexible strategy to navigate the competing pressures of identity and coalition politics while confronting the exclusionary practices within women's liberation, gay liberation, and anti-war movements. It offered a mode of honoring the coalitional commitments while using that relationship as a platform to reinforce lesbian-feminist identities. Second, the conclusion addresses how this study contributes to the broader project of queer rhetorical studies and the ongoing recovery project within feminist rhetorical studies. In particular, this study reveals the importance of studying lesbian-feminist activists from an intersectional perspective, recognizing their multiple, concurrent, and generative relationships to social movements that extend beyond radical/separatist lesbian-feminism.

In many ways, the analysis of power is central to this project, as it has functioned

structurally, socially, politically, and served to construct certain hegemonic restrictions of lesbianism and women's identity throughout U.S. history. The constitutive function was crucial for gay and lesbian communities during the second half of the twentieth century, whose members fought against the very discourses that defined them as inferior, degenerate, and morally weak citizens while also pressing for social change. Yet, the same oppression lesbians faced from the dominant culture occurred within their own identity groups as exclusionary practices emerged in tandem with rhetorics of social protest.²¹⁸ In light of such practices, an analysis of discursive absences or silences reveals the limits of constitutive calls for identity that resulted in silencing certain voices within coalitional politics.

I locate the rhetoric of lesbian-feminists within a lengthy history of tensions between identity politics and coalition politics in the United States. By considering lesbian-feminist protest rhetoric within the broader history of ideas, the analysis attends to the ways in which they drew upon, extended, and redefined these ideas in relation to oppressive dominant ideologies and the project of identity construction. In the process, focusing on the intra-movement and inter-movement discourse “render[s] the power relations among subjects visible.”²¹⁹ As different groups competed with one another, they posited different identities and political goals for their members, sometimes exacerbating the divisions, at other times opening up productive spaces for coalition-building. By privileging public discourse in the study of lesbian-feminist identity construction and coalition-building activism, this contributes to the broader rhetorical corpus of lesbian-feminists engaged in social protest.

Notes

¹ Del Martin, "IWY Support Coalition Speech, summer 1977," Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, 93-13, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society, San Francisco, CA.

² Jeanne Cordova, "GAYS Out-Front at Anti-War Convenvention (sic)" *The Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 2 (1972), 2. The capitalization appears in the published version of the text.

³ Cordova, "GAYS Out-Front," 3.

⁴ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

⁵ Throughout this study I hyphenate lesbian-feminist in order to recognize the connection between these identities and to leave space for multiple interpretations of such an identity location. Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp define lesbian feminism as "a variety of beliefs and practices based on the core assumption that a connection exists between an erotic and/or emotional commitment to women and political resistance to patriarchal domination." I draw upon their definition in part, but aim to extend the reach to include those lesbian-feminists who may have conceptualized the political and personal intersections differently. Moreover, I aim to avoid using "lesbian" as an adjective to denote a "type" of feminist, a move that can be just as reductive and heteronormative. See Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism," *Signs* 19, no. 1 (Autumn 1993), 33.

⁶ Helen Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric: The Co-Option of the Rhetoric of White Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication*

28, no. 1 (2005): 1-31. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon frequently referred to this choice as a central dilemma facing lesbian-feminists. See, for example, Phyllis Lyon, "Speech at University of Missouri-Columbia," April 1975, Box 40, Folder 38, Lyon and Martin MSS; Phyllis Lyon, "Speech to the Humanist Society: The Lesbian, Key to Women's Liberation," 1974, Box 40, Folder 36, Lyon and Martin MSS, card 5; Del Martin, "'Lesbians and Gay Liberation' Speech at Bellingham, WA," 6 April 1973, Box 40, Folder 16, Lyon and Martin MSS.

⁷ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad*; Sheila Jeffreys, *Unpacking Queer Politics: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2003); and Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Echols' discussion of radical feminism has particularly undergone increased scrutiny, as her historiography did not account for the political and theoretical complexities within radical and cultural feminism.

⁸ Shane Phelan, *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989), 3. Phelan argues that a "rejection of liberalism" and an awareness of its "failure to account for the social reality of the world" provided common ground for many social movements of the 1960s and 1970s outside of the boundaries of identity, involving lesbian-feminists, the New Left, and civil rights.

⁹ GLBT and queer historians along with rhetorical scholars often name the social movements in terms of strategic differences or relation to the riots at the Stonewall Inn during June 1969. The earlier movement often referred to as the "homophile movement." It was both a way to challenge the behavioral connotation of "homosexual" with the positive "homo" (same) and "phila" (love), which also referenced the reform (versus

liberation) strategies that characterized the political efforts of this period. See, for instance, James Darsey, "From Gay is Good to the Scourge of AIDS: The Evolution of Gay Liberation Rhetoric, 1977-1990," *Communication Studies* 42, no. 1 (1991): 43-66.

¹⁰ Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 164-165.

Clendinen and Nagourney discuss the outrage of lesbian-feminists at the West Coast Lesbian Conference at UCLA in 1973 over the performance by pre-op transsexual Beth Elliot. The issue of transsexual lesbians threatened to tear apart lesbian-feminist groups in San Francisco and New York. See also "A Collective Editorial," *The Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 5 (1972): 21; and Greta Resenbrink, "Reshaping Body Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Cultural Politics of the Body, 1968-1983" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003), 3-5.

¹¹ Kimberly Springer, "Black Feminist Organizations and the Emergence of Interstitial Politics," in *Modern American Queer History*, ed. Allida M. Black (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001), 182.

¹² Over the last three decades, historians, sociologists, and rhetorical scholars have told the story of the emergence and development of the "modern homosexual" in America and Western Europe. While the importance of this historical work should not be diminished, many of the earlier narratives resulted in what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls "universalizing," positing homosexuality as an identity with a clear, linear, and progressive history. Scott Bravmann argues these kinds of studies "failed to account for multiple 'antagonisms' within that identity, including race, class, and gender, among other differences. More pointedly, historian George Chauncey argues that earlier scholars

who pointed to the riots at Stonewall as marking the “emergence of a gay culture” served to perpetuate key myths of isolation, invisibility, and internalization. In his study of gay male culture in New York before 1940, Chauncey challenges the myths by illuminating a viable and, in many ways, flourishing gay male community long before Stonewall. Nan Alamilla Boyd similarly confronts the centrality of Stonewall in her history of San Francisco before 1965, wherein she notes the vibrancy of gay and lesbian bar and tourist culture in that city during and following World War II. These critiques have opened new avenues of study, particularly localized and focused studies. By examining the public and political work and worlds of specific women in particular communities, and taking into consideration the multiplicity of identities that gay men and lesbian women experienced during the height of gay liberation. At the same time, these studies need to continue to address the cultural and ideological forces that constrained gay and lesbian people ontologically and epistemologically. As such, this study offers an intervention in the literature by contextualizing social movement efforts in order to fully understand the struggles internal and external to gay and lesbian activism, collaboration, inter-movement conflicts, and identity struggles during the 1970s. See Barry D. Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, rev. ed. (New York: Twayne, 1995); John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 26; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1990/2008); Scott Bravmann, "Postmodernism and Queer Identities," in *Queer Theory and Sociology*, ed. Steven Seidman (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 334-5, 344; and Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹³ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States: 1880-1917* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Belinda Stillion-Southard, "Militancy, Power, and Identity: The Silent Sentinels as Women Fighting for Political Voice," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2007): 399-418.

¹⁵ Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xiv; and Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 26.

¹⁶ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 3; Celeste Condit, "Hegemony in a Mass Mediated Society: Concordance about Reproductive Technologies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11, no. 3 (1994): 205-230; and Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 3 vols., trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁷ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 94.

¹⁸ Martin J. Medhurst, "The History of Public Address as an Academic Study," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 21.

¹⁹ Havelock Ellis, "Sexual Inversion in Women," in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1901/1915): 195- 263. Among the prominent sexologists,

Havelock Ellis was one who turned attention to sexual inversion among women. See also Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 45.

²⁰ Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 23.

²¹ Lisa Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America," *Signs* 18, no. 4 (1993), 792; Donna Penn, "The Sexualized Woman: The Lesbian, the Prostitute, and the Containment of Female Sexuality in Postwar America," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* ed. Joanne Meyerowitz, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP, 1994), 358-381; Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 58; and Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," *Signs* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1984): 557-575.

²² Throughout this project I will be using the terms queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and homosexual. I continue to reference homosexual, but only in terms of dominant and oppositional usages, or when directly quoting primary source material. While the terms lesbian and gay were most prominent during the era under investigation, I aim to follow scholars like Nan Alamilla Boyd in reclaiming the term "queer" from its use during this era as a homophobic epithet and as an alternative "umbrella" term in reference to non-normative sexual identity. Moreover, my use of "queer" specifically references broader projects within historical and rhetorical scholarship that point to moments of "queer world-making," which draws upon queer theoretical interventions in these disciplines. When appropriate, however, I do intend to use both gay and lesbian in

an effort to render the latter visible. In doing so, I follow the feminist critique that problematizes these umbrella terms as erasing racial, gender, and sexuality specificity. See Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 6-7; and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 199.

²³ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 18.

²⁴ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 184; and Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1905).

²⁵ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 5.

²⁶ Luibhéid, *Entry Denied*, xiv. As Luibheid notes, however, the visual “markers” of deviant sexuality relied on established stereotypes, thus, providing invisibility to women who conformed to norms of traditional femininity.

²⁷ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 48.

²⁸ Duggan, “The Trials of Alice Mitchell,” 793.

²⁹ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 47.

³⁰ Duggan, “The Trials of Alice Mitchell,” 792; Catherine Palczewski, “The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam: Visual Arguments, Icons, and Ideographs in 1909 Anti-Woman Suffrage Postcards,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 4 (2005), 375; See also Belinda Stillion-Southard, “Militancy, Power, and Identity,” 403; and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Femininity or Feminism: To Be or Not Be a Woman,” *Communication Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1983): 101-108.

³¹ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 48.

³² Newton, “The Mythic Mannish Lesbian,” 557-575. See also Heather K. Love, “‘Spoiled Identity’: Stephen Gordon’s Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History,” *GLQ* 7, no. 4 (2001): 487-519.

³³ Love, “‘Spoiled Identity,’” 487.

³⁴ Penn, “The Sexualized Woman,” 360, 363; Ellis, “Sexual Inversion in Women,” 195-6; and May, *Homeward Bound*, 94. Donna Penn argues that this conflation occurred in part due to the rising dominance of psychiatric authority as it constructed procedures for “diagnosis, hospitalization, surveillance, [and] interrogation” of women suspected of lesbianism, particularly in the military during and immediately following World War II.

³⁵ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 8, 128-129. While the psychiatric partnership with the U.S. government during the mobilization for World War II was initially aimed at reducing the number of service member hospitalizations after the war, it resulted in changes whereby recruitment psychiatric evaluations and interviews included explicit and implicit questions about homosexuality and sex role compliance. See also, American Psychiatric Association Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics, *Mental Disorders: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual: With Special Supplement on Plans for Revision* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1952).

³⁶ Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders, 1948); Alfred C. Kinsey et. al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia, PA: Saunders, 1953). Assumptions about sexual activity among American men and women were significantly challenged by the release of the Kinsey reports starting in 1948. The reports revealed the prevalence of

non-traditional and same-sex sexual experiences among large percentages of both men and women. Furthermore, psychiatric classification homosexuality as a disorder, disease, and problem reinforced and may have extended the reach of existing criminal statutes by reaching beyond behavioral indications.

³⁷ Allan Bérubé and John D’Emilio, “The Military and Lesbians During the McCarthy Years,” *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984), 762.

³⁸ Several scholars have conducted archival studies and oral histories of gay and lesbian service from World War II to the conflicts in the Persian Gulf. See Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*; Steve Estes, *Ask and Tell: Gay and Lesbian Veterans Speak Out* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Mary Ann Humphrey, *My Country, My Right to Serve: Experiences of Gay Men and Women in the Military, World War II to the Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990); Zsa Zsa Gershick, *Secret Service: Untold Stories of Lesbians in the Military* (Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books, 2005); Leisa Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Randy Shilts, *Conduct Unbecoming: Lesbians and Gays in the U.S. Military: Vietnam to the Persian Gulf* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

³⁹ Estes, *Ask and Tell*.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁴¹ Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 4. Their study provides a crucial intervention in lesbian historical research by explicitly considering working-class women. Their study of such lesbian communities in Buffalo, New York, follows a

geographic trajectory among historians interested in queer communities around the United States. In their focus on Buffalo, Kennedy and Davis also demonstrate the vibrancy of lesbian communities outside of the major metropolitan areas that tend to receive the bulk of scholarly attention, namely New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

⁴² Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*.

⁴³ Bérubé and D'Emilio, "The Military and Lesbians," 759-760. On military discharges during and after WWII, see Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane*; Leisa Meyer, "Creating G.I. Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behavior in the Women's Army Corps During World War Two," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992): 581-602; Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 262; and May, *Homeward Bound*, 194. These scholars note that witch-hunts and lesbian baiting was largely based upon persistent stereotypes that easily fit the unmarried women who volunteered for service in its masculine institution.

⁴⁴ Bérubé and D'Emilio, "The Military and Lesbians," 759-775.

⁴⁵ Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 232-240; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 44; Margot Canaday, "Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship under the 1944 G.I. Bill," *The Journal of American History* (December 2003): 935-957; and Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill of Rights), Pub. L. No. 78-346, Stat. 284.

⁴⁶ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 9. Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Kennedy and Davis concur, as working-class lesbian communities in Buffalo relied heavily on an extensive bar culture for maintenance of the vibrant connections there.

⁴⁷ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 213.

⁴⁸ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.

⁴⁹ Franklin Kameny, "Gov't vs. Gays: Civil Service Employment and Security Clearances," in *Creating Change: Sexuality, Public Policy, and Civil Right*, eds. John D'Emilio, William B. Turner, and Urvashi Vaid (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 189.

⁵⁰ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 40; Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 72.

⁵¹ Kameny, "Government Vs. Gays," 189.

⁵² "Report Asks Firm Action on Perverts," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 16, 1950.

⁵³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Executive Order 10450 "Security Requirements for Government Employment," April 27, 1953, *Federal Register*, 2489.

⁵⁴ Eisenhower, "Executive Order 10450: Security Requirements for Government Employment," emphasis added.

⁵⁵ The historical tendency to directly link the WWII experiences to fledgling activism during the post-war era has been complicated by other scholars who have argued for the significance of community building and bar culture before the war. They argue instead that the presence of gay and lesbian communities during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s resulted in fledgling political activism that is often overlooked. Still others, including Lillian Faderman, argue that the lesbian subject and identity, though present in different forms for decades in the United States, Europe and other global locales,

emerged as a social movement identity during the period following World War II. See Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 119; Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Elizabeth Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁵⁶ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 10; Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 76; and Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 273.

⁵⁷ Early homophile activists were not the only evidence of early organizing among the gay and lesbian communities, but they were important locations of activist work and efforts. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 58.

⁵⁸ See D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 58. According to D'Emilio, the name “mattachine” was suggested by James Gruber in reference to “mysterious medieval figures in masks speculated to have been homosexuals” (67). Mattachine was established after a short-lived effort in Chicago by Henry Gerbner, who founded the Society for Human Rights in the early 1920s. After attracting only six members, Gerbner’s arrest on charges of obscenity (later dismissed) brought the group to an end in 1925. See Ralph R. Smith and Russel R. Windes, *Progay/Antigay: The Rhetorical War Over Sexuality* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 16.

⁵⁹ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 72.

⁶⁰ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 72. D’Emilio notes that while Mattachine’s southern California membership was “overwhelmingly male,” its northern Bay area chapter boasted more lesbians members and leaders.

⁶¹ DOB was cofounded by Martin, Lyon, and three other lesbian couples: June and Marcia, Mary and Noni, Rose and Rosemary. Marcia Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2006), 3-5; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 273. During the first meeting with the group, Martin and Lyon explained that they decided to name the group Daughters of Bilitis. On the one hand, Daughters of Bilitis represented an ironic reference to the Daughters of the American Revolution, a conservative women’s group. On the other, it was a shrouded literary reference to French author Pierre Louÿs’ book of poems called *Songs of Bilitis* that referenced Sappho on the Greek island of Lesbos. As Lyon later explained, if they were ever asked about the nature of their organization, they could say it was a literary society. See Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972); Women Vision and Moonforce Media, *No Secret Anymore: The Times of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon*, produced by Joan E. Biren (JEB) and Dee Mosbacher (San Francisco, CA: Frameline, 2003); and David Mixner and Dennis Bailey, *Brave Journeys: Profiles in Gay and Lesbian Courage* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000), 23.

⁶² Del Martin, “President’s Message,” *The Ladder* 1, no. 1 (October 1956), 3. Reprinted in *Speaking for Our Lives: Historic Speeches and Rhetoric for Gay and Lesbian Rights, 1892-2000*, ed. Robert B. Ridinger (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2004).

⁶³ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 149.

⁶⁴ Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 150; and Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 74.

⁶⁵ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*; and Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*

⁶⁶ Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 273.

⁶⁷ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 115.

⁶⁸ *One, inc. v. Olesen* 355 U.S. 371 (1958); D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 115; Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 172; James C. N. Paul and Murray L. Schwartz, *Federal Censorship: Obscenity in the Mail* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 115-116; and Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History, The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 21.

⁶⁹ In many cases the Post Office and Postmaster General pursued legal action and imprisonment for publishing and distributing such material through the mail. In Washington, D.C., for instance, a District Court judge upheld the U.S. Post Office’s mailing ban of three male “beauty magazines” for distributing material he called “obscene to the Nth degree.” According to the Post Office spokesman, such magazines were “obscene, lewd, lascivious, indecent, and unmailable,” as they targeted “homosexuals, lesbians, sadists, masochists, and other deviates.” See Leslie Whitten, “Male ‘Beauty’ Magazines Ruled Obscene by the Court,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, August 16, 1960.

⁷⁰ Mixner and Bailey, *Brave Journeys*, 30.

⁷¹ Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies, The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 2. Bruce Schulman argues that the end of the sixties “signaled the end of the post-WWII era, with its baby boom and economic boom, its anti-communist hysteria, and expansive government . . .”

⁷² James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987/1994), 8.

⁷³ Garth E. Pauley, *LBJ’s American Promise: The 1965 Voting Rights Address* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007). These efforts were first discussed during the Kennedy administration.

⁷⁴ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked with Culture Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 134.

⁷⁵ Jill M. Bystydzienski and Steven P. Schacht, eds., *Forging Radical Alliances across Difference: Coalition Politics for the New Millennium* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 3-4.

⁷⁶ Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances across Difference*, 3. Bystydzienski and Schacht define identity politics as “discourse and social activism grounded in gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, or other fixed, often singular identities” that has served as the basis for social movements.

⁷⁷ Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 35; and Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, 7.

⁷⁸ Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 127; and Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, 4.

⁷⁹ Several scholars working on coalition politics challenge such critique as limited in and of itself. Linda Martin Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty argue that “Social movements of the 21st century require a new language of liberation,” that scholars “need new accounts of the relationships among our various identities; we also need new ideas about how to make common cause across differences of privilege and geography. We need new thinking.” Likewise, Stephanie Gilmore aims to challenge the continuing narrative of division and destruction at the hands of identity politics within feminist histories, and notes that despite the persistence of such narratives, productive and radical coalition-building took place in many communities during the 1960s and 1970s. See Linda Martin Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics: An Introduction,” in *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, eds. Linda Martin Alcoff, Michael Hames-Garcia, Satya P. Mohanty, and Paula M. L. Moya, (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006), 3; Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2-3.

⁸⁰ See Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1990).

⁸¹ John D’Emilio, “Homophobia and the Trajectory of Postwar American Radicalism,” in *Modern American Queer History*, ed. Allida M. Black (Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP, 2001), 89.

⁸² D’Emilio, “Homophobia and the Trajectory of Postwar American Radicalism,” 92.

⁸³ Eric Brandt, ed. *Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays, and the Struggle for Equality* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 5.

⁸⁴ Patricia Bizzell, "Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'Religion and Race' (14 January 1963)," *Voices of Democracy* 1 (2006): 1-14.

⁸⁵ Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 112. Advocated by leaders like Maria W. Miller Stewart in as early as 1832, W.E.B. Dubois in the early decades of the twentieth century, and later by Stokely Carmichael, these radical ideas undergirded calls for racial solidarity and separatism for black men and women. Cheryl Jorgenson Earp, "Maria W. Miller Stewart, 'Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall' (21 September 1832)" *Voices of Democracy* 1 (2006): 15-42; Charles J. Stewart, "The Evolution of a Revolution: Stokely Carmichael and the Rhetoric of Black Power," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 4 (1997): 429-46; and Kalen M. A. Churcher, "Stokely Carmichael, 'Black Power' (29 October 1966)," *Voices of Democracy* 4 (2009): 132-148.

⁸⁶ Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 121; Springer, "Black Feminist Organizations," 195, n6; and United States Department of Labor and Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action* (Washington, DC: The U.S. Department of Labor, 1965).

⁸⁷ Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 121; and Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), 13-14.

⁸⁸ Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 131; and Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 87-91.

⁸⁹ Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 131.

⁹⁰ Tom Hayden, *The Port Huron Statement* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1962/2005); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 4; and John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003), 5-6.

⁹¹ While former activists like Todd Gitlin argue that the New Left provided a "template" for women's liberation activism in the late 1960s, other feminist scholars point instead to the fact that women's liberation actually emerged *in response* to sexism in the New Left and civil rights movements. See Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 4; and McMillian and Buhle, *The New Left Revisited*, 6.

⁹² Echols, *Daring to be Bad*.

⁹³ Coalition building does not automatically mean reformist or anti-radical goals of political activism. Jill M. Bystydzienski and Steven P. Schacht contend if groups share radical goals, then "radical alliances have the advantage of bringing together seemingly diverse persons and groups around shared ideological beliefs, values, and principles." It is more likely that those engaging in coalition building, in contrast to those activists working to "defend the boundaries of identity," according to Todd Gitlin, may be *perceived* by others as "giving in," or "watering down" their goals. Regardless of such perceptions, coalitional work is not necessarily equivalent to less radical aims. See

Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances across Difference*, 7; and Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 147.

⁹⁴ When referencing younger or older “generations,” I draw from Nancy Whittier’s definition of political generations, dating from when members come into their political consciousness and activity. See Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women’s Movement* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995), 14.

⁹⁵ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 189. The Tavern Guild was a successful coalition of bar owners and employees, effectively joining together disparate neighborhood businesses and smaller niche communities that catered to or allowed gay and lesbian clientele.

⁹⁶ Phyllis Lyon, “No Title,” (1976), Box 41, Folder 21, Lyon and Martin MSS. In many ways, The Council on Religion and the Homosexual was what some scholars call a long-term association or alliance, building upon the initial coalition created to address specific issues facing gay men and lesbians of faith, and later, to address a broader range of issues related to the queer community. For more on alliances as long-term relationships among different groups, see Lisa Albrecht and Rose Brewer, eds., *Bridges of Power: Women’s Multicultural Alliances* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers & National Women’s Studies Association, 1990), 4.

⁹⁷ Martin and Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman*; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*.

⁹⁸ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 161. D’Emilio argues that ECHO was important in the solidification of the “militant wing” of homophile

movement. Through analyzing social movements, scholars have defined differences between moderate/liberal and radical/revolutionary approaches to social change. For this study, I draw from feminist and rhetorical scholarship to delineate definitions of moderate/liberal, radical/revolutionary, and intermediate political perspectives or strategies. Alice Echols, focusing on feminist activist histories, defines liberal feminism by its goal of “integrating women into the public sphere.” Such a definition was rooted historically in (previously radical) “personhood” claims that women should receive equal treatment under the law because of their humanity and their consequent similarity to men. Herbert Simons characterizes this set of strategies as “moderate,” to which he adds the style and tactics of the moderate, including a “pattern of peaceful persuasion, embodiment of reason, civility, and decorum.” Moderate strategies are suited to working within the established system, what Simons describes as a willingness to “adapt to the listener’s needs, wants, and values; speaks his (sic) language, adjusts to his frame of reference; reduces the psychological distance between his movement and the larger structure.” Moderate strategies are juxtaposed with “militant” or radical strategies. Simons contends that militants “act on the assumption of a fundamental clash of interests [between the movement and the larger structure].” In the history of feminism, moderate/liberal personhood claims collided with opposing arguments of “womanhood” that stressed woman’s difference from men, and thus, in need of additional “protection.” By the 1960s, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues that the tension between the two arguments necessitated a “second wave” of activism. In its later instantiation, however, the personhood claim worked to animate “liberal feminists” in pursuit of workplace, familial, and legal forms of equality. Conversely, claims to the unique differences between women

and men fueled radical feminist claims that “women constituted a sex-class, and that transforming the entire “racist and patriarchal system” was the necessary goal of activism. Nancy Whittier argues that the definition of what qualifies as “radical” or not depends on the context, yet ultimately posits that use of the term “radical feminist” signified an important shift in collective identity from “women’s liberationist” with its links to the New Left, to an emphasis on building an autonomous feminist movement and women’s institutions.” This shift, paired with the growing “cultural distance between the women’s movement and the New Left and the growing lesbian presence” all “linked radical feminist collective identity more closely with separatism.” Whittier places separatism as an even more radical and revolutionary enactment of radical ideology. Whittier’s definition thus posits less radical women as connected to New Left movements from the era. Finally, Simons suggests the “intermediate” strategy as somewhere between the moderate and the militant, drawing upon the strengths of both and avoiding the weaknesses. This intermediate location functions as a bridge between the two “antithetical” sides of militant and moderate, and thus could offer a productive space for further study. See Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 3; Herbert W. Simons, “Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 1 (1970), 7-10; Campbell, “Femininity or Feminism,” 101-108; and Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women’s Movement*, 54, 62-63.

⁹⁹ D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 216.

¹⁰⁰ David K. Johnson, “Franklin E. Kameny,” in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context*, ed. Vern L. Bullough (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 214.

¹⁰¹ Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 73. Stonewall is often noted as *the* important moment of gay liberation over the earlier homophile movement that emphasized assimilation tactics.

¹⁰² For scholars who rely on this scheme see Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Darsey, “From Gay is Good to the Scourge of AIDS,” 47. See Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 6; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 156; Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past*, 68-69; and David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked a Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004).

¹⁰³ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008); Riki Wilchins, “A Woman for her Time: In Memory of Stonewall Warrior Sylvia Rivera,” *The Village Voice*, Feb. 26, 2002, online at <http://www.villagevoice.com/2002-02-26/news/a-woman-for-her-time/>.

¹⁰⁴ Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 10.

¹⁰⁵ Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*, 156.

¹⁰⁶ John D’Emilio argues that, with the eventual dissolution of the national Daughters of Bilitis after a rough two year stint with radical feminists at the helm, “the lesbian wing of the homophile movement proved unable to cope with the intrusion of the new radicalism.” Instead, I argue that lesbians worked on constructing their own movement, a lesbian-feminist movement. D’Emilio’s statement forecloses the

opportunity for a liberal lesbian feminism or any other kind of lesbian homophile activism, by relying only on the dissolution of one organization despite the growth of others in its place. This discounts the efforts by other leaders to not necessarily branch out the homophile movement, but to move in a different direction. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 230.

¹⁰⁷ Martin and Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman*.

¹⁰⁸ Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ It was in this context that social movement scholarship emerged within rhetorical studies to make sense of the new activism during the 1960s, by tracing the rhetorical and protest strategies, and theorizing rhetoric in light of the contemporary examples. See, for instance, Franklyn S. Haiman, "The Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53, no. 2 (1967): 99-114; Michael Calvin McGee, "'Social Movement': Phenomenon or Meaning?" *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 233-44; Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4, no. 1 (1971): 71-91; Randall A. Lake, "Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, no. 2 (1983): 127-42.

¹¹⁰ Tate, "The Ideological Effects of Failed Constitutive Rhetoric," 9.

¹¹¹ D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 228.

¹¹² Karla Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 82.

¹¹³ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 170.

¹¹⁴ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 170.

¹¹⁵ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, 150, 171.

¹¹⁶ Barbara Smith, *The Truth that Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 127-128.

¹¹⁷ James F. Wilson, *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*, 72-78.

¹¹⁸ Springer, “Black Feminist Organizations and the Emergence of Interstitial Politics,” 181.

¹¹⁹ Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 127.

¹²⁰ Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement, April 1977,” in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (Latham, NY: Kitchen Table—Women of Color Press, 1983), 272-282.

¹²¹ Bonnie Dow explains the disagreement of scholars over the origins of the second wave of the feminist movement. It ranges “from ideological origins in the publication and subsequent success of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, in 1963 and women’s emerging rebellion within the New Left in 1965, to organizational beginnings with the founding of [The National Organization of Women] in 1966. See Bonnie J. Dow, “Fixing Feminism: Women’s Liberation and the Rhetoric of Television Documentary,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 1 (2004), 55. I strategically avoid identifying an “origin point” for the “second wave” with the publication of Friedan’s book. I do so to challenge the already established historical narrative and to emphasize the heteronormative and homophobic work Friedan’s book and subsequent rhetoric accomplished; Friedan openly, and famously, argued against the inclusion of lesbian

women in the larger feminist movement. The publication of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, provides a starting point for several feminist and woman's liberation scholars because she offered both a name and a description to the common experiences of many middle-class white women in America. This narrow definition limited the appeal for women of color and lesbians, and further supports the limits of the wave metaphor. See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963); Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 7; Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1945-1958," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994), 229; and Sheila Tobias, *Faces of Feminism: An Activist's Reflections on the Women's Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 58-70.

¹²² Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 5.

¹²³ Springer, "Black Feminist Organizations and the Emergence of Interstitial Politics," 181.

¹²⁴ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973), 501.

¹²⁵ Lisa A. Flores, "Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82, no. 2 (1996): 142-156.

¹²⁶ Campbell, "Femininity or Feminism," 101-108; and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, vols. 1 & 2 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989).

¹²⁷ Judy Klemesrud, "The Lesbian Issue and Woman's Lib," *The New York Times*, December 18, 1970.

¹²⁸ Betty Friedan, "Up From the Kitchen Floor," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1973.

¹²⁹ Judy Klemesrud, "The Lesbian Issue and Woman's Lib."

¹³⁰ Ginny Vida and Jean O'Leary, "End Lesbian Oppression!" *The New York Times* March 25, 1973. At the time of their letter, Vida was serving as vice-president for the Gay Activists Alliance and O'Leary as chairwoman for Lesbian Liberation Committee in New York.

¹³¹ Even though some radical feminist groups did not explicitly name their group as lesbian-feminist, their separation from NOW and other liberal feminists tacitly supported lesbian members.

¹³² Jo Freeman, "The Revolution is Happening in our Minds," *College and University Business* 48, no. 2 (February 1970), 63. Republished online at <<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/jofreeman/feminism/happening.htm>>

¹³³ Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 91.

¹³⁴ Tobias, *Faces of Feminism*, 157; and Dow, "Fixing Feminism," 56; and Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 388-389.

¹³⁵ See Sheila Tobias, 157; and Tate, “The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric,” 4. Helen Tate argues that the Redstockings changed their name to The Lavender Menace and then to Radicalesbians, but all groups spun out from the same Redstockings group.

¹³⁶ Susan Brownmiller, “Sisterhood is Powerful,” *The New York Times* (March 15, 1970), 140; Helen Tate, “Ideological Effects of Failed Constitutive Rhetoric,” 3; and Kristan Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman: Containment Rhetorics of Second Wave Radical/Lesbian Feminism,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 263. Susan Brownmiller and others countered that such concern about lesbian involvement represented a “lavender herring.”

¹³⁷ Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 238.

¹³⁸ Ginny Berson, “The Furies,” *The Furies* 1, no. 1 (January 1972), 1.

¹³⁹ Tobias, *Faces of Feminism*, 156.

¹⁴⁰ Here I avoid “marking” civil rights and liberation movements in order to capture, but not limit, the wide variety of cultural and ethnic groups fighting for civil rights and arguing for liberation during the late 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁴¹ It is important to recognize the materials I was unable to find, recover, or locate. The archival materials reflected in this study privilege the voices that were circulated in available periodicals. As such, the study does not account for the activist events, speeches, rallies, and other rhetorical performances that were not recorded, discussed explicitly, or among people who did not share those experience with a publication. In addition, there are still many documents in activists’ basements, in long-lost files, that have yet to be accessioned into a formalized or grassroots archive. These

absences make visible the politics of access, visibility, and memory that continue to impact the recovery of LGBTQ voices from the past. Efforts to gather ephemera and oral histories continue, but these limitations persist and directly impact the material analyzed for this study. Importantly, the queer turn in rhetorical studies involves “queering” the archive given that the archive demonstrates the power of heteronormativity’s “violence,” functioning as “terministic screens” simultaneously revealing and concealing (even erasing) queer sexualities within the historical record. See Charles E. Morris III, “Archival Queer,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 145-151. Cara Finnegan and Davis Houck speak to other effects of these processes for rhetorical scholars engaged in archival work. See Cara A. Finnegan, “What is This a Picture of?: Some Thoughts on Images and Archives” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 117-123; and Davis W. Houck, “On or about June 1988,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 132-137.

¹⁴² Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan, eds., “Introduction: The Study of Rhetoric and Public Address,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11.

¹⁴³ Leila Rupp, *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love Between Women* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*; Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*; and Martha Vicinus, “‘They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong’: The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity,” in *Lesbian Subjects: A Feminist Studies Reader*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 233-260.

¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*; Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters*; Yolanda G. Retter, "On the Side of Angels: Lesbian Activism in Los Angeles, 1970-1990" (Ph.D. Diss. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1999); and Emily Holod, "Politics of Accommodation, Practices of Integration: The Daughters of Bilitis and their Organizing around Differences of Race, Class, and Sexuality," (M.A. thesis, Sarah Lawrence College, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ Kathryn Tracy Adams, "Paper Lesbians: Alternative Publishing and the Politics of Lesbian Representation in the United States, 1950-1990," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1994); Margo Hobbs Thompson, "'Dear Sisters': The Visible Lesbian in Community Arts Journals," *GLQ* 12, no. 3 (2006): 405-423; Yvonne Keller, "'Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife So Passionately?': Lesbian Pulp Novels and U.S. Lesbian Identity, 1950-1965," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (June 2005): 385-410; and Katherine V. Forrest, *Lesbian Pulp Fiction: The Sexually Intrepid World of Lesbian Paperback Novels, 1950-1965* (San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press, 2005); Victoria Louise Nogle, "A Rhetorical Criticism of Women's Music and the Lesbianfeminist Movement," (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1984).

¹⁴⁶ Mixner and Bailey, *Brave Journeys*.

¹⁴⁷ These include Anne Enke's work on the women's navigation of commercial and recreational spaces for lesbian, feminist, and woman-centric activism in Midwestern cities, Anne Valk's examination of Black lesbian-feminist activism in Washington, D.C. during the 1960s and 1970s, and Kimberly Springer's analysis of Black feminist organizations during the 1970s. See Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Valk,

Radical Sisters; and Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-198* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance, D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*; Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers*; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*; Mixner and Bailey, *Brave Journeys*; Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*; Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; and Arlene Stein, ed., *Sisters, Sexperts, and Queers: Beyond the Lesbian Nation* (New York, NY: Plume, 1993); At the same time, these histories have overlooked much of the public speeches, conference activities, rally remarks, and other discourse that could further contribute to understanding the ways in which gay men and lesbians approached identity construction and political activism.

¹⁴⁹ Amin Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

¹⁵⁰ Jonathan Ned Katz, ed., *Gay/Lesbian Almanac* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1994); Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan, eds., *We are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Ridinger, *Speaking for Our Lives*.

¹⁵¹ Charles E. Morris III, "Archival Queer," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006), 148.

¹⁵² Amin Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent*. Harvey Milk has received the bulk of scholarly attention in rhetorical studies and in popular culture, and as such, has been venerated as a queer icon and hero.

¹⁵³ Lester C. Olson, "Anger Among Allies: Audre Lorde's 1981 Keynote Admonishing the National Women's Studies Association." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 3 (2011): 283-308; Lester C. Olson, "Traumatic Styles in Public Address: Audre Lorde's Discourse as Exemplar," in *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, ed. Charles E. Morris III (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007): 249-282; Lisbeth Lipari, "The Rhetoric of Intersectionality: Lorraine Hansberry's 1957 Letters to the Ladder," in *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, ed. Charles E. Morris III (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007): 220-248.

¹⁵⁴ Phelan, *Identity Politics*.

¹⁵⁵ Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron;" Campbell, "Femininity or Feminism;" Bonnie J. Dow, "Spectacle, Spectatorship and Gender Anxiety in Television News Coverage of the 1970 Women's Strike for Equality," *Communication Studies* 50, no. 2 (1999): 143-58; Bonnie J. Dow, "Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2000): 127-149; Bonnie J. Dow, "Fixing Feminism," 53-80; Sonja K. Foss, "The Equal Rights Controversy: Two Worlds in Conflict," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65, no. 3 (1979): 275-88; Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Diane Blair, "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5, no. 4 (2002): 565-99; Martha Solomon, "The 'Positive Woman's' Journey: A Mythic

Analysis of the Rhetoric of STOP ERA,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65, no. 3 (1979): 262-74; Martha Solomon, “Stopping ERA: A Pyrrhic Victory,” *Communication Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1983): 109-17; Jill Weber, “Gloria Steinem, ‘Testimony before Senate Hearings on the Equal Rights Amendment’ (6 May 1970).” *Voices of Democracy* 3 (2008): 162-181; Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman;” Gregg, “The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest,” 71-91.

¹⁵⁶ Katherine Kurs and Robert S. Cathcart, “The Feminist Movement: Lesbian-Feminism as Confrontation,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 6, no. 1 (1983): 15-16.

¹⁵⁷ Tate, “Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric.”

¹⁵⁸ Kristan Poirot, “Mediating a Movement, Authorizing Discourse: Kate Millet, Sexual Politics, and Feminism’s Second Wave,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 27, no. 2 (2004): 204-235.

¹⁵⁹ Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman,” 263-292.

¹⁶⁰ Bonnie J. Dow, “Feminism and Public Address Research: Television News and the Constitution of Women’s Liberation,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 346-52; and Bonnie J. Dow, “Feminism, Difference(s), and Rhetorical Studies,” *Communication Studies* 46, nos. 1 & 2 (1995): 106-117.

¹⁶¹ While I position my recovery of lesbian feminist discourse as challenging leader-centric approaches to rhetorical studies, I also recognize that the very privileging of public discourse may be perceived as contradicting such a goal. Bonnie J. Dow suggests, for instance, that the majority of women’s liberation discourse and rhetorical activity took place in small groups, essays, and collective-centric publications, I argue

that in addition to these “non-traditional” or non-hierarchical rhetorical activities, lesbian feminist women *did* speak in public, and to a wide range of audiences across the country. Thus, work to recover those speeches, published essays, and collective statements, is still important to understand the nuances of the complex histories of social movements during the 1970s. See Dow, “Feminism and Public Address Research,” 346-52. For more on how women’s liberation activists used “non-rhetorical” forms of rhetoric, see Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation,” 501.

¹⁶² Scholars note how these historical narratives alternatively point to lesbians as either the “magical sign” or the epitome of feminist theorizing or the reason radical feminism “declined” in the 1970s. For details regarding the former trend, see Katie King, *Theory in its Feminist Travels: Conversations in U.S. Women’s Movements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 124-137. Other dominant narratives blame the “deradicalization and demobilization” of women’s liberation in the mid 1970s on the rise of cultural feminism. Taylor and Rupp argue that such narratives attack lesbian feminism by conflating it with cultural feminism and ignore the persistence of radical feminist ideology throughout the decade and into the 1980s. See Taylor and Rupp, “Women’s Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism,” 32-33; Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women’s Movement*.

¹⁶³ My project focuses on the 1970s for three reasons. First, I hope to attend to the typically negative historical accounts of the decade by conservative and liberal historians and activists. Situated between the “civic minded political activism” of the 1960s and the conservative shift of the 1980s, the 1970s is often associated with “self-indulgence and decay,” and could be seen as either “the antidote to or the repudiation of the activist,

altruistic 1960s.” In this way, I hope to shed new light on the struggles that continued throughout the 1970s. This goal dovetails with the second: to challenge the feminist histories that have followed a “declension” model by arguing that radical feminism ultimately met its demise by the mid-1970s. I hope to add to the growing scholarship that considers the maintenance and building up of feminist activism over the course of the decade, particularly among lesbian-feminists, as they prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly powerful conservative Right in the United States. Third, I aim to consciously avoid bounding my study of lesbian-feminist activism by dates that already animate the dominant historical narratives of both women’s liberation and gay liberation. While I create what could be viewed as artificial boundaries to my study, in doing so I hope to challenge the centrality of certain “watershed” moments that have often rendered lesbians and lesbian-feminists invisible. For instance, such moments include the publication of Betty Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and events like the riots at New York City’s Stonewall Inn in 1969. See Resenbrink, “Reshaping Body Politics,” 2; Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*, 145; Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women’s Movement*.

¹⁶⁴ Parry-Giles and Hogan, “Introduction,” 4. For this study, I work from a definition of rhetoric as a “symbolic means of inducing cooperation” and identification “in beings that by nature respond to symbols.” By moving beyond the persuasive function rooted in Aristotle’s definition, “the faculty of observing, in any given situation, the available means of persuasion,” Burke’s emphasis on identification helps scholars taking a constitutive approach. See Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1950/1969), 43; Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic*

Discourse, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Vanessa B. Beasley, *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2004), 9.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen Lucas, "The Renaissance of American Public Address: Text and Context in Rhetorical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74, no. 2 (1988): 241-260; and John Angus Campbell, "Between the Fragment and the Icon: Prospect for a House of the Middle Way," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 346-376.

¹⁶⁶ Parry-Giles and Hogan, "Introduction," 3, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Parry-Giles and Hogan, "Introduction," 3.

¹⁶⁸ Ernest J. Wraga, "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 33, no. 4 (1947): 451-57; and Barnett Baskerville, "Must we all be 'Rhetorical Critics'?" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63, no. 2 (1977): 107-116. Baskerville added that part of the power of public address scholarship is the way scholarship further contributes to this history of ideas.

¹⁶⁹ David Zarefsky, "A Skeptical View of Movement Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 245-54.

¹⁷⁰ Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952), 184; Malcolm O. Sillars, "Defining Social Movements Rhetorically: Casting the Widest Net," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 46, no. 1 (1980): 17-32; and Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies," 3. Herbert Simons specifically uses the term "uninstitutionalized" to describe the collectivity working to change or transform the establishment, while Stephen Lucas

argues that such groups typically use “non-institutionalized means” to advocate for social change. On this point, David Zarefsky has argued that movements can emerge from within the “establishment” and still others have pointed to the prevalence of conservative or reactionary social movements seeking to halt change or reinforce the status quo. See David Zarefsky, “President Johnson's War on Poverty: The Rhetoric of Three ‘Establishment’ Movements,” *Communication Monographs* 44, no. 4 (1977): 352-373; and Kristy Maddux, “When Patriots Protest: The Anti-Suffrage Discursive Transformation of 1917,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 283-310.

¹⁷¹ Sillars, “Defining Social Movements Rhetorically,” 21. Sillars built upon Griffin’s call for critics to analyze “the pattern of public discussion, the configuration of discourse, the physiognomy of persuasion, peculiar to a movement.” See Griffin, “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” 185.

¹⁷² J. Michael Hogan, “Managing Dissent in the Catholic Church: A Reinterpretation of the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989), 400-401.

¹⁷³ Griffin, “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” 185. Malcolm Sillars specifically problematized the linear approach of social movement rhetorical scholarship, noting that it leads to a sequential narrative. Sillars argues that considering rhetorical characteristics or elements of social movements that are not “time-bound” sidesteps this problem. See Sillars, “Defining Social Movements Rhetorically,” 21.

¹⁷⁴ Campbell, “Between the Fragment and the Icon,” 346-376. Kirt Wilson argues that within public address scholarship, “context is invoked as a necessary category for the work of interpretation.” See Kirt H. Wilson, “The Racial Contexts of Public Address:

Interpreting Violence During the Reconstruction Era,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 205.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Rosteck, “Form and Cultural Context in Rhetorical Criticism: Rereading Wrage,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 4 (1998), 476, emphasis original.

¹⁷⁶ Campbell, “Between the Fragment and the Icon,” 346-376; Martin J. Medhurst, “The Contemporary Study of Public Address: Renewal, Recovery, and Reconfiguration,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4, no. 3 (2001), 500.

¹⁷⁷ Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp, “Lillies and Lavatory Paper: The Public and Private in British Suffrage Archives,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 229-249; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron.”

¹⁷⁸ Susan Gal, “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” *differences* 13, no. 1 (2002): 79.

¹⁷⁹ Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics (abbreviated version),” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4 (2002): 413.

¹⁸⁰ Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism,” in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, eds. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 181.

¹⁸¹ Some examples of this kind of scholarship include Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry Giles, *The Prime-Time Presidency: The West Wing and U.S. Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron;” Mari Boor Tonn, “Militant Motherhood: Labor’s

Mary Harris ‘Mother’ Jones, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82, no. 1 (1996): 1-21; and Jason Edward Black, “U.S. Governmental and Native Voices in the Nineteenth Century: Rhetoric in the Removal and Allotment of American Indians,” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2006).

¹⁸² Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56, no. 2 (1989), 91; and Phillip Wander, “The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism,” *Central States Speech Journal* 34, no. 1 (1983): 1-18.

¹⁸³ Feminist scholarship, for instance, has both challenged the notion of texts worthy of study while also challenging sexism and erasure of women’s voices from the canon of public address. Michaela D. E. Meyer, “Women Speak(ing): Forty Years of Feminist Contributions to Rhetoric and an Agenda for Feminist Rhetorical Studies,” *Communication Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2007): 1-17.

¹⁸⁴ Raymie McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis.”

¹⁸⁵ Diane Raymond, “Popular Culture and Queer Representation,” in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*, eds. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 98-99. In line with critical rhetoric, this study also seeks to contribute to the broader intellectual movement of queer theory within humanities scholarship. See Gust A. Yep, Karen E. Lovaas, and John P. Elia, “Queering Communication: Starting the Conversation,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2 (2003), 2.

¹⁸⁶ Queer functions as a contested “umbrella” term, similar to “gay” in the way it “covers” the G, L, B, and T and subsequently renders gender, class, and race invisible. Similarly to how lesbian feminists challenged the popular “Gay is Good” in the 1960s and 1970s, some feminists challenge the use of queer as an umbrella term. As such,

“queer” is located within the identity challenges and contestations within LGBT history. See Raymond, “Popular Culture and Queer Representation,” 99.

¹⁸⁷ Yep, Lovaas, and Elia, “Queering Communication: Starting the Conversation,” 2.

¹⁸⁸ Charles E. Morris III, “Sexuality and Public Address: Rhetorical Past, Queer Theory, and Abraham Lincoln,” in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 399; and Gust A. Yep, “The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies: Notes on Injury, Healing, and Queer World-Making,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45 no. 2-4 (2003): 11-59. Within the communication discipline, queer scholarship has been slowly growing over the last several decades, traceable through the publication of three volumes from the groundbreaking volume *Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication*, to R. Jeffery Ringer’s *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality*, to the most recent volume *Queer Theory and Communication: From Disciplining Queers to Queering the Discipline*. See James W. Chesebro, ed., *Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication* (Charlottesville: Pilgrim Press, 1981); R. Jeffery Ringer, ed. *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); and Gust A. Yep, Karen Lovaas, and John P. Elia, *Queer Theory and Communication: From Disciplining Queers to Queering the Discipline*. Yet Yep argues that a “scholarly silence” about queer sexuality remains within the Communication discipline as a whole; the scholarship that does address the silence has focused largely on interpersonal and representational concerns. He further argues that heterosexuality needs to be analyzed, as the scholarly

focus on LGBT or queer identities and non-normative theoretical perspectives has helped maintain the normativity and dominance of heteronormativity. For example, Yep notes the breadth of scholarship that analyzes the media representation of LGBT identities and sexuality. See, for instance, Emile C. Netzhammer and Scott A. Shamp, "Guilt by Association: Homosexuality and AIDS on Primetime Television," in *Queer Words, Queer Images: Communication and the Construction of Homosexuality*, ed. R. Jeffery Ringer (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 91-106; Bonnie J. Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001): 123-40; Kathleen Battles & Wendy Hilton-Morrow, "Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces: *Will & Grace* and the Situation Comedy Genre," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 1 (2002): 87-105; and Brenda Cooper, "*Boys Don't Cry* and Female Masculinity: Reclaiming a Life and Dismantling the Politics of Normative Heterosexuality," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 1 (2002), 44-63.

¹⁸⁹ Charles E. Morris III, ed. *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

¹⁹⁰ Charles E. Morris, III, "Introduction: Portrait of a Queer Rhetorical/Historical Critic," in *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Public Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 2.

¹⁹¹ Morris, "Archival Queer," 148-149. Rhetorical scholars have taken this turn anew, engaging in renewed efforts to recover lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender discourse, which likewise utilizes sexuality as a critical and identity lens for rhetorical analysis in the on-going efforts to "queer public address." See Charles E. Morris, III,

“Introduction: Portrait of a Queer Rhetorical/Historical Critic,” 1-18; and Morris, “Sexuality and Public Address: Rhetorical Pasts, Queer Theory, and Abraham Lincoln,” 399. Queer rhetorical scholarship within the queer turn has variously considered the notion of “passing” and the constraints on homosexuality throughout U.S. history, studying the strategies by which gay men, lesbians, and transgendered individuals have fought back against those constraints, including mediated representations of LGBT characters and subjects. See Charles E. Morris III, “Pink Herring and the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 2 (2002): 228-244; Bonnie J. Dow, “Aids, Perspective by Incongruity, and Gay Identity in Larry Kramer’s ‘1,112 and Counting,’” *Communication Studies* 45, nos. 3 & 4 (1994): 225-240; and Dow, “Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility,” 123-140. Additional scholarship has challenged the ways in which queer history has been constructed and limited, leaving room for these scholars to contribute to both queer histories but also to “queer” mainstream or established historical narratives. At the same time, Morris notes the dangers associated with historicism associated with the “familiar essentialist construction of the gay past through its figures and texts known as liberation history.” A second central definition emerges from concerns linked with modernist, essentialist, and “minoritizing” notions of identity, fueling queer theoretical scholarship based on a rejection of binary categories to create a queer or non-dominant analytical and theoretical perspective. See Morris, “Sexuality and Public Address: Rhetorical Pasts, Queer Theory, and Abraham Lincoln,” 400; Raymond, “Popular Culture and Queer Representation,” 99; and Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1.

¹⁹² David Zarefsky, “Four Senses of Rhetorical History,” in *Doing Rhetorical*

History: Concepts and Cases, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998). Part of this approach involves the long-standing tensions within the field of rhetoric concerning instrumental or constitutive functions of rhetoric. Instrumental goals are often measured in terms of efficacy through laws, legislation, or other factors. I am interested in the ways in which those same speeches and calls for action contributed to a broader project of imagining a lesbian-feminist community on a local and national scale. See James Jasinski, "A Constitutive Approach to Rhetorical Historiography: Toward an Understanding of the Discursive (Re)Constitution of 'Constitution' in the Federalist Papers," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 74; and James Jasinski and Jennifer Merceica, "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics: The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and the 'Principles of '98'," In *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 313-341.

¹⁹³ Jasinski and Merceica. "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics," 315.

¹⁹⁴ Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133-50; Nathaniel I. Cordova, "The Constitutive Force of the Catecismo Del Pueblo in Puerto Rico's Popular Democratic Party Campaign of 1938-1940," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 2 (2004): 212-33; and Beasley, *You, the People*.

¹⁹⁵ Jasinski and Merceica. "Analyzing Constitutive Rhetorics," 319; Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture,"

Western Journal of Speech Communication 54, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 274-289; and Campbell, "Between the Fragment and the Icon."

¹⁹⁶ Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell," 793.

¹⁹⁷ Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell," 793.

¹⁹⁸ Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 2, 14. According to Gutmann, identity group membership is not merely defined by instrumental (political) goals, in order to differentiate identity groups from interest groups. Gutmann does argue that identity groups can also pursue instrumental aims, but they cannot be simply conflated (as critics of identity groups often do) with interest groups. Her distinction between the two counters those who attack identity groups as "mere interest groups."

¹⁹⁹ Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 133; Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest." Charland notes that constitutive rhetoric examines the "key process in the production of ideology: the constitution of the subject."

²⁰⁰ Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, 7.

²⁰¹ Flores, "Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference," 143.

²⁰² Vicinus, "They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong."

²⁰³ Rosteck, "Rereading Wrage," 476; Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995), 20.

²⁰⁴ Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 205; Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, "Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens," in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice* (New Brunswick,

NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 4. Dill and Zambrana note that in applying and developing intersectionality, scholars have conceptualized it variously as a “field, theory, and analytical perspective.”

²⁰⁵ Frances Beale, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” in *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970/2005); and Dill and Zambrana, “Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens,” 4.

²⁰⁶ Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics.” in *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*, ed. Katherine T. Bartlett and Roseanne Kennedy (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 72.

²⁰⁷ Dill and Zambrana, “Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens,” 4.

²⁰⁸ Mary Jane Collier, R. S. Hegde, Wenshu Lee, Tom K. Nakayama, and Gust A. Yep, “Dialogue on the Edges: Ferment in Communication and Culture,” in *Transforming Communication about Culture: Critical New Directions*, ed. Mary Jane Collier (Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage, 2002), 273; quoted in Yep, “The Violence of Heteronormativity,” 14.

²⁰⁹ Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and Performance of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 167.

²¹⁰ Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin, *Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 12.

²¹¹ Gloria Anzaldua, “Preface: (Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces,” in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, eds. Gloria Anzaldua and Analouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4; and Springer, “Black Feminist Organizations,” 182.

²¹² This challenge emerges from the literature about second-wave feminist history and multiple issues that faced the movement at the turn of the decade, namely, divisions and “splintering” along the very lines of intersectional identities like sexuality, race, and class. For a narrative that follows this trajectory, see Echols, *Daring to be Bad*.

²¹³ For instance, in several speeches, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon point out the problems with “butch” women associated with DOB. In their book, *Lesbian/Woman*, they tell the story of a woman, Nancy, who eventually feminized her appearance to gain acceptance of other DOB members. In retrospect, this kind of treatment by other lesbian or feminists can be viewed as discriminatory against gender non-conforming, transsexual, or transgender individuals. See also Resenbrink, “Reshaping Body Politics,” 5.

²¹⁴ As a theory, intersectionality emerged through the experiences and reflexive analysis of Black feminists activists and scholars during the 1970s. Lisbeth Lipari argues that Sojourner Truth was among the first to publicly articulate such an analysis in her “Ain’t I a Woman” speech in 1851. Decades later, Angela Davis offered a thorough treatment on the combined oppression and experiences of Black women through a nascent intersectional lens considering gender, race, and class, while the Combahee River Collective added sexuality as another aspect of oppression facing Black women. See Lisbeth Lipari, “The Rhetoric of Intersectionality: Lorraine Hansberry’s 1957 Letters to the *Ladder*,” 224.

²¹⁵ Recalibration refers to the ways lesbian-feminist identity was readjusted through the pivotal process in accordance with the coalitional context and relationship. Drawing upon Susan Gal, I utilize this concept of recalibration to negotiate two different binary relationships: identity politics/coalition politics and women's liberation/gay liberation movements. This concept also emphasizes the temporal and rhetorical character of identity formations deployed within and in defiance of such binary constraints. Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," 77-95.

²¹⁶ Aimee Carillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 3.

²¹⁷ See Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," 77-95.

²¹⁸ In terms of the ideological turn in rhetorical studies and criticism, Phillip Wander argued for critics to analyze rhetoric by considering a "right" response to the political "wrongs" present in discourse. See Wander, "The Ideological Turn."

²¹⁹ Ono and Sloop, "Critique of Vernacular Discourse," 21.

Chapter One

Rhetoric, Identity, and Coalition: Creating Visibility in Social Movements

As October 14, 1979 approached, lesbian feminists from across the country organized bussing campaigns to ensure their presence on the National Mall in Washington D.C. for the first national march in support of gay and lesbian rights. Thousands of lesbian-feminist women descended on the Mall to join gay men, transsexuals, and other lesbians in a powerful public display of their power and unity.¹ The march took place at the end of a decade where the increased recognition of gay and lesbian civil rights concerns (perhaps epitomized by historic political inroads with the Carter presidential administration) confronted an established social conservative coalitional force.² As such, it visibly demonstrated a coalitional moment shared by lesbian-feminists and gay men as they promoted social and political reform around matters of civil rights and sexuality.³

Yet this performance of unity belied the long history of challenges that hampered co-gender activism within the gay rights movement during the 1970s. Many lesbian-feminists harbored reservations about working with men, gay or straight. Lesbian-feminist identities were often at odds with the developing national gay and lesbian movement. Even increasing use of co-gendered language, for example, did not change the growing gay movement's broad male-centrism. Despite intense debate about whether lesbian-feminists should participate, the March on Washington offered a huge platform from which lesbian feminists could articulate their sense of identity and culture with other women (and men) from across the country in a demonstration of collective visibility. As such, the march was a prime example of a moment when lesbian-feminists

joined in rights-based activism that dominated the decade. On the Mall, the event included keynote speeches by fellow “sisters in the struggle,” Audre Lorde and Charlotte Bunch. As the crowd sang along with popular women’s musician Meg Christian, lesbians and lesbian-feminists demonstrated a visible unity that surprised the gay men at the event, many of whom were unaccustomed to sharing the public stage with, and witnessing the public activism of, so many lesbian-feminists.⁴ Indeed, the surprising enactment of lesbian-feminist identities despite the geographical distance that separated them off the Mall revealed the reach and resonance of their identity rhetorics, the development of lesbian culture (e.g., through women’s music), and the general estrangement they experienced from gay men.⁵

In short, their coalitional relationship, which was grounded in the history of homophile and early gay liberation activism, was far too complex for such an event to fully convey. Moreover, marching together with gay men still offered a space in which lesbian-feminist activists could articulate a national community by connecting their sexuality, gender, and politics in ways different from gay men. Thus, at the close of a crucial decade, lesbian-feminists converged in one place, marching side by side with their gay brothers in a visible demonstration of a co-gendered gay and lesbian movement that obscured the very complexity of that relationship.

Over the decade that stretched from the establishment of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and the Radicalesbians to the highly contested march on Washington, D.C., lesbian-feminists rhetorically crafted and contested the contours of their collective identities. They navigated several issues that have since become central to the scholarship on social movements, feminism, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)

studies: processes of identity construction, identity politics, coalition politics, and the history of gay and lesbian rights activism. Members of identity-based social movements often confronted a variety of limitations associated with identity politics, most notably, intersectional identities, complications with visibility and publicity, and pressures from other social movements competing for their activist energy. These concerns shape this chapter, which traces rhetoric's role in constituting identity, facilitating coalition-building, navigating difference, and challenging visibility in a social movement context. Because social movement rhetoric crafts new ground upon which activists can build identity, acknowledging the intersectionality of multiple identities extends that connection by highlighting the appeal and challenges of coalition politics.

This chapter will proceed first by considering how rhetorical studies scholars understand movements for social change and rhetoric of identity politics. Then, I consider the growing attention to rhetoric and coalition politics. In using contemporary understandings of coalition in relation to identity, I draw upon Karma Chavez's work on *coalitional moments* and Aimee Carillo Rowe's *coalitional subjectivity* to unpack the tension between identity politics and coalition politics. Coalitional work has the potential to resolve or ameliorate some of the limitations associated with identity politics, especially around issues of difference and visibility. By transgressing or blurring boundaries set up by identity politics, coalitions can transform or *queer* identity formations themselves.

Rhetoric, Social Movements, and Identity

Social movement scholars have long analyzed the role of rhetoric as people have fought for change in the advancement of political, economic, and social justice.

Concerned with how rhetoric “invariably antagonizes and attracts persons, creates and resolves conflicts, stabilizes and upsets societies,” early movement scholars in the United States drew upon sociological literature to understand how movements were formed and consequently transformed over time.⁶ Yet, such transformation and development within social movements does not necessarily occur in a linear fashion. As such, taking a “collective, evolutionary, and dialectical” approach to social movement rhetoric places the focus on shifts and changes over time and recognizes social movement discourse as in process rather than confined to a narrative of progress.⁷ This approach allows for ebb, flow, and tension within social movement formations, especially regarding debates about identity and coalition.

The social and political upheaval during the late 1960s shifted the analytical focus for scholars in the field of speech and rhetorical studies. Burgeoning social movements drew upon the power of the non-violent and innovative strategies advocated by civil rights activists; in the process, certain scholars and activists embraced the turn toward identity-based activism. As prominent social movement scholarship emphasized a definition of rhetoric based in rational speech, scholars regarded protest strategies such as sit-ins, zaps, and consciousness-raising as “non-traditional,” “non-rational” or “non-rhetorical,” precisely because the strategies did not fit the established model of rational discourse.⁸ Scholars have increasingly recognized the rhetoricity of such strategies.⁹ Alongside more traditional forms of public address, such protest activities help to paint a fuller rhetorical picture of social movement rhetoric. Taken together, the rhetoric of social movements has the potential to engage external audiences, including dominant

political and social institutions as well as internal audiences populated by social movement activists.

Rhetoric directed toward a movement constituency can raise consciousness and build, transform, or rhetorically imagine a movement collective.¹⁰ The goal of such rhetoric not only mobilizes a collective, but offers a mode to challenge the worldview of broader audiences by confronting prominent cultural and political discourses. Social movements are frequently analyzed as a “dialectical enjoinder” between those in power versus those perceived as more disempowered, with rhetorical strategies directed toward an external “establishment” audience.¹¹ Both approaches consider how audiences are mobilized to identify with and participate in social movement activism by collectively addressing external audiences. Rhetoric’s constitutive function is especially suited to unpacking the process of mobilization and identity formation through social movement discourse.¹²

The ways in which identities are defined, circulated, and contested within texts is a key dimension of constitutive rhetoric.¹³ Such an approach examines rhetoric’s role in building, sustaining, and affirming the identities of social movement activists.¹⁴ Rhetoric creates collective political identity for movement members when rhetorical messages encourage identification and a cohesive group identity to effect social change.¹⁵ Michael Calvin McGee holds that because collective identities are rhetorical constructs, they should be analyzed as a dynamic process rather than a static phenomenon.”¹⁶ Lisa Duggan argues that powerful narratives are one way this process occurs. Identity narratives “forge connections among individuals”—connections that are decidedly dynamic.¹⁷ Mobilizing individuals and organizing political activism around identities has

come to be known as identity politics. Taking a constitutive, process-focused approach to analyzing identity-based mobilization can help to complicate the dichotomy built up around identity politics as it relates to activism and coalition politics.¹⁸

Rhetorical discourse does more than constitute identities; it contests the boundaries and terms of circulating definitions or formations.¹⁹ Duggan argues that identities are “never static, monolithic, or politically innocent” and are often contested.²⁰ Such contestation can result in the concurrent presence of competing constitutive rhetorics vying for the same audiences. Some scholars interpret such competing rhetorics as an obstacle for movement success. Arlene Stein, for instance, argues that lesbian-feminists deployed a series of identity reconstructions from the 1970s through the 1990s.²¹ For Stein, they crafted identity boundaries in ways that de-medicalized the term “lesbian” and created cultural institutions to nurture lesbian community and challenge dominant gender systems. Yet Stein argues, because activists did not offer a unified central definition of “lesbian feminist,” they failed to sustain the movement over time or avoid some of the challenges that befell the members of the group.²² Indeed, Stein articulates a common critique of identity politics, namely that failure to establish a common identity results in the failure of movement sustainability and success. In short, she forecloses the possibility of interpreting the contestation over “lesbian-feminism” as a generative and positive process. I take a different perspective to this process of identity formation, arguing instead that difference and contestation have enriching and expansive potential, especially as identity formations may not provide a space for the recognition of multiple identities. Identities consequently are not “fixed objects”²³ and are continually

evolving, opening a space to consider how difference and coalition impact those narratives.

Rhetorical activities serving a constitutive function accordingly go beyond creating or contesting identities; rhetoric also facilitates the process of building coalitions.²⁴ Opening the critical horizon to investigate the rhetorical dynamics of processes of identity formation *and* coalition-building adds to a scholarly understanding of social movement rhetoric.²⁵ To understand the tension between identity and coalition and how rhetoric facilitates the latter, I begin by exploring the various meanings of coalition.

Social Movement Rhetoric and Coalitions

The first challenge facing scholars interested in coalition politics is definitional. Specifically, the question of the relationship between coalition and alliance has generated wide-ranging discussion in scholarly and political contexts. The first *OED* definition of the noun “coalition” captures this range, and refers to “the growing together of parts, coalescence” and “union into one mass or body.”²⁶ Here coalition signifies the creation of a unified whole resulting from separate parts coming together. Yet in political contexts, coalition has referred to “an alliance for combined action of distinct parties, persons, or states, *without permanent incorporation into one body.*”²⁷ This definition fits common usage whereby coalitions are defined along pragmatic, instrumental, and temporal lines. Further, coalition is *defined* by the term “alliance,” even though scholars and activists often differentiate between coalition and alliance. Feminist sociologists Lisa Albrecht and Rose Brewer, for example, define coalitions as short-term relationships focused on a single issue; alliances, conversely, are construed as long-term relationships based on

trust.²⁸ Their distinction allows them to pursue the radical possibilities of alliances over coalitions. Alternatively, sociologists Jill Bystydzienski and Steven Schacht avoid such a distinction by defining coalitions as “radical alliances,” or “fluid sites of collective behavior where the blending of multiple personal identities with political activism interacts with structural conditions to influence the development of commitments, strategies, and specific actions.”²⁹ Within this study, I emphasize “the language of coalition” like feminist scholars Chavez, Bernice Reagon, and Cricket Keating rather than differentiating between coalition and alliance.³⁰ This opens a space for rhetorical analysis of coalition politics *about* coalition.

I use coalition more broadly to reference any work among people or groups that ranges from short-lived, joint efforts, to long-term sustaining relationships among movement members.³¹ The latter focus on relationships draws from another set of usages related to the Latin *coalit* and *coalĕre*, which mean, “to sustain or nourish together, communion, fellowship.”³² These usages move away from a sole focus on the coming together of specific groups, organizations, or political parties in formalized ways and moves to recognize the relational work put into coalitions. Thus, I do not focus *only* on coalitional organizations created to act on behalf of multiple organizations involved in coalitional activism; I also consider how groups created informal coalitional relationships as well. I furthermore consider the coalitional organizations as more formalized instances of coalitional relationships.³³ Blending an organizational perspective with this relational approach creates a space to explore how social movement activists use rhetoric to *transform* partnerships or relationships with other activists in order to sustain something beyond the sum of their parts.³⁴ By considering coalition in terms of relationships, I am

interested in understanding how such coalition-building rhetoric also impacted the contestation over identity within the context of these overlapping, multi-layered movements.

Just as rhetoric has the potential to posit identities as the basis for political organizing, rhetoric can also help constitute coalitions.³⁵ Coalition building has long been placed in a dichotomous relationship with identity politics. It has frequently taken a backseat to understanding identity politics and the ways in which social movement rhetoric can effect change in the face of an establishment opposition.³⁶ Rhetorical scholars, however, have begun to turn their attention to coalitional activism and movements for social change.³⁷ Chavez and Carillo Rowe have paved a crucial path for scholars interested in unpacking the possibilities of coalition politics. Chavez theorizes *coalitional moments*, “when political issues coincide or merge within the public sphere in ways that create space to re-envision and potentially reconstruct the rhetorical imaginary.”³⁸ She builds upon social movement scholars taking the constitutive turn to consider those moments where rhetoric makes coalitions possible in an effort to create social change. In short, the presence or *possibility* of coalitional activism can emerge in discourse.³⁹

Carillo Rowe’s concept of *coalitional subjectivity* further expands identity formation from an individual basis to what she calls a “politics of relation.” She argues that because “belonging is political,” the “meaning of self . . . is forged across a shifting set of relations”⁴⁰ Carillo Rowe theorizes coalitional subjectivity in interpersonal terms as it occurs among women in university contexts. I consequently draw upon her politics of relation to understand competing rhetorics of identity, which can help unpack

the rhetorical dimensions of coalition building. How social movement actors rhetorically negotiate coalitions, whether formalized or momentary, create the possibilities for crafting coalitional subjectivities and can augment the rhetoric of identity. Indeed, activists may resolve the tension that results from pitting identity against identity by choosing to align with one set of identity-rhetorics in the process of enacting a coalitional-relationship with other movement constituencies.

Finally, conceiving of coalitions more broadly leaves space to recognize the tension created when identity rhetoric and coalition rhetoric collide in transformative ways. Activists faced with coalition politics may choose to resist and avoid “incorporation into one body,” especially when the stakes of transforming identity categories are high. Benita Roth’s work on the *lack* of transracial coalitions among white, Black, and Chicana feminists during the second wave emphasizes the power of such resistance.⁴¹ As Roth indicates, the shared ideology of “organizing one’s own” actually impeded coalition building among feminists.⁴² Such resistance to coalition in defense of identity-based political activism lies at the heart of the tension between identity politics and coalition politics. Those projects dedicated to bolstering singular identities and mobilizing around those identities necessarily resists the transformative possibilities associated with coalition building. Scholars and activists have thus analyzed and critiqued identity politics as a means of mobilizing activism for social change.

The Power and Limitation of Identity Politics

Identity politics have garnered a great deal of attention and critique by activists and scholars alike. At a basic level, identity politics posits identity as “relevant to one’s politics,” becoming the potential basis of political organization.⁴³ Linda Martín Alcoff

notes that identity politics also refer to “political struggles associated with the vilification of a particular identity,” pointing to several identity-based movements in the twentieth century as evidence of this view.⁴⁴ A positive perspective on identity politics maintains that identity-based movements confirm the value of established democratic institutions (e.g., Bill of Rights)—an approach that consequently expands popular political values.⁴⁵ Additionally, Amy Gutmann maintains that although often dismissed as “interest groups,” collectivities created around a shared sense of identity are also a place where individuals gain “a sense of their own interests in democratic politics.”⁴⁶ Yet such affirmative perspectives on identity politics are infrequent and often dismissed. Alcott and Satya Mohanty argue that such perspectives have come under sustained attack. They note that critics of identity politics from the Left and the Right contend that “identity-based social struggles are politically limited and misguided.”⁴⁷

This broad criticism of identity politics can be broken down into two central arguments. First, critics argue that activism on behalf of an identity becomes insular and detrimental to the common good.⁴⁸ In part, this occurs as identity politics “fractures coalitions and breeds distrust of those outside one’s group,” sacrificing unity for increased segmentation.⁴⁹ Such fractures, critics maintain, result in social movement fragility, which often leads to a failure to achieve the desired social change. Internal fracture around identity can also make movements vulnerable to attack. Scholars like Tate have shown how opposition movements can capitalize on division by using identity categories to “divide and conquer” their political opponents.⁵⁰ As such, these critics attest, the fracturing associated with identity politics internally weakens a movement’s strength and hampers political efficacy.

Second, critics charge identity politics with creating a collective on the basis of a singular, static identity construct rooted in problematic binaries, which fail to account for difference and ultimately impede coalition building.⁵¹ Reagon illustrates this problem by characterizing identity categories as “little rooms with bars,” that keep people separated in ways that inhibits the attainment of social justice.⁵² This argument holds that identity politics are extremely limited, especially for activists who avow multiple intersectional identities. As such, instead of promoting commonality around identity, some scholars charge that identity politics “promot[es] divisiveness” and undermines productive opportunities for coalition politics.⁵³ This critique assumes that a social movement organizes to protect and defend one identity at the exclusion of all other identities. This study will show, conversely, the ways in which coalitional practices by members located within many identity movements of the 1970s did move beyond such factionalization by forming coalitional relationships that achieved productive ends even in the face of relational tensions. Moreover, this study will challenge the dichotomy between identity politics and coalition politics that undergird these critiques.⁵⁴

The complexity of identity discourse, critiques of identity politics, and the tension associated with coalition politics offers a fruitful nexus for analysis. As such, I draw upon two theoretical interventions that critique and complicate identity politics while leaving room for coalition relationships: intersectionality and queer studies. These theories are foundational to my analysis of lesbian-feminist public discourse. And they also speak to the challenges of analyzing the discourse of sexual minority movements in general, particularly matters involving visibility and difference.

Contesting and Queering Identities: Accounting for Difference and Visibility

The critiques of identity politics all point to a central dilemma—the struggle between the two different political impulses: deconstructing vs. strengthening categorical boundaries.⁵⁵ The trajectories of feminist and queer critiques of identity politics capture this clash. Both critiques recognize the *complexity* inherent within “multi-identity politics.” People have, after all, historically identified with *multiple* identities and *multiple* activist locations. For Jane Ward, the question of multi-identity politics reflects the dual challenge to the notion of unified identities and the limitations of approaching identity from a singular lens.⁵⁶ In this context, intersectional and queer critiques intervene in identity-based activism by variously deconstructing, multiplying, and interweaving identity categories.

Intersectionality and Difference

Intersectionality represents a significant feminist contribution to the theorization of identity in terms of challenging essentialist and exclusionary politics associated with identity-based activism.⁵⁷ As a theoretical and methodological framework, intersectionality encourages critics to consider interlocking and mutually constitutive structures of power and identity categories.⁵⁸ Feminist scholars Chavez and Cindy Griffin point out that theories of intersectionality have developed a variety of metaphors—from “intersection” to “interlocking” to “curdling”—each with a unique way of understanding how intersectionality works.⁵⁹ Leslie McCall’s “intracategorical complexity,” for example, aims both to understand and “interrogate the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself” to attend to how discourse constitutes multiple identities over

time.⁶⁰ Her metaphor captures the complexity facing and shaping individuals positioned in various social locations as they create identities.

At the same time, intersectionality is not without its critics. Though there are many working metaphors that capture the ideas of intersectionality, as Lester Olson confirms, no metaphor is perfect.⁶¹ Scholars, for example, have challenged the utility of its spatial metaphor of roads coming together at an intersection.⁶² Poststructuralists and transnational feminists have critiqued its reliance upon stable identity categories, its failure to consider forces of nationalism and globalization, and its recent cooptation by institutional structures striving for “diversity.”⁶³ For example, Jasbir Puar critiques intersectionality’s reliance on naming practices. The fact that the imagery requires naming the identities that intersect like different roads (i.e., woman, black, straight, middle-class) inherently limits the interactivity among those identities as they are experienced. Instead, Puar calls for scholars to consider how “identities collide, come together, work through one another, and impact how individuals are interpreted.”⁶⁴ Carillo Rowe’s concept of coalitional subjectivity further re-envision the notion of intersection through her terms of *relation*. In this way, the language of coalition gives life and utility to the concept of intersectionality beyond merely naming the identities or “roads” as they crisscross.

One of the important ways intersectional identities can be analyzed as transformative is through what Susan Gal calls *recalibration*. In her study, Gal offers recalibration as a means to productively negotiate dichotomies in order to utilize the interstitial space opened as a result of their overlap. Although Gal is talking about the interaction of “public” and “private,” her theory nevertheless allows for variation in

identity formation and provides a way to consider it in relation to notions of coalitions. Just as the possibility of identity formation opens up within coalitional relationships, the practice of identity formation can encourage political collaboration across groups with shared political objectives. As such, rather than viewing identity politics and coalition politics as dichotomous concepts, Gal's theory of recalibration instead helps us see the generative and strategic potential that culminates from the fusion of identity/coalition politics. Recalibration thus deepens understandings of intersectionality and together they allow for a unique angle into the study of political activism, identity politics, and coalitional relationships.⁶⁵ Queer theory also offers a productive political thread by which to interrogate the rhetoric of identity and coalition.

A Queer Analytic

Queer studies challenge stable, unified identity categories by questioning assumptions of normativity and visibility at the heart of identity politics. In part, the queer critique of identity politics focuses on normativity or “conventional forms of association, belonging, and identification.”⁶⁶ This argument holds that identity constructions often “sustain hegemonic ideas about gender, sexuality, race, and class” and serve as the basis for exclusion,⁶⁷ even if the deployment of such normative notions is intended to be strategic and designed for the “good of the movement.”⁶⁸ In other words, some identity categories are constructed to confront the constraints of dominant institutional discourses. Yet those categories function normatively by creating boundaries that determine what and whom are included and excluded. For example, Duggan argues that the desire for normativity dominated gay and lesbian social movement activism by the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, resulting in the development of what she calls

“homonormativity.”⁶⁹ The gay and lesbian movement, Duggan argues, privileges a less threatening, “normal” image of gay men and lesbians and distances itself from the sexual “outlaws” and non-normative people celebrated in the earlier movement.

Despite the limitations and queer critiques of identity politics, scholars continue to find utility in using identities for political purposes. Many scholars craft a third way between total destabilization of identities and the deployment of essentialist, static, identity constructs. E. Patrick Johnson, for example, argues for conceptualizing a queer critique of identity that is politically productive. By positing “quare studies,” he suggests a way to acknowledge that identity politics can be mobilized and theorized in a way that critiques essentialism and engages in “political praxis.”⁷⁰ As such, Johnson echoes other scholars who support the possibility for strategic deployment of identities, even while recognizing the limitations of such categories. Sally Miller Gearheart calls this the “fundamental interdependence of Queer Theory and identity politics.”⁷¹ And, according to Gloria Anzaldúa, considering identity in light of its complexity reminds critics to take care in how terms like gay (or even lesbian) can become “falsely unifying” as they “homogenize [or] even eras[e] our differences.”⁷² For Gearheart and Cathy Cohen, recognizing “multiplicity and interconnectedness of identities” not only maintains a space for scholarly work on lesbian and gay histories that refer to identity categories, but it also “provide[s] the most promising avenue for the destabilization and radical politicization of [those] same categories.”⁷³

In this study I merge the queer studies critique of presumed stable and unified identity constructs with an intersectional critique. This approach can emphasize the limitations of what have become static and stable identity categories undergirding

identity politics in order to show how activists recalibrated those identities in generative and strategic ways. In particular, gay identity politics have continually presumed the centrality of the white, middle-class, gay male identity. Even when co-gendered language emerged in the late 1970s to refer to the “gay and lesbian” movement, gay white men dominated the image associated with the (equally problematic) unified movement. Moreover, lesbians of color have long-challenged the centrality of the white, middle-class, straight woman as the center point of women’s rights or the identity politics of women’s liberation. Their interventions complicate the identity categories much like the queer critique of identity can frame long-standing interrogations of identity categories. By approaching identity politics with an awareness of normativity and intersectionality, I consider how each identity construct exerts power within a movement. Notions of recalibration spotlight the nuanced and innovative ways in which lesbian-feminists worked to attain the goals of identity politics from within coalitional partnerships.

Beyond challenging the terms upon which identity politics functions, queer studies centralizes another key tension: visibility. I consider it here as it relates to gay liberation discourse. Visibility and its converse—invisibility—both promote and inhibit mobilization associated with identity and coalition politics. These concerns are interconnected, working together to construct, maintain, and develop a broader movement that is likewise connected to the activism and politics of the past.⁷⁴

Identity, Visibility, and the Closet

Visibility poses a central challenge to movements seeking to mobilize around shared identity. For LGBT people, various cultural or rhetorical markers continue to render sexuality visible, often by addressing a “submerged network” or “winking” at

audience members “in the know.” Morris calls this submerged or implied audience the “fourth persona.”⁷⁵ Even with such modes of visibility, sexual identity remains largely invisible due to societal constraints and dominant negative constructions of homosexuality. The construct of the closet and the visibility associated with coming out need to be complicated in light of the emphasis by certain social movements on mobilizing around sexual identity and interacting with other movements.

Scholars of social movements, especially those concerned with identity politics, implicate visibility as an important factor in social movement organizing, involving a “politics of recognition,” or the ability to “recognize and be recognized.”⁷⁶ In this sense, social movement organization is based on one of the human senses—vision—neglecting other senses through which individuals may feel compelled or connected to another collectivity or movement. In part, an emphasis on visibility can ignore the importance of a shared “consciousness,” something that defies the limits of visibility in important ways. Rhetoric that both raises consciousness and creates a shared space for coalitional relationships can similarly defy the limitations often associated with exclusivity in identity politics.

Rhetorical scholars have explored how discourse circulating outside of physical meetings or demonstrations can offer a “visible” activism for those who may be unable or unwilling to attend activist events.⁷⁷ Indeed, those who posit action and mobilization as dependent upon physical proximity miss the key role of rhetoric in the process of constituting identity in defiance of geographical distances and boundaries. Secondly, sexuality itself has challenged visibility as necessary for identification on the grounds that sexuality can be visibly performed yet remain publicly unmarked. Still, cultural markers

like styles of dress, physical movement, or language, provide visual access to presumed identity and foster social movement organization and mobilization around a shared identity-based culture. More recently, scholars have even posited the ways in which affective experiences and sexual practices (at one time distanced in earlier activism challenging the legal emphasis on “homosexual acts”) can also create a unique sense of identity and subculture.⁷⁸ These practices challenge the process of ascribing identity markers to visibility. Implicated within a discussion of visibility in this particular historical context is the construct of the closet, which captures the dilemma associated with visibility/invisibility in the context of LGBT history and activist discourse.

The closet has shaped the heart of gay liberation histories by crystallizing powerful tropes of visibility/invisibility, shame/trauma, and privacy/shelter.⁷⁹ The closet metaphorically locates the queer subject in a space of invisibility, shame, and deceit.⁸⁰ Michael Warner argues that “the possibilities for public or private speech” for gay men and lesbians are “distorted” by the construction of the closet, which he calls a “misleading spatial metaphor.”⁸¹ David Halperin and Valerie Traub add that the reference to shame is necessary for “gay pride” discourse to make sense.⁸² More than a symbolic container for shame, the closet can be used in threatening ways. “Keeping someone in the closet” refers to, in part, the closet’s coercive power as it hides the shameful thing that could ruin one’s life. But not all accounts of the closet emphasize its negative or shameful qualities. Scholars and activists have pointed out the productive power and relative safety of the closet—the space in which one could feel sheltered from the homophobia and traumatic violence of the heterosexual world outside. As Warner explains, when

“publicness [feels] like exposure,” the closet becomes a place of privacy, couched in more modern terms of “protection.”⁸³

Part of the power of the closet is the emphasis placed on the “speech act” as an act of liberation and declaration of identity. Coming out of the closet implies making oneself visible to the outside world, using speech to declare that identity for oneself and to make one visible to others.⁸⁴ Scholars note two specific implications this framework has for lesbian and gay politics. First, Bonnie J. Dow notes that featuring the closet in this way hyper-individualizes the process of coming out. That process draws on the power of shame by placing the onus of coming out on the gay subject. She argues that rather than acknowledging the systemic and structural function of heteronormativity, this personalization further emphasizes the inconvenience and deviance by which the gay subject presents to the heterosexual world.⁸⁵ The result, Dow argues, is a depoliticized coming out process, which turns the focus away from the oppressive effects of homophobia and heterosexism and instead blames the gay person for “hiding” in the closet.⁸⁶ Dow warns that personalizing the liberatory aspects of coming out may limit the political possibilities for gay collectivities.

Warner echoes Dow’s assessment and argues that the closet construct ought to be “better understood as the culture’s problem.”⁸⁷ He articulates the second implication of the closet on gay and lesbian political activism: the construct of the closet supports dominant discourses that have historically defined homosexuality. For Warner, visibility and public-ness under “the conditions of the closet,” renders “being publicly known as homosexual” as a “pathologized visibility.”⁸⁸ Warner argues “identity politics—and the

performative ritual known as coming out— tries to transform” this kind of visibility by pointing out the problems of homophobia.⁸⁹

As a construct that undergirds gay liberation discourse, the closet is limited in who it includes and excludes from gay and lesbian politics. Because the closet itself overdetermines the freedom and liberation possibilities on its “outside,” it implies that coming out is a one-time process and is necessarily productive.⁹⁰ Basing political activism on coming out can work in exclusionary ways. First, if collective identity building is premised on the notion of visibility, sexuality can remain “invisible” to those not privy to specific codes or limited by what Adrienne Rich calls “compulsory heterosexuality.” Second, assuming that someone *needs* to be visible to be a part of, to be “hailed” by social movement identity rhetorics, ignores the exclusionary implications of that discourse for those who are not, or choose not to be, visible.⁹¹ Third, by constructing a binary of “in” and “out,” the closet naturalizes the white middle-class gay subject. Several scholars working under the auspices of black queer studies have challenged the centrality of the closet because it supports white privilege and (white) gay liberation narratives. Black queer scholars hold that the closet creates the visible, white, gay subject as the primary possibility for a public queer identity.⁹²

Visibility, while crucial for mobilization or public acknowledgment of identity, does not necessarily always benefit “oppressed groups.” Ward argues that visibility itself can lead to additional forms of social control, particularly when “stigmatized identities become the subject of popular discourse and representation.”⁹³ This could lead to the development of *hypervisibility* or stereotypical visibility, where one iteration of identity becomes, in effect, a shorthand way of connoting an entire multi-dimensional group of

people. Hypervisibility can work against a group. For instance, the increased visibility of radical feminists during the late 1960s and early 1970s positioned them as both a threat to liberal feminists and a threat to dominant culture. Helen Tate argues that antifeminists co-opted the threatening stereotypes to undermine feminist arguments and thwart feminist political success.⁹⁴ For Ward, visibility is a double-edged sword, especially for sexual minorities, because they traverse the boundaries between public and private concurrently. Still, despite its limitations, visibility remains at the center of identity politics and implicated in social movement rhetoric.

Visibility consequently serves a central function in the rhetoric of social movements. Arguments calling for visibility typically premise its importance in mobilizing people for political activism and gaining public recognition for social movements or subaltern communities. In order to constitute a social movement public, rhetors frequently rely on arguments about visibility as a mode of creating collective power and strength. Moreover, visibility is not limited to identity-based activism; it can also function as a means to bring together coalitions of disparate communities. Christina Hanhardt, for instance, demonstrates how shared concerns about urban space and safety (from the state, from police brutality, from vigilante violence) brought together coalitions of people in urban San Francisco and New York from the 1960s through the 1980s.⁹⁵ Social movement scholars similarly maintain that such visibility is necessary for collective mobilization. Alberto Melucci contends that “Visibility provides energy to renew solidarity, facilitates creation of new groups and recruitment of new militants attracted by public mobilization who then flow into the submerged network.”⁹⁶ Hearing about or experiencing the open declaration of identity demonstrates the very presence of

similarly aligned people in a community; this experience of shared identification can occur in spite of geographic or physical boundaries. Visibility is implicated in identity rhetorics, and the collective power associated with a coalition can elevate or bolster visibility of the coalition and its members.

Conclusion

These interventions by intersectionality and queer studies highlight the tenuous ground upon which identity politics are negotiated. Indeed, the very discourses of visibility, predicated on the liberated, individual, white, gay male subject, exclude or limit the possibilities for lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people, or people of color. The closet serves an important rhetorical function; it has dominated gay rights discourse since the late 1960s. While scholars today consider the ways the closet can be understood, it is equally important to look back on the ways the closet construct helped shape gay rights rhetoric.⁹⁷

Some scholars might hesitate at the notion of using queer theoretical interventions in an analysis of this kind due to concerns about ascribing contemporary terminology to historical people and events.⁹⁸ I argue conversely that the central themes of the critiques have not changed. Though terminology has shifted over time to eventually acknowledge lesbians (i.e., “Gay and Lesbian Movement”), bisexuals, and, transgendered people (by the 1990s), the primary emphasis remains focused on the voices and experiences of white upper/middle-class gay men.⁹⁹ Moreover, I argue that the interventions forwarded by queer theory since the 1990s provide a new perspective and open up a new series of questions regarding the complexity of the sexual minority movements during the 1970s.

In this way, queer studies and intersectionality animate the consideration of coalition and identity at the heart of this historical investigation. Specifically, I do not argue that women during the 1970s *claimed* a queer identity—in some instances they spoke out against such terminology—but rather were doing “*queer work*.” In other words, they contested the identity categories around which they sought to organize a challenge to mainstream and dominant power structures. By taking up identity in this way, this analysis expands the possibilities for what “lesbian-feminism” meant to women across the United States. When the very boundaries of identity are contested, as they were during the decade in question, the possibilities for connection, for identification, for politics, for coalition, and for activism, fundamentally expand. As such, the boundaries for rhetorical investigation likewise expand beyond the confines of leader figures or those organizations of heightened visibility. Surely, these groups and individuals are an important part of this history; they offer a few of the multitude of voices heard throughout the decade. My analysis thus builds upon Chavez and Carillo Rowe’s work on coalition-politics and social movement rhetoric, by exploring the complexity, contradictions, and generative responses involving the constitutive rhetorics of lesbian-feminism during the 1970s.

Notes

¹ Amin Ghaziani captures the threads of this debate in his chapter on the first march in 1979. The primary sources capture the debate, but also account for the excitement of the prospect of the march. Interestingly, many of the concerns about the efficacy or purposes of the march itself echoed lesbian feminist challenges to the decreasing political focus of Christopher Street parades (that developed into pride parades and festivals). See Amin Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008): 6-8.

² See “Gay Representatives Chosen for White House Meeting,” 1976, Box 36, Folder 11, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Records, #7301, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY.

³ Of course, gay men and lesbian feminists had been working in coalition, sometimes strained, since the 1960s with the activism against the American Psychiatric Association’s Statistical and Diagnostic Manual and the co-gendered founding of the Gay Liberation Front in New York in 1970. The struggles over coalitional relationships persisted throughout the decade, coming together in certain contested moments of cooperation, including the March on Washington in 1979. Moreover, I choose to open chapter one with this example from the end of the decade to establish some of the possibilities on the horizon for lesbian-feminists as they worked to establish, defend, expand, and contract their collective identity over the course of the decade itself.

⁴ Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent*, 6.

⁵ Victoria Louise. Nogle, “A Rhetorical Criticism of Women’s Music and the Lesbianfeminist Movement.” (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1984). In this study I do not argue that all lesbian-feminists were estranged from gay men, but the reports of surprise on the part of gay men at the familiarity shared among lesbians at the national march do indicate a certain social estrangement that many queer historians have confirmed. For example, in Anne Enke’s discussion of queer social spaces for women in the Midwest, she argues that social constraints supported the development of a completely separate lesbian cultural space. Because rules prohibiting women going unaccompanied (by men) to bars, it left gay men’s bars to flourish without lesbian patronage. See Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁶ As Charles Conrad points out, many scholars were interested in what Griffin and Smelser call movement inception. See Charles Conrad, “The Transformation of the ‘Old Feminist’ Movement,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67 (1981): 284; Leland M. Griffin, “The Rhetorical Structure of the ‘New Left’ Movement: Part I,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 50, no. 2 (1964): 113-135.

⁷ J. Michael Hogan, “Managing Dissent in the Catholic Church: A Reinterpretation of the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989), 400-401.

⁸ According to Elizabeth Armstrong, zaps were “carefully staged, often highly theatrical, political confrontations.” They were a common strategy in both women’s liberation activism and homophile and gay liberation activism, though Armstrong argues that “gay liberation pioneered the zap.” See Elizabeth Armstrong, *Forging Gay*

Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 74. For a discussion of zaps by radical feminists, see Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 76. In one example members of Gay Liberation “zapped” or “disrupted” a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in 1970, “demand[ing] they re-examine their views on homosexuality. . . .” See “A.P.A Zap,” *Homophile Action League Newsletter* 2, no. 4 (May/June 1970): 2-3. For example, scholars studying women’s liberation noted the prevalence of consciousness-raising (CR) groups as crucial vehicles for transforming personal experiences into political activism. As Campbell argues, CR was the primary rhetorical strategy of women’s liberation rhetoric, ironically a strategy deemed non-rhetorical by traditional rhetorical standards. See Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973), 74-86.

⁹ These demonstrations challenged the centrality of rationality for sociological models and the centrality of rational discourse and argumentation for rhetorical scholars. Some scholars emphasized the ways bodily-centric activism destabilized norms of decorum. Since then, however, others have challenged such dismissal of bodily strategies, calling them extra-rhetorical, material interpretations of protest, or rhetorical in and of themselves. Their challenge opened up research in enactment, embodiment, and the rhetoricity of the body in motion. See Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, “The Rhetoric of Confrontation,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55, no. 1 (February 1969): 1-8; Kevin Michael DeLuca, “Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36 (1999): 9-21.

¹⁰ The constitutive function relates to the work of sociologists working within the identity paradigm in social movement scholarship. Melucci was among sociologists interested in the meaning-making process associated with the development and definition of collective identity. He argued utilizing collective identity as an analytical framework “implies the inclusion of the social field as part of the movement construction,” which “means that beyond the formal definitions (speech, documents, opinions of participants) there is always an active negotiation, an interactive work among individuals, groups or parts of the movement.” See Alberto Melucci, “The Process of Collective Identity.” In *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 52.

¹¹ Robert S. Cathcart, “Defining Social Movements By Their Rhetorical Form,” *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 267-273; David Zarefsky, “President Johnson's War on Poverty: The Rhetoric of Three ‘Establishment’ Movements,” *Communication Monographs* 44, no. 4 (1977): 352-373.

¹² See Leland M. Griffin, “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 184-188; James Darsey, “From Gay is Good to the Scourge of AIDS: The Evolution of Gay Liberation Rhetoric, 1977-1990,” *Communication Studies* 42, no. 1 (1991): 43-66; Franklyn S. Haiman, “The Rhetoric of the Streets: Some Legal and Ethical Considerations,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53, no. 2 (1967): 99-114. David Zarefsky has argued that movements can emerge from within the “establishment” and still others have pointed to the prevalence of conservative or reactionary social movements seeking to halt change or reinforce the status quo. See Zarefsky, “President Johnson's War on Poverty,” 352-373; Kristy Maddux, “When

Patriots Protest: The Anti-Suffrage Discursive Transformation of 1917,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 283-310; and Martha Solomon, “The ‘Positive Woman’s’ Journey: A Mythic Analysis of the Rhetoric of STOP ERA,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65, no. 3 (1979): 262-74.

¹³ Charland notes that constitutive rhetoric examines the “key process in the production of ideology: the constitution of the subject.” See Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133.

¹⁴ Richard B. Gregg, “The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest.” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4, no. 1 (1971): 71-91; Randall A. Lake, “Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, no. 2 (1983): 127-42; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation,” 74-86; Michael Calvin McGee, “In Search of ‘The People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235-249; and Karma Chavez, “Counter-public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building,” *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January/March 2011): 1-18.

¹⁵ See Lake, Randall A. “Enacting Red Power,” 127-42; Gregg, “The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest.”

¹⁶ Michael C. McGee, “In Search of ‘The People,’” 240-243.

¹⁷ Lisa Duggan, “The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America,” *Signs* 18, no. 4 (1993): 793; Walter R.

Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument." *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984): 1-22.

¹⁸ Scholars have also analyzed where constitutive rhetoric or "identity-forming discourse" fails to, in Louis Althusser or Maurice Charland's terms, "interpellate" or "call into being" audiences. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing 2006), 79-87; Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*," 134. For scholars who investigate constitutive failures, see Kenneth S. Zagacki, "Constitutive Rhetoric Reconsidered: Constitutive Paradoxes in G. W. Bush's Iraq War Speeches," *Western Journal of Communication* 71, no. 4 (2007): 272- 293; and Helen Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric: The Co-Option of the Rhetoric of White Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-31.

¹⁹ To account for such contestation, I take a "horizontal approach" to consider a broad range of voices that contributed to identity discourse. Such an approach helps account for otherwise silenced voices that did not necessarily emerge from recognized leadership positions or from within formalized coalition organizations.

²⁰ Duggan, "Trials of Alice Mitchell," 793.

²¹ Arlene Stein, "Sisters and Queers: Decentering Lesbian Feminism," in *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, eds. Marcy Daronovsky, Barbara Epstein, and Richard Flacks (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995), 136.

²² Stein, "Sisters and Queers," 136.

²³ McGee, "In Search of 'The People,'" 243; Stephen Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (Winter 1980): 255-266.

²⁴ Karma R. Chavez, "Counter-public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January/March 2011): 2.

²⁵ Chavez, "Counter-public Enclaves," 2.

²⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, n. "Coalition."

²⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, n. "Coalition," emphasis mine.

²⁸ Lisa Albrecht and Rose Brewer, *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers & National Women's Studies Association, 1990), 4.

²⁹ Jill M. Bystydzienski and Steven P. Schacht, eds., *Forging Radical Alliances across Difference: Coalition Politics for the New Millennium* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 1-2.

³⁰ Karma R. Chavez, *Queer/Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*. (unpublished manuscript, November 21, 2011), 16; Cricket Keating, "Building Coalitional Consciousness" *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 86-103; Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in *Feminism and Politics*, ed. Anne Phillips. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 242-253.

³¹ Chavez notes the "theoretical utility" of the term coalition, and uses it in similar ways. Chavez, *Queer/Migration Politics*, 17. I wish to avoid perpetuating assumptions that 1) limit coalition-politics to instrumental, single-issue activist efforts or 2) foreclose radical political possibilities by assuming coalition politics as always already reformist.

³² *Oxford English Dictionary*, n.2 “Coalition.”

³³ Catherine Corrigan-Brown and David Meyer, for example, analyze the organization Win Without War, which brought together many member organizations together in the early 2000s against the U.S. war in Iraq. See Catherine Corrigan-Brown and David S. Meyer, “The Prehistory of a Coalition: The Role of Social Ties in Win Without War,” in *Strategic Alliances: Coalition Building and Social Movements*, eds. Nella Van Dyke and Holly J. McCammon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 3-21.

³⁴ This is not to suggest that instrumental purposes are unimportant. Indeed, many coalitions forge around shared issues or goals, but frequently in the process, can have deeper implications for the people involved or lead to additional activism.

³⁵ Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, 7.

³⁶ This bifurcation has occurred largely by a focus on identity politics and less consideration of the role of coalition politics. As discussed here, identity politics have received a great deal of attention, both positive and negative. Additionally, activists like Todd Gitlin focus attacks on identity politics. See Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 33-35. One of the central ways coalition politics is put into a dichotomy with identity politics is around the issue of ideology. For activists, coalition politics was frequently positioned as compromise in a negative sense, resulting in acquiescence to reformist or assimilationist political goals. This study examines how despite that dichotomous relationship, lesbian-feminists saw potential for radical activism within the context of coalition politics. See Judy Freespirit, Ivy Bottini, Jeanne Córdova, and Maria

Ramos, "Coalition Politics: A Necessary Alliance," *Lesbian Tide* 7, no. 2

(September/October 1977): 4.

³⁷ Chavez, "Counter-public Enclaves," 1-18; Chavez, *Queer/Migration Politics*.

³⁸ Chavez, *Queer/Migration Politics*, 17.

³⁹ Chavez develops her theory of coalitional moments in a contemporary context, whereas I analyze the rhetoric of coalitions in a historical context. In this way, "familiar" discourses of identity, re-read through a lens of coalition can unpack the interactivity among them. Specifically, I consider the importance of coalition-building and coalition politics to the ongoing *process* of identity formation and how rhetoric mediates or facilitates that process.

⁴⁰ Aimee Carillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3.

⁴¹ My capitalization matches Roth in this case.

⁴² Benita Roth, "'Organizing One's Own' as Good Politics: Second Wave Feminists and the Meaning of Coalition," in *Strategic Alliances: Coalition Building and Social Movements*, eds. Van Dyke, Nella and Holly J. McCammon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 99-118. Stephanie Gilmore's edited collection suggests that in particular cases, transracial coalitions did exist, particular in the labor movement. See Gilmore, *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

⁴³ Linda Martin Alcoff, "Identity Politics," *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* ed. Lorraine Code (London: Routledge, 2000), 263.

⁴⁴ Alcoff, "Identity Politics," 264.

⁴⁵ Linda Martín Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics: An Introduction” in Linda Martín Alcoff, Michael Hames-García, Satya P. Mohanty, and Paula M. L. Moya, eds. *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006), 2.

⁴⁶ Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 2, 14. According to Gutmann, identity group membership is not merely defined by instrumental (political) goals, in order to differentiate identity groups from interest groups. Gutmann argues that identity groups can also pursue instrumental aims, but they cannot be simply conflated (as critics of identity groups often do) with interest groups. Her distinction between the two counters those who attack identity groups as “mere interest groups.”

⁴⁷ Alcoff and Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics,” 2.

⁴⁸ Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 35; and Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, 7.

⁴⁹ Alcoff and Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics,” 3.

⁵⁰ Alcoff and Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics,” 3; Chavez, *Queer/Migration Politics*, 4. Chavez notes that “divide and conquer” is a classic “master’s tool” used to dominate and oppress, as defined by Audre Lorde.

⁵¹ Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 127; and Bystydzienski and Schacht, *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference*, 4.

⁵² Reagon, “Coalition Politics: Turning the Century,” 243.

⁵³ Several scholars working on coalition politics challenge such critique as limited in and of itself. Linda Martín Alcoff and Satya P. Mohanty argue that “Social movements

of the 21st century require a new language of liberation,” that scholars “need new accounts of the relationships among our various identities; we also need new ideas about how to make common cause across differences of privilege and geography. We need new thinking.” Likewise, Stephanie Gilmore aims to challenge the continuing narrative of division and destruction at the hands of identity politics within feminist histories, and notes that despite the persistence of such narratives, productive and radical coalition-building took place in many communities during the 1960s and 1970s. See Alcoff and Mohanty, “Reconsidering Identity Politics,” 3; Stephanie Gilmore, “Thinking about Feminist Coalitions,” in *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, ed. Stephanie Gilmore (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2-3.

⁵⁴ Melucci, “The Process of Collective identity,” 52. I do not argue that I have accounted for all possible voices from the lesbian-feminist movement. Here, I account for the limitations of my approach as I have privileged those voices that appeared in publications, no matter how small or localized.

⁵⁵ Joshua Gamson, “Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma,” *Social Problems* 42, no. 3 (August 1995): 391. These impulses, according to Gamson, result in a clash between a *deconstructionist* politic and an *ethnic/essentialist* politic. The former views “clear collective categories as an obstacle to resistance and change,” while the latter views the presence of clear categories as necessary for political resistance and social change.

⁵⁶ See Jane Ward, *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations*. (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 32, 135.

⁵⁷ Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1771; Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 31.

⁵⁸ Karma Chavez and Cindy Griffin argue “theories of intersectionality are vital to the continued viability of feminist communication scholarship.” Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin. *Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 3.

⁵⁹ As Chavez and Griffin point out, theories of intersectionality has developed a variety of metaphors—from “intersection” to “curdling” to “theory in flesh.” See Chavez and Griffin, 11-12.

⁶⁰ McCall argues that such interrogation needs to “acknowledge the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time, though it also maintains a critical stance toward categories.” See McCall, Leslie. “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” 1773-1774.

⁶¹ Lester C. Olson, “Intersecting Audiences: Public Commentary Concerning Audre Lorde’s Speech, ‘Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,’” in *Standing at the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies*, eds. Karma R. Chavez and Cindy L. Griffin (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 143, n.2.

⁶² Karma R. Chavez, “Doing Intersectionality: Power, Privilege and Oppression in Political Activist Communities,” (Paper, Western States Communication Association Conference, Monterrey, California, February 2010).

⁶³ Puar contends that such theorizing potentially posits the very intersecting locations or identities as stable and separable, ultimately supporting exclusionary practices. She argues, “Intersectionality demands the knowing, naming, and thus

stabilizing of identity across space and time, generating narratives of progress that deny the fictive and performative of identification: you become an identity, yes, but also timelessness works to consolidate the fiction of a seamless, stable identity in every space.” Jasbir K. Puar, “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages,” *Social Text*, 84-85, nos. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2005): 127. Even as intersectionality has taken root as scholars now seek to attend to the “mantra” of race, class, and gender, scholars have pointed to the increasing contemporary co-optation of intersectionality, particularly within LGBT social movements and rights activism. Analyzing the broader dominance of multiculturalism and diversity, Ward points out that intersectionality can be co-opted as a means of mobilization in the service of economic and neoliberal “diversity culture.” Her critique is important in considering the shifting of the gay rights movement over the course of the 1970s as it began to work within the mainstream political culture and clash at points with more radical lesbians and gay men in the process. Eventually, the rise of “equality politics,” took hold by the late 1970s and into the 1990s, and the importance of differences fed a neoliberal diversity agenda rather than a radical politics. See Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 28; Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003), 46

⁶⁴ Jasbir Puar calls upon scholars to utilize *assemblages* instead of the spatial intersection metaphor. Demonstrating the intervention “assemblage” poses to identity and multi-identity politics, Puar contends that “intersectionality privileges naming, visibility, epistemology, representation, and meaning, while assemblage underscores feeling, tactility, ontology, affect, and information.” Puar, “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages”, 128.

⁶⁵ Other scholars question the utility of intersectionality for analyzing contemporary activism and social justice movements. Ward reveals how intersectionality has been co-opted by neoliberal corporate power structures working in the service of “diversity culture” and as such, attempts to *queer* intersectionality. Michael Warner similarly challenges the limits of intersectionality as its “slogan [race, class, and gender] often implies not alliance or intersection, but rather a fantasized space where all embodied identities could be visibly represented as parallel forms of identity.” For queer feminists of color, Warner’s critique is well taken, as certain embodied identities are rooted in privilege and others in historical, ongoing oppression. See Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 28; Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xix.

⁶⁶ Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 134.

⁶⁷ Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 134.

⁶⁸ Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 134. Ralph R. Smith argues that destabilizing identity, both gender and sexual, has challenged activists committed to constructing collective identities and coalitional relationships and, I would add, scholars studying those collective identities and coalitional relationships. See Ralph R. Smith, “Queer Theory, Gay Movements, and Political Communication.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2/3/4 (2003): 345-348.

⁶⁹ Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?* 42.

⁷⁰ E. Patrick Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January 2001): 18-20.

⁷¹ See McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” 1771-1800; Sally Miller Gearheart, “Foreword: My Trip to Queer,” in *Queer Theory and Communication: From Disciplining Queers to Queering the Discipline*, eds. Gust A. Yep, Karen E. Lovaas, and John P. Elia. (New York: Haworth Press, 2003), xxix.

⁷² Quoted in Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies,” 3. She argues that “queer,” used during the 1980s and 1990s as an “umbrella” term, simply reworked the old “gay” with a new term of “erasure.”

⁷³ Gearheart, “Foreword: My Trip to Queer,” xxix; Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 45. Cathy Cohen agrees that part of the problem with queer politics is the erasure of racial, class, and other kinds of difference under the label of queer. Cohen echoes Anzaldua’s concerns about queer’s erasure of racial, class, and other differences. For those sheltered beneath the queer umbrella, it serves to mask internal or intra-group exclusions as well.

⁷⁴ Much of the work done by queer studies scholars, particularly regarding the neoliberal equality politics focuses on the developments within the gay and lesbian rights movement from the late 1970s and into the 2000s.

⁷⁵ Morris, Charles E., "Pink Herring and the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover's Sex Crime Panic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 2 (2002): 228-244.

⁷⁶ Alcoff, “Identity Politics,” 264; Melucci, “The Process of Collective Identity,” 46.

⁷⁷ See Martha Solomon, ed., *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).

⁷⁸ See, for example, Carlos Ulises Decena, *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-Sex Desire Among Dominican Immigrant Men* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁷⁹ In terms of gay liberation, the central means of constructing this collective identity was through the prevalent construct of the “closet” in the fight for legal and social recognition. Some scholars, like Darsey, turned to the ways in which these rhetorics of liberation progressed over time, changing in response to various the catalytic historical events. Darsey notes that progression or evolution of rhetorical discourse, or, as Lucas (1980) posits the possibility of discursive “metamorphosis” over time in a movement, contributes to the larger understanding of how rhetorical strategies shift and change over time for members of a movement. James Darsey, “From ‘Gay is Good’ to the Scourge of AIDS,” 43-66; Lucas, “Coming to Terms with Movement Studies.”

⁸⁰ See David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, eds., *Gay Shame* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁸¹ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, NY: Zone Book, 2002), 52.

⁸² Halperin and Traub, *Gay Shame*, 3.

⁸³ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 52.

⁸⁴ Eve Sedgwick argues that the closet limits the horizon of readings of homosexuality as an identity. In particular, the closet does not necessarily leave room for understanding the rhetorical and political potential of passing. For those who pass, in

terms of gender or sexuality, the ability to travel in dominant spaces undetected can either be seen as a cop-out or a strategic and political move. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 3 vols., translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990/2008; Charles E. Morris, "Pink Herring and the Fourth Persona," 228-244; and Dreama G. Moon, "Performed Identities: 'Passing' as an Inter/Cultural Discourse," in *Readings in Cultural Contexts*, eds. Judith N. Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, and Lisa A. Flores (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1998), 322-330.

⁸⁵ As *the* speech act, Dow adds, the declaration of the identity is continually couched in a confession/liberation framework, the process of coming out becomes intensely personal, as does the libratory effects. Bonnie J. Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001): 123-40.

⁸⁶ Bonnie J. Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility."

⁸⁷ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 52.

⁸⁸ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 52.

⁸⁹ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 53.

⁹⁰ Instead, the process of "coming out" is continual, contextual, and without a specific telos. According to Gross, three factors drive arguments used to encourage outing others or making oneself visible. First, people cite the "increasing costs of homophobia" from emotional to physical costs including antigay violence as reason to come out. Such reasoning rests on the notion that the truth of coming out speaks back to

power exercised through homophobia. This focus on the personal impact on the political emerges in the second argument; beyond the personal reasons, coming out holds political significance. Premised on the discourse of gay liberation, this argument supports the notion that civil rights and freedom for the group is impossible if people are in hiding. The third factor Gross explicates relies on the dual claims that “those who engage in frequent, voluntary homosexual conduct, whatever their state of political awareness, are by definition gay,” and that “gays are a real, inescapable minority marching towards increasing self-realization. See Larry P. Gross, *Contested Closets: The Politics and Ethics of Outing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 107-108.

⁹¹ Parsing the closet as a central metaphor for identity building within gay liberation discourses helps to interrogate the terms upon which visibility is premised. In particular, the closet ascribes negative, shameful, and deceitful affective characteristics to the closet itself, supporting a binary and limited conception of the possibilities within the closet. Moreover, it can also presume the converse—the positive, liberating characteristics of the visibility associated with coming out—ignoring the disciplinary functions of dominant rhetorics of sexuality and gender that can accompany such coming out narratives. At times, safety is enough to encourage lesbians and gays to remain in the closet. Moreover, the presumption that visibility equals “instant” community as well as self-gratification and widespread acceptance, depends upon location and the availability or legibility of visibility in the first place.

⁹² More recently scholars have challenged the closet’s presumption of a static binary between “out” and “in,” ultimately supporting a limited version or horizon of visibility that renders invisible or unintelligible practices of sexual discretion. McCune

specifically challenges the limitations of the closet in understanding the experiences and identity construction of men of color “on the down low” (or DL). For McCune, the existence of down-low men confronts the “overdetermination of the closet as a container of shame, pain, discomfort, and anxiety” by demonstrating the possibilities of “sexual discretion” that creates space for exerting agency. Likewise, transnational feminist scholars have challenged the utility of the closet construct in light transnational and global movements and migrations of people. Carlos Decena holds that the closet is a limiting construct, especially when used to understand the formation and practice of sexual identity among Dominican immigrant men living in New York. His critique challenges the construct through a transnational lens. He identifies possibilities associated with the “tacit subject,” one for whom the closet *does not apply*. In that context, sexuality is “something present yet not remarked upon, something understood yet not stated, something intuited yet uncertain, something known yet not broached by either person in a given exchange.” Jeffery McCune, “Out in Da Club: The Down Low, Hip Hop, and the Architecture of Black Masculinity,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2008): 299; Carlos Ulises Decena, *Tacit Subjects*, 18; Marlon Ross, “The Closet as a Racist Construct,” *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press 2007), 161-189.

⁹³ Ward, *Respectably Queer*, 29. Suzanna Walters adds, “there are ways in which this new visibility (in the context of the 1990s) creates new forms of homophobia.” Suzanna Danuta Walters, *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 10.

⁹⁴ Tate, “The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric,” 1-31.

⁹⁵ Christina Hanhardt, “Safe Space: Sexual Minorities, Uneven Urban Development, and the politics of Anti-violence.” (PhD Diss. New York University, 2006), 36.

⁹⁶ Alberto Melucci, “The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements,” *Social Research* 52, no. 4 (1985): 801.

⁹⁷ Indeed, the “invisibility” or “privacy” associated with the closet provided a space for mobilization/collective organizing in the years before the movement went “public” in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁹⁸ See Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008): 177-189.

⁹⁹ See David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). For this project, I take up the concerns about equality politics, neoliberalism, and poststructuralist/queer challenges to identity and intersectionality as instructive yet not restrictive to my analysis of lesbian-feminist activism over the 1970s.

Chapter 2

More than Women Identified Women:

Unpacking Lesbian-Feminist Identities in the 1970s

For one weekend in April 1973, the West Coast Lesbian Conference (WCLC) brought together 1,500 women from sixteen states, the District of Columbia, and four countries including Denmark, France, Sweden, and Canada on the campus of University of California, Los Angeles in West Hollywood.¹ According to activist Joan Nixon, the conference promised to fulfill the organizers' dream: "a thousand lesbians, finding each other in one place, in one room, fill[ing] the space with a joyous celebration. We would be an army made of lovers and we would build our lesbian culture with our sisters."² For some, the conference exceeded expectations. Chicago lesbian-feminist Connie Mayer noted that what started as the "L.A. Lesbian conference" soon became the "West Coast Lesbian Conference" and, by the end of the weekend, felt more like the "national" or even "international" lesbian conference; it proudly declared the existence of the lesbian community on a national scale.³ Lesbian-feminists from communities across the country came together, struggled, and crafted a sense of identity and community across geographic and cultural lines. The conference created a space for lesbian-feminists within the broader social movement landscape of the 1970s. Jeanne Cordova, speaking on behalf of the sponsoring organization, Lesbian Activist Women, explained:

We as lesbians have felt for a long time that we have been batted between the Gay Movement and the Women's Movement, between the Old Left and the New Left We wanted to build this conference as the founding convention of the Lesbian Feminist Movement. Many of us . . . have been heavily involved in the

Women's movement, some of us have gone into and out of the Gay Movement, as long as we could stand the sexism! Now it's time for us to come home.

'Amazon Nation' is our base.⁴

As a touchstone for the ongoing struggle over identities, political loyalties, racism, classism, and diversity, the conference marked a moment where lesbian-feminists defined, defended, and contested the boundaries of their identities as lesbians and as feminists. On one hand, Cordova pointed to the consensus of women present at the conference as confirmation of "the existence of a Lesbian Feminist culture/movement."⁵ On the other hand, conference participants found "a series of deadly-serious struggles over issues too complex and deeply-felt to be resolved in three days."⁶ The "dyke conference" correspondingly became what Nixon termed "a battleground" of "a thousand angry women . . . fighting with each other—lesbian against lesbian, feminist against feminist, woman against woman."⁷ At once a genesis and a boiling point, the WCLC witnessed the collision of numerous lesbian-feminist identity rhetorics. Women at the conference defended and contested these identities, including woman-identification, politicalesbianism, separatism, and gay women's liberation. As such, the event and the subsequent response demonstrated the painful yet generative process of constructing identities at the nexus of multiple movements for social change.

This chapter examines these rhetorical contestations over lesbian-feminist identity throughout the 1970s. Some of the early identity constructs resulted from the lesbian experience within the women's movement. Beginning with the 1970 Radicalesbians manifesto—"The Woman Identified Woman"—I trace how lesbian-feminists both embraced and disputed the notion of "woman-identification" as a form of radical feminist

identity, locating these struggles within the tension between identity politics and coalition building. I contend that while the “woman-identified-woman” offered an initial statement of lesbian-feminist identity in 1970, it was not the only constitutive rhetoric available for lesbian-feminists across the United States. Because lesbian-feminists identified with movements other than women’s liberation, they crafted other articulations of identity in terms of those coalitions through what Aimee Carillo Rowe calls “coalitional subjectivity.”⁸

This chapter seeks to elucidate the rhetorical and political struggle to define lesbian-feminism in the context of the 1970s by analyzing lesbian-feminist discourse about identity, coalitions, and the challenges they faced regarding racism, heterosexism, and sexism within their coalitional locations. It would become much more than a radical feminist identity as various factions seeking to advance lesbian-feminist civil rights vied to preserve their own identities in the debates over political strategies and coalition building. In part, lesbian-feminists of color, liberal lesbian-feminists, and advocates of gay women’s liberation empowered themselves by defining their own coalitional subjectivities through the process of coalition building across those identities and in relation to external activist communities. Alternatively, separatist lesbian-feminists articulated their identities in ways that shunned coalitions and sought greater ideological purity and isolation. Both approaches resulted in destructive exclusionary practices in terms of racism, classism, co-gender activism, and gender performance that generated micro-hierarchies and disempowered some in the process of uplifting others. While painful and divisive, such exclusionary politics were *generative* as they contributed to contrary definitions of lesbian-feminism.

Because women of many ideological, identity, and coalitional investments participated in the process of lesbian-feminist identity construction, this chapter consequently expands the range of voices that matter in feminist and queer rhetorical histories. Analyzing historical feminist identity discourses in tension with coalition-building activities correspondingly expands the role of rhetoric in social movement identity formation and reveals a rich tapestry of lesbian-feminism in the United States during the 1970s.

Re-Reading “The Woman Identified Woman”

For rhetorical scholars and some lesbian-feminists of the era, including Charlotte Bunch, the politics and identity of “lesbian-feminism” was captured succinctly in the Radicalesbians 1970 manifesto entitled “The Woman Identified Woman” (WIW).⁹ This chapter begins by examining WIW to interpret its power as an affirmative statement featuring *one version* of lesbian-feminist identity in the context of the conflict and tension between liberal and radical feminists. Despite its wide circulation and adaptation, woman-identification was ideologically and politically limited. Not only did it “fail” to constitute a radical feminist identity for heterosexual feminists or women of color, as scholars have noted, it missed the mark for scores of lesbian-feminists. The chapter then turns to the alternatives lesbian-feminists offered throughout the decade. These alternatives responded to the desexualization of lesbianism and homophobia within women’s liberation, ranging from politicized versions of WIW, separatist lesbian-feminist identities, and lesbian-feminist identities grounded in coalition with women’s liberation, including lesbian-feminists of color and gay women’s liberation. Each identity construct was accordingly contested around the concurrent need to include coalition-

committed women within the boundaries of lesbian-feminism and the need to fortify that very boundary against internal exclusionary politics and external attacks.

In 1970, the members of what was then called the “new feminist” movement were deeply engaged in battle against inequality and patriarchal oppression. Fighting from liberal/reform and radical/revolutionary ideological perspectives and at times bitterly divided, the feminist movement was gradually uniting under the metaphor of “sisterhood.”¹⁰ By the beginning of the decade, signs of “success,” including the well-attended Women’s Strike for Equality, the hearings on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and growing consciousness-raising efforts, put women’s liberation on the map of American political culture.¹¹ During this time, lesbian identity began to take center stage within women’s liberation in two contradictory ways: as a dangerous threat and a vanguard for the movement.¹² Indeed, despite the prominence and unifying gestures that sisterhood offered as a constitutive rhetoric of *feminist* identity, its limitations concerning sexual identity soon emerged.¹³

Whether identified with “equality and reform” of liberal feminists or “liberation and revolution” of radical feminists, lesbians encountered numerous challenges in their attempts to constitute a feminist identity.¹⁴ Though lesbians had long participated in the women’s movement, rising to leadership positions in liberal organizations like NOW or the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC), they were often ignored or viewed as a threat—a “lavender menace.”¹⁵ From the perspective of certain women’s rights activists advocating a liberal/reform agenda within the system, the issue of homosexuality threatened to discredit not only individual feminists, but also the movement as a whole.¹⁶ By 1970, lesbianism was so internally divisive that the National Organization for Women

(NOW) purged lesbians from leadership positions, which exacerbated an already toxic environment for out lesbians and women *suspected* of being lesbian or bisexual.¹⁷

In the face of blatant homophobia from their liberal feminist “sisters,” many lesbians worked within NOW to create a legitimate space for lesbians. The organization did not officially acknowledge them until a 1972 conference, where the following resolution was passed:

That NOW recognizes the double oppression of women who are lesbians; that a woman’s right to her own person includes the right to define and express her own sexuality and to choose her own lifestyle; and that NOW acknowledges the oppression of lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism.¹⁸

Although the resolution did not solve the problem of homophobia, NOW’s public solidarity coupled with its stated political agenda, helped keep liberal lesbian-feminists working hard on behalf of liberal feminism. Moreover, the charge that lesbianism posed a threat to the public face of the feminist movement drove a wedge between the members of the increasingly radicalized movement.¹⁹

There was growing need to develop a way to include lesbians within the available feminist political identity, particularly as the emerging radicalized form of feminism positioned lesbians at the heart of the revolutionary feminist ideologies.²⁰ Radical feminism posited lesbians as the quintessential feminists, the vanguard of radical politics. Having built its membership from former New Left movement activists, radical feminists broadly argued that the structure of society itself was insufficient and liberation should be the goal of feminism.²¹ For many, lesbianism represented the ultimate liberation: a life separated from patriarchy. The emergence of radical feminism and its embrace of lesbian

identity resulted in a “radical feminist identity” for lesbians.²² As lesbians struggled to negotiate their own identity as lesbians with their commitments to different feminist ideological camps, this central position in radical feminism crystallized in the form of the woman-identified-woman, a rhetorical construction that would catalyze a decade of identity contestation.

Constructing “The Woman Identified Woman”

On May 1, 1970, at a plenary session at the Second Congress to Unite Women, a NOW-sponsored event, the lights illuminating the room suddenly went dark. When they came back on, a group of women wearing lavender t-shirts emblazoned with Betty Friedan’s words “Lavender Menace” across the chest “liberated” the microphone on the stage to confront the issue of lesbianism within the feminist movement.²³ In the audience, members of the New York Radicalesbians, a group that brought together women from the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and women’s liberation, distributed a manifesto entitled, “The Woman Identified Woman.”²⁴ The paper articulated the central tenets of lesbian-feminist politics and identity, opening up the definition of “lesbian” to include heterosexual women through the notion of woman-identification.²⁵

Throughout the WIW statement itself, the authors actually offered several definitions of “lesbian,” beginning with the oft-quoted opening line, “A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion.”²⁶ This line and the following paragraph made the case that, by way of her socialization, frustration, and politicization, the lesbian—now the woman-identified-woman—was “all women.” The first section rhetorically united lesbian and heterosexual feminists through woman-identification based in the common experience of gender socialization.²⁷ According to their narrative, a

lesbian's inherent discomfort with such traditional (read: white, middle-class, heterosexual, feminine) gender socialization positioned her as the quintessential feminist. Moreover, the concept of woman-identification promised to unite feminists even as it aired lesbian grievances regarding societal and movement marginalization. It explained:

Women in the movement have in most cases gone to great lengths to avoid discussion and confrontation with the issue of lesbianism. . . . They are hostile, evasive, or try to incorporate it into some "broader issue." If they have to [talk about it], they try to dismiss it as a 'lavender herring.' But it is no side issue. It is absolutely essential to the success and fulfillment of the women's liberation movement that this issue be dealt with.²⁸

The WIW needed to respond to the lesbian-feminist frustrations with heterosexual women in the feminist movement. Within liberal circles, when feminists acknowledged lesbianism, it was often considered a "bedroom issue," allowing lesbian membership "on the liberal grounds that all women were accepted and that what one does in bed is their own business."²⁹ Relegating lesbianism to private sexual behavior rather than acknowledging it as legitimate faction of feminist political action crafted a ready-made closet for many lesbian-feminists, whether they were open about their sexuality or not. Invisibility qua privatization was not wholly negative, as some women found its protection necessary for survival in feminist activist circles. Yet privatizing lesbian sexuality kept the issue at an arms length to protect the public face of the women's movement from the public stigma associated lesbianism.³⁰ Though it made for a useful public relations strategy, such easy dismissal of sexuality represented just one way that "sisters" internally oppressed lesbian-feminists.

Concerns about the threat of lesbians to the movement's public face were only the beginning of the attacks.³¹ Fears of lesbian "recruitment" under the guise of feminism paired with the assumption that lesbians were "demanding that every woman be a lesbian" in order to be an authentic feminist.³² Moreover, some women argued that lesbians thought of themselves as "superior" because they did not deal with men, while others called lesbians "chauvinists" for being into "oppressive sex roles." Combined, these arguments supported the notion that lesbians were simply divisive to the women's movement.³³

In the context of such divisiveness, the Radicalesbians' WIW manifesto identified the shared stakes in the fight against heterosexual ideology and patriarchy to unite lesbians and straight feminists. They wrote, "As long as the label 'dyke' can be used to frighten women into a less militant stand, keep her separate from her sisters, keep her from giving primacy to anything other than men and family . . . she is controlled by the male culture."³⁴ First, this statement affirmed the experience of inter-movement oppression and denounced the homophobia within the movement. Second, it revealed the detrimental power lesbian-baiting had on movement health. The word "dyke" not only silenced lesbian sisters, but it kept other feminists (straight, black, Chicana, and others) from adopting a radical ideological position. As such, the Radicalesbians identified heteronormativity as both the culprit for the intra-movement divisions and the reason to craft a united front, offering lesbians a way to respond to homophobia without engaging in ad hominem attacks. Thus, by articulating a common ground for building feminist identity against the ideology supporting oppressive sex roles, they also decried their

fellow feminists for using patriarchal lesbian-baiting strategies against lesbians in the movement.

Not only did the WIW reorient the ideological problem that drove feminist activism to unite straight and lesbian-feminists, its articulation of lesbianism also debunked the prevalent authoritative definitions of homosexuality as diseased or deviant. The Radicalesbians argued, for example, that “lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy.”³⁵ Refuting prominent definitions of homosexuality, they also anticipated counterarguments that feminists may have used to discount lesbians. The authors explained, “Homosexuality is a by-product of a particular way of setting up roles . . . on the basis of sex In a society in which men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feelings, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear.”³⁶ Here, the Radicalesbians suggested a new gender and sexuality order, indeed, the possibility of the revolution’s success—a queer world in the making. In that world, they argued, the very terms used to oppress women, particularly liberated women, like the words “lesbian” and “dyke,” would disappear as the power structure was eliminated.

Enacting such a shift in terminology held the promise of this liberated queer world. As such, the Radicalesbians offered the *woman-identified woman* as an alternative to lesbian or dyke, words that held enormous identity-significance for some lesbian-feminists. In solidifying the WIW as both an invective and an olive branch to straight feminists by focusing on how heterosexual ideology negatively affected *all* feminists, the statement limited its own horizon as a constitutive rhetoric for lesbian-feminist identity.

Moreover, as demonstrated above, the Radicalesbians took pains to emphasize the divisive and fearful consequences of being called a lesbian or living as one among homophobic feminist sisters. As an attempt to soothe the painful wounds of “lesbian-baiting” and denunciations of lesbianism as an identity, the WIW articulated the woman-identified-woman to create a sense of political unity for all feminists, gay or straight.³⁷

Beyond “The Woman Identified Woman”

Lesbian-feminists are often portrayed as a more radical faction of the women’s movement. Consequently, rhetorical scholars have focused on the Radicalesbian text, “The Woman Identified Woman,” and its attendant rhetoric of woman-identification, as a central constitutive rhetoric of feminist identity and the *only* rhetoric of lesbian-feminist identity. Helen Tate, for example, points to the WIW as an important feminist rhetoric that had the potential to heal divisions and unify the women’s movement. She argues that although the WIW allowed white lesbian-feminists to successfully constitute a liberatory identity, it ultimately failed to extend that identity to heterosexual feminists and women of color.³⁸ Tate is not alone in her critique of woman-identification. Kristan Poirot considers how liberal and radical/separatist feminists used woman-identification. She argues that woman-identification rhetoric *contained* the possibilities for identity and liberation in ways that restricted the “lesbian threat” for liberal feminists and restricted radical feminists through separatism.³⁹ Poirot’s analysis builds upon Tate’s assessment of the WIW’s constitutive failure for heterosexual women in both ideological feminist camps.⁴⁰ Both scholars focus on what WIW meant for heterosexual feminists and reveal how, as Bonnie Dow notes, the women’s liberation movement was “staggeringly

complex—rhetorically, organizationally, ideologically.”⁴¹ Analyzing the rhetorics of lesbian-feminist identity illuminates this complexity far beyond the confines of the WIW.

Analyses of WIW and woman-identification rarely consider lesbian-feminists’ involvement with gay liberation or third world liberation movements. Nor do they consider the possibility that it may have failed to constitute lesbian-feminist identity for some lesbian-feminists. I argue that the WIW affirmed the identity, history, and feminist legitimacy of lesbian-feminists who fought for women’s liberation, gay liberation, and other liberation movements in the 1970s. While I agree with Poirot’s contention that radical/lesbian-feminism’s “predetermined ‘liberatory’ locale” disciplined other women in the feminist movement, including straight and liberal feminists, I contend that the WIW can also be interpreted as a *response* to the internal oppression lesbians experienced.⁴² Such a focus shifts the central question from “What did lesbian-feminism (or woman-identification) mean for heterosexual feminists?” to “How did lesbian-feminists build a sense of shared identity and navigate relationships with gay liberation, gay men, women’s liberation, and straight women?” Many lesbian-feminists contested the WIW’s replacement of “lesbian” with the safer term “woman-identified-woman” while others took issue with the concept of the “politicalesbian” as inclusive to heterosexual women. Lesbian-feminists of color critiqued the manifesto as it ignored their multiple identities and movement identifications. Thus, just as the woman-identified-woman emerged in response to fissures within an emergent feminist “sisterhood,” it functioned as a contested rhetoric. Looking beyond the WIW as a *singular* constitutive rhetoric sharpens focus on the *multiple, concurrent* articulations of

lesbian-feminist identities, each defining various boundaries of political, ideological, and sexual commitments in conjunction with feminist activism.

Considering a more expansive set of possibilities for lesbian-feminism opens up the space for liberal lesbian-feminists, gay women's liberation activists, lesbian-feminists of color, and separatist lesbian-feminists. This analysis disconnects lesbian-feminism from a singular radical feminist lineage by accounting for this wider range of identity formations and ideological perspectives associated with WIW.⁴³ A broader horizon leaves room to acknowledge how lesbian-feminists engaged in the push and pull of coalitional politics, faced the exclusionary practices that accompanied identity politics, and contested each identity formation. While several alternatives to woman-identification complicated the identity landscape for lesbian-feminists, some did affirm woman-identification as a means of carving out a space within feminist communities.

For certain lesbian-feminists, the woman-identified-woman solidified the identity resources lesbian members found within the women's liberation movement; it provided the language to craft a shared political identity with heterosexual feminists. Many women assumed the identity—woman-identified-woman—to successfully navigate internal politics and ameliorate the painful experiences with sisters in women's liberation. In response to the distribution of the manifesto, Charlotte Bunch argued that the WIW declared the arrival of lesbian-feminist politics.⁴⁴ For her, the woman-identified-woman was synonymous with the “lesbian” who “commits herself to other women for political, emotional, physical, and economic support” to “challeng[e] male supremacy” as one prong of the lesbian-feminist agenda.⁴⁵ Woman-identification valued loyalty to women over men, sisterhood over oppression. Bunch and others felt that woman-identification

had the potential to diffuse homophobic tension within feminist communities and unite ideological camps to expand the identity to include straight women. This perspective viewed the women's liberation movement as space for the woman-identified-woman, even as the sexual stigma associated with lesbian sexuality remained a huge obstacle for straight-identified feminists.

Some lesbian-feminists emphasized the *politics* of lesbian-feminism as integral to the success of feminism more broadly in an effort to thwart the personal rebukes questioning their identification with women's liberation. This shift in emphasis connected lesbian-feminism even *less* with sexuality to make the identity appealing for straight feminists. Bunch, along with fellow Furies Collective member Nancy Myron, sought to combat what they perceived as an "informational gap" between lesbian-feminists and straight feminists. They responded to the anti-lesbian attacks to show how heterosexism was relevant to all feminists by "rais[ing] questions about women's lives."⁴⁶ They lamented straight feminists' inability to recognize heteronormativity as the central problem that created the oppressive conditions against which women's liberation fought.

Myron and Bunch took other attacks against lesbians head-on by reframing and redirecting in ways that emphasized the common ground with heterosexual feminists. They reframed the oft-cited perception of lesbian "arrogance" as a defense mechanism that resulted from the continual attacks and "roadblocks" erected by straight feminists "against our ideas and experiences."⁴⁷ Responding to the argument that lesbian couples practiced sex roles like "butch and femme," Bunch and Myron redirected the conversation by arguing that "lesbian-feminist politics is not primarily concerned with sex-roles, but with sex *power*; it is not the roles themselves that men and women play, but

the power behind those roles that is oppressive.”⁴⁸ Myron and Bunch heavily emphasized common political ground as they routinely de-emphasized the “sex” in sexuality. In so doing, they maintained their faith in the link between lesbian and feminist political identities. Framing the relationship between lesbians and feminism in this way travelled well across the ideological divide. As the WIW emerged from radical feminist ideology, naming the lesbian the vanguard of women’s liberation bore a striking resemblance to concurrent rhetorical maneuvering taking place among liberal lesbian-feminist activists.

“Lesbian” began to represent a vanguard for liberal feminist activism because the politicizing of lesbianism functioned as a common rhetoric across ideological differences within the broader movement and extended a version of the woman-identified-woman to a conservative audience.⁴⁹ Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, for example, having been involved in gay rights and feminist activism on the West coast, represented a different set of voices as lesbians who hailed from homophile/gay rights activism and liberal feminist activism. They, like other liberal lesbian-feminists, found themselves rhetorically negotiating the new woman-identified-woman and straight feminist attacks on lesbians with their reformist political agenda. Martin and Lyon maintained that lesbians, as women, were equally affected and even doubly oppressed by sexism and patriarchy. Speaking to an audience in Missouri in 1975, Lyon argued that “women’s sexuality is the key issue in the liberation of women . . . And when I say women, I mean to include Lesbians—for they, too, are women.”⁵⁰ Decrying sex role socialization, a strategy akin to the WIW manifesto, Lyon argued that lesbians were “caught in the same morass of sexual suppression as are all women in this country,” even though they continued to be judged by their behavior (e.g., homosexuality).⁵¹ Because of that shared socialization

experience, Lyon and Del Martin frequently made lesbians visible within their narrative of feminist history. They argued that lesbians were, in fact, the “first feminists,” rooting the story of the feminist movement in early lesbian activism. In doing so, they turned the notion of the “lavender menace” on its head, instead questioning why feminists were afraid of their own early connections/coalitions with lesbians.

As lesbian-feminists of various ideological stripes responded to the attacks on lesbians within the women’s movement, fears about lesbian “recruitment” of straight women still plagued the larger movement and fueled ongoing distrust among lesbians over the problem of heterosexual privilege.⁵² The persistence of these roadblocks threatened the utility of a lesbian-feminist identity built through an inherent connection to women’s liberation. Such limitations led some lesbian-feminists to reframe their relationship with women’s liberation entirely as a means of protecting the distinctiveness of their identity formation.

The Achilles Heel of Women’s Liberation: Homophobia & Heteronormativity

Heterosexual privilege presented an enormous roadblock for lesbians who viewed women’s liberation as a resource for identity-formation; many lesbian-feminists readily identified heterosexism and, at times, heterosexuality, as a central problem. Just because straight feminist sisters were “woman-identified” did not mean they “examin[ed] and [fought] against heterosexuality as an ideology and institution that oppresses us all.”⁵³

Radical lesbian-feminists clarified that lesbian-feminism did not require all feminists to become lesbians, but instead required “the destruction of heterosexuality as a crucial part of male supremacy,” an argument that served radical feminists well in attempts to overturn the system of patriarchy.⁵⁴ Extending the critique of heterosexuality, they

argued it not only upheld male supremacy but also “hinder[ed] the development of a strong women’s community and female power.”⁵⁵ Challenging their straight feminist sisters for their heterosexism allowed lesbian-feminists to reframe attacks against themselves. Critiques of heterosexual ideology sought to call the sexuality of straight feminists into question by linking it to the central problem of patriarchy. As Furies Collective members Myron and Bunch explained, “it is not lesbians, but women’s ties to men, and thus men themselves, who divide women politically and personally.”⁵⁶

Heterosexism and homophobia limited the efficacy of the WIW for many lesbian-feminists. Though woman-identification linked lesbian and feminism to create a radical political identity for lesbian-feminists, it was a contested constitutive rhetoric.⁵⁷ Woman-identification did not strike a universally harmonious note for all lesbian-feminists.⁵⁸

Megan Adams captured the discord:

I know you’ve heard the slogans: Woman Identified Woman, women who love women, etc., as if we have pledged undying allegiance and love for all women. It is implied that lesbians plead the cause of women as a sex. I am suspicious of these sentiments. It is uncomfortable to love all women when the vast majority of them prefer men; worse, it is a setup for rejection⁵⁹

For Adams, the constitutive rhetoric of woman-identification spelled a future of exactly the opposite—male-identification and continuing a pattern of gender hierarchy, something she had rejected as a lesbian. Writing in 1972, Chicago activist Betty Peters added:

It’s time we stop kidding ourselves. The straight world will not support us, they mean to kill us; straight women will not support us, they mean to ignore us; gay

men will not support us, they mean to imitate us We are none other than Lesbian-identified-Lesbians, and anything else is mockery and insanity.⁶⁰

Peters' distrust of those who, at times, claimed kinship with lesbians, indicated the depth of homophobia and patriarchal values. These strong reactions to the constitutive rhetorics coming out of women's liberation, like the WIW, revealed its limited range with some lesbians. Lesbian-feminists contested the woman-identified-woman in ways that revealed the diversity of identity discourses and the varying identity and coalitional pressures that drove those constructions.

Some focused on how the woman-identified-woman (or, at times, politicalesbian) replaced the more dangerous term "lesbian" and threatened to shrink the space for lesbian identity within feminist identity. Peters' strategic reference to "Lesbian-identified-Lesbians" succinctly captured this concern.⁶¹ At times, woman-identification threatened to force lesbians out altogether. For Sharon Earll, women's liberation was simply not necessary for creating a lesbian-feminist identity. She stated, "Women's liberation, with its energies dedicated to children's day care centers, abortion laws, and Hugh Hefner's exploitation of the female as a sex object, could give a damn about the gay community's battles for sex-law repeals, income tax reform, and the dual employment discrimination of female homosexuals."⁶² As Earll reversed the popular unifying phrase to read: "United We Fall, Divided We Stand," she called division from women's liberation necessary for comprehensive lesbian-feminist political success. She maintained further that ties with women's liberation were not necessarily designed to build lesbian-feminist identity and actually served to impede lesbian political success by focusing on exclusively heterosexual issues.

Earl's perspective illuminated the sense of empowerment that came from maintaining distance from feminists and aligning with gay rights to fight for issues facing lesbians. Some women actually *embraced* being forced out by straight feminist identity rhetoric, capitalizing on it to fuel their argument for a lesbian-only space. Some of these lesbian-feminists advocated a recalibrated relationship with women's liberation while others called for complete separation from hetero-patriarchal society. For those who sought to continue working with women's liberation despite the struggles, one solution capitalized on establishing it as a coalitional resource rather than a source for crafting identity.

Building Coalitional Subjectivity: Crafting Ties with Women's Liberation

Lesbian-feminists were divided over adopting the new terminology associated with the new identity category of WIW. That division was both painful and generative. Women's liberation provided an important identity resource for some, particularly for those who crafted lesbian identity through feminism. Working within women's liberation to craft lesbian-feminist identity was powerful even in light of homophobic attacks. In response to those attacks, some lesbians began to pull away and view women's liberation as a *coalitional* resource. Shifting their relationship with women's liberation in this way, they parsed their *lesbian* identity formation process as apart from women's liberation. Several lesbian-feminists were able to accomplish this coalitional relationship with women's liberation without fully embracing a lesbian-separatist ethic. In other words, they believed working with feminists was fine, but crafting their identity on straight feminist terms was untenable. Specifically, lesbians who identified more strongly with gay liberation pushed back against feminist attempts for a unified identity construction

like woman-identification on the grounds that such a term subsumed lesbians under the sign “woman.” The result was a divided view of women’s liberation that loosely paralleled ideological differences.⁶³ Recognizing how lesbian-feminists engaged (or refused to engage) with women’s liberation adds a crucial layer to their identity formation process as it developed during the tumultuous decade.

For some, the center-point of their lesbian-feminist identity was sexuality, an identity more closely aligned with another history altogether: the homophile and gay liberation movements. For women espousing this perspective, their coalitional subjectivity was forged in the fires of homophobic society and the ongoing fight for gay rights. Building their identity through a coalitional subjectivity, rather than viewing women’s liberation a source of identity, these women reframed it from the key source of identity to a coalitional relationship. Many of these lesbian-feminists had been active in gay movement organizations like DOB or GLF before embracing feminist activism. For Diane Benison, member of the Boston chapter of DOB, the gay women/lesbians of DOB had not recognized their ability to contribute to the cause of women’s liberation. Yet, she argued that they should not become merely an “arm of women’s liberation,” for “as gay women we have special kinds of strengths and problems and we should retain our identity.”⁶⁴ Benison differentiated between *associating* with women’s liberation and *integrating* it into her sense of lesbian identity.

One benefit of maintaining a coalitional relationship with women’s liberation, Benison argued, was the fact that much of the positive visibility and coverage of “gay women” had occurred within the context of the women’s liberation movement, the “only place we get anywhere near equal time,” and the place from which “we’re reaching those

people with whom we relate better anyway, women.”⁶⁵ Finally, she articulated the common thread that bound DOB women to feminism: “Maybe I’ve gone through my own evolution, but I no longer see gay liberation and female liberation as two distinct and unrelated movements.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Sally Miller Gearheart, San Francisco area communication professor and lesbian-feminist activist, argued that “Lesbianism is implicitly revolutionary.”⁶⁷ She echoed radical lesbian-feminist arguments by locating lesbians’ political potential in their gendered identity and used it to create common ground with women’s liberation. In her piece, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” Gearheart intended to politicize, even radicalize, lesbians in *coalition* with women’s liberation. Naming “Women’s Liberation” and “Gay Women’s Liberation” separately, she constituted the latter as a space for lesbians working to determine where their loyalties lie.⁶⁸ For Gearheart, who noted her own identification with women’s liberation and what she termed “gay women’s liberation,” the common thread remained gender identity.

The above responses to woman-identification recognized, for better or for worse, the centrality of women’s liberation to that construction. For others, woman-identification made the feminist movement relevant to lesbians who did not identify as feminists. For example, in 1971, Sharon R. called upon the Chicago lesbian community to consider the value of the woman-identified-woman:

[T]he concept of the woman-identified woman is significant to Chicago Lesbians . . . For the most part, we have not dealt with Women’s Liberation; apparently we feel that because we relate emotionally and sexually only to women, we don’t

need Women's Liberation. We seem to think . . . we're immune since we don't deal with men.⁶⁹

She articulated the terms of separation or lack of identification and then, extending the term "men" to refer to male domination of society, Sharon argued that the negative culture adversely affected all women, gay and straight. In doing so, she pressed the value of the WIW for lesbians to work with straight feminists for a common purpose. Still, she noted "If the [feminist] movement is to have any success, straight movement women must stop giving primary value to men and begin to make that full commitment to their sisters."⁷⁰ For Sharon, the opportunity of the WIW was the cultivation of a coalitional relationship between lesbians and straight feminists.

In short, woman-identification was limited, not only for straight feminists, as Tate and Poirot have argued, but also lesbian-feminists. An analysis of their responses to the WIW reveals how WIW was appropriated, reframed, and reworked in its relationship to women's liberation because of such limitations. Some viewed the WIW statement as a radical declaration of a specific identity and movement; others dismissed the manifesto as an attempt to bring straight feminists on board with lesbian-feminist ideology. These voices demonstrate not only the varying perspectives on women's liberation as a means of constructing lesbian-feminist identity, but the widespread negative yet generative impact of homophobia within the feminist community. This analysis reveals the subtle, insidious attacks that plagued lesbians who sought to construct an identity through liberal or radical feminist politics. Concurrently, Tate's summation emphasizes the additional limitations of the WIW for women of color. The next section explores how lesbian-feminists of color navigated the contested identity rhetorics in the context of their

experiences of interlocking oppressions and multiple identities. Indeed, their contestations not only extended the call for feminist activism to diverse groups of women, but they also revealed additional layers of limitations inhering within the articulations of lesbian-feminist identity.

Confronting Racism, Identity, and Coalition

As lesbian-feminists fought to craft their identity on their own terms, racism, conflicting experiences of oppression, and contradictions among the words and actions of white lesbian-feminists highlighted the limitations of those discursive processes. Some historical narratives of radical and lesbian-feminism suggest that full-throated challenges to the construction of feminism as the domain of white, middle-class, heterosexual women did not emerge fully until the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁷¹ Yet, certain primary sources reveal otherwise. In many lesbian-feminist communities throughout the decade, women of color (sometimes self-identifying with the broader term “Third World Women”) openly discussed the problems posed by racial privilege, oppression, and the pressures of multiple identities. Sustained discussions of race and racism occurred in communities like Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Boston—arguments that circulated throughout their publications. Such discussions captured the local and national conversation about racism in the lesbian-feminist movement. Moreover, racism and racial privilege were frequent topics for workshops, collective meetings, and periodical forums. These conversations revealed an early acknowledgment about interlocking oppressions and identities and the importance of dealing with the problem of racism within the movement writ large.

Lesbian-feminists of color had wide-ranging experiences with the challenges of lesbian-feminist identity rhetorics, which animated an intersectional critique. For some, their racial or ethnic identity made them suspect regarding their loyalty to lesbian-feminist or women-only activism. In part, racial identity brought the tension between coalition and identity politics to a head as many women of color worked in racial identity-based movements in addition to lesbian-feminist activism. For others, oppressive experiences led them to craft different forms of lesbian-feminist identity to challenge the exclusionary identity formations proffered by white lesbian-feminists. For still others, organizing around their lesbian sexuality offered the only inclusive activist space, and as such, they sought to center “lesbian” or “queer sexuality” as a unifier instead of “woman.” These experiences responded to the prevalence of exclusion and racism, contributing to the internal conflict over lesbian-feminist identity as it included and/or excluded lesbians of color.

Activists made the case for women of color to join women’s liberation by linking the fight against sexism with the battle against its “Siamese twin”—racism.⁷² For Anita Cornwell, writing in the *Lesbian Tide* in 1973, racism and sexism were intertwined to the point where “it’s virtually impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins,” creating the grounds on which she identified with women’s liberation. Characterizing racism as bound to sexism, Cornwell’s imagery of Siamese twins alluded to the notion of “interlocking” oppression and its unique relevance in the lives of women of color. Moreover, Cornwell observed that she found her own community of black gay women in the context of women’s liberation. She argued that negative effects of racism and sexism included alcoholism, depression, hypertension, or religious fanaticism, and that these

problems drove her and others to the women's movement. Though she saw sexism and racism as conjoined, Cornwell noted another interlocking oppression, lamenting how she felt disconnected from *straight* black women because, like straight white women, they often took their cues from men. Cornwell argued that because "99 percent" of black men would "rather be dead than have women placed on an equal level," it justified her choice and the choice of others similarly identified to side with women's liberation over black liberation. Moreover, she called it "tragic" that most gay black women did not identify as feminists because, for Cornwell, "few seemed to realize that sexism is just as crippling as racism."⁷³ Indeed, developing a feminist consciousness as a black gay woman only amplified the connection between racism and sexism.⁷⁴

Just as racism, sexism, and homophobia constituted interlocking oppressions for lesbian-feminists of color, they highlighted the intersectional quality of multiple identities. While identity formations were often predicated on micro-hierarchies among women, women of color experienced and recognized the simultaneity of their identities. Yet, instead of simply merging those identities into one formation under one term, many sought to retain the power of their difference by avowing each of their identities at once. Thus, as race and ethnic identity complicated the relationship among women of color, white lesbian-feminists, and the broader women's liberation movement, many lesbian-feminists of color pointed to their multiple locations of difference as sources of power. Anita Cornwell's title words cascaded down the page of the *Lesbian Tide* from left to right: "Black. . . Lesbian. . . Woman." The ordering pattern suggested Cornwell's avowed hierarchy of identification, indicating which movement attracted her loyalty most. Yet an alternative interpretation suggests the visual presentation sought to refute the notion that

her identities were necessarily arranged hierarchically. Rather, she presented them each as concurrent, cascading, and central in her life. In the context of her overall argument about the linkage between racism and sexism, her primary identities were inherently interconnected. Patty Kunitsugu, who self-identified as an “Asian dyke,” echoed the sentiments about interlocking rather than merging identities, noting “I do not want to blend in. My difference is something I want to retain, it is my strength.”⁷⁵ For Kunitsugu, retaining the simultaneity of her identities was crucial for retaining her difference. Kunitsugu and Cornwell’s commitment to their interlocking identities demonstrated the generative potential of the intersectional space they occupied, showing how identities did not need to overpower one another.

Though some lesbian-feminists of color insisted their identities remain numerous and interlocking, others suggested that specific identities could be proffered for constructing common ground with others in various contexts. For some women, their lesbian identity was *the* vehicle for creating a collective identity with other women across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries. Writing in the *Lesbian Tide* in 1974, Jenice Jeanette, a black lesbian in the Los Angeles area declared, “First, I’m black. I’m a woman second, and a lesbian third.”⁷⁶ For Jeanette, her lesbian identity afforded her a direct response to the sexism within the black movement:

Being a lesbian makes me stronger, it makes me want to fight all the time. I can walk away from a lot of things, like the trips guys lay on my head, because I’m a lesbian. It gives me some kind of strength over the black female who isn’t a lesbian, who caters to that bullshit trip that goes on in the ghetto.⁷⁷

Yet while Jeanette found strength in her identity as a lesbian, she also discussed the ways in which her identity as a black woman complicated her relationship with white lesbian-feminists. She explained, “a lot of Black women don’t feel comfortable with white lesbians. . . . A lot of Black women just don’t feel white lesbians are as interested in our welfare as you are in your own.”⁷⁸ Her shift from third person, speaking about white lesbian-feminists in general to the second person “you” at the end of the statement, confronted these women's expressions of privilege. Jeanette thus pointed to their political, not personal, “background” as a key point of difference. She argued that black women were more likely to have come from the “black movement” if anything. Moreover, she held that the perception of white lesbians as “rich white girls” deepened the experiential divide between groups along class line. For Jeannette, however, their shared oppression as lesbians helped unify them. In other words, lesbian identity could be a great potential “unifier” to bring diverse women together for common causes. She continued,

It really angers me when womyn talk of revolution. What I saw happen [at a recent Native American group event] was a lot of womyn agreeing, “Yes, racism is a problem,” but I have not seen any real steps taken yet to do the on-going work on racism. . . . You, white womyn, must work on your racism with eachother (sic), with feedback from 3rd World womyn. . . . Don’t ask 3rd World womyn for answers; that is your work, not ours.⁷⁹

Jeannette articulated the importance of a process with white women, a process of them recognizing their racism and working through it with feedback, not necessarily support, from Third World Women. Jeannette offered a solution that put the responsibility for racism squarely in the hands of her white lesbian-feminist comrades, without positioning

women of color as the source for answers or hand-holding through that process. In doing so, she avoided tokenism or assuming responsibility for white lesbian-feminists' oppressive behavior or beliefs.

Part of the process of crafting a space for an inclusive lesbian-feminist identity involved bringing women of color together. Lesbians of color gathered conferences and workshops to analyze, problem-solve, and discuss their experiences with each other and with white lesbian-feminists. Following the West Coast Lesbian Conference in 1973, attendees of the Black Caucus meeting reported that racism was not only prevalent throughout the lesbian-feminist movement, but it constituted one of the most divisive problems facing its future of the movement. They reported, "Racism is an issue we have yet to come to terms with. We must, for there is no greater oppression than that which comes from a sister."⁸⁰ The strength of such a call to the rest of the movement members differed significantly from the language of the Black Caucus position paper, released concurrently with the general report from the conference. In that position paper, the Caucus described the racist treatment black lesbians experienced with white "sisters" in the movement. They acknowledged that their perspectives, while challenging to some, were important for movement growth and expansion of identity boundaries. Couching their challenge in a commitment to "the total struggle of lesbian feminist women," they encouraged white lesbian-feminist members to "recognize that we are all oppressed. We, as Black lesbian women, are conscious of your racism. But do not keep brow-beating yourselves for being racist."⁸¹ With that, they upheld the history of black women's experiences, arguing that as a "proud and vitalizing force," they had much to offer the "efforts of liberation." They called on white lesbian-feminists to take ownership of their

racism, to combat racist remarks and exclusionary practices, and “stand up for us if your consciousness and commitment to sisterhood is real.”⁸²

Though the issue of racism created a contentious environment at the conference that reflected its divisive quality within the movement more broadly, some activists argued that lesbian-feminists were among the few Leftist activists actually addressing racism. Los Angeles activist Stacy Fulton described how the “sisters [of the WCLC] were clearly discouraged by the polarization and angry dialog, particularly stemming from the issue of racism in the movement.” And yet, she called her sisters to be open to discussing racism—something that “*never* occurs in male left groups”—in order to confront and “attempt to deal with it.”⁸³ In other words, Fulton reasoned that a lesbian conference was the ideal place to confront racism and deal with its implications for internal movement politics. Patty Kunitsugu was not so forgiving in her open letter to the readers of *Out and About*. She argued that white women needed to take responsibility for their own racism, proclaiming, “It is a rip-off to me to keep bringing up the importance of racism to confront you, white womyn, so that you will move on it.”⁸⁴ For her, just as it was crucial for the voices of lesbian-feminists of color be heard, it was important for white lesbian-feminists to develop an awareness of their privilege. As Fulton argued, doing the hard work of acknowledging the divisive aspects of racism within lesbian-feminist communities was important for the movement itself. For Fulton, working through racism within the movement created the possibility for adding their voices to the unified fight against “racist patriarchy.”⁸⁵

Lesbian-feminists of color were deeply aware of the ways they experienced oppression as a result of their intersecting and interlocking identities. Elandria

Henderson, writing to the Chicago lesbian community, argued that black gay women were often forced to make a choice between the different parts of their identities. In doing so, she made plain the consequences of those intersectional identities—in the workplace and in the liberation movements themselves—and extended Frances Beale’s early articulation of intersectionality by explicitly addressing sexuality.⁸⁶ Henderson explained, “We are black, we are gay, we are women. We are Black Gay Women. . . We must work on all three oppressions or not at all. I don’t want to go for a job, be hired, receive lower pay because I am a woman, forced to do subordinate work because I am black and be fired because I am a Lesbian.”⁸⁷ Turning to the “three-fold” oppression she experienced within the social movements, she added:

I don’t want to come to a gay meeting and have to put up with racism because whitey’s problems come first. I don’t want to be told to be a lady, or asked to speak softly, because I am a woman. . . [Black Gay Women] have to fight women’s liberation, because we are gay and we have to fight whitey because we are black. We have to fight men because we are women. Do we have to become completely separate in our revolution? Do we have to break off from our gay white sisters and brothers[?] Is there no place for us in Gay Liberation, in Black Liberation, in society?⁸⁸

Henderson and other black gay women revealed the compounded struggles of their intersectional experiences, lending to the common sentiment that they lacked a “home” within any of the liberation movements available for their activism. In the process, they also made clear their challenges to the white women and men who were responsible for those exclusions. Very early in the decade, black gay women spoke up to carve out

spaces within the movement organizations to address the intersectionality of racial, gender, and sexual oppressions. In Elandria Henderson's byline, she identified herself as an "advocate of Women's Liberation." Henderson's listed membership with the "Gay Women's Caucus" and "Black Gay Liberation" suggested her primary allegiance with the latter.⁸⁹ Her language choice, identifying herself as an "advocate of Women's Liberation," revealed a critique of women's liberation, even as Henderson emphasized the possible role of black gay women within its ranks.⁹⁰

Racism was a central problem that plagued the contested rhetorics of lesbian-feminist identity. Lesbian-feminists of color were thus faced with choosing among their multiple identities, privileging one identity over another, or actively avowing their multiple identities at once to craft an interstitial identity. In calling attention to the linkages among their identities, lesbian-feminists of color also called upon their white "sisters" to acknowledge their own racist beliefs and practices within movement politics and recognize the interaction among sexism, racism, and homophobia. Doing so, many of these women argued, would generate new common ground upon which to build a unified, inclusive movement. Points of commonality included their oppression as lesbians or gay women, the common relationship between sexism and racism, and working with or against men. The latter—the question of working with men—animated two additional lesbian-feminist identity rhetorics on different ends of the feminist ideological spectrum: gay women's liberation and separatism.

On Gay Liberation: Working With or Without Gay Men

As many lesbians found a partial, contested, or coalitional home in the women's liberation movement, many also cultivated a coalitional relationship with the gay

movement, one that purported to fight for their sexual identity. Yet, like the women's movement, the gay movement was hardly monolithic. Generational tension developed between two factions. The first, called "old gay," represented a general commitment to a liberal/moderate approach grounded in earlier homophile activism. The second was often referred to as "new gay," characterized by the radicalized politics of a youthful gay liberation movement that emerged after the late 1960s riots in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and, in particular, at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. This tension compounded the challenges for lesbians and lesbian-feminists who supported a "conservative" (read: liberal) approach, especially for those who identified more strongly with the gay movement (e.g., those affiliated with DOB and other homophile groups). Yet for many, the problem of sexism stood in the way.

Despite the motivations to craft a coalitional subjectivity around their shared minority status as gay men and lesbians, the challenges of working with men, even gay men, prompted many lesbian-feminists to seek their own movement for "gay women's liberation." The tension between loyalty to gay men and the oppressive treatment they experienced yielded identity-formation rhetorics that centralized the relationship between lesbians-feminists and the gay movement. Identity formations crafted at the nexus of gay liberation and women's liberation including "lesbian liberation" and "gay women's liberation" offered alternatives to the woman-identified-woman. Retaining the terms lesbian and gay, these formations explicitly referenced connections to the stigmatized sexual identities that drove gay liberation. As such, there were those who held fast to their identification with the gay movement and those who left to embrace women's liberation. Others conversely explored the spaces between to carve out a third option, a

coalitional subjectivity that recognized both women's liberation and gay liberation as legitimate political partners for the lesbian-feminist movement.

The first option recognized that part of their identity *as* lesbians meshed with the goals and history of the established homophile and emerging gay liberation movement. Many of these women identified themselves as “gay,” emphasizing their movement affiliation as lesbians in the gay movement. Several lesbian women articulated an immediate and strong loyalty to the gay movement and their gay brothers. For example, Kathy, an editorial board member for the San Francisco DOB lesbian-feminist publication *Sisters*, wrote of her frustration with fellow lesbians who used “male-chauvinism” to attack their activist counterparts.⁹¹ She explained, “I am a homosexual, and therein lies my first loyalty,” noting that splitting the movement along gender lines was counterproductive and contradictory. “If homosexuals, as a group, fail to achieve their rights,” she added, “female homosexuals aren’t going to get very liberated from anything.”⁹² For Kathy, loyalty to the gay movement ran far too deep and the stakes were too high to cut ties.

A second option cut those ties, as lesbians embraced women's liberation activism and criticized the sexism they experienced in the gay movement. The shift in consciousness made their ties within the gay movement precarious as the tensions among their identities and feminist activism intensified. As lesbians began to re-analyze their experiences with gay men in co-ed organizations and coalitions through a feminist lens, many argued that women's liberation held the key to crafting lesbian-feminist identity. These women reworked their identities as lesbians, women, and activists as distinct from gay men. In this way, the struggle over coalition politics and co-gender activism

bolstered lesbian-feminist identity politics; reiterating the centrality of gender inequality supported arguments for lesbian liberation over gay liberation.

After fifteen years of coalitional work from the early homophile movement to gay liberation, Del Martin provided one of the strongest statements for leaving gay activism in favor of women's liberation. Martin wrote in the style of radical feminist Robin Morgan's infamous farewell to the male-dominated New Left, "Goodbye to all that."⁹³ She declared that the years of "mediating, counseling, appeasing, of working for coalitions and unity" had created an "identity crisis." This crisis was ultimately resolved by saying "goodbye to the male chauvinists in the homophile movement who are so wrapped up in the 'cause' they espouse that they have lost sight of the people for whom that cause came into being."⁹⁴ Martin argued that lesbians had kept "co-ed organizations" going, adding that part of the problem rested on her sisters' shoulders as they "demean[ed] themselves by accepting 'women's status' in these groups—making and serving coffee, doing the secretarial work, soothing the brows of the policy makers who tell them, 'We're doing it all for you, too.'" Martin, venting after years of frustration, appropriated the phrase of the homophile movement by quipping: "Gay is good," but not "good enough" for lesbians.⁹⁵

Offering a kind of middle ground for lesbians who positioned themselves between gay liberation and women's liberation, Sally Miller Gearheart made the case for "gay women's liberation" around the central problem of sexism and gender inequalities.⁹⁶ While she celebrated the homophile community as it "embrace[d] a wide range of people whose political postures vary from the militant to the silent," she explained that "Gay Women's Liberation, like the Women's Liberation Movement, is beginning slowly but

powerfully to articulate both its discontent with the status quo and its vision of human potential.”⁹⁷ By status quo, she likely referred to the state of the homophile community in addition to the state of society and culture. This dual interpretation of “status quo” associated the homophile movement, and subsequently gay men, with patriarchal male oppression. Yet, rather than attacking gay men, Gearheart simply enumerated several ways in which a lesbian “becomes distinctively and more fundamentally” oppressed as a woman in a patriarchal society. She argued that as a lesbian, she was engaged in a “deeper and more righteous revolt” against capitalism, took a “more radical standpoint” than gay men against “the nuclear family structure,” and engaged in a “revolt against the whole rationalistic, unfeeling, bureaucratic, duty-bound, male-instigated, and male-perpetuated Protestant/Catholic/Jewish ethic which has branded me a ‘helpmeet’ or a ‘rib’ rather than a person...”⁹⁸ She concluded by declaring herself a lesbian woman who was “in revolt against a complex interwoven system whose every part conspires by both subtle and obvious means with every other part to keep me down.”⁹⁹ Rather than simply blaming gay men for oppressing lesbians, Gearheart instead cited logical differences between lesbians and patriarchal society as the basis for gay women’s liberation. While both Gearheart and Martin agreed that gay men were ultimately part of the dominant patriarchal system, the strategies they selected and the tone they used to articulate that point of rupture differed. Gearheart labored to make her arguments in the interstitial spaces between women’s liberation and gay liberation while Martin dismissed gay men in favor of women’s liberation.

Finally, some lesbian-feminists crafted an entirely lesbian space and movement dedicated to liberating gay women because of the negative and frustrating experiences

they faced with the gay movement and with women's liberation. Part of this construction relied on the importance and contestation over naming practices and re-centering the word lesbian. Published discourse referred variously to gay women's liberation or lesbian liberation. For some, the power of the term "gay women's liberation" demonstrated affinity for both women's liberation and the gay movement by claiming the term "gay." Some noted that their use of "gay" was, in fact, central to their sense of identity. For others, like Sharon Crase, the term "gay" needed to be discarded because of its association with men. "I am no longer gay. I am a lesbian," she declared, "'gay' is no longer our word." She continued:

The 'gay' men have taken the word and applied it to themselves as well as to us. Since we have very little in common with our 'gay brothers,' I believe the same word cannot be descriptive of both homosexual men and Lesbians. Lesbian is our very own word. . . We have a copyright on it.¹⁰⁰

For Crase, Gearheart, and the gay women's/lesbian liberation movement itself, the task of naming involved crafting a space specifically for lesbians apart from, but also drawing on, relations with women's liberation and the gay movement. Indeed, naming "gay women's liberation" or "lesbian liberation" capitalized on both movements as sources of coalitional subjectivity. In other words, it allowed lesbian-feminists to strike out on their own while acknowledging the ties they maintained with the other movements. Crase's suggestion of a singular meaning for "lesbian" claimed a name for a collective identity even as the term itself would be contested throughout the decade.

Lesbian liberation and gay women's liberation offered unique constitutive rhetoric for lesbians. In contrast to the woman-identified-woman, which explicitly moved away

from the word lesbian altogether, it was a politicized identity, with fluid distinction from the other identity formations. For example, their distinction from gay men heightened during the emerging practice of Christopher Street parades and festivals, the precursors to the pride celebrations.¹⁰¹ The politicized nature of lesbian identity emerged as lesbian-feminists persistently emphasized the protest element of those events. Engaging in political protest worried some concerned about overstepping the conservative boundaries established by past DOB activism. Crafting the coalitional subjectivity of “gay women’s liberation” and lesbian liberation capitalized on a growing frustration among lesbians about the failure of both movements (gay rights and women's liberation) to meet their needs and goals.¹⁰²

In short, exclusionary practices and coalition politics dramatically impacted the identity-construction process taking place within gay liberation and lesbian-feminist communities. Lesbian-feminists had many options for constructing their identity. They could identify themselves as women-identified-women or lesbian-feminists within or in coalition with the women’s liberation movement. They could avow a lesbian-feminist identity in coalition with gay liberation and gay men, a complex intersectional lesbian-feminist identity that more explicitly recognized matters of race and ethnicity or class, or any number of options in between. The ensuing contestation over those identities and coalitional relations led some to narrow the field of identity possibilities. In particular, separatism emerged as a viable, appealing option for those exasperated with the limitations of coalitions, and as other movements failed to attend to the needs of lesbians. Within some separatist collectives or communities, women believed that a separatist ethic was the *only* means of crafting an authentic lesbian-feminist identity and community in

pursuit of liberation. Such a rhetoric drew heavily upon the identity-based revolutionary rhetoric exemplified by black power in the 1960s. This strident identity rhetoric challenged those rhetorics of coalitional subjectivity, i.e., identity through coalition. As time went on, separatism came under increased scrutiny for encouraging the same exclusionary politics that initially animated separatist theory. The resulting contradictions between theory and practice revealed the tenuous nature of identity rhetorics in a movement that sought reflexivity, unity, and political efficacy during a challenging decade.

Separatism: A Troubled Vanguard Within Lesbian-Feminism

Separatism, like the WIW or the politicalesbian, offered an important, though contested, source of lesbian-feminist identity formation. Among the responses to the limitations of woman-identification, separatism emerged as a more rigid, idealized option for a few lesbian-feminists, a hard-line response to the challenges facing lesbian-feminists at the nexus of gay liberation and women's liberation. Like the radical rhetoric of black power in the 1960s, separatism among lesbian-feminists was typically defined by a combination of hard-line ideology, economic separatism, and, at times, collectivist or communal living arrangements.¹⁰³ Though the conversation about separatism took place around the country, including the short-lived Furies collective based in Washington, D.C., in 1972, this section analyzes a lengthy published forum in Seattle's lesbian-feminist periodical, *Out and About*. In the Seattle area in 1977, lesbian-feminists debated the theory and practice of separatism as exemplified by several communes and collectives, including the Gorgons, the Rising Fire Study Collective, the Separatist Gang, and others. Within that debate, the justification of separatism was articulated in two

divergent ways: 1) as a response to working with men, and 2) as a response to working with straight feminists. As such, separatism presented an alternative articulation of lesbian-feminist identity in contrast to lesbian-feminists who engaged in coalition-politics or reform-based approaches. Separatism, an exceptional articulation of identity politics, bolstered rigid definitional boundaries with oppressive exclusionary practices, consequently limiting future membership and making separatism unsustainable. Indeed, the internal oppression within separatist communities contributed to its failure to gain wider adoption as an identity rhetoric.¹⁰⁴ Members from within the collectives themselves critiqued separatism in its call for ideological purity and frequent reliance upon exclusionary practices to achieve that goal. Such internal struggle fueled debates about what separatism meant for lesbian-feminist identity and political activism. Despite the limitations, however, separatism offered a viable framework for developing another form of lesbian-feminist identity in contrast to coalition-building and co-gender activism.

To justify their choice to isolate into cloistered communities of separatist lesbian-feminists, many separatists held that the practice was necessary as an alternative to working with men—straight or gay—and exercising one’s self-determination. As members of the Rising Fire Study Collective in the Seattle area put it,

As lesbians, we know that our willingness to separate ourselves from men and male or mixed groups is a great source of our power both personally and politically. . . . The perspective we get from our distance from men enables us to see, feel, and analyze the nature of sexism and heterosexism more deeply and creatively (it’s hard to describe the outline of a cloud when you’re in the middle of it).¹⁰⁵

The decision to work separately from men was more about celebrating the power and self-determination that accompanied separatism as a practice, once again echoing similar black power protest strategies.¹⁰⁶ Separatism offered a means of developing that alternative perspective on the world, developing an alternative standpoint—in order to theorize the possibilities of liberation. In some respects, separatism itself was seen as liberation in practice, cutting off from the world grounded in the sexist and heterosexist oppression. In addition to celebrating self-determination and power, arguments for separatism called upon the history of painful associations with straight feminists.

For some lesbian-feminists, the rhetoric of woman-identification failed because it opened up the possibility for straight feminists to identify as lesbians. It did so by emphasizing the political while swiftly unmooring it from sexuality and desire in that political construction. For some, de-prioritizing lesbian needs in women's liberation and discriminating lesbians by way of woman-identification necessitated lesbian-feminist separatism.¹⁰⁷ Calling separatism an important “ingredient” for lesbians to realize and enact their own liberation, Megan Adams couched her argument in a distrust of the woman-identified-woman. Writing in the *Out and About* forum on separatism, she argued for the maintenance of sexuality in the definition of lesbian: “being a lesbian allows for the fullest emotional and sexual expression of my being.”¹⁰⁸ For Adams, like several others who pushed back against woman-identification, turning to the signifier “woman” over “lesbian” in the “Woman-Identified-Woman” was a point of weakness derived from a fear of alienating other women. As a result, “developing an identity as lesbians, as a separate minority group, is low priority in part because we fear losing what little legitimacy we possess if we assert our separateness from straight women.”¹⁰⁹

For Adams and others, lesbian separatism offered the best solution to the problems facing lesbian-feminists. Relations with straight women, even those who claimed to be “women-identified-women,” she argued, were always fraught with the need to please straight men, sexually or politically. Echoing lesbian-feminists like Rita Mae Brown, Adams maintained that *men* constituted the common thread that held straight, even feminist, women together. Adams argued that society privileged men who “harass, abuse, humiliate and otherwise oppress women all the time.” To her, there was little point in making connections with straight women, for “most women,” despite such oppression, “still give primary loyalty and love to men.”¹¹⁰ In separatism, lesbian-feminists found great potential for creating “strong bonds within our community” that did not exist in relation to men or straight women.¹¹¹ Though separatism did not need to be totalizing (though it did for some), including avoiding or dismissing straight women or men completely, it created the necessary spaces for lesbians to identify with their primary relation—women. But for Adams, the pressure to work together under a rhetoric of “unity” or “sisterhood” was often too strong, and thus limited the power of lesbian women to enact separatist ideology. Ultimately, though separatism offered what some perceived as an idealized space for lesbians to construct their identity in political, sexual, and erotic ways, the pragmatic pressures of movement politics hamstrung efforts to expand its practice.

In light of the challenges of political pragmatism, some turned to separatism instead as a central component of lesbian-feminist identity. Adams, for instance, called for separatism to be construed as an integral component to lesbian-feminist identity. Such a move would recognize that creating separate lesbian-feminist identity and community

offered full sisterhood and power outside of “sexist and heterosexual culture.”¹¹² Promising to protect lesbian-feminists from the detriments of a “hostile culture,” separatism created clear space for them to explore their own identity “without defensiveness.”¹¹³ Defensiveness, in this case, referred to the need to defend lesbian and feminist identities within broader culture and within women’s liberation and gay liberation movements. Separatism was perhaps the most radical identity rhetoric in response to the WIW. Certainly, some drew upon the idea of woman-identification, but they utilized the concept to bolster separatist lesbian-feminists as ultimately woman-identified, rather than opening the borders of lesbian-feminist identity to heterosexual feminists. The formulation of lesbian-feminism vis-à-vis separatism left no opportunity for straight feminist women to claim primary loyalty to women or to identify as lesbian-feminists. Rather, they were denied entrée on the grounds that patriarchy’s power centered men in those women’s lives, making woman-identification impossible.

Articulating this identity, separatists differentiated themselves from other lesbian-feminists. The Separatist Gang, also hailing from the Seattle area, celebrated the appeals of separatism for disgruntled lesbian-feminists and hailed separatism’s construction of distinct boundaries. In identifying themselves as “lesbian-feminist separatists,” they differentiated themselves from lesbian-feminists who did not practice separatism. The Gang’s distinction revealed how separatism was considered more than just a theory and a practice but integral for some constructions of lesbian-feminist identity. The Gang even acknowledged that separatists were not perfect and that separatism was not the only way to practice lesbian-feminist politics. They admitted that separatists contributed to “fat oppression, classism, racism, and ageism” in their own ranks.¹¹⁴ Still, they held that

separatists like themselves were the “most clear, unconfused, careful, and consistent lesbian feminists we know.”¹¹⁵ In many regards, their celebration of separatist theory and practice gave the exclusionary politics a pass, only exacerbating the divisive effects of the drive for ideological purity. They worked to defend lesbian-feminists’ choice of separatism by arguing that many separatists chose to work only with separatists after having painful experiences with other lesbian-feminist sisters. Though they did not detail what those painful experiences may have been, it trafficked in the same exclusionary rhetoric, which helped defend their choice of exclusion through separation. Separatism, because it proffered what some saw as an authentic path to lesbian-feminist identity, also created rigid, restrictive boundaries and rules that became the basis for critique.

Separatism developed a particular brand of lesbian-feminist identity and was roundly critiqued for creating another hierarchy within communities of women.¹¹⁶ Controversy over separatism as a vehicle for exclusionary discourses within lesbian-feminist communities revealed the tenuous ground upon which these groups of women, betwixt and between women’s liberation and gay liberation, worked to carve out a space for themselves. For example, The Separatist Gang described the feelings of persecution and isolation that they experienced as separatists. Even though they acknowledged that the requirement for ideological purity within separatist politics failed to acknowledge the “good” in (non-separatist) lesbian-feminist politics, the Gang continued to uphold the superiority of separatism. Activists Julie Morris and Harriet Welch responded to arguments about the limits of separatism by calling for continued efforts to build community among women *as* women—gay and straight.¹¹⁷ In her contribution to the *Out and About* forum on separatism and lesbian identity, an activist identifying only as

Stephanie described her experience of such limitations first hand. She described feeling intense discomfort with the internally divisive aspects of separatism. While she agreed with the purpose behind the choice to work and socialize only with women, she argued that distancing from straight women and non-separatist lesbians made separatism untenable as an option for living.¹¹⁸ Stephanie argued, for example, that “I do want acceptance from other lesbians, along with support for being an individual, to make mistakes, to be the same, to be different, to live, and breath (sic), and not suffocate.”¹¹⁹ Her frustration and confusion was well received by the editors of the *Out and About* (*OAA*), who explained, “We decided to print Stephanie’s letter because we know, from other feedback we’ve received, that her feelings are shared by many other lesbians in the community.”¹²⁰ They argued that rather than expressing “anti-Separatist” sentiment, Stephanie instead offered “valid critical feedback” regarding the “common confusion about Separatist theory.”¹²¹ That confusion, they maintained, was only exacerbated by a “lack of communication” within the broader community. The published forum was intended to ameliorate the confusion and tension within the community about separatism. Even the Separatist Gang quipped, “Politics between lesbians in the lesbian movement are sometimes totally confusing and incomprehensible.”¹²² Confusion was only one aspect of the incongruity between separatist theory and practice.

Separatism sought to draw distinct boundaries around its particular form of lesbian-feminism, and as such, resulted in additional exclusionary politics on multiple fronts, including racism. Racism proved to be another major problem among women in separatist communities largely due to discord between the *theory* that recognized interlocking oppressions and the *practice* of separatism that emphasized one aspect of

identity over all others. *OAA*'s forum captured a vigorous debate about the “needs of third-world dykes,”¹²³ the oppression from “white womyn” within the lesbian-feminist and separatist communities, and the problems of racism and inaction among those white women to confront such oppression in their own community. In particular, identifying all men as “the enemy” comprised one of the central issues that bound racism and separatism. It called into question the co-gender and coalitional work in which many third world lesbian-feminists were already engaged. In their broad critique of separatism, the members of the Rising Fire collective argued that “many third world women choose to work with men because of the importance they place on racial strength and unity. We support these women and men in the struggle against racism because we see that fight as part of our struggle.”¹²⁴ The challenge of racism within lesbian-feminist separatist theory and practice fueled the tension between those advocating strident identity politics and those offering coalition-building as a similarly viable means of crafting and enacting lesbian-feminist identity.

Lamenting the exclusionary oppressive politics that divided lesbian-feminists from within, many critics of separatism argued for unity of political purpose over ideological purity and isolation. For Susan Edwards, a lesbian-feminist activist in Chicago, separatism impeded *real* progress for the larger movement. Her reservations about separatism focused on its ideologically opposite position to liberal feminist efforts like the ERA. Calling separatism “the ultimate [lesbian] ghetto experience—total isolation,” Edwards argued that the limited, utopian vision of separatism ignored the practicalities of living as a lesbian in regular society.¹²⁵ Lesbians in society *already* experienced a ghettoized situation, something that Edwards argued could not be remedied by

separation. Such a critique implicitly called for a unified, coalitional response to the challenges facing lesbians rather than isolating further into separatist communities. Using such racialized and rhetorically freighted imagery, Edwards worried about political division and exclusion of non-separatist lesbian-feminists and questioned the negative effects of separatism on separatist lesbian-feminists themselves. In her *OAA* forum contribution, Stephanie asked, “Does being a separatist mean that you can’t have straight woman friends?” She continued, “I know what it feels like to be burnt (sic) by a straight woman.” Yet, despite such experiences, she called for readers to consider the possibility of “straight woman friends who acknowledge their heterosexual privilege.” Valuing unity among lesbians and relationships with straight women seemed contrary to those advocating separatism. She argued that “separatist lesbians have too many rules” that merely created more ways to attack one another rather than focusing on the external enemy. She added that if she were a separatist lesbian-feminist, she would “spend too much time feeling angry and expending a great deal of energy on hatred.”¹²⁶ Indeed, separatists viewed coalitional or allied relationships with straight women with disdain, akin to collaborating with the enemy. Yet, Stephanie contended, such practices were not limited to separatist groups alone: “I am opposed to rules, especially unspoken rules that lesbians impose on other lesbians, which is not unique to only separatist lesbians, but is something that happens in the entire lesbian community.”¹²⁷ As such, Stephanie affirmed her lesbian identity and considered herself politically active, in spite of her non-separatist identification. For her, political activism was not solely the domain of separatists.

According to its critics, separatism negatively impacted lesbian-feminist communities, political unity, political efficacy, and feminist ideology. While division

from men grounded separatist constructions of lesbian-feminist identity and power, some argued that separatism's reliance on making *all* men enemies threatened to weaken the broader work of challenging sexist ideology. The Rising Fire Collective, for example, disagreed with separatist arguments that "men are inferior biologically to women. . . hopeless, irrevocably (sic) evil, or members of another species." They argued that while it was "tempting to blame it all on [men's] fundamental nature," they also rationalized that such actions were learned within the culture. In other words, men "act destructively," the collective argued, "because they have been taught to and they are rewarded for being oppressive."¹²⁸

A second critique related to the argument that separatists needed to figure out how to destroy the existing system instead of simply describing the oppression that was rooted in a "contradiction between men and women." They called on separatists and lesbian-feminists to "talk about who can work together to make change, what our grounds of commonality are, and how to engage in the inevitable struggle amongst us that will guarantee that none of us is sold out."¹²⁹ This critique revealed the pressure of a coalitional impulse driving the critiques of separatism. The call for creating common ground and denouncing contradictions between men and women placed external pressure on those who chose to separate. For members of The Gang, "total political separation" was not useful in the fight against patriarchy.¹³⁰ As such, they advocated political unity both with other separatists and non-separatist lesbian-feminists to create a united front in the face of an external common enemy, patriarchy. They argued further that many separatists created these isolated "cliques" for the ease of creating a collective identity in relation to a common enemy, a process they described as easier than working with other

groups of separatists or non-separatist lesbian-feminists. For The Gang, separatism offered a convenient escape from the difficult work of coalition building and cooperation.

In the end, The Gang attempted to strike a middle ground by recognizing the power of separatism and critiquing its efficacy to demonstrate their commitment to fight “against patriarchy and men” because, as they reasoned, “we can’t afford to lose.”¹³¹ This middle ground also opened spaces for identity formation among lesbian-feminists of color. Concerns about creating more internal divisions and hierarchies in the Seattle lesbian-feminist community fueled The Gang, Rising Fire Collective, and many other women to lodge critiques against separatism. They revealed the problems associated with separatist claims of ideological or political purity and the deleterious effects on movement relationships and success against the “real” enemy. The Separatist Gang offered a particularly nuanced and explicit refutation of separatism as a “be-all, end-all” formula for lesbian-feminist political success. For them, it constituted an approach for only a few women, implicitly exemplifying the exclusionary, “clique” critique of separatism. The Gang thus articulated the way that each *specific* separatist group formulated an identity— personal and political—and that when pressed, such unity in separatism could (and should) be put asunder for the good of coalition work against common enemies.

In an effort to justify and defend the fragile separatist formulation of lesbian-feminist identity, those lodging critiques against separatism were threatened with painful interpersonal consequences. As the *OAA* editorial staff’s defense of Stephanie’s concerns suggested, there were material consequences for questioning separatism in lesbian-feminist circles. Nancy, writing on behalf of the *OAA* collective, warned of the rise of

dogmatism within lesbian-feminist communities. She explained, anyone caught “calling out” the internal disciplining practices of one group often resulted in silencing or dismissing that sister as “politically ‘off the wall.’” In particular, disciplinary action could occur before someone was comfortable in their lesbian identity, let alone their feminist consciousness. Nancy explained,

Sometimes it feels like the old butch—fem roles have been replaced by an equally restricting super amazon dyke role. . . There is not much difference between the patriarchy telling women they have to look ‘feminine’ and act weaker than they are and the lesbian community ‘telling’ women they should look a certain way and act stronger than they feel...[the latter] seems to insist that women play a political amazon role....¹³²

Nancy’s strong critique of the emergence of the “super amazon dyke role” demonstrates the broader challenge to separatism’s drive for ideological purity. By aligning separatism with patriarchal control, her argument crystallizes the ways ideological purity, when used against women who stepped out of line within the lesbian-feminist community, reproduced the sexist oppression in broader society.

Such expectations for perfection threatened to hamper efforts to build that particular lesbian-feminist identity, incorporate it into the broader movement, or change others’ consciousness in favor of separatism. In a letter to the editors of *Out and About*, Lois noted the courage required for the non-separatist collective Rising Fire to critique lesbian-feminist separatist groups. The expected response, she argued, was typically “intimidation and denial” of the non-separatist perspective and identity, going so far as to suggest that “Rising Fire can’t be lesbianfeminists (sic) on the basis of separatist

definitions of feminism. . . .”¹³³ Lois’ critique emphasized how for separatist lesbian-feminists, separatism itself was *necessary* to the identity of the lesbian-feminist. As editorial staffs and publishing collectives agreed, some critiques were hard to read, or perhaps hard to publish. Yet, those perspectives were as equally important for the process of identity and community building as separatism itself.¹³⁴

Separatism offered a viable space for forming lesbian-feminist identity throughout the 1970s. It provided a polar opposite response to rhetorics of woman-identification and appeals to cultivate activist relationships with straight feminists and men. Yet separatism was not immune from the pressures of coalitional politics and the questions of its utility.¹³⁵ Critics identified many exclusionary practices that served what some deemed as ideological purity, challenged isolationist practices as detrimental to the broader community, and opened up “safe” spaces to question separatist theory and practice. Not only did such critiques call into question the implications of separatist lesbian-feminist identity formations, they opened a space to identify and respond to the painful exclusionary practices that often accompanied separatist politics. The problem of such practices went beyond separatism, as exclusionary rhetoric accompanied each lesbian-feminist identity formation. The next section explores several ways lesbian-feminist activists excluded, dismissed, and disciplined their own throughout the 1970s.

Disciplining One’s Own: Visibility, Monogamy, Maternity, and Gender Identity

The debate surrounding the boundaries of lesbian-feminist identity ultimately produced a discursive disciplining of certain lesbians. Racism and ideological conflict plagued efforts to define lesbian-feminist identity, but additional exclusionary discourses developed around the question of “coming out” and the performance of gender roles.

These discourses bolstered the already thick boundaries around specific articulations of lesbian-feminist identity, and threatened to further divide women within the movement. When identity formations were pitted against one another, each side disciplined the other to bring them in line with what was considered the insider-identity. Exposing and analyzing these disciplinary rhetorics reveals the deep contradictions at the heart of identity politics, as lesbian-feminists struggled to craft their own movement and work with others in an effort to create social change. In particular, exclusionary rhetorics concerning visibility, monogamy, motherhood, and gender performance, in addition to the aforementioned racism and classism, challenged the developing lesbian-feminist identity formations from within.

Hiding versus Leaping: Disciplining Closeted Lesbians

In large part, discourse regarding lesbian-feminist identity in the 1970s assumed that lesbian-feminists and lesbians were open about their personal, political, and sexual identity. Those women who remained in the closet were often viewed as victims of false consciousness and were construed as stuck in the “dark ages.” Such assumptions implicitly and explicitly disciplined women who chose to remain closeted. The problem of visibility associated with “coming out” was a unique challenge facing lesbian-feminists. At the same time, because they targeted a “public” largely constituted by the discourse circulating in the alternative presses, closeted women writing to the publication’s “public” exercised a certain level of public “outness” as they engaged the broader lesbian-feminist community. This engagement was crucial for women living in rural, suburban, and urban locations alike.¹³⁶ In this regard, the assumptions about openness that inhered in dominant constructions of lesbian-feminist identity failed to

recognize the significance of the closet itself and the lesbian-feminists who still crafted such identity in various levels of secrecy. Moreover, the presence of women who were, to varying degrees, “in the closet,” even within lesbian communities, created an obstacle for those lesbians who identified as feminists and crafted a “public” political identity.

The closet disciplined lesbians implicitly and explicitly by reinforcing the hegemonic, pathologized, and moralistic constructions that continued to plague lesbian-feminist identity rhetorics over the course of the 1970s. In part, the closet construct retained more stigmatized remnants of an older generation’s experience with homosexuality in the period of pre-Stonewall, pre-gay liberation, and pre-women’s liberation, and thus ran counter to the notion of lesbian-feminist liberation in the 1970s. As such, the closet functioned tacitly while woman-identification, separatism, gay women’s liberation, and lesbian-feminism each capitalized on the image of a visible, public, and “out” lesbian woman. Many lesbian-feminists described being “politically out” as central to their identity.¹³⁷ Betty Peters, for example, made the point that “As Lesbians. . . we stand as the greatest threat to this society. . . .We shake the very foundation of this society by refusing to bow to men and all they expect: hot pants, eye makeup, expensive clothes, credit spending, and a child at every knee.”¹³⁸ In her estimation, political and social threats to society required visibility, being “out” in public to physically confront those expectations.

Once the visible lesbian was established as the central figure of lesbian-feminist identity, it needed to be *the* circulated image. The closet became a weapon with which lesbians attacked one another in the pages of lesbian-feminist periodicals. In one letter to the editor of the *Leaping Lesbian*, the anonymous writer responded to an earlier article

about one woman's experience in the closet. She argued that the periodical should represent only the voices of those lesbians who were "leaping," which she defined as "strong, positive, and up-front lesbians as role models in order to make it easier for lesbians to come out and be who they are!"¹³⁹ Additionally, she argued that the editors of the periodical had a "moral obligation" to present the voices of "those leaping women for the good of the whole movement," rather than offering a space for those women who are not "up-front" or completely out.¹⁴⁰ Some used the closet to dismiss sisters who passed in their multiple activist communities. Drawing upon a racist analogy, Chicago area lesbian-feminist Linda Shear argued, for example, that lesbians had become the "nigger" to every other movement, scared enough to stay in the closet to avoid "offending those with queer fear."¹⁴¹ For her, the closet evidenced the lack of lesbian-feminist politicization in their own right, working in every other movement but not for themselves.

The closet thus functioned as a foil to some constructions of lesbian-feminist identity—a position that some activists challenged. For some, mere acknowledgement of women who located themselves in the "closet" threatened the whole movement.¹⁴² For one woman, writing anonymously, giving voice to closeted women in lesbian-feminist periodicals provided a "regressive and bad role model" to the readership. In her attack, she characterized a closeted lesbian as "shuffling and crawling," rather than "leaping" with pride and self-confidence. Such powerful imagery crystallizes how internal exclusionary politics were practiced among lesbians in a community. With lesbian-feminist identity premised on public visibility, it did not provide space within the movement or an identity for women who chose to stay in the closet. Consequently, women who found power in passing and silence were denied political and social efficacy.

Indeed, silence represented a great cost to the community and individuals themselves, and proponents of visibility used that silence against closeted women. “The irony of it all,” Chicago activist Betty Peters stated, “is that it seems to take more energy to speak out publically (sic), but the truth is that it takes far more energy to remain silent, for then we have to fight ourselves, to rationalize our fears.”¹⁴³ Silence confirmed the power of patriarchy and homophobia; it only heightened the need for a publically visible lesbian-feminist activist. For those who explicitly discussed the closet, it came to represent the myriad of oppressions associated with patriarchal society.

Arguments about visibility characterized the closet as a monolithic, oppressive entity. Failing to recognize the possibility for the protective role the closet could play in some women’s lives dually oppressed those lesbian-feminists who remained “closeted.” The anonymous writer reasoned that visibility was central to authenticity. For her, “any philosophy needs to be grounded in one’s self-esteem of their very own being/identity,” noting that everything one does is grounded in that sense of self. She declared, “I’m a lesbian twenty-four hours a day. I am myself. I’m authentic and validated. Anything else would be self-denial and lacking credibility.”¹⁴⁴ The notion that authentic life in the closet represented an impossibility completely ignored how passing women were able to harness some power in the closet. Such rejections of the closet likewise ignored the protective barriers it served from outside oppression and violence.

Some lesbian-feminists argued that remaining in the closet was a pragmatic choice. One woman, identified only as Morreaux, responded to another writer’s call for women to come out of the closet by challenging the notion of the closet itself. She argued that while she did not consider herself an “inhabitant” of the closet, she counted herself

among those who “do not wish to stick their necks out too foolishly.”¹⁴⁵ In her article, Morreaux argued that the closet was itself a construction and its use as a weapon against women was unnecessary. “Is it fair,” she asked, “to relegate some of our sisters to the ‘closet’ because, in truth, we ALL lurk in there at one time or another for whatever reasons drive us there. Who is really free from the ‘closet’?”¹⁴⁶ Further, she depicted the closet as a “product of the fears our present chauvinist society has ingrained in all of us.” For her, calls for coming out did not honor or appreciate the challenges the closet presented to each and every lesbian, making those calls hollow and limited. In challenging the ways in which the closet was used as a weapon in attacking one another, Morreaux urged that lesbians ought to “be gentle” to one another, “closet or no,” recognizing the radical aspects of living a gay life in the first place. One way lesbians fought the pressures of the closet in plain sight was through acts of role-playing—additional activist activities that fostered a politics of exclusion.

Role-Playing Dykes, Monogamy, and Gender Discipline in Lesbian-Feminist Communities

While closeted lesbians were attacked, lesbians living openly faced additional scrutiny for their performance of gender. Challenges about “role-playing” created an exclusionary discourse of its own—performances that were used as rhetorical attacks targeting lesbians within and outside the lesbian-feminist movement. The arguments generally held that role-players had a pre-feminist consciousness; they were unwittingly playing or recreating the oppressive roles outlined by patriarchal society. Such attacks often targeted butch women for “aping” oppressive masculine roles and reinforcing the existing power structure between men and women, albeit in a lesbian context.

The attack on role-playing came from all ideological corners of the lesbian-feminist membership. Del Martin, for example, argued that when lesbians engaged in role playing, they fell into a “trap” following the patriarchal model offered by “Mom and Dad or heterosexual marriage,” merely reproducing rather than challenging it.¹⁴⁷ For Martin, any kind of role-playing meant butch women reproduced “men’s worst characteristics” and only created anti-egalitarian relationships.¹⁴⁸ For Phyllis Lyon (and Martin), part of the challenge facing lesbian-feminists was affirming the existence of lesbians as *women*. It was also important to confront the power which sex roles played in defining and confining women’s options for sexual expression. As Lyon maintained, “Central to the liberation of women (and also the liberation of men) is a new concept of sexuality which must be a freeing experience allowing human beings to respond to one another freely and reciprocally without rigid role definition.”¹⁴⁹ For her, erotic expression was central to women’s empowerment, freeing them from the oppressive hierarchical roles constructed by patriarchy. This challenge to roles cut both ways, unfortunately, for many lesbians at the time. On the one hand, challenging roles was crucial to raising the consciousness of women—straight and lesbian alike—to the patriarchal underpinnings of gender relations. At the same time, this argument conformed to a long-standing feminist campaign against role-playing lesbians. Either butch lesbians didn’t know any better, such logic assumed, or they were attempting to feel liberated and empowered by taking up the role of the oppressor.

Role-playing represented a different kind of problem with additional obstacles when considered from the perspective of lesbian-feminists of color. For Anita Cornwell, the prevalence of role-playing within black lesbian groups was a hallmark of the

interconnectivity of racism and sexism. When called a “femme,” Cornwell described being surprised, but when another black lesbian called her a “stud,” she recalled it as a shocking, painful experience. For her, being perceived as performing a masculine “stud” role dismissed the centrality of “woman” as her avowed identity. She explained, “I tried to point out that I was a woman, and as far as I could recall, a stud was a male horse. But whether or no[t], a stud was not me!”¹⁵⁰ Exemplified by her personal experience with Dee, a self-described stud, Cornwell crystallized the problems of sexism within the community of black gay women, re-inscribed in the sex roles constructed by the racist patriarchal society. Moreover, Cornwell’s critique of role-playing specifically targeted those women who self-identified or welcomed the identification of “stud,” seemingly denying their necessary identification as women. Taking Cornwell’s criticism a step further by appropriating the medical language of psychiatrists, Patricia Fullerton argued that lesbians should “[present] feminine appearances” rather than supporting “the maladjusted females, sporting dildoes, jockey shorts and the conviction that they are almost men.”¹⁵¹ These critiques demonstrated the easy slippage between challenging the patriarchal *source* of sex-roles and evaluating gender *performance* by butch lesbians. Such critiques often led to questions about such lesbian-feminists’ authenticity.¹⁵²

Some lesbian-feminists sought to reframe the attacks on role-playing. Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch clarified that lesbian-feminist politics was centrally concerned with “sex power” and critiquing the ways in which adhering to sex roles could reproduce the oppressive power distinctions supported by dominant heterosexual society.¹⁵³ And yet, they argued that lesbian-feminists were capable of constituting alternative roles in an effort to equalize power structures within relationships. By creating

a space for this possibility within role-playing, the members of the Furies Collective, for example, crafted an important response to the challenges leveled against lesbian-feminists within women's liberation.

Additional critiques of role-playing drew upon the power of generational conflict over relationships and visibility. In the midst of the counter-cultural and sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, younger generations of lesbian-feminists critiqued older lesbians for relying on more traditional models of relationships. Some women, including Robin Morgan, responded by arguing that dismissing any form of relationship, even monogamous ones, was simply another way of “trashing” one another.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon revealed how politically tenuous monogamy (and motherhood) was when they affirmed their relationship by publically identifying themselves as “politically-incorrect lesbians.”¹⁵⁵

Sidney Abbot and Barbara Love described the differences regarding relationships, the closet, and roles as reflective of a generation gap. They explained, “Older Lesbians are more apt to exchange rings and think in terms of homosexual marriages than young Lesbians are.” The most significant issue for the younger lesbians pertained to “monogamy,” and the stereotypical view that a “lesbian couple” should be comprised of “one masculine and one feminine woman—one butch and one femme.”¹⁵⁶ Abbot and Love maintained that younger lesbians were more likely to critique monogamy and marriage as part of patriarchal gender socialization; older couples, conversely, sought marital relationships dependent on foundations of stability and added safety from homophobic society. Most importantly for Abbot and Love, the traditional couples “compromise[d] their identity” in order “to be accepted in the traditional gay culture.”¹⁵⁷

Such relationships often helped produce a closeted existence. The combination of monogamy and a closeted existence clashed with younger lesbians. Without a doubt, role-playing dykes and gender performance became central targets for intra-movement exclusion and discipline. Taken to the extreme, these attacks fueled anti-transgender sentiment, which boiled over at events like the West Coast Lesbian Conference.¹⁵⁸

Boiling Point in Los Angeles: Another “Origin” of Lesbian-Feminist Liberation

By 1973, lesbian-feminists were contesting several available identity constructs as they crafted their own space for a liberation movement. Each identity formation—from woman-identification, to coalitional relationships with women’s liberation or gay liberation, to separatism—was further challenged by the exclusionary practices taking place between “sisters.” Their robust discourse about what lesbian-feminism meant was put to the test when women in lesbian-feminist enclaves from across the country travelled to Los Angeles to attend the West Coast Lesbian Conference in 1973. The conference crystallized the central conflicts at the heart of identity politics: gender identity, racism, woman-identification, the “politicalesbian,” and boundaries of lesbian-feminism. Much of the controversy at the conference centered on the Friday evening opening performance by Beth Elliott, a transsexual lesbian-feminist woman,¹⁵⁹ and the keynote address the next evening by radical feminist Robin Morgan.¹⁶⁰ Whereas Elliott confronted the boundaries of lesbian-feminist identity as intricately tied to biology,¹⁶¹ Morgan’s rather violent rhetorical response to Elliott’s very presence pointed to the contradictions that accompanied boundary defense.¹⁶² Ironically, Morgan’s attack on Elliott’s authenticity occurred in the midst of her own authenticity challenges as the keynote speaker given that she identified as a lesbian but lived with a man. The controversy over Morgan and Elliott

captured the central tension between identity politics and coalition politics within the lesbian-feminist movement as varying proponents engaged in discourses of inclusion and exclusion.

Controversy preceded Morgan's appearance at WCLC, and as such, Morgan responded to the critics who questioned her presence as the keynote speaker. Morgan decried those who required her lesbian "credentials," but still listed them for her audience:

I am a woman. I am a Feminist, a radical feminist, a militant feminist. I am a Witch. I identify as a Lesbian because I love the People of Women and certain individual women with my life's blood. Yes, I live with a man. . . The man is a Faggot-Effeminst [sic],¹⁶³ and we are together the biological as well as the nurturant [sic] parents of our child. . . Most of all, I am a Monster—and I am proud.¹⁶⁴

Enumerating her intersectional, "monstrous" identities allowed Morgan to simultaneously claim *and* defy the boundaries of those identities. The notion of the "monstrous" revealed the unintelligibility of intersectional identities. As such, Morgan stitched together her own set of identities to defy easy classification or dispute of her position as a speaker. Moreover, by identifying other prominent feminist and lesbian-feminist leaders who shared similar identities, Morgan articulated her consubstantiality with women in similar "politically incorrect" positions. These identities or "credentials," she argued, allowed her to "speak from concrete experience on: Feminism, Lesbianism, Motherhood" and more.¹⁶⁵ At the same time, as a result of these multiple identities, she maintained that she had broad experience with exclusionary politics, having been "straight-baited, dyke-

baited, red-baited, violence baited, mother-baited, and artist-baited” and targeted for internal attacks.¹⁶⁶ Giving into the demands of her inter-movement critics to defend her place at the podium, she thus attempted to transcend the divisions associated with identity politics. Doing so allowed her to excoriate her lesbian-feminist critics for engaging in oppressive patriarchal political practices.

In her speech, Morgan sought to heal the division from the “Lesbian-Straight Split” by drawing new battle lines between “Feminists” and “Collaborators.”¹⁶⁷ Recounting the history of the “Feminist-Lesbian” split, she spoke of her own experience with homophobia after outing herself once as bisexual and later as a lesbian at consciousness-raising meetings.¹⁶⁸ She aligned herself with lesbians in the audience who continued to experience homophobia in the women’s movement. She explained: “At present, there are supposedly two factions. On one side, those labeled heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, and celibate women. On the other, those labeled Lesbians. Not that the latter group is monolithic. . .”¹⁶⁹ Despite the plethora of sub-divisions of identities among lesbians, Morgan argued, a sense of unity still drove the early lesbian civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and continued to fuel the feminist movement in 1973. Noting this historical unity reframed the presumed divisions into a unified, energized, feminist movement.¹⁷⁰

As she defined the “feminist” side of her battle, Morgan turned to collaborators. Central to her attack on “collaborators” was a denunciation of coalition-building if it involved working with men or anyone who adopted a male-style or attitude.¹⁷¹ Collaborators were a problem, Morgan argued, because “the straight men, the gay men, the transvestite men, the male politics, styles, [and] attitudes. . . are being arrayed once

more against us . . . using women as their standard bearers.” She argued that men attempted to harness the power of the women’s movement to advance their own goals, cloaking these efforts as coalition-building or recognizing women’s contributions to their own movements. While coalition building was necessary among different feminists, such work could not take place outside of the women’s movement. While she acknowledged that there were lesbians who worked with gay men, she argued they were “locked into indentured servitude” within the GLF and the GAA. She added such work amounted to collaboration with patriarchy against real “Feminist Revolution.”¹⁷² She advanced this argument against anything male-related in such a way that alienated butch women, lesbian-feminists of color, transsexual lesbian-feminists like Elliott, radical lesbian-feminists who still worked in political coalition with men, and liberal lesbian-feminists who continued to engage in co-gender activism in an effort to reform current systems of oppression. For Morgan, anyone associated with men or the “male system” represented a “collaborator”—one who collaborated with the patriarchy and was ultimately duped in the process. Referencing Booker T. Washington’s familiar clenched fist metaphor, Morgan argued, “Where the Man is concerned, we must not be separate fingers but one fist.”¹⁷³ For her, unity among *feminists* (not women) depended on rejecting men and the male system. Calling the practice of man-hating “an honorable and viable political act,” Morgan argued, “the oppressed have a right to a class-hatred against a class that is oppressing them.”¹⁷⁴

Denouncing feminists and lesbians engaging in coalitional work revealed the central contradiction in Morgan’s speech at the WCLC. While Morgan had to defend her own credentials and credibility as a lesbian-feminist and denounce the practice of

vanguardism of extreme identity politics, she enacted those exclusionary practices herself. Denouncing sub-divisions among identities and the divisiveness of identity politics, she called for more division and “polarization” as the solution. By doing so, she divided the “real” feminists from the “collaborators,” namely feminists who advocated a liberal approach by engaging establishment structures. Though Morgan’s explicit avoidance of unity may have been unexpected to some in her audience, for others her call for further polarization may have been a welcome call for a separatist ethic. By tacitly positioning calls for unity in alignment with patriarchal establishment politics, Morgan articulated a critique of liberal feminist strategy in a way that resembled those critiques articulated by black power rhetors in the 1960s.¹⁷⁵ Her attempt to denounce exclusionary practices while calling for a rhetoric of polarization that relied on such practices constituted a central contradiction in her speech. There would be other equally troubling aspects of her rhetoric.

While collaborators received a blunt blow, Morgan saved her harshest critique for transsexuals. More than collaborators, these “men,” she argued, “infiltrated” feminist and lesbian groups, relying on their performance of femininity to establish identification with the women’s movement only to divide them from within. She asked her audience:

Are we . . . yet again going to defend the male supremacist obscenity of male transvestism? . . . No, I will not call a male ‘she’; thirty-two years of suffering in this androcentric society and of surviving, have earned me the name ‘woman’; one walk down the street by a male transvestite. . . and then he dares to think he understands our pain? [W]e must not call him sister.¹⁷⁶

Morgan's attacks on transsexuals and Beth Elliott echoed gender disciplining practices that took place in lesbian-feminist communities across the country.¹⁷⁷ By emphasizing biology and the problem of gender roles, her attacks against male-bodied transsexuals or transvestites illuminated the depth of exclusionary politics at the heart of her message. For her, biological female-ness and social experiences as *women* held straight and lesbian women together, something that those who "pretended" could only glimpse for a moment. Morgan thus touted biological and cultural authenticity as necessary to achieving a feminist consciousness.

Once the broader question of transsexual "men" in the movement was established, Morgan used the immediate example of Beth Elliott, only referencing her obliquely through the oppressive label "he/she," to demonstrate her argument. She contended, "Last night, at this Conference's first session, women let a man divide us, pit woman against woman and, in the process, exploit the entire Lesbian Conference to become the center of attention and boost his opportunistic career."¹⁷⁸ Referring to Elliott with masculine pronouns, Morgan questioned Elliott's motivation to perform at the lesbian conference.¹⁷⁹ She argued that Elliott's very presence negatively impacted the possibilities of the conference itself, focusing again on Elliott's male-bodied-ness. She added, "If transsexual males are oppressed, let them band together and organize against that oppression, instead of leeching off women who have spent their entire lives as women in women's bodies."¹⁸⁰ Thus, Morgan denounced Elliott's presence, denied her ability to identify with the lesbian-feminist movement on account of biology, and decried any opportunity to fight for gender equality in coalition with the already developing

transsexual movement. Morgan's transphobic arguments further deepened the contradictions in her speech focused on healing divisions and unifying feminists.

Morgan's speech was described by audience members as "volatile" and drew intense criticism by lesbian-feminists around the country.¹⁸¹ By and large, the immediate responses were passionate, angry, and defensive. Pat Buchanan, writing in the *Lesbian Tide* following the conference, responded to the contradictions in Morgan's speech by highlighting her dismissal of trashing practices. Buchanan argued that Morgan, in fact, epitomized this practice, by appropriating the identity "lesbian" while simultaneously attacking her lesbian sisters. When Buchanan bolstered the boundaries regarding who could claim an "authentic" lesbian identity, however, she enacted the same contradictions as she attacked Morgan for her relationship with an Effeminate man, a lifestyle that violated the bounds of lesbianism from Buchanan's perspective. She stated, "It seems strange to me that a woman (and I will not call her a sister) with such a high consciousness level & who attacks men so radically, can continue in her own lifestyle."¹⁸² Buchanan thus denied Morgan the identification she sought with her lesbian-feminist audience.

Many doubted Morgan's motives for attending the WCLC, and Buchanan argued that Morgan's trashing practices amounted to a defense mechanism. She argued that Morgan felt threatened "by men, by society, but above all, by Lesbians." Buchanan continued:

She is not a Lesbian & must realize that when Lesbians start to unify & work together, age-old stigmas begin to fall. She has been for some time, a voice & a leader in the feminist movement. *Lesbians are the feminist movement* [and] she

is in serious danger of no longer being able to lead. . . She is being threatened politically and personally.¹⁸³

Buchanan dethroned Morgan as a leading voice of women's liberation, arguing that because lesbian-feminists *were* the movement Morgan was now an outsider. In effect, Buchanan argued that by claiming their identity as the vanguard of the movement, lesbian-feminists turned the tables on their oppressors within the movement, shutting down the borders to "straight" feminists like Morgan. Reclaiming power within the movement, Buchanan articulated the possibilities of neutralizing "age old stigmas" that had held lesbians back within women's liberation.

Interpretations of Morgan's speech varied, particularly around whether it offered a call for unity or division. Indeed, it could be interpreted both ways. As a result, many women debated Morgan's overall message, rife as it was with divisive language. Joan Nixon, writing in Chicago's *Lavender Woman*, argued that Morgan's message was one of unity, grounding that call to arms under the banner of feminism. She explained, "Robin called for lesbians to identify with all women for a feminist revolution and hoped that there were closet feminists among the dykes who would come out into the feminist struggle."¹⁸⁴ In her defense of Morgan, Nixon took up the call for unity around the identity/label of feminist instead of the term "lesbian," merely shifting the terms of unity and division.

In the end, though Morgan attempted to enact a less strident articulation of identity politics or "vanguarditis" by locating herself in a space between identity labels (the "monster" who crosses boundaries), she ultimately undermined such an effort by defining the feminist revolution on the basis of woman-centric activism. This move

against lesbian-feminists engaged in coalitional activism on a variety of levels ultimately alienated a huge portion of her audience. For her, the importance of biologically “authentic” women transcended any calls for coalition that involved, in her words, “collaborating” with the enemy. Indeed, making men the central enemy, while offering a unifying force, also created a litmus test for anyone seeking to identify themselves as a “true” feminist. As such, in a speech decrying the painful division of the lingering “Lesbian-Straight” split, Morgan enacted “vanguarditis” when she called to determine the “authentic” from “inauthentic” feminist activists (i.e., male-bodied “pseudo-feminist” collaborators). In other words, by resting her call to heal division by bolstering thicker impenetrable boundary lines, Morgan’s speech itself was a contradiction. While most separatist feminists and radical lesbian-feminists likely welcomed her message, her attempt to heal divisions among women by crystallizing an enemy and collaborators dramatically hindered that message.

It is clear that Morgan’s attempt to offer what she viewed as a nuanced position missed the mark when looking at the published responses and accounts of the speech itself. Some of her critics pointed to the contradiction between her identification as a lesbian and her denunciation of working with men. Others called her support for “man-hating” as a welcome supportive message of their own fight against male-dominated institutions and systems. Some defended Morgan’s unapologetic attack on collaborators, while others defended Beth Elliott against those attacks. In short, Morgan’s speech captured the primary contradictions that competing rhetorics of lesbian-feminist identity navigated throughout the decade.

Conclusion

For Jeanne Cordova, one of the members of the planning committee for the WCLC, and others who produced commentary after the conference, the “Lesbian Feminist Movement” meant different things to different women.¹⁸⁵ For some, it meant and required true separation from the Women’s Movement, whereas others felt that such separatism was not the end goal of the movement. On the one hand, the notion of dyke separatism strategically eschewed coalitional relationships with men—straight Leftist men and gay men alike—on the basis of sexism. On the other hand, some women viewed the conference from a coalitional perspective, emphasizing its power to bring together lesbians involved in other movements rather than solely upholding a certain vanguard.¹⁸⁶ As such, the questions of separatism and coalitional relationships undergirded the very identity questions taken up by lesbian-feminist women at the WCLC. The conference itself, and the ensuing controversy around Beth Elliott and Robin Morgan, demonstrated the multiplicity of circulating identity formations among lesbian-feminists across the country. As Robin Morgan noted, lesbians were hardly monolithic:

[T]here are some Lesbians who work politically with gay men; some work politically only with certain other Lesbians (age, race, class distinctions); some work politically with *all* Feminists (Lesbians, heterosexuals, etc.); and some don’t work politically at all. . . there are sub-sub-sub-divisions, between gay women, Lesbians, Lesbian-Feminists, dykes, dyke-feminists, dyke-separatists, Old Dykes, butch dykes, bar dykes, and killer dykes. . . divisions between Political Lesbians and Real Lesbians and Nouveau Lesbians.¹⁸⁷

These identity formations, while confusing to the movement newcomer, revealed the possibilities for identity crafted by individual communities. As those formations circulated in the periodicals in those communities and across geographic space, they contributed to debates about the boundaries and relationships to other movements. These identities further demonstrated that woman-identification was contested among lesbian-feminists even as some took it up as central to their identity.

Although perhaps intended for an audience of straight feminist women, the rhetoric of woman-identification circulated widely throughout lesbian-feminist communities across the country. Within such circulation, the WIW went far beyond its appeal for straight women or for some unified political identity grounded in women's liberation.¹⁸⁸ Instead, it politicized sexuality for those lesbians who already identified with multiple movements and struggled with homophobia and sexism. As such, this chapter expands the debates about woman-identification to include lesbian-feminist communities and emphasizes how coalitional subjectivities crafted in the interstices between second wave feminism and gay liberation affected each interpretation of the WIW.

Finally, exploring the various articulations of lesbian-feminist identity reveals the struggle and exclusion that occurred in some cases around the issue of coalition politics. Some sought to transform lesbian-feminist identity in and through those coalitional relationships, by constructing a "coalitional subjectivity." Others sought to maintain ideological and political purity that pushed coalitional feminists to the margins. Such bolstering of identity boundaries fostered a definition of lesbian-feminism grounded in discourses of whiteness, often discriminating against and excluding lesbian-feminists of

color who worked in coalition with racial and ethnic liberation movements. The work to create identity formations around singular notions of lesbian-feminism further excluded lesbians on the basis of gender performance or an assumption of public visibility. The prevalence of exclusionary practices reveals the persistent tension as identity politics typically relied on division while coalition politics and coalitional identity formations often depended on discourses of inclusion and intersectionality.

The struggles around lesbian-feminist identity did not occur in isolation from the broader context of U.S. social protest. As lesbian-feminists navigated the challenging waters of identity formation, many also engaged in a wide range of activism on behalf of multiple social movements. Though some of those movements had a direct impact on their identity formation, including women's liberation and gay liberation, as discussed above, others remained powerful locations for coalition building. Participating in other activist movements, including women's liberation, gay liberation, third-world liberation, and the U.S. antiwar movement, demonstrated many lesbian-feminists' commitment to broader social change and tested the veracity of those competing identity rhetorics. In particular, such activism contributed to radical and liberal lesbian-feminist questions about the value of separatism. Examining coalitional discourse and its circulation among lesbian-feminist communities illuminates how lesbian-feminists made sense of other social movement activism and how they used such spaces to advocate for a lesbian-feminist visibility on local and national levels. Rather than simply building identity, such coalition building had the potential to expand the base for lesbian-feminist community and legitimacy. Accordingly, the next chapter analyzes lesbian-feminist discourse about coalitional activism beyond women's liberation.

Notes

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- ¹ “Betcha Didn’t Know,” *The Lesbian Tide* 2, nos. 10 & 11 (May/June 1973): 7. The number of attendees from this tally by the organizing committee differs from other articles published about the conference, notably Connie Mayer’s piece in the *Lavender Woman*.
- ² Joan E. Nixon, “Documenting the Dyke Conference.” *Lavender Woman* 2, no. 5 (August 1973): 14.
- ³ Connie Mayer, “1200 sisters gather!” *Lavender Woman* 2:3 (May 1973): 1.
- ⁴ Jeanne Cordova, “Radical Feminism? Dyke Separatism?” *Lesbian Tide* 2, nos.10/11 (May/June 1973): 27.
- ⁵ Cordova, “Radical Feminism?” 27.
- ⁶ Nixon, “Documenting the Dyke Conference,” 14.
- ⁷ Nixon, “Documenting the Dyke Conference,” 14.
- ⁸ Aimee Carillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3.
- ⁹ Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement*, (Baltimore, MD: Diana Press, 1975), 11; Helen Tate, “Toward a Rhetorical History of Feminist Identity: The Negotiation of Feminist Identity in Contemporary American Discourse,” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2001); Kristan Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman: Containment Rhetorics of Second Wave Radical/Lesbian Feminism,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 263-292.

¹⁰ Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History of Feminist Identity," 107; Winifred Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1988), xiii.

¹¹ Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History of Feminist Identity," 107; Wandersee, *On the Move*, xiii. The radical feminist strategy of consciousness-raising (CR) was quickly adopted/ appropriated by liberal feminists who began to host CR sessions through the National Organization for Women. See Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973), 78-79.

¹² Throughout this chapter and larger project I refer to the feminist movement activism that took place from 1970 through the early 1980s as "women's liberation" to both recover the under-used term and strategically avoid the terminology attached to the "wave" metaphor. In particular, Helen Tate argues that by 1970, the reform and revolutionary branches of the feminist movement had largely joined forces, in what she calls the "radicalized mainstream feminist movement." See Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History," 91. As such, this project seeks to contribute to histories of second wave feminism without replicating the wave imagery. See Sara M. Evans, "Re-viewing the Second Wave," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 259-267; Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

¹³ Lesbian-feminists were not the only feminists to challenge the erasure within the unifying rhetoric of sisterhood. Women of color historically called white feminists out on how sisterhood was limited by divisions along racial and class lines. See, for

example, Frances Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970/2005), 109-122.

¹⁴ Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History of Feminist Identity," 41.

¹⁵ Betty Friedan, "Up From the Kitchen Floor," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1973.

¹⁶ This anxiety was legitimized when emerging feminist leader Kate Millet, author of *Sexual Politics*, was outed as bisexual by *TIME* magazine in 1970. Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, *Sappho was a Right-On Woman: A Liberated View of Lesbianism* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), 122-125; Kristan Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman," 270.

¹⁷ Kristan Poirot, "Mediating a Movement, Authorizing Discourse: Kate Millett, Sexual Politics, and Feminism's Second Wave," *Women's Studies in Communication* 27, no. 2 (2004): 205; Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Abbott and Love, *Sappho was a Right-On Woman*; Helen Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History."

¹⁸ "From the Doll House to the White House," *Sisters* 2, no. 10 (October 1971): 1.

¹⁹ "From the Doll House," 1.

²⁰ Moreover, the available feminist identity lacked inclusivity as a primarily white and middle-class.

²¹ Wandersee, *On the Move*, xiv.

²² Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History."

²³ Ellen Shumsky, “Radicalesbians,” *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide* 16, no. 4 (Jul/Aug 2009): 17.

²⁴ Radicalesbians, “The Woman Identified Woman,” in *Notes from the Third Year*, eds. Anne Koedt and Shulamith Firestone (New York: Notes from the Second Year, Inc., 1971), 81-83; Radicalesbians, “The Woman-Identified-Woman,” Pittsburgh, PA: KNOW Inc., 1970, Special Collections Library, Duke University. Throughout this chapter I will refer to the “woman-identified-woman” in two ways: First, with lower-case letters and dashes when dealing with the concept or a person who identifies as such. Capitalization and/or an acronym WIW refers to the published manifesto, “The Woman Identified Woman.” Kristin Poirot notes that beyond the meeting, the WIW was circulated in a variety of “germinal” second wave publications including *RAT*, *Ain’t I a Woman*, and *Notes from the Third Year*. See Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman,” 275. Additionally, groups such as Lesbian Feminist Liberation (LFL) in New York City and women’s liberation groups on college campuses across the U.S. continued to circulate the manifesto throughout the decade. See Jean O’Leary Papers, #7321, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library; Pauline Layton Papers, #7620, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

²⁵ Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman,” 263-292; Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement*, (Baltimore, MD: Diana Press, 1975), 11.

²⁶ Radicalesbians, “The Woman Identified Woman,” 81.

²⁷ Notably, the gender socialization narrative served up in WIW is hegemonic and unmarked in its white, middle-class location, and as such, demonstrates the limits of identification for women of color or women of other class locations.

²⁸ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 82.

²⁹ Abbot and Love, *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman*, 109.

³⁰ Morreaux, "And about those closets," *Focus* 2, no. 5 (April 1971): 6-7.

³¹ Betty Friedan's primary concern was how the movement was perceived publicly. See Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History of Feminist Identity;" Poirot, "Mediating a Movement," 205, 210.

³² To be fair, some did make that argument. As Kristen Poirot notes, "second wave radical/lesbian feminists argued that lesbianism offered women a chance to become *authentic*, untarnished by male oppression." Historian Doug Rossinow maintains that the politics of the new left in the 1960s and 1970s were focused on challenging political alienation or estrangement with an existentialist politics of authenticity. "Adopting an existentialist outlook," Rossinow explains, "the new left came to argue that social and political change would open the path to authenticity The search for authenticity lay at the heart of the new left"(4). Rossinow adds that the search for authenticity among new left activists "was entangled with what we today might call question of 'identity.'" (15). As they sought to define identities during the 1970s, lesbian-feminists frequently used language of authenticity in a similar way. Yet just like the identities themselves, authenticity, what was real or genuine, was fraught and contested. Thus, attaching claims about authenticity to identity formations was a way to bolster that identity against other forms, a way of defending that definition as more real, more authentic, than others. As

such, authenticity could also be used as a means to exclude. See Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman," 263; Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 4, 15.

³³ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 11.

³⁴ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 81

³⁵ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 81.

³⁶ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 81.

³⁷ For more on lesbian-baiting within the women's movement, see Anne Koedt, "Lesbianism and Feminism," *Notes from the Third Year*, eds. Anne Koedt and Shulamith Firestone (New York: Notes from the Second Year, Inc., 1971), 79-81.

³⁸ Helen Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric: The Co-Option of the Rhetoric of White Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-31.

³⁹ Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman," 263-292.

⁴⁰ In other research I also seek to extend Poirot's work that analyzes the rhetoric of internal containment rhetorical work that occurred in lesbian-feminist communities by attending to the other disciplinary discourse in which lesbian-feminists engaged.

⁴¹ Bonnie J. Dow, "Review Essay: Reading the Second Wave," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 105.

⁴² Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman," 285.

⁴³ Though radical feminist ideology integrally shaped the history of lesbian-feminism in the United States, herein I aim to complicate that relationship. See, for

instance, Alice Echols' historical narrative that confirms that linkage, ultimately conflating lesbian-feminism with cultural feminism and blaming that for the decline of radical feminism by 1975. See Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America*. Other scholars have also only considered lesbian-feminism in terms of radical feminism. Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier would likely disagree with my effort to complicate the relationship of lesbian-feminists with radical feminism. They ground their analysis of lesbian-feminism in radical feminism, claiming that in order to understand lesbian-feminism, they must understand "the social and political struggle/[social movement activity] that created the identity." Verta Taylor and Nancy E. Whittier, "Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 110.

⁴⁴ Charlotte Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," in *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, eds. Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch (Baltimore, MD: Diana Press, 1975), 30.

⁴⁵ Bunch, "Lesbians in Revolt," 31.

⁴⁶ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 11

⁴⁷ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 11.

⁴⁸ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 11, emphasis mine.

⁴⁹ The reference to conservative perspectives in the context of some lesbian-feminist communities referred to those who advocated a liberal feminist or even homophile approach. Karen Wells explains the shifting notions of what is considered "radical" during a given time period, noting that in its day, DOB and Mattachine

represented radical approaches to social change whereas by the 1970s, they were viewed as conservative approaches. See Karen Wells, "DOB and Radical Politics," *Sisters* 1, no. 2 (December 1970): 28-29; and "Letter from A Conservative Radical," *Sisters* 2, no. 2 (February 1971): 13-14.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Lyon, "Speech delivered at University of Missouri, April 1975," Box 40, Folder 38, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, 93-13, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society, San Francisco, CA.

⁵¹ Lyon, "Speech delivered at University of Missouri, April 1975."

⁵² Recruitment fears proved an easy personal attack on lesbians for it drew on the established "villain," "menace," and predatory lesbian figure that persisted in films and literature. See Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, rev. ed (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

⁵³ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 12.

⁵⁴ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 12.

⁵⁵ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 13.

⁵⁶ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism*, 12.

⁵⁷ Tate, "Toward a Rhetorical History of Feminist Identity," 142.

⁵⁸ Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric," 1-31.

⁵⁹ Megan Adams, "Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity," *Leaping Lesbian* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 3.

⁶⁰ Betty Peters, "Notes on coming out; they mean to kill us all," *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 3 (May 1972): 3.

⁶¹ Peters, "Notes on coming out," 3.

⁶² Sharon Earll, “An Opposing Point of View: United We Fall, Divided We Stand,” *Focus* 2, no. 4 (March 1971): 4.

⁶³ By ideological differences, I mean the division among women’s liberation activists along liberal/radical lines. Feminist scholars confirm this ideological distinction among feminists. The distinction conforms with bifurcation between radical and liberal political ideologies and their differential relationships to societal structure. See Bernard L. Brock, Mark E. Huglen, James F. Klumpp, and Sharon Howell, *Making Sense of Political Ideology: The Power of Language in Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 71, 113.

⁶⁴ Benison, “Editorial: women’s liberation, do you know what it’s all about,” 4.

⁶⁵ Diane Benison, “Why the emphasis?” *Focus* 2, no. 5 (April 1971): 6.

⁶⁶ Diane Benison, “Editorial: women’s liberation, do you know what it’s all about?” *Focus* 2, no. 4 (March 1971): 4.

⁶⁷ Sally Gearheart, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” *Sisters* 1, no. 2 (December 1970): 2.

⁶⁸ Gearheart, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” 2.

⁶⁹ Sharon R., “The Woman-Identified Lesbian,” *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 2 (December 1971): 5.

⁷⁰ Sharon R., “The Woman-Identified Lesbian,” 5.

⁷¹ Poirot, for instance, continues in this tradition, noting that “By the late 1980s black and third world feminist critiques of feminism’s myopic understanding of woman as middle class, white, and often times heterosexual had become a common staple in the

feminist canon as intersectional theorists/third wave feminist demanded a more inclusive commitment to women.” See Kristan Poirot, “Domesticating the Liberated Woman,” 285.

⁷² Anita Cornwell, “Black Lesbian Woman,” *Lesbian Tide* 3, no. 2 (September 1973): 11.

⁷³ Anita Cornwell, “Black Lesbian Woman,” 11.

⁷⁴ Anita Cornwell, “Black Lesbian Woman,” 11. Cornwell even quipped that it was racism that “causes a black woman to realize she’s gay in the first place.”

⁷⁵ Patty Kunitsugu, “Needs of Third World Dykes,” *Out And About* (October 1977): 21

⁷⁶ Jenice Jeannette, “Give me my 40 acres and a mule,” *Lesbian Tide* 4, no. 1 (August 1974): 23.

⁷⁷ Jenice Jeannette, “Give me my 40 acres and a mule,” 23.

⁷⁸ Jenice Jeannette, “Give me my 40 acres and a mule,” 23.

⁷⁹ Patty Kunitsugu, “Needs of Third World Dykes,” 21, 24, emphasis original.

Within radical feminist circles it was common to use alternative spellings of woman and women that removed the references to “man” or “men” within the term in both singular and plural forms. These alternatives included womyn or wommin.

⁸⁰ “Black Caucus Position: Report from the Racism Workshop,” 19.

⁸¹ “Black Caucus Position: Report from the Racism Workshop,” 19.

⁸² “Black Caucus Position: Report from the Racism Workshop,” 19.

⁸³ Stacey Fulton, “Letter: On Racism and Anger,” *Lesbian Tide* 3, no. 1 (August 1973): 18, emphasis in original.

⁸⁴ Kunitsugu, “Needs of Third World Dykes,” 21.

⁸⁵ Stacey Fulton, "Letter: On Racism and Anger," 18.

⁸⁶ Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970/2005), 109-122. Henderson's explication of such intersectionality also pre-dated the famous statement by the Combahee River Collective that also included explicit discussion of sexuality and lesbianism in 1977. See Combahee River Collective, "Combahee River Collective Statement, April 1977," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983), 272-282.

⁸⁷ Elandria V. Henderson, "Black and Lavender," *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 2 (December 1971): 4.

⁸⁸ Henderson, "Black and Lavender," 4.

⁸⁹ Henderson, "Black and Lavender," 4

⁹⁰ Henderson's article bespeaks the frustration associated with this lack of "home" and the failure of other movement members to recognize common oppression. Henderson declares that even if other groups fail in this regard, We [Black Gay Women] will continue to demand our right to exist as productive, free, equal, black, gay beautiful women." Henderson, "Black and Lavender," 4.

⁹¹ Kathy, "Kathy's Corner," *Sisters* 1, no. 2 (December 1970): np.

⁹² Kathy, "Kathy's Corner," np.

⁹³ Del Martin, "Del Martin Blasts Men," *Sisters* 1, no. 1 (November 1970): 5-9.

⁹⁴ Martin, "Del Martin Blasts Men," 5-9.

⁹⁵ Turning the well-known take on “Black is Beautiful,” Frank Kameny proffered the phrase “Gay is Good” that became a classic mantra among homophile activists. In the years that followed, Kameny continued to argue that “gay” was the best term for all homosexuals, while feminists like Martin challenged the ways in which “gay” served to make lesbian women invisible. Martin, “Del Martin Blasts Men,” 9.

⁹⁶ Gearheart, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” 2.

⁹⁷ Gearheart, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” 2.

⁹⁸ Gearheart, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” 3.

⁹⁹ Gearheart, “Lesbianism as a Political Statement,” 4.

¹⁰⁰ Sharon Crase, “Did you know...,” *Sisters* 4, no. 6 (June 1973): 18-19.

¹⁰¹ In her class analysis of thirty years of pride festivals, Jane Ward illuminates some of the crucial early history of Christopher Street West parades and festivals in Los Angeles. The history and perennial conflict between lesbians and gay men around Christopher Street Liberation events will be taken up in more detail in Chapter Three. See Jane Ward, “Producing ‘Pride’ in West Hollywood: A Queer Cultural Capital for Queers with Cultural Capital,” *Sexualities* 6, no. 1 (2003): 65-94.

¹⁰² “Letter from a Conservative Radical,” 13-14.

¹⁰³ Rising Fire Study Collective, “A Criticism of Lesbian Separatism,” *Out And About* (June 1977): 4-6. The dismissal of conciliatory or coalitional approaches by other lesbian-feminists, the dismissal of the establishment as inherently against their fight for justice, and the support of a separatist, nationalist ethic (i.e., Lesbian Nation) demonstrated similarities between separatist lesbian-feminist rhetoric and the rhetoric of black power. Randall M. Fisher argues that the rhetoric of black power built upon the

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee chairman Stokely Carmichael's rhetoric, which moved away from the non-violent civil rights strategy led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and toward a radical discourse built upon a combination of W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey before him. Fisher contends that such rhetoric was characterized by two contentions: 1) "insisting that conditions [for Black Americans] were changing too slowly and improvement in conditions could only be assured if blacks established sufficient economic and political power to bring about changes themselves;" and 2) that "the full, unified black strength necessary to meet black goals could only be achieved if blacks were motivated to act by pride in being black, by pride in black accomplishments and capability." See Randall M. Fisher, *Rhetoric and American Democracy: Black Protest Through Vietnam Dissent*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 83-85.

¹⁰⁴ This unsustainable separatist lesbian-feminist identity rhetoric also echoes the rhetoric of black power. In Fisher's study, he argues that "the more aggressive, demanding rhetoric" of black power garnered "enthusiastic response" from audiences especially on black campuses, but divided the civil rights movement from within and made it "impossible to maintain." Fisher, *Rhetoric and American Democracy*, 86-87.

¹⁰⁵ Rising Fire Study Collective, "A Criticism of Lesbian Separatism," 4-6.

¹⁰⁶ Some separatists were adamant to respond to the charge of "man-hating" by holding that separatism was primarily about self-determination and enacting one's power with other women—something they argued was impossible to do in the presence of men—rather than hating men altogether. At the same time, some lesbian-feminists who either agreed with or practiced separatism proudly avowed their own man-hating

perspectives, wearing it as a badge of pride. See Fisher, *Rhetoric and American Democracy*, 84.

¹⁰⁷ Megan Adams, “Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” 3.

¹⁰⁸ Megan Adams, “Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” 3.

¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that Adams’s article came out at the end of the decade, long after feminist historians have pointed to the decline of radical or even lesbian-feminism.

¹¹⁰ Megan Adams, “Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” 3.

¹¹¹ Adams, “Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” 3

¹¹² Adams, “Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” 3.

¹¹³ Adams, “Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” 3.

¹¹⁴ Feminist fat liberation activism took place throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It involved fighting against “size-ism” or oppression on the basis of body size. Judith Stein was a well known in lesbian-feminist circles for her work in Boston Area Fat Liberation around fat acceptance and the intersection of oppressions around her identities as a Jewish lesbian woman of size. See Judith Stein Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

¹¹⁵ Separatist Gang, “An Analysis of the Politics of Separatists Working With Lesbian Feminists,” *Out and About* (July 1978): 9.

¹¹⁶ Julie L. Morris and Harriet M. Welsch, “Further Thoughts on Separatism and Lesbian Identity,” *Leaping Lesbian* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 8.

¹¹⁷ Morris and Welch, “Further Thoughts,” 8.

¹¹⁸ Stephanie, “In My Opinion,” *Out And About* (November 1977): 16.

¹¹⁹ Stephanie, "In My Opinion," 16.

¹²⁰ Nancy, "February Forum: Who Makes the Rules?" *Out and About* (November 1977): 17.

¹²¹ Nancy, "February Forum: Who Makes the Rules?" 17.

¹²² Separatist Gang, "An Analysis," 10.

¹²³ Patty Kunitsugu, "Needs of Third World Dykes," 21, 24.

¹²⁴ Rising Fire Study Collective, "A Criticism of Separatism, Part II," *Out And About* (July 1977): 7.

¹²⁵ Susan Edwards, "ERA and the Lesbian Ghetto," *Lavender Woman* 2, no. 7 (November 1973): 6. Edwards was not alone in her use of diminutive and racially inflected terminology to reference the oppression and isolation lesbians and lesbian-feminists faced. Her use of the term "ghetto" can be interpreted as racist discourse, though in the context of her critique of separatism, it can be interpreted as emphasis on oppressive implications of isolation. Alternatively, her use of such language can also be interpreted as an extension of the analogical reasoning often used to describe the sexual and gender oppression lesbians experienced. Jane Ward points to the usage of such language by advocates of gay liberation as part of a broader effort to articulate a class-based analysis of gay oppression and use a rhetoric akin to ethnic identity. See Ward, "Producing 'Pride,' 65.

¹²⁶ Stephanie, "In My Opinion," 16.

¹²⁷ Stephanie, "In My Opinion," 16.

¹²⁸ Rising Fire Study Collective, "A Criticism of Lesbian Separatism," 5.

¹²⁹ Rising Fire Study Collective, "A Criticism of Lesbian Separatism," 5.

¹³⁰ Separatist Gang, “An Analysis,” 10.

¹³¹ Separatist Gang, “An Analysis,” 11.

¹³² Nancy, “February Forum: Who Makes the Rules?” 17-22.

¹³³ Lois, “Letter to editor,” *Out And About* (August 1977): 9.

¹³⁴ Nancy, “February Forum: Who Makes the Rules?” 17-22; Janey, “About Racism, or what has been going on in *OAA*” *Out And About* (September 1977): 5-6. For some collectives, publishing critiques and alternative perspectives created rifts in the community. For example, after a series of scathing critiques of separatism were published in *Out and About*, the separatist collective Gorgons, citing an inability to “have the same relationship with the O.A.A. collective,” stopped submitting their regular column on lesbian separatist politics. See “Gorgons Bow Out,” *Out and About* (October 1977): 24.

¹³⁵ This is not to suggest that separatist communities did not embrace woman-identification. Many assumed it as an identity in so far as it supported a purist separatist ethic. The limitations of lesbian-feminist separatism as an identity and an ethic also echoed the limitations of black power rhetoric. Not only did “black power [threaten] to split and destroy the efficacy of the civil rights movement,” its militancy also made it easy for critics to condemn black power and “hurt its ethos with a message which frightened white supporters.” Likewise, separatist lesbian-feminists’ quest for ideological purity scared non-separatist lesbian-feminists and potential straight allies. Moreover, lesbian-feminist separatism crafted a compelling militant caricature that would fuel anti-feminist and anti-gay sentiment. See Fisher, *Rhetoric and American Democracy*, 91-93.

¹³⁶ See “Country women manifesto,” *Lavender Woman* 3, no. 2 (March 1974): 3.

¹³⁷ Betty Peters, "Notes on coming out; they mean to kill us all," *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 3 (May 1972): 3.

¹³⁸ Betty Peters, "Notes on coming out; they mean to kill us all," 3.

¹³⁹ "Letter to Leaping Lesbian regarding 'in the closet,'" *Leaping Lesbian* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 5

¹⁴⁰ Her strong words echoed separatist arguments as she clearly defined the boundaries of identity and community in ways that ultimately oppressed others. Ironically, the writer argued for lesbians to "stop oppressing each other," even as she oppressed closeted lesbians by silencing their voices.

¹⁴¹ Linda Shear, "Politicalebrities," *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 1 (November 1971): 6.

¹⁴² "Letter to Leaping Lesbian," 5.

¹⁴³ Betty Peters, "Notes on coming out; they mean to kill us all," 3.

¹⁴⁴ Letter to Leaping Lesbian," 5.

¹⁴⁵ Morreaux, "And about those closets," *Focus* 2, no. 5 (April 1971): 6-7. *Focus* was a Boston lesbian feminist publication that had begun years earlier as the newsletter for the local Daughters of Bilitis chapter.

¹⁴⁶ Morreaux, "And about those closets," 7.

¹⁴⁷ Del Martin, "Lesbians and Gay Liberation," Speech delivered in Bellingham, WA, April 6, 1973. Box 40, Folder 16, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin MSS.

¹⁴⁸ Martin, "Lesbians and Gay Liberation."

¹⁴⁹ Phyllis Lyon, "Speech to The Third Annual Florida Gay Conference, Tallahassee, FL," 26-29 May 1978, Box 40, Folder 6, Lyon and Martin MSS, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Anita Cornwell, "Black Lesbian Woman," 11.

¹⁵¹ Patricia Fullerton, "Dilemma of the Modern Lesbian" *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 3 (May 1972): 5.

¹⁵² Additionally, critiques of role-playing were fraught with exclusionary rhetorics of classism, often failing to validate or affirm the possibilities for passing and public life wrought by passing. Often these attacks were implied, appearing in denunciations of bar culture, non-feminine (read: professional) dress, and dismissal of women in trade professions. Indeed, such dismissive attacks on role-playing created obstacles for those women who wanted to speak out on behalf of the happy relationships they enjoyed even with roles. Lillian Faderman discusses the long history of passing women in her book *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). Kennedy and Davis, in their oral history of lesbian communities in Buffalo, New York, reveal the empowering possibilities associated with role-playing. See Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Jeannie, "To the editors of 'Sisters,' *Sisters* 5, no. 5 (May 1974): np.

¹⁵³ Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, 12.

¹⁵⁴ In her keynote address at the West Coast Lesbian Conference, Morgan stood up for those lesbians who maintained monogamous relationships and called out those lesbian-feminists who dismissed women in such relationships. The term trashing here refers to the common practice of dismissing fellow feminist "sisters" in the movement. This was most notably detailed by Jo Freeman (who went by Joreen in her byline) See Jo Freeman, "Trashing: The Dark Side of Feminism," *Ms.* (April 1976): 49-51, 92-98.

¹⁵⁵ Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, “Lesbian Movement in the 80s,” Box 40, Folder 23, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin MSS.

¹⁵⁶ Abbot and Love, *Sappho was a Right-on Woman*, 92.

¹⁵⁷ Abbot and Love, *Sappho was a Right-on Woman*, 92.

¹⁵⁸ I use the contemporary term “transgender” in this chapter despite the tendency to conflate it with the term used during the 1970s, transsexual (some spell it with one ‘s’, arguing that the other spelling is medicalized). In the case of Beth Elliott and others, who were pre-operative transsexual women, lesbian-feminists protested because of their biologically male bodies and conflating them with cross-dressers. This kind of disciplining reached beyond male-bodied self-identified lesbian-feminists like Elliott, but to those performing “butch” or masculine gender roles within lesbian relationships. Rather than naming any one in particular who may have performed a butch identity without affirming a transgender identity, I discuss these similar disciplinary functions within lesbian-feminist communities in different ways. It is important to understand, however, that the impetus or ideology behind such disciplining comes from the same heteronormative and even homonormative location.

¹⁵⁹ In referencing Elliott, I will use feminine-gendered pronouns in recognition of her identification as a lesbian-feminist woman. When quoting from primary sources, readers may notice the contradictory nomenclature. Those who opposed her presence at the conference itself focused on her pre-operative status and biological male sex and thus often referred to Elliott, incorrectly, as a transsexual *man*. This incorrect nomenclature is a classic example of transphobia, whereby observers continue to rely on biological sex assignment rather than one’s avowed gender identity. This debate about “male-bodied

individuals” in lesbian-feminist spaces continues, with the contemporary controversy focusing on the long-running Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival.

¹⁶⁰ Historian Susan Stryker notes that Morgan made those edits to her speech very shortly after her arrival in order to attend to the response to transsexual lesbian-feminist activist and musician, Beth Elliott. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 103-104.

¹⁶¹ Beth Elliott, “Of Infidels and Inquisitions,” *Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 10/11 (June 1973): 15, 26.

¹⁶² Transgender historian Susan Stryker notes that Morgan edited her speech at the last minute to incorporate a section on the transsexual issue. Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 103-104.

¹⁶³ The Effeminists was a group of anti-sexist men formerly part of the Gay Liberation Front in New York City who aligned themselves with women’s liberation. Founded by Steven Dansky, John Knoebel, and Kenneth Pitchford (Robin Morgan’s husband), the group was controversial as it called out individual men for sexism and misogyny in their publication *Double F: A Magazine of Effeminism*. See Lindsay Branson, “The Effeminists,” Outhistory, last modified 28 September 2011, http://outhistory.org/wiki/The_Effeminists; Steven Dansky, John Knoebel, Kenneth Pitchford, "The Effeminist Manifesto," in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook in Gay and Lesbian Politics*, eds. Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York: Routledge, 1997), 432-435.

¹⁶⁴ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 30.

¹⁶⁵ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 30.

¹⁶⁶ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 30.

¹⁶⁷ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 30.

¹⁶⁸ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 30. Through these identifications, Morgan demonstrated the homophobia among straight feminists and the sexism and biphobia among lesbians. This struggle, especially prominent within lesbian-feminist circles has been thoroughly documented by bisexual feminists. See, for example, Jennifer Baumgardner, *Look Both Ways: Bisexual Politics* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2008).

¹⁶⁹ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 31.

¹⁷⁰ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 31.

¹⁷¹ Among others, Morgan cited the example of the all-woman rock band “Street Fighting Women” whose members dress in “black leather and motorcycle chains.” Beyond their masculine dress, they covered sexist songs like “Brown Sugar” by the Rolling Stones, a band led by Mick Jagger, “the high priest of sadistic cock-rock.” Sexism masquerading as feminist empowerment was unacceptable. See Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 32.

¹⁷² Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 31.

¹⁷³ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 32. See David Lionel Smith, “Booker T. Washington’s Rhetoric: Commanding Performance,” *Prospects* 17 (1992): 191-208.

¹⁷⁴ Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism,” 32.

¹⁷⁵ This re-articulation of liberal feminists as “collaborators” is similar to the black power “reinterpretation of integration as [assimilation].” See Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede, “The Rhetoric of Black Power: Order and Disorder in the Future,” in

The Rhetoric of Black Power, eds. Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 195; Fisher, *Rhetoric and American Democracy*, 87.

¹⁷⁶ Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism," 32.

¹⁷⁷ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 162.

¹⁷⁸ Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism," 32.

¹⁷⁹ Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism," 32.

¹⁸⁰ Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism," 32.

¹⁸¹ Jeanne Cordova, "Radical Feminism?" 27.

¹⁸² Pat Buchanan, "The Living Contradiction." *Lesbian Tide* 2, nos. 10/11

(May/June 1973): 6.

¹⁸³ Buchanan, "The Living Contradiction," 6-7, emphasis mine.

¹⁸⁴ Joan E. Nixon, "Documenting the Dyke Conference," 15.

¹⁸⁵ Cordova, "Radical Feminism?" 27

¹⁸⁶ Cordova, "Radical Feminism?" 27.

¹⁸⁷ Morgan, "Lesbianism and Feminism," 31. Morgan finished her enumeration with the wry remark, "Hera help the woman who is unaware of these fine political distinctions and who wanders into a meeting for the first time, thinking she maybe has a right to be there because she likes women."

¹⁸⁸ Sharon R., "The Woman-Identified Lesbian," 5; Abbot and Love, *Sappho was a Right-On Woman*, 113; Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman," 275.

Chapter 3

Building Coalition and Bolstering Identity:

Lesbian-Feminists, Anti-War Activism, and Gay Liberation

The complexity of lesbian-feminist identities over the course of the 1970s fueled coalitional activism with other social movements. In addition to women's liberation and gay liberation, lesbian-feminists participated in the wide-range of ongoing social protests that characterized the 1970s. They protested against the war in Vietnam, the U.S. prison system, nuclear energy technology, domestic violence, media representations of women, lesbians, and gay men, and interlocking oppression of people via racism, classism, sexism, and ableism.¹ To some extent, their work in these movements also played a role in the process of identity formation as detailed in Chapter Two. Additionally, coalitional work with these movements afforded lesbian-feminists another stage from which they could expand their visibility and advocate on behalf of their identity. Those who engaged in such activism affirmed the importance of both identity-based and coalitional approaches and, by extension, co-gender activism. This combined approach responded to the limitations of separatist approaches by articulating a both/and solution that capitalized on the intersection of identities as a mode of forging new connections, issuing more resounding societal critiques, and expanding the reach of identity discourse. Their arguments consequently positioned lesbian-feminists as legitimate and active citizens agitating for civil rights and social justice alongside other citizens broadly aligned with leftist activism in the United States. Accordingly, lesbian-feminist protest rhetoric from these coalitional locations insinuated their political identities, ideologies, and goals within the civil rights activities of other activist communities. Analyzing the coalitional

strategies at work in lesbian-feminist discourse during the 1970s reveals the complex rhetorical negotiations and struggles that took place at the intersection of identity politics and coalition politics. Specifically, coalitional relationships provided a means for lesbian-feminists to re-articulate their presence and legitimacy by using a pivotal strategy.

Here, I use the concept of the *pivot* to indicate the process of making one's identity more salient from context to context. Yet, rather than a vertical or hierarchical move associated with privileging one identity *over* another, pivoting references a horizontal move, akin to shifting one's weight. Pivoting accordingly becomes a way to rhetorically work the space between identity locations, emphasizing one identity for a given audience and another for audiences of differing subject positions. The pivot is associated with identification, although it emphasizes the possible (and simultaneous) modes of identification between, among, and within audiences and communities, particularly those that are not completely aligned by shared identity. As a way of navigating the tension between coalition and identity politics, pivoting animates a *recalibration* process, whereby lesbian-feminist identity is readjusted through the pivotal process in accordance with the coalitional context and relationship.²

In speaking with anti-war and gay liberation audiences, lesbian-feminists paired coalitional arguments with subtle recalibrations of identity to negotiate tension between identity and coalition and confront exclusionary practices in those two social movements. They sought to elevate the terms of anti-war and gay liberation arguments in ways that accounted for gender, and at times, sexuality. Because the center point from which they pivoted was generative and malleable, they were able to address the broad impact of

oppressive gender ideologies on gay men, lesbians, and straight women using the coalitional platforms of the anti-war and gay liberation movements.

This chapter thus attends to the ways lesbian-feminists crafted coalitional relationships with anti-war and gay liberation movements in speeches that addressed multiple co-gender activist audiences. The first section considers how they joined the coalitional chorus demanding an end to the Vietnam War, and later, extended those arguments to include the fight against the development of nuclear weapons technology.³ Feminists had been involved in Vietnam anti-war activism from the 1960s until after the U.S. troop withdrawal in 1973. Likewise, lesbian-feminists had also protested the war in Vietnam, though not always in their capacity as lesbians.⁴ Lesbian-feminists delivered speeches to ideologically diverse anti-war coalition audiences at large-scale demonstrations and explicitly inserted gender into the anti-war conversation, articulated a feminist (sometimes radical) critique of war, and, in some cases, used such arguments to turn the ire of the anti-war movement inward in an effort to confront the horizontal oppression of its own membership.

Some lesbian-feminists made anti-war activism relevant to a broader lesbian-feminist audience even though the anti-war movement had little to do with their identity per se. When they confronted the general invisibility of lesbians and gay men within anti-war activist communities, lesbian-feminists argued that sexism and homophobia would weaken the anti-war movement. In so doing, they rhetorically positioned themselves as coalitional partners and internal agitators with anti-war activists. Across the discourse, lesbian-feminists argued that the dominant patriarchal ideologies that oppressed them domestically as women and lesbians also undergirded nuclear technological development

and the scourge of war. Such logic featured gender as a means to promote identification among American women and the plight of Vietnamese women; such identification would be used to bring more lesbian-feminists into the anti-war effort. For lesbian-feminist audiences, these speeches constituted them as part of this anti-war coalition and gave them the necessary rhetorical tools to make themselves more visible on radical feminist terms. Alternatively, some arguments centralized sexuality to directly confront homophobia, invisibility, and exclusionary politics, especially with anti-war audiences. In each case, the argument cut both ways for anti-war and lesbian-feminist audiences: demonstrating how systems of power oppressed people in Vietnam and lesbian women and gay men in the United States—even within the anti-war movement.

The second section analyzes lesbian-feminist coalitional activism with gay men involved in gay liberation. In addition to the negotiation of identity in relation to gay liberation, lesbian-feminists advocated for coalition building specifically grounded in co-gender work. Because they shared sexual minority status with gay men, the primary move in this discourse was a pivot toward gender and the exposure of sexism within gay liberation activism. This pivotal strategy positioned lesbian-feminists to shift the conversation about the rhetoric of pride at the heart of gay liberation to one that centered feminism and sexuality. Because lesbian-feminists frequently joined gay men to commemorate the rebellion at the Stonewall Inn in 1969 with Christopher Street Liberation Day (CSLD) marches, rallies, and parades, they found a consistent opportunity to articulate that shift. As highly visible annual events, they had the potential to reach broader audiences than the local-level coalitions and communities around the country. They would simultaneously take the opportunity to amplify the gendered divisions that

plagued the gay movement. CSLD consequently became an annual flashpoint for co-gender activism and struggle.

As such, this section attends to the ongoing debate over working with gay men. Lesbian-feminists were thoroughly split over co-gender activism. Many argued passionately that activism with gay men was a futile exercise. Others emphasized the common oppression shared by gay men and lesbians as important grounding for coalitional struggle. Despite powerful critiques of sexism within gay liberation, many lesbian-feminists found in gay liberation a greater platform for visibility. This section considers lesbian-feminists' varied experiences and subsequent responses to pride festivals and local activism in order to unpack the benefits and struggles associated with co-gender efforts.

In each case, activists rhetorically crafted coalitional possibilities at an intersectional nexus, opening additional spaces for lesbian-feminists to enhance their own visibility through effective political partnerships. Lesbian-feminists used coalitional rhetoric to articulate the shared interests while also raising the consciousness of their respective audiences regarding gender discrimination and homophobic oppression. As such, much of the discourse addressed several audiences, including anti-war and gay movement members and the broader lesbian-feminist community.

Confronting Heterosexism: Lesbian-Feminists in the Anti-war Movement

Activism against the war in Vietnam and the use and development of nuclear weapon technology drove anti-war rhetoric in the 1970s. The U.S. anti-war movement offered one space where lesbian-feminists articulated coalitional relationships, particularly during the first half of the 1970s. Many activist groups came together to

protest the Vietnam War.⁵ The speeches and essays published in the lesbian-feminist periodicals reveal how lesbian-feminists, having participated in large- and small-scale anti-war demonstrations, envisioned their engagement with anti-war protests and made their arguments relevant to anti-war and lesbian-feminist audiences on local and national levels. In one local example, lesbian-feminist activists in the Seattle area protested the development of Trident missile technology by the Lockheed Martin Corporation in Seattle, Washington in the late 1970s.⁶ Though they protested the broader ideologies undergirding weapons technology, their efforts targeted the activities taking place near their community.

At some of the larger demonstrations that drew together activists from across the anti-war movement spectrum, lesbian-feminist speeches reflected the rhetorical strategies that characterized the broader anti-war movement. However, their speeches differed by centralizing gender in the movement's mission and articulating a feminist critique of the movement's exclusion of women. In some cases, the lesbian feminist activists also issued a critique of homophobic practices in the movement. Jeanne Córdova's 1972 speech to the Fifth Annual Anti-war Convention in Los Angeles offered a feminist and sexual analysis of war, delineating the numerous reasons lesbian-feminists should concern themselves with the anti-war cause.⁷ She and other lesbian-feminist activists used the rhetorical opportunities of coalition building to insist on their visibility and legitimacy and to directly confront the sexism and homophobia that plagued the New Left and the anti-war movement. Certainly, these activists were committed to the anti-war cause. Yet, they also had another mission in mind. For Córdova and other lesbian-feminists working with anti-war activists, the call for lesbian visibility functioned in two ways: to constitute

a lesbian-feminist presence within the anti-war movement and to make the anti-war movement another space by which to recalibrate and reify lesbian-feminist identity and political action.

Anti-war Movement Rhetoric

Rhetorical scholars have extensively examined the rhetorical strategies of anti-war movements in the United States; much attention has focused on the emergence of anti-war activism in response to the U.S. aggression in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s. Vietnam, according to J. Justin Gustainis, was the longest and arguably the most controversial war in the twentieth century. That controversy fed healthy prowar and anti-war rhetorics.⁸ In his analysis of anti-war rhetoric during the 1960s and 1970s, Gustainis identified several rhetorical strategies that connected activists across the spectrum of the Left—from the Catholic Ultra-resistance to the Students for a Democratic Society to the Weathermen. Across these cases, Gustainis notes how anti-war activists broadly supported nonviolence as a resistive protest strategy, articulated disdain for American government and corporations, and used strategies of paradox to call others to action.⁹ Paradox, according to Gustainis, is “a concept ‘containing at once features which, though contradictory, coexist’ . . . a way of linking two ideas that appear to be opposites.” In other words, “paradox takes mutually exclusive ideas and holds them together in dynamic tension.”¹⁰ He argues that by showing disconnects between ideals and reality, “the rhetoric of modern social movements lends itself to paradoxical worldview[s],” making it a successful way to call people to action.¹¹ Feminists used paradox to make a gendered critique of war, particularly when arguments for engaging in war were premised on

spreading democracy and ideals of equality.¹² Paradox also emerged as a strategy in lesbian-feminist anti-war arguments that critiqued homophobia.

Feminists have long attended to the gendered nature and consequences of war and challenged it as a masculinist project. Taking up war as a gendered phenomenon, some feminists have taken a maternalist perspective on antimilitarism and pacifism, constituting women as “naturally” maternal, nurturing, and peaceful.¹³ Sara Ruddick, for instance, calls the “feminist peace project” a “hybrid feminism . . . partly constituted by its antimilitarism and a commitment to developing nonviolent relationships.”¹⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, the group Women Strike for Peace (WSP), for example, took this approach to their anti-war and peace advocacy. Yet the limitations of their essentialist perspective on gender and peace manifested when a confrontation erupted between WSP and radical feminists when the latter disrupted a major anti-war protest organized by WSP in January 1968. The radical feminists, marching with the Jeannette Rankin Brigade, (named after the congresswoman who had cast the only vote in opposition to U.S. engagement in both World Wars), advocated an approach to anti-war activism that departed from a maternal approach.¹⁵ Yet even feminist involvement in anti-war activism demonstrated the differences of generations and perspectives. Many younger second-wave feminists had developed their own political consciousness while working with New Left organizations like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). As indicated in Chapter Two, it was frequently their experiences with intra-movement sexism in the civil rights movements that led many to leave for women’s liberation.¹⁶ These younger activists departed from maternal feminist anti-war arguments to make broader gender analyses of war.¹⁷ They

continued to work for anti-war causes despite the challenges they faced with sexism in such activist communities.

Lesbian-feminists' attempts to craft a coalitional relationship with anti-war activist communities were visible throughout their discourse. They fronted their opposition to the war. Yet, in the process, they also illuminated the troubling experiences with co-gender activism in the anti-war context. In some cases, lesbian-feminist rhetors made clear the extent to which sexism, homophobia, and exclusionary politics took place within such a broad-based and diverse movement. Their arguments, then, not only worked to raise the consciousness concerning the sexism and/or homophobia of their multiple audiences, but also helped to enact their visibility and legitimacy as coalitional partners. Utilizing their intersectional location as a platform from which they could pivot, they confronted sexist politics of exclusion and equipped lesbian-feminist audiences with anti-war arguments. Those arguments specifically attacked the patriarchal values that constituted the very basis for American engagement in foreign conflicts generally and domestic oppression of women, gays, and lesbians more specifically.¹⁸ As such, they also challenged anti-war audiences to at least consider a gendered analysis of war.

In the anti-war discourse that circulated through lesbian-feminist periodicals, rhetors typically took one of two approaches in making their arguments relevant to their diverse audiences. Some lesbian-feminists featured their gender identity, using the common experience of gender oppression as associated with and intensified by war. Such a pivot not only linked gender oppression in America and Vietnam, but it also united feminists' arguments with the anti-war effort.¹⁹ This approach sidestepped the link with homosexuality, focusing instead on the oppression of women domestically and

internationally as shared on the basis of patriarchal culture. Alternatively, lesbian-feminist rhetors taking a second approach privileged their intersectional identity as *lesbian* women to highlight sexuality and confront homophobia on two accounts—among war-makers and among members of the anti-war movement. This latter approach made visible the dual oppression of lesbians and called upon the anti-war movement to treat them as legitimate activists committed to a shared cause. Though both approaches capitalized on the nexus of gender and sexuality, pivoting to one or the other deepened and complicated the arguments at the heart of anti-war activism in divergent ways.

Pivoting Toward Gender

Over the first half of the decade, essays and speeches that circulated among lesbian-feminist periodicals articulated a connection between the domestic fight against gender and sexual oppression with the devastation occurring in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Some groups, including the Los Angeles-based Women and the War (WATW), were established out of a sense of the interconnectedness of oppression and a shared desire to fight on behalf of women. Likewise, a group of lesbian-feminists based in Boston used gendered analyses to critique *and* create coalitions with the anti-war movement in a speech delivered at a “large anti-war rally” in Boston on May 6, 1972, to a diverse anti-war movement audience that later circulated through lesbian-feminist periodicals.²⁰ They also tied the gender oppression in the United States with the struggle against the military actions in Vietnam, arguing that both were rooted in patriarchal values and culture. Though these appeals did not always explicitly link the oppression of women and *lesbians* with the brutalization of Vietnamese people, the use of feminist cultural critique augmented contemporary anti-war arguments.²¹ Their coalition-building

rhetoric made the case that working together to fight the U.S. intervention in Vietnam was necessary to the fight for human rights. The arguments proceeded in similar stages. The first stage included articulating domestic examples of patriarchal gender oppression.

To begin, both groups offered a feminist critique of gendered oppression in the United States. WATW argued that American women were oppressed by patriarchal values and cultural practices as evidenced by valuing “youth and beauty at all costs” and using those ideals to mold the beliefs and values of future generations.²² The Boston lesbian-feminists took a more radical approach by arguing that the U.S. rape culture fueled sexual violence and set the stage for the kind of sexual and militaristic violence taking place in Vietnam. They explained that while the analogy had been made before, it had never gone “far enough.”²³ Rape, they argued, was a “symptom of a male dominated culture, which feeds on the combination of sex and violence.”²⁴ Moreover, they refuted a pathological definition of rape perpetrated only by “abnormal or maladjusted men.” Instead, they implied that even “normal” men, by virtue of culture, were capable of perpetrating such horrific crimes. By centering their anti-war speech on the oppressive “politics of rape,” the Boston lesbian-feminists sought to connect the oppression of U.S. women with the experiences of Vietnamese people at the hands of the same men and institutions that were victims of Western culture. WATW and the Boston lesbian-feminists used similar domestic critiques to articulate a feminist argument against the war in Vietnam even though they focused on different features of patriarchal culture.

To motivate audience members to oppose the war in Vietnam along the lines of their feminist critique, both groups argued that patriarchy was behind the brutalization of Vietnamese people—especially women and children. They argued that the negative

consequences resulted from the same patriarchal cultural values that undergirded the U.S. military as an institution. To their feminist audience reading the Los Angeles-based periodical, *Sister*, WATW claimed that the brutality amounted to forcing Western cultural beliefs about gender, namely sexual objectification, on Vietnamese women. They argued that members of the military “impose[d] American standards on a people with an historic cultural identity.”²⁵ These “American standards” proved especially oppressive for women, they argued, because women were the ones poised to bring new generations into the same oppressive state. WATW maintained that the brutal cycle of the sexual exploitation—women ripped from their villages and forced into prostitution to support their families—would likely continue long into the future, ultimately impacting millions of children. It would continue, they implied, as long as troops were there to contribute to the sexual exploitation.

The Boston lesbian-feminists echoed this same line of argument, noting that the problem of rape culture in the United States had extended to Vietnam. They argued, “What starts as the socialization of male sexual violence in this culture is used by corporate and military interests to train a vicious, killing army”²⁶ Pointing to examples in training and on the battlefield where sex and violence were “inseparable,” they argued that such practices and values permeated the imperialistic foreign policy of the United States. Finally, they argued, because rape, as the symbolic expression of the white male hierarchy, was the ultimate violent act of our civilization, “no simple reforms” could eliminate it. Only a radical approach, they argued, had the potential to halt the oppressive patriarchal practices—an argument that tied the project of women’s liberation with the project of anti-war activism. Although they identified themselves as

lesbian-feminists, detailing the brutality in gendered terms elevated universal human rights over lesbian civil rights in these statements, creating additional grounds for lesbian-feminist audience members to join anti-war activities in the United States. In short, these arguments rhetorically nourished a “sisterhood” beyond the confines of lesbian-feminist activism and within the anti-war movement. Delivering their speech to an immediate audience of anti-war activists in Boston, they sought to raise the consciousness of audience members by introducing a radical feminist critique of war to the bevy of available anti-war arguments.

By extending the critique of patriarchy from the context of the United States to Vietnam, WATW and the Boston lesbian-feminists privileged gender rather than sexuality in calling their feminist and lesbian-feminist audiences to join in the anti-war activism.²⁷ They also made the case for working with co-gender movements as part of the broader project of attaining human rights for women and children caught in the brutal gears of military machinery. Their final strategy articulated the possibility of such coalitional and co-gendered activism, not only for the benefit of feminist or lesbian-feminist audiences, but also for the benefit of the anti-war movement.

For WATW and the Boston lesbian-feminists, the final argumentative move turned inward in a call to actively (and radically) intervene in patriarchal culture in the United States. WATW argued that because the oppressive experiences of American and Vietnamese women extended from the same cultural center— American patriarchal and sexist culture—the common ground was already tilled for women to protest against this shared oppressive system. Taking the long view beyond the immediate brutality plaguing women, WATW argued that war “threatens the lives of future generations,” by

inculcating them with the same violent, patriarchal values and literally killing the possibility of future generations through rape and gendered violence.²⁸ The solution, according to both the Boston lesbian-feminists and WATW, called for a shift in gender socialization. The Boston lesbian-feminists mapped the feminist critique of rape (and patriarchal culture) onto a critique of war (as a literal extension of that culture). By centering the gendered implications of war—a domestic war in the form of rape and an international war in Vietnam—WATW and Boston lesbian-feminists extended the reach of feminist activism into the realm of anti-war protest. A critique of these domestic oppressions necessarily pointed to domestic contexts—like the anti-war movement—as places where such intervention could occur. As such, their gendered critique could help strengthen the anti-war movement by broadening its reach to feminist audiences.

Both groups generally steered clear of heterosexism and homophobia.²⁹ Given the varying demographics of their audiences—lesbians, straight feminists, women and men of the anti-war movement—a focus on gender rather than sexuality helped meet an expedient purpose, bringing together activists around a new set of anti-war arguments rooted in a feminist critique of patriarchy. Calling upon American women to engage in anti-war activism, they also called upon anti-war activists to consider gender as a valid critique for their set of anti-war arguments. Yet, these arguments fell short of challenging the anti-war movement for its own sexist and homophobic practices. Other lesbian-feminists offered a similar critique of patriarchal culture and militarism. They argued that homophobia, in conjunction with sexism, was a cornerstone of militarism, which ironically plagued the *anti-war* movement.

Pivoting Toward Sexuality

Lesbian-feminist activists like Jeanne Córdova and anti-nuclear activists in Seattle pivoted toward sexuality to link the dual oppression of lesbians with oppression exemplified by the war. They articulated a coalitional relationship with the anti-war movement and deployed war discourse to make the fight against sexism and lesbian oppression visible to a new constituency. By doing so, they constituted lesbians as visible, legitimate, and even *ideal* anti-war activists in that coalitional relationship. Córdova capitalized on the productive place lesbian-feminists occupied as activists in the intersection by claiming that they were able to make anti-war arguments from a nuanced feminist and lesbian perspective. Because lesbian-feminists and gay men were already angry activists in their own liberation movement, Córdova argued, they could infuse new energy into the anti-war movement, if only anti-war activists would address their homophobia. Córdova's speech in particular stood apart from the above anti-war appeals that featured gender as a means of challenging patriarchal culture. Instead, she explicitly confronted the double standards at work in the arguments of anti-war movement activists by using a familiar rhetorical strategy: paradox. Linking the war in Vietnam and anti-war activists' supposed opposition to any *notion* of war, she bound anti-war activists to the position that oppression of lesbians and gay men within the anti-war movement was also wrong. In this way, she made homophobia visible, and crafted a common ground to sustain a coalitional relationship among lesbian-feminists, gay men, and anti-war activists.

Córdova used anti-war movement rhetoric and principles to make visible the homophobic and sexist oppression of gay men and lesbians, many of whom sought

inclusion in the anti-war movement. To rhetorically craft the coalitional relationship, Córdova created identification between anti-war activists and gay and lesbian activists with her diverse audience. Presumably following others who spoke out against the war in Vietnam at the large anti-war demonstration in Los Angeles, Córdova began, “I want to talk to you about another war. A war that is like Viet Nam, only not many people know about it, not many know where it’s being fought or what it’s all about.”³⁰ Córdova struck a slightly less strident tone to articulate the similarities between the war in Vietnam and the war facing gay men and lesbians in the United States. Waiting to reveal the nature of this “other war,” and appealing to her anti-war crowd, Córdova explained the similarities:

Its [sic] a lot like Viet Nam in that the aggressors, the war-makers, are the same.

The same adjectives have been applied to this war. It, too, has been called justifiable, a necessary evil. This war, also, is a war supposedly based on the principles of the common good, but really based on the preservation of an economic system.³¹

Córdova added that the wars shared rhetorical justifications: “based on rhetoric and illusions about concepts like democracy and human equality and humanity. Concepts that have been perverted by the war-makers as they try to justify their imperialism and inhumanity.”³² Working with paradox, a central feature of anti-war discourse, she couched homophobia and the domestic oppression of gay men and lesbians in the language of war. This move allowed her to position anti-war activist audience members in a paradoxical position with their own treatment of gay men and lesbians, confronting their own war-making behaviors.

This strategy worked in three ways. First, she characterized the fight against homophobic oppression as a war in which anti-war activists should be thoroughly invested. Second, she articulated the severity of the oppression she and her fellow lesbians and gay men faced in extreme terms associated with war. Finally, she showed the common ground—and coalitional space—shared among gay men, lesbians, and anti-war activists. In particular, once she revealed the specifics of this “other war,” she forced anti-war activists to confront their own role as “war-makers” and the moral dilemma associated with such a position. Córdova articulated the possibilities of coalition by positioning lesbians and gay men as important allies for the anti-war movement. She stated:

I am here tonight to speak about war. The war that I, as a gay woman face every day of my life, and the war in which so many Vietnamese and American people have faced the last days of their lives. These are the SAME wars. Fought on different battlegrounds, camouflage[d] with different illusions and myths, but perpetuated by the same principles.³³

Uniting the oppression facing gay men and lesbians in the United States with that experienced by the Vietnamese, Córdova not only called upon the anti-war movement to fight the Viet Cong and the U.S. military *and* the homophobia internally plaguing the anti-war movement. Córdova drew parallels to the oppression of gay men and lesbians around the world. She argued: “For thousands of years, governments of the world, be they pagan, feudalist, monarchist, capitalist, communist, or socialist, have oppressed gays.”³⁴ As such, she referenced both prowar and anti-war arguments that made claims based on opposition to a particular kind of government—prowar arguments that held that

war was necessary to halt the expansion of communism and anti-war arguments that blamed particular kinds of governments (i.e., capitalist or communist) for such war-making.³⁵

In her speech, Córdova noted how gay men and lesbians had consistently engaged with anti-war activists in fighting against the war, whether they did so visibly or not. Just as consistently, she noted, they experienced exclusionary practices by other members of the anti-war movement. Pivoting toward sexuality, she critiqued the exclusionary practices and inter-movement oppression of gay liberation activists in the process. Part of her pivot to emphasize sexual oppression drew from feminist critiques of patriarchal cultural values that impacted women and men and the same ones that undergirded militarism and war. Rather than emphasizing women as the only victims of patriarchal values, she argued that sexism “legislates, condones and encourages military officers to call their men cowards, sissies, faggots” She pointed out while conscientious objectors “refuse to take up arms against their fellow human beings,” sexism continued to do the work of “legislat[ing], condon[ing] and encourag[ing] our civilian defense squad.” Córdova argued that the same squad was responsible for “entrap[ping], beat[ing], degrad[ing], and imprison[ing] homosexual women and men. . . .”³⁶ Detailing the ways sexism demeaned, degraded, and harmed men in the military, in the ranks of anti-war activists, and the gay community, Córdova linked those men together at the hands of their common oppression. Such a move had the potential to raise consciousness about the co-gender possibilities associated with feminism, and it specifically tethered feminist anti-war arguments with domestic efforts to address homophobia.

By emphasizing sexuality, Córdova articulated what the possibilities of creating coalition with gay liberation would look like to the primarily anti-war activist audience. By framing the fight against homophobia in a discourse of war, she set up the rest of her speech to outline the multiple ways gay men and lesbians experienced oppression. She highlighted not only the oppression from dominant institutions, but also from *within* political and social movement contexts. Córdova confirmed that gay men and lesbians had participated in anti-war activism—“in demonstrations and contingents” during 1971 and 1972. Yet because their presence was met with exclusionary practices, Córdova argued, “We will no longer do the same shit work, or speak on the same platform . . . [or] not be recognized at all for who we are.” Córdova then issued an ultimatum dependent on a coalitional relationship that allowed gay men and lesbians to retain their own activist identities. She stipulated: “We will work together [with the anti-war movement], but under our own banner.”³⁷ By emphasizing the retention of their identity politics through coalitional activism, Córdova articulated a both/and strategy that could address gay and lesbian oppression in the United States more broadly and within anti-war activism more specifically.

When not faced with outright dismissal by anti-war activists, Córdova argued, gay men and lesbians were merely tolerated or included as tokens. To support this argument, she pointed to the tokenism gay men and lesbians experienced at the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami, an event that featured the failure to include a gay rights plank within the Democratic Party platform. Calling the experience in Miami an example of “token pats on the head,” Córdova rejected the expediency of “pre-election and pre-candidacy kind words” that denied the extent of the “war” against gay men and

lesbians.³⁸ By articulating these arguments against the members of the Democratic Party who chose to uphold tokenistic treatment of gay men and lesbians, Córdova issued a warning to her anti-war activist audience to avoid making the same mistake. Returning to her use of war discourse, she warned, “All of us, like the Vietnamese people, are in a war, and those who do not take up our banners, openly without deception, those people are our enemies. . . and YOUR enemies. . . despite their rhetoric.”³⁹ Positioning gay men and lesbians in alignment with the anti-war movement and as powerful possible activists for the common cause, Córdova articulated the need for coalition formation. Failure to recognize the benefits of working together in a manner that went beyond tokenism, implied a weakening of the anti-war movement as gay men and lesbians moved on to greener pastures.

Córdova maintained that the anti-war movement would benefit from the presence and energy of gay men and lesbians. “Three years ago,” she explained, “gay people called [sexism] wrong, and the Gay Liberation Movement was born. Today, we are one of the strongest and one of the angriest among oppressed peoples in this country.”⁴⁰ Such anger, she argued, would make for an especially strong coalitional relationship. As Córdova acknowledged the *presence* of lesbians and gay men, she also shed light on the homophobia and exclusionary practices they faced within the anti-war movement itself: “We come to you and we come to our oppressors (and to those of you who may be both!) as angry, strong, and proud GAY women and men.”⁴¹ Coalitions were tenuous, yet offered the crucial possibilities for gay men and lesbians to collectively fight homophobia and oppression in partnership with other U.S. social movements.

For Córdova, like the Boston lesbian-feminists, anti-war activists and lesbian-feminists shared a problem linked to psychology and the arguments supporting war and its atrocities. To set up her pivot toward sexuality, she first critiqued the ideology that undergirded war in Vietnam as it supported the patriarchal system of gender oppression in the United States. This shared ideological grounding offered a unique means of speaking to two seemingly separate experiences of oppression—confronting gay women and men in the United States and the war-torn people of Vietnam. For her, linking these oppressions and rooting them in the same ideological location was a way of tying gay liberation and lesbian-feminist activism with the work being done in the anti-war movement. Yet her strategy to align the oppressions pointed toward another goal—eradicating the oppression against gay men and women involved in anti-war activism. In this way, Córdova sought to align the sexism of war mongering with the sexism of anti-war activists in order to call the latter on the carpet for their oppressive behavior and/or discrimination against gay liberation or gay men and lesbians.

Activists who took up anti-war activism later in the decade after the end of the Vietnam War protested war technology by similarly emphasizing the link between homophobia and sexism. In Seattle in the late 1970s, lesbian-feminists banded together with many other local activist groups to protest Lockheed Martin and the development of the Trident submarine-launched ballistic missile. One of the key events took place on May 22, 1978, at a rally on a local farm near Olympia, Washington and included a march to the Bangor Trident Naval Base.⁴² Many of the arguments they made aligned with feminist critiques of war, patriarchal oppression, and homophobia. Members of the Olympia (WA) Lesbian Caucus wrote that Trident constituted “an embodiment of many

kinds of dominance.”⁴³ Linking gender oppression, sexual oppression, and environmentalism, they argued that military technology was “part of the destruction of the environment for profit and through warfare . . . part of a military system that oppresses people all over the world to maintain profits for a U.S. based corporation (Lockheed).” Extending a similar argument the Boston lesbian-feminists articulated years earlier, the Olympia Lesbian Caucus maintained that Trident was “a weapon that works side by side with rape of women as a U.S. War strategy and the U.S. financed sterilization of women to control the population and hold off revolution.”⁴⁴ Because Trident nuclear missile technology embodied such a wide-reaching form of dominance, the Olympia Lesbian Caucus, among others, made a case for why *lesbians* should be concerned and active in fighting such weaponry. They maintained that lesbian-feminists should work with a broad coalition of people and groups in order to strengthen their resistance. First, the Caucus argued, “Being lesbian, politically applied, means fighting on many fronts . . . Lesbianism challenges many attitudes and institutions in our society . . . Being lesbian is refusing to be violated. It involves valuing oneself, valuing women, [and] questioning male supremacy.”⁴⁵ This first argument politicized their lesbian identity in a way that uniquely challenged gender and sexual oppression and violence. Indeed their “lives as lesbians have brought us to question this [hierarchical] ideology.” For the Caucus members, that ethic of questioning supremacy and dominance animated their resistance to Trident technology and nourished their connections with other oppressed groups.⁴⁶

Second, the Caucus explained that building what was called the “May 22 Coalition,” not only provided shared ideological resistance to war, it also created sizable

numbers with which to confront the establishment. They argued, “To resist and change large institutions like Trident and the military/industrial complex, we must form large, diverse coalitions. Very few people stand to gain from Trident. We have to stop allowing the system to split us.”⁴⁷ Yet their discourse illuminated the cracks in the coalition along sexist and homophobic lines. Even within the coalition fighting against the missile technology, they maintained that lesbians were discouraged from participating *visibly* in the protest. “Despite the attempts of the May 22 Coalition” to discourage lesbian presence, they reported, “we were there anyway—nearly 200 strong, with [three] banners, a lit table, a speaker, a grand finale dyke rendition of ‘Still Ain’t Satisfied,’ and [two] lesbians arrested for civil disobedience.”⁴⁸ When one lesbian-feminist activist by the name of BettyJohanna spoke before the crowd of thousands at the May 22 rally against Trident, she argued about the linkages between homophobia and the oppression symbolized by the missile system.⁴⁹

Like Córdova years earlier, BettyJohanna used the very arguments that bound the coalition against weapons technology like Trident as a means of attacking their homophobia and exclusionary politics. For her, “patriarchy” linked lesbians’ “oppression as womyn, as lesbians and the oppression of Trident.”⁵⁰ It linked these oppressions as the ideology that “supports the violence of Trident and the violence against womyn and children.” Characterizing Trident as a “monster” much like the monster of homophobia, she argued for the intersection of those oppressions so that “to perpetuate the existence of one monster while trying to stop another is a contradiction in all of us that must cease.” Using her experience of homophobia within the organization behind the rally, she called upon “All lesbians and women who appreciate the need for solidarity with other womyn

and children . . . to join us under the banner, “Womyn Who Love Womyn Love Life— Stop Trident.”⁵¹ In this example of anti-war discourse, a gendered critique was extended to illuminate the homophobia of the opposition and of the anti-war coalition itself.

The anti-war discourse that circulated in lesbian-feminist periodicals made the case for co-gender coalitional activism as a way to launch a feminist critique of war and nuclear technology that simultaneously emphasized the connection to homophobia. The coalitional location offered a productive opportunity to make these arguments against dominant or establishment forces while also critiquing the internal oppression that took place within anti-war movements, a strategy that emerged throughout the decade. While some lesbian-feminists pivoted exclusively toward gender to call lesbian-feminists and co-gender anti-war activists to action on the basis of a feminist critique of war, others like Córdova, BettyJohanna, and the Olympia Lesbian Caucus explicitly named the troubling linkages between sexism and homophobia that limited the power of the anti-war movement itself.⁵² Their rhetoric about the anti-war movement demonstrated the utility of the pivotal strategy in articulating a gender and sexuality-based set of arguments to critique a social movement built upon a broader reaching set of concerns.

Analyzing the anti-war discourse by lesbian-feminists reveals very vocal radical, *non-separatist* lesbian-feminist communities and confirms their deep commitments to the connections among oppressions. In contrast with separatism’s vanguard impulse associated with identity politics, lesbian-feminist anti-war rhetoric confirmed the radical possibilities of coalitional relationships that they crafted outside of women’s liberation and gay liberation. By articulating the need for lesbian-feminists to concern themselves with the anti-war movement, they also spoke to the productive potential of the coalitional

relationship—for lesbians to increase their visibility and to leverage the crucial feminist arguments against war in a non-feminist movement space. The coalitional relationship did not usurp the importance of identity. For Córdova especially, she refused to cede any ground regarding the importance of lesbian-feminist identity to the anti-war work. This dual impulse animated another coalitional relationship, one more closely aligned with their own identity: gay liberation.

Confronting Sexism and Building Coalition with Gay Men: Pride and Local Activism

One coalitional relationship that ignited significant debate within lesbian-feminist communities dealt with the question of working with gay men as a means of achieving liberation. The minority sexual identity status shared between gay men and lesbians provided fruitful ground for them to develop a coalitional relationship. As such, lesbian-feminists entered the debate in two ways. First, lesbian-feminist rhetoric that featured *sexual identity* ultimately centralized common ground and coalitional practice. By centralizing shared oppression with gay men, lesbian-feminists recalibrated their activist identity vis-à-vis this coalitional partnership, drew upon the power of visible numerical presence within the gay-lesbian community, and supported a national level of advocacy within the gay movement. Many used their activist activities with gay liberation as a platform for greater lesbian-feminist visibility on their own terms. Those lesbian-feminists who opted for the second mode of activism featured *gender* in order to confront the sexism and exclusionary politics that still troubled the gay movement. For gay male audiences, the lesbian-feminist rhetoric spotlighting gender also articulated a feminist critique of power, demanded visibility of lesbians as gay liberation activists, and explicitly threatened to undermine the rhetorical armor of unity through “pride.” For

lesbian-feminist audiences, such feminist critiques affirmed their frustrating experiences, confirmed their legitimacy in the gay liberation movement, and, at times, positioned them as politically *superior* to gay men, especially when it came to large-scale demonstrations. From this perspective, lesbians constituted themselves as the more “politicized” and militant members of the movement. Indeed, the coalition with gay liberation gave them a broader platform and resources for radicalized politics by enhancing a visibility with which to challenge homophobic and sexist society.

On the other hand, the coalitional relationship also offered lesbian-feminists an opportunity to advance a conservative, reformist approach to gay and lesbian rights. Some lesbian-feminists moderated their gendered critique of gay liberation by pivoting back toward sexuality for lesbian-feminist audiences. In these cases, they referenced common oppression of homophobia (and sometimes gender) in order to maintain the productive, albeit tense, coalitional partnership and mitigate a separatist impulse. This mode of recalibration allowed conservative lesbian-feminists to articulate a gendered critique by identifying the common challenges facing gay men and lesbians and using that relationship as a means of elevating lesbian-feminist identity politics tempered with coalitional appeals. In short, the coalition with gay men was used to amplify both radical and conservative lesbian-feminist activism, each group recalibrating lesbian-feminist identity in relation to the gay liberation movement.

This section takes up lesbian-feminist debates about coalitional work with gay men by contrasting annual pride festivals with smaller local efforts. First, gay men and lesbians took the opportunity to annually demonstrate the large-scale visibility of their collective gay movement in the events that would become commonly known simply as

“pride.” Debates about the meaning of pride, especially for lesbians and lesbian-feminists participating in gay pride, took place throughout the decade. Co-gender coalitions were more difficult to sustain in the context of large-scale demonstrations of unity and visibility. By engaging in a gendered critique, lesbian-feminists challenged the mythos of unity undergirding gay liberation’s rhetoric of pride. The mythos of unity crystallized in the events that developed around the watershed moment that, for many, kicked off the new spirit of gay liberation: Stonewall. Yet that mythos unfortunately obscured the persistent oppression *within* gay liberation along the lines of gender, race, and class in an effort to demonstrate large-scale visibility. Still, many lesbian-feminists were invested in working together with gay men despite the challenges, especially on a local level. Indeed, coalition politics became increasingly necessary as the decade wore on and the right wing oppositional backlash intensified. In all cases, coalitional work involved rhetorical battles for visibility, credibility, and legitimacy among lesbian-feminists, which they waged on a larger symbolic scale during pride. Analyzing their discourse elucidates the tension between gender and sexuality and identity and coalition as lesbian-feminists struggled with sexism in the context of gay movement activism.

Celebration or Demonstration? Unpacking Lesbian-Feminist Perspectives on Pride

In the months and years following Stonewall, commemorative events tried to tap into the energy that exploded during the rebellion at the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village (on Christopher Street). Marches, parades, and eventually gay pride festivals offered a space to articulate the rhetoric of liberation and power and enact the unity many activists desired. On the West coast, these events were initially known as Christopher Street West (CSW).⁵³ Early on, established homophile organizations lauded

the increased visibility that accompanied such events. In fact, the earlier homophile movement laid much of the groundwork for coalition building among gay men and lesbians in the 1970s. Coalition building and co-gender work among activists in the earlier homophile/gay rights movement in the years before Stonewall became increasingly tense as lesbians vocally critiqued sexism within the gay movement.⁵⁴

Christopher Street Liberation Day (eventually known as gay pride) offered an annual platform to re-articulate the goals and arguments of the gay liberation movement and enact the solidarity of the gay community in line with those goals. The events emphasized unity, strength, pride, and self-determination as a means of affirming selfhood, identity, and community in the face of considerable opposition.⁵⁵ The rhetoric of pride itself relied on visibility and the collaboration of movement members. In short, pride was about bringing together greater numbers of gay and lesbian people, educating straight society, helping gay and lesbian community members struggling with their identity, and raising the consciousness of all regarding the homophobic policies in place at local, state, and national levels of policy.

A lack of consensus persisted over whether to define it as a protest/rally or a festival/parade. It was, first and foremost, a commemorative event. Even the earliest conversations within the Gay Liberation Front featured debates over whether a vigil, rally, or a parade would best suit the occasion.⁵⁶ In advance of the year anniversary of the rebellion at Stonewall, members of the Homophile Action League (HAL) raised funds for the event they called a “Gay-In” in honor of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day on Sunday, June 26, 1970.⁵⁷ Making their pitch, they explained, “the Christopher Street Riots of 1969 were the beginning of a new spirit among Gay men and women of *pride*,

militancy, affirmation, and solidarity. We march this year to celebrate that spirit. . . We need money—lots of it—to coordinate and publicize this greatest Gay event ever.”⁵⁸ In short, they defined the event as a celebration of the *spirit* shared by gay men and lesbians. This kind of definition contrasted with a press release announcing the 1976 CSLD events. The CSLD planning committee asked participants to “join with us to demand with pride the rights of 20 million American adults,” to collectively make “demands for passage of gay civil rights legislation and repeal of sodomy statutes.”⁵⁹ Here, the emphasis on the political demands is centralized, and “pride” is the mode of making them. Constituting the annual march in this way foregrounded the political purpose of the event. By using “pride” in this way, the committee’s announcement managed the tension between celebrating the “spirit” of pride and demonstrating the sources of oppression facing the broader gay and lesbian community.

Barbara Gittings captured all of the key themes associated with pride in her 1973 speech before the mixed-gender crowd at the Fourth Annual CSLD March in New York City’s Washington Square. Gittings was a lesbian-feminist member of HAL in Philadelphia and Daughters of Bilitis, and she articulated the possibilities of working in coalition with gay men during this speech.⁶⁰ She drew upon her lengthy experience of working with gay men in the homophile movement and, using language associated with women’s liberation, called the march “the greatest consciousness-raising event in gay history.”⁶¹ Amplifying the success of the new liberation strategy, Gittings contrasted CSLD with the earlier days when members of the future gay movement were just “waking ourselves up.” Those days, characterized by fears of arrest and coming out, contrasted sharply with the multitude openly marching in the streets as part of the gay

liberation demonstration in New York. This multitude confirmed the large numbers of gay and lesbian people and the “show of strength” in evidence at the march, solidifying the “unity and diversity” of the movement.⁶² For gay men and lesbians, enacting such unity could inspire “thousands of gay people to take off their masks,” thereby increasing the movement's numbers. For straight audiences, it asserted a rhetoric of presence, of sheer numbers, an important statement associated with gay liberation rhetoric.

Gittings’ speech featured sexuality as the common ground that united lesbians and gay men. Her message of co-gender unity hinged on a common identity shared by gay men and lesbians, what she called “the truth of gay,” despite the widely different “styles” or “ways” of living or enacting this “truth.” For her, this message affirmed the diversity within the gay community and benefitted gay people themselves. Yet it also targeted straight society by reminding them that “we still have a long way to go to be a country of equal opportunity and full justice.”⁶³ Extending good will to those present and absent, Gittings said, “Hang in there, people! Those of us who are out are oiling the closet door hinges as fast as we can!”⁶⁴ In this way, Gittings’ rhetoric encouraged her audience members to support arguments for equal rights while avoiding the limitations of internal division.⁶⁵ By featuring the common denominator that gay men and lesbians shared— institutional and internalized heterosexism—Gittings tapped into the unity at the heart of pride’s symbolism. She attended to the commemorative features of the event, celebrated the liberation ethic, and argued for continued political advocacy. Notably missing from Gittings’ remarks was an indictment of the gender politics continually threatening to rend the gay movement from within.⁶⁶

Although Gittings remarks exuded positivity about collaborative activism, many lesbian-feminists viewed pride as a complicated and even contradictory event. On the one hand, it celebrated identity, community, and unity, which supported a politicized, militant, liberation ethic. On the other hand, for some lesbian-feminists, the celebration of pride (in practice) seemed to depoliticize or de-radicalize the politics of pride (in theory). Moreover, sexism and exclusionary practices undermined the enactment of unity and diminished the significance of pride for lesbian-feminists. Thus, a definitional struggle over pride pressured the tenuous coalitional relationship shared by gay men and lesbian-feminists.

Politicizing Pride through Gender

For lesbian-feminists, pride offered a chance to gain visibility and demonstrate their presence within the gay liberation movement. Yet for many, pride meant visibility on gay men's terms. As such, some pivoted to feature gender and articulate a feminist critique of sexism to call for a more inclusive enactment of gay liberation at pride events.⁶⁷ Acknowledging the purpose of pride, Sara Thompson noted in *Lavender Woman* in 1973, "Gay Pride Week, specifically the Gay Pride Parade, is supposed to be a call for solidarity, a call for unity between gay men and lesbians."⁶⁸ But, in pointing to the divisions, she insisted, "unity can only exist between people who have a common purpose, between those who have a love and a respect for each other that will help keep them strong and that will work to help eliminate the exploitation of each other."⁶⁹ Thompson's critique reveals, in part, the perennial tension at the root of pride celebration and demonstration: a struggle over definition that reflected the different standpoints and

experiences of lesbian-feminists and gay men. Such differences exacerbated the difficult coalitional relationship.

Lesbian-feminists recognized that visibility constituted the fulcrum of gay liberation politics. Yet as Rita Goldberger, writing in the *Lesbian Tide* in June, 1974 argued, “Christopher Street Day . . . has long been male-dominated.”⁷⁰ They argued that because visibility—directed at broader audiences as well as gay men and lesbians themselves—revolved around gay male sexual sensibilities, it made lesbian participation less visible. It also made their participation in future events less likely. For example, Jeanne Córdova argued that “Emotionally, I so totally identify with women that it’s hard to feel a part of Christopher Street West parades.”⁷¹ Though the annual event may have been intended to make “everyone” in the gay community visible, it did not always support an inclusive ethic.⁷² Further, lesbian-feminists lamented the lack of political protest they witnessed at Christopher Street Liberation festivals and parades.⁷³ In response, lesbian-feminists fought for visibility on their own terms as they talked about, planned, and participated in pride. Doing so, they positioned themselves as vanguards: more politicized and more radical.

Because of past exclusions, lesbian-feminists sought to make their voices heard in the planning and execution phases of pride events.⁷⁴ Lesbians were frequently excluded from the planning process, particularly in the early Christopher Street Liberation Days. This exclusion was evidence of the distance between gay men and lesbians even after Stonewall. Given such distance, the stakes were high for lesbians who battled with gay men for a voice in the planning process and for a say in defining the purpose and tone of the events. Documents from the planning committee for the first annual Christopher

Street Liberation Day protest and celebration detailed this struggle. Questions about respectability and gender became salient as activists struggled over whether to define the event as an expression of pride *or* a demonstration in protest against persistent discrimination.⁷⁵

Lesbian-feminists used the discrimination in the planning process to motivate women to participate—if not for themselves, at least for other lesbian-feminists. Córdova argued that to not participate “would be to deny our existence to the world and to all our gay sisters out there who are looking for some kind of sign.”⁷⁶ Though Rita Goldberger confirmed that the participation of women at the 1971 CSW parade in Los Angeles far exceeded the previous year’s event,⁷⁷ Jeanne Córdova explained that women who “stayed away from the parade” at the 1971 CSW event likely did so because it was “marked by a feeling on the part of women of male dominance.”⁷⁸ In contrast, she noted a “large assembly of women” who had gathered before the start of the 1972 parade. One participant in the 1972 CSW events explained the enhanced efforts that went into addressing the dearth of women in the initial parade. In 1972, for example, she explained that “women played a key role in planning the whole demonstration today and organizationally in terms of getting the publicity out.” Those who participated “leafleted a lot more women’s bars and women’s organizations and gay women’s groups.”⁷⁹ Their increased involvement supported arguments where lesbians claimed responsibility for turning these celebratory parades into politicized marches.

Making lesbians and lesbian-feminists visible at this annual event targeted straight audiences, gay men, and lesbians themselves. As such, Córdova and others used the *increasing* presence of women to demonstrate their shift from an auxiliary to co-equal

relationship with gay men. One linguistic move confirmed this shift and the organizational power of the Los Angeles lesbian-feminist community. References to lesbians as “auxiliary” rendered them more supplemental and dependent on the gay (male) movement. As such, Córdova dismissed the old “auxiliary” language and pointed to “the heavy and influential participation of lesbians” at the CSW parade.⁸⁰ She argued that lesbian-feminists’ role in the event proved “that women, feminist, radical and conservative, played a major, rather than auxiliary role in a major gay event.”⁸¹ She and other observers interpreted the event as a successful political demonstration that mobilized a visible lesbian *contingent*.⁸² The use of “contingent” affirmed lesbians and lesbian-feminists as a cohesive unit despite differences in political ideology (i.e., “radical and conservative”) and engaged in a co-gender coalitional relationship with gay men. In short, lesbian participation meant something more than sheer numbers.

Pointing to the increased cohesive participation of lesbians in pride events, many like Córdova argued they shifted the *purpose* of the event itself—from celebration and a “festive spirit” to one of “mass militant demonstration with demands.” She explicitly connected that shift to the increased lesbian presence.⁸³ Because lesbian-feminist participation ascribed a politicized tone to the event, observers argued the converse was also true; a *lack* of lesbians contributed to a depoliticized celebratory spirit associated with a parade (versus a march). One lesbian participant in 1972 confirmed Córdova’s argument about a shift in tone as a result of the increased number of participating lesbians: “I was just noticing the difference from last year. Most of the people seem to be on foot [rather than on decorated floats], there’s a hell of a lot more women, five or six times more women...”⁸⁴ Writing about the “pride parade” (note the shift away from

“CSW”) in 1974, Goldberger argued that the lesbians leading the Los Angeles pride parade intended to “start it off with a serious approach to the gay movement.”⁸⁵

Using militaristic language to affirm their collective power, lesbian-feminists positioned themselves as central to turning the parade into a moment for *political* visibility and an enactment of citizenship. The coverage in the lesbian-feminist periodicals affirmed the experiences of readers who may (or may not) have attended the event and the productive possibilities associated with political activity even at events typically dominated by gay men. It confronted the negative treatment by gay men directly and turned pride into something more than what lesbian-feminists thought was possible. Even Goldberger’s description of the lesbian presence at the 1971 parade included “two cars, our own float, an army of women preceding us and an army of women following.” As Goldberger boasted, “That’s Progress (sic). . . Talk about working together.”⁸⁶ Like Córdova’s “contingent,” Goldberger’s use of militarized language of “an army of women” constituted the lesbian presence through their strength, visibility, and radical political message designed to capture the “serious tone” so necessary for Christopher Street West. Though the use of militarized language lacked reflexivity, especially in the context of concurrent anti-war activism, such language captured a sense of formidable strength and impact associated with the sheer numbers of activists in the lesbian-feminist community. It lent rhetorical freight to the declaration of statistical or numerical presence.

Lesbian-feminist efforts to politicize and capitalize on pride by making it their own (some suggested renaming it “Christine Street”) demonstrated the possibilities of using the annual event to forward lesbian political goals. In particular, Córdova and

others' feminist assessments of pride modeled how lesbian-feminists could enhance their politicized visibility. Yet even in critique these proved to be some of the more hopeful and positive assessments of pride. Just as some lesbian-feminists carved out a politically viable and productive space in conjunction with gay men at Christopher Street and pride events, there were still many who questioned the utility or value of such coalition building.

Articulating a Feminist Critique of Pride: Coalitional Fissures

Many lesbian-feminists questioned whether the benefits of political visibility as a result of participation in pride were worth the trouble. Struggles with sexism, drag, and differing perspectives on the goals of the broader movement continually challenged the relationship between gay men and lesbian women throughout the decade. They put their critique of pride into practice in various ways. They held counter-rallies and woman-only events and even boycotted the festival. Goldberger explained, "Women from around the country have often boycotted Christopher Street events because of the sexism."⁸⁷ When those who did attend wrote about their experiences, they featured gender and a feminist critique to reveal the real *lack* of unity in practice that persisted in spite of the rhetoric of unity.

Lesbians who attended pride events with the hopes of demonstrating the *potential* of unity subsequent to lesbian coalitions with gay men encountered sexist treatment. At times, despite their inclusion in the planning phases, the negative treatment they faced at the co-gender events necessitated a physical separation from "official" pride festivities. One women-only event was organized nearly overnight in New York. According to Karla Jay, a lesbian-feminist member of the Gay Liberation Front, once the CSLD march made

it to Central Park in New York City, “most of the women separated from the men and held a separate all-women rally in another part of the park.”⁸⁸ Published and re-printed articles documented similar sexist abuse of lesbians during the CSW parade in San Francisco in 1972.⁸⁹ For them, hosting separate woman-only events was a way for lesbian-feminists to be present at pride while protesting their exclusion.

CSW and CSLD events included women, though when lesbian-feminists addressed lesbian issues at the co-gender events they were often “booed by the men” and otherwise dismissed. Jean O’Leary, a member of the Lesbian Feminist Liberation and the Gay Activists Alliance in New York City, experienced such vocal dismissal at a 1974 CSLD event in New York City, especially as she critiqued cross-dressing, transvestites, and gay men using drag for entertainment and profit.⁹⁰ Because of such treatment, lesbians asked the scheduled female speakers for the “male rally,” including Kate Millett, Barbara Love, and Jean O’Leary, not to participate as an act of counterprotest.⁹¹ Coverage in the lesbian-feminist press of the blatant attempts to quell the voice of lesbians at gay liberation events motivated the continued appeal for action on the part of the readership. These kinds of actions surrounding such early marches in commemoration of Stonewall indicate the gendered division of participation, despite the attempts to include lesbians in the planning process or on the speaking roster.

Others went beyond highlighting the sexist treatment of women at pride parades to critique one of the most visible performances at pride—drag queens. They argued such performances directly clashed with their visions of unity at gay pride events. Sara Thompson, writing for Chicago’s *Lavender Woman*, noted that Gay Pride Week was built upon “a call for solidarity [and] a call for unity between gay men and lesbians.”⁹² The

central disconnect for Thompson was the sexism that inhered in the camp performances by drag queens.⁹³ To her, unity was virtually impossible as long as drag performers and audience members “publicly mock and display their hatred of women.” Thomas expressed disgust with the reductive presentation of women through the “costume of high-heels, wigs, falsies [lashes], and make-up.” She charged that such performances were insulting and mocked the “tools” that “women use to survive” in sexist society. Thompson’s analogical argument linked drag with blackface minstrelsy that fueled demeaning stereotypes and presented black identities in caricature throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Because straight people (and other gay men) were entertained and amused by drag performances, Thompson refuted arguments that supported drag’s radical political possibilities. Her critique was similar to the way lesbian-feminists dismissed role-playing dykes or gender-nonconforming lesbians.⁹⁴ Critiques like Thompson’s interpreted camp as expressions of gay men “show[ing] much contempt for me [and] my sisters.”⁹⁵

Supporters of drag performances maintained the radical political possibilities of drag. Thompson, however, contended that radical gay activism meant subverting the roles associated with *masculinity* rather than parodying femininity. The argument about the radical possibilities of drag rested on the assumption that “gay men are supposedly infuriating straight society by not accepting male roles.” Yet, she noted, straight audiences were *entertained* rather than challenged by the ridiculous presentation of femininity.⁹⁶ Men in drag were merely “playing” rather than “dealing, with their oppression and our oppression” by offering the “image straights want to see them [in].”⁹⁷ Furthermore, Thompson suggested that gay men should march in Gay Pride either “naked

or in a football uniform” because “no man has given up his male privileges/roles by dressing in drag.”⁹⁸ For her, drag performances did not challenge straight society; they played into the gendered prejudice that straight society harbored against gay men. Within a co-gender gay rights movement, drag only increased the divide with lesbian women. In short, drag was not radical because it *evidenced* the pervasiveness and oppression of heterosexism. Ironically, it was a shared experience that could have fueled unity between gay men and lesbian-feminists. Instead, the practice was grounds to challenge co-gender activism, because, as Thompson argued, the purpose of the liberation movement was not “a game or an attempt to make this world ‘happy,’” but rather the “destruction of [the] system,” which allowed for such performances to take place.⁹⁹ Thompson’s thorough refutation of drag performances by gay men affirmed the lesbian-feminist political critique of dominant society and the internal evaluation of their supposed allies in the gay liberation movement. It also called into question the terms on which their increased visibility at pride was attained.

Lesbian-feminists called upon one another to engage in pride festivities to capitalize upon the opportunity for large-scale visibility and political demonstration. Pride also represented an annual opportunity to fulfill the promises of unity and solidarity in coalition with gay men. Many lesbians took that opportunity, viewing their participation as necessary to ensure the radical politics were maintained. Yet sexist treatment by gay men—in the planning process, at the parades, and at the podium—was enough to necessitate women-only alternative events or to persuade some women to stay away altogether. Centralizing a feminist critique not only sought to make sexism visible, but it also disrupted the rhetoric of unity and solidarity at the heart of pride. While pride

offered a consistent opportunity to enhance their prominence, many lesbian-feminists questioned the terms on which they attained it. Still, pride offered a huge perennial platform from which lesbian-feminists could bolster their credibility and visibility as part of the gay liberation movement.

Beyond Pride: Sexism and Local Activism

Thompson was not alone in shying away from co-gender coalitional activism, and the debates about co-gender work carried over into local efforts with gay men. Some lesbian-feminists commented at length on the reasons against working with gay men. The members of the Chicago Gay Women's Caucus, for example, broke away from the Chicago Gay Alliance in 1971. In their statement announcing the separation, the members of the caucus cited their "final frustration with the members of C.G.A." and their inability to wait for the men in the group to "confront their own sexism and racism."¹⁰⁰ They argued that they "[chose] to work on our liberation independently of Gay men," because gay men participated in lesbian oppression.¹⁰¹ As such they asked gay men in the C.G.A to understand their need for "absolute safety and free space" to work with other women on the issues facing them. As they questioned the value of supporting brothers who did not understand and sometimes contributed to their oppression as lesbian women, they still supported the work gay men were doing toward "their own liberation." They stated, "We simply feel that our Liberation, as women and lesbians, must take an independent direction at this time and will not benefit from your support since you continue to evidence racist and sexist attitudes of the oppressor."¹⁰² They sought autonomy to support their own liberation and to highlight the shortcomings of the gay men with whom they worked in Chicago. Their example revealed the common failure of

coalition building with gay men, particularly as “the seeming similarity of our sexual preferences clouds and covers the real and deep differences between us, which only time, hard work, and critical self-examination can begin to resolve.”¹⁰³ Unfortunately, such struggles were not new.

After years of social protest in the homophile movement, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon harbored conflicting feelings about co-gender activism. Some of Martin and Lyon’s toughest critiques were reserved for gay men involved in the gay liberation movement. Of the two of them, Martin seemed to harbor the most distrust for gay men. Her vituperative “farewell” missive, published in 1970, aired the dirty laundry plaguing the gay movement as she “took [her] gay brothers to task for their egocentricity and their inability to relate to Lesbians and the issues that affect gay women.”¹⁰⁴ In short, the essay articulated long-brewing frustrations many lesbians harbored toward gay men over their experiences with sexism in homophile and gay liberation movements. Martin and Lyon addressed such tensions two years later, when speaking before an audience of primarily gay men gathered at Sacramento State College on October 21, 1972. Martin admitted, “I never expected to appear again on the platform of an all-gay conference. For I had made my commitment to women—both gay and straight—and no longer would I waste my time nor [sic] energy on gay male issues.”¹⁰⁵ In that speech, Lyon articulated hope for building a collaborative political future with gay men, while Martin expressed a more tentative stance on that future. Lyon argued, “In recent years it is true that many gay men have been supportive of their Lesbian sisters,” and enumerated several examples to support her claim.¹⁰⁶ Martin then dismissed the examples as “political maneuvers.” Martin continued, calling them:

[S]teps—very tentative steps—toward establishing a male-female relationship that *never really existed in the gay community*. What we have to recognize though is that they will not bring unity to the community, nor will they necessarily bring mutual respect and equality between gay men and women. . . . These efforts were political alliances, nothing more, and they were successful.¹⁰⁷

For Martin, coalitional work alone could not address the root problem of sexism; it required deeper confrontation of male privilege.

Lesbian-feminists frequently used their own experiences working with gay men to bolster their arguments against such co-gender activism. Karen Wells, who only months earlier had vocally advocated for co-gender activism, related her negative experience on a panel at San Francisco State in 1971. Wells, along with Sally Gearheart and Phyllis Lyon, joined four men on a panel called “The Liberation Movement.” Of that panel presentation, Wells explained that the men focused on sex and the prevalence of repressed homosexuality, which alienated audience members and the women on the panel. Though Wells, Gearheart, and Lyon tried to intervene and open up the discussion, Wells ultimately lamented that the panel devolved into a shouting match. As she narrated this experience, Wells tried to head off criticism by noting “we women on the panel WERE NOT BEING ANGRY. We were trying to communicate with our sisters. The men blew it all.”¹⁰⁸ For her, the experience boiled down to the fact that “women cannot be heard with their brothers shouting around and at them.” Even though she was “one of the few women who is willing and has been willing to speak with men on common grounds of our gayness,” she wrote, “I WILL NOT DO ANOTHER PANEL WITH MEN.” She added, “in spite of all the verbage [sic] thrown back and forth among the gay

community spokesmen and women about how we MUST get together, WE WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT and must be allowed our differences.”¹⁰⁹ For Wells, the tendency for men to take over co-gender events like the panel at San Francisco State drowned out the voices of the women on the panel and alienated the women in the audience. Moreover, her experience spoke to a disconnect between the supposed openness for diverse voices and the reality of such events.

Lesbian-feminists’ who identified this disconnect within the gay movement returned to “issues of Gay Civil Rights” only after “finding their strength” in the women’s movement. Yet their feminist worldview made coalitional work in the gay movement more difficult. In 1973, lesbian-feminists from around California wrote a letter detailing their treatment by gay men at a convention dedicated to “Sexual Law Reform” in February 1973. After saying “goodbye” to the gay movement a few years earlier, the lesbian-feminist authors found a good reason to return once again to the efforts of gay civil rights. They wanted to bring the knowledge of “strength [through] unified action” that they had gained in the women’s liberation movement to their activism in the gay movement. They were met with resounding negative responses. Explaining how gay men called members of the lesbian leadership “uppity dykes,” the representatives from the lesbian-feminist contingent noted that “the sexist gay man is no more willing now than he was two years ago to deal with us.”¹¹⁰ They argued that the tactics for limiting lesbian and lesbian-feminist participation had changed from simply “blocking” them. Now, the preferred strategy sought to “invalidate our participation, our principles, our ideology, our strength, our words by calling us ‘communist—‘socialist—‘Trotskyists,’ or to

characterize us as ‘innocent dupes’ of these political tendencies or some other male leadership” (i.e., gay movement leader Morris Kight).

Featuring gender not only highlighted the limitations of co-gender work, it also affirmed the negative experiences of lesbian-feminists. Sexist strategies devalued and delegitimized lesbian-feminists with gay movement audiences. Their effort to attain equal lesbian participation at gay movement conventions and events was described by one writer in the gay press as though lesbians wanted “to be masters of the movement.”¹¹¹ This kind of negative treatment faced lesbian-feminists in gay movement activities, from large-scale pride celebrations to smaller level issue-focused actions. When local gay press covered their demonstrations or conferences, lesbian-feminists argued that the resulting coverage was either substantively lacking or negative in tone.¹¹² Despite such negative coverage of their co-gender activist efforts by the gay press, lesbian-feminists held their ground and made the case for their legitimate voice in the gay movement.

Confronting the Common Challenges: Arguments for Coalition

Coalitional work, particularly with gay men in gay liberation, was difficult for many lesbian-feminists. And yet, the discourse suggested that despite these reservations, many expressed a desire to work together for intrinsically linked causes, especially on the local level. For many, the hopeful possibilities of building coalitional relationships across their range of differences rested in the power of a common cause in fighting oppression. It offered a way of transcending those differences in political ideology and enhancing the collective visibility of gay liberation and lesbian-feminists. Wendy, from the “Boston Feminists for Lesbian Liberation,” articulated the benefits of working across (gender)

differences in the lesbian-feminist publication *Focus*. Defending her group's plan to attend the Women's Workshop at Gay Pride Week, she wrote,

We are all working toward the same goal—to combat oppression. If we cannot be supportive of each other, can any of us succeed? We need an honest and open flow of communication between women's groups. We need a means to work together and a way to recognize the differing needs between groups, both gay and straight.¹¹³

Wendy articulated the intersectional position of her group as committed to women's liberation and gay liberation by attending to the needs of lesbians. Pointing to commonalities, in this case around sexuality and gender, also offered a way to support co-gender activism in the face of criticism from more radical feminists.

Featuring their gender identity allowed lesbian-feminists to directly address sexism in the gay movement *and* call for building a coalitional relationship with gay men. In a 1978 speech to a mixed audience at a gay conference in Florida, Phyllis Lyon argued that sexism, at the heart of lesbian invisibility, was a shared and surmountable burden to the gay movement. Though sexism rendered “women virtually invisible with the Gay Rights Movement,” it was still crucial to address how sexism inhibited successful coalitional and “co-sexual” work.¹¹⁴ Lyon first made clear that her attack on sexism was not meant to “denigrate the many Gay men who have struggled, and are struggling to overcome their sexism and understand Gay women.” She then extended the identification between gay men and lesbian-feminists beyond sexuality to include their shared marginalization by patriarchy, arguing that sexism was “a powerful force that has been scripted into all of us.”¹¹⁵ Showing how the burden of fighting sexism was culturally

shared, Lyon then enumerated the challenges lesbians faced in the gay movement. From gender oppression, to economic oppression (i.e., “women do not have as much money as do men, gay or straight”), to the ways sexism prevented women from “attempting to join [the gay movement],” Lyon emphasized the internally divisive impact of sexism and the importance of lesbians for the success of the movement.

Similarly, the group of lesbian-feminists involved in Sexual Law Reform eventually shifted toward sexuality to extend their identification with gay men. They argued:

Because we as lesbian women are, like our gay brothers, fired from our jobs, denied the rights of parenthood, evicted from our homes, labeled ‘criminal’ because we choose to love one another, etc., we will continue our struggle for our civil rights in the gay movement. Our real enemy is too strong for us to spend many more years fighting each other.¹¹⁶

Their argument about the need for collective strength and collective cause was compelling, even in light of sexist news coverage and other abuses committed by their gay brothers. In spite of all the complications, certain lesbian-feminist leaders still insisted on the necessity of working together. It did not mean they were going to take sexist treatment lying down, however. Diane Banos, Donna Collins, Jeanne Córdova, Beth Elliot and the rest of their collective issued a clear warning: “Hell hath no fury . . . brothers we are here to stay.”¹¹⁷

Because coalition building emphasized the importance of working together across differences to achieve a common goal, other lesbian-feminists pointed to such work as a pragmatic counterpoint to separatism. Coalitional work, rather than representing a

compromise in ideological purity, was seen as the answer to the internal ideological conflict exacerbated by separatism. Koreen Phelps, writing in the Minnesota-based *So's Your Old Lady*, questioned the increasing pressure to separate from gay men. She argued that separatism could go too far, and in doing so, endangered the broader fight for social justice and civil rights. For that reason, she asked, "[A]re all Gay men really the enemies of Lesbians? Are Gay men the ones that make laws that tell us we can't have abortions? Are they the ones who rape us? Are they the ones that wage war on our children and reap the benefits of our oppression[?]" By pointing out the ways in which gay men did not oppress lesbians, Koreen turned toward the enemy shared by gay men and lesbians: patriarchy. She continued, "We know who the enemy is. The enemy is . . . a system that can only function when Gays, women and other minorities are exploited on all levels. . . perpetuated by a few old, white, straight men who profit off the general misery of the majority of society, women and men included."¹¹⁸ Though Koreen confirmed that gay men were certainly not "free of sexism" and were often "unwitting tools of a system that oppresses women as well as themselves," she reasoned that "gay men have a better chance of understanding [women's liberation] than any other group of men." Such shared oppression drew her to the reality that "to rule out any cooperative effort or turn down support from men would be self-defeating."¹¹⁹ In this way, she refuted the various warrants supporting separation from gay men, arguing that the more compelling path involved working with gay men directly. For her, "highly conscious Gay men and women know that women and Gays have a common enemy and that we can win the struggle for liberation only if we fight together."¹²⁰ As she called for cooperation and coalitional

activism, she worked hard to strengthen a shared identification between the two groups while attending to the counter-argument about gay men's propensity for sexism.

Writing from rural Alabama in response to Koreen's letter, Linda Regnier affirmed the dual *appeal* of separating from men and the negative consequences of doing so. Speaking from her own experience as a member of a co-gender health care collective, Regnier explained, "We need all the help we do get from the brothers to accomplish goals that meet human health needs."¹²¹ Regnier articulated one central reason for remaining open to working with men, even if separatism was compelling to those women who had been, in her words, "fucked over by a man."¹²² After noting the ruptures between gay men and lesbians in the Gay Movement during the early 1970s, Nancy Davis likewise argued that the need to work together again was strong. Yet, she argued that while acknowledging their "gay" identity had liberated lesbians, they were "forced to become 'women' again" in the Gay Movement.¹²³ Instead, Davis argued, the activism needed to be directed outward. She explained, "Gay women and men should see the need to unite and do some 'consciousness raising with straight society—the ultimate form of consciousness-raising—the destruction of heterosexuality."¹²⁴ For these women, working together to fight human oppression constituted the central thread that bound gay men and lesbian women; it was a purpose too important to ignore.

Coalitional work had the added benefit of creating a basis for making lesbians and lesbian-feminists visible. In these spaces, Ehret felt accomplished when she could "raise consciousness by sharing my feelings, needs, and struggles as a gay woman."¹²⁵ Her argument pointed to the importance of coalitional spaces to make lesbian-feminist experiences visible. Those spaces, while useful in advocating for common cause,

subsequently offered a platform for raising consciousness around the oppression that lesbian-feminists experienced. In the end, she explained, “I think we can take greater steps in social change together than we can apart. I hope we can work out an analysis of the causes of oppression by learning about the similarities between the lives of oppressed people, whether they are straight or gay, women or men.”¹²⁶

Lesbian-feminist arguments in support of coalition also emphasized the opportunity to transcend political differences and bolster identification. One common strategy articulated the importance of common cause despite different political approaches by crafting an analogy to the civil rights/Black power movement. In one article in *Sisters*, Karen Wells used the analogy of the African American civil rights movement to support her argument about the political legitimacy of “establishment” movement members and “radical” or “revolutionary” members in the gay movement. She argued that Martin Luther King, Jr. was “society's first radical,” and established the cause eventually taken up, albeit differently, by the Black Panthers.¹²⁷ They worked for the same goals, but in different ways. Extending her comparative argument more explicitly, Wells explained, “Gay is black, too. We are every bit, if not more of a threat to every white, middle-class straight.” She continued, “We, like the blacks, are demanding compassion, equality, recognition, humanity from the oppressive, up-tight society. And if we wish as gay people to get our rights as humans, we must work together as humans.”¹²⁸ Although her language failed to explicitly recognize the intersectional experience of lesbians or gay men of color, (i.e., “We, *like* the blacks”), the focus on the common demands sought to transcend political differences and intra-movement division. Granted, Wells was concerned with the growing division within the lesbian-feminist community

between “revolutionaries” interested in “Gay Women’s Liberation” and the members of DOB who worked within “certain establishment” structures to make change. Yet, her broader statements made the case for co-gender activism as well.¹²⁹ Referencing those differing political approaches, Wells explained, “humans are different—some are radical, some are not.” Yet, she also quickly turned away from difference to emphasizing the shared similarities: “We have a common goal, we gay people, liberal or radical. We want to do away with oppression. AND WE CAN DO IT, as long as we all communicate and share.”¹³⁰ Transcending political divisions through coalition supported a level of visibility only attainable through national-level political activism.

Co-gender coalitional activism offered an effective way to accomplish political or legislative goals, particularly on the national level, by making gay men and lesbians a visible entity in need of recognition. Coalition building promised to increase general visibility and the numerical presence of lesbians and gay men. In one article extolling the virtues of potential federal gay rights legislation, Goldberger argued, “To channel our energies most efficiently and effectively, Lesbians should work in conjunction with gay men. However, we must be sure that the movement constantly relates to *our* struggle”¹³¹ Part of the challenge, she noted, pertained to the silencing practices and dismissal of lesbians that occurred in “mixed [gender] groups.” To avoid such problems and “insure that Lesbians work with gay men on an equal basis,” Goldberger insisted that lesbians “work through coalitions between gay men’s and Lesbian organizations.”¹³² She argued that Lesbians were more likely to attend a women’s-only group; if they found themselves involved in a mixed group, they were more likely to find a voice within a woman’s caucus. This kind of coalitional work, according to Goldberger, fueled larger

co-gender demonstrations intended to “show our sisters and brothers our numbers and our determination.”¹³³

One example of such coalitional activism included the Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights joining with Lesbian Feminist Liberation to protest at the 1976 Democratic National Convention held at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Then, writing of the nascent plans for a national March on Washington, Goldberger posited, “Many sisters and brothers will be encouraged to join the struggle if tens of thousands of people show their willingness to march.”¹³⁴ Coalitions and co-gender activism was necessary to visibly demonstrate the great numbers of gay and lesbian activists working in the movement. Moreover, she argued, “Lesbians must start now to fight for their rights. We must end our piecemeal approach to freedom and unite, together with our brothers who have the same goals as us, to end this oppression.”¹³⁵ She assured her lesbian sisters, “Taking up the struggle for gay rights does not mean we abandon our music, our poetry, our collectives, or our community of sisters. It merely adds one more element to our culture”¹³⁶ Rather than working against the women’s culture that had sustained lesbian-feminists through the difficult times with other movements, Goldberger suggested instead that working with gay men confirmed an existing part of their culture and identity.

For some, emphasizing *cumulative* numbers of gay men and lesbians threatened to reduce the space for lesbian-feminists to articulate their own statistical presence. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon defended the importance of lesbian-feminist identity and visibility even in the context of coalitional work. For them, coalitions provided a greater platform from which to support lesbian visibility efforts to target movement and external

target audiences. Without visibility, they warned, lesbians would continually be hidden in the shadows of “the Gay and Women’s movements” and public consciousness.¹³⁷ Martin argued, “When people hear the word Gay they think male homosexual. When they hear the word woman they think heterosexual. The Lesbian is considered, if at all, incidental to both the Gay and Women’s movements. Lesbians, for the most part, are non-existent in the public mind.”¹³⁸ She further implored, “If we want to be an assumption and not just an afterthought or adjunct to the Gay and Women’s movements, if we want Lesbian rights as well as Gay and Women’s rights, we will have to fight for them.”¹³⁹ To remedy this problem, the primary means of visibility rested on “ten percent” as a *symbolic* presence. In earlier speeches Lyon and Martin often echoed gay liberation arguments that homosexuals comprised ten percent of the population by contending that *lesbians* comprised ten percent of the population. Importantly, the ten percent rhetorically accounted for a critical mass of gay people—men and women—regardless of literal visibility. And yet, to Martin and Lyon, the figure as a statistical argument still fell short of formally recognizing lesbian presence and importance to the movement. As such, Martin challenged the ten percent legitimacy argument to render lesbians greater visibility:

It is estimated that Gays comprise 10% of the American population, but people think that figure applies only to men, that the number of Lesbians is far less and thus insignificant. Because Lesbians are not as visible, it is generally assumed—and we believe erroneously—that there are far fewer of us. From our own experience and connection with Lesbians across the country, the 10% ratio applies

to Lesbians in the women's population as well. And since there are more women than men, that means there are more Lesbians than Gay men.¹⁴⁰

Martin argued not only for the significance of lesbians as part of the larger American population, but also as a *forgotten entity* within the categories of "gay" and "woman." They fought to maintain their identity even as they forged coalitional partnerships. Using the nexus between gender and sexuality, Martin featured both identities to argue for lesbian legitimacy to internal movement audiences. This meant that their gender *and* sexual identities must be taken seriously, in this case, at the national level and as part of both the gay liberation and women's liberation movements. The notion of critical mass refuted the notion of gay and lesbian people as threatening either dominant culture or movement politics, instead implying lesbians' presence *within* presumably heterosexual families and existing movement groups.

Much of the coalitional work lesbian-feminists engaged in fueled the development of these coalitional subjectivities and contributed to radicalizing their local work on behalf of specific issues or referenda. Across lesbian-feminist periodicals, activists wrote about several of these coalitional opportunities. They frequently editorialized about how certain coalition groups valued equal representation and inclusion, or actively avoided sexism and racism.¹⁴¹ Such coalitional work demonstrated the continual effort by lesbian-feminists, lesbian-feminists of color, gay men, and other feminists to work together on behalf of civil rights.

Lesbian-feminists frequently worked in coalition with gay men to fight political opponents on local, state, and national levels. For example, lesbian-feminists and a variety of other gay and lesbian groups took part in the Coalition for Lesbian & Gay

Rights in New York. The coalition members took part in many actions, from picketing a “bigot of the week” to meeting with city officials to advocate passage of municipal non-discrimination legislation.¹⁴² The coalition took “a leading role in pushing for the passage of Intro 384, the bill which would guarantee civil rights for lesbians and gay men.”¹⁴³ They explained, “we are working with groups that are not a part of CLGR but are joining with us in a broader unified effort for the passage of the bill.” The process was fraught with setbacks and as such, they reported: “Our community has run out of patience. We want action, not vague promises.” Such promises were the result of a meeting with New York City mayor Ed Koch. In response to that meeting, the coalition insisted, “a truly massive public action will be needed.” Such actions included “rallies, demonstrations, distribution of literature, forums, mailings.”¹⁴⁴ These actions and more, according to CGLR, “are indications of our increased organization in fighting for our civil rights.”¹⁴⁵ Pointing to the broad-based strategies to win the legislative fight, CLGR noted the combined power of the coalition as greater than the sum of its parts from other organizations. The importance of the collective work on behalf of gay and lesbian civil rights on the municipal level increased, they argued, with a spike in “violence directed at gays” during the summer of 1978. They also reported on their coalitional support of other groups to show solidarity between the gay community and other groups in and around the city. Aligning their fight with civil rights groups in New York City, CLGR explained:

On September 28 members of the [CLGR] supported the rally organized in part by the Black United Front at City Hall. Our purpose in attending the protest demonstration and in distributing leaflets was to express gay solidarity with the

struggles of the N.Y.C.'S Black population and to urge Black support for Intro.
384.¹⁴⁶

It offered yet another example of using the platform provided by a higher profile organization or oppressed population to gain greater visibility for their own identity and activist work.

Likewise, in Chicago in 1974, Janice detailed the formation of a new coalition group called the Chicago Civil Rights Action Coalition. She explained how “many groups in Chicago are represented, among them are Chicago Lesbian Liberation, N.O.W., Chicago Gay Alliance . . . And a good representation of other groups in the city. This is the first group that is truly mixed and does not smell of sexism.”¹⁴⁷ This coalition, Janice pointed out, was focused on accomplishing two main legislative goals: “passage of a Gay civil rights bill and the women’s rights bill.”¹⁴⁸ Within the cauldron of Chicago social movement organizing, this coalitional group was founded on the heels of much dissent and division within the Chicago gay, lesbian, and feminist communities. It demonstrated the continual effort for many activists to work together despite the failures of previous efforts. As writers detailed in the *Lavender Woman*, groups split from one another, most frequently citing sexism and racism as the central reasons for such separation. These experiences thus revealed the tenuous nature of the coalitional work that took place among these activist communities. At the same time, the fact that efforts renewed and redoubled again and again demonstrated the perseverance of lesbian-feminist activists and others to pursue the vision of social justice.¹⁴⁹

Lesbian-feminists never reached consensus during the 1970s on the question of working with gay men in gay liberation. Those engaged in coalitional work with gay men

argued that their concerns about sexism and historical dismissal of lesbians mattered to the whole gay movement. By engaging with gay men on local-level issue activism all the way to the annual pride festivals, lesbian-feminists affirmed the promise of building a gay *and* lesbian movement that would also maintain a space for them to assert their own political and sexual identity. They also suggested that addressing sexism could actually strengthen the gay and lesbian movement by empowering all of those involved in the coalition work to end oppression more broadly.

Other lesbian-feminists maintained skepticism about the possibilities of coalition. Some engaged in attacking drag in much the same way they criticized butch/femme lesbian relationships.¹⁵⁰ Still others simply questioned why lesbian-feminists would work with gay men due to their different social, political, and economic concerns. If they were different in all of these respects, what was the benefit of working with gay men at all? These critiques fueled calls for woman-only spaces at pride and lesbian-centric culture, spaces, and activist communities.

Despite the struggle, however, many lesbian-feminists staked their own activism on collective work with gay men. For them, co-gender activism, strengthened by years of struggle in the earlier homophile movement, was an issue of loyalty and collective strength, particularly when the conservative backlash strengthened as the 1970s drew to a close. These lesbian-feminists argued that working with gay men did not replace or counteract the work they did as lesbians or feminists; rather, they sought to utilize their common ground with gay men as another platform to increase their visibility and challenge the central rhetorics guiding gay liberation protest.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1970s, lesbian-feminists around the country actively worked in coalition with members of prominent movements, especially the women's liberation, anti-war, and gay liberation movements. Doing this work not only challenged the competing and compelling identity politics associated with separatism, but it also offered a new means of attaining visibility on a larger scale. In particular, they continued to emphasize their identity throughout their coalition work. By advocating on behalf of other social movements, lesbian-feminists capitalized on their intersectional location to address common concerns while also highlighting the specific oppression facing lesbians (and women) in the United States. Their use of a pivotal strategy depended on the activist audience. With anti-war activists, they pivoted toward gender and sexuality to echo a feminist critique of the Vietnam War and confront the homophobia and sexism that permeated anti-war activism circles. By using their intersectional identities in this way, lesbian-feminists crafted a new space in which to make themselves and their ideological critique of the war visible and prominent. This strategy, not unlike the merger of anti-war, civil rights, and Black power discourse by the end of the 1960s, sought to expand the reach of lesbian-feminist critique beyond feminist, lesbian, or gay circles.¹⁵¹

Gay liberation similarly offered a critical platform for bolstering lesbian-feminist identity and visibility even though it featured continual struggles over sexism. Some lesbian-feminists saw potential to recalibrate lesbian-feminist identity and visibility in light of their work in gay liberation. Merging a gendered critique of pride and local-level campaign politics with a recognition of the broader purpose of working together, these women positioned lesbian-feminists as the standard-bearers for the militancy associated

with gay liberation. Their radical presence and politics, enacted through “armies and contingents,” challenged the male-dominated image of gay liberation and disrupted the unity of pride. Such participation fueled a rhetoric that featured coalition in order to advance lesbian-feminist identity politics. It also motivated more lesbians to participate in future activities. As such, coalitional work with gay men, like other co-gender activism, challenged identity rhetorics that called for separatism. Part of the purpose of this argument was similar to anti-war coalition work—to render lesbian-feminists visible to a broader audience—both within the gay and lesbian community and in broader society. Working with gay men did not diminish the powerful lesbian-feminist critique of power, privilege, and patriarchy present in the gay liberation movement. Indeed, their critique created fissures in the rhetorics of unity that frequently appeared unchallenged at perennial events like Christopher Street Liberation events around the country. As a source of debate and struggle as well as a space for increased visibility and militancy, co-gender gay liberation activism proved to be a productive coalitional relationship for lesbian-feminist across the country.

As their coalitional work continued throughout the decade, lesbian-feminists were also engaged in coalition work with women’s liberation. Again, the fight was for making a dual claim for visibility and interjecting a critique of homophobia as connected with sexism. This coalitional relationship featured prominently in the coalitional discourse of lesbian-feminists throughout the decade. Chapter Four unpacks this relationship and considers it in a moment of transition and crisis. In particular, as lesbian-feminists negotiated coalitional activism with women’s liberation, they also faced common challenges as the decade came to a close. Unfortunately, as lesbian-feminists advocated

for visibility within the women's movement, that very visibility nourished the growing anti-feminist backlash.

Notes

¹ Griffin, Smith, and Peters define ableism, or “disability oppression,” as “a pervasive system of discrimination against people with disabilities. Like racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, ableism operates on individual, institutional, and cultural levels to privilege temporarily able-bodied people and disadvantage people with disabilities.” See Pat Griffin, Madeline L. Peters, and Robin M. Smith, “Ableism Curriculum Design” in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, 2nd ed.*, eds. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2007), 335.

² Susan Gal proffers recalibration as a way to negotiate dichotomies. I utilize this concept of recalibration to negotiate two different binary relationships: identity politics/coalition politics and women’s liberation/gay liberation movements. This concept also emphasizes the temporal and rhetorical character of identity formations deployed within and in defiance of such binary constraints. Susan Gal, "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction," *differences* 13 (2002): 77-95.

³ Such internal division did not help the anti-war movement, already fighting against its dismissal by President Nixon in his 1969 “Vietnamization” speech. Like the efforts regarding abortion rights and repealing anti-abortion laws, lesbian-feminists were also engaged with labor and wage reform activism. In this vein of work, they merged a feminist critique of gendered divisions of labor to identify the ways lesbians were dually oppressed as women and as sexual minorities. The essays that circulated seemed, of all the coalitional work, to indicate less direct work with labor organizations or labor activism communities specifically. At the same time, lesbian-feminists who shared their activist discourse with the broader lesbian-feminist readership and community injected an

important voice regarding class and wage disparities facing large segments of the lesbian population. Certainly, class analysis occurred in much of the discourse, yet it frequently took a backseat to gender, sexuality, and race. In this way, the work that took place around wage reform constituted an important coalitional possibility for working class lesbian-feminists and those involved in manufacturing and trade professions could make their voices heard. For example, one writer, signed “Mechanica” advertised for a rap group of tradeswomen to “create a support group which allows us to use our personal and collective resources and skills in developing our identities as strong trades-women, as well as to fight on-the-job discrimination.” Still, for a lesbian-feminist audience, women in non-traditional trades found they had to defend their ability to discuss the links between their work (that took place in non-traditional or male-dominated settings) with their “lesbian feminist politics.” For the contributing members of the support group “Wommin in Non-Traditional Trades” they wanted to open discussion about “the reality of working towards a womyn’s network in a hostile work world primarily composed of men.” Questions and discomfort around class remained an undercurrent to their letter and the confusion about the topic of the issue of *Out and About*, “Lesbians and Work.” See Mechanica, “Tradeswomen unite!” *Out And About* (June 1979): 2; Debbie Jenney, Sylvia Salget, and Bev Sagen, “Women in Non-Trad Jobs respond to Forum,” *Out And About* (June 1979): 29. These contributions also show the variety of spellings lesbian-feminists employed to avoid the term “man” or “men” when referring to women. Spelling choices included womyn, wommin, and wimmin.

⁴ Charlotte Bunch, for instance, participated in civil rights and anti-war activism before she became a lesbian-feminist as part of National Council of the Methodist

Student Movement. See Charlotte Bunch, *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 3.

⁵ Along with many other activists grounded in social movements like Black liberation or the civil rights movement, lesbian-feminists around the country actively engaged in anti-war protest.

⁶ See "Lesbians Come Out Against Trident," *Out And About* (July 1978): 5.

⁷ Jeanne Córdova, "GAYS Out-Front at Anti-War Convenvention [sic]" *The Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 2 (1972), 2.

⁸ J. Justin Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993, xv.

⁹ Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War*, 72, 80. In his analysis of Daniel Berrigan of the Catholic Ultra-Resistance, Gustainis also notes a frequent use of religious references in Berrigan's anti-war rhetoric.

¹⁰ Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War*, 80.

¹¹ Gustainis, *American Rhetoric and the Vietnam War*, 84-85.

¹² As Belinda Stillion Southard argues, using paradox in the context of war was not new for feminists. Her study reveals how radical suffragist activists of the National Women's Party took a similar tact when they appropriated presidential discourse during wartime to highlight the paradox between statements about why the U.S. was engaging in the First World War while the government left half of its citizens without formal citizenship rights, including the franchise. See Belinda A. Stillion Southard, "Militancy, Power, and Identity: The Silent Sentinels as Women Fighting for Political Voice," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2007): 399-418.

¹³ See Jodi York, “The Truth about Women and Peace,” in *The Woman and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 19-25; Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Gendering War Talk* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). Such perspectives have been critiqued as essentialist. In response, Lorentzen and Turpin included several essays that explore violence and war-making by women. Other volumes explore this phenomenon to explode essentialist notions of women as “naturally” peaceful. See Laura Sjoberg and Carol Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, and Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

¹⁴ Sara Ruddick, “‘Woman of Peace’: A Feminist Construction,” in *The Woman and War Reader*, eds. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 214.

¹⁵ Ruth Rosen notes that this confrontation demarcated an early line of division along perspectives on maternity and femininity. She and Sarah Evans point to this demonstration as an early indication of generational and ideological rupture within the burgeoning second wave of feminism. The younger feminists famously demanded the burial of “traditional femininity” at the event, clearly staking their claim for feminism in an approach that departed from expedient approaches that maintained an emphasis on gendered differences. I take up the example of one of the established feminist peace organizations in the U.S. See Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), 202-203; Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century’s End* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 27.

¹⁶ See also Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 84; Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 27-29.

¹⁷ One of the primary critiques of a maternalist perspective contends with the essential linkage of biological femaleness with naturalized resistance to war and embrace of peacekeeping. See Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Maternal Thinking and the Politics of War," in *The Woman and War Reader*, eds. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 227-233.

¹⁸ See J. Robert Cox, "Perspectives on Rhetorical Criticism of Movements: Antiwar Dissent 1964- 1970," *Western Speech* 38, no. 4 (1974): 259.

¹⁹ J. Robert Cox notes that between 1964 and 1970, the primary ideological divisions within the anti-war movement typically broke down along the lines of activists who advocated for a negotiated settlement and de-escalation of the war versus more radical activists who called for immediate withdrawal of American troops and an immediate end to the war in Vietnam. See Cox, "Perspectives on Rhetorical Criticism of Movements," 258.

²⁰ "Diverse" here indicates a mixed audience of men and women, straight and gay folks, as well as racially diverse. Importantly, the speakers were not making their arguments about sexism to a wholly lesbian-feminist audience, or even a lesbian-feminist anti-war audience. One reprint of the speech included the following description of the immediate audience and context provided by the speakers: "All publicity prior to the rally listed an all-male roster of speakers. Women were contacted at the last minute and were then met with blatant sexism. A crowd-pleasing rock concert mentality was more than reluctant to put woman speakers on the platform. We were not announced until after

many people had left and then only because women in the audience shouted for a woman speaker. ‘The subject of feminism is very ordinary; it’s the question of male domination that makes everybody angry’” (5) According to the editorial comments provided by the “Ain’t I A Woman” collective based in Iowa City, Iowa, their decision to reprint the speech “Vietnam: A Feminist Analysis,” by the Boston area lesbian-feminists Hollibaugh et. al. was a controversial one. Some in the women’s movement reportedly refused to publish the speech because it suggested that feminists (and lesbian-feminists in this case) could and should engage in anti-war (anti-imperialism) activity *outside* of the women’s movement. They explained, “We heard . . . that another radical feminist paper, *The Furies*, refused to print this speech because they ‘don’t want to encourage women to do anti-war work.’ We can see where women who have come to see the limitations of the anti-imperialist women’s movement could take such a stand. However, the content of such a statement is racist and condescending when coming from citizens of the country which [sic] is waging an imperialist and genocidal war on Viet Nam. We printed the article because we feel the issue of anti-imperialism [is] integral to a feminist analysis.”

By publishing the speech that offered an integrated analysis of war from a feminist perspective, the AIAW collective supported feminists attempting to create a “separate anti-imperialist women’s movement” of having “a limited analysis and therefore a limited vision of what a just society should be: they didn’t deal with the position of Blacks, women, working-class people, or lesbians in this society. They were women against the war who were often feminist; we were feminists who considered anti-imperialism integral to our analysis.” See Hollibaugh, von Bretzel, Crichton, Lindbloom,

“Vietnam: A Feminist Analysis,” *Ain’t I A Woman* 3, no. 1 (August 18, 1972): 4-5. No first names were provided in reprints of the speech.

²¹ Women And The War, “Why Women and the War,” *Sister* 4, no. 1 (January 1973): 1. In an essay published in *Sister* (not to be confused with the San Francisco-based *Sisters* periodical) that announced the formation of their collective, members of WATW called upon lesbian-feminist readers to participate in anti-war activism. There they explained that their group coalesced after a “women’s march against the war” at which point they began carrying out activism in Los Angeles and the surrounding area. Their rhetoric appealed to their lesbian-feminist audience by pivoting toward their shared gender identity.

²² “Why Women and the War,” 1.

²³ Hollibaugh, Von Bretzel, Crichton, and Lindbloom, “Vietnam: A Feminist Analysis,” *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 5 (September 1972): 8- 9.

²⁴ Hollibaugh, et. al, “Vietnam: A Feminist Analysis,” 8.

²⁵ “Why Women and the War,” 1.

²⁶ Hollibaugh, et. al, “Vietnam: A Feminist Analysis,” 8- 9.

²⁷ Some may argue that just because they sought to forge connections in their discourse with the women of Vietnam doesn't mean that any coalitional work actually took place. I contend that it remains significant that lesbian-feminists sought to craft coalitions with co-gender movements and extend a feminist critique of war to lesbian-feminist audiences. Some audiences may have simply incorporated anti-war activism into their own cadre of causes akin to lesbian civil rights, though some may have remained committed to such gender oppression facing women at home instead.

²⁸ “Why Women and the War,” 1.

²⁹ Avoiding the link between sexism and homophobia was perhaps an attempt to adapt their arguments to a co-gender anti-war movement.

³⁰ Jeanne Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 2. Her speech was reprinted in *Lavender Woman* 2, no. 1 (January 1973), 12.

³¹ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 2.

³² Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 2.

³³ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 2. The capitalization appears in the published version of the text.

³⁴ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

³⁵ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

³⁶ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 2.

³⁷ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

³⁸ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

³⁹ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

⁴⁰ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

⁴¹ Córdova, “GAYS Out-Front,” 3.

⁴² “Lesbians Come Out Against Trident,” 5.

⁴³ “Olympia Dykes Against Nukes,” *Out And About* (July 1978): 6.

⁴⁴ “Olympia Dykes Against Nukes,” 6.

⁴⁵ “Olympia Dykes Against Nukes,” 6.

⁴⁶ “Olympia Dykes Against Nukes,” 6.

⁴⁷ “Olympia Dykes Against Nukes,” 6.

⁴⁸ “Lesbians Come Out Against Trident,” 5.

⁴⁹ I use the spelling of “BettyJohanna” as it appeared in a few articles about anti-Trident protests in *Out and About* published in 1978.

⁵⁰ BettyJohanna, “Homophobia and Trident,” *Out And About* (July 1978): 7.

⁵¹ BettyJohanna, “Homophobia and Trident,” 7.

⁵² Despite the strategies demonstrated by these anti-war and anti-nuclear activists, some lesbian-feminists took a less idealistic or revolutionary approach. Some, like Muffie Noble, found symbolic action useless against “real action” like stopping the war altogether. Writing in the *Lavender Woman*, Noble argued that symbolic acts of marching and speaking in protest were “twice removed” from actually ending the war in Vietnam or similar oppression. For her, the problems associated with mere “words” within an anti-war context extended to the limits of words in lesbian liberation. In particular, the focus of consciousness-raising to emphasize shared enemies and oppression, in her words, “badisms,” deflected attention from the “positive things which also could hold us together.” Additionally, she argued that “our rhetoric . . . Has shaken loose of reality. The world is not a perfect place, no[,] is it a place of unrelieved misery. Change comes slowly: people can only open their heads a crack at a time. We certainly have no guarantee that we can run the world any better. See Muffie Noble, “Rhetoric reexamined,” *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 5 (September 1972):10

⁵³ The initial naming of the commemorative marches and rallies following the riots in New York City’s Greenwich Village used the street name rather than the establishment (Stonewall Inn) as the moniker.

⁵⁴ Some radical homophile activists like Barbara Gittings and Frank Kameny had already demonstrated the possibilities of radical, coalitional, and co-gender homophile activism. Still, the shift toward a liberation politic, though not necessarily causally linked to Stonewall, emerged at the same time lesbians were also engaged in the growth of women's liberation. See Chapter Two and Chapter Four for more on that coalition.

⁵⁵ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 237-239; and Lynda Johnston, *Queering Tourism: Paradoxical Performances at Gay Pride Parades* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1-2.

⁵⁶ Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 25, 28-29.

⁵⁷ The term "Gay-in," as it was used in the HAL newsletter, referenced the kind of embodied protest associated with similar turns of phrase including "sit-in" of civil rights movement protest and the "love-ins" and "be-ins" associated with hippies and counterculture activists in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁵⁸ "Funds needed for Gay-In," *Homophile Action League Newsletter* 2, no. 4 (May/June 1970): 3, emphasis mine. HAL's expression of support for an event that represented the shift in the movement toward this new militant spirit (and a mode of activism that, in some cases, explicitly spurned the kind of homophile activism of the past) was notable. In the same issue of the HAL newsletter, one activist mused about this new era of militancy.

⁵⁹ Jim Owles, Joanne Passaro, and Harold Pickett, "7th Annual Gay Pride March Announced for June 27th, 1976," 21 April 1976, Bruce R. Voeller Papers, #7307,

Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, emphasis original.

⁶⁰ Gittings was a radical member of the homophile movement. She, along with Frank Kameny, had been engaging in visible pickets, protests, and zap actions throughout the 1960s. For example, Gittings, along with members of HAL, staged an annual “Reminder Day” picket outside of Independence Hall in Philadelphia to remind passers by about the need for homosexual rights. See Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 46; “The Second Largest Minority,” *Homophile Action League Newsletter* 1, no. 10 (August/September 1969), 2-3; “Reminder Day flyer,” 4 July 1969, Box 1, Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen miscellany, #7645, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁶¹ Barbara Gittings, “Keynote speech at Fourth Annual Christopher Street Liberation Day March,” 24 June 1973, Washington Square, New York City,” Box 1, Folder 6 “Writings and Speeches by Gittings,” Barbara and Kay Tobin Lahusen Collection, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives.

⁶² Gittings, “Keynote speech,” 1-2.

⁶³ Gittings, “Keynote speech,” 2.

⁶⁴ Gittings, “Keynote speech,” 2.

⁶⁵ No doubt her established position as a lesbian-feminist activist occupying the space between women’s liberation and gay liberation (via her history in the homophile movement) lent additional credibility to a positive, co-gender perspective from which she appealed to the unity of the broader movement.

⁶⁶ Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney put it more bluntly in their assessment of Gittings' speech, explaining that her references to unity "could not have been more wrong" (171). They write about the scuffles that took place between members of the group Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), formed by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson in the wake of the Stonewall riots, with lesbian-feminists including Jean O'Leary of the group Lesbian Feminist Liberation. The disagreement over drag and transvestite (or transgender) inclusion in gay pride and the broader gay movement continued to be a sticking point for lesbian-feminists in particular. Indeed, this clash in 1973 came on the heels of the confrontation between lesbian-feminists and Beth Elliot at the West Coast Lesbian Conference in Los Angeles. See Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 171. See also Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 87.

⁶⁷ To be sure, some lesbian-feminists did not desire certain inclusivity, particularly when it came to issues around non-normative gender performance and identity. See Chapter 2 for more on this source of conservatism among radical lesbian-feminists.

⁶⁸ Sara Thompson, "Politics of Drag," *Lavender Woman* 2, no. 5 (August 1973): 13, emphasis mine.

⁶⁹ Sara Thompson, "Politics of Drag," 13.

⁷⁰ Rita A. Goldberger, "Christopher (Christine?) Street," *The Lesbian Tide* 3, no. 10 (June 1974): 15.

⁷¹ Jeanne Córdova, "What's a Woman to do?" *Lesbian Tide* 4, no. 2 (September 1974): 11. Her use of "parades" here referenced depoliticized events centered on gay male culture—the implied alternative to politicized protest marches.

⁷² Moreover, gay men, cross-dressers, and lesbians of color further challenged the typical practices that articulated a gay respectability in line with white, middle-class standards of respectability.

⁷³ Indeed, their use of varying terms used to describe the events — as a march or a parade—captured their perspective on whose visibility was getting *privileged* visibility. This argument does not consider how merely proclaiming a gay or lesbian identity, “coming out,” was the basis for gay liberation politics at the time. In part, the kind of visibility lesbian-feminists desired was less like a “be-in” or “sit-in” and more of an active demonstration in protest of the inequalities gay men and lesbians faced.

⁷⁴ These exclusions occurred in spite of the appeal pride events held as large-scale enactments of gay visibility, legitimacy, and identity-based action. By speaking back to the exclusions built into pride, lesbian-feminists demystified its appeal. The issue of women’s exclusion from the planning process was thoroughly articulated in articles that focused on the Third Annual Christopher Street West (CSW) parade in 1972. The articles highlighted the previous absence of women by noting the marked increase in women’s participation in the event while also articulating a need for continued and increased presence and activism to combat ongoing sexism among the Gay Liberation groups.

⁷⁵ These challenges presented themselves throughout the decade and in committee meetings, the clear effort to include men and women was evident, even if inconsistent. For example, in the minutes from a CSLDC meeting in preparation for the 1976 event indicates a list of featured women and men to serve as speakers and entertainment for the event. At the same meeting, the assembled committee members approved a motion reading, “Be it resolved that CSLDC ’76 shall end all appearance of favoritism and

discrimination among its members and supporters by equalizing the practice concerning titles between the Honorary Grand Marshals and the Steering Committee members by ending the use of any titles of office or honorifics before names of personas, whether among the Honorary Grand Marshals or the Steering Committee.” This motion followed the press release announcing the honorary grand marshals where two, Reverend Troy Perry and Bishop Robert Clement, stood out among the others due to their titles. Arnie Kantrowitz, “Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee ’76 meeting minutes,” 17 May, 1976, Voeller MSS; Owles, et. al, “7th Annual Gay Pride March,” n.p., emphasis original.

⁷⁶ Goldberger, “Christopher (Christine?) Street,” 15. Goldberger quickly added that logistically, it was too late to put together an entirely separate demonstration for lesbians with little time to secure proper permits for such activity.

⁷⁷ Rita Goldberger, “The Week that Was!” *The Lesbian Tide* 1, no. 1 (July 1971): 3.

⁷⁸ Jeanne Córdova, “Christopher Street ’72,” *The Lesbian Tide* 1, no. 12 (June 1972): 3.

⁷⁹ Córdova, “Christopher Street ’72,” 4.

⁸⁰ Among lesbian-feminists, pushback against “auxiliary” language was not new. As founding members of the Daughters of Bilitis, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon indicated their frustration when gay men dismissed the group as a “Mattachine women’s auxiliary.” At the Denver Mattachine Society Convention in 1959, Martin argued, “Lesbians are not satisfied to be auxiliary members or second-class homosexuals.” See David Mixner and

Dennis Bailey, *Brave Journeys: Profiles in Gay and Lesbian Courage* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000), 23.

⁸¹ Córdova, “Christopher Street ’72,” 14.

⁸² Indeed, *contingent* language re-emerged in discourse about lesbian-feminist involvement with women’s liberation activism. See Chapter Four.

⁸³ Córdova, “Christopher Street ’72,” 4.

⁸⁴ Córdova, “Christopher Street ’72,” 4.

⁸⁵ Goldberger, “Christopher (Christine?) Street,” 15.

⁸⁶ Goldberger, “The Week that Was!” 3.

⁸⁷ Goldberger, “Christopher (Christine?) Street,” 15.

⁸⁸ Jay, “Christine Street East Marked by Dissension,” 18. Beth Elliot illuminated the hypocrisy of one “megalomaniac male gay [who] considers himself as having a feminist consciousness (could have fooled us).” See Beth Elliot, “Brotherly Concern,” *The Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 2 (August 1972): 12.

⁸⁹ Gay Sunshine Collective, San Francisco, “News Release—San Francisco,” *The Lesbian Tide* 1, no. 12 (1972): 9.

⁹⁰ Goldberger, “Christopher (Christine?) Street,” 15.

⁹¹ Karla Jay, “Christine Street East Marked by Dissension,” *Lesbian Tide* 4, no. 1 (August 1974): 18.

⁹² Sara Thompson, “Politics of Drag,” *Lavender Woman* 2, no. 5 (August 1973): 13.

⁹³ Camp is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a slang adjective that refers to “ostentatious, exaggerated, affected, theatrical, effeminate, or homosexual.”

Helene Shugart and Catherine Waggoner analyze camp, which they define as “parodic, ironic, over-the-top” sensibility as it is used in contemporary popular culture. They argue that camp has transgressive potential, especially with regard to gender and sexuality. Drag performances drew upon camp sensibilities in order to engage in double entendre as a mode of survival, as Alan Bérubé documents the opportunities for gay men to perform in USO shows overseas and remain in the service. See Helene Shugart and Catherine Egley Waggoner, *Making Camp: Rhetoric of Transgression in U.S. Popular Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 1; *OED*, camp, adj.; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

⁹⁴ See Chapter Two.

⁹⁵ Thompson, “Politics of Drag,” 13. See also the discussion of lesbian-feminist transphobia in Chapter Two.

⁹⁶ Thompson, “Politics of Drag,” 13. For her part, Thompson distinguished between dressing in feminine clothes and “aping women.” The latter relied on items like “heels, girdles, and bras” designed to “stifle and objectify.”

⁹⁷ Thompson, “Politics of Drag,” 13.

⁹⁸ Thompson, “Politics of Drag,” 13.

⁹⁹ Thompson, “Politics of Drag,” 13.

¹⁰⁰ Gay Women’s Caucus, “Why We Left the Chicago Gay Alliance,” *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 2 (December 1971), 2.

¹⁰¹ Gay Women’s Caucus, “Why We Left the Chicago Gay Alliance,” 2.

¹⁰² Gay Women’s Caucus, “Why We Left the Chicago Gay Alliance,” 2.

¹⁰³ Gay Women's Caucus, "Why We Left the Chicago Gay Alliance," 2.

¹⁰⁴ Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, "Lesbianism: Sacramento State," 21 October 1972, Folder 32, Box 40, Lyon and Martin MSS, 1.

¹⁰⁵ The address eventually emphasized their hopefulness about the future of co-gender gay activism. Martin and Lyon, "Lesbianism: Sacramento State," 1.

¹⁰⁶ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbianism: Sacramento State," 3.

¹⁰⁷ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbianism: Sacramento State," 3, emphasis mine.

¹⁰⁸ Karen Wells, "Some observations Upon Co-operating with Men," *Sisters* 2, no. 6 (June 1971): 17.

¹⁰⁹ Wells, "Some Observations Upon Co-operating with Men," 17.

¹¹⁰ Diane Banos, Donna Collins, Jeanne Córdova, Beth Elliot, et. al., "Letter to the Collective: Our Place in the Gay Movement," *Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 9 (April 1973): 20.

¹¹¹ Banos, et. al., "Letter to the Collective: Our Place in the Gay Movement," 21.

¹¹² Goldberger, "The Week That Was!" 3.

¹¹³ Wendy, "The Birth of Boston Feminists for Lesbian Liberation," *Focus* (June 1973): 9.

¹¹⁴ Phyllis Lyon, "Speech to The Third Annual Florida Gay Conference, Tallahassee, FL," 26-29 May 1978, Box 40, Folder 6, Lyon and Martin MSS, 2.

¹¹⁵ Lyon, "Speech to the Third Annual Florida Gay Conference," 2.

¹¹⁶ Banos, et. al., "Letter to the Collective: Our Place in the Gay Movement," 21.

¹¹⁷ Banos, et. al., "Letter to the Collective: Our Place in the Gay Movement," 21.

"Hell hath no fury," is a proverb that originally referred to the Furies, "avenging goddesses of Greek mythology," and was repeated as a popular paraphrase spoken by the

character Zara in Act III of William Congreve's play *The Mourning Bride* (1697). The quote from Congreve's play reads, "Heav'n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn'd, Nor hell a Fury, like a Woman Scorn'd," is often paraphrased as "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." See Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Proverbs* (London: Wordsworth, 2006), 276.

¹¹⁸ Koreen Phelps, "Letter re: concerns about separatism," *So's Your Old Lady* 4 (November/December 1974): 33-34.

¹¹⁹ Phelps, "Letter re: concerns about separatism," 33-34.

¹²⁰ Phelps, "Letter re: concerns about separatism," 33-34.

¹²¹ Linda Regnier, "Letter in reponse to Koreen re: Separatism," *So's Your Old Lady* 5 (Summer 1975): 24.

¹²² Regnier, "Letter in response to Koreen re: Separatism," 24.

¹²³ Nancy Davis, "Separatism," *Lavender Woman* 3, no. 4 (June 1974): 14.

¹²⁴ Davis, "Separatism," 14.

¹²⁵ Joanne Ehret, "Doing Political work with Men and Women," *Leaping Lesbian* 1, no. 11 (December 1977): 21.

¹²⁶ Ehret, "Doing Political work with Men and Women," 21.

¹²⁷ Karen Wells, "DOB and Radical Politics," *Sisters* 1, no. 2 (December 1970): 28-29.

¹²⁸ Wells, "DOB and Radical Politics," 29.

¹²⁹ Wells, "DOB and Radical Politics," 29.

¹³⁰ Wells, "DOB and Radical Politics," 29.

¹³¹ Rita A. Goldberger, "Gay Rights: A Lesbian Issue," *Lesbian Tide* 3, no. 3 (October 1973): 5-6, emphasis original.

¹³² Goldberger, "Gay Rights: A Lesbian Issue," 6.

¹³³ Goldberger, "Gay Rights: A Lesbian Issue," 6.

¹³⁴ Goldberger, "Gay Rights: A Lesbian Issue," 6.

¹³⁵ Goldberger, "Gay Rights: A Lesbian Issue," 6.

¹³⁶ Goldberger, "Gay Rights: A Lesbian Issue," 6.

¹³⁷ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbian Movement in the 80s," 5.

¹³⁸ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbian Movement in the 80s," 1.

¹³⁹ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbian Movement in the 80s," 5.

¹⁴⁰ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbian Movement in the 80s," 1.

¹⁴¹ Chavez calls these "coalitional moments." Karma R. Chavez, *Queer/Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (unpublished manuscript, last modified November 21, 2011), 4-5.

¹⁴² In particular, Lesbian Feminist Liberation (LFL) organized picketed outside the houses of those deemed "bigot of the week" to protest actions or legislation that negatively affected the gay and lesbian community or blocked gay-friendly legislation. See Voeller MSS.

¹⁴³ "CLGR/other groups, meet with Koch; Intro. Hearings Coming Up," *CLGR Bulletin* 1 (August 1978): 1.

¹⁴⁴ "Briefs," *CLGR Bulletin* 2 (November 1978): 1.

¹⁴⁵ "Briefs," 1.

¹⁴⁶ "Briefs," 1.

¹⁴⁷ Janice, “Action Coalition,” *Lavender Woman* 3, no. 4 (June 1974): 14.

¹⁴⁸ Janice, “Action Coalition,” 14.

¹⁴⁹ In addition to these examples in New York and Chicago, a coalition of gay, lesbian, and feminist groups joined The Washington Coalition for Sexual Minority Rights to oppose Initiative 13 in Seattle, Washington in 1978. The initiative “would repeal Seattle’s protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual preference as well as take away enforcement powers from the Office of Women’s Rights.” Like Miami, FL, St. Paul, MN, and Eugene, OR, the Seattle ballot initiative was among the widespread efforts by the conservative opposition to repeal anti-discrimination laws that explicitly protected the civil rights of gay men and lesbians. See Joan, “Coalition to join Init. 13 Fight,” *Out and About* (April 1978): 4; “Defeat Initiative 13!” *Out and About* (March 1978): 16.

¹⁵⁰ They even employed the same language, charging that gay men were “aping” women with sexist performances for entertainment purposes. See Chapter Two.

¹⁵¹ Randall M. Fisher, *Rhetoric and American Democracy: Black Protest Through Vietnam Dissent* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 185.

Chapter 4

“We Are Everywhere”: Lesbian-Feminist Visibility and Coalition Politics at the 1977 National Women’s Conference

On August 26, 1973—the fifty-third anniversary of the nineteenth amendment securing women’s right to vote—lesbian-feminist activist Ivy Bottini stepped to the podium to address a National Organization for Women audience in California. There, she argued that despite all of the progress feminists had won since gaining the franchise, they were still plagued by “the fear within.”¹ For Bottini, “the suspicion” of lesbianism or the “guilt by association” not only hurt lesbians, but “cause[d] women in the movement to kill each other psychically” and oppress one another. In short, she contended, “the word ‘lesbian’ unleashes . . . fear.”² That fear, she argued, of “not being feminine enough in the eyes of society, friends and family” and of having one’s sexuality questioned was at the heart of the struggle between lesbians and straight women within the women’s movement.³ That fear, sometimes exercised through lesbian-baiting, made coalitional work with feminists increasingly difficult for lesbian-feminists who sought liberation on their own terms.⁴ That fear, grounded in the link between sexism and homophobia, plagued the women’s movement throughout the decade.

The “homophobia [that] held women in fear” in women’s liberation contributed to a series of obstacles for lesbian-feminists, including invisibility, negative stereotypes, and exclusionary politics.⁵ Not only did lesbians historically threaten the public face of the women’s movement, but the very words “dyke” or “lesbian” threatened to inhibit the empowerment of many women who entered male-dominated areas like politics, education, and athletics. As a result, coalitions with other social movements (see Chapter

Three) were often difficult to forge and sustain, especially with straight feminists in the women's movement. As discussed in Chapter Two, while many lesbian-feminists viewed their connection with women's liberation as central to their identity formation process, others preferred to keep their relationship with women's liberation on a coalitional basis.⁶ Much of the struggle for lesbian-feminists involved fighting for acknowledgment of their existence and significance to the women's movement beyond that of scapegoat and "lavender menace."

Despite the constraints, lesbian-feminists continued to view the women's movement as an important coalitional relationship and as a viable platform for lesbian-feminist visibility. Because visibility remained a key element to the process of gaining political and cultural acknowledgement, lesbian-feminists took many opportunities to make themselves visible and their identities a public force as they worked in coalition with other members of the women's movement.⁷ Like Bottini, they would use the opportunity to forge relationships with such feminist organizations as NOW, National Women's Political Caucus, and various other groups at women's conferences around the country.

Near the end of the decade, a particularly auspicious opportunity for national, mainstream visibility presented itself: the National Women's Conference in observance of International Women's Year (referenced as IWY or Houston).⁸ As an unprecedented government-sponsored gathering of women from all "walks of life" around America, IWY would become a "watershed moment" in feminist and women's history.⁹ The conference came at a critical moment for Equal Rights Amendment supporters (and detractors), with only sixteen months remaining until the ratification deadline. Yet even

there, the same fear that contributed to lesbian-baiting and purging practices within the women's movement earlier in the decade persisted in discourse that identified lesbians as a *distraction* and *threat* to the political future of the Equal Rights Amendment and the goals of the conference itself.¹⁰ In many ways, efforts to avoid the "lesbian issue" demonstrated the lingering homophobia plaguing the women's movement.¹¹

Leading up to and during the conference, lesbian-feminists transformed the rhetorical constraints swirling around their participation in the National Conference into a rhetorical opportunity for making a case for their own identity as U.S. citizens through coalitional politics. They enhanced their own visibility as coalitional partners with women's rights activists and countered the (expected) conservative backlash rhetoric. Captured in the phrase, "We are everywhere," lesbian-feminists used their physical presence at the conference to retroactively *queer* women's (and feminist) history. They called attention to their historical and contemporary presence within American womanhood and highlighted their tireless work alongside straight women over the course of the women's movement. This visibility signified not only cultural significance, but also radical political power. Like the visibility for which lesbian-feminists advocated in the context of gay liberation (see Chapter Three), it was not simply about "presence;" it was also about a *political* declaration, a visibility couched in a claim for lesbian civil rights. Even though not all lesbian-feminists agreed on the same path for achieving social change (i.e., liberal/establishment vs. radical/liberation perspectives), they all politicized and enhanced their collective visibility.¹² By engaging in an internal and external approach to activism at IWY, lesbian-feminists confronted the sexist and homophobic

rhetoric by foregrounding their identities and demonstrating the generative power of coalition politics.

Houston marked a momentary yet powerful victory for lesbian-feminists in the context of the women's liberation movement and offered a platform for public visibility more broadly. This chapter analyzes lesbian-feminist activism that took place before and during the IWY conference in November 1977 as detailed in lesbian-feminist periodicals, mainstream news media coverage, government-commissioned accounts of the conference proceedings, and in lesbian-feminist archival ephemera, speeches, and IWY organizing materials. In order to understand the concerted efforts to secure lesbian-feminist involvement and the dynamics of the two-pronged lesbian visibility efforts at IWY, the first section details the lengthy political process that gave rise to the conference.

International Woman's Year: The National Commission and the Houston Conference

In June of 1975, at the International Woman's Year Conference in Mexico City, the United Nations approved a World Plan of Action to improve conditions for women. The international community had turned its attention to the discrimination and inequalities facing women around the world. When the UN declared the decade-long focus on improving conditions for women on a global scale, officially called the "United Nations Decade for Women,"¹³ it placed pressure on U.S. officials to carry through with American obligations to the project. The global work that would take place over the course of the decade was intended to address equality, development, and peace.¹⁴

From that point on, the IWY commission and the subsequent conference enjoyed extensive support from the federal and state levels of government. Early on, President Gerald Ford established the National Commission on the Observance of International

Woman's Year on January 9, 1975, which promised to create committees that dealt with "particular aspects of discrimination based on sex."¹⁵ Executive Order 11832 called the commission to "take as its action agenda the relevant parts of the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly." The EO ultimately called upon an International Women's Year Commission "to promote equality between men and women; to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort . . . and to recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations and cooperation among States and to the strengthening of world peace." In addition to state- and territory-level commissions, President Ford established an interdepartmental government task force that charged one man and one woman from each government agency to produce a report and to identify recommendations for improving the status of women.¹⁶

In accordance with the EO, congressional representatives Bella Abzug (D-NY) and Patsy Mink (D-HI) drafted legislation to appoint Commissioners and appropriate \$5 million dollars to fund the IWY commission, state meetings, and National Women's Conference to be held in November 1977.¹⁷ The IWY commission next held hearings and conducted interviews around the country, resulting in a set of 115 recommendations to address gender discrimination and inequality in the private and public sectors. The recommendations were published by the State Department in a 1976 report entitled . . . *To Form a More Perfect Union . . . Justice for American Women*.¹⁸ With the formal report in hand, the Commission held state IWY meetings across the country in the months leading up to the National Conference. Collectively, those meetings were attended by an estimated 150,000 men and women in all fifty states and the U.S.

Territories, including Puerto Rico and Guam.¹⁹ At the meetings, attendees held workshops to discuss the core issues that emerged in the report and elect the 1,403 delegates and alternates to represent their respective state or territory during the Houston conference in November of 1977. Those delegates would be tasked with debating and voting on each of the eventual twenty-six planks that made it into the document called “The National Plan of Action,” which would “pass the recommendations [of IWY] along to the President, the Congress, and the American people.”²⁰

The National Plan at the center of the conference indicated the breadth of inequalities and discrimination facing women.²¹ The planks covered discrimination facing women in the arts and the humanities, business, education, elective and appointive office, employment, health, insurance, international affairs, child care and custody, welfare practices, and poverty. It also specified the bevy of challenges facing battered women, disabled women, minority women, homemakers, older women, and more.²² There was healthy discussion and debate surrounding the details of these planks, especially those addressing the concerns of minority women, homemakers, and welfare recipients.²³ Some of the most heated debate centered on the planks that called for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), supported reproductive freedom, and affirmed the validity of lesbian civil rights.²⁴

Controversy about the conference itself ramped up over the summer as states held IWY meetings from May to October of 1977. The increasing tension focused on the forthcoming planks and the overt feminist rhetoric of gender equality at the root of IWY. This galvanized conservative opponents who attempted (and succeeded) in taking over several state meetings by blocking pro-feminist resolutions and flooding delegate

elections. As a result of such actions, several state delegations represented an overwhelmingly conservative and antifeminist perspective while other state delegations appeared to be more balanced or decidedly feminist.²⁵ Those conflicts at the state meetings contributed to an expectation that feminists and conservatives would stage a similar battle in Houston.

IWY epitomized establishment politics with a top-down approach to addressing women's rights.²⁶ The entire process emphasized legitimacy—from the United Nations declaration to the formal endorsement statements issued by the president, to the congressional support and federal appropriations, to the multi-tiered meeting process and a conference built upon parliamentary procedure. Some observers called it a great experiment in American democracy; others viewed it as a test of whether women could actually come together in a formalized political process. Still others, especially radical feminists and radical lesbian-feminists, expressed skepticism or dismissed the conference altogether, viewing it as little more than a “ruse” that portended government support of women's rights without actualizing such support through substantive change. In particular, the IWY process repeated efforts to develop a long-range public policy strategy to address gender inequality compiled by private sector and women's movement coalitions like the Women's Activist Alliance and the National Women's Agenda Coalition.²⁷ Additionally, as IWY's delegates voted on and presented recommendations to the President and the Congress, they also rhetorically crafted a narrative of American womanhood—past, present, and future—in feminist terms.

For lesbian-feminists, the National Women's Conference represented a major opportunity for visibility; inclusion in the IWY process and the National Plan meant a

chance to be truly part of a broader narrative about womanhood in the United States. The massive visibility strategy began on the state level, and focused on electing pro-lesbian rights and openly lesbian delegates at the state meetings. Those visibility campaigns successfully added lesbian rights to the set of resolutions in the National Plan that went before the voting delegates. Later, their strategy focused on simply getting lesbians to Houston. Once there, lesbian-feminists worked in coalition with women from around the country to affirm their civil rights while others rallied outside to challenge the establishment politics of IWY. Whether working within the IWY process or exerting external pressure, lesbian-feminists spoke back to the conservative, lesbian-baiting, and expediency arguments that dismissed lesbians' inclusion in the national conversation about women's rights. In particular, their visibility campaign occurred in the context of IWY's narrative of womanhood, told through the history of early feminists' struggle for woman suffrage and the ensuing battle over who represented America's "majority" in 1977. The discourse surrounding IWY rhetorically crafted a specific historical legacy upon which women could ground their agenda for the future.

Establishing the Significance of IWY

Three themes—history, progress, and diversity—dominated the discourse surrounding IWY and worked in concert to assert the historical consequence of the conference. Those themes resonated through the media coverage and speeches delivered at IWY, and endured in the reflections written by participants and observers over the months and years that followed. Already poised to be a huge media event for women in general, the conference was rhetorically positioned as a "test" of the women's movement. The conference would come to represent a conflict and confrontation between feminists

in the women's movement and conservative opposition as well as a display of the internal divisions around race, class, sexuality, geography, and political ideology. The themes bolstered the significance of the work done by women in Houston to claim their legitimacy as citizens and political actors in the American democratic process. Creating this narrative of American womanhood's past success and future at IWY provided a basis for the lesbian visibility campaign.

History

History, the most prominent theme, framed the conference and affirmed the importance of the work taking place there. The conference coincided with the year-long celebration of the nation's bicentennial. IWY Commission head Abzug saw the timing as a wonderful opportunity to assess and address the status of women and recover their historic significance within the broader narrative of American history. According to Abzug, the goal of the national conference was to "recognize contributions of women to the development of the country . . . assess the process in promoting equality . . . and assess the role of women in the nation."²⁸ Because the bicentennial offered a "year of celebration and self-appraisal," she continued, the conference was well-positioned to join in that process.²⁹

IWY not only addressed women in American history, multiple leaders explicitly linked it with the first Women's Rights Convention held in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. The rhetoric of early women's rights heroes, especially Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, was centrally featured in remarks at the conference.³⁰ American author, poet, and IWY Commissioner Maya Angelou, for instance, recited a new version of the "Declaration of Sentiments," crystallizing a rhetorical link to the 1848

“Declaration of Sentiments” delivered and signed in Seneca Falls (which had drawn its rhetorical power from the Declaration of Independence).³¹

This new declaration captured the historic gravity and legacy of the gathering. It read, in part, “We American women view our history with equanimity. We allow the positive achievements to inspire us and the negative omissions to teach us We American women unfold our future today. We promise to accept nothing less than justice for every woman.”³² The great-niece of famous women’s rights activist Susan B. Anthony’s, also named Susan B. Anthony, was present at the National Conference and advocated for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment to “fulfill her namesake’s life’s work.”³³ Quoting her great-aunt in her remarks from the floor in support of the ERA, she declared, “Failure is impossible.” The conference was even brought to order by Susan B. Anthony’s gavel, on loan from the Smithsonian Institution for the occasion.³⁴ In addition, images of suffragists marching in parades, early women’s rights ephemera, and other historical references featured prominently in conference materials.³⁵ The rhetorical chain across generations was not lost on journalists covering the event. George Will, writing in the *Washington Post*, assumed a familiar patronizing tone often used to cover women’s rights activities:

It was a long, winding road that led to Houston, where the [National Women’s Conference] was, predictably and poignantly, an exercise in that touching earnestness that liberal reformers bring to the task of voting the dawn of the new world. Addressing one another as ‘sister’ and invoking the spirit of their ‘foremothers,’ they tried to wash from society the grime of irrationality with a cleansing rain of resolutions.³⁶

The explicit link to the women's rights "foremothers" was emphasized by literal embodiment of that legacy and the immense legislative gains that had been made for women in the 1960s and 1970s.

The clearest embodied link between women's rights foremothers and the second wave involved a torch relay where women, young and old, carried a "Torch of Freedom" over a span of approximately 2,600 miles from Seneca Falls to Houston.³⁷ By connecting the distant geographic spaces, lengthy historical time periods, and generations of women, the relay was a literal enactment of the conference slogan, "American Women on the Move." It rhetorically signaled the "arrival" of women's rights on the national stage. The lineage to an earlier era of women's rights activism was referenced through the bodies of the young women who displayed the success of Title IX and the expansion of women's athletics, which embodied the present and the future of women in America. The torch relay also rhetorically connected the culturally disparate locations of both historic gatherings, lending additional legitimacy to the conference in Houston, which was, at times, referred to as "Seneca Falls of the South."³⁸

Progress

By claiming its legacy in the earlier women's movement and using the athletic bodies of young women to synecdochally mark the present and future of the movement, the IWY commission and conference centralized another theme: progressive movement. Using the history of women's rights imbued the meeting in Houston with the sense of the *arrival* of the women's movement. The emergent second theme of progressive movement specifically refuted interpretations of the conference as a point of closure. Indeed, Ruth Rosen argues that the media frequently declared the "death" or "end" of feminism in the

United States.³⁹ Yet the conference slogan—“American women on the move”—suggested forward, progressive movement and a freedom of *movement* in both an athletic and political sense. This rhetoric of forward progress bolstered the arguments made in the National Plan and in support of the meeting in general. Enacted by the torch-relay, and echoed in the discourse at IWY conference, the progress theme gestured to the arguments of the mid-nineteenth century and used the passage of institutional efforts such as Title IX and women’s athletic bodies as evidence of progress.⁴⁰

The theme of progress positioned IWY to claim the arrival of the women’s movement in a way that signaled its shift from the fringes to the mainstream.⁴¹ This move supported the argument that the women’s movement represented the “majority” of American women. Much of the news coverage that pointed to this shift indicated the clear movement away from the radicalism of the 1960s toward a more moderate and *palatable* politics. For example, Bill Curry and Megan Rosenfeld, writing for the *Washington Post* on November 19, 1977, made the following observation:

A decade after a handful of feminists symbolically discarded bras and girdles in a ridiculed gesture of independence, thousands of women gathered here today for a massive assertion of their claim that the American’s women’s movement now speaks for a majority. The four-day National Women’s Conference . . . is viewed by all sides as a crucial test of that claim.⁴²

Ellen Goodman, writing on November 17 in the *Washington Post*, made similar claims of the watershed moment that the conference posed for the women’s movement: “What is at stake in Houston is the perception of political power. Everyone agrees that the conference will be a symbol, a message, a test of clout.”⁴³ That clout mattered, especially with the

“male majority who make public policy.”⁴⁴ David Broder, writing for the *Washington Post*, noted that its arrival in mainstream politics could make the women’s movement a new legitimate political partner, for both “liberal and conservative coalitions.”⁴⁵ Despite the fact that conservatives convened a “Pro-Family Rally” to prove their claim to represent the “majority” only eight blocks away from the convention center, the IWY conference offered compelling evidence of broad mainstream support, using the surprising diversity represented at the conference as evidence.

Diversity

Diversity, the third major theme, constituted the Houston conference as a space that brought together a wide range of women from across geographic, economic, racial, ethnic, language, ability, and ideological divides. In the official conference proceedings, entitled *The Spirit of Houston*, Caroline Bird argued that the “insistence on democratic diversity proved to be the key to the success of the Houston meeting, with its unprecedented cross-section of women.”⁴⁶ In part, the state meetings drove that diversity, drawing “together women from all walks of life and political perspectives” and encouraging “every woman [to have] her say.”⁴⁷ According to Patricia Benavidez, a lesbian-feminist and Washington state delegate, that process made Houston “a kaleidoscope of American womanhood.”⁴⁸ The emphasis on diversity revealed not only the common experiences of gender based oppression by women around the nation, but also the varying perspectives on how to change that oppressive condition. In part, the conference showcased how women could come together and “overrid[e] . . . differences in race, lifestyle, class, and, sometimes, even opinion.”⁴⁹

The diversity evidenced the mainstream appeal of the women's movement and sought to put persistent stereotypes to rest. Judy Klemesrud, writing in the *New York Times* in November 1977, described the variety of delegates "wear[ing] blue jeans and T-shirts, designer dresses with Gucci bags, muu-muus and leis. They are doctors and welfare mothers, lawyers and farmers, housewives and nuns, secretaries and factory workers."⁵⁰ According to some, the diversity refuted "the notion that the women's movement appeals only to Easterners or liberal Democrats or affluent suburbanites or any other narrow slice of society."⁵¹ Some argued that the presence of Republicans, including "former First Lady Betty Ford, current Republican National Committee Chairman Mary Crisp, former National Chairman Mary Louise Smith, and former Co-Chairman Elly Peterson, along with more than 250 Republican grass-roots delegates and alternates," indicated the women's movement's shift into the mainstream.⁵²

Yet the delegates at Houston were far from wholly supportive of feminist goals. Indeed, conservative and anti-feminist presence in Houston manifested in three ways: within IWY, in large and small protests outside of the coliseum during the conference proceedings, and across town at an organized Pro-Family Rally held on Saturday, November 20. Conservative women and men at IWY voiced their opposition to the most controversial planks in the National Plan and claimed to represent the majority of Americans, especially women.⁵³ They participated in the debates on the resolutions and signaled their anti-feminist positions by wearing buttons, hats, or ribbons, and carrying signs.⁵⁴ A few conservative participants made it clear that they desired to have their voices heard at IWY in order to prevent a lesbian takeover. For example, three middle-aged women from San Jose, California told *Washington Post* journalists Curry and

Rosenfeld that they were there because the government supported the event and “because we’re out of the closet straights who want to make sure that lesbians do not dominate the conference.”⁵⁵ The concern about lesbian presence at the conference emerged in other media coverage. Indeed, though the conference challenged “the charge by Mrs. [Phyllis] Schlafly and others that the movement is socially radical or ‘anti-family,’” it did highlight how “support for publicly funded abortions and for the civil rights of homosexuals . . . caused the most uneasiness among the delegates.”⁵⁶ Despite the ideological diversity, it was clear that the support for the Equal Rights Amendment dominated the political imbalance among the delegates.⁵⁷

The diversity of “American womanhood” present at IWY created a critical opportunity for lesbian-feminists to heighten their own visibility by demonstrating how interlocking systems of oppression included sexuality—for all women. By identifying how homophobia added to, co-constituted, and exacerbated oppression on the basis of sexism, racism, classism, ageism, and ableism, lesbians were able to show how women from all walks of life (represented at the conference), shared more than they knew with lesbians. The need for coalitional support catalyzed critical collaborative work across differences.⁵⁸ For lesbian-feminists, the sexual preference plank gave them the opportunity to detail the ways in which sexism and homophobia affected lesbians who were “everywhere” among “all women.” At an event that was already being hailed for its embrace of the “kaleidoscope” or “rainbow” of American womanhood, it was up to lesbian-feminists to make the case for how sexuality mattered within that scope of gendered experience. It allowed them to strategically engage intersectionality to make a case for why audience members should recognize a common experience that many

women faced—homophobia and lesbian-baiting. Using intersectionality to appeal to the wide variety of coalitional partners also bolstered their rhetoric of visibility—“We Are Everywhere.”

In short, the three themes that emerged from the discourse about IWY, promulgated by the IWY commission, the news media, and the participants themselves, confirmed IWY’s historical and political significance. Moreover, while the news media coverage framed the conference as a moment for unprecedented collaboration as well as confrontation among women who differed ideologically and on the basis of identity, lesbian-feminists sought to strategically capitalize on that intersectionality of experience represented at Houston in order to enhance their own visibility to those audiences of women.⁵⁹ The coalition building, particularly the work that ended up supporting lesbian-rights, started long before Houston, grounded in the grassroots efforts at the state meetings.

Before IWY, lesbian-feminists across the country embarked on a large-scale visibility campaign in which they encouraged the members of their community to attend IWY meetings and the National Conference in Houston. The state meetings and IWY conference offered a context in which lesbian-feminist identity rhetorics could be amplified by the coalitional relationships with feminists (and even conservative opposition). Lesbian-feminists crafted coalitions with feminist women across a spectrum of identities to launch their large-scale visibility campaign at the state meetings.⁶⁰ That visibility, realized by lesbian delegates and non-delegates alike, endeavored to put lesbian civil rights issues on the national map and declared lesbians as part of the “national imaginary” of American womanhood.⁶¹ Their campaign demonstrates the ways in which

both coalition building and identity politics worked in tandem to heighten visibility and articulate their legitimacy as a community.

Lesbian Visibility and Inclusion at IWY State Meetings

In advance of the National Women's Conference, lesbian-feminists launched a visibility strategy that garnered support from women around the country and used IWY as an opportunity to assert lesbian voices and presence on a national stage. That strategy occurred in two primary modes. First, by working within the IWY process to gain representation among the delegates and in the production of the National Plan. And, second, by working outside of that process through the physical presence of non-delegate lesbians at the National Conference. The first mode, begun during the months of IWY state meetings, prioritized the inclusion of lesbian-rights resolutions in the forthcoming National Plan and the election of openly or pro-lesbian delegates to represent each state during the conference. The second mode dovetailed with the political process by engineering a bussing campaign to ensure a numerically significant and tangible lesbian-feminist presence at IWY. Taken together, these parts of the visibility strategy combined internal and external exertions of pressure to ensure that lesbians were not only represented in words, but also in visible presence.⁶² The strategy capitalized on IWY as a platform to launch lesbian-feminist visibility through the coalition work with one another *and* with straight women. Even though such increased presence exacerbated the conservative backlash, the strategy was successful in many ways.

Three driving forces organized lesbians for IWY, demonstrating the importance of coalition building within lesbian-feminist communities and across political ideological differences.⁶³ The first source of support was the Houston-based lesbian-feminist

collective known as the Lesberadas, led by Pokey Anderson, Claire Noonan, and other Houston-area lesbians. They explained the symbolism of their organization in the following way: “A desperado is an outlaw. An outlaw is one who is put outside the law, exiled and who is deprived of the law’s benefits and protection, a fugitive. A Lesberada is a lesbian outlaw. All lesbians are outlaws.”⁶⁴ Defined by their outsider status and approach, the Lesberadas proved to be a key source of support for the lesbian-feminist presence at Houston, for delegates and non-delegates alike. Kathleen Boyle, a Seattle area lesbian-feminist reported in *Out And About* that the “Houston Lesberadas provided housing, connections, workshops—even some food—for hundreds of women and were farsighted enough to make available counselors for any woman who had the need of one.”⁶⁵

The California IWY Support Coalition, which had proven itself at the California state IWY meeting, was a second source of support for the visibility effort. Both Lesberadas and the California IWY Support Coalition developed specifically around the IWY commission, state meetings, and conference. The Support Coalition in particular pressed the commission to include the breadth of lesbian-feminist opinions in the process. The National Gay Task Force, through the leadership of its co-director and IWY commissioner, Jean O’Leary, comprised the third major source of support for the lesbian visibility in Houston. In contrast to the others, the NGTF represented an institutional form of support.

These organizations drove the lesbian visibility effort at IWY in accordance with the two-pronged approach: the California Coalition and NGTF worked within the established political process associated with IWY while the California Coalition joined

Lesberadas and others to exert pressure for visibility from outside of those structures. The Lesberadas embraced an “outlaw” ethic, the NGTF assumed a liberal ethic that emphasized civil rights, and the California coalition capitalized on the power of both perspectives.⁶⁶

Much of the early activism focused on gaining visibility within the IWY process. It began at the state meetings where attendees discussed, debated, and voted on resolutions sent forward to the IWY national commission and elected delegates to represent them at the National Conference. Women involved in the lesbian-visibility effort needed to convince others of the need to participate in the process. Part of this effort necessitated coalition formation with other activists including straight feminists and gay men. The desire to achieve visibility and vocal representation was evident in the rhetoric used to motivate lesbian-feminists to participate. One of the primary strategies to persuade lesbians to join the IWY effort highlighted the importance of their voice in assessing the status of American women. On a bright yellow flyer distributed before the California state IWY meeting held on the campus of the University of Southern California, for example, members of the California IWY Support Coalition explained,

The federal government has decided that 1977 is the year to ‘find out’ what the women want. To do this it is sponsoring an International Women’s Year (IWY) Conference in every state with the climax being a national IWY conference in Houston, Texas this November . . . It will be the task of these women [at the California IWY meeting] to determine the issues and adopt the resolutions[,] which will reflect the California viewpoint at Houston as well as to elect a slate of 96 delegates to carry the resolutions there.⁶⁷

Though they questioned the purpose of IWY (in the wry comment about the federal government's sudden interest in women's civil rights concerns), the Coalition perceived the process as an important opportunity for enhancing lesbian representation.

The Support Coalition further articulated a rhetoric of representation that sublimated political differences in favor of a unified voice of identity—an important visibility strategy within the IWY process. Headlining one flyer, they proclaimed, “LESBIANS MUST HAVE A VOICE AT THE NATIONAL WOMEN’S YEAR CONFERENCE.” The leaders also called upon readers to “BE PART OF THAT VOICE! SUPPORT RESOLUTIONS IMPORTANT TO YOU! VOTE FOR THE LESBIAN SLATE!” Suggesting a unified voice among lesbians, the coalition members argued, “We as lesbians represent a defined minority of the women’s population. It is our responsibility to guarantee that our viewpoint is strongly and clearly represented.” Their argument suggested that lesbians could not count on anyone else except their own community members for support. Lesbian-feminists could enact their visibility by their physical presence and unified “viewpoint.” While the notion of an easily unified viewpoint may not have accounted for the variety of political perspectives harbored by lesbian-feminists, it demonstrated how such differences were submerged in favor of coalition-building, expediency, and visibility. Divided they lacked visibility; together they could make their presence felt within the conference and their identity part of the coalition of women's voices. Attendees were consequently called upon to take part in particular workshops at the California state meeting and to “[elect] lesbians concerned with lesbian issues to carry our viewpoint to Houston.” Lesbian-feminists would not engage in this visibility effort alone, the Support Coalition promised, as it asked readers

to identify those members of the community with an “active interest in representing us in Houston.” That representation would ensure the hearing of political demands on behalf of the broader national lesbian community. The Coalition maintained, “your vote for them [community members who supported lesbian issues] as delegates as well as your vote on resolutions for the end of discrimination based on sexual preference and the deletion of all archaic oppressive sexual laws as between consenting adults is DESPERATELY NEEDED.”⁶⁸ Thus, coalition building occurred across lesbian-feminists factions and other supportive groups, including feminists and gay men.

Appealing to coalition politics did not necessarily diminish the centrality of lesbian identity in the IWY process. For some, including members of the California Support Coalition, building coalitions with supportive women and men could enhance lesbian-feminist representation. Yet appeals that emerged in the discourse surrounding other state IWY meetings called upon lesbians to take responsibility for representing themselves. Calling for lesbian-feminist participation at the New York state meeting in Albany in July 1977, activists Cheryl Adams and Jean O’Leary argued, “without a strong lesbian-feminist presence . . . our issues and our needs will consciously or unconsciously be overlooked.”⁶⁹ They asked lesbian-feminists to “spread the word and encourage Lesbians to join the fight for full participation in the goals of International Women’s Year.”⁷⁰ The appeal for voice and representation in the IWY process addressed lesbian-feminist communities around the country. In part, it was about being included in the conversation at all. On another level, it was about not being excluded from the arguments made for what needed to be done for women. Writing in *Out and About*, W.D. argued, “Never before has there been such a singular focus or opportunity to express our cause;

never has there been the interest in lesbian rights. It is up to us to take advantage of this [forum] to let the world know who we are and why they don't know us or our issues — and to give them the straight gay story.”⁷¹ Houston represented a critical moment for such lesbian-feminist presence on such a public stage.

A key aspect of the early visibility strategy focused on electing pro-lesbian, pro-ERA, and pro-feminist delegates to the National Conference, an indication of the coalitional relationships undergirding the effort. In California, the advocacy effort resulted in the inclusion of thirteen “up front Lesbians” on the feminist-dominated “orange slate” of 101 delegate nominees that “won handily” at the state IWY meeting.⁷² The slate of delegates included the endorsement by a broad coalition of feminist, gay, lesbian, and other social movement organizations including, “Los Angeles NOW, the National Gay Task Force, the Gay Rights National Lobby, *The Lesbian Tide*, Gay Community Services Center, Olivia Records, Women on Wheels, Alcoholism Center for Women.”⁷³ Because they gained support for the feminist and lesbian-friendly slate of IWY delegates, the *Lesbian News* staff declared it a “win” for feminists. They noted, “California will be well-represented in Houston at the national meeting in November.”⁷⁴ Of the lesbians at the state meeting, the staff members commented, “It was good to see that Lesbians were very well represented at the entire event and were vital to the success of it all.” To them, coalitional activism or “unity with straight feminist sisters and Gay brothers,” paid off.⁷⁵ Lesbians led the way at the IWY state meeting in California, and those spearheading such organization hoped their efforts would be repeated in other state meetings still to come during the summer of 1977.⁷⁶

The lesbian visibility campaign, an effort fueled by a coalitional ethic, responded to the invisibility of lesbians within other social movements. They would do so by capitalizing on the National Conference as a platform from which they could assert their own voice. Those leading the charge for visibility in Houston explained in one press release published in *Out And About*, “We see our organizing closely linked with the struggles of poor and minority women and intent to coalesce and build mutual support with them.”⁷⁷ Such statements articulated the coalitional relationship with women who were similarly fighting for representation at the conference and the broader national conversation about women in America. The IWY conference convened around shared gender identity to make a statement about American womanhood. Consequently, lesbian-feminists sought to complicate that narrative through an appeal to intersectionality. Indeed, while lesbians were sometimes included as a mode of difference under the theme of diversity, rarely did that inclusion cut across multiple modes of difference (i.e., race, class, or ability). As such, the voices of lesbians of color like Margaret Sloan and Patricia Benevidez were crucial in articulating those connections for coalitional success.

The state IWY meeting process grew increasingly heated and controversial; lesbian-feminist activists wrote that they were troubled by the organizational prowess that the conservative opposition displayed at meeting after meeting. They used those concerns to motivate action among their membership. The battles between feminists and conservatives at the state meetings foreshadowed the looming conflict in Houston, especially around the trifecta of controversial plank issues. One flyer that circulated in advance of the California state meeting crystallized the stakes of their representation by invoking the names of the anti-feminist and anti-gay “enemies.” “Women and Men!” the

heading began, “Stop [the] Attempt by Anita Bryant and Phyllis Schlafly to TAKE OVER the California International Women’s Year Conference,” pointing to the “Issues at Stake: Gay Rights, ERA, Abortion [and] our lives.”⁷⁸ In California, thousands more than the expected 6,000 people registered for the state meeting, with one estimate claiming that feminists outnumbered “[Anita] Bryant and [Phyllis] Schlafly forces . . . perhaps 8-1.”⁷⁹ In response, lesbian-feminist activists created a Lesbian Caucus and operated a “nerve center” at the meeting, which used runners to relay information between the concurrent workshop sessions in order to defeat conservative resolutions. The strategy proved effective, as feminists and gay men were able to defeat an anti-abortion resolution in one workshop and prevented “conservative resolutions from making it to the general session.” The *Lesbian News* staff noted that although the “extremes”—pro-lesbian/pro-feminists versus conservatives—were well represented at the meeting’s workshops, there seemed to be few moderates, what they called “middle of the roaders.”⁸⁰

The pro-lesbian and pro-feminist coalitions did not experience wholesale success as conservatives proved their strength during more state meetings. In Georgia, Vicki Gabriner lamented the stonewalling at the Georgia IWY state meeting, where lesbians were “only allowed to present a minority report, and had to fight like hell to even be allowed to do a workshop.”⁸¹ Some lesbian-feminists engaged in ferocious battles with conservative opposition who flooded the meeting and voted as a bloc. According to lesbian-feminists present at the Washington State IWY meeting in Ellensburg, over 2,000 women, supposedly there “on the orders of the Mormon Church,” not only arrived to register at the last minute, but were very organized with an explicit plan for “which workshops to go to, what to say, and how to vote.”⁸² It became quite clear early on,

according to a lesbian-feminist activist named Cookie, that “defeating pro-lesbian rights resolutions was a Mormon priority.” At each of the Lesbian Rights workshops, she explained, Mormon women outnumbered lesbians, spoke in opposition to pro-lesbian rights resolutions, and repeatedly out-voted them to defeat the passage of the lesbian-rights resolutions to the general session. In the workshop dedicated to “lesbian child-custody” concerns, conservative women outnumbered lesbians 75 to 45” and “350 to 250 at the lesbian rights plenary” session.⁸³

Unlike the success at the California meeting, the contingent of conservative women in Washington proved to be a force to be reckoned with. There, they voted to defeat resolutions supporting “the ERA, the right to control your own reproductive organs, lesbian rights, childcare, affirmative action . . . Education resolutions and handicapped women’s resolutions . . . and the Ethnic Women of Color group statement from all the [Third] world women caucuses.”⁸⁴ The furor created at the Washington State meeting initially left the delegate slate in question, though it was soon determined that the pro-ERA slate ultimately won in the end. Cookie’s report on the devastating blow to lesbian-feminist efforts to gain inclusion in the IWY process made it clear that Houston would very likely shape up to be yet another battleground with clear winners and losers. In short, if lesbian-feminists could not make their voices heard through the intricacies of the IWY process, other tactics would be necessary. Kathleen Boyle, a lesbian-feminist in Washington, felt that the “hell” lesbians experienced at Ellensburg meeting should inspire lesbians to go to Houston, even if not as official delegates to IWY.⁸⁵ As Kathy noted, “I believe [Washington] lesbians should protest our recent oppressions loudly and publicly at the national conference.”⁸⁶ The contentious state meetings demonstrated the success of

the lesbian visibility effort within the bounds of the IWY process and presaged the challenges that awaited lesbians in Houston.

Another large part of the visibility effort within the IWY process revolved around the forthcoming inclusion of lesbian rights in the IWY Commission's National Plan, the document of resolutions at the center of debate at the National Conference. Jean O'Leary spearheaded the effort to pass the lesbian rights plank. As a co-director of the first national gay civil rights organization, the National Gay Task Force, and an openly lesbian IWY Commissioner, O'Leary used her leadership role to survey the state commissioners and assess the likely breakdown of delegates around the most controversial issues (i.e., abortion rights, lesbian rights, the ERA, and state/federally funded childcare).⁸⁷

O'Leary's efforts enjoyed institutional support from the newly developed Women's Caucus at the NGTF. According to one NGTF press release, the new Caucus was "a formally constituted body of lesbians and lesbian-feminists" focused on "actively foster[ing] lesbian visibility within the gay movement and especially within the National Gay Task Force," and "facilitat[ing] a lesbian presence in all women's issues, projects, and organizations throughout the country." The Caucus alone demonstrated the solidifying commitment among some lesbian-feminists to "reflect our commitment to feminist principles and to the integration of the battles against both sexism and heterosexism."⁸⁸ The development of the Caucus indicated the commitment among lesbians to gain a foothold of visibility within both the gay movement and the women's movement on a national level. O'Leary's leadership within NGTF, the Women's Caucus, and the IWY Commission provided her with the financial and institutional resources to lead the visibility campaign at the National Conference.

O’Leary and other members of the Women’s Caucus led the “coordination effort for full lesbian participation in IWY state meetings as well as the National Conference.”⁸⁹ To accomplish this goal, O’Leary, along with Ginny Vida, the media director at NGTF, solicited feedback from the state IWY commissioners and participants regarding the outcomes of their meetings. In a press release, O’Leary stated,

We know that many lesbians have been active in state conferences—holding workshops, passing resolutions, and getting lesbian delegates as well as feminists sympathetic to lesbian issues elected. We know and have participated in many of these activities. But we need to hear from every state in order to get a complete list of resolutions passed concerning lesbians to know what delegates are interested in working with us at the national IWY conference.⁹⁰

Women wrote in from state after state, informing O’Leary not only of the demographic break-down of their delegates, but the perspectives those states would bring to the planks in the forthcoming proposed Plan of Action. For example, Kerry Woodward, a lesbian-feminist with The Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights, wrote O’Leary to “share information about the Minnesota Women’s Meeting.” She wrote, “Lesbians fared well as delegates . . . of the 26 delegates elected, three are openly declared Lesbians Most of the other delegates are feminists in support of Lesbian/Gay issues.”⁹¹ According to O’Leary, a “concerted presence at the government-sponsored International Women’s Year National Conference . . . [would] make the rights of lesbians a core issue, not simply a minority concern.”⁹²

Working within the IWY process worked in two key ways. Lesbian-feminist activism at thirty state meetings sent lesbian rights resolutions to the IWY commission

for inclusion in the National Plan of Action—a document that otherwise likely lacked specific language of lesbian civil rights among the chief concerns. Second, lesbians were able to gain representation among the delegates, with estimates ranging from 60-70 openly lesbian women. Despite the success of lesbian-feminist efforts to increase visibility under the terms of the IWY process, however, powerful and vocal conservative backlash at the state meetings blocked pro-lesbian resolutions and the election of openly lesbian delegates, which made demonstration and protest increasingly necessary.

The state meetings further revealed a rising tension facing lesbian-feminists between their desire for visibility/inclusion and the draw of expediency associated with other feminist resolutions, including the ERA and reproductive rights. This tension meant that not all lesbian-feminists approached the upcoming IWY conference in Houston with an agreed-upon sense of unity and positivity. Some referred to the resistance they had historically experienced when bringing lesbian concerns to feminist audiences (like NOW chapters) and worried that Houston would simply repeat such betrayal.⁹³ As W.D., writing in *Out and About* in November 1977, explained:

It will be up to us [lesbians] to confront those who would deny us and our sisters our civil and moral rights; it will be up to us to speak out on these issues; and, alas, it will be up to us to encourage our heterosexual feminist sisters to stand up for those rights of all women, not just those who fit into certain socially “accepted” categories.⁹⁴

Others worried that pro-ERA feminists were not advocating for lesbian representation on pro-ERA delegate slates that had been prepared in advance of the state IWY meetings. In the case of Washington State, only by eleventh-hour advocacy did lesbian-feminists win

two positions on the delegate slate for Kathleen Boyle and Patricia Benevitez.⁹⁵ For some, the inclusion in the National Plan, in the form of a “sexual preference plank” did not go far enough. Indeed, though the plank was hard won vis-à-vis lesbian-feminist activism in thirty states, it called for securing only the most basic civil rights for lesbians. The modest set of resolutions in the plank attempted to strike a balance between the needs of lesbians in the United States with the expedient desires to avoid derailing broader efforts associated with the ERA, for example. These concerns about possible betrayal by straight feminists in the face of powerful conservative opposition fueled additional lesbian-feminist visibility efforts. This time the focus was on getting lesbians to Houston, whether they were delegates or not.

Get on the Bus: Lesbians to Houston!

The state meeting process proved that seeking inclusion and visibility within the IWY conference as delegates and through the sexual preference plank in the National Plan, was not going to be enough. The rhetorical tussles with conservative opposition members at the state meetings proved that such efforts for formal inclusion could be swiftly thwarted, and as such, other modes of creating opportunities for visibility were necessary. The central effort to address this need materialized in the IWY Freedom Ride.

Lesbian-feminists from Los Angeles spearheaded an effort to transport lesbians from the West Coast and other locations around the country to Houston as part of their own “Freedom Ride,” borrowing from the legacy of the 1961 Freedom Rides used by civil rights activists to desegregate public transportation. The discourse around the bussing campaign affirmed the historic significance of the national conference and visibility within the IWY process. At the same time, it also affirmed the growing fervor

for non-delegate lesbians to assert themselves in the national conversation about to take place there. By foregrounding lesbian issues, the campaign imbued Houston with additional symbolic significance than the IWY commission had envisioned. With “bus caravans . . . [that left] from major cities on both coasts and from the Midwest,” the Freedom Ride was the second mode of the lesbian visibility campaign that sought to include lesbian voices in the debates at Houston. In many ways, the rhetoric of the Freedom Ride constituted IWY as a watershed moment for lesbian-feminists, an effective strategy for motivating participation and increasing their presence at the conference.

The discourse around the Freedom Ride emphasized the importance of lesbian visibility in Houston as a declaration of lesbian identity and as an important coalitional force. On the one hand, going to Houston was framed as an opportunity to speak back to the forced invisibility within other social movements. Organizers stressed the rhetorical opportunities in Houston: “We see the IWY Conference as a forum for presenting *our* issues.”⁹⁶ Visibility was especially important event because, they argued, “Lesbians have too long been invisible numbers in other people’s movements.”⁹⁷ The timing was especially salient for the organizers as well, who argued further that, “we [lesbians] are now under attack and must therefore come out as a unique and definitive force.” As the organizer envisioned, the caravans would “stop in cities along the way to hold actions or demonstrations planned by local lesbians, and to pick up more women as we move towards Houston.” Not unlike the rhetorical work of the IWY torch relay, the lesbian Freedom Rides linked lesbian-feminists from around the country en route to Houston.

On the other hand, by providing affordable transportation, the rides would also ensure a strong lesbian presence at the conference that forged coalitional relationships

and transcended lesbian resolutions. In their press release, the organizers argued, “we will make ourselves seen and heard, both as delegates and non-delegates, by calling for passage of all pro-feminist, pro-minority, and pro-gay resolutions.”⁹⁸ The stakes were very high for those who identified with and worked within multiple constituencies. As Del Martin noted to members of the California Support Coalition in the summer of 1977: “Houston will be the next major battleground for human rights. It will mark the showdown of the Equal Rights Amendment, a fight neither the women’s movement nor the gay movement can afford to lose.”⁹⁹ In her pitch for lesbian-feminists to support the ERA at IWY, Martin compared the numbers and argued, “If the ERA fails, it will also be a failure for gays. If the country can turn its back on women who comprise 53% of the population, you can rest assured there will be little support for a bunch of queers who constitute only 10%.”¹⁰⁰ Coalitional loyalties—for sheer strength in numbers and a source of unified power—demonstrated the intersectional quality of the politics leading to Houston, especially in the face of the concerted oppositional force that would meet activists there.

In addition to their gesture to civil rights history in particular, the Freedom Rides served a practical purpose as well; they provided an affordable means of transportation for many women who might not have been able to attend the National Conference. In an article detailing the plans for lesbian delegates and non-delegates from the Seattle area to join in the Freedom Rides, Kathleen Boyle, an IWY delegate representing Washington State, wrote, “Money is a major problem, as we have too little of it now in the lesbian community.”¹⁰¹ Despite those challenges, lesbians from around the country made every effort to get to Houston, from selling buttons, holding benefits, and sponsoring other

events to raise the necessary funds, all for the purpose of attaining “Lesbian Visibility in Houston.”¹⁰² The conservative opposition that met them *in* Houston only further intensified the stakes of lesbian representation at IWY.

The New Right at Houston: Fanning the Embers of Resistance

The vocal opposition to lesbian-feminists and IWY did not just emerge in 1977. It was rather part of a growing shift among conservatives that had intensified over the latter half of the decade. Over the course of the 1970s, the New Right developed into a coalition of single- and multi-issue conservative groups that experienced increased political power.¹⁰³ Many members of this New Right coalition saw themselves as part of President Richard M. Nixon’s “Silent Majority” of Americans “fed up with ‘liberal’ social policies that trampled on traditional family values.”¹⁰⁴ The New Right’s call to protect family values targeted a wide variety of people including supporters of evolution, school administrators, and textbook editors. Yet, feminists, lesbians, and gay men were singled out as central threats to the nation’s children and the moral fabric of the nation as a whole.¹⁰⁵ The conservative resistance to feminist gains had been building over the decade, with several organizations founded specifically to resist feminist efforts to ratify the ERA. In what Ruth Rosen calls “mirror-image politicking,” conservative women had started their own all-female groups. Such groups included Happiness of Motherhood Eternal (HOME), Women Who Want to be Women (WWWW), American Women Against Ratification of the ERA (AWARE), and Phyllis Schlafly’s STOP ERA in 1972 and Eagle Forum later in the decade.¹⁰⁶ These organizations drew upon persistent characterizations of feminists as women who were uninterested and even outspokenly

against motherhood, as women who did not embrace their femininity or did not “want to be women,” and as women who were a danger to the nation.

The intensifying opposition from the New Right posed an acute problem that warranted a vociferous, unified response from members of both gay liberation and women’s liberation movements. In particular, the New Right’s antifeminist rhetoric positioned lesbian-feminists as dual threats to family values. In doing so, they successfully re-appropriated the “lavender menace” construct, which had contributed to the gay/straight split that had internally divided feminists for years. They would now use that construct as an antifeminist weapon.¹⁰⁷ As such, lesbians and lesbian-feminists, whether they worked with women’s liberation or gay liberation, confronted the conservative opposition at every turn. In fact, the New Right exemplified the possibilities of a coordinated, effective coalitional force.

By the end of the 1970s, the New Right had already flexed its collective muscles to fight against gains sought by gay men, lesbians, and feminists. Because gay men and lesbians ranked foremost among those believed to threaten traditional values, the New Right amplified the dominant theological, biological, psychological, and legal discourses about homosexuals and homosexuality as it fought to repeal municipal-level gains in gay civil rights.¹⁰⁸ The coalition exemplified what Barbara Warnick calls “conservative resistance” rhetoric as they attempted to “prevent or rescind changes in the present system” advocated by feminist, lesbian, and gay activists.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, moments of clash between pro-gay and anti-gay forces occurred in several local level battles in the late 1970s, where orange-juice spokeswoman, singer, and evangelical Christian activist Anita Bryant emerged as a leading voice of anti-gay rhetoric. In 1977, she led the fight against

a Miami-Dade County gay rights ordinance with her “Save Our Children” campaign, eventually becoming a national voice for the conservative effort.¹¹⁰ In the wake of the Miami loss, gay rights advocates met with newly emboldened resistance in several other cities. There and in cities around the country that followed suit, lesbian-feminists joined with gay men and others to build their own coalition to fight the New Right.¹¹¹ Rhetoric scholars have analyzed the “antagonistic enjoyment” between the conservative voices of the New Right coalition and the gay liberation movement on a broad scale.¹¹² Schlafly and Bryant, along with many others in the New Right coalition, frequently assumed a “moralistic stance” as they feared “the loss of their traditional values” and the subsequent deleterious effects on the family and children.¹¹³

A rhetoric of fear built up around defending the family and served to unite the conservative forces who descended upon the IWY state meetings and the National Women’s Conference in 1977. Phyllis Schlafly, STOP ERA, and other conservative voices appropriated the stigma associated with homosexuality and lesbianism to discredit women’s liberation. In short, an attack on lesbians equaled an attack on feminism and vice versa.¹¹⁴ Lesbian-feminists and the New Right openly clashed at the state IWY meetings and in Houston. The conservatives made their way to the conference as official delegates, halted the passage of pro-feminist resolutions at the state meetings, protested outside the conference proceedings, and organized an enormous counter-event called the “Pro-Family Rally.” Members of Phyllis Schlafly’s STOP ERA organization, the John Birch Society, and the Ku Klux Klan, demonstrated how even vastly different members of the New Right coalition dually delegitimized lesbians by conflating their deviant sexuality with the “dangers” of feminism.¹¹⁵

A print advertisement that ran in the *Houston Chronicle* on the opening day of the IWY conference succinctly captured the fear of feminism vis-à-vis lesbianism. The half-page ad featured a cherubic-faced white girl in a dress holding a bunch of flowers. The copy read, “Mommy, when I grow up, can I be a lesbian?”¹¹⁶ Underneath, the copy asked readers to consider what their tax dollars were supporting. An appeal to attend the pro-family rally on Saturday followed, adding a formal event to the protests occurring at the IWY conference just across town.

The vocal opposition force in Houston sought to create a sharp contrast with the goals and messages of the IWY conference. Inside and outside the conference, protesters picketed with signs decrying the support for abortion, racial diversity, and homosexuality. One “scuffle” took place outside the conference hall as “male gate-crashers” bearing signs that read “‘White Supremacy’ and ‘Down with Women’” tried to get into the conference space.¹¹⁷ Within the confines of the National Conference, the “pro-family, pro-life” delegates utilized several rhetorical strategies to articulate their opposition to central pieces of the National Plan. For one, they held up signs with counter-arguments. In addition, upon passage of the sexual preference plank, the Mississippi delegation turned their backs to the podium. In line with the symbolic use of costumes among many state delegations, conservative anti-ERA delegates also wore yellow ribbons printed with “Majority,” supporting their claim to represent the majority of American women.¹¹⁸ Beyond these strategies associated with conservative women and men elected as delegates to the IWY conference, the most significant oppositional strategy emerged at the enormous counter-rally that occurred across town from the “federally-funded” National Women’s Conference.

Pro-Family Rally at the Astro Arena

Held in the Houston Astro Arena, the “Pro-Family Rally” attracted some eleven to fifteen thousand people. It also attracted a significant amount of media attention in crystallizing the oppositional message to the IWY conference. The rally participants fought to prove that they, rather than the IWY conference attendees, represented the majority of American women.¹¹⁹ While the IWY rally had support from the federal government, a former Republican president, a Democratic presidential administration, and delegates from all walks of life, the counter rally sought to undermine such claims to legitimacy by making consistent and collective claims to the majority.

Phyllis Schlafly, the de facto leader of the antifeminist movement, organized The Pro-Family Rally as a counter-point to the IWY conference. The discourse of the rally specifically positioned lesbians as central to the problems associated with feminism and the equality rhetoric of the conference. Schlafly and other opposition members to the conference began their campaign against IWY and the ERA long before the conference. In the months leading up to IWY, Schlafly warned “God-fearing, pro-family women” among her newsletter readership that the IWY meeting would be “full of ‘Libs and Lesbians, Frauds and Follies,’ trying to promote ‘witchcraft,’ among other things.”¹²⁰ As such, anti-abortion groups protested at some meetings while at others they coordinated an effort to stack conservative delegates in the conference from certain states.¹²¹ The oppositional goals of the counter rally were made clear by Schlafly who explained: “We reject the antifamily goal of the Equal Rights Amendment and the International Women’s Year. The American women do not want ERA, abortion, lesbian rights, and they do not want child care in the hands of government.”¹²²

Just as Schlafly's anti-ERA and anti-IWY arguments relied on homophobic and antifeminist discourse, such arguments echoed through the protest discourse at the rally. According to journalists who described the attendees of the rally, "They came in their chartered buses and church van from East Texas and Tennessee and elsewhere for this rally. They came with their Bibles, their flags, and their signs."¹²³ Ann Taylor Fleming, reporting for the *New York Times*, described the scene in the Astroarena when she arrived at the counter rally. She explained, "Twelve thousand people stood cheering and waving American flags or Bibles. They carried large hand-scrawled signs, disarming in their rawness, with messages like: 'God is a Family Man,' 'Keep Lesbians Out of Our Schools,' and 'I was a Fetus Once.'"¹²⁴ Such signs declared that the coalition connected the arguments about the family, lesbians, and reproductive rights, to frame its support of the family. The rally offered a space for the conservative coalition to come together and effectively merge their arguments around the pro-family theme and in opposition to the IWY conference.

To her packed audience, Schlafly argued that the National Women's Conference was a tax-payer-funded rally for the ERA and homosexuality. She argued that the ERA would "drive the homemaker out of the home" and even "[Take] away the right to have mothers in the home."¹²⁵ Of the ERA supporters meeting across town, she claimed they "want to forbid you to identify the traditional roles as wives and mothers." She added, "They want to relieve mothers of the menial task of taking care of their babies. They want to put them in the coal mines and have them digging ditches The ERA will only benefit homosexuals. We reject the ERA."¹²⁶ While Schlafly's rejection of the ERA had been long clear since she first rejected it in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, staging

the rally in 1977 was timely—the remaining time for ratification was sixteen months and three states away from success. Schlafly thus utilized the counter rally to support her claim that the attendees spoke for what she elsewhere called the “silent majority”—American women and men who rejected the ERA and the broader goals of the women’s rights movement. As Curry and Rosenfeld put it, the members of the counter rally argued “that the [IWY] convention will end the women’s movement by exposing it to the nation as a minor group of radicals and lesbians opposed to the family.”¹²⁷ Thus, the pro-family rally sought to refute the claim enacted by the IWY conference about the women’s movement’s shift into the mainstream of American culture and politics. As indicated by Schlafly and the Pro-family Rally advertisement, they specifically identified lesbians as primary anti-family representatives of the women’s movement to make their argument. Some speakers at the rally used especially homophobic language to indicate the link between the conference’s support of the ERA and their support of lesbians. As Texas State representative Clay Smothers put it, the IWY conference was evidence of the “federal government . . . promoting perverts.” He then added, “I want the right to segregate my family from these misfits and perverts.”¹²⁸ Conservatives, like lesbians, protested for their voices to be heard inside and outside the IWY conference. They amplified the stakes of lesbian-feminist visibility at Houston by demonizing their presence and using it to discredit the whole event.

“We Are Everywhere”: Visibility at IWY

Implementing their visibility strategy at Houston, lesbians and lesbian-feminists entered a conversation in which they were already hyper-visible. The conservative coalition negatively accentuated the conference by including lesbians in the triple threat

of “anti-family” resolutions in Houston. Additionally, the IWY commission and news media’s emphasis on diversity positioned lesbians and the sexual preference plank in two divergent ways. First, the work to include lesbian rights in the National Plan (and its eventual approval) indicated a watershed moment in the history of feminism—the official recognition and inclusion of lesbian identity and politics within the feminist platform. On the other hand, the discourse from individual members still tempered claims of support as some feminists continued to identify lesbians as a “menace” or “albatross” to the women’s movement. In some of the news media coverage, lesbians constituted the radical fringe that threatened the movement from within and played into negative stereotypes that fueled antifeminist arguments. These two competing characterizations of lesbians—as evidence of the diversity and forward progress of the women’s movement and the radical menace that threatened mainstream political success—contributed to the constraints facing lesbian-feminists throughout the 1970s. Judy Klemensrud, writing in the *New York Times* on November 15, 1977, summarized, “Today the split [over the lesbian issue] seems largely healed, although Jean O’Leary . . . said she thought some black and other minority women still had difficulty accepting lesbians as part of the women’s movement.”¹²⁹ Concerns about the strength of coalitions with women across a spectrum of difference persisted in advance of the conference. As the debate around the sexual preference plank approached, the mixture of constraints and opportunities surrounded the lesbian-feminist visibility effort.

Lesbian-feminists executed their visibility campaign at Houston in two modes: within the procedures and processes detailed by the IWY commission and by exerting external pressure in the gallery and at separate rallies. In doing so, they turned Houston

into a watershed moment for their identity politics *and* coalitional activism. Participants reported that lesbian visibility during the Houston conference was “outstanding.” They estimated “1,000 dykes from all over the country,” many bedecked in t-shirts and buttons declaring “‘Viva la mujer’ (Long live women),” and “Dyke” and “Matriarchy is the Answer,” attended as delegates and observers.¹³⁰ Addressing her lesbian feminist readers in the Atlanta area through the pages of the *Atalanta*,¹³¹ Vicki Gabriner parsed those numbers to claim that of the 120 lesbian delegates, “60 [were] open” and “60 were closet sisters” in addition to “an unknown number of unidentified” lesbians among the 1,400 total IWY delegates.¹³² Her narrative about IWY focused almost exclusively on how lesbian rights, “politely referred to as sexual preference,” were taken up at the conference.¹³³

As evidence of the success of lesbian-feminist efforts at the state level, the sexual preference plank comprised the central effort at the conference. Jean O’Leary, Charlotte Bunch, and the NGTF Women’s Caucus “focused its energy on passage of the sexual preference plank.”¹³⁴ O’Leary read the plank from the podium to open the session. Clear in its simplicity, the plank was broken into three sections. First, it called for “local, state, and federal legislation to eliminate discrimination based on sexual and affectational preference.” Second, it stipulated the “removal of sodomy laws from state penal codes.” Finally, it demanded “state legislation that would prohibit consideration of sexual or affectational orientation in determination of child custody or visitation rights.”¹³⁵ By the time the sexual preference plank was taken up, it was already eight o’clock in the evening on the last night of the conference. Following the lengthy floor discussion on the two dozen planks before it, including the controversial ERA and reproductive freedom

planks, the delegates were exhausted, heading into the floor debate over sexual preference. Once formal discussion opened on the resolutions, a thorough pre-planned strategy was put into action to ensure that pro-lesbian rights arguments controlled the debate. Throughout the hall, lesbians positioned near the microphones rushed to control them for a designated speaker.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, above the coliseum floor, “around 500 [women] sat in a Dyke Vigil” in the gallery, waiting with helium-filled balloons printed with the declaration, “WE ARE EVERYWHERE.”¹³⁷

Rhetoric opposing the sexual preference plank was infused with conservative anti-family themes. Additional expediency claims also positioned lesbians as threats to the women’s movement. Joan Gubbins, a floor leader for the opposition, stated, “We have two minds. We are unhappy a group of women would support such a resolution. But we are happy because it will hurt the ERA.”¹³⁸ Importantly, opposition to the sexual preference plank did not come just from conservative anti-feminist delegates, but also conservative pro-ERA delegates. Many of these delegates articulated familiar expediency arguments that relied on scapegoating lesbians in the process. Gabriner, herself a lesbian-feminist from the Atlanta area, lamented, “Georgia has the dubious distinction of having one of its delegates, Dotsie Holmes, speak out against the resolution.” Holmes, a familiar opponent to the members of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA), drew upon the familiar rhetoric of the lavender menace, arguing that lesbians endangered the potential for ERA ratification. Gabriner summarized this argument, writing, “Lesbianism has long been an albatross around the neck of the women's movement and if this [the sexual preference plank] passes, it will make it impossible to get the ERA ratified.”¹³⁹

The rhetoric of pro-ERA/anti-lesbian forces was not surprising given the struggles lesbians had faced at the state IWY meetings in the months preceding Houston.

The rhetoric in support of lesbian rights reflected the coalitional ethic and themes of the conference. Some supported the lesbian rights plank as it captured the coalitional work at the heart of the conference. Patricia Benevidez, a lesbian-feminist delegate representing Washington, spoke from the floor of the conference, referencing the passage of the other planks including the ERA plank and addressing discrimination of minority women. She told the audience, “Last night I rejoiced when you gave me my rights as a woman. This afternoon you gave me my rights as a Chicana. Please give me my opportunity for full equality and civil rights as a lesbian.”¹⁴⁰ Betty Powell, a black lesbian feminist, linked the negative impact of lesbian invisibility with the experiences of other minorities:

The totally false stereotypic image of ‘man-hating queer’ still runs rampant in the land. This lesbian invisibility, like the invisibility of all minorities, negatively perceived by society has for so long, too long, fostered only ignorance of our persons, our values, our actual lifestyles . . . which are as rich and diverse as we are in number.¹⁴¹

Other women rose to speak in support of the lesbian rights plank, including Charlotte Bunch, a lesbian-feminist delegate representing the District of Columbia. Bunch argued that the success at the state meetings demonstrated the strong, broad-based and grassroots support for lesbian rights. She argued, “There is a mandate from thirty [state] conferences that this issue is indeed a woman’s issue This resolution is not only for lesbians. This resolution is for all women.”¹⁴²

When Jeanne Córdova rose in support of the plank, she sought to explicate the ways in which lesbian rights extended beyond “sexual preference” and were an issue of “civil rights” on a national and international basis. She declared:

We are women from every state. We are in the labor unions and in the factories, secretaries and carpenters, teachers and professionals...and mothers. And sometimes still wives. We are women of all colors and races. We are women everywhere. We have been fighting alongside and in the forefront of all the national women’s struggles from South Africa to Chile, from Viet Nam to Florida.¹⁴³

Other remarks in support of the plank reflected the theme of progress at IWY.

Perhaps the most surprising speech in support of the plank that evening came from Betty Friedan, a noted opponent of lesbian rights. In a move that surprised many women in the conference hall that night, Betty Friedan reversed her position by calling for passage of the resolution. She explained, “As someone who grew up in middle America, as someone who grew up in Peoria and who has loved men perhaps too well . . . I believe we must help the women who are lesbians to be protected in their own civil rights.”¹⁴⁴ Friedan’s remarks received cheers and sighs of relief even from audience members, including radical feminist Kate Millett, who observed the speech from the sidelines.¹⁴⁵ Certainly, Friedan’s remarks were widely welcomed by many lesbian-feminists. Importantly, her reversal represented a symbolically significant moment that garnered media attention.¹⁴⁶

When the vote passed the sexual preference plank, the lesbians observing from the gallery cheered, released the balloons, and unveiled a banner in the rear of the hall that read “Lesbian Rights.”¹⁴⁷ Women on the main floor simultaneously formed a celebratory

conga line that snaked through the hall. While pandemonium erupted inside the coliseum, some non-delegate lesbians brought the celebration outside by conducting a candlelight vigil in honor of the success. The response to the vote was not universally celebratory. For instance, members of the Mississippi delegation stood and turned their backs to the podium in protest. The success of the visibility campaign went far beyond the passage of the plank.

The rhetoric of the lesbian visibility campaign, succinctly captured in the phrase “We Are Everywhere,” was about declaring presence, claiming numerical and statistical significance, and confronting of lesbian-baiting strategies.¹⁴⁸ As an existential claim, the rhetoric refuted charges of lesbians’ non-existence or simple dismissals of their concerns as a “special interest.” In some ways, this first claim mirrored the rhetoric of the conference itself by drawing upon their common experiences as women in ways that recognized and valorized lesbian civil rights. “We are everywhere” suggested that lesbianism cut across all of the other modes of difference, *queering* the “rainbow of American womanhood” present at the conference. As a strategy, it challenged the “lines” of gendered behavior used to discipline women and the threat of being labeled a lesbian. As Charlotte Bunch added in her remarks on the floor of the conference, the sexual preference plank was “For all women whose choices in life are in fact constrained by the fear and threat of being called a lesbian.”¹⁴⁹

As Ivy Bottini put it in her 1973 NOW address, lesbian-baiting resulted from the “fear within” every woman of being considered different, abnormal, sick. Within that framework of fear and gender discipline, lesbian-feminists’ declaration, “We are everywhere,” could have been interpreted as a threat. In part, it articulated their presence

among the diverse voices representing the “kaleidoscope” of American womanhood on display at the conference. Yet, it also appropriated the fear of invisible threats (e.g., homosexuality, communism) that supposedly terrorized America from within. By defiantly declaring their presence *everywhere*, lesbian-feminists premised their visibility campaign on the historical *invisibility* that had left them unacknowledged and feared. “We Are Everywhere” also invoked a *retroactive* cultural visibility, an argument that lesbians *had always been everywhere*. It dually sought inclusion while also queering feminist and women’s history, which constituted important symbolism for IWY. So, despite the constraints that had kept them invisible, lesbian-feminists articulated their presence as historically interconnected with the women’s movement by way of identity and coalition. They dually re-crafted history by claiming that lesbians were actually involved despite their invisibility and challenged the current narrative as a straight-washed version of women in American history. As such, lesbian-feminists capitalized on their own intersectional identities to make broader claims about the potential for feminist solidarity around sexuality.

Finally, “We are everywhere” gave lesbian-feminists a visible platform from which to confront conservative rhetoric. Many confronted conservative feminists who voiced their expediency concerns about the future of the ERA in addition to those opponents who sought to reduce the conference to a tripartite of sins—the ERA, abortion, and homosexuality. Even though such a defiant approach fed anti-feminist complaints, some argued that it importantly bolstered their visibility efforts. As Gabriner noted of the anti-lesbian rhetoric, “the right wing assisted lesbian visibility. . . .”¹⁵⁰ The stridency of

the “We are Everywhere” rhetoric also linked the work enacted within IWY to the activism that enhanced lesbian-feminist visibility outside of the conference.

Lesberadas /Lesbian Outlaws: Lesbian Visibility Outside IWY

In the meantime, lesbian-feminists also advocated for their visibility *outside* of the conference hall and the confines of parliamentary procedure. The rallies attended by feminists and lesbian-feminists showed that IWY still did not speak for *all* women, and proved that the women’s movement was not wholly mainstream. Rather, both rallies enacted the diversity of opinion and radical ideology that sustained many lesbian-feminists within the women’s movement. There, lesbian-feminists engaged in demonstrations that simultaneously confirmed and challenged the concept of IWY.

The first rally took place on the steps of Houston's City Hall and was framed as a radical *lesbian-feminist counter-point* to the opening events of IWY. For *New York Times* journalist Ann Taylor Fleming, it displayed “some remnants of old anger” associated with radical feminism. To Fleming, lesbians were evidence of a lingering radical “fringe,” which contrasted with IWY’s mainstreaming of the women’s movement. Fleming described the “few hundred women, many avowed lesbians, mostly in jeans with clipped hair, [who] had gathered to hear Flo [Florence] Kennedy, the black feminist lawyer . . . and Kate Millett, perhaps the movement’s prime theoretician. They had gathered, in other words, to hear two of the old guard.”¹⁵¹ Kennedy and Millett led the rally in Houston without any formal connection with the IWY. They disregarded working within the official political process on display at the coliseum. Fleming confirmed, “there were no commissioners in the crowd who had come to see them, no discernible delegates, nor any of the gay women I had met in any of the hotels.” She added, “In this audience

were the scrappers, the determined outcasts, women who . . . had become so accustomed to their outrage that they would feel naked without it.”¹⁵² On the one hand, the demonstration by lesbians and lesbian-feminists represented the “outlaw” perspective endorsed by the local Houston group, Lesberadas. Yet as Fleming characterized the lesbian-feminist presence in this way, as guardians of the “old anger” and radical spirit of the earlier women’s movement, she positioned lesbians less as the future of the movement, but as its past. As such, the rally positioned lesbian visibility within IWY as more moderate, mainstream, and acceptable.

The second rally was held on Saturday, November 20, the same day as the Pro-Family Rally and the passage of the ERA resolution at IWY. With approximately seventy lesbians and feminists from all backgrounds in attendance, that rally, called “Beyond the ERA,” expressed skepticism regarding IWY’s ERA-centric discourse.¹⁵³ It captured the argument that social change was necessary “beyond the ERA” and perhaps called into question those efforts that, for expediency purposes, had been tempered to not endanger the ERA effort of mainstream women’s groups. It garnered attention less for its message of pressing “Beyond the ERA,” and more for the public altercation between feminists and conservative opponents. According to Debby McBride’s report in *The Lesbian News*, the skirmish involved “Ku Klux Klan and the Christian Defense League men slugging and pushing several women” participating in the rally. McBride added, “Women of the right-wing groups” carried signs with phrases like “Who needs Jews, Dikes, Abortion and Communism,” while the lesbian-feminist protesters “chanted ‘Ku Klux Klan, Scum of the Land.’”¹⁵⁴ These demonstrations indicated the ways that IWY and the establishment politics it represented did not speak for the entire lesbian-feminist community gathered in

Houston. Indeed, with the level of attention dedicated to the skirmish between KKK members and women at the rally, the presence of feminist activists outside of IWY garnered even more media coverage and visibility for lesbian-feminists.

The lesbian-feminist visibility strategy thus encompassed the broad range of political perspectives that cut across their own communities and identities. For those who advocated for visibility *within* IWY, making their voices heard at the government-sponsored event meant working as delegates, strategizing with other women to ensure passage of the pro-feminist National Plan, and ensuring that lesbian rights were included within that formal document. That part of the strategy worked in tandem with the radical women who advocated for lesbian-feminist visibility outside of the formalized, bureaucratic structures of IWY. They trekked to Houston by way of the Freedom Rides, they packed the gallery above the conference with “We Are Everywhere” balloons and banners in hand, and they held protests outside the conference and called for a radical, grassroots approach. If not for the lesbian-feminists who advocated for their own visibility outside of the IWY process, Houston may not have become such a watershed moment in lesbian-feminist history.

Reflecting on Houston: Victory or Disappointment?

When lesbian-feminists returned home from Houston, many pondered what could (or should) happen next. They penned reflective articles and letters about their experiences, published pictorials of the conference, strategized about next steps, and offered critiques of the process and of each other. For lesbians and lesbian-feminists, the power of Houston manifested not only in the successful passage of the sexual preference plank, but also in the enactment of coalitional relationships and identity rhetorics that had

circulated throughout the decade and around the geographically diverse U.S. communities. As delegates and non-delegates, lesbian-feminists made their way from all corners of the country to take a stand together, speak for themselves, and work in coalition with others to ensure their visibility at the huge event. As they made sense of the struggles, successes, and skirmishes, they began to turn Houston into a rhetorical symbol—of all that was *possible* through coalition politics and, alternatively, as a troubling indication of the mainstreaming women's movement. Like the visibility strategy, lesbian-feminist assessments of Houston fell into two primary camps. Some expressed hope and promise about gaining ground within the established political system, while others remained skeptical about what that legitimacy meant for the future of lesbian-feminist activism. Both arguments maintained the importance of lesbian-feminist identity in connection with coalitional activism. Yet, they divided primarily along lines of liberal versus radical approaches.

First, the experience of IWY confirmed the strength of the lesbian-feminist community. In particular, lesbian women showed deep support for one another in Houston behind the scenes of the conference. Kathleen Boyle wrote to her fellow Seattle area lesbian-feminists,

Something very exciting happened which equals or surpasses that victory [of the sexual preference plank]. Lesbian women came to Texas by the hundreds (thousands?) and made their forces known . . . it was beautiful . . . [Seattle lesbians] were right in the thick of it and were instrumental in what happened . . . Unlike our non-lesbian sisters, we knew the risks in Houston. So we protected each other.¹⁵⁵

She hailed the “strength of purpose” that she witnessed at the IWY conference, adding, “Like so many of my sisters, I left Houston filled to bursting with women-power, lesbian women-power.”¹⁵⁶ For her, “the ‘effectiveness’ or lack of ‘purpose’ of the conference itself” mattered less than what lesbians “proved” in Houston. She argued, “We went, we did our job, we won, we went home . . . stronger.” Boyle added that after Houston they “went home knowing that we had forged links with our non-lesbian sisters as well. We were not betrayed.”¹⁵⁷ Those links had a history. Boyle’s implied concerns about betrayal were justified by the troubled relationship between lesbian-feminists and straight feminists. As Charlotte Bunch noted, “lesbians [had been] organizing, struggling, and educating” others in the women’s movement and gay movement “for ten years.”¹⁵⁸ For her, none of the success in Houston would have been possible without that groundwork for coalitional success.

Many agreed that the successful coalition politics were the greatest outcome from IWY. Vicki Gabriner called the “lesbian victory at Houston very significant,” because “for the first time, a diverse coalition of women, not all of whom define themselves as women’s liberationists, resoundingly affirmed the rights of lesbians and recognized it as a feminist issue.”¹⁵⁹ Such affirmation, she argued, represented “several giant steps out of the closet,” as lesbians started to “roll back the sheets of invisibility that have covered us in society and in the women’s movements.”¹⁶⁰ Charlotte Bunch echoed that assessment in a January 1978 speech at Pitzer College in Los Angeles. For Bunch, feminist coalitions at IWY faced the challenge of achieving “UNITY without dropping controversial issues” including “race, class, [and] sexual preference” and in a short “two days time.”¹⁶¹ From her perspective, that goal was accomplished with the National Plan. It was a document of

what Bunch called “*bottom line positions* for feminist/progressive women” that proved the principle that “women/feminis[m] are not just narrow ‘women only’ concerns—but ultimately about any and all issues that touch our lives.”¹⁶² Yet that document, Bunch believed, would not have been possible without coalition building at the state level and at IWY. According to Bunch, the “underlying approach” and “mechanism of coalition” drove success at IWY, which made it the “most important” for future activism.¹⁶³

As Bunch and others upheld Houston as a coalitional success with deep symbolic significance, other lesbian-feminists remained skeptical of its political implications. Writing in *Out and About* before IWY, W.D. worried that it would be “an energy drain on the women’s movement and a diversionary tactic devised to appease us.”¹⁶⁴ Afterwards, Kathy Boyle similarly questioned the efficacy of the conference, especially because it required a great deal of resources that lesbian-feminists and straight feminists used to sustain their local activist activities.¹⁶⁵ In a reflective article published in *Atalanta* and Houston’s *Pointblank Times*, Vicki Gabriner tempered her celebration of the lesbian victory at Houston by placing it “against the backdrop” of the conference’s “rigid format of parliamentary procedure” because it “ape[d] two-party politics.” She disagreed with Bunch’s argument that the National Plan was a significant document with rhetorical and political power. Instead, Gabriner argued, that the National Plan carried “no enforcement power” and as such, “our very *real raw power as women committed (sic) to change* [was] diluted piece by piece as the IWY process wended its merry way to Washington.”¹⁶⁶ Even lesbians working on the visibility strategy argued that the National Plan would not be an “an acceptable substitute for legislation protecting the self-determination and full civil rights of women in America.”¹⁶⁷ They not only questioned the efficacy and sincerity

of the established political system, lesbian-feminists held that the federal support of the conference was merely a tactic to “pacify women.” This skepticism extended into a critique of the government financing of IWY.¹⁶⁸

Even with the vocal critiques, some women pointed out the broader benefits of making their community visible to external audiences, even the hostile ones. Writing in *Out and About*, W.D. confirmed the importance of Houston as a place to “[focus] serious attention on women—on issues and our very existence, [because] the media, the government and business generally ignore us.” And yet, W.D., argued, such attention on women was not enough to garner media attention. Echoing Gabriner’s assessment, W.D. asserted the “right-wing male groups such as the KKK, the Nazi party, the Mormon Church and the John Birch Society” helped to attract additional attention because they were considered “violent and/or threatening.”¹⁶⁹ As such, the clashes with antifeminists amplified lesbians and lesbian-feminist visibility. The significance of Houston for the lesbian-feminist community went far beyond efficacy in a legislative sense. It also was about becoming culturally legible.

Conclusion

The 1977 National Women’s Conference at Houston was a significant moment for lesbian-feminist activism in the United States, particularly in terms of lesbian visibility and coalition building. In many of the historical narratives of the period, the IWY conference is typically mentioned in brief and positive terms. Ruth Rosen describes “the glory that was Houston.” Winifred Wandersee calls IWY a “watershed moment.” And Sarah Evans’s history of second-wave feminism references the conference as a marker of feminism’s move into the mainstream.¹⁷⁰ Evans adds that IWY exemplified the

institutionalization of women's rights politics in the wake of huge legislative gains earlier in the decade.¹⁷¹ The success of IWY was abbreviated by the mounting opposition of the formidable New Right coalition that successfully ousted the Carter administration in favor of a new era in conservative politics exemplified by the election of Ronald Reagan for two presidential terms in office.¹⁷² The shift precipitated a backlash that negatively affected gay rights and women's rights into the 1980s.¹⁷³ Still, IWY confirmed that lesbian-feminist activists from around the country could stage large-scale demonstrations to demand their inclusion in the shifting narrative of American womanhood.

The IWY conference provided lesbian-feminists with an opportunity to test the ongoing (though complicated) coalitional relationship with feminists in the woman's liberation movement and create a large-scale platform from which they could launch their visibility strategy. As such, visibility constituted the central radicalized strategy of lesbian-feminists. That strategy capitalized on the coalitional relationships to help their coalitional partners at IWY achieve their shared goals and enhance lesbian-feminist political goals in the process. First, lesbian-feminists demonstrated their commitment to coalitions with women of color and liberal feminists by supporting the election of pro-ERA, pro-feminist, and pro-lesbian delegates to the IWY conference. Further, they voted and spoke in support of the proposed National Plan with its planks that addressed the needs of minority women, women with disabilities, and homemakers. Their visibility strategy then used the established coalitional relationship to further their own political agenda. They did so by integrating the conference themes and bolstering their claims to presence and legitimacy. In the process, they affirmed the validity of lesbian rights and supported a radical rhetoric that challenged heterosexism undergirding the political

system. Using coalition to uplift their own identity-based rhetoric and political goals, lesbian-feminists demonstrated the generative and radical possibilities of coalition politics. The success of coalition building at IWY was dramatic in the context of the many constraints facing lesbians, many coming from within the women's movement.

Persistent constraints rooted in the link between homophobia and sexism nevertheless still plagued the coalition with women's liberation. Not only did lesbians epitomize the threat to the public face of the women's movement (ala Friedan's "lavender menace"), but the very words "dyke" and "lesbian" held significant power over those women who caught the wave of feminist success and entered into male-dominated fields like politics, corporate employment, education, and athletics.¹⁷⁴ The simple threat of being called a lesbian contained women and showed homophobia's reach beyond the surface of stereotypes. This form of lesbian-baiting practice made visible coalitional efforts on behalf of women's liberation more difficult because it reinforced the anti-feminist dismissal of women's rights activists.¹⁷⁵

Lesbian visibility spoke back to these constraints and confronted the homophobia and stereotypes that characterized lesbians as a threat to the family and an impediment to feminist goals. In IWY's "experiment in democracy," steeped in parliamentary procedures and other hallmarks of establishment politics and bureaucratic process, lesbian-feminist visibility proved successful. From the state meetings to their inclusion in the National Plan, lesbians were formally recognized for the first time by those in the pipeline of mainstream political influence. Though such inclusion did not materialize in federal level anti-discrimination legislative action, IWY was an important inroad toward formal recognition of lesbians. Moreover, the lesbian-feminists who exerted pressure

outside of the IWY process, bolstered visibility because they fit within the prevailing stereotypes of lesbian-feminists as radical, non-traditional, and “fringe.” Their radical and confrontational presence outside the conference may have rendered the tepid language in the IWY sexual preference plank more acceptable to wider audiences in the end.

Because Houston was designed to proffer recommendations instead of crafting legislation, most of its power was symbolic.¹⁷⁶ Historian Marjorie Schuill notes that in the wake of IWY, feminists and anti-feminists declared victory. Many believed the drama of Houston would only have “meaning insofar as its recommendations were implemented.” Accordingly, some believed that Houston’s significance resided less in its legislative efficacy, and more in its symbolism.¹⁷⁷ Curry and Rosenfeld wrote in the *Washington Post* in the days following the conference,

. . . the organizers and the overwhelming majority of the delegates believe that the federally funded convention . . . has already had its most important effect. They feel that the process has attracted women who had never had contact with the women’s movement, has articulated concerns about the issues, and increased political skills.¹⁷⁸

Indeed, the process itself proved very productive for lesbian-feminist identity and coalition rhetoric in the months and years that followed.

The experience of Houston validated the need for a national level lesbian organization, drawing on the example set by Jean O’Leary and her co-leadership of the National Gay Task Force and Women’s Caucus. Sharon McDonald noted in the *Lesbian Tide* in 1978, “Many lesbians involved in the IWY Conference knew that the real rewards of that weekend would not come from Washington.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, making the most of the

connections they made throughout the visibility campaign and at IWY, lesbian-feminists gathered in March 1978 in Los Angeles to hash out the contours of a national organization. For hours they debated the benefits and drawbacks of forming a national organization, the challenges associated with a decentralized structure and differing regional needs, and the roles that women of color and women of “various class backgrounds” should play. The meeting resulted in the establishment of the National Lesbian Feminist Organization (NLFO).¹⁸⁰ Though the founding conference of NLFO was challenged with defining insiders and outsiders, the participants ultimately opened its membership (after much debate) to “lesbians and women-identified women.”¹⁸¹ The organization did not survive in the long-term, but the *promise* of the national community and the lessons of Houston endured, often in the form of smaller local level coalitions.¹⁸² Those coalitions would become crucial for sustaining the women’s movement into the next decade.¹⁸³

Despite the coalitional success, IWY revealed the enduring tension among lesbian-feminist activists around questions of strategy and political ideology. A few years later, Phyllis Lyon asked her audience of lesbian activists in 1980, “What have we gained from [Houston] except a fond memory?”¹⁸⁴ She attacked radical lesbian-feminists for the failure of the NLFO at the end of the decade, a time when they “needed solidarity as Lesbians” the most. For her, their resistance to liberal politics of inclusion proved that “The quantum leap from an inner-directed, quasi-separatist Lesbian culture to mainstream national political organizing was apparently asking too much.”¹⁸⁵ Yet Lyon’s repudiation of radical lesbian-feminists following Houston was only one side of the story. IWY proved the utility of ideological diversity; that both approaches were necessary in

order to bolster visibility and gain political ground. The different approaches to social change had clashed throughout the IWY process.¹⁸⁶ Radical lesbian-feminists like Gabriner articulated what would later be characterized as a “queer critique” of gay and lesbian political structures and strategies.¹⁸⁷ Vicki Gabriner summarized the controversy accordingly: “There is a political conflict between the willingness to jump head-first into establishment defined national arenas of struggle (NGTF) and a desire to remain more outside the bounds of a system that is considered to be illegal at its core.” Pointing to the concept proffered by the Lesberadas that “all lesbians are outlaws,” she noted, “NGTF literature talks more in terms of ‘lesbian rights’ and equality, as though they can be won within this system.”¹⁸⁸ For her, the efforts of the NGTF to bring lesbians together at Houston were appreciated, but their emphasis on the sexual preference plank left much to be desired for those focused on liberation. This critique of the NGTF’s broad embrace of establishment politics was a central critique among more radical lesbian-feminists, many of whom participated in rallies and visibility efforts outside of the IWY process.

Their visibility came at a price, however. Houston’s symbolic battle to represent the “majority” of women in America, highlighted the limitations of visibility politics because of the accompanying backlash that it can help incite.¹⁸⁹ As Suzanna Walters argues, “forms of bigotry sustain themselves and even grow in the face of public, cultural visibility.”¹⁹⁰ Lesbians were still being used as scapegoats that threatened the ERA in conservative pro-ERA expediency arguments. Their visibility “recycl[ed] old stereotypes,” framed lesbians as controversial and threatening, linked them to the other controversial measures associated with abortion and the ERA, and fed the conservative narrative of IWY as “anti-family.”¹⁹¹ As such, it was perhaps no surprise that the IWY

conference, hailed simultaneously as the “arrival” and the “death knell” of the women's movement, engendered coordinated counter-protest from the conservative opposition. Given this renewed battle between feminists and anti-feminist forces, lesbian-feminists were once again in a paradoxical position. As they fought for visibility, that very visibility fueled anti-feminist rhetorical attacks. At the end of the decade, the promise and energy of Houston became an ever-distant mirage in an increasingly hostile conservative political climate.

Yet the significance of Houston for the lesbian-feminist community extended far beyond the negative ways anti-feminists characterized it. For many lesbian-feminists, the frustrating and exhilarating experience brought women from around the country closer together and affirmed the common struggles and common strength they shared. It affirmed the internal diversity and possibility for coalition building.

Notes

¹ August 26th had been celebrated as the anniversary of the effective date of the nineteenth amendment (eight days after ratification) in 1920. In 1971, the date was formally recognized as “Women’s Equality Day” by a joint resolution of Congress drawn up by Congresswoman Bella Abzug. In that resolution, the day served as an opportunity for celebration and “as a symbol of the continued fight for equal rights.” In line with the latter purpose, many second wave feminists used August 26th to stage protests, marches, and other events to draw attention to the feminist political message and garner media attention. One of most notable examples of such mass demonstration occurred in New York on August 26, 1970, when feminists marched down Fifth Avenue on the fiftieth anniversary of woman suffrage. Likewise, in 1973, feminists around the country hosted events and staged demonstrations. At the California event referenced here, Bottini spoke at a dinner sponsored by the Bakersfield, California chapter of the National Organization for Women. That same day, lesbian-feminists of the group Lesbian Feminist Liberation staged a demonstration outside of the Museum of Natural History in New York City to protest the sexist and racist exhibits, the lack of representation of women, and lack of female anthropologists on the museum staff. See Ivy Bottini, “The Fear Within,” 26 August 1973, Box 5, Folder 41, Ivy Bottini Papers, Coll 2009-005, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California; Judy Burns and Robyn Lutzky, “LFL Zaps Museum of Natural History,” *The Lesbian Feminist* 1, no. 2 (Oct. 1973), 1; “Lesbian Feminist Liberation Protest in Front of Museum of Natural History,” Images 2/18 and 2/36, Bettye Lane Gay Movement Photographs Collection, New York Public Library Rare and Manuscript Division; Bonnie J. Dow, “Spectacle, Spectatorship and Gender

Anxiety in Television News Coverage of the 1970 Women's Strike for Equality,”
Communication Studies 50, no. 2 (1999): 143-58; *Designating August 26 of each year as
“Women’s Equality Day”* H.J. Res 808, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 117
(July 27, 1971): 27403.

² Bottini, “The Fear Within,” 9.

³ Bottini, “The Fear Within,” 7.

⁴ Lesbian-baiting, discussed in the introduction, is often discussed in the context of women’s military service. Suzanne Pharr adds that lesbian-baiting is a central example of how homophobia can be used as a weapon of sexism. It is grounded in the threat of being called or perceived as a lesbian, something that could be used against any woman who goes “outside of the lines” associated with femininity. See Suzanne Pharr, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism* (Oakland, CA: Chardon Press, 1997).

⁵ Suzanne Pharr, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*, 27. I would argue, along with Pharr, that homophobia continues to discipline women as a “weapon of sexism.” Pharr also adds that the link between homophobia and sexism also disciplines men.

⁶ Separatist lesbian-feminists viewed women’s liberation, if it was built upon lesbian-feminist identity in particular, as an important source for identity development, though they eventually struck out on their own. See Chapter Two.

⁷ Shane Phelan, *Sexual Strangers: Gays, Lesbians and Dilemmas of Citizenship* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001), 6. Lesbian-feminists participated and led feminist actions in the context of major organizations like NOW or the National Women’s Political Caucus, in addition to speaking out on central feminist issues, like abortion. Jeanne Córdova, much like her anti-war speech in 1972, spoke of to feminist

audiences about lesbian-feminist solidarity around the issue of abortion. In February 1973, Córdova spoke at the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) Victory Rally, following the landmark Supreme Court decision on *Roe v. Wade*. There, she articulated the reasons lesbian-feminist shared a vested interest in abortion rights and the need for coalitional relationships. In particular, rather than celebrating the historic victory, Córdova called upon her feminist audience to recognize the links between their fight for sexual autonomy and lesbian-feminist needs for the same. In doing so, she rhetorically crafted a coalitional space grounded in abortion-rights politics. See Jeanne Córdova, "The Fourth Demand: Here We Are Again," *Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 8 (March 1973): 9, 26-27.

⁸ Lesbian-feminists have continued to refer to IWY as "Houston" since the 1970s. At a plenary session of the conference, "In Amerika They Call Us Dykes: Lesbian Lives in the 1970s," hosted by City University of New York Graduate School in 2010, one woman stood up and said, "What about Houston? Someone needs to write about Houston!"

⁹ Winifred Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), xiii, 175.

¹⁰ Because lesbian-baiting disciplined any woman who went "outside the lines" of appropriate femininity, the entire conference could have been interpreted as working outside of those boundaries. Pharr, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*, 18.

¹¹ The desire to avoid the "lesbian issue" and the threat of its inclusion at IWY is more apparent in a recent documentary film about the IWY conference. In that film, women reflect on the sexual preference plank and note how they "were not interested" or

concerned about losing the support of minority women for whom “women sleeping with women” was not their issue. “The Sexual Preference Plank,” *Sisters of '77*, DVD produced by Cynthia Salzman Mondell, Allen Mondell, and Brian Hockenbury (Dallas, TX: Media Projects, Inc., 2005).

¹² The lesbian-feminist narratives of Houston reveal the various perspectives on the establishment politics of the conference and the efforts to assert radical feminist arguments instead. Despite these differences, however, lesbian-feminists from across the ideological spectrum generally agreed that their visibility and presence was necessary. See, for example, Charlotte Bunch, “Analysis of Houston IWY Conference, Pitzer College,” 30 January 1978, Charlotte Bunch, Personal Collection, New York.

¹³ *The Spirit of Houston*, 9-10.

¹⁴ Historian Cynthia Harris argues that significant efforts had been made in the private sector to create a long-range, national agenda to address gender inequality. In the wake of the UN declaration, a coalition of feminist and traditional women’s organization, the Women’s Action Alliance (WAA) created a “National Women’s Agenda” and advocated for a private sector voice in creating a national agenda. Her study of the WAA found that there was significant frustration among the coalition of women’s organizations and small groups around the fact that the IWY commission wrested control over the development of a National Plan of Action where one was already developed the year earlier by the National Women’s Agenda Coalition. She argues that the NWAC fought to “secure a firm role” in the IWY process to “provide an opportunity for women to present their own Agenda to the government rather than vice versa.” See Cynthia Harrison, “Creating a National Feminist Agenda: Coalition Building in the 1970s,” in *Feminist*

Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States, ed. Stephanie Gilmore (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 32.

¹⁵ Executive Order 11832, Establishing a National Commission on the Observance of the International Women's Year, 1975. The IWY commission was the "latest" in a long line of federal commissions on women." These commissions, beginning with the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women started by President John F. Kennedy and led by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1961 created the series of state level commissions that would eventually feed the early rolls in the National Organization for Women and the National Women's Political Caucus. The commissions also led to the early legislative victories in the 1960s and 1970s, including the Equal Pay Act in 1963, including sex discrimination in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. See Harrison, "Creating a National Feminist Agenda," 19-20; Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), 66-67.

¹⁶ Executive Order 11832.

¹⁷ Public Law 94-167. This money also provided for financial aid to ensure that women of all socioeconomic status could have an opportunity to attend the conference as a delegate or alternate.

¹⁸ National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, ". . . *To Form a More Perfect Union . . .*": *Justice for American Women Report of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year* (Washington, Department of State, 1976). The report lacked any thorough discussion of the challenges facing lesbian-feminists.

¹⁹ National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, *The Spirit of Houston: The First National Women's Conference* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 10.

²⁰ *The Spirit of Houston*, 10. In March 1978, the Commission produced an official report of the conference proceedings and presented it to President Jimmy Carter. Titled *The Spirit of Houston: The First National Women's Conference*, the publication offered an official narrative from the perspective of the Commissioners. The primary author, Caroline Bird, described a collaborative and heated conference that brought forward a diverse set of voices from the far reaches of the nation to assess the past, present, and future of women (and men) in America. It carefully detailed the recruitment and advertising efforts used to ensure that women representing "all walks of life" and political perspectives were able to attend the state and national meetings. This "official" narrative of IWY at Houston says comparatively little of the contributions of lesbians. It covered the Friday press conference hosted by Jean O'Leary and the Sunday discussion of the Sexual Preference Plank in the National Plan of Action. At the time the report was published, Caroline Bird was already an author of several books and senior editor at a new magazine *Working Women*. See Joan Cook, "For Women of All Views: A State Meeting," *New York Times*, May 22, 1977.

²¹ Harrison explains that the IWY commission's plan ran "parallel" to the existing National Women's Agenda that was developed in 1976 by a series of task forces that then contributed to the Agenda at the National Women's Agenda Coalition conference in October, 1976. The IWY commission, however, commandeered their own process to pull together a National Plan. Harrison notes the parallels from the plank issues to the similar

preamble statements offered by the IWY Commission and the NWAC. See Harrison, “Creating a National Feminist Agenda,” 31-37; *The Spirit of Houston*, 15.

²² These areas are capitalized because they indicate the titles of the planks that appeared in the conference program and in the official report on the IWY conference, *The Spirit of Houston*.

²³ In the film *Sisters of '77*, participants recall the controversy around the minority women’s plank in particular. The minority women’s caucuses took issue with the lack of specificity in the original language of the plank, as it failed to account for the broad range of political, social, and economic challenges facing women of color across the country.

²⁴ The conference agenda scheduled the planks for full debate in alphabetical order. The ERA plank was discussed on Saturday afternoon, while the “Reproductive Freedom” and “Sexual Preference” planks were taken up late in the evening on Sunday, the third and final day of the conference. See Vicki Garbiner, “International Women’s Year: ‘Mommy, When I Grow Up, Can I Be a Lesbian?’” *Atalanta*, 5, no. 12 (December 1977): 12. Box 6, ALFA Archives 94-040, Sally Bingham Center, Duke University Special Collections Library.

²⁵ Some of the delegations that were successfully overwhelmed by anti-feminist forces included Mississippi, Indiana, Georgia, and Oklahoma. At other state IWY meetings, like the Washington meeting in Ellensburg, conservative forces dramatically impacted the results of the recommendations sent forward even as the delegates’ ideological make-up still favored feminists and the ERA. See *The Spirit of Houston*, 112.

²⁶ See Harrison, “Creating a National Feminist Agenda,” 31-37.

²⁷ Harrison, “Creating a National Feminist Agenda,” 31-37.

²⁸ *The Spirit of Houston*, 10.

²⁹ *The Spirit of Houston*, 9.

³⁰ See *Spirit of Houston*, 217-241.

³¹ Angelou's version of the "Declaration of Sentiments" appeared in the front matter of the National Women's Conference official program, along with multiple images of the suffragist parades and other historical images from the earlier era of feminist activism. See Lillene H. Fifield Papers, Coll2007-014, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

³² Maya Angelou, ". . . To Form a More Perfect Union..." in National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, *The Spirit of Houston: The First National Women's Conference* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 195.

³³ Susan B. Anthony, named after her great aunt, (a prominent woman's rights activist from the nineteenth century), spoke from the floor of the conference and called the audience members to complete the work the original Susan B. Anthony had begun decades earlier. The Equal Rights Amendment was brought before Congress by members of the National Women's Party in 1923 but the language for the amendment had been proffered by Anthony in the nineteenth century.

³⁴ Marjorie J. Spruill, "Gender and America's Right Turn," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, eds. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 73; Anna Quindlen, "Women's Conference Approves Planks on Abortion and Rights for Homosexuals," *New York Times*, November 21, 1977, 44.

³⁵ The images showed parading suffragists, protesting members of the NWP outside of the White House, buttons from suffrage organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and other recovered materials for conference members to connect, visually, to that historical legacy. Notably, the images lack women of color, visibly poor women, women with disabilities, or open lesbians. See Fifield MSS.

³⁶ George F. Will, "Earnest 'Sisters' Voting for a New World," *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1977, A23.

³⁷ The relay involved a number of famous women, including tennis star Billie Jean King, carrying the "Torch of Freedom" en route to Houston. See Spruill, "Gender and America's Right Turn," 73.

³⁸ See Jean O'Leary Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. By connecting the IWY conference to a glorified history of women's rights activism, the planners imbued it with significance by grounding it in a narrowly focused historical narrative of suffrage. That narrow focus reemerged in the second wave through a singular focus (to the exclusion or detriment of other groups of women like lesbians) on the Equal Rights Amendment.

³⁹ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xii.

⁴⁰ The images of the torch relay runners, hoisting the torch above their heads and surrounded on all sides by women marching in the streets in Houston *visually* referenced the images of suffragist parades performed by the earlier generation of women's rights activists. As such images graced the covers of the national and feminist media outlets, the

rhetorical links between Houston and Seneca Falls (or earlier suffrage activism) were only further solidified.

⁴¹ In Leo C. Wolinsky's December 1 article in the *Los Angeles Times* attested, many women who attended the IWY conference viewed themselves as "middle-of-the-road" women, as opposed to radical feminists. "Participants turned to markers of traditional femininity as evidence of feminism's mainstream appeal. Sandra Winston, for example, describes her surprise at seeing "a lot of women in pearls and dresses with very feminine coiffures voting with the feminist groups. There were nuns, teachers, nurses, students, and a lot of middle-of-the-road kind of women." See Leo C. Wolinsky, "Feminists Play Down 'Crazies,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1977, CS1.

⁴² Bill Curry and Megan Rosenfeld, "Crucial Test for Women's Conference: Momentum in the Mainstream," *The Washington Post*, November 19, 1977, A1.

⁴³ Ellen Goodman, "At Stake in Houston: Perception of Power," *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1977, A23.

⁴⁴ Goodman, "At Stake in Houston: Perception of Power," A23.

⁴⁵ David S. Broder, "The Real Significance of Houston," *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1977, A17.

⁴⁶ *Spirit of Houston*, 10; Kathleen Hendrix, "Who's Who in Houston: Diverse Goals of L.A. Delegates," *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 1977, G1.

⁴⁷ Caroline Bird, "State Meetings: Every Woman Her Say," in *The Spirit of Houston*, 109; Lorraine Bennett, "Women Delegates Find Unity in their Diversity," *Los Angeles Times* November 10, 1977, A1. Bennett's article used the Orange County delegates to exemplify the level of diversity that would be on display at Houston because

it included “two Asian-Americans, three American Indians, a black woman, several grandmothers, and a high school student”

⁴⁸ Klemesrud, “At Houston Meeting.”

⁴⁹ Curry and Rosenfeld, “Beginning the Mission,” A1.

⁵⁰ Klemesrud, “At Houston Meeting.”

⁵¹ “Home From Houston,” *The Washington Post*, November 27, 1977; David S. Broder, “Assessing the Impact: After the Euphoria, Impact of Women’s Meeting is Unclear,” *The Washington Post*, November 22, 1977.

⁵² Broder, “Assessing the Impact.” See also, Rosalyn Carter, “Remarks to National Women’s Conference, Houston, TX, 19 November 1977,” Box 5, folder 5, Fifield MSS.

⁵³ In addition to submitting a formal “Minority Report” to accompany the National Plan, journalist Judy Klemensrud explained, “the approximately 350 ‘pro-family, pro-life’ delegates wear yellow ribbons saying ‘Majority,’ an indication that even though they feel far outnumbered at the conference, they believ[e] that they represent the majority of American women.” See *Spirit of Houston*, 265-272; Judy Klemensrud, “A Reporter’s Notebook: Symbolic Attire,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1977, 44.

⁵⁴ One photograph by Bettye Lane captured a middle-aged white women sitting near the Missouri delegation holding up a sign with a hand-drawn door and the words “Keep em in the closet.” “Anti-gay/Anti-choice attendees,” November 1977, R25/F23, Bettye Lane Gay Movement Photographs Collection, New York Public Library Rare and Manuscript Division.

⁵⁵ Curry and Rosenfeld, “Crucial Test for Women’s Conference,” A1.

⁵⁶ “Home From Houston.”

⁵⁷ Broder, “Assessing the Impact;” Jeanne Córdova , “IWY Houston, here we come! Disruptions Planned: Keeping Our Heads,” *Lesbian Tide* 7, no. 3 (November/December 1977): 16

⁵⁸ Charlotte Bunch, in a speech in 1978, described the importance of trans-racial collaboration among the Washington D.C. IWY delegation prior to, and continuing after, the conference in Houston. See Charlotte Bunch, “Analysis of Houston IWY Conference.”

⁵⁹ Indeed, the contrast positioned the official report, *The Spirit of Houston*, as a counter-narrative to the much of the news coverage of IWY events.

⁶⁰ Some did so despite their misgivings about the lack of real political power at IWY, apart from the symbolism associated with the conference and the resulting report. For these critics, the fact that such wide-reaching perspectives were once again solicited did not equate with legislative or otherwise authoritative action on those resolutions. See Vicki Gabriner, “IWY Conference: A Woman’s Reaction,” *Pointblank Times* 4, no. 1 (January 1978): 17.

⁶¹ Phelan, *Sexual Strangers*, 7; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983/2006). Phelan notes that there are many concurrent and contradictory “national imaginaries.” IWY represented a counter-hegemonic national imaginary that centered the contributions, “rights and responsibilities” of women in America. As such, lesbian-feminists were not only fighting to be considered in this counter-hegemonic national imaginary, they were also creating a version of their own. See also Public Law 94-167.

⁶² In part, their dual strategy anticipated the possible failure of lesbian rights at the National Conference, whereby lesbians would be forced to make their case through their presence and protest if not through the language voted on by official delegates.

⁶³ Gabriner, "International Women's Year," 11.

⁶⁴ Gabriner, "International Women's Year," 11; James Thomas Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 270. Sears notes that the Lesberadas met weekly throughout the summer and fall leading up to the conference at the First Unitarian Church in Houston.

⁶⁵ Kathleen Boyle, "Houston: What did we gain?" *Out And About*, (February 1978): 16.

⁶⁶ In a letter from Claire Noonan, a member of the Lesberadas, addressed to Jean O'Leary, Noonan argues that the NGTF women were not supportive of radical lesbian-feminists. She argued, "as a lesbian, a Houstonian, a staff member of *Pointblank Times*, and a non-delegate I am thoroughly insulted by your blatant disregard for the needs and desires of the non-delegates or grassroots lesbians who attended the conference. How effective [would the demonstration in support of the sexual preference plank] have been without lesbians in the gallery? Who did the press cover at the celebration? Delegate or not—weren't we all lesbians? Didn't we all work, in whatever capacity, for the same goals?" Noonan expressed some of the same frustration that Vicki Gabriner noted in her reflections on the IWY conference in Houston in the pages of *Atalanta*. See Claire Noonan to Jean O'Leary, 1 December 1977. Jean O'Leary MSS.

⁶⁷ “Lesbians MUST have a voice at the International Women’s Year Conference,” International Women’s Year California State Meeting, June 16-19, 1977. Box 4, folder 11, Fifield MSS.

⁶⁸ “Lesbian’s MUST have a voice at the International Women’s Year Conference.” The same language was used in a *Lesbian News* article published in June 1977 before the state conference. See Diane Abbitt and Bobbi Bennett, “IWY and the Lesbian Issue” *The Lesbian News* 23 (June 1977): 1. See also, Bobbi Bennett, “Lesbians needed at IWY,” *Lesbian Tide* 6, no. 6 (May/June 1977): 34.

⁶⁹ Cheryl Adams and Jean O’Leary, “Lesbian Voices Needed: I.W.Y. State Conference,” *The Lesbian Feminist* (published by Lesbian Feminist Liberation, New York) (June 1977): 3.

⁷⁰ Adams and O’Leary, “Lesbian Voices Needed,” 3.

⁷¹ W.D. “IWY Conference: Where do lesbians fit in?” *Out And About* (November 1977): 3-4.

⁷² “IWY: Feminists Win One!” *The Lesbian News*, 24 (July 1977): 1, 12; “International Women’s Year California State Meeting, June 16-19, 1977,” Box 4, folder 11, Fifield MSS. In the spring of 1977, Fifield sent handwritten strategy notes to Jeanne Córdova, accompanied by inserts for leaflets designated for distribution at the California Meeting. In those notes, Fifield specifically addressed the significance of the orange slate. She explained, “We selected orange for easy association and identification. The California orange slate differs only by the removal of 12 delegates and the insertion of a lesbian slate. *This is important in order to gain coalition support with other feminist and minority groups.* We prepared 7,000 orange slates and ran out. Be sure to print enough

for massive distribution for leaflet preparation and distribution.” Lilene Fifield, “Strategy for Ensuring Representation at IWY” Box 4, folder 11, Fifield MSS, emphasis mine.

⁷³ “Official Nominating Committee Report with 11 Gay Substitutes,” Box 4, folder 11, Fifield MSS.

⁷⁴ “IWY: Feminists Win One!” 1.

⁷⁵ “IWY: Feminists Win One!” 12. In a report addressing “feminists, lesbians, and their allies” elected as delegates to IWY, organizers hailed the success of coalition with gay groups and NOW chapters. To get gay men and lesbians involved, the group publicized the powerful “An[ita]Bryant-Phyllis Sch[a]fly Coalition” in order to “mobiliz[e] the gay community to come to IWY,” and found that such a strategy motivated gay men to attend the California meeting. They added, not only were “Gays, BOTH men and women are angry now and will participate to show Bryant their anger, but “inviting GAY MEN to come support their sisters” at the IWY state conference days earlier at a gay rally.” See Fifield, “Strategies for Feminist Victory at IWY.”

⁷⁶ In a letter to Jean O’Leary reporting on the outcome of the Minnesota state IWY meeting, Kerry Woodward wrote of the success lesbian-feminists had in getting workshop space at the meeting, asserting themselves at panels where they lacked representation, and thwarting the efforts of the “Pro-Lifers” who “attempted to take over the lesbian workshops but failed in each case.” Kerry Woodward to Jean O’Leary, 29 June 1977, Jean O’Leary MSS.

⁷⁷ “Lesbian Visibility Planned for Houston IWY,” 12.

⁷⁸ Ad hoc Committee of Women for Lesbian Rights, “Women and Men! Stop Attempt by Anita Bryant and Phyllis Schlafly to TAKE OVER the California

International Women's Year Conference" Box 4, Folder 11, Fifield MSS. In a speech to the coalition that summer in California, Del Martin made it clear that even the rights of men, gay men in particular, were at stake in Houston. See Del Martin, "IWY Support Coalition Speech, Summer 1977," Box 40, Folder 11, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

⁷⁹ "IWY: Feminists Win One!" 1.

⁸⁰ "IWY: Feminists Win One!" 12.

⁸¹ Garbner, "International Women's Year," 11.

⁸² Cookie, "To Form a More Perfect Union?" *Out And About* (August 1977): 4-5.

⁸³ Cookie, "To Form a More Perfect Union?" 4-5. See also Flippen's discussion of Mormon anti-feminist/anti-gay activism in the 1970s. J. Brooks Flippen, *Jimmy Carter, the Politics of the Family, and the Rise of the Religious Right* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

⁸⁴ Cookie, "To Form a More Perfect Union?" 4-5.

⁸⁵ "IWY Delegates Confirmed," *Out And About* (September 1977): 13.

⁸⁶ Kathy Boyle, "Seattle Lesbians Bussing to Houston IWY, Nov. 7," *Out And About* (September 1977): 13. In one article in the *Lesbian Tide*, Jeanne Córdova wrote that the "straight press" had reported the "KKK, John Birch Society, militant Catholics and Mormons, Schlafely's (sic) Eagle Forum and Pro-American and [Anita] Bryant's anti-gay forces have formed an informal coalition and 'are out to wreck' the Conference." See Jeanne Córdova, "IWY Houston, here we come!" 16.

⁸⁷ O'Leary MSS.

⁸⁸ “Women’s Caucus Formed at NGTF,” August 1, 1977, Box 9, Folder 40, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Records, #7301. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁸⁹ “Women’s Caucus Formed at NGTF.”

⁹⁰ “NGFT Women invite feedback on IWY State meetings,” 1 August 1977, Box 9, Folder 40, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Records. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

⁹¹ Kerry Woodward to Jean O’Leary, 29 June 1977, O’Leary MSS.

⁹² “NGFT Women invite feedback on IWY State meetings,” 1 August 1977, Box 9, Folder 40, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Records.

⁹³ Cookie, “What’s New,” *Out and About* (November 1977): 4. Cookie noted that while the Seattle-King County chapter of NOW had a lesbian rights task force, it was not an easy battle. She argued that the NOW chapter had a “pretty poor record of supporting lesbian rights” but that it decided that the “advantage of belonging to a national organization and having contact with the National Lesbian Rights Task Force might be worth the hassle”

⁹⁴ W.D. “IWY Conference,” 3-4.

⁹⁵ “Lesbian Visibility Planned for Houston IWY,” 12.

⁹⁶ “Lesbian Visibility Planned for Houston IWY,” 12, emphasis mine.

⁹⁷ “Lesbian Visibility Planned for Houston IWY,” 12.

⁹⁸ “Lesbian Visibility Planned for Houston IWY,” 12.

⁹⁹ Del Martin, “IWY Support Coalition Speech, Summer 1977,” Box 40, Folder 11, Martin and Lyon MSS.

¹⁰⁰ Martin, “IWY Support Coalition Speech.”

¹⁰¹ Kathy Boyle, “Seattle Lesbians Bussing to Houston IWY, Nov. 7,” *Out And About* (Sept. 1977): 13.

¹⁰² “Houston?” *Out And About* (Oct. 1977): 4.

¹⁰³ See Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies, The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Tina Fetner, *Tina. How the Religious Right Shaped Gay and Lesbian Activism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Lambert, *Religion in American Politics*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ In a rejoinder to Barbara Warnick and Barry Brummett’s respective critiques of his essay exploring the rhetorical strategies of a conservative campaign to defeat a pro-gay city ordinance, Martin Medhurst asks, “With which overarching social movements are campaigns such as Right to Life, STOP ERA, and Save Our Children affiliated?” I argue that such campaigns can be understood as part of a conservative coalition that scholars have variously termed the New Right or the Christian Right. Though this coalition and the campaigns within it conform to many of the characteristics of conservative resistance detailed by Warnick in her 1977 study “The Rhetoric of Conservative Resistance” and her aforementioned response to Medhurst, I do not argue that they themselves constitute a movement. Rather, taken together, they exemplify a mere part, or wing, of a broader coalition that included additional political and cultural agendas. Furthermore, in this case study, the coalition shared a negative moralistic view of feminists, gay men, and lesbians, and as such, created a unified oppositional force for

activists in both women's and gay liberation. Martin J. Medhurst, "The Sword of Division: A Reply to Brummett and Warnick," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46 (Fall 1982): 383-390; Martin J. Medhurst, "The First Amendment vs. Human Rights: A Case Study in Community Sentiment and Argument from Definition," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46 (Winter 1982): 1-19; Barbara Warnick, "Conservative Resistance Revisited: A Reply to Medhurst," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46 (Fall 1982): 373-378; Barry Brummett, "The Skeptical Critic," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46 (Fall 1982): 379-382.

¹⁰⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 332.

¹⁰⁷ Kristan Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman: Containment Rhetorics of Second Wave Radical/Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 272-273; Tate, 21-23.

¹⁰⁸ Several scholars have studied the characteristics of conservative rhetoric during this time period. See, for instance, Barbara Warnick, "The Rhetoric of Conservative Resistance," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 42 (1977): 256-273; Barry Brummett, "A Pentadic Analysis of Ideologies in Two Gay Rights Controversies," *Central States Speech Journal* 30 (1979): 250-261; Sonja K. Foss, "Equal Rights Amendment Controversy: Two Worlds in Conflict," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1979): 275-288; Martha Solomon, "The Rhetoric of STOP ERA: Fatalistic Reaffirmation," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 44 (1978): 42-59.

¹⁰⁹ Warnick, "The Rhetoric of Conservative Resistance," 257.

¹¹⁰ Lee Gould, *Associated Press*, May 28, 1977. Several cities like Eugene, Oregon, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Wichita, Kansas followed suit.

¹¹¹ By 1978, California state senator John V. Briggs cited Bryant's leadership as inspiration for his own Proposition 6, a measure aimed at prohibiting homosexuals "determined to be promoting the homosexual lifestyle" from teaching in public school classrooms. Tony Ledwell, "Today's Focus: Another California Proposition-Homosexuals," *Associated Press*, October 24, 1978; Robert Scheer, "A Times Interview with Sen. John Briggs on Homosexuality," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 6, 1978. When U.S. representative Theodore Weiss (D-NY) introduced legislation in 1981 to "prohibit discrimination on the basis of affectional or sexual orientation," social conservatives fought back. In a fundraising letter to protest the legislation, Reverend Jerry Falwell, a leader of the New Right organization Moral Majority wrote, "In effect, this legislation would not just prevent discrimination against militant homosexuals, but give social acceptabilities (sic) to a perverted lifestyle." See House Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities, *Civil Rights Act Amendments of 1981*. 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 1982, H.R. 1454, 3-6; Jerry Falwell, "Moral Majority Versus Militant Homosexuals," n.d., Box 106, Folder 32, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force records.

¹¹² Scholars have analyzed how the surge in conservative rhetoric bolstered "traditionalist" or "anti-gay" arguments locked in conflict with "pro-gay" and feminist discourse. Such conflict augmented the activism on both sides. Ralph Smith and Russell Windes maintain that "pro-gay" and "anti-gay" forces "exercise[d] deep mutual influence over one another." Ralph R. Smith and Russell R. Windes, *Progay/Antigay: The Rhetorical War Over Sexuality* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), xvii-xviii, 34; Solomon, "The Rhetoric of STOP ERA," 42-59; Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. Others explicate the strategies and characteristics of

conservative rhetoric, particularly in resistance to pro-gay legislation, municipal ordinances or public debate over LGBT issues. See, for instance, Medhurst, "The First Amendment vs. Human Rights," 1-19; Martin J. Medhurst, "Public Moral Argument on Same-Sex Marriage," in *Public Address and Moral Judgment: Critical Studies in Ethical Tensions*, eds. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 61-96.

¹¹³ Warnick, "The Rhetoric of Conservative Resistance," 257.

¹¹⁴ Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric," 21.

¹¹⁵ Martin and Lyon, "Lesbian Movement in the 80s"; Cookie, "Houston Report part I," *Out and About* (February 1978): 14; Martha Solomon, "Stopping ERA: A Pyrrhic Victory," *Communication Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1983): 109-117.

¹¹⁶ Vicki Gabriner, writing in *Atalanta*, called the advertisement a classic "dyke-baiting" tactic that inadvertently drew additional visibility to the lesbian effort at IWY. See Gabriner, "International Women's Year," 12.

¹¹⁷ Megan Rosenfeld, "Delegates Vote ERA Support: Women's Conference Opens with a Display of Political Muscle," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1977.

¹¹⁸ Judy Klemesrud, "A Reporter's Notebook: Symbolic Attire," *New York Times*, November 21, 1977.

¹¹⁹ Rhetorically, such emphasis on the notion of "majority" sought to capitalize on the similar strategy employed by President Nixon in his dismissal and re-framing of antiwar protesters in his Vietnamization speech by articulating the perspective of what he called the "silent majority" of Americans. Doing so not only diminished the antiwar

effort, but constituted them as the ultimate non-citizens or non-patriots during a time of war.

¹²⁰ Ellen Goodman, “At Stake in Houston: Perception of Power,” *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1977, A23.

¹²¹ For example, at a final meeting of the Maryland state delegation to IWY, they were met with “about 45 women wearing red roses—the symbol of anti-abortion groups—and a small group of lesbians.” See Megan Rosenfeld, “Women’s Conference Facing Storm,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 1977.

¹²² Bill Curry, “15,000 Hold Opposition Rally,” *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1977, A1.

¹²³ Sally Quinn, “The Pedastal has Crashed’: Pride and Paranoia in Houston Notebook,” *The Washington Post*, November 23, 1977, B1.

¹²⁴ Ann Taylor Fleming, “Week in Houston,” *New York Times*, December 25, 1977.

¹²⁵ Curry, “15,000 Hold Opposition Rally,” A1.

¹²⁶ Quinn, “The Pedastal has Crashed,” B1.

¹²⁷ Curry and Rosenfeld, “Crucial Test for Women’s Conference,” A1.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Quinn, “The Pedastal has Crashed,” B1.

¹²⁹ Judy Klemensrud, “Women’s Movement at Age 11: Larger, More Diffuse, Still Battling,” *New York Times* November 15, 1977, 63.

¹³⁰ Debby McBride, “Exclusive: Women for Women Win in Houston,” *The Lesbian News* 29, (November 1977): 1; Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 11.

¹³¹ In January 1977, the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance re-debuted their *ALFA Newsletter*, which had been in print since 1973, as *Atalanta*, named after a goddess in Greek mythology. See *Atalanta*, 5, no. 1 (January 1977), 1

¹³² A number of lesbian-feminists, including Jean O’Leary, provided estimates about the “actual” number of open and closeted lesbians in attendance at IWY, especially represented among the delegates. Most reports confirm Gabriner’s estimates.

¹³³ The language of the plank had been a source of contention. Some women, like Gabriner and Jeanne Córdova, lamented the lack of the word “lesbian” in the title of the plank. Córdova argued that since lesbians were “everywhere” fighting alongside women around the world, “We therefore request that at the conferenes to come we be placed under ‘L’ for Lesbian.” Others, like Charlotte Bunch, argued that using the words “sexual preference” emphasized how sexuality and *choice* were relevant to all women, not just lesbians. For them, sexual preference dovetailed with the reproductive freedom plank in many ways, providing women the freedom of choice over their bodies and sexuality. See Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 11; “IWY Pictorial,” *Lesbian Tide*, 7, no. 4 (January/February 1978), 15; Charlotte Bunch, “Analysis of Houston IWY Conference, Pitzer College,” 30 January 1978, Charlotte Bunch, Personal Collection, 2.

¹³⁴ Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 11.

¹³⁵ Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 12; *The Spirit of Houston*, 89.

¹³⁶ See Bunch, “Analysis of Houston IWY Conference; Lilene Fifield, “Strategies for Feminist Victory at IWY,” n.d., Box 4, Folder 11, Fifield MSS.

¹³⁷ Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 12; “Lesbians Attend IWY Conference, Houston, TX” R35/F10, Bettye Lane Gay Movement Photographs

Collection, New York Public Library Rare and Manuscripts Division; Ann Taylor Fleming, "Week in Houston," *New York Times*, December 25, 1977.

¹³⁸ Megan Rosenfeld and Bill Curry, "Women's Conference Passes Abortion, Gay Rights Measures," *The Washington Post*, November 20 1977, A1.

¹³⁹ Gabriner, "International Women's Year," 12.

¹⁴⁰ Bill Curry and Megan Rosenfeld, "Beginning the Mission: Conference Over the Mission Begins," *The Washington Post*, November 22, 1977, A1.

¹⁴¹ "IWY Pictorial," 15.

¹⁴² "IWY Pictorial," 14.

¹⁴³ "IWY Pictorial," 15.

¹⁴⁴ Megan Rosenfeld and Bill Curry, "Women's Conference Passes Abortion, Gay Rights Measures," A1. I contend that Friedan's comments, though hailed as a huge milestone in the news media and in lesbian-feminist reflections of the Houston experience, were lukewarm and tinged with a homophobic, patronizing tone. Couched in a thorough defense of her heterosexuality, in her reference to loving men "perhaps too well," she ultimately supported "helping" (which suggests more benevolence rather than a mutually transformative coalitional relationship) lesbians in their efforts to advocate for civil rights. From a contemporary standpoint, her statement of support was not earth-shattering; rather it was the lowest level of risk for Friedan at that point in the decade.

¹⁴⁵ Fleming, "Week in Houston."

¹⁴⁶ Rosenfeld and Curry, for example, called Friedan's remarks "The most dramatic support for the lesbians' cause." Megan Rosenfeld and Bill Curry, "Women's

Conference Passes Abortion, Gay Rights Measures,” *The Washington Post*, November 21, 1977, A1.

¹⁴⁷ “IWY Conference Houston TX,” R37/F14, Bettye Lane Gay Movement Photographs Collection, New York Public Library Rare and Manuscripts Division. Other photographs were featured on Linda Griffith’s personal website. See Linda Griffith, “‘Ghosts of the Second Wave’: 51 Historic Photographs of the 1977 National Women’s Conference in Houston, Texas,” modified 2001, accessed October 12 2012, <http://www.lindagriffith.com/IWYcaptionsmain.html>

¹⁴⁸ The phrase, printed on the balloons released with the passage of the sexual preference plank at IWY, captured the visibility strategy and created a spectacle designed to generate media attention.

¹⁴⁹ “IWY Pictorial,” 14.

¹⁵⁰ Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 12.

¹⁵¹ Fleming, “Week in Houston.”

¹⁵² Fleming, “Week in Houston.”

¹⁵³ Cookie, “Houston Report part I: Lesbians in Houston,” *Out And About*, (February 1978): 14; Kathleen Boyle, “Houston: What did we gain?” *Out And About*, (February 1978): 16; Debby McBride, “Exclusive: Women for Women Win in Houston,” *The Lesbian News* 29, (November 1977): 1.

¹⁵⁴ Debby McBride, “Exclusive: Women for Women Win in Houston,” *The Lesbian News* 29, (November 1977): 1.

¹⁵⁵ Boyle, “Houston: What did we gain?” 16.

¹⁵⁶ Boyle, “Houston: What did we gain?” 16

¹⁵⁷ Boyle, "Houston: What did we gain?" 16.

¹⁵⁸ Charlotte Bunch, "Analysis of Houston IWY Conference, Pitzer College," 5.

¹⁵⁹ Gabriner, "IWY Conference: A Woman's Reaction," 17; Barbara Ruth, "Disabled Women Taking Control," *Lesbian Tide* 7, no. 5 (March/April 1978): 7.

¹⁶⁰ Gabriner, "International Women's Year Conference: A Woman's Reaction," 17.

¹⁶¹ Charlotte Bunch, "Analysis of Houston IWY Conference, Pitzer College," 2.

¹⁶² Bunch, "Analysis of Houston IWY Conference, Pitzer College," 2, emphasis original.

¹⁶³ Bunch, "Analysis of Houston IWY Conference, Pitzer College;" Leslie Mallgrave, "Charlotte Bunch: What Now After Houston?" *Lesbian Tide* 7, no. 5 (March/April 1978): 16.

¹⁶⁴ W.D. "IWY Conference," 3-4.

¹⁶⁵ Boyle, "Houston: What did we gain?" 16.

¹⁶⁶ Vicki Gabriner, "IWY Conference: A Woman's Reaction," *Pointblank Times* (January 1978): 16-18. Gabriner rejected the "clear attempt to co-opt and control the power of an independent women's movement" but still hailed the conference as a watershed moment for lesbian-feminist community solidarity. In the end, she confirmed the necessity of both approaches, because "there are many levels to the struggle" (17). See Harrison, "Creating a National Feminist Agenda," 32.

¹⁶⁷ "Lesbian Visibility Planned for Houston IWY" *Out And About* (September 1977): 12.

¹⁶⁸ Conservatives and lesbian-feminists both critiqued the government support and taxpayer dollars that sustained IWY, albeit on different grounds. On the one hand, the appropriation of federal funds represented a legislative vote of confidence and symbolic support of women's issues. Bird, writing in *The Spirit of Houston*, emphasized that the federal funds were distributed to ensure true participatory democracy through the diverse attendance of women at the conference. On the other hand, critics of the federal funds used for the conference used it to attack the conference. Some simply characterized the conference as a waste of federal monies. Noting that Congress appropriated \$5 million for IWY, Bird argued it "amounted to less than a nickel for each female in the country." The conservative opposition used the \$5 million dollar figure in their attacks on the conference as a feminist lobbying opportunity. They asked audiences, "Do you see what your taxpayer dollars are supporting?" while pointing to the most controversial elements of the conference: abortion rights, the ERA, and homosexuality. Ironically, some lesbians joined in haranguing the conference on the whole for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the taxpayer dollars used to support the conference. They argued that the government funding fueled the larger "ruse" perpetuated by the IWY conference that the government supported women. They added that while the government had appropriated money to the conference, it still withheld funds or failed to actually pass legislation that advanced women's rights. *The Spirit of Houston*, 10; Gabriner, "International Women's Year," 6.

¹⁶⁹ W.D. "IWY Conference," 3.

¹⁷⁰ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 191; Winifred Wandersee, *On the Move*, xiii, 175; Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 129. Though some attend to the challenges facing lesbians at the conference, none of these narratives discuss the lesbian visibility campaign.

¹⁷¹ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 129.

¹⁷² Flippen, *Jimmy Carter, the Politics of the Family, and the Rise of the Religious Right*; Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies, The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

¹⁷³ The introduction of the Family Protection Act (FPA) to Congress and the continued success of conservative political initiatives against gay civil rights demonstrated the formidable strength of the New Right coalition and the success of their rhetorical strategies. The FPA, designed to defend the “traditional American family, was heavily supported by many in the Pro-Family Coalition including the Moral Majority. As journalist Larry Bush described the bill in the *New York Times*, the FPA aimed to “deny federal funds to any person or group that even ‘suggests’ that homosexuality is an acceptable ‘life style.’” Further, the bill “condemned homosexuals, prohibited information on contraception for unwed minors, attacked ‘sex intermingling in sports and other school activities,’ removed federal laws concerning wife-and-child abuse, and generally reinstated ‘the traditional role of women in society.’” The FPA, in addition to the successful campaigns to eliminate civil rights for gay men and lesbians in municipalities across the country, attempted to roll back feminist gains and the increased visibility of gay men and lesbians in the media and politics. The rhetoric of the New Right thus capitalized on new “homosexual panic,” based on the threat of increasingly visible and politically powerful gay and lesbian activists. See Margot Hornblower, “‘Pro-Family’

Push: Political Mine Field; Drive for 'Traditional Family' Poses a Political Mine Field," *The Washington Post*, July 25, 1980. The introduction of the Family Protection Act (FPA), followed up on electoral promises during a wave of conservative victories in 1980, further demonstrating the clout of the New Right. See Leavitt, "Addressing the Limits of Altruism: The Nuts and Bolts of Gay Power." Leavitt's article notes that the Human Rights Campaign Fund and the Gay Rights National Lobby started in 1981 in response to the success of the conservative political action committees. The former is now known as the Human Rights Campaign, or HRC. See also Larry Bush, "'Majority' Vs. Gays," *The New York Times*, Nov. 19, 1981; Peter Ross Range, "Thunder From the Right," *The New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1981.

¹⁷⁴ "IWY Pictorial" 14.

¹⁷⁵ Yet even with these constraints, lesbian-feminists continued to view women's liberation as an important coalitional relationship. Politically, women's liberation pursued goals that frequently garnered lesbian-feminist support, among radicals and liberals. Houston proved that other women, not just members of women's liberation, affirmed lesbian civil rights. Though such affirmation fell short of recognizing the broadest range of inequalities and discrimination facing lesbians (that extended beyond the formal plank within the National Plan), women's liberation offered a huge platform for visibility. This opportunity was only enhanced further by the IWY conference.

¹⁷⁶ Historian Marjorie Schuill notes that in the wake of IWY, feminist and anti-feminists declared victory. See Schuill, "Gender and America's Right Turn," 74.

¹⁷⁷ Harrison, "Creating a National Feminist Agenda," 37.

¹⁷⁸ Curry and Rosenfeld, "Crucial Test for Women's Conference," A1.

¹⁷⁹ Sharon McDonald, "National Lesbian Organization is Born!" *Lesbian Tide* 7, no. 6 (May/June 1978): 18.

¹⁸⁰ McDonald, "National Lesbian Organization Born!" 18; Jeanne Córdova, "Ticket to Lesbos: Who Qualifies?" *Lesbian Tide* (May/June 1978): 20.

¹⁸¹ Jeanne Córdova, "Ticket to Lesbos," 20. As Córdova explains in her editorial preceding the report on the founding convention of the NLFO, the question over limiting membership to lesbians presented a problem of exclusion, particularly to those feminists who avowed a woman-identified identity. She argued that had the membership stipulations been closed to those women, then lesbians would have learned nothing from the IWY experience. Moreover, it was a matter of employment security for many women. She explained, "I supported the more open policy because of the potential freedom it gives to thousands of lesbian school teachers, nurses, social workers, licensed professionals, and mothers who can now join without making a public statement about their sexuality. . . I am also proud that membership in a national lesbian organization is open to all women-identified-women, because I believe this represents a bold assertion that *all* women are the sisters of lesbians." She expressed her desire for lesbian-feminists to avoid replaying the problems they themselves faced within the women's movement.

¹⁸² For example, Charlotte Bunch argued that the coalition between black women and lesbians in the District of Columbia, built with IWY in mind, sustained after the conference as a D.C. feminist "power block" in local elections and government appointments. See Bunch, "Analysis of Houston IWY Conference," 4; Mallgrave, "Charlotte Bunch: What Now After Houston?" 16.

¹⁸³ Bunch, "Analysis of Houston IWY Conference,"

¹⁸⁴ Martin and Lyon, “Lesbian Movement in the 80s,” 3.

¹⁸⁵ Martin and Lyon, “Lesbian Movement in the 80s,” 4.

¹⁸⁶ Though such coalition building still offered a platform for promoting a lesbian-feminist political agenda that sought to recognize multiple lesbian-feminist identities.

¹⁸⁷ See, for instance, Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999); Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

¹⁸⁸ Gabriner, “International Women’s Year,” 6.

¹⁸⁹ Phelan, *Sexual Strangers*, 6.

¹⁹⁰ Suzanna Danuta Walters, *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 12.

¹⁹¹ Walters, *All the Rage*, 11.

Conclusion

In the fall of 1977, three lesbian-feminists and a socialist feminist in Los Angeles—Jeanne Córdova, Ivy Bottini, Judy Freespirit, and Martha Ramos—published a dialogue on the challenges facing radical activists in a difficult political climate. On the eve of the International Woman’s Year Conference in Houston (IWY), they shared their perspectives, concerns, and advice with fellow lesbian-feminist activists through the pages of the *Lesbian Tide*. They did so in the midst of a conservative uptick led by “the new right wing,” which they associated with then California governor, Ronald Reagan. As Ramos explained, the political climate was so bad for “gays and women,” it was “more dangerous than the attack on communists during the ‘50s.”¹

The four activists agreed that the rise of the New Right necessitated coalitional efforts—efforts, they stressed, which should not be taken at the expense of their more radical feminist approach that involved a commitment to identity politics.² It was no time, Bottini argued, for lesbian-feminists to acquiesce to those who advocated putting “the Gay Movement on ice” or who urged lesbians in the Women’s Movement to assume “a low profile” in a time of backlash.³ Rather, they saw the need to work together in order to fight back while also staying true to their radicalism in the context of both movements.⁴ Their words reaffirmed the on-going tension between identity politics and coalition politics, crystallized the stakes for lesbian-feminists, and positioned them as a critical political force for the liberation of women and gays and lesbians. In the end, their sentiments also expressed the need for a more reciprocal approach between coalition politics and identity politics, which preserved the identity of lesbian-feminists within coalitional partnerships (or relationships).⁵ The complexity of their arguments challenges

the common presumption that lesbian-feminists were necessarily radical, always confrontational, or only cultural feminists.⁶ These stereotypical characterizations limit the intersectional and multi-dimensional presence of lesbian-feminists in social movement activism throughout the formative decade of the 1970s.

This study began with the woman-identified woman, progressed to the West Coast Lesbian Conference, and ended with the National Women's Conference. In the process, the study exposed the frustrations, divisions, and exclusionary practices that continually challenged lesbian-feminists throughout the 1970s. Yet the study also highlighted the exciting activist community that lesbian-feminists built in their merger of identity and coalitional politics. They built that community and maintained committed coalitional relationships with movement activists who focused on homophile/gay liberation, third world liberation, black liberation, anti-war activism, and women's liberation. As their activism progressed, *lesbian-feminism* held out different meanings for women working in the second-wave women's rights, gay liberation, and anti-war movements.⁷ At times, lesbian feminists upheld a separatist, vanguard ethic, which was defined in *opposition* to other identities and movements.⁸ Though empowering and celebrated by some as more ideologically pure, separatist identity formations remained highly contested at the margins of lesbian-feminist identity politics. With those margins clearly defined, lesbian-feminists strategically pivoted to enact political ideologies and preserve identity from *within* coalitional relationships. In the process, their discourse revealed a great deal about the relationship between identity politics and coalition politics in the context of U.S. social protest. This concluding chapter assesses two overarching implications derived from this study.

1. *Rhetorical pivoting can help build and bolster identities from within coalitional relationships, revealing the rhetorical and political power of intersectionality.*
2. *The robust diversity of lesbian-feminist discourse from the 1970s contributes to the ongoing recovery of feminist and queer public address and opens new directions for future scholarship.*

Taken together, these implications highlight the significance of lesbian-feminists' rhetorical efforts throughout the 1970s. These implications also capture the dynamic history of adversity and advancement in their expression of an intersectional politics, which helped them confront homophobia and sexism in other social movements and within their own activist communities.

Recalibrating Identities: Using Coalitions and Pivoting at the Intersections

Coalitions enabled lesbian-feminists to engage larger and more diverse audiences, make themselves more visible, and bolster their identity outside of separatism. In short, lesbian-feminists transformed and “*recalibrated*” identity in and through coalition relationships.⁹ Recalibration allowed lesbian-feminists to strategically capitalize on intersectionality in order to negotiate the tension between identity and coalition.¹⁰ By pivoting to feature certain aspects of their identities with the various coalitions in mind, they increased their visibility. They did so not only for the sake of legitimizing lesbian-feminism, but also to confront social movement members to think outside of the boundaries of their own systems of political vanguardism and identity politics. Without sacrificing identity politics to coalitional formations, lesbian-feminists could use their intersectional position(s) to uphold the strengths of social movement politics and critique

the accompanying weaknesses and exclusions. Such arguments frequently situated lesbian-feminists as stewards of the radical, intersectional politics they saw at the heart of these movements: women's liberation, anti-war activism, and gay liberation activism. As such, this section will attend to how rhetorical pivoting as a strategic rhetoric 1) allowed lesbian-feminists to build coalitions while preserving and bolstering their radical identities, 2) confronted marginalization within and outside lesbian-feminist groups and correspondingly expanded the range of identity rhetorics through coalition, and 3) used separatism to mark the margins of lesbian-feminist identity.

Building Coalitions, Bolstering Identities

Examining lesbian-feminist negotiations of identity and coalition politics in an historical context addresses and departs from several assumptions and critiques of coalition politics. Scholars of coalition politics tend to emphasize formalized organizations as the object of their analysis in order to assess coalitional efficacy.¹¹ This study confirms that at times, lesbian-feminists engaged in coalitional and co-gender work under the aegis of formal organizations. These groups, like the Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights in New York or the Coalition to Defeat Initiative 13 in Seattle, typically focused on achieving specific instrumental, legislative civil rights goals, as discussed in Chapter Three. Yet by taking a constitutive approach to analyze lesbian-feminist discourse about coalitional activism, this study contributes to the emergent scholarship on the relational and rhetorical aspects of coalition politics.¹² Lesbian-feminist discourse underscores the ways in which coalition politics not only manifested in formal coalitional organizations, but also articulated the basis for transformative relationships to promote social change. As a *relational construct*, coalition also presumes a coming together of

equals. Because they had to overcome exclusionary politics to meet their coalitional partners on equal footing within those relationships, lesbian-feminists asserted their identities in radical *and* unifying terms. As such, they dually critiqued the systems of power exercised among coalitional members and rhetorically crafted a common ground from which to base an activist collectivity. In short, lesbian-feminists embraced coalition politics in ways that maintained a space for identity politics and radical political goals.

The latter observation responds to another critique of coalitional activism, which contends that such work typically entails a liberal, reformist, or even an “assimilationist” approach.¹³ The lesbian-feminist dialogue in the *Lesbian Tide* intimated that critique as they expressed their concerns about retaining radical political goals in coalition politics. Though some activist efforts advocated liberal goals, coalitions did not foreclose radical activism altogether. Lesbian-feminist efforts in women’s liberation, anti-war activism, and gay liberation suggest that they recognized a space for radical empowerment even from within coalitional relationships.

Women’s Liberation

For lesbian-feminists, the 1977 National Women’s Conference in Houston was an important symbol of the political possibilities *in and through* coalition building within women’s liberation. It brought together lesbians representing different political approaches, identity formations, and communities from around the country. In a speech a few years later, Phyllis Lyon called Houston “Our proudest moment as Lesbians.” She added, “We had come by the droves from all parts of the country as delegates and non-delegates, as a force that could not be ignored. We were visible, we were vocal, we were strong—and we won!”¹⁴ By their more unified presence and voice, lesbians confirmed

the existence and the common struggle of a national lesbian-feminist community. In the years that followed the 1977 conference, some lesbian-feminist activists like Lyon used Houston to foster a rhetoric of coalition building that recognized, rather than marginalized, lesbian presence and activism. At IWY, lesbian-feminists articulated coalitional arguments that did not eschew the *term* lesbian or sexuality, nor did they argue for all women to identify *as lesbians* or woman-identified women.¹⁵ Instead, lesbian-feminists and their allies at IWY argued that because homophobia negatively affected all women, all women had a stake in fighting such discriminatory practices. Using shared oppression and noting how homophobia interlocked with sexism, racism, and classism, lesbian-feminist activists argued for their inclusion within a national women's agenda. They strategically utilized intersectionality to identify and challenge interlocking systems of power in order to build coalitional strength.

Intersectionality as a political strategy also allowed activists to feature one (or more) identity as a means to connect to multiple groups *without* relinquishing another identity in the process. Throughout the decade, lesbian-feminists of color, including Betty Powell, Marge Sloan, Jeanne Córdova, Patricia Benevidez, Anita Cornwell, and Patty Kunitsugu, highlighted the importance of honoring difference while upholding coalitional relationships among lesbian-feminists. Cornwell and Kunitsugu, for example, emphasized how their gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual identities came together to create common ground with multiple communities while they retained power in their difference. This intersectional strategy of appealing to common ground while addressing racism, sexism, and homophobia re-emerged at IWY in Houston. There, Sloan, Córdova, and Benevidez called upon sexuality not as a way to divide, but as a way to pull women

together. Because sexism had disciplined them in interlocking ways, they used that oppression to forge common ground across identity groups. By channeling the power of an intersectional and coalitional force, they proved they could bolster their own visibility and identities in the process.

Anti-War Activism

In addition to shedding light on lesbian-feminists' relationship with women's liberation, this study also pinpoints their vocal presence in other social movements, including anti-war activism. Their anti-war discourse showed how pivoting to feature gender or sexuality allowed lesbian-feminists to strategically use intersectionality as a means of promoting lesbian-feminist identity in the process of engaging in anti-war activism. Lesbian-feminists argued that they could add new anger and energy to the movement at a critical time.¹⁶ They made these claims in the face of an anti-war movement that relied on the power of coalition politics while contributing to a legacy of sexism and homophobia.¹⁷ Though difficult, lesbian-feminists used their coalitional relationship as another platform from which to challenge homophobia and sexism as associated with militarism and imperialism.

Circulating anti-war speeches *by* lesbian-feminists *to* lesbian-feminist audiences provided the inventional *topoi* to participate in other social movement activism while asserting their power as lesbian feminists. Coalitional arguments supported their activist community and the established anti-war and anti-nuclear efforts in two ways.¹⁸ First, rhetors united anti-war politics with feminist politics and advocated a view of both movements as sharing in a common struggle for humanity and social change. Second, lesbian-feminists sought to bolster or extend anti-war arguments with radical feminist

criticism. For lesbian-feminists concerned with anti-war activism, both modes made coalition politics possible without sacrificing radical politics aimed at ending militarism and imperialism linked to heterosexism. In short, they elevated radical feminist and lesbian-feminist politics within the context of the anti-war movement. In doing so they confronted anti-war audiences and rallied lesbian-feminist audiences to the anti-war cause.

Gay Liberation

Strategic pivoting was especially necessary in co-gender coalitional relationships where lesbian-feminists could enact their commitment to co-gender activism without submerging a gendered or feminist critique. They honored the common ground and unity they shared with men while confronting exclusionary politics. While lesbian-feminists were, in many respects, hypervisible in women's liberation activism, they were far less visible in the context of gay liberation. As such, this study contributes to ongoing work in queer history and queer rhetorical studies in order to understand the historical contributions of lesbian-feminists to gay liberation activism and pride demonstrations. For lesbian-feminists who engaged in activism with gay men, the process of claiming shared sexual minority identity allowed them to bolster their own identity discourse. They sometimes positioned themselves as equal partners with gay men, and at other times claimed to be the true vanguards of radical gay liberation politics. Either way, many women saw value in struggling with gay men over matters of equality from within the coalitional partnership. They often appealed to their collective numerical significance that signaled gay and lesbian unity in the face of a rising conservative activism. The opposition of the New Right helped to bring them together with new strength in the latter

half of the 1970s.¹⁹ Still, even with the call for unity, lesbian-feminists did not abandon their focus on liberation and identity.

In considering lesbian-feminists' protest activities in conjunction with gay men, this study contributes to the ongoing history of gay pride festivals, marches, and rallies in the United States. Some analyses and histories speak to the division between gay men and lesbians in the 1970s, frequently locating lesbian-feminists either in the women's movement or in their own lesbian separatist community.²⁰ This study reveals some of the ways in which lesbian-feminists made sense of pride and used it strategically to strengthen their sense of shared lesbian identity in the context of gay liberation. Their views of gay pride were decidedly mixed, but those varied perspectives helped shed new light onto what pride meant to women during the 1970s. Some located its meaning in the events at the Stonewall Inn in 1969, and as such, viewed pride as an event entirely for gay men. Some lamented how it served as an annual example of the sexist treatment and dismissal they experienced within gay liberation specifically and in the gay community more broadly. For others who viewed it more positively, gay pride signified the common struggles they shared with gay men and signaled an annual opportunity to come together in display of that unity. For still others, gay pride created a space in which lesbian-feminists could reaffirm their own sense of *lesbian* pride whereby they bolstered their identity rhetorics and collective visibility in and through pride events. By considering the varied responses to pride discourse, this study recognizes and complicates the rhetoric of unity at the heart of pride while showing how it brought lesbians and gay men together in a powerful show of force.

Whether in gay liberation or the anti-war movement, lesbian-feminists engaged in robust coalitional work with men into the 1970s. They sat on panels together, spoke at rallies, and marched together against discriminatory legislation. Although the discourse reflected the struggles of working together, they still *did* the work. Lesbian-feminists used those coalitional relationships to forward the broader goals of social change while reflexively working to challenge and strengthen those movements by confronting the sexism and homophobia that weakened them from within.

For lesbian-feminists involved with gay liberation over the course of the 1970s, the political struggles, gains, and losses would create critical groundwork for building community during the difficult decade ahead.²¹ The rightward turn in the political scene at the end of the 1970s presaged the challenges that awaited gay men and lesbians into the 1980s and 1990s, from the Family Protection Act to HIV/AIDS to Don't Ask, Don't Tell. But as such oppositional pressures strengthened the unity among gay men and lesbians, they contributed to an increasingly normative shift in gay activism.²² In part, the growing national gay and lesbian organizations and fundraising committees reflected that shift.²³ In recent decades, queer scholars and lesbian-feminist activists have criticized early activists' desires for social and political legitimacy because it directed subsequent activist work to achieve those narrow goals.²⁴

Within the three movements analyzed in this study, coalitional rhetoric and politics had a series of implications for lesbian-feminist activism and identity formation. Lesbian-feminist rhetors worked to raise the consciousness of other activist communities as they encouraged their own (i.e., lesbian-feminist readers) to strengthen their fight against oppressive dominant systems of power inside and outside of such partnerships.

They radicalized the rhetoric of *both* sides of the coalition by infusing it with a critique of homophobia and sexism. This approach connected lesbian-feminists with national, co-gender communities of activists. The next sections examine the power of coalitional relationships as lesbian-feminists recalibrated their identities and confronted exclusionary politics in ways that specifically departed from a separatist ethic.

Confronting Marginalization and Constituting Identities

Rhetorical pivoting as a strategic rhetoric expanded lesbian-feminists' range of identity rhetorics defined in and through coalitional relationships. Such a strategy helped them confront marginalization within and outside lesbian-feminist groups. Lesbian-feminists engaged in coalition building throughout the 1970s to create transformative relationships that they could also use as a resource for enhancing their own visibility. Their relationship with women's liberation may have seemed clear-cut vis-à-vis shared gender identity and feminist politics. Yet, sexuality—and the negative associations with homosexuality in particular—made for a difficult fusion of interests and a history of rocky relationships. Some lesbian-feminists, like Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, even invoked history in an effort to confront such marginalization. Within NOW, as Lyon explained in a 1974 keynote address, lesbians were embraced and accepted by some organizational chapters; in others, they were charged with implementing “a lesbian conspiracy or takeover.”²⁵

In the face of such obstacles, many lesbians working within women's liberation submerged their sexuality to protect themselves against reprisal and to insulate the public image of the feminist movement from the spectre of homosexuality. Even as inconsistency, betrayal, and homophobia threatened to hold lesbian-feminists back, they

continued to advocate on behalf of feminist issues throughout the decade, speaking out on such issues as reproductive rights, domestic violence, wage inequality, and sex discrimination in a variety of arenas.²⁶ In particular, this study reveals how lesbian-feminists creatively negotiated the possibilities for activism from *within* the women's movement, expressing commitments to liberal, radical, and separatist political perspectives. Such activism offered inventional resources to expand their constitutive options for identity.

As other scholars have indicated, lesbian-feminists rhetorically constituted their identities to create new possibilities for community and activism in response to the exclusionary politics that shut them out of women's liberation.²⁷ For example, the constitutive rhetoric articulated in the 1970s Radicalesbians' statement, "The Woman-Identified-Woman," acknowledged lesbian sexuality while eschewing the negative ramifications associated with the label "lesbian." The statement crafted the "woman-identified-woman" (WIW) and the "politicalesbian," which emphasized lesbianism as a political choice and sought to define lesbianism through feminism. Within those formulations, straight feminists could embrace the new fulcrum of radical feminist politics—lesbianism—through the concept of woman-identification, presumably without the baggage associated with the term.

As Chapter Two demonstrates, despite the wide acceptance of the WIW as a rhetoric of white lesbian-feminist identity, it fell short in many ways. Scholars like Tate and Poirot suggest that WIW failed because it excluded women of color and straight feminists and constrained the political possibilities for lesbian-feminism.²⁸ In this study I argue instead that such shortcomings did not represent a dead end; those moments of

rupture contributed to an ongoing dialogue about lesbian-feminist identity that resulted in an expanded set of constitutive rhetorics. In other words, the WIW was a *limited* constitutive rhetoric not just for women of color or straight feminists, but also for many lesbian-feminists. In response, lesbian-feminists moved beyond the WIW by crafting identities in ways that recognized their intersectionality and double or triple commitments to other social movements, including women's liberation, gay liberation, and ethnic liberation movements.

By the end of the decade, lesbian-feminists had expanded the range of constitutive options for identity in ways that recognized intersectional, coalitional, and co-gender commitments. Lesbian-feminists of color used intersectionality to craft new definitions of identity, address racism, and raise the consciousness of women of color who still “took their cues” from men. Elandria Henderson called attention to how racism, sexism, and heterosexism co-constituted one another by arguing that “Black Gay women . . . must fight all three oppressions or not at all.”²⁹ Others sought to imbue lesbian-feminism with a commitment to anti-racism. Women in the Black Caucus at the West Coast Lesbian Conference argued that fighting racism was part of the “total struggle of lesbian-feminists.”³⁰ These and other lesbian-feminists fought to recognize the value of co-gender activism as a critical part of this total struggle. Because some feminists held co-gender activism as suspect, lesbian-feminists who crafted their identity in part through co-gender coalitional relationships ultimately rejected using women's liberation as an *identity* resource. Instead, they reconfigured their relationship with other feminists as coalitional. At times, this even meant crafting coalitions with other lesbian-feminists, as exemplified by the visibility effort at IWY in Houston.

Lesbian-feminist activism around the National Women's Conference revealed their dexterous ability to advance sexuality in ways that fostered shared commonalities with others and a unity reliant on recognizing difference. As such, they took advantage of their hypervisibility within the women's movement to achieve inclusion and confront homophobia as they worked for women's liberation.³¹ IWY opened a space for enacting intersectionality and redeemed the earlier *promise* of the woman-identified-woman: lesbian-feminists argued that lesbians were "all women" because sexuality was relevant across multiple forms of difference. The rhetoric of woman-identification articulated the stakes lesbians and feminists shared in relation to sexism and its relationship to homophobia. Yet this time, they articulated such claims without pushing lesbian identity to the side, into the shadows, or back into the closet.

As shown, even when the intersectional qualities of lesbian-feminism were identified and used to constitute new identities and coalitions through difference, such recognition did not resolve intra-movement marginalization. Many lesbian-feminists feared betrayal from straight feminist, gay men, and "gay women," especially those who were gender non-conforming. As detailed in Chapter Two, in the process of redefining the boundaries of identity, lesbian-feminists from across the ideological spectrum disciplined one another. They critiqued one another for being too radical and too conservative. Younger lesbian-feminists questioned women who embraced monogamy over the sexual freedom that broke the patriarchal bonds of gender roles. Lesbian-feminists frequently failed to see the liberatory potential in butch/femme relationships and criticized those women for being sexist or for being victims of patriarchal culture. They disciplined one another for being closeted. And finally, lesbian-feminists disputed

the trustworthiness of those who engaged in co-gender activism. Such disputes ranged from simple dismissal, to charges of “collusion with the enemy,” to the violent dismissal of transsexual lesbian-feminists like Beth Eliot. In short, wide-ranging criticism surfaced throughout 1970s lesbian-feminist discourse.

This study exposes how lesbian-feminists struggled with racism, classism, ableism, and sexism as they disciplined one another.³² This disciplinary feature of their community and identity building process was especially destructive for those lesbians and lesbian-feminists who conformed to butch/femme relationship structures or identified as transsexual or gender non-conforming. Thus, despite the positive, generative, and expansive aspects of activism and community building, lesbian-feminists still fell prey to the negative repercussions of identity politics as they designated insiders and outsiders. Collectively, these dismissals amplified the constitutive rhetoric of separatist lesbian-feminism.

Separatism: Defining the Margins

Separatism offered what many viewed as an ideologically pure constitutive option,³³ one that stood apart by eschewing coalition politics and offering an identity formation on the margins of lesbian-feminism. As a practice and enactment of identity, separatism underwent intense scrutiny. Though it was often perceived a more ideologically and politically pure, detractors argued that separatism ignored the struggles that lesbian-feminists shared with others, including lesbians of color, straight women, and men. Additionally, some lesbian-feminists and lesbian-feminists of color argued that the isolation and desire for unity through separatism actually *exacerbated* the exclusionary

practices, especially in terms of racism. The myopia of separatism, Kunitsugu argued, overlooked lesbians' intersectional struggles.³⁴

Many lesbian-feminists argued that while separatism was an attractive notion, they found it limiting because it wholly foreclosed the possibility of coalition—with straight women or men. Indeed, the varied requirements for enacting ideological purity became another form of exclusion. As such, this study reveals how most rhetorics of lesbian-feminist identity provided for coalition building and defined those options *against* a separatist identity. As such, it repositions separatism from a central or sole enactment of lesbian-feminist identity to one option out of several identity formations, occupying a margin against which other lesbian-feminists negotiated their identity formation process.

In sum, the constitutive identity rhetorics circulating among lesbian-feminists demonstrated how they could creatively navigate the intersectionality, diversity of thought, and exclusionary politics. In particular, many lesbian-feminists held fast to the possibility of working together despite vast differences as a means of achieving broad-based social change.³⁵ While some scholars including Stein have argued that lesbian-feminists failed to sustain their movement because they lacked a unified central definition of identity, I argue that the expansive, flexible, and coalitional identity options represented the *strength* of lesbian-feminist activism.³⁶

Lesbian-feminists thus leveraged coalitional arguments to enhance social movement activism, recalibrating lesbian-feminist identity in the process. They simultaneously staked their claim to visibility and legitimacy in the process of coalition building. Analyzing lesbian-feminist activism through the lens of coalition formation expands historical narratives that emphasize their singular connection to either women's

liberation *or* gay liberation. Because they had to fight just to be recognized as legitimate voices of protest with anti-war and gay liberation movement audiences, their calls to coalition and consciousness were even more notable and remarkable. Those coalitions, especially women's liberation and gay liberation, built the collective strength that proved necessary to survive the impending cultural shift toward the reactionary politics of the 1980s.

Queering Public Address: Recovering Lesbian-Feminist Voices

The spotlight on lesbian-feminist discourse in this study expands the range of voices and perspectives included in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer rhetorical history. As they circulated locally and nationally in periodicals, lesbian-feminist voices contributed to the ongoing conversations about identity formation, coalition building, and community enhancement. The vast range of publications coming out of communities from Atlanta to New York City, from Jackson to San Francisco, from Seattle to Minneapolis, from Iowa City to Chicago, from San Jose to the District of Columbia, demonstrate the sheer number of lesbian-feminist enclaves around the country during an incredibly generative time. They show how, despite differing regional constraints and needs, women in these communities carried on strikingly similar debates about the contours of lesbian-feminism, the societal and inter-movement challenges they faced, the struggles over separatism, and the depth of intersectional experiences. It revealed their extensive activist commitments to gay liberation, women's liberation, anti-war activism, third-world liberation, wage equality activism, prison reform, and more.³⁷

Additionally, analyzing such a broad range of discourse illuminates the diversity of political ideologies within lesbian-feminist communities. Lesbian-feminists were not

politically monolithic.³⁸ Internal conflict over political ideology persisted throughout the decade, yet proved that lesbian-feminists could contribute and bolster their collective visibility in multiple ways. Lesbian-feminists used a dual approach—blending liberal (establishment) and radical (anti-establishment) strategies—to achieve visibility and impact the conversation about women’s rights at IWY in 1977. While some argued that gaining inclusion within the formal government-sponsored process of IWY was paramount, others advocated for a radical critique of that process and called for the future of women’s rights to go beyond the Equal Rights Amendment in support of broad-based liberation. Both arguments convinced lesbian-feminists from around the country to attend, confront the exclusionary politics at IWY, and build coalitions inside and outside the conference.

This study addresses the limited presence of women in historical narratives of the gay rights movement, particularly in rhetorical studies. In part, this absence may be due to a lack of voices that have risen to the top through rhetorical prowess or through established positions in political office, or simply because women were not open about their lesbian identity.³⁹ Additionally, lesbian-feminists frequently favored non-hierarchical organizational structures wherein they avoided designating certain women as “leaders.” In either case, women’s voices have been largely left out until more recently, and when they do appear, it is more often in the context of their work in the women’s movement. My study contributes to the latter and adds to the process of recovering the women who protested alongside and *against* gay men. As such, this study begins to fill in the gaps by analyzing the protest activities of lesbian women in a way that recognizes their activist work with gay men and second wave feminism yet also recognizes their

efforts to overcome the challenges of invisibility and exclusionary politics that plagued them *within* those movements.⁴⁰

Lesbian-Feminists and The Politics of “Queer”

As part of queer rhetorical studies, this study on lesbian-feminist identity and coalition politics highlights the creative political practices they engaged in over the course of the decade. I argue that such work can be interpreted as an example of queer political practice. As discussed in Chapter One, I do not utilize queer in this study as an *identity marker* for lesbian-feminists in this study.⁴¹ Instead, I employ the term queer to suggest the rhetorical *flexibility* and *fluidity* of identity in the context of social movement activism.⁴² As the rest of this study suggests, lesbian-feminists demonstrated their ability to utilize the intersectionality of their identities to recalibrate them in the face of different audiences and compounding constraints within multiple social movements. In this way, I argue that by recalibrating their identities, lesbian-feminists *queered* them. They transformed them in and through the coalitional relationships they cultivated with women’s liberation, gay liberation, black liberation, and others, and according to the interlocking oppressions they sought to challenge (i.e., homophobia, sexism, racism). In short, they queered their identities over the course of the 1970s, long before such practice gained theoretical authorization under the auspices of queer theory.⁴³

This study has only begun to unpack the complexity of how lesbian-feminists negotiated identity and coalition politics in the 1970s. They were prolific activists with holistic visions of social change. Such visions enabled them to work in movements that did not necessarily welcome them as open lesbians with open arms. Despite the constraints they faced in each social movement, many lesbian-feminists persisted. They

accentuated the ways their experiences as lesbian women linked with the oppressions facing other groups. They created common ground and added their strength to many causes, ultimately recalibrating lesbian-feminist identities in light of those other movement ideologies. Such insights open several avenues for future analysis that recognize and value the generative *possibilities* that result from crafting options beyond the limits of identity-politics.

Notes

¹ Judy Freespirit, Ivy Bottini, Jeanne Córdova, and Maria Ramos, “Coalition Politics: A Necessary Alliance,” *Lesbian Tide* 7, no. 2 (September/October 1977): 4.

² See Katherine Kurs and Robert S. Cathcart, “The Feminist Movement: Lesbian-Feminism As Confrontation,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 6, no. 1 (1983): 12-23.

³ Freespirit, et. al., “Coalition Politics: A Necessary Alliance,”⁵.

⁴ Bernard L. Brock, Mark E. Huglen, James F. Klumpp, and Sharon Howell. *Making Sense of Political Ideology: The Power of Language in Democracy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 71, 113.

⁵ My use of the reciprocal seeks to capture the reciprocal relationship lesbian-feminists tried to strike between identity politics and coalition politics. Rather than fully sacrifice one for the other, they tried to strike a balance between the two. Additionally, identity politics augmented the terms of coalition building and conversely, coalition building impacted the terms upon which identity politics rested.

⁶ See Kurs and Cathcart, “The Feminist Movement,” 15-16. They argue that by definition, lesbian-feminism (a term they *collapse* with woman-identification) was woman-identified and a “source of rhetorical confrontation against the male-system.” As such, lesbian-feminists “forged a political position totally at odds with with the traditional male-controlled power structure and those who identified with it” (16).

⁷ Competing conceptions of identity were formulated and debated within the pages of the lesbian-feminist periodicals that circulated from woman to woman, community to community. Much like the early suffrage and woman’s rights movement periodicals and newspapers, the lesbian-feminist network of alternative publications

served critical ideological, identity, and inventional functions. The letters to the editor of the *Lavender Woman*, a Chicago-based publication, attests to their reading and circulation habits. Based on the discourse included my broad sample of publications and the available histories of lesbian communities in the United States, this practice of passing around the periodical (at sporting events, at parties, at the bar, etc.) contributed to the circulation of lesbian-feminist identity rhetorics and community (local and national) news. See “Sisters Speak Out,” *Lavender Woman*, (June 1974): 2;. Martha Solomon, ed., *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).

⁸ Separatist lesbian-feminist formations in this study conform in many ways to the “confrontational” perspective identified by Kurs and Cathcart in their 1983 study of lesbian-feminism. See Kurs and Cathcart, “The Feminist Movement,” 19.

⁹ Gal, Susan. “A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction,” *differences* 13 (2002): 77-95.

¹⁰ As Patricia Hill Collins suggests, “the 1970s and 1980s were the heady days of intersectional scholarship, a time when the critical analytical lens of intersectionality was to assessing significant social issues, thinking through mechanisms of intersecting systems of power themselves, and/or trying to do something about social inequalities” (viii). She argues that Crenshaw’s 1991 coining of the term intersectionality led scholars to turn inward, “to the level of personal identity narratives” and turning away from “social structural analyses of social problems” (viii). Thus, she argues, there is increased need to use intersectionality to ask larger questions about the relationship between power and societal structures. This study thus contributes to understanding how women during

those “heady days” talked about the intersecting systems of power and how they made sense of those as they discussed their own identity formations and coalition building efforts. Thus, rather than simply developing “personal identity narratives,” this study examines how the *deployment* of intersectionally-informed identity formations helped bolster both lesbian-feminist visibility and craft coalitional relationships with other social movement activists. I consider how lesbian-feminists used intersectionality as they developed their identities while also tackling the daily impact of societal power structures in their lives and coalitional political practice. Further, this study seeks to consider the strategic, rhetorical possibilities associated with intersectionality—beyond creation of identification, but creating opportunities for new, productive coalitional relationships. See Patricia Hill Collins, “Forward,” in Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, eds., *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), viii; Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” in *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*, eds. Katherine T. Bartlett and Roseanne Kennedy, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 57-80.

¹¹ See Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Nella Van Dyke and Holly J. McCammon, eds., *Strategic Alliances: Coalition Building and Social Movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

¹² See Karma R. *Queer/Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (unpublished manuscript, last modified November 21, 2011); Karma R.

Chavez, "Counter-public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January/March 2011): 1-18; Carillo Rowe, Aimee. *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

¹³ Sharon Deevy cites Rita Mae Brown as an early detractor of coalition politics as assimilationist, characteristic of an "old gay" political approach. Sharon Deevy, "Such a Nice Girl," in *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*, eds. Charlotte Bunch and Nancy Myron (Baltimore, MD: Diana Press, 1975), 25.

¹⁴ Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, "Lesbian Movement in the 1980s," n.d., Box 40, Folder 23, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, 93-13, GLBT Historical Society, 3.

¹⁵ To be clear, the discourse that took place on the floor at IWY, in the periodicals at the time, and in the meetings and workshops at the conference explicitly used terms like lesbian, dyke, lesbianism, and sexuality. This contrasted with the name of the plank itself, "sexual preference," which retained a feminist emphasis on *choice*, departed from biological notions of sexual *orientation*, and avoided reducing the relevance of sexuality to lesbians only.

¹⁶ Gay anti-war activists like Morris Kight in Los Angeles made similar claims about the energy gay activists could infuse into the anti-war movement. See "Anti-war March split looms in L.A.," *The Advocate*, April 12, 1972, 7;

¹⁷ As articles in *The Advocate* indicate, gay and lesbian anti-war activists in Los Angeles faced intense homophobia from coalition members of the anti-war movement. The homophobic treatment was so bad, leaders threatened to withdraw gay anti-war activists from a massive anti-war march and rally in April 1972. Articles explained how

Morris Kight, a prominent leader in the Los Angeles gay community, told anti-war coalition members that unless the homophobic abuse ceased, he would encourage gay activists to refuse to participate and hold their own rally. The implied claims—that the anti-war movement needed gay activists and still offered a homophobic activist environment for those members—emerged in Jeanne Córdova’s speech to the anti-war rally. See Doug Beardslee and Jim Kepner, “Thousands Protest War: Gay Lib marches in S.F.” *The Advocate*, May 26 - June 8, 1971, 1, 6; “Anti-war March split looms in L.A.,” *The Advocate*, April 12, 1972, 7; “Most groups to skip L.A. peace march,” *The Advocate*, April 26, 1972, 12.

¹⁸ Yet those links, in addition to co-gender activism, were not universally endorsed within lesbian-feminist communities. Their very contestation reveals the diversity of opinion regarding coalitional work among lesbian-feminists. See Hollibaugh, von Bretzel, Crichton, Lindbloom, “Vietnam, A Feminist Analysis,” *Ain’t I A Woman* 3, no. 1 (Aug. 18, 1972): 4-5.

¹⁹ For example, Anita Bryant’s January 22, 1978 performance at the annual gathering of the National Religious Broadcasters Association in Washington, D.C. catalyzed one of the largest public protest actions at that point in the D.C. gay community’s history. Until that night, the community’s presence at public gay rights demonstrations had peaked the previous June 1977 with a rally of 300 people in Lafayette Park. Bryant’s performance inspired a crowd numbering over 3000 to march from the Dupont Circle, the city’s “gay ghetto,” to the Hilton Hotel on Connecticut Avenue. Many marched that night for the first time, often risking their government jobs due to the local newspaper and television coverage of the event. Local reports credited Bryant with

uniting the gay community in opposition to her homophobic rhetoric. See Lou Romano, “Anita to Visit D.C.—Protest Rally and March Planned,” *The Gay Blade*, January 1978, 1; Bill Evans and Jim Zais, “Rally Draws Record Crowd,” *The Gay Blade*, February 1978; Jim Zais, “Reactions to the March,” *The Gay Blade*, February 1978, 4.

²⁰ See Amin Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008; David Schneer and Caryn Aviv, eds., *American Queer: Now and Then* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 219. Schneer and Aviv discuss lesbian-feminism in terms of 1) “the feminist movement,” 2) in terms of “queer people of color” who became “active within the queer movement,” and 3) suggesting that “many women did not find a home in the 1970s gay movement” (219). While the latter is true for some lesbian-feminists, it maintains a male-centric narrative of gay activism in the 1970s.

²¹ The AIDS crisis brought gay men and lesbians together anew in the 1980s. See Jeanne Córdova, *When We Were Outlaws: A Memoir of Love and Revolution* (Midway, FL: Spinsters Inc., 2011), 413.

²² In her memoir, Jeanne Córdova points to “two cataclysmic events” that brought gay men and lesbians together—Anita Bryant’s attack on gay civil rights in Dade County, Florida in 1977 and the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. She adds, “Many would argue that gay men still don’t recognize women as equals” See Córdova, *When We Were Outlaws*, 413-414.

²³ Schneer and Aviv point to the establishment of NCLR in 1977, the growing presence of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF), and Walters points to the establishment of the Committee for Human Rights, the precursor to the Human Rights

Campaign. See Schneer and Aviv, eds., *American Queer*, 219; Suzanna Danuta Walters, *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 47.

²⁴ In part, the activism and political progress of the 1970s contributed to the rise of *homonormativity*, which emphasizes gay men and lesbians as “normal” in an effort to secure civil rights. Such work, however, fails to challenge the sexism undergirding such norms and government-restricted modes of citizenship, including the barriers imposed against marriage and military service. Despite a growing media presence of gay men, lesbians, and even transgender folks, double standards and unequal representation remain for lesbians and gay men. Though increased political power has been frequently won through a liberal, establishment approach, it has thrived at the expense of radical, “threatening,” non-normative members of the LGBTQ community and movement. See Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003); Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999). This project also traces some of this distancing process by detailing the tensions over transsexual lesbian-feminist Beth Elliot at the West Coast Lesbian conference in 1973 and the clashes over transsexual and drag queen performances at pride in Chapter 3. These moments of clash mark the tension that remains among lesbian-feminists concerning transgender members of the movement. Some have indicated a concern about the “disappearing lesbian” under the sign of “queer” in the contemporary LGBTQ movement. While this argument may be seen as

essentialist as lesbian-feminists still fight for biological women's bodies at annual events like the Michigan Women's Music Festival, the battles over identity politics and coalition politics offer some insight into the persistence and virulence with which some defend "lesbian" today.

²⁵ Phyllis Lyon, "Keynote Speech: NOW National Convention, Houston, TX," May 25-27, 1974, Box 41, Folder 4, Lyon and Martin MSS, 4.

²⁶ See, for example, Jeanne Córdova, "The Fourth Demand: Here We Are Again," *Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 8 (March 1973): 9, 26-27.

²⁷ Kristan Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman: Containment Rhetorics of Second Wave Radical/Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 263-292; Helen Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric: The Co-Option of the Rhetoric of White Lesbian Feminism," *Women's Studies in Communication* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-31.

²⁸ Tate, "The Ideological Effects of a Failed Constitutive Rhetoric," 1-31; Poirot, "Domesticating the Liberated Woman," 263-292. Poirot suggests that liberal and radical/lesbian feminist rhetoric not only failed to constitute a feminist identity, but it constructed a definition of "woman" that fit with their political goals—reform or liberation. In the latter effort, they ultimately contained the possibilities for radical feminism on the one hand and alienated straight liberal feminists on the other.

²⁹ Elandria V. Henderson, "Black and Lavender," *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 2 (December 1971): 4.

³⁰ "Black Caucus Position: Report from the Racism workshop," *Lesbian Tide* 2, no. 10 (May/June 1973): 19.

³¹ While other scholars suggest that such visibility was often negative, especially as it fueled conservative backlash, I argue that it marked a huge step forward for the coalitional relationship between straight feminists and lesbian-feminists.

³² Sexism here references the negative treatment of transgender and transsexual folks within lesbian-feminist and gay liberation activist communities.

³³ See, for example, Separatist Gang, “An Analysis of the Politics of Separatists Working With Lesbian Feminists,” *Out and About* (July 1978): 9; Charlotte Bunch, “Lesbians in Revolt,” *The Furies* 1 (January 1972): 8-9.

³⁴ Patty Kunitsugu, “Needs of Third World Dykes,” *Out And About* (Oct. 1977): 21. The debates and struggles that occurred in response to such constraints of separatism revealed a diversity of thought among lesbian-feminists. That diversity even necessitated coalition building across *lesbian-feminists*, as illustrated by the two-pronged effort to elevate lesbian-feminism at IWY.

³⁵ Feminist scholars like Gilmore and others are committed to re-framing the historical narrative with an eye toward the coalitions. See Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

³⁶ Arlene Stein, “Sisters and Queers: Decentering Lesbian Feminism,” in *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, eds. Marcy Daronovsky, Barbara Epstein, and Richard Flacks (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995), 136.

³⁷ The activist commitments not discussed at length in this study are avenues for future research.

³⁸ Contrary to other historical analyses, I argue that lesbian-feminists were neither solely separatist, nor radical. See Verta Taylor and Nancy E. Whittier, “Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization,” In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 108.

³⁹ This is not to suggest that there were no gay or lesbian people serving in public office in the 1970s. In 1975, George Moscone, the Mayor of San Francisco, appointed Del Martin to the Commission on the Status of Women, in addition to appointing Jo Daly and Phyllis Lyon to the Human Rights Commission (he also appointed Harvey Milk to the Board of Permit Appeals). Elaine Noble was the first openly lesbian woman elected to the Massachusetts State House of Representatives in 1975 and Harvey Milk was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California in 1977. She frequently expressed frustration about the expectation that she would represent lesbians and gay men in public office. See John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 88; David Mixner and Dennis Bailey, *Brave Journeys: Profiles in Gay and Lesbian Courage* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000).

⁴⁰ Arguably, this tension persists in the LGBTQ movement.

⁴¹ I avoid this usage for several reasons. I recognize that queer theory emerged long after the 1970s. Additionally, the women in this study, and their discourse during that time most often used gay, lesbian, dyke, and other terms to describe themselves.

⁴² I call upon flexibility here in relation to queer theory’s challenge to the stability and determinacy of identity. See, for example, Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and

Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 45.

⁴³ Most scholars point to Theresa De Lauretis’s germinal essay in *differences* as the point at which queer theory was formally named. See Theresa De Lauretis, “Queer Theory,” *differences* 3, no. 2 (1991): iii-xviii.

Appendix A

Special Collections Consulted

ALFA Archives. Sally Bingham Center, Duke University Special Collections Library.

Bottini, Ivy. Papers. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Bunch, Charlotte. Papers, 1967-1985. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Bunch, Charlotte. Papers. Private Collection.

Córdova, Jeanne. Papers. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Fifield, Lillene H. Papers. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Gittings, Barbara and Kay Tobin Lahusen Collection. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles.

---. Papers. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Lane, Bettye. Gay Movement Photographs Collection. Rare and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

Layton, Pauline. Papers. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Periodical Collection 1952-1999. Rare and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

Lesbian Herstory Archives, New York.

Lesbian Legacy Collection Subject Files. ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Lyon, Phyllis and Del Martin Papers. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society of Northern California, San Francisco, CA.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Records. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.

O'Leary, Jean. Papers. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.

Periodicals Collection. June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles.

Rainbow History Project. Historical Society of Washington, Washington D.C.

Stein, Judith. Papers. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Voeller, Bruce R. Papers. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.

Appendix B

List of Lesbian-Feminist Periodicals

<i>Ain't I A Woman</i>	(Iowa City, IA)
<i>Atalanta</i>	(Atlanta, GA)
<i>Focus</i>	(Boston, MA)
<i>The Furies</i>	(Washington, D.C.)
<i>Lavender Woman</i>	(Chicago, IL)
<i>The Leaping Lesbian</i>	(Ann Arbor, MI)
<i>Lesbian Lipservice</i>	(Ann Arbor, MI)
<i>The Lesbian Feminist</i>	(New York, NY)
<i>Lesbian Front</i>	(Jackson, MS)
<i>The Lesbian Tide</i>	(Los Angeles, CA)
<i>Lesbian Voices</i>	(San Jose, CA)
<i>Mother</i>	(San Francisco, CA)
<i>Mother Jones Gazette</i>	(Knoxville, TN)
<i>Off Our Backs</i>	(Washington, D.C.)
<i>Out and About</i>	(Seattle, WA)
<i>Pointblank Times</i>	(Houston, TX)
<i>Purple Rage</i>	(New York, NY)
<i>Sister</i>	(Los Angeles, CA)
<i>Sisters</i>	(San Francisco, CA)
<i>So's Your Old Lady</i>	(Minneapolis, MN)
<i>We Got It!</i>	(Madison, WI)

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