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TOOLS NOT RULES:
CULTIVATING PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE TO AND PREVENTION OF
SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

by

Nadya Burton

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT
Tools Not Rules:
Cultivating Practices of Resistance to and Prevention of Sexualized Violence
Nadya Burton, PhD 1999
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

This thesis proposes that feminist thinking and practice concerning prevention of sexualized violence has too often limited itself to strategies such as breaking the silence or legal reform, without including, in both theory and practice, self-defense as a practical, effective, and empowering assault prevention tool for women.

While women are raped daily, they also fight back daily, they use a variety of verbal and physical techniques: they yell, reason, plead with their attackers, and they flee, punch, kick and seriously hurt their would-be rapists. This work explores why it is, in this time of virtual explosion of writings on violence against women, that with extremely few exceptions, there is so little writing on this resistance? Why and how has women's resistance to violence been rendered invisible, within broader society, but more centrally here, within feminist discourse, as well? Finally, what are the effects of this invisibility on women's thinking and practice concerning resistance to sexualized violence?

This thesis explores two co-implicated strands of this issue. On the one hand it addresses the absence of resistance and prevention in feminist anti-violence theorizing and practice. This part of the thesis is a critique-based project, looking at existing texts and practices with an aim to understand how and why resistance and prevention are such marginal concepts in a field in which one would imagine them to be central. This critique provides a theoretical based from which to examine feminist 'resistance to prevention.' Secondly, the thesis theorizes resistance and prevention in a way which provides theory and tools for practice where they have not previously existed, or existed only marginally.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Despite the perception that producing a dissertation is an individual and even isolating process, this piece of work has been created in concert with many others. Without the conversations, guidance, inspiration, and support I received from many, it is questionable whether this document would have emerged. If it did, it certainly would bear little resemblance to the thesis I have, in the end, created.

My first debt of gratitude, which is indeed large, is to my advisor, Kari Dehli. She offered a wonderful blend of excitement about and engagement with my topic, and simultaneously a cool and wise distance from it. Her practical help eased me through the complex halls of academe, and her theoretical guidance helped me produce a better piece of work.

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To Lisa Weintraub, co-founder of the Montreal Assault Prevention Centre, creator of ACTION Assault Prevention for Women, and dear, dear friend, I am grateful for endless hours of conversation, for being one of the first to help me articulate the difference between the rape crisis and the assault prevention movements, and most significantly, for offering and sharing the inspiration from where this work comes.

Finally, and most deeply, I offer my thanks to Gord Thompson, who has pushed me to think through, understand, and utilize bodies of theory that enrich and enliven this work. For your insightful intelligence, your commitment to this project, your faith in me, your pride in me, and your unswerving presence by my side there is no thank you deep enough.
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Preface

This thesis is, at least in part, my story. It is the story of my transition from one part of the North American feminist grass-roots anti-violence movement to another: the move from the rape-crisis or anti-rape movement, to the assault prevention or self-defense movement, and the accompanying shift from one framework for the conceptualization of sexual assault to another. My research has followed directly from the concerns that were raised as I made this transition. The questions that this thesis poses, and attempts to respond to, are located in the space which separates these two worlds, which holds them at a distance and renders them incommensurable. At issue in this incommensurability is the question of female agency. The rape-crisis approach de-emphasizes the individual woman in the face of sexual violence. It focuses instead on the collective subject positioning of women, in a way which marginalizes resistance to particular instances of aggression. The assault prevention approach, on the other hand, while in no way ignoring the social and structural dimensions of violence against women, seeks to recuperate and foreground women's agency, focusing on every woman's possibilities for resistance in the face of sexual violence. While the latter approach is more inclusive and better able to encompass a diversity of approaches to addressing the problem of violence against women, it has remained subordinate, within feminist anti-violence discourse, to the voice of the anti-rape movement. The result has been innumerable missed opportunities to challenge rape culture at its core, to enrich and deepen a theory and politics of prevention, and a failure to open up spaces for women to practice resistance.

My involvement with the anti-rape movement began with my arrival at university, and constituted a dramatic moment in my political education. Although I came to the movement a feminist, and firmly committed to issues of social justice,
my education at the rape crisis centre gave me something new: a powerful theory and a concrete practice. The anti-rape movement offered a compelling analysis of a clearly-defined problem (violence against women), and a series of activities designed to remedy this problem. For a feminist would-be activist, the anti-rape movement provided concrete tools and strategies and a glimpse of the excitement of effecting social change. I was mentored by the core group of rape crisis workers in the centre at which I volunteered (and later became paid staff), into the workings, both theoretical and practical, of a grass-roots, feminist political movement.

We quoted and read (or were presumed to have read), in those years, the works of Susan Brownmiller and Susan Griffin, of Diana Russell and Andrea Dworkin. We cited them frequently, often without the context of the entire work produced by any particular author. I remember, for example, a mimeographed fourteen-page article entitled The Politics of Rape by Susan Griffin. It was only years later that I learned that, transformed title and all, this was a summary of Griffin's Rape: The Politics of Consciousness. We read three-page snippets of Diana Russell and quoted the eminently quotable Andrea Dworkin at public rallies and information sessions. These texts became, in small-town central Ontario, our bibles.¹ They came, over time, to have deep effects on how we thought about and acted in relation to sexualized violence.

The centre offered a variety of services in support of victims of sexual assault, including a 24-hour crisis-line, in-house counselling, and advocacy in the medical and legal-justice systems. In addition, the centre committed considerable resources towards public education. As public education coordinator, I offered workshops and lectured on sexual assault to boards of education and other community

¹ Like the bible, copies of these texts sat on many bedside tables, but were not necessarily read. We all knew the basic storyline and the moral, but this information was imparted by sermon as much as by direct research.
agencies, coordinated in-service training for police, hospitals, and crown attorneys, developed pamphlets and student information kits on sexual assault, and acted as centre spokesperson for television, radio, and newspaper.

The work of rape crisis centres aimed to redress the deficiencies of the social service sector which offered women guidance and support in the wake of sexual violence. Rape crisis centres took a peer counselling approach, drawing on other related social movements, such as the anti-psychiatry movement. The approach was critical of professionalism and grounded in the belief that social service training was likely to indoctrinate its practitioners with a therapeutic world-view fundamentally incompatible with the politicized analysis of sexual violence offered by the anti-rape movement.

As crisis counsellors we were concerned, therefore, less with any therapeutic theory or practice, and more with offering women a social and political arena in which to locate their experiences of rape and sexual assault. We tended to resist the pathologization of the victims, the tendency to treat them as women with problems which would be the standard presupposition of most therapeutic situations. The politicization of rape took assault out of the arena of the individual, of the victim and the aggressor, and made it a social issue grounded in patriarchy and male violence. Our practice consisted predominantly of demonstrating that society, rather than the victim, had the problem, and that it was, therefore, society that needed to 'get better,' to change. Our crisis counsellors were 'just women,' who were trained internally. Credentials of social work or psychology usually served as a detriment to inclusion in the work, rather than as an asset.

This was, and continues to be, a direly needed project. While rape crisis centres may not have always offered the highest quality counselling, we did offer a unique form of support. We helped women unsettle some of the basic and devastating beliefs they carried with them: namely that the assault was their fault,
that they had in some way asked for or brought on the event, that they were experiencing something rare and would have to suffer through it alone. While the effects of rape, and particularly of ongoing sexual abuse are far-reaching, the knowledge that they were not alone, that rape was a systematic element of the patriarchal world in which we lived, aided many, many women in dealing with the violence they had experienced.

Rape crisis centres played a profound and significant role both in providing a rare secure and sheltered place for survivors of violence, and in being pivotal in producing the 'breaking the silence' discourse of the 1970's and early 1980's in North America. They were key players in the breaking out of a 'discourse of denial,' when existing discourses of violence, abstracted from larger systems of power and oppression, rendered impossible the more systematically intricate and politicized notion of violence-against-women. The feminist campaign to 'break the silence' was often spearheaded by local and grassroots rape crisis centres, and served some very important purposes:

Speaking out serves to educate the society at large about the dimensions of sexual violence and misogyny, to reposition the problem from the individual psyche to the social sphere where it rightfully belongs, and to empower victims to act constructively on our own behalf and thus make the transition from passive victim to active survivor (Alcoff and Gray, 1993:261/2).

In addition to an introduction to the political understanding of violence against women, my education at the rape crisis centre also, and equally importantly, consisted of an introduction to a particular kind of feminist process. I was interpolated into a 'structure of operations' and set of practices, based in an identity politics typical of the era, in which strict rules and codes of behaviour relating to one's social location, were unerringly enforced. We created a world for ourselves, in the rape crisis centre, where we divided along the lines of our identities into
groups (in which we addressed our privileges and attempted to act more accountably based on these), and caucuses (in which we gathered to share our victimization based on our various identities of oppression). Seeking to set right the power imbalances we faced out in the 'real' world, we created a haven in which power dynamics were reversed so that those most oppressed held sway and privilege within the group. Power was redistributed along the lines of identity categories presumed to be static, non-shifting, and discreet. As a result, we often found ourselves in bizarre competitions for holding the location of 'most marginalized.'

These two project of the rape crisis centre - the politicization of rape which guided our external work on the one hand, and a politics of identity which guided our internal workings on the other - were deeply entwined and embedded in an understanding of the social world as striated along rigid and unyielding lines of power. Our outward talk about rape was facilitated by our inward practices of identity politics, the two together constituting a powerful political agenda which framed our thinking and practice.

My first discomfort with the work of the anti-rape movement was a growing awareness that the identity-politics base of our work was oppressive, in ways not dissimilar to the very systems we were trying to critique. Our constant attempts to fit problematically split and multiple subjects into coherent and discreet identity locations were painful, and often unsuccessful. A significant number of women left the movement because there seemed no place for the ways their diverse subject locations would interact and spill untidily over into other parts of their lives. Our new world of tightly controlled identities and inverse relationships between oppression in the world and power within the walls of the centre seemed to be recreating, albeit in an opposite kind of way, the very society we wanted to change. While this moment was my first fissure with the rape crisis centre, it was not until I
had begun work as a self-defense instructor that I also began to acknowledge that our strategy of educating the public, of 'breaking the silence' was not, in fact, ending or even apparently reducing violence. It was not the most effective way for women to experience less violence now. I began to identify the ways in which the discourses produced and circulated in the anti-rape movement had the effect of silencing and even rendering unimaginable other ways of ending violence.

As the new epistemological understanding of rape engendered by the work of the grass-roots anti-rape movement began to gain currency, women's victim status became inscribed in some feminist discourses of violence. In the case of the rape crisis centre at which I worked, these discourses rendered notions of women's ability to, in fact, negotiate power and victimhood, invisible. Self-defense and assault prevention were troubling concepts for us, and were not seen as central or even particularly important to our work as counsellors. Occasionally we would sponsor a self-defense course, but in our ultimate goal of ending violence against women, self-defense and assault prevention remained marginal, and were not taken up as significant strategies, in either theory or practice.

The consequences of firmly fixing women's victimhood became clear to me when I began working in the assault prevention movement and started teaching self-defense. I began to see the consequences of a discourse (both non-feminist and feminist) which allowed only for passivity and frozen immobility in the face of sexual violence. As I learned more and more about women's ability to resist violence, I was faced with the multilayered pain of those who were deeply invested in believing they could not do so, as well as with my own concern for the ways my work at the rape crisis centre was partially implicated in this process. Women who felt exhilaration at breaking through a board with many times the strength required to break a nose, collar bone, or knee-cap, often simultaneously experienced regret at not having known these skills earlier, before. I was catalyzed into a desire to unsettle
rape crisis discourse by the realization that as much (and often more) time had to be spent helping women overcome inhibitions about their inability to fight and resist, as teaching actual physical strategies and skills. I was amazed at how slight and insignificant gestures were enough to interrupt the flow of an assault situation and open the possibilities of escape. My concern in reflecting on my work at the rape crisis centre was in realizing the difficulty most women experienced in taking these tiny (physical) steps. Tremendous effort of will was required to overcome a deep-seated belief in their own inefficacy, a belief that the rape crisis centre approach had done nothing to unsettle, and had perhaps unwittingly bolstered through our insistence that women were never responsible for fighting back.

The course I was trained to teach is unusual among women's self-defense courses. It insists on the clear and definite delineation between suggesting there is almost always something we can do to prevent violence, and blaming women for not learning skills and strategies to do so, or for learning, and then having no social or personal support to believe they are worth trying. It questions the value of 'rules,' 'tips,' or 'advice,' for assault prevention, which suggest exactly what to do to avoid assault. Instead, the course provides a kind of tool-box of skills and strategies, flexible and adaptable to a wide variety of aggressive situations, from subtle manipulations by friends, to harassment on the street or by an employer, to overt violence by those both unknown to us and those we may love and trust.

My immersion in teaching self-defense/assault prevention occurred simultaneously with my first understandings of poststructuralism. I began to note the ways in which poststructuralist perspectives, so often maligned for being a-political, ephemeral and abstract, in fact, gave me a very concrete and useful way of understanding my experience in the anti-rape movement, and allowed me for the

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2 As we shall see in Chapter 4, an important corollary to the myth of women's weakness is the myth of male strength and invincibility.
first time to articulate my discomfort with the discourses and practices of the rape crisis centre I had worked for. At the same time I was overwhelmed by the way in which the self-defense/assault prevention course I was regularly teaching seemed to resonate with some of the central tenets of poststructuralist thinking. The course teaches of negotiable power relations, how even as the disempowered we can take back control in particular instances in order to resist violence. It works on helping generate strategies and tools that allow for the very shifting, contingent and contextual nature both of violence and of our own subjectivities. It addresses openly and consistently the partiality and situatedness of our experiences. It attempts to work with difference in a non-essentialist way, addressing our divergent and complex positionings and the differing ways we might experience violence. In its process it seeks to generate a language and practice of possibility which might open new ways of thinking and practicing resistance.

This story is the backdrop against which the following chapters are written. The shift from one part of the feminist anti-violence movement (the anti-rape movement) to another (the assault prevention movement) catalyzed a series of questions for me about women's fear, about victimhood, and about what a theory and politics of prevention might look like beyond the bounds of rape crisis work. This thesis constitutes an effort to deepen and enrich feminist anti-violence theory and practice. Chapter 1 outlines the problem as I see it, describing how feminist anti-rape theory has left an insufficient discourse of resistance and no theory of prevention.

In Chapter 2, I in some sense, 'do my homework,' and go back to those texts I was supposed to have read. Doing so I came to see that I did in fact know them to some degree through osmosis, through indoctrination, or through cultural immersion. My reading of these texts is focused through the lens of the problem outlined in Chapter 1. I try to demonstrate how we have arrived at this point and
shed light on the source of the problem by examining the texts in relation to four central concepts (fear, victimhood, resistance, prevention). My selection of these concepts issues from my perspective on the problem, rather than from the texts themselves. Only the first two concepts (fear and victimhood) hold prominent places in all the texts and seem to me to be linked at the centre of anti-rape writing from this period. I want to address them individually, but note as well the important way they are made to co-implicate one another. If the first two are notable for their conspicuous presence, the second two (resistance and prevention) are noted for their corresponding absence or paucity. I argue that the construction of the first two concepts accounts for the underdevelopment of the second two.

My goal in Chapter 3 is to unsettle the relations among these terms which, I argue, restrict the development of resistance and prevention. Thus in Chapter 3, I attempt to rethink the four terms in ways that might do justice to both a rape crisis and assault prevention politic, finding a ground for coalition and common work for these different agendas. As an organizing principle, these terms will serve as a point of reference, returned to in different ways and for different purposes, providing a certain continuity and point of connection throughout this work. This process of returning to a number of central concepts is useful because in "...interrogating fundamental concepts...and the images of women's lives they support" we are given the hope of not only assessing limitations, but imagining alternatives, thus "the ongoing process of positing and questioning foundations becomes...a strategy for re-imaging women's lives" (Hirsch, 1994:4). In our case, for re-imagining ways of ending violence against women, and for working towards a politics of prevention.

Finally in Chapter 4, having settled my score with the past and diffused the prejudices that make prevention strange and incomprehensible, I outline the
political work that is where my heart currently lies, addressing the possibilities offered by both the practice and theory of self-defense.

As a feminist still actively engaged in the anti-violence movement it is of tremendous importance to me that my critiques of the anti-rape movement be seen in the historical and contextual light they are intended. Without the invaluable work of rape crisis centres I would be in no position to be pushing on to what I hope can be a more complex and useful understanding of how we might reduce/end violence in all people's lives. My thoughts, although at times deeply critical, are grounded in a place of tremendous respect for the work that has gone before, as well as an acknowledgment of the risks, pitfalls and dangers in all political work.
Chapter One
Toward a Discourse of Resistance

Rape prevention efforts could be highlighted. ...stories about those who have successfully resisted and avoided rape could be presented (Gordon and Riger, 1989:134).

Self-consciously performative narratives that represent diverse experiences of sexual violence to the social world can emerge if we take seriously the significance of the multiple sites from which women experience sexual violence and include stories of resistance which subvert the images of women as vulnerable (Heberle, 1996:69).

It was evening turning dusk, and having finished dinner at my sister's house I had to face one of many such decisions, made a thousand times a day by thousands of women and others who must take the threat of violence, and particularly sexualized violence, into account. To walk back to my apartment, leaving via my sister's front door, down fairly heavily trafficked residential streets, or alternatively to take the much shorter route, leave by the back door and cut through a long, and mostly isolated alley. It was a question of saving time, of my own freedom to make choices, of my perceived sense of safety, of fear, and of strength and power.

Reasoning with my sister that I was, after all, a self-defense instructor, I decided on the alley route. Not 30 seconds after the gate clicked shut and I heard my sister's back door slam closed, I heard the footsteps. Too cliché, I thought, not possible, but a quick glance over my shoulder confirmed it, a man, eyes boring into my back, following.

In that moment it came to me, just as the raped women on the pages of Diana Russell's Rape: The Victim's Perspective, and in Susan Brownmiller's Against Our Will repeated over and over; this is not about rape, it's about death. Rape I would survive, death I would not, and in that moment, my fear was for my life.

I drew on the scripts available to me. Panic? Freeze? Head down, walk fast, and hope he was just out for an evening stroll? Although these still are the first scripts that come racing to my mind they were not good options for me in that moment. Get help? I looked up and down the alley, realizing that both sides were flanked by locked garages and high fences guarding the privacy of the tiny Montreal backyards. Run? The alley was long, I was at
the beginning of it, he could probably outrun me if he chose to. I thought, for a
split second, about hearing Natalie Provost, one of the survivors of Lepine's
Ecole Polytechnique massacre, talk about what came to her mind in that
moment of violence as her classmates lay around her. She thought of a James
Bond movie, and how Bond was always ripping his shirt and making it into
tourniquets, which is exactly what she did. I remember thinking then, how
paltry are the scripts upon which to draw.

I stopped walking. I turned around and faced the man some 50 feet
behind me. I looked him up and down and looked into his eyes, not, as some
advice would train us to do, so that I could remember his hair and eye colour,
height and kind of clothing so as to better describe him to the police when I
reported the inevitable rape. Rather, to let him know that I knew, to let him
know that my fear, far from debilitating me was making me stronger. As I
stood still, for the split second that felt like an eternity, facing the fear rather
than denying it, I thought strategies. A fist to the nose and then run; a really
loud, low yell as I ran. I turned my back to him and kept walking towards the
end of the alley. Moments later I stopped walking again. I turned my body to
face him. He was gone.

The experience has become almost dream-like to me. I have a hard
time, years later, believing there ever was a man behind me. I believe that part
of what contributes to this erasure is the lack of drama to the incident. The
actions I took feel so small, so unexciting, so simple. Could I have prevented a
sexual assault?

Feminist anti-violence movements in North America have consistently made
one of their priorities the `telling of women's stories'. Their aim has been, not
dissimilar to an equivalent goal in much feminist theorizing in other diverse fields
of the last few decades, to set women's voices free, to break the silence that has kept
the reality of women's lived experiences out of the realm of public discourse, and
thus to provide an alternative to the apparent `reality' of women's lives that has
been historically told by men in a culture of male hegemony. My story above has
both a certain affinity with and a certain distance from this `telling' which has been
so central to feminist anti-violence movements.

The valorization of women's voices sparked extensive epistemological debate
within feminist discourse. In the first instance, then, we need to be cautious
concerning the questionable epistemological practice of uncritically endowing
experience with the authority of truth. As Wendy Brown has noted concerning the consciousness raising and breaking the silence campaign of the North American feminist movement, these strategies have too often operated as feminism's epistemologically positivist moment. The material excavated there, like the material uncovered in psychoanalysis or delivered in confession, is valued as the hidden truth of women's existence - true because it is hidden, and hidden because women's subordination functions in part through silencing, marginalization, and privatization (Brown, 1995:41).

Breaking the silence, then, is far more than an acknowledgment of the politics of discursive suppression. It is an ideological campaign to counteract false consciousness, to endow subordinated experience with an epistemological privilege and to allow the Truth to speak.

I also want to distance myself more particularly from the conflation that has been fostered within the feminist anti-rape movement, between notions of the 'telling' of violence against women, and the prevention of that violence. The

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3 The number and variety of terms used to describe the sexual violence women experience are growing, and it is not without reflection that I draw most consistently on the term 'violence-against-women'. I use this term, despite its limitations, because it most accurately reflects the kind of violence I am addressing in this project, the fairly specific sexual violence perpetrated against women, by men. Importantly this choice is not intended to reflect a theoretical privileging of sexual violence committed by men (one claim of my work in fact is that violence committed by women is liable to remain in- or at least less visible if we continue to discount women's power and agency) against women (thus privileging gender over other dimensions of identity/oppression). Rather, this choice is one of the parameters and the limitations of what I am able to address in this work. Sharon Rosenberg eloquently describes both the imperative for and problems with the term violence-against-women, and I include her words here to echo her wishes: "I am acutely conscious of the importance and inadequacy of this phrase 'violence-against-women.' I use it because it orients specific attention to the breadth of violences women suffer - most often, but certainly not only, at the hands of men. As a generalizing phrase, however, it can privilege gender to the extent that it suggests a unitary meaning and erases the complex and specific ways in which violences are lived across other dimensions of oppression. This is an erasure I do not wish to perpetuate" (Rosenberg, 1996:127).

The term violence-against-women serves importantly, however, to rip the violence women face (based on their sex/gender) out of the domain of generalized, non-gender specific and often very troubling erasure of terms like 'family violence' or 'spousal abuse'. Instead, as the feminist anti-violence movement has sought to do for decades, the term more helpfully places this violence firmly in the gendered and overtly political place of sexualized violence, and for this it remains useful.

Further to this, in the preface to the recent anthology Gender Violence, the editors outline some of the reasons for their choice of title. Although their aim is to be able to include a range of issues that the term violence-against-women excludes (whereas my project is truly limited to violence against women) I think their rationale is instructive for what gets in- and excluded in the troubling and yet indispensable term: "So why
movement operated from the belief that the reality of women's experiences of sexual violence had been systematically obscured, and that this violence could only continue, and its consequences be ignored, if the facts remained hidden. To expose the hideous face of sexualized violence; to refuse to allow it to remain hidden, was to threaten its very survival. Telling women's stories of violence, was therefore, in itself, an emancipatory political project, for in so doing women,

provide testimony to the reality of rape culture. [Women's stories] will, it is thought, encourage the eradication of images and practices of sexual violence altogether. Women express their pain and victimization because of their outrage, and to move toward healing themselves through the catharsis of recognition. But they also express themselves out of the conviction that once society understands the truth about itself, it will transform its terms of existence (Heberle, 1996:64) [emphasis mine].

In offering a story of my own, I am particularly wary, writing from and about a movement that has worked so valiantly to counter the victim-blaming and misguided 'advice' about how to respond (or not respond) to situations of sexual violence, to add another cautionary tale to the collection. My story is not intended as advice, direction, or reprimand, it is neither 'truer' nor 'better' than if it had ended in rape. Rather it is a collection of moments in an evening of my life which allow me to address the crux of this dissertation: how we might work to resist and prevent sexual violence.

This project, then, is not about how violence is lived in women's lives. Rather it is about how that violence is represented through specific feminist texts and

have we called this book Gender Violence rather than Violence Against Women? Although documenting and exploring the violation of women has been the primary focus of research and activism among feminist and protofeminist analysts, we have chosen to include a broader set of questions that spring from the study of gender and violence... By widening our analytical lens, we are able to incorporate important connections among violence against heterosexual women and men, lesbians and gay men, and children..." (O'Toole and Schiffman, 1997:xiii). These connections are important ones for my work, and although I will focus on the issues related to women and violence specifically, part of my intent is to address how feminist constructions of violence-against-women effect the ways violence and gender can be thought of.
discourses of violence-against-women. Specifically I seek to examine and theorize the effects of these discourses on possibilities for the conceptualizing and practicing of resistance. I am not, therefore, writing a history of the feminist anti-violence movement in North America, nor am I studying the individual or groups of women and activists who produced the texts and discourse at stake. I am not seeking to establish how women live and experience sexualized violence - I do not, for example, want to dispute that many women live with a high degree of fear, nor do I want to debate the level of devastation that sexual violence leaves in its wake. My aim is neither to add to nor challenge the extensive documentation which already exists on how women live and experience gendered and sexualized violence.

I do, however, want to be suspicious about the unproblematic equation that develops between feminist representations of violence, and the possibilities for the diverse ways women might live/experience that violence. What are the effects, for example, of a discourse which not infrequently echoes the perspective that "to be raped is, in essence, to die" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:9)? The method I will use, then, will not be to talk to/interview women to discover if their experiences map accurately on to dominant feminist discourses of violence against women, but rather to examine feminist discourses of violence against women both for the apparent victims and forms of victimization they create, and for the ways they work to construct and effect our responses to violence. Rather than studying whether most (which?) women in fact do feel that to be raped is to die, for example, I am interested in how this discourse structures and lays the framework for the experience of rape long before a women ever faces that particular violence in her life, and how it circumscribes the possibilities of responses to rape both before, during, and after the event.

I will try to demonstrate how the violence in women's lives is rhetorically constructed, how fear and victimhood are made to work together and become co-
dependent concepts; how they become centre-pieces of the category 'woman,' and what the consequences of this are for women's resistance and for prevention of sexualized violence. Feminist writings on violence against women, with alarming regularity, place this violence at the centre of women's lives, as one of our most formative experiences, in fact as one of the experiences which mark us as 'woman.' Laura Lee Downs' (1992) rejoinder to Joan Scott's poststructuralist questionings about gender and history, titled If 'Woman' is Just an Empty Category, Then Why Am I Afraid to Walk Alone at Night? offers us an example of this construction. In asking such a question Downs renders inseparable 'woman' and 'fear,' problematically positing fear of (unnamed but understood) male violence as proof that, in fact, the category 'woman' must exist. We understand, of course, what Downs is trying to say, which is perhaps surprising given that her question, from our perspective, makes no sense. It can only generate meaning through a tautology of mutually-defining terms: firstly that woman is one who fears violence, and secondly that 'I am fearful' therefore I am a woman. It is perhaps ironic that Downs' intention was to refuse the discursive dimension of gender identity (and of the experience of fear), and yet her question only demonstrates all the more vividly that it is only within the webs of discourse that regimes of Truth emerge. Outside of those discursive formations, statements like the one posed by Downs' rhetorical question slip into senselessness.

I do not feel compelled to deny the existence of violence in all women's lives (in all lives, period) but this fact should not be used to naturalize that violence. Violence is discursively constructed and feminists participate actively and eagerly in that construction. The important question is, then, in what ways does a feminist rhetoric of violence resist, consolidate, or perpetuate that violence? This is the question that remains most immediately at stake throughout the following work.

Because I am not primarily seeking to address how this construction takes
place in dominant discourse, with its legislated truths and imposed silences, but rather more particularly in relation to specifically feminist discourses on violence against women, the project is fraught with complexity. To fundamentally critique the feminist anti-violence movement raises ambiguities that are not easily displaced onto 'others;' ambiguities that raise unsettling questions about my/our implicated-ness in this process.

In choosing to open this chapter by telling a story from my own life in spite of the dangers such tellings have in the past often lead to, I want to suggest that the telling of stories can work in complex and contradictory ways. One purpose of my particular narrative is to act as counterpoint to the more typically recounted stories of violence which are most often horrific, defeated, stories of our victimization and our weakness. We need not assume telling to be a uniform process: the telling of a completed rape might be quite different from the telling of a prevented one. While I want to separate this work from, and question the uncomplicated 'telling' of violence against women as a strategy to end or prevent sexualized violence, I do not want to suggest that this is not extremely important work, and that at times this telling can be done in ways which are deeply textured and powerful in challenging our thinking about violence against women, upsetting accepted norms and categories about gendered violence. I hold a belief in the transformative power of subjugated knowledges and experiences, in their ability, not to reveal truth or provide solutions, but rather to pose problems for accepted modes of

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4 I am faced with the continual problem of how to locate myself in the questions I raise and in this thesis more broadly. In speaking of 'women' and women's resistance to violence I find myself moving in and out of the we/they, at times identifying and including myself in the 'we' of women, and at times othering either myself or the problematic category of 'woman' by using 'they'. Although at times rendering my particular relation to the issues at stake somewhat less clear, I believe this sliding between we/they better reflects the unstable ground I inhabit in relation to this project - at once in- and outside, part of and separate from. The lack of stability to my location reflects more accurately the very differing and shifting relations 'we' have to notions of feminism, women's movement, fear, victimhood, sexualized violence, and resistance to that violence. In disrupting the oft-assumed stability of these relationships I hope to more accurately reflect my/our lived experiences of resistance.
understanding, to be incitements to thought in Foucault's sense of the term:

Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem (Foucault, 1997:117).

Seen in this way, thought constitutes "a perilous act" (Deleuze, 1990:95), a practice, fraught with risk, but with the potential to open up new spaces of freedom:

...thinking's a capacity, a capacity to set forces in play, once one understands that the lay of forces doesn't just come down to violence but is to do with acting upon actions, with acts, like inciting, inducing, preventing, facilitating or obstructing, extending or restricting, making more or less likely...' That's thought as strategy (Deleuze, 1990:95).

I approach the issues of violence against women, of women's resistance to that violence, and to violence prevention, from a perspective that is deeply feminist. Yet at the same time, this thesis attempts to challenge much of the feminist understanding and deployment of both language and practice in this area. The project works from Foucault's insight

that political 'resistance' is figured by and within rather than externally to the regimes of power it contests, [and] ... examine[s] ostensibly emancipatory or democratic political projects for the ways they problematically mirror the mechanisms and configurations of power of which they are an effect and which they purport to oppose (Brown, 1995:3).

I try to understand how feminist discourses of violence have in fact laid down new lines of power, making new 'truths' speakable and inevitably silencing others. I attempt to unsettle current feminist discourses of violence against women in much the way the feminist anti-violence movement sought to unsettle previous discourses.
which spoke little of violence against women. This work pushes toward the project of questioning foundations, exposing them for their inevitable exclusions, even when, or perhaps especially when, these foundations are the 'new' ones established by feminism:

...foundations function as the unquestioned and the unquestionable within any theory. And yet, are these 'foundations,' that is, those premises that function as authorizing grounds, are they themselves not constituted through exclusions which, taken into account, expose the foundational premise as a contingent and contestable presumption (Butler, 1992:7)?

The valuable ground gained through the work of the feminist anti-violence movement has undoubtedly opened up new ways of thinking about and understanding violence against women. Theory and practice has shifted as new concepts in the realm of sexualized violence gain understanding and appear to carry a certain new-found transparency. Yet we need to remain cautious about accepting new foundations to replace the old. The acceptance into both feminist and popular discourses of these concepts will necessarily serve to solidify particular (if new, if feminist) ways of thinking about violence against women.

When initially deployed, these foundational constructs were powerful tools for changing consciousness and providing new policy directions, yet they elided other ways of seeing the problems and imagining solutions. Theories built on particular images always mask or foreclose others. And the images themselves are at risk of turning perverse... (Hirsch, 1994:3).

In part due to the effort to unsettle the 'new' feminist foundations of violence against women, and to question the apparent transparency in their various meanings, this project often leads to a critical reading of the anti-violence movement, a movement in which I have participated, and in which I continue to participate passionately.

In the preface to The Order of Things, Foucault quotes a delightful passage he has taken from Borges, which is itself an excerpt from a fictional Chinese
encyclopedia. The passage describes a classification system which divides animals into a number of categories which appear, from our perspective, laughably absurd (rather than genus, species, etc., for example, animals are divided into categories such as: belonging to the Emperor; embalmed; sucking pigs; frenzied; having just broken the water jug; from a distance looking like flies) (Foucault, 1970:xv). Foucault uses this passage, remarking as he does so on the laughter it incited in him, to let us know of that moment/process whereby "all the familiar landmarks of my thought - our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography...[were] threatened with collapse..." (Foucault, 1970:xv). This moment, as Foucault so compassionately and profoundly critiques both himself and all of us, forces the question, "what is it impossible to think?" (Foucault, 1970:xv).

I will draw on and borrow much from Foucault in this work, but let me begin with taking from him a disturbing and exciting sense of ground-shifting, the profound critique of what we can know and think, and yet the compassion for whence we have come, for our own culpability and implicated-ness in the limits of our knowing. It is not possible to critique, in this case, the North American feminist anti-violence movement, without noting my own voice and my own constructions in the very process I seek to challenge. I critique with compassion, not with the detached, clean, purity of distance, but rather with the dirtied hands of one both inside and outside, both us and them, seeking to question those very categories which allow for unproblematic distinctions between same and other. I write as both

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5 There are a number of perspectives and frameworks, primarily feminist and poststructuralist ones, which inform this work. These differing strands intertwine, together creating a particular vantage point from which I think and write. Poststructuralist perspectives have been tremendously important to me in helping generate the questions which have instigated this work. This body of thought has, however, been used more directly in the framing of questions, than in the exploration of answers. While a certain poststructuralist positioning underlies the framing of this thesis, my explorations rely, in the end, much less on poststructuralism than I had originally thought they might. It is important that this approach be acknowledged for the tremendous amount it has offered in my initial workings of this thesis, even if it appears less directly in the following chapters than anticipated.
insider and outsider simultaneously. My interests coincide, no doubt, with many feminist workers in the anti-violence movement, and my activist history certainly marks me as 'part of' this movement. Yet my current location, my place within the relatively privileged academic world of critique rather than the fast and tough and contradictory world of daily political decision-making and action, mark me as an outsider.

I do this work from a deep sense of longing to enable myself and others to live differently, to begin the task of conceptualizing sexualized violence and resistance to that violence in ways which expand rather than limit our lives. In response to a question concerning the motivation of his research, Foucault responds:

It was curiosity, the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself... There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary... (Foucault, 1986:8).

It is such a moment for the feminist anti-violence movement. Concepts of violence and resistance as they are known, and in some ways unknown respectively, need to be shaken up and to resettle in ways which enable living differently, living better.

Part of this unsettling and examining is directed specifically at the two major prevention strategies employed by anti-violence feminists to date, breaking the silence and legal reform. I seek to examine their effects which have curtailed the way women are able to think about and practice a wide range of resistance and prevention strategies. I am also touching briefly on the way the more primary prevention strategies of victim control and offender control (Cooper, 1991) have not been successful, and have in fact worked to severely curtail women's lives. I do not seek to discredit these various efforts in their entirety, and nor is my project intended as an easy after-the-fact critique of ineffective or politically suspect
strategies. Rather I seek to problematize them as centre-pieces of the feminist anti-violence campaign, to develop rather than answer questions, and to examine the closures created through these strategies. As we shall see, both breaking the silence and legal reform have served very practical and important theoretical roles in the feminist anti-violence movement, and in their own distinct ways each has served both to unsettle certain dominant misogynist ways of thinking about violence against women, and to reinscribe others.

There is no question that women resist violence in diverse and often effective ways. While women are raped daily, they also fight back daily, they use a variety of verbal and physical techniques: they yell, reason, plead with their attackers, and they flee, punch, kick, and seriously hurt their rapists. This work seeks to explore why it is, in this time of virtual explosion of writings on violence against women, that with extremely few exceptions (Bart and O'Brien, 1985; Caigan and Groves, 1987), there is so little feminist writing on this resistance. How is it that despite such a plethora of studies (Furby and Fischhoff, 1986; Kleck and Sayles, 1990; Quinsey and Upfold, 1985; Ullman and Knight, 1992, 1993) showing the effectiveness of resistance strategies, that there is a virtual silence within feminist anti-violence discourses about this resistance?

To make sense of those prevention strategies which did arise from feminist anti-violence discourse, we need to understand the circumstances in which they were embedded. In grappling to explain the feminist anti-violence movement's tendency to dwell on victimhood, to foreground fear, to eschew resistance, and to posit prevention in limited terms, it is important to identify how such positions are intricately entangled with ways of thinking which encouraged and, indeed, deeply conditioned this discursive turn. We need to read these practices against an
understanding of feminist anti-violence discourses as deeply embedded in a
discursive world from which they borrowed much, and from which they (and we)
could not, and perhaps still cannot entirely escape.

Before feminist efforts at 'breaking the silence' around violence against
women there was what is tempting to call a 'discourse of denial'. While this term
reflects the retrospective bias of a post-breaking-the-silence discourse on violence, it
is revealing to the extent that it highlights discourse's active power of suppression.
While there had certainly been a discourse of violence, the structure of this episteme,
to borrow Foucault's term, rendered impossible the more systemically intricate and
politicized notion of violence-against-women; a notion which disallows a
conceptualization of violence abstracted from larger systems of power and
oppression.

Forging this link between individual experiences of violence and women's
collective 'victim status' has been fundamental to much feminist discourse. The
goal here has been to rip the discourse of violence out of a liberal context which is
wont to see violence as something visited by one autonomous individual upon
another. Linking the actual experiences of violence of any one woman to the
potential experiences of all has been central to an acknowledgment of the
'structured' and 'institutional' character of women's oppression. Any effort to
challenge the notion of women's victim status must come to terms with this
concept's discursive function and not seek to return violence to a paradigm of
abstract individualism.\footnote{The importance of taking violence against women out of the realm of the individual was amply illustrated in the debates that followed the Montreal Massacre in which feminists continuously had to counter a stubborn media to insist that this was not the isolated act of a mad individual, that in fact women were victimized, not by chance, but as women, and that Lepine's act was in fact an only slightly more extreme version of daily violence against women. But the establishment of women's systematic victimhood is a faulty strategy in countering the media's individualist propaganda. We begin to see the danger of locking ourselves into a conceptual framework forced to choose between abstract individualism and systematic victimhood when we examine a counter-example. We might consider the opposing scenario played out in relation to the 1994 Toronto shooting at Just Desserts cafe. In this instance we witnessed certain members of the black community.}
We can attribute what are now referred to as the 'myths' of sexual assault to this older discourse (and its outmoded 'regimes of Truth'). These myths are numerous, but even the most dominant and persistent reveal fundamental characteristics of the anti-systematic discourse of denial: that rape is committed by strangers, outside in isolated areas, and at night. The metaphorics of isolation pertain not only to the isolation of the victim of violence, but also to the isolation of the violent act, detached and abstracted from the regular daily functioning of society. Rape is perpetrated by strangers because of the definitional impossibility of familial, conjugal, or acquaintance rape in which all three manifest varying degrees of ownership or property rights in relation to women. Stranger rape was the only definitionally viable form of sexual violence because it was a violation of these property rights (as opposed to the rights of women).

The feminist campaign to 'break the silence' aimed at dispelling these myths and placing the rights of women at centre-stage where they belonged. Significantly, the discourse of violence becomes the discourse of violence-against-women, and this marks an important epistemological shift that places women at the victimized centre and highlights the systemic nature of their oppression.

Breaking the silence rhetoric is rife with acknowledgments of the suppressive power of discourse. "...[O]ne of feminism's most powerful contentions about rape - [is] that rape is a question of language, interpretation, and subjectivity" (Marcus,1992:387). Thus speaking violence came to be seen as the radical project.

Previous discourses of denial and invisibility were challenged by a discourse which being compelled to demand that the killing be viewed as the isolated act of an individual. Such demands arise against a backdrop of a media campaign that insidiously and subconsciously seeks to link any violence committed by blacks to 'American-style gang warfare,' to the Americanization of Canadian violence, to inner-city American problems; all of which seek to racialize the incident and place it within a broader context of a whole mythology of violent black masculinity: of black men as victimizers. In an important sense the ideological construction of black men as victimizers can be seen as the underside of the ideological construction of women's victim status. In both instances an analysis is needed that can break out of this vicious dichotomy.
named such concepts as acquaintance and date rape, sexual harassment, marital rape and battering - a discourse which 'disclosed' events which had of course long existed, but simultaneously 'reclothed' them, giving them new significances within a new discursive universe.

Certainly this public naming, the telling and speaking was seen in itself, to heal. While the goal of 'breaking the silence' was on the one hand a political rendering visible of violence against women, it was simultaneously therapeutic. Ellen Bass, author of *Courage to Heal*, aptly titled the introduction to a much earlier work (1983) "In the Truth Itself, There is Healing," joining her voice to many other survivors of sexual violence in claiming that breaking the silence, both politically and at more therapeutic and personal levels, was a prerequisite for healing.

Against this background we can imagine a number of reasons the feminist anti-violence movement got caught in the foregrounding of women's passivity and lack of active response to assault at the expense of their agency. The most compelling of these is the great value placed on a particular notion of women as victim (and as innocent victim in particular). Driven by the need to claim victim status for women (in the face of a predominantly misogynist culture which didn't/wouldn't identify sexual violence as a systemic and power-related problem and which continued to blame women for the violence visited upon them), feminist anti-violence movements held tenaciously to women's victimhood as proof of our innocence and lack of culpability in crimes of sexual violence. The link between victimhood and innocence, which served the political purposes of challenging traditional and misogynist concepts of women's blameworthiness in instances of sexualized violence, was itself based on very particular notions of innocence and of the assumed subject positions of the 'victim'. The victim/innocence link was constituted in a specific historical, social, and political moment within a particular set of conditions in which only a small group of privileged women were able to
speak as/for 'women'; neither innocence nor an innocent victimhood were equally available to all women. The victim/innocence link needs to be disrupted in order for us to understand how it claims to, but does not necessarily reflect the complex and diverse ways women (and others) may experience victim-ness. Dominant feminist discourses have worked to discount and marginalize other ways of experiencing/being victims in favour of an over-emphasis on innocence, both because of the political agenda they were tied to, and because of the often very particular subject positions of those at the fore of the feminist anti-violence movement.

Hard-won victim status7 entwined with a second factor which might help explain the apparent eschewing of resistance and prevention: the implications of responsibility that are perceived to be inherent in having the ability to stop a violent situation. Here feminist anti-violence language and conceptualizing found itself tied to, unable to extricate itself from the discursive world which suggested that if one was capable of resisting violence one was consequently responsible for doing so. The slope between ability/agency and responsibility was a slippery one, and the practical and sensible route out of the discursive quagmire was to fully and completely deny and distance oneself from responsibility, throwing way the baby (agency) with the bath water (blame).

A third factor concerns the overwhelming political need to counter the misogynist and often hegemonic rape myths which have dominated thinking on violence against women. Both victim-status and the notion that women need not have physically or verbally resisted for an assault to be considered coercive and violent were hard won notions for feminist anti-violence movements. To place

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There is, of course, a certain paradox in speaking of 'hard-won' (implicit agency) 'victim status' (implicit passivity) - and certainly this paradox is part of what this thesis explores. That the feminist anti-violence movement could have been so agentic (which it certainly was vis a vis the vast array of significant changes it catalyzed for women who had been assaulted), and yet could have been part of generating an environment in which active resistance to violence was so marginalized, is an irony not to be dismissed.
women's ability to resist violence at the centre, to foreground their/our strength and agency appeared simply counter-productive and too complex for mainstream thinking to absorb without a retreat to the myth way of thinking.

A fourth and particularly troubling reading would suggest that violence against women became one of the most significant focuses of the North American women's movement in its call for unity among women. Increasingly, as issues of diversity, race and class oppression began to fragment an (apparently united) women's movement, rape and sexual violence became a rallying cry for how, in the end, women share something fundamental and essential. As white and middle-class women saw 'their' movement fall apart under the strain of racism, classism, homophobia and other increasingly articulated oppressions, rape became the focus for troubling unifying strategies among women.

While more immediate survival concerns may preoccupy poor women, including many women of colour, I am still convinced that violence against women is a key issue for all but the most powerful, protected and independent of women. As such, it still has the potential to unite women across differences, when we approach the issue informed by our differences (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:67; emphasis mine).

The movement thus focused significant resources on the explication of our shared victim status, and did so at the expense of attention to the possibilities of resistance to and prevention of that violence.

Finally, we might also understand this lack of attention to resistance and prevention as a strategic and theoretical move, heralded for its simplicity, for providing access to an easy and straightforward vision of violence against women, a vision easily understood and adopted. The clarity of the notion that women are never to blame, have no role to play in resisting violence, and are not responsible for prevention allowed for discursive strategies which are powerful and compelling in their accessibility and apparent truth. To allow for the complexity of resistance and
prevention, to allow for women's role in rape and sexualized violence would unsettle the easy, and often righteous truth power of the movement. In a critique of Catharine MacKinnon's rhetorical and theoretical style, Wendy Brown asks the very questions that we need to ponder: does a certain poststructuralist provisionality render approaches (such as a complex rendering of violence as well as resistance and prevention) permanently marginal; is the marginality inherent in some way, to the very approach?

Can a radical postfoundationalist feminist political discourse about women... - with its necessarily partial logics and provisional truths, situated knowledges, fluid subjects, and decentered sovereignty - work to claim power, or to contest hegemonic power, to the degree that [in this case] MacKinnon's discourse does? Or do the commitments of postfoundationalist feminist analysis condemn it to a certain political marginalization, to permanent gadfly status, to a philosopher's self-consolation that she is on the side of 'truth' rather than power (Brown, 1995:79).

While Brown is in part attempting to account for the left and academic ambivalence towards poststructuralism, and hence is more concerned than I am here with the reasons particular complex visions of the world are rejected, I would like, as Brown does, to cradle this work in the arms of these reflections. I do not suggest that the grassroots feminist anti-violence movement of the 1970's and 1980's had a thought-out strategy to reject what we today might identify as poststructuralist thinking about violence against women. Rather, I do suggest that the need for a clear and convincing political doctrine helped shape and structure the theory that arose from the movement, and that this theory in turn works to structure both discursively and effectively the ways feminists think about sexualized violence, its subjects, and the possibilities for its prevention.

These possible stories about the absence of resistance and prevention from feminist anti-violence movements are intended to help me address how they and other factors worked together to structure women's victimhood and fear in ways
different from, but not entirely divorced from the highly misogynist and oppressive
discourses of previous eras. The 'means' differed, as did unquestionably, the intent.
However the effects of the feminist discursive terrain, which so successfully called
into question and in many cases even replaced misogynist and patriarchal ways of
knowing about violence against women, were not so radically different. Women
were locked within a well-intentioned, but limited discursive field which tended to
link our very essence with fear, which tended to render inevitable our victim status.
We became, in Sharon Marcus' (1992:386) words, 'always already rapable.'

My attempt to foster a theory and politics of prevention makes apparent a
significant void in the feminist literature on violence against women. I seek both to
understand why this void exists, and to examine its effects, while simultaneously
making an initial gesture towards the difficult task of filling it. The literature that
does exist about resistance and prevention of violence is not only limited, but highly
specific and for the most part falls into one of several fairly discrete categories.
Firstly, there is an increasing body of literature about women who kill men
(Browne, 1987; Jones, 1994; Walker, 1989). While killing one's aggressor can certainly
be seen as resistance to violence, it obviously sits at one extreme end of a continuum
and does not provide, in either theoretical or practical terms, a framework for daily
resistance. Knowing that women can kill is an important piece in theorizing and
practicing resistance, however this literature leaves untouched the more practical
and effective ways women can reduce violence in their daily lives.

Secondly there is the vast body of feminist anti-violence literature which
construes breaking the silence as a kind of prevention (Bass, 1983; Griffin, 1986;
Guberman and Wolfe, 1985). This literature grows out of and is deeply intertwined
with the crucial work of the North-American grass-roots feminist anti-violence
movement of the 1970's and 1980's. This movement encouraged women
individually, in consciousness-raising groups, at speak-outs, rallies and marches, to
publicly name the violence they experienced at the hands of men, and in so doing
bringing voices which had often existed only marginally into the centre of
knowledge- and meaning-making concerning sexualized violence. The project of
affirming marginalized knowledges, and of marking as expert those who
experienced violence rather than those who were (apparently) neutral observers of
it, was of immense importance and paved the way for many invaluable services for
women who experience violence (crisis centres, shelters, etc.).

Silence has been a major weapon in men's arsenal which has
prevented women and children from talking about their experiences
of sexual violence, let alone finding ways to get support and join in
campaigns and movements for justice (Kelly, 1996:34).

Breaking the silence thus works as a corrective to (imposed) silences, both past and
present, speaking out itself is an act of defiance against a discursive world devoid of
the very words to talk about rape, battering, incest, wife abuse, molestation. The
"feminist reconstruction of language" (Kelly and Radford, 1996:20) has been seen as
an urgent political necessity in light of dominant masculinist and oppressive
discourses of denial which systematically denied women's experiences of sexualized
violence.

One of the most significant aspects of feminist theory and practice has
been to find/create/redefine words which reflect and record women's
experiences. Concepts which are now common place simply did not
exist before the present wave of feminist activism, for example,
domestic violence, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse. Whilst
these behaviours undoubtedly existed, they were revealingly referred
to by first wave feminists as 'unspeakable outrages' ... what women
lacked were social definitions. Names provide social definitions,
make visible what is invisible, define as unacceptable what was
accepted; make sayable what was unspeakable (Kelly and

It is important to deconstruct this body of literature as it reflects the
predominant feminist strategies of violence prevention (embodied primarily in
breaking the silence, but also in projects of legal reform) and it thus points to one of the central paradoxes my project seeks to explain: despite the fact that many studies confirm the efficacy of physical and verbal resistance as a method of violence prevention, the movement (and the feminist literature on violence-against-women) tend to eschew resistance and to maintain breaking the silence and legal reform as the primary routes to violence prevention.

Studies on self-defense constitute the third body of literature which allow for resistance and prevention (Furby et al., 1991; Kleck and Sayles, 1990; Searles and Berger, 1987; Ullman and Knight, 1992, 1993). This literature is found mainly within the fields of psychology and sociology and tends to be primarily quantitative in nature. While this literature provides consistent statistical support for the use of physical and verbal resistance as a violence reduction method, it provides little analysis or theorizing of its findings. Interestingly, it is a body of literature which remains isolated from other feminist writings on violence against women. As it does not theorize its own often powerful findings, it also does not theorize its own marginality within the field, or question why its findings are not central to feminist anti-violence work. Thus, although providing important statistical data, this literature does little to challenge the existing silence around resistance and prevention, and does little to theorize these concepts. As such it provides an interesting and highly useful base for my work, but stops short of the theorizing I would like to do.

This project will interact with and contribute to a number of different bodies of literature, including those addressed above. I will suggest that we need to pay careful attention to those rare writings that theorize resistance and prevention differently (such as work by Marcus [1992], Pidduck [1994], and Heberle [1996] in the more theoretical domain, and Bart and O'Brien [1984], and Caigan and Groves [1987] in the more practical arena), so that we have something on which to draw in
times of violence. We need to begin to open up new theoretical, discursive, and practical worlds so that we have a discourse and a strategy of resistance/prevention on which to draw in both our theoretical worlds and in the face of sexual violence.

As it stands, the range of resources now available to women are seriously inadequate. The section on sexual assault, of the 1992 re-edited version of Our Bodies Our Selves, a popular book aimed at a wide female audience, offers the following typical example of this inadequacy:

When we take steps to protect ourselves, we want it to be with full awareness that the true responsibility for preventing and eradicating violence belongs to men. *Men must stop committing violence against women, stop each other from doing it, stop condoning it in others and stop blaming women for it.* This is the most important and appropriate form of prevention (Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, 1992:134; emphasis in original).

The emphasis in this paragraph should rest not where the authors have placed it, but rather on the last sentence, for it is here that women are being instructed in the best form of assault prevention. Ultimately, we are being told, the best prevention is for men to stop raping.

We find that common-sense strategies for preventing sexualized violence fall into two categories which are appropriately referred to as victim control and offender control (Cooper, 1991:17). It is no coincidence that these two primary methods for the management of sexual violence in North America do not fundamentally challenge notions of men’s agency and women’s passivity in the face of violence. Victim control and offender control aimed either at those seen likely to experience violence or those likely to perpetrate it, are methods of violence management that leave intact the basic assumptions that women have no role to play in preventing violence (although they may have some role in avoiding it, as victim control strategies will direct them), and that men need to be convinced out of violence, primarily by threat of legal sanction:
...traditional rape prevention strategies seek to control behaviour - either the behaviour of rapists or the behavior of women. These strategies prescribe (1) control of rapist through prosecution, and (2) control of women and girls by limiting their mobility and activities (avoidance) (Cooper, 1991:17).

Offender control strategies are those which seek to legislate sexual violence out of existence. They include such diverse tactics as increased police presence on the streets, prolonged jail terms for convicted offenders, mandatory laying of charges in any complaint of harassment, improved lighting in particular locations (parking lots, parks, alleys, etc.). The primary limitation of offender control as a prevention strategy, is that it for the most part functions after the fact, and relies on an already victimized subject to be enacted. The obvious exceptions to this are the strategies designed to convince men not to rape (such as tougher sentences), however there has been no evidence of which I am aware to date suggesting that increased punishment acts as a significant deterrent in cases of sexual violence.

Both conceptually and practically offender control maintains accepted norms of women's passivity, focusing solely on the actions of potential or actual aggressors. Perhaps most sadly, offender control offers us so little, a forlorn giving up of the empowering and effective possibilities of challenging violence, replaced instead with a desperate hope that the law will protect us.

...the best we might hope for is some minor relief from domination's excesses. Not freedom but censorship; not First Amendment guarantees but more rights to sue for damages; not risky experiments with resignification and emancipation but more police, more regulation, better dead-bolt locks on the doors (Brown, 1995:94).

Offender control's companion prevention strategy, victim control, suffers from a far greater variety of problems. Victim control typically manifests itself in a series of what are interchangeably called 'tips,' 'rules,' 'advice,' or 'common sense,' for women to follow in order to avoid violent or dangerous situations. A few
moments with a group of women asked to think about the ways they have been taught to prevent violence in their lives will quickly reveal a comprehensive list of familiar examples: don't walk alone at night; don't talk to strangers; always lock your door and check through the peep-hole before opening it; don't hitchhike; check the back seat of your car before you get in; don't park in underground parking lots; walk only in well-lit areas; carry your keys between your knuckles; walk looking confident (even when, perhaps especially when, you are terrified); don't dress provocatively or get drunk, and so on. The term victim control literally explicates its logic and methods. It suggests rules which potential victims are to follow in order to avoid violence; it consists, that is, of a program of controlled and controlling behaviour to which women and other potential victims of violence are subjected. It is itself very literally a system of coercion, even of violence.

Much feminist anti-violence discourse maintains a schizophrenic ambivalence to strategies of victim control, perhaps partly because it has failed to generate any compelling alternative. On the one hand it wants to refuse to place the burden and focus of responsibility on the victim rather than on the perpetrator, yet on the other hand, and in blatant contradiction to this stated belief, it continues to promote victim control prevention strategies. A return to the 1992 edition of Our Bodies Our Selves demonstrates this ambivalence. We find first, a clearly articulated rejection of strategies associated with victim control:

Most safety advice offered to women is based on the 'blame the victim' mentality: 'Don't go out alone at night.' ... 'Don't wear sexy clothes.' ... 'Don't be friendly to strangers.' ... 'Stay out of risky situations.' As if what we do is decisive. The argument goes: because it's women's behaviour - our seductiveness or carelessness - that 'invites' violence or allows it to happen, then it is up to us, by changing our behaviour, to prevent it (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1992:134).

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8 As part of the self-defense course I teach, participants are asked to name some of the advice they have received from childhood on, about the best ways to avoid or prevent sexual assault. The list of rules is alarmingly consistent, with very little, if any, variation into more active and agentic acts of resistance.
The authors' point is motivated by the important acknowledgment that women are not responsible for the violence visited upon them (hence 'don't blame the victim'). However the easy slippage between lack of responsibility and lack of agency shows itself here. Victim control strategies are being problematized by the authors because of the apparent blame they lay on women, not because of their tendency to reduce rather than increase women's agency and ability to defend themselves. Thus a central point to the argument above, that women's actions are not to be focused on is rendered highly troublesome when we re-read it as a disabling move which places women's agency outside of the question at hand: "as if what we do is decisive."

Not three pages later we find the ghost of victim control resurrected by the authors in a boxed insert entitled Protecting Ourselves and Each Other From Rape. These tips consist of the same old series of do's and don'ts: do walk home with other women; keep lights on in all entrances; keep windows locked and in place; have strong locks on every door; be aware of places where men might hide; say 'I'll get the door, Bill,' when home alone. Don't carry a lot of stuff; walk through dark places or groups of men; stand near groups of men on public transportation; hitch-hike, etc. (Boston Women's Health Book Collective,1992:137). These tips are prefaced by a bracketed author's acknowledgment that "the following are much more useful against a stranger than against an acquaintance or husband" (Boston Women's Health Book Collective,1992:137). Such statements reveal a profound inability on the part of these feminists to conceptualize prevention and resistance strategies in a way that doesn't reinvoke the myths of the older discourse of denial. The point being that on the question of women's agency the discourse of denial and the discourse of violence against women are similarly silent/silencing.

My desire is to create a world of possibilities that multiplies women's options for resistance to sexualized violence. In the world of violence prevention this means
a shift from a rules-based perspective to a tools-based perspective. This analogy is
drawn most directly from self-defense strategies which often operate under a
system of 'rules' for behaviour and response to violence. I argue that effective
assault prevention is based, rather, on providing a series of flexible and adaptable
tools that can be drawn upon in a wide variety of situations. Fundamentally, 'tools
not rules' is at the heart of this dissertation, I am investigating the consequences for
resistance and prevention practice of a shift from a rules to a tools perspective.

One way of framing this shift and helping to elaborate upon this distinction
is the Foucaultian/Deleuzian shift from a focus on morality to ethics, from a system
of law to a system of living, with the concomitant shift from transcendence to
immanence. In this regard, it becomes important to tease out how feminist anti-
violece literature and practice construe a code of rules for women. Foucault has
written extensively of a 'morality' of the new Christian era which dictated a code of
rules for people to follow in living their lives. He juxtaposes this morality to a kind
of 'ethics of existence,' to a way of being predominant in the ancient Greco-Roman
era he studied. While the former systems of morality relied upon interdictions,
systems of morality based on ethics rely rather on what Foucault calls practices or
techniques of the self (Foucault, 1986:13). Foucault's notion of prescriptive morality
resonates in my work most obviously with overtly prescriptive values found in
dominant discourses (don't walk alone at night, don't fight back it will only make
things worse), but also and importantly for this project, with feminist anti-violence
discourse which have fashioned a new morality as limiting in its prescriptions and
interdictions (all women are potential victims, and all women live in fear of
violence). While morality as 'code of behaviour' is enforced by institutions and
agencies with the authority to enforce and penalize, ethics, for Foucault is concerned
more directly with a process of subjectification: "In this type of system, the codes
and explicit rules of behaviour may be rudimentary, while greater attention is paid
to the methods, techniques, and exercises directed at forming the self within a nexus of relationships. In such a system authority would be self-referential" (Foucault, 1997:xxxvii). Deleuze makes sense of Foucault's process of subjectification in the following way:

And what's he talking about? About a relation of force to itself (whereas power was a relation of force to other forces), about a 'fold' of force. About establishing different ways of existing depending on how you fold the line of forces, or inventing possibilities of life that depend on death too, on our relations to death: existing not as a subject but as a work of art. He's talking about inventing ways of existing, through optional rules, that can both resist power and elude knowledge (Deleuze, 1990:92).

For women facing violence this process of subjectification, of a kind of perpetual 'becoming' makes room for existing differently in relation to forces of (in this case) sexualized violence. While externally devised rules for behaviour limit our options and take the decision about how much, when and what we chose to experience or resist out of our hands, ethics offers us instead a concrete agenda, contingent, shifting and set individually, which makes room for us to act, in the moment, in ways different from and even counter to prevailing morality.

The difference is that morality presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values (this is good, that's bad...); ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved (Deleuze, 1990:100).

When the basis of judging our actions shifts from a transcendental source of truth or morality (in most feminist writing sexual violence is never a woman's fault, it is not her responsibility to resist) to a more immanent and concrete ethics about what may be 'good' in the moment, we are potentially opening the door to thinking differently about resisting violence. Rather than relying on a morality (even a feminist one) which establishes women as blameless, innocent victims whose blamelessness and innocence are attested to by their very passivity, an ethical stance would ask what is
best - regardless of an imposed morality - for us in that moment. Stopping a violent attack is usually 'better' for us than not, even if it may point to the reality that women can in many situations stop violence and therefore that we may have some role in doing so. A practice of justice thus gives way to a practice of life, to a connecting to one's own power.

In this philosophy, resistance can be seen not as the possibly foolish and probably ineffective action of a weaker woman vainly attempting to stop an inevitable rape, not as some kind of 'admittance' of our culpability, but rather as resistance to the 'bad encounters' of life, encounters which would destroy us or separate us from our own power, from our uncultivated capabilities. "We do not even know what a body can do" (Deleuze, 1988:17). This question, according to Deleuze, is at the root of Spinoza's Ethics (which he insists is not a morality). This uncertainty concerning a body's (any body's) capacity, concerning its effective potential is a sign of hope and an incitement to experimentation and cultivation.

Connecting with our power is pursued through, in Foucault's terms, a 'cultivation of the self,' ways of crafting effective and powerful selves. The self, in this view, is a mechanism for the flow of our power; a mechanism of expression. Because we live in a world of conflicting forces, a world fraught with danger, or filled with risk of bad encounters, that expression becomes an action of resistance. Importantly, we must continue to address the ways in which practices of 'cultivation of the self' are not equally available to all women at all times. Unequal distribution of and access to power along many axes/locations, make connecting to one's power a differential process, easier and more accessible and more successfully done at different moments by different women.

It is upon this theoretical backdrop that I write this dissertation, attempting to challenge notions of transcendent morals, and to show how a more immanent ethics of existence, which must be grounded in the particular and different contexts
of women's lives and the range of discourses through which our lives can be rendered meaningful/intelligible, allows space for resistance to violence.

This thesis is motivated by the necessity for a discursive intervention into feminist rhetoric of violence, an intervention which aims to undo some of the violence that traps women within the debilitating structures of fear and victim status. The following story offers us a glimpse into the way our predetermined thinking about women and victimhood deeply constructs not only how, but what we see.

**The Nine That Became Six.**

On December 6th, some time after 1989, I heard an eloquent, moving, and intelligent lecture on the politics of witnessing and remembering violence against women. In the course of the talk the lecturer briefly retold the tale of Marc Lepine and the 1989 Ecole Polytechnique massacre. She told of Lepine entering his first class in the engineering school, sending out all the men, and shooting and killing the remaining six women.

There were in fact, nine women in that first classroom. The three that were not named here and that are rarely named elsewhere, were the three that survived. All three did so by their actions, not solely by chance. In these instances their actions, however subtle, were decisive, what they did, mattered. One survived by speaking to Lepine from the moment he entered the classroom until the moment she was shot (something for which she was later greatly maligned by many feminists because among her speakings to Lepine she tried to convince him that the women in the room were not, in fact feminists, in the hope he would therefore not kill them). Because she was interacting with Lepine she watched him pull the trigger, and turned her head a matter of inches, which was nothing and everything. The bullet passed shallowly through her temple, rather than through her brain. The other two survived by maintaining eye contact with Lepine, so that when he moved his finger to the trigger they ducked and fell to the floor. They were shot, but not killed. Resistance can be that subtle. A turn of the head, a word, a look... Resistance is by no means a guarantee of anything - how many of the fourteen dead might also have resisted? But equally tragically, how many fewer dead might there have been if all had the tools of a discourse of resistance, a politics of prevention on which to draw?

Somewhere, those three surviving women got misplaced. Whether it was the media that didn't quite tell the whole story, or those who took up the story, feminists among them, who focused exclusively on the deaths, so that the six became more important and more tellable than the three, or whether in hearing the story one simply glossed over the three, not even able to see and hear the resistance that existed in what for many is the ultimate and most terrifying moment of male violence, where in fact the disappearance occurred seems less important than the fact that it did, that three living, resisting women turned invisible.
Chapter Two:
Resistance to Prevention:
A Decade of Feminist Anti-Violence Discourse

It is late 1986 now, and we are losing. The war is men against women; the country is the United States. Here, a woman is beaten every eighteen seconds: by her husband or the man she lives with, not by a psychotic stranger in an alley... Woman-beating, the intimate kind, is the most commonly committed violent crime in the country, according to the FBI, not feminists. A woman is raped every three minutes... Forty-four percent of the adult women in the United States have been raped at least once... There are an estimated 16000 new cases of father-daughter incest each year, and in the current generation of children, thirty-eight percent of girls are sexually molested... We keep calling this war normal life. Everyone's ignorant; no one knows; the men don't mean it. In this war, the pimps who make pornography are the SS, an elite, sadistic, military, organized vanguard. They run an efficient and expanding system of exploitation and abuse in which women and children, as lower life forms, are brutalized. This year they will gross $10 billion (Dworkin,1988b:308/9).

Every day in this country women are maligned, humiliated, shunned, screamed at, pushed, kicked, punched, assaulted, beaten, raped, physically disfigured, tortured, threatened with weapons and murdered. Some women are indeed more vulnerable than others, but all women, simply by virtue of their gender, are potential victims of violence. Moreover, the violence is often directed at them by those whom they have been encouraged to trust, those whom they are taught to respect, those whom they love. Violence against women cuts across all racial, social, cultural, economic, political, and religious spectrums. While there is no question that violence may be conditioned by these factors, the fact remains that all women are at risk (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women,1993:3).

In this chapter I delve into a collection of some of the 'classic' texts in the field of violence-against-women. These texts, written in the crucial years 1975-85, when violence-against-women was finally becoming recognized and understood as a category worthy of study and action, were among the very first in North America
(with the exception of sporadic articles or writings in fields such as criminology and psychology) to examine the issues of violence-against-women, and to do so from an avowedly feminist standpoint.9 They were tremendously influential in the North American women's movement as a whole (where, it could be argued, violence-against-women rapidly became one of the main rallying points), and within the anti-rape movement they served as the theory on which much practice was based. I am returning to these texts more than a decade later, following another crucial period of theoretical change, because I believe we are now well-placed to consider the important ways in which violence-against-women came to be conceptualized and taken up among feminists. Even for those of us, working in the feminist anti-violence movement, who had never actually read many of these texts (and I must confess myself to be such a person) Brownmiller, Dworkin, Russell, and Griffin were intimately familiar names. Reading these texts now for the first time, I realize how much of my thinking and the very language I used as a grassroots activist in the anti-rape movement, was drawn from these works, despite never having read the texts themselves.

9 The particular texts I am looking at are as follows: Rape: The All-American Crime (Griffin, 1971); Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape (Brownmiller, 1975); The Politics of Rape: The Victim's Perspective (Russell, 1975); Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality (Clark and Lewis, 1977); Stopping Rape: Successful Survival Strategies (Bart and O'Brien, 1983); Introduction No Safe Place: Violence Against Women and Children (Guberman and Wolfe, 1985); Rape (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985); Rape: The Politics of Consciousness (Griffin, 1986 [originally published in 1979]); I Want a Twenty-Four-Hour Truce During Which There is No Rape (Dworkin, 1988 [originally published in 1983]); Violence Against Women: It Breaks the Heart, Also the Bones (Dworkin, 1988 [originally published in 1984]).

I am aware that there are a number of other texts that belong alongside the ones I have chosen. In trying to problematize how a new and feminist discourse of violence was constructed during the late 1970's and early 1980's, and how this discourse was informed by feminist anti-violence texts, I have selected those texts and authors whose names resounded in the halls of the small-town Ontario, grassroots rape crisis centre at which I volunteered and worked between 1984 and 1989. This does not make for a complete or even necessarily representative list of texts, but it does speak, in a site- and time-specific way, to the works and authors who informed and influenced our theorizing and our practice.

The one exception to this criteria of choice is Bart and O'Brien's Stopping Rape, the only text among those examined which is primarily about resistance and prevention. This was not a book I was aware of during my years at the rape crisis centre, and it has been added because of its singular importance in being the only work I am aware of that was available during this decade which consistently posits resistance and prevention as central to the issue of violence-against-women.
The problematic of how particular texts came to be so central to the Canadian grass-roots anti-rape movement, and of how we identified which of these texts provided the theories upon which our practice drew, especially in light of often not reading these works in their entirety, is indeed a confusing one, and difficult to clarify so many years later. We quoted Dworkin at rallies and marches, we circulated a sorely abridged version of Griffin's (1979) *The Politics of Consciousness*, we touted the then recently-published *Against Our Will* (Brownmiller, 1975) as proof that we were right about women, rape, and a misogynist culture at the root of it all. In a time of virtual absence of feminist writing about sexual violence, there were not many texts to chose from, and the news that one anti-rape activist had actually read Brownmiller, and had reported that it was great, more than sufficed for us to take up these texts as our 'bibles,' without necessarily reading them ourselves. There were, therefore, citational practices that circulated and created, in a sense, an authoritative structure for the discursive form of what the anti-rape movement was articulating as the basis for its practice. The choice of texts, therefore, is not a selection of convenience nor one derived according to personalized or specific interest. These were the texts assigned not by me, nor even particularly by the long-time activists within the rape crisis centre at which I worked, but by a coherent organizational structure (certainly the Ontario anti-rape movement, if not the movement nationally defined) which internalized these theories in terms of organizational process and practice.\(^\text{10}\)

I am returning to these texts with the desire to look at the use of four very particular concepts: fear, victimhood, resistance, and prevention. I want to examine what the use of these concepts seems to enable and limit, what is being set up as

\(^{10}\) Not only were the texts formative during the era under examination here, but they continued for many years to exert a strong force on the thinking of many feminists. Hence the following kinds of claims are not unusual in more recent feminist anti-violence literature: "We cannot overestimate the influence of feminist theorists such as Brownmiller upon the thinking of current researchers" (Sorensen and White, 1992:4).
common-sense understandings of violence-against-women in the way they are used, or in other words, how is a rhetoric of violence, one which I suggest continues to operate powerfully today within feminist movements, being constructed in this literature through the deployment of these terms? Put differently my question might be; what regimes of truth about fear, victimhood, resistance, and prevention were established in the 1970's and 1980's feminist anti-violence literature, and what were the effects of these new regimes of truth on women and their relationship to sexualized violence? The remainder of this question - how might we think differently/outside these 'truths' - is what will be explored in the next two chapters.

As we have seen, these texts were published in the wake of an 'era of silence', an era in which violence-against-women did not exist in the public discourse and where most forms of sexual assault were either invisible or collapsed into broader discourses of violence, abstracted from the more systemically intricate and politicized notion of violence-against-women. They thus served, along with many other texts - some theoretical, others more confessional - to 'break the silence' of this era, bringing into the public realm what had always previously been invisible or private.

I will show that this account of a shifting discursive terrain tends to set up a problematic dichotomy, however, whereby discourse is either repressive (by omission as in the era of silence) or liberatory (as in the breaking-the-silence era which followed). Foucault's conceptualizations of both the enabling and limiting workings of discourse help to tease out some of the problematic notions behind this dichotomy. In problematizing any attempt to understand language as exclusively either liberatory or repressive, Foucault makes explicit the fact that (liberatory) discourse does not eliminate power, but rather redeploy it. So while, on the one hand, the bringing into language of acts and ideas that had previously and differently 'existed' in some less public and widely understood way can serve as
liberating and as a force for social change, on the other hand, the bringing into discourse of these same acts and ideas can also serve to reinscribe them into new power structures. Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray address these tensions of discourse in relation to the anti-violence movement:

...movements of social change should focus in the arena of speech as a central locus of power. The act of speaking out in and of itself transforms power relations and subjectivities, or the very way in which we experience and define ourselves (Alcoff and Gray, 1993:260).

They then very quickly point out that "bringing things into the realm of discourse works also to inscribe them into hegemonic structures" (Alcoff and Gray, 1993:260). There is, in other words, no innocent position available for subjects to take up. Inevitably speaking poses other traps as new truths are inscribed into language, reorganizing the terrain of the speakable and the unspeakable.

My aim is to avoid a simplistic dichotomy: liberatory/repressive and speakable/unspeakable, whereby language is defined as unequivocally liberatory or repressive, rather than as a site of struggle, a site where power and resistance are in constant tension. On the complexity and tensions within/among discourses, Foucault writes:

...we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies... Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance... There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are
tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy (Foucault, 1980:100-102).

There is no question that new discursive worlds were opened up in the feminist anti-violence writings of the decade in question, and that the new language of violence-against-women catalyzed a transformation of the event itself, not only of what the event was, but also of how it was experienced and responded to. For the most part, these texts are taken up by many feminists as clearly liberatory in their effect, without the concomitant questioning of the limitations of this discursive turn. Despite the truly significant openings for more diverse understandings of women's experiences of violence, much of the rhetoric solidified in these works (and in the activist feminist anti-violence movement itself) arose in opposition to a particular misogynist, patriarchal and anti-woman set of beliefs and discursive practices that have come to be termed the 'rape myths.' I will show that the nature of this process of oppositional discourses problematically structured new, feminist discourses and practices relating to sexualized violence.

Wendy Brown comments upon the tendency of movements for 'freedom' to recreate the very relations they seek to abandon:

Initial figurations of freedom are inevitably reactionary in the sense of emerging in reaction to perceived injuries or constraints of a regime from within its own terms. Ideals of freedom ordinarily emerge to vanquish their imagined immediate enemies, but in this move they frequently recycle and reinstate rather than transform the terms of domination that generated them. Consider exploited workers who dream of a world in which work has been abolished, blacks who imagine a world without whites, feminists who conjure a world either without men or without sex, or teenagers who fantasize a world without parents. Such images of freedom perform mirror reversals of suffering without transforming the organization of the activity through which the suffering is produced and without addressing the subject constitution that domination effects, that is, the constitution of the social
categories, 'workers,' 'blacks,' 'women,' or 'teenagers' (Brown, 1995:7).

Although there was a tremendous need to expose and unsettle the myths of violence as the patriarchal representations they were, uninformed by and apparently unrelated to the lived experiences of many survivors of sexual assault, the oppositional framework which structured this new discursive turn posed deadly traps for the emerging feminist discourse. Working within a reactive framework, feminist anti-violence writers produced a series of simplistic, extreme, and dualistic oppositions. As I shall outline in greater detail as I explore specific concepts, we can see, for example, how the myth that only some few women could actually be 'legitimate' rape victims (white, virgin or married, middle-class, educated women, for example) was challenged with the new feminist 'truth' that all women are potential rape victims. The myth that claimed that without overt physical resistance, rape could not have taken place, was countered with the denial of women's ability to resist in the face of the terror imposed by sexual violence, even when no physical force was used. Categories of women as victim, and of the relationships between victimhood, fear, resistance and prevention were not part of the movement to end violence against women. Thus, as Brown suggests:

> It would thus appear that it is freedom's relationship to identity - its promise to address a social injury or marking that is itself constitutive of identity - that yields the paradox in which the first imaginings of freedom are always constrained by and potentially even require the very structure of oppression that freedom emerges to oppose (Brown, 1995:7).

The new feminist 'truths' were part of a direly needed political strategy to unsettle the commonly accepted and highly problematic understandings of violence-against-women. However, and perhaps inevitably, in the initial moments of reactive discourse production binaries tend to be generated. The new feminist discursive constructions problematically responded to a one-dimensional claim with an (albeit) oppositional, one-dimensional claim of their own, thus serving to reinscribe the
very polarities that needed to be unsettled. Instead of very few potential rape victims, we are left with all women as always/already rapable. Now instead of resistance being absurdly and unfairly required to prove rape, we are left with resistance as virtually impossible in the face of sexual violence. I argue that this new feminist rhetoric of violence solidified into a new regime of truth concerning violence-against-women that kept many women as trapped, albeit in different ways, as had the older myths. While the intent was to challenge a dominant, pervasive, and oppressive discourse, the result was a new and equally rigid discursive world.

It is difficult, coming from a marginalized location, to believe in the power of one's own language, and we don't often imagine the possible diverse impacts our language might have once it reaches some intangible place of influence. Yet the new feminist rhetoric of violence being constructed in the decade from 1975 to 1985 has had tremendous influence on how many women think of violence-against-women. There have been both overwhelming gains and worrisome losses within these discursive strategies, and this work hopes to explore and unsettle both these effects.

Thus as the texts I am examining participated in the construction of new discursive terrains, new lines of power inevitably got drawn. I seek to examine these works not only for the tremendous amount they enabled (a more complex understanding of violence-against-women, legal reform, the establishment of a plethora of crucial support and victim-services), but also for what they limited. I hope through a study of the four concepts (fear, victimhood, resistance, and prevention) to begin to tease out the contradictions of this complex enabling and limiting, to imagine future alternatives and ambiguities, and to understand how this relates to the general goal of reducing violence in women's lives.

These are works which simultaneously call for tremendous respect and for serious critique. They truly served to broaden public understanding of violence-
against-women, to bring a silenced and subjugated world to the fore, and they did so in a time when the vast movement of women, so taken-for-granted by many feminists today, was only beginning its rise. They are virtually silent, however, on the interplay between sexual violence and race, and posit an unspoken assumption of the subject, predictably reflective of the theorists themselves, mostly white and middle-class, usually able-bodied and often heterosexual. They do little to address the racist use of rape mythology to maintain black men as the perpetrators, white women their innocent victims and black women incapable of being raped because rape is never against their will. On this, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall narrates the following:

In 1972 Anne Braden, a southern white woman and long-time activist in civil rights struggles, expressed her fear that the new anti-rape movement might find itself 'objectively on the side of the most reactionary social forces' unless it heeded a lesson from history. In a pamphlet entitled *Open Letter to Southern White Women* - much circulated in regional women's liberation circles at the time - she urged anti-rape activists to remember the long pattern of racist manipulation of rape fears. She called on white women, 'for their own liberation, to refuse any longer to be used, to act in the tradition of Jessie Daniel Ames and the white women who fought in an earlier period to end lynching,' and she went on to discuss her own politicization through left-led protests against the prosecution of black men on false rape charges. Four years later, she joined the chorus of black feminist criticism of *Against Our Will*, seeing Brownmiller's book as a realization of her worst fears (Hall, 1983:344/5). Hall's narrative renders problematic any attempt to excuse Brownmiller and the other authors under question here for their lack of attention to race and other diverse subject positionings on the grounds that these issues were simply not yet on the table. Certainly racism itself, as well as the way race is inextricably linked with sexual violence (especially in the United States where the majority of these texts were published) were topics well in the public domain by the 1970's. The occlusion of race as well as of other diverse subject locations is one of the main limitations of
these texts, not excused by the era, but certainly typical of it.

These works are also already drastically outmoded in terms of their stylistic propensity towards totalization and their almost absurdly reductionist attempts to cite sexual violence against women as the unicausal site of women's oppression. Hence such sweeping claims as the following by Brownmiller:

Female fear of an open season of rape, and not a natural inclination toward monogamy, motherhood or love, was probably the single causative factor in the original subjugation of woman by man, the most important key to her historic dependence, her domestication by protective mating... Concepts of hierarchy, slavery and private property flowed from, and could only be predicated upon, the initial subjugation of woman (Brownmiller, 1975:6-8).

This is a somewhat extreme example, and while such a proposition appears obviously problematic to a contemporary reader within an intellectual climate that has been sensitized to issues of reductionism, there are other more subtle issues of rhetorical effect which have yet to be seriously challenged.

The quotes by Andrea Dworkin and the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women at the opening of this chapter shed light on the ways these discourses operate and to what effect. The passages are both are moving and frustrating; moving perhaps because they are a way of describing so vividly what certainly is the reality for many, many North American women, frustrating because they simultaneously leave the reader feeling disempowered and hopeless in the face of overwhelming violence. The depiction of violence in women's lives offered in these two passages, a depiction which naturalizes and renders inevitable women's victim status, and which can be nothing if not fear-inducing, demonstrates the way mainstream and dominant feminist discourses about women's experience of and relation to violence circumscribe the experience of violence before it is ever lived.

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11 Of all the texts reviewed, Brownmiller's chiefly historical analysis is the one which most often tends towards an extreme 'grand narrative'.
The construction of women as helpless and passive victims is evident, and the participation of these passages in a rhetoric of fear, even in the name of feminism, is alarming. In response to the opening paragraphs of the Panel of Violence Against Women's report, Julianne Pidduck asks us to:

Consider again the litany of transitive verbs listed in the first sentence: 'maligned, humiliated, shunned, screamed at, pushed, kicked, punched, assaulted, beaten, raped, physically disfigured, tortured, threatened with weapons and murdered' (Pidduck, 1994:8).

Pidduck goes on to posit that:

...aspects of feminist rhetoric around violence against women, particularly as they begin to circulate in broader discourse, are not simply clean critical tools which cut through ambient masculinist silences and lies. (Although this is part of their function.) Feminist discourse carries more than critical negativity, more than a righteous corrective effectivity. They carry a tangibly productive weight which may at times even amplify the fear-production process (Pidduck, 1994:9/10).

It is this 'tangible productive weight' which is the focus of the following pages, an examination of the ways in which feminist anti-violence discourses are actively constitutive of, rather than merely representative of victimhood and fear. Pidduck highlights an important point that is all too often lost on feminists who prefer to downplay the political force of their rhetoric; failure to identify the constitutive dimensions of their/our discourse leads inevitably, or by default, to a naturalization which encourages dangerous and theoretically suspect conflations.

The opening quotes to this chapter are, thus, not dissimilar from the texts under examination here, both eye-opening and agency-reducing. What is enabled in these words is an understanding of new dimensions of the problem of violence-against-women, of its frequency and effects, what is limited is an empowered possibility for resistance and change. It is into this messy set of contradictions that I will leap.
FEAR

I have never been free of the fear of rape. From a very early age I, like most women, have thought of rape as part of my natural environment—something to be feared and prayed against like fire or lightning (Griffin, 1971:26).

From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear (Brownmiller 1975:5).

The fear of rape effects all women. It inhibits their actions and limits their freedom, influencing the way they dress, the hours they keep, and the routes they walk. The fear is well founded, because no woman is immune from rape (Clark and Lewis, 1977:23).

We became concerned about sexual assault long before writing this book, for fear of rape lies within the hearts of all women (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:ix).

Women and children live in the shadow of terror. Whether it is in the workplace, on the street, or inside the home, the threat of violence stays with us wherever we happen to be (Guberman and Wolfe, 1985:9).

The above passages all demonstrate how fear operated as a framing concept for much of the writing of this era. All of these quotations, remarkable for their stark similarity, illustrate the need felt by early feminist theorists of violence...

12 In my discussion of fear, beginning here and continuing on through the following chapters, I shift alternately between a discussion of the need to reduce fear in women’s lives, and the possibilities for using fear transformatively in the aid of resisting sexualized violence. Certainly these two notions are not interchangeable, and need to be seen as two differing projects with differing effects. I do seek to emphasize, however, that both are necessary projects in my view. and ones that can comfortably co-exist, indeed that necessarily and realistically must co-exist. We might want to consider the reduction of a certain ambient fear in women’s lives, a fear which is ultimately useless, that is, is not really transformable into anything helpful because it is vague, constant, and acts prior to and separate from any particular fear-inducing event (such as the act of rape). We might also, however, want to suggest the transformation of the highly specific and contextual fear we feel when faced with an actual aggressor. In that instance, transforming fear into anger and strength serves an obviously valuable purpose.
against women to articulate an essential relationship between womanhood and fear of a very specific form of violence.\(^\text{13}\) It appears in fact to have been almost impossible for feminists to have written about rape and sexual assault without direct, frequent appeals to fear as the framework within which violence-against-women operates. The question is, why should this have been so, and what are the consequences of this linking of women and fear?

The desire to articulate women's fear with such unrelenting consistency is understandable in the moments immediately following the 'era of silence,' when feminists were struggling to render visible the magnitude and devastating effects of violence-against-women. There was an articulated need to claim fear in North America of the 1970's and early 1980's: to bring women's fear into the realm of the visible, the knowable, the understandable, as a way of naming and explaining the vastly different world women claimed to live in, one dominated by fear and violence.

This 'telling' about fear appears to serve quite different functions depending upon the audience called upon. On the one hand the revealing of fear as a centrepiece of women's experience speaks in a particular way to a non-feminist (or not specifically feminist) audience who have perhaps never given much thought to violence-against-women. In this case simply the naming of such pervasive and

\(^{13}\) I would like to gesture here, towards the possibility that fear more broadly defined, and perhaps particularly in relation to sexualized violence, was deeply enmeshed with race and racism. That white and middle-class women and girls, from the 1950's well into the era of the texts under examination in this chapter, were solicited to take on fear of encroaching 'otherness' (into the schools, the suburbs, the previously safe/white spaces of America) should lead us to imagine that the universalized fear posited by the authors (all white) under study here, might in fact have been tied to their race as deeply as it was tied to their sex. I know of no studies examining women's fear of rape and how it differs on the basis of race and class, which posit that women of colour, for example, may have been less fearful than white women. There are, of course, claims to the contrary, that "...the distribution of fear appears to follow existing social cleavages delineated by gender, age, race, and social class that mark status and power inequalities in our society" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:118). I would, however, like to leave open the possibility that white women's claim that the fear of rape constitutes a relatively uniform experience for all women (and qualified by the assumption that those more marginalized could only possibly feel even more fear), is grounded in a world-view which rarely addressed differences based on race, and which is likely obfuscating racial differences as they pertain to fear, imagining white women's experiences to be commensurate with all women's.
devastating fear appears to serve as an appeal to the humanity of those who not only may have given it little recognition, but who may be part of its cause as well. We can assume such an audience, for example, in the case of Susan Griffin's 1971 article (what was to become the first chapter of *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness*) published in *Ramparts*, a magazine targeting a more general and not specifically feminist audience. However, if we acknowledge that most of these texts were in fact read primarily, if not almost exclusively by women, then the purpose served by talking of fear to those very readers whose lives are apparently imbued with it, is very different. According to this rhetoric, women need not be told of the *existence* of their fear (since they are assumed to be intimate with it). Rather what they need to be made aware of is the way in which their individual fear is a *consequence* of their gender and systematically unites them with women as a whole. The experience of fear is generalized and becomes a universal and collective experience of womanhood. This essentialized and universalized link between women and fear serves a critical (if highly problematic) function of creating the united, collective category of 'rape victims'; 'you are not alone' becomes one of the many battle cries of the anti-rape movement. This rhetoric serves simultaneously the important and valuable purpose of deindividualizing violence-against-women and placing it firmly in the arena of the social and political, and the more problematic purpose of rendering fear an essential part of femaleness.\(^{14}\) In a related manner, the male rapist is also deindividualized, acting not in his own interests, but on behalf of a generalized male power. Brownmiller (1975:281) argues that the rapist performs the societal function for all men, of keeping women in a state of fear, and further argues that, in fact, women need not experience rape to carry that fear with them: "that some men rape provides a sufficient threat to keep all women in a constant state of

\(^{14}\) It should be clear here that I refer to the constructed rather than essential character of the state we call 'femaleness.' Here and elsewhere the femaleness I am referencing is, of course, femaleness as it exists in patriarchy.
intimidation" (Brownmiller, 1975:229).

Hence rape as a "form of mass terrorism" (Griffin, 1971:35), as a tool "designed to intimidate and inspire fear" (Brownmiller, 1975:439), is a consistent reference across these texts and is used to explain the magnitude of rape extending far beyond any physical injury or experience. The desire to incite fear is constructed as the primary motivating force for rape. Interestingly then, rape is being called upon primarily as a 'cover.' In this discourse, fear is at the heart of violence-against-women; fear is the 'end' ('keeping all women in a state of terror') and rape is simply the most effective means to that end.

This understanding of the relationship between fear and violence connects in interesting ways to one of the early and central truth claims of the feminist anti-violence movement, namely that rape is not about sex, but rather is a crime of power, violence, and control. The individual experience of the rapist and the raped in the forced act of intercourse is deemphasized in relation to a generalized social agenda. According to the vision of this social agenda, rape finds its essence not in its sexual means, which are incidental, but in its telos, its final cause, that is, in the terrorization of women. Hence fear is frequently and not surprisingly represented in these texts as more significant than acts of sexual violence themselves: "more than rape itself, the fear of rape permeates our lives" (Griffin, 1986:83).

An anticipatory fear operates in these texts as a unifier of women, uniting them in their potential victimhood, before they ever have to be assaulted. This fear is abstract, separate and distinct from any specific act of sexual violence. It is suggested that we are fearful regardless of our concrete experiences of assault, fear is simply part of being a woman. This framing of women's experience in relation to sexual assault, the assumption that we all learn an anticipatory fear of rape, excludes the experiences of women for whom fear of rape is not central to their
being. The construction of fear as hegemonic, while serving to validate the often privatized and individualized feelings of many women, simultaneously serves to establish fear as normative and universal. The knowledge that "rape and the fear of rape are a daily part of every woman's consciousness" [emphasis mine] (Griffin, 1971:27) is expressed within these texts with a certainty that overshadows all other possibilities. Anticipatory fear of sexualized violence is posited as the emotional norm for women within a culture of rape.

In addition to the assumption that all women carry ambient or anticipatory fear in relation to sexual violence, many of these texts also made assumptions about the effects of the fear that comes into play in the specific moment of an assault. The texts operated with the implicit assumption that there was a natural link between the fear experienced in the midst of a sexual assault and immobility. In writing of rape which involves minimal physical aggression (that is rape that is not particularly extreme in its use of physical force or weapons), Brownmiller insists that,

> Without doubt, any of these circumstances can and does produce immobilizing terror in a victim, terror sufficient to render her incapable of resistance or to make her believe that resistance would be futile (Brownmiller, 1975:42).

When, in the passage above as in the other texts under examination, fear is presumed to lead almost inevitably to immobility, it becomes equally inevitable that sexual violence will not (or can not) be resisted. By insisting that fear and immobility are natural and necessary partners, the rhetoric of these texts tends to work against a cultivation of resistance on the part of women in specific violent situations. Further, the assumed link between fear in the face of an actual sexual

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15 The following two chapters will address the possibilities for resistance and assault prevention that are opened up when we begin to include the possibilities that in fact not all women have such anticipatory fear, or that we have such fear to vastly differing degrees.

16 Against this tendency, I will want to suggest that there is nothing natural about the connection between fear and immobility. Fear might equally operate as an instigation to action and resistance. There are
assault, and immobility, tends to render invisible any acts of resistance when they do occur. A curious occlusion in Russell's text, for example, illustrates the degree to which resistance or action have been erased from the profile of the rape victim. In speaking of men's tendency to want to hurt or kill the rapist of a woman close to them, Russell comments "women rarely express the same sentiment" (Russell, 1975:67). The statement is jarring, since over half of the women she interviews in her book make direct reference to wanting to seriously harm or kill their rapists. Yet, I would suggest that because immobility, in this discourse, is the primary understandable response of women to their assaults, other responses are rendered insignificant and invisible. Thus women's expressed desire to fight back and strong sentiments of revenge can go unnoticed by Russell and others.

If we want to understand the anti-rape movement's commitment, in this period, to equations which explain or proclaim women's passivity, it is helpful to look at how this rhetorical strategy relates to the political culture of the time. Feminist anti-violence discourses intersected with and positioned themselves in relation to other discourses, including (particularly) those operating in legal institutions/practices. The rhetoric which identifies lack of resistance as a natural response to fear is readily comprehensible as a strategic response to legal requirements stipulating that women needed to prove that they had resisted in some concrete way in order for the incident to be seen as sexual assault in a court of law:

What makes sexual intercourse rape is not the offender's use of or threat of physical force, but proof that a 'rapable' female did not consent to the act in question...
Worse, the absence of consent must be supported by tangible

undoubtedly, many socially produced factors conditioning women's 'natural' response to fear, not least of which are the messages we have assimilated regarding our own strengths and capacities, and the skills we have or have not learned. In the section on fear in the next chapter, I will more thoroughly discuss the fact that fear can insight a range of differing affects.
evidence; it will rarely be inferred from the victim's testimony that she simply said 'no.' Instead, lack of consent must be inferred from evidence that the victim actively resisted the attack and attempted to prevent sexual intercourse from occurring, regardless of the risk she ran in doing so. If there is no such evidence, then her 'consent' will be assumed. Saying 'no' is apparently not enough, even in the face of physical violence.

Since the victim's consent can be used as a defense to the charge of rape, the victim must resist her attacker to the utmost of her capabilities if her later testimony concerning lack of consent is to appear credible (Clark and Lewis, 1977:162).

Susan Brownmiller similarly points out that:

Under the rules of law, victims of robbery and assault are not required to prove they resisted, or that they didn't consent, or that the act was accomplished with sufficient force, or sufficient threat of force, to overcome their will, because the law presumes it highly unlikely that a person willingly gives away money, except to a charity or to a favorite cause, the law presumes that no person willingly submits to a brutal beating and infliction of bodily harm and permanent damage. But victims of rape and other forms of sexual assault do need to prove these evidentiary requirements - that they resisted, that they didn't consent, that their will was overcome by overwhelming force and fear - because the law has never been able to satisfactorily distinguish an act of mutually desired sexual union from an act of forced, criminal sexual aggression (Brownmiller, 1975:431/2).

It is no small wonder that feminists attempted to name fear as a reason for not resisting. This effort was grounded in the attempt to shift the burden of blame for assault to the aggressor, regardless of physical resistance on the part of the woman. In one of the only crimes in which a victim's legal innocence is predicated upon her level of resistance, denying the necessity of resistance is an important political goal. Like much of the rhetoric of violence being constructed in these feminist texts, however, the complexities and contradictions of discourse are played out in this use of fear. For while, on the one hand, marking fear as a legitimate reason for women's lack of resistance to an assault served to bring many otherwise unacknowledged assault situations into the fold of legally understandable assault
and to shift blame from the woman to her rapist, this new 'truth,' linking fear and lack of resistance, also served to silence discourses that would foster the cultivation of resistance. While fear undoubtedly has an important role to play in the dynamics of an actual assault situation, immobility is a conceivable, but not necessary, effect.

Thus legal necessity helped foster a discourse which led to particular conceptualizations and ways of speaking about women's relationship to fear, a discourse which has often, no doubt unintended consequences. One such consequence of significance is to marginalize discourses of resistance. The troubling equation (lack of consent is only understandable via physical resistance) is replaced with a new feminist equation (fear makes resistance unlikely, unnatural, and even impossible in the face of assault) which, in its attempt to create a more just climate before the courts for women who have been assaulted, simultaneously serves to repress and marginalize ways of thinking which allow for the possibility of resistance. In this context the notion that "prolonged resistance therefore may invite further abuse, serious injury, or even death," and that "a victim who can remain level-headed during an attack may realize that it is rational to submit to rape in such circumstances" (Clark and Lewis, 1977:162), comes to serve larger ideological purposes, separate from the reality of the usefulness of women's resistance.

In contrast to these propositions we should note that most empirical studies will, in fact, affirm the effectiveness of resistance for rape prevention:

When a woman used physical force as a defense technique together with another technique [talking, yelling, fleeing], her chances of avoiding [rape] increased (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:34).

And:

We are told that if we fight back, if we physically resist, we will pay the price of severe injury or death. Not only is this admonition not supported by our findings, it is also unsupported in the work of McIntyre...Queen's Bench...Sanders... and Block and Skogan [other
studies of women's resistance to sexual assault] (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:40).

In an attempt to eliminate resistance as a definitional requirement for sexual assault, the early feminist anti-violence rhetoric propagated false and empirically insupportable (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:40) notions of resistance as ineffective and dangerous (and therefore not only not necessary but often not advisable). It thus proved itself incapable of juggling the complexities of two discourses which don't map perfectly onto each other: that resistance is not necessary for assault to be assault, but that it does in fact help prevent assault. Instead of arguing for this important distinction, early feminist anti-violence activists found themselves in agreement with prevalent and misleading societal assumptions that to resist sexual aggression is to invite greater violence. While their position opposing the necessity of resistance was, perhaps, thereby strengthened, they found themselves colluding with a dominant discourse which presumed and encouraged women's powerlessness in the face of sexual violence.

We do, in fact, find occasional moments of resistance in the early texts, but these moments are exceedingly rare and often carefully managed. For example, it is not until page 397 of her 450-page book, that Brownmiller relays, for the very first time, a short list of successful resistance stories. Clustered together over a brief two and a half pages, Brownmiller provides 'testimonies' from women who resisted their aggressors in an attempt to shed light on the question "do women fight back, and can women fight back successfully" (Brownmiller, 1975:397)? Brownmiller is not dismissive of the three testimonies she includes, and in fact provides some rather strong support for resistance, despite the fact that the structure of her book, and her silence on resistance until the concluding pages, would seem to belie much concern with the topic. In commenting that there are no studies done on women resisting rape (at the time of publication of her text) she suggests that thwarted
rapes are most likely the result of "strong resistance on the part of the woman" (Brownmiller, 1975:399). Equally clearly, in posing the question "is submissive behaviour in any way helpful to a victim of rape?" (Brownmiller, 1975:403), Brownmiller responds with an unequivocal 'no'.

Her effort, however, is not convincing, and in fact the presence of such a minor and passing discussion of resistance is highly instructive. Interestingly, discussion of resistance is not entirely absent and its presence doesn't seem to pose any serious challenge to the anti-rape agenda. Yet the effect of feminist anti-violence discourse has been to marginalize and de-emphasize the topic, and Brownmiller's lack of sustained attention to the issue suggests that while posing an interesting question to be considered in passing, it is in no way a theoretical priority. She cites only three examples of resistance in comparison to the sixteen examples of completed rapes immediately following, which are intended to illustrate the diversity of how women respond to rape. Indeed, her brief discussion of resistance stands out against many of her preceding arguments. The effect is to minimize and render marginal such acts of resistance, thus privileging the link between rape and a powerless lack of agency in women and reinforcing a rape/fear/immobility relationship at the expense of a rape/fear/resistance one. This move is particularly troubling, as it develops and reinforces a climate of vulnerability for women.

Brownmiller writes of the genuine astonishment that she and other women felt in a self-defense class she took when they came to realize that they (the women) could in fact, by way of yells and kicks and punches, instill fear in the men (Brownmiller, 1975:454). Clearly fear was the domain of women, and even more than the excitement of learning to resist aggression and thus reduce the violence in their lives, the feeling that is foregrounded is the discovery of their ability to make men feel fear. The fact that her own agency comes as such a shock to Brownmiller
confirms that the possibility of women's resistance is little considered by her.

Curiously, Brownmiller cautions that in taking the responsibility to resist assault women also accept fear as part of life: "to accept a special burden of self-protection is to reinforce the concept that women must live and move about in fear" (Brownmiller, 1975:449). To have to think about defending oneself is, for Brownmiller, to have to accept a burden of fear. Ironically, this is a fear that Brownmiller has argued that all women carry with them most of the time anyway, and sadly she seems to deny the possibility that learning to defend oneself might in fact actually work to reduce fear.

On this point Susan Griffin is a notable exception among the early works under review. She demonstrates a nuanced appreciation of how fear can feed on passivity and how a cultivation of strength can work to reduce women's fear:

Much of the study of martial arts...is a change in attitude. To work against fear, shock, a feeling of defeat... And this change in attitude brings about a change in the material. The body becomes stronger, quicker, gravitates to the physical, seeks movement; and the body which feels strong, which feels it can defend itself affects the mind, cannot be seized in the same way by fear, transforms the psyche (Griffin, 1986:35).

In speaking of the martial arts in such a way, Griffin offers us a moment of insight into the possibilities of resistance (which will be explored in later chapters) rarely seen in the works of this era. Her poetic reference to using one's body to defend oneself reminds us that it was not impossible, in this era as now, to allow for the inclusion of concepts of resistance into the anti-violence theorizing being done by these early feminists. Her concerns about the movement - "We lived in a mood of vigilance and still do that our movement not end in a series of ameliorating social services" (Griffin, 1986:36) - foreshadow later critiques of the anti-rape movement (Matthews, 1994) for 'managing' rather than truly 'preventing' rape. Her words, because they are so unusual within the works under study, highlight the
construction of victimhood for women perpetuated by much feminist theorizing of the time, and simultaneously offer us a glimmer of an alternate way of thinking about violence.

My aim is not to set up a dichotomy in which there is no self-defense and fear, versus self-defense and no fear. While learning self-defense may act to reduce fear of violence for some women, it is certainly conceivable that it might also serve to make more real possibilities of assault for them, and thus in fact exacerbate their fear (temporarily at least). While one would certainly hope the former to be more likely, the aim of self-defense is primarily to generate strategies and skills to reduce violence (although I would argue that the by-product of this in a good self-defense course is the reduction of fear). Importantly however, reduction of fear is a secondary issue. The primary issue is to problematize the notion of immobilizing fear and to insist that fear alone in no way precludes resistance.

**VICTIMHOOD**

In contrast to the preceding concept, which has not been subject to much current debate (Brian Massumi's *The Politics of Everyday Fear* being a recent exception), the concept of victimhood has been, in recent years, subjected to countless polemical denunciations. Most of the noise has come out of the United States, heralding the rise of a 'new individualism' uniting a range of diverse voices (such as Camille Paglia, Naomi Wolf, and Wendy Kaminer). What is being claimed by these authors regarding the use of the term 'victim' and what is being eschewed in its rejection is thus an important question: what is at stake in the use or rejection of this term? Many feminists seem to want to employ it (and are criticized for wanting to use it) because the connotations it is meant to invoke are a certain blamelessness, helplessness, innocence, and a kind of moral high-ground. The `new
individualists,' on their part, invoke instead a level playing field where everyone is responsible for themselves.

I want to distance myself from this stance on victimhood, and want to clarify, therefore, that in critiquing the use of the term victim in the texts under-study, I am making no claims about lack of socially structured power imbalances (the 'level playing field' of the new individualists) or about responsibility. Rather, I am concerned with women's agency as something to be cultivated, not suppressed or denied, and I am concerned with the way feminist discourses, operating under diverse motives, have worked for and against this cultivation.

In most of the texts I review, women who have been raped are rendered 'victims' with rare exceptions. In a piece on rape written by the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre in 1985 (for the Guberman and Wolfe text entitled No Safe Place) the authors self-consciously use the term 'survivor,' and on occasion in other texts the 'woman who has been raped' is substituted for victim. However, most consistently in both construction of character and in the terminology itself, the women appearing in the pages of these texts are 'victims.' Several of the books under study here are based on interviews with women who have been assaulted. Diana Russell's Politics of Rape (subtitled The Victim's Perspective) provides the most stark division between the self-description of the women and the descriptors used by the researcher/theorist. What is very striking in Russell's book is her insistence on describing women as victims, even when only one woman used this term to describe herself. Of the twenty-two interviews transcribed in this text only one has directly referred to herself as a rape victim. Two others spoke of rape victims generally, and the other twenty did not use the word victim anywhere in their interviews. In her opening and closing analyses which bracket each interview, Russell nevertheless consistently draws on the word victim to describe the women in her study. We cannot conclude from this that the absence of the self-descriptor
'victim' in fact means that some of these women may not have felt profoundly victimized. However, a frame has been established by Russell that effects our understanding of women's experiences. My concern here is how the repeated use of the term victim might in fact come to produce victimhood.

In texts such as the Canadian study of rape by Loreen Clark and Debra Lewis (1977), the use of the term victim is understood to reflect the police reports the authors are using as data (and it is noticeable in other feminist anti-violence texts that in chapters drawing on police statistics and discussion of the legal aspects of rape, the use of the word victim increases dramatically). What is intriguing to me, however, is the way in which 'victimhood' is construed as a category to be claimed by feminists. Motivating factors behind the fostering of the victim concept and terminology are no doubt complex, but legal considerations were of considerable import. In this respect the notion of the 'potential victim' has been an important corollary to the 'actual victim.' Clark and Lewis spend a chapter discussing how, in the eyes of the law and of society generally, factors such as appearance, age, marital status, occupation, alcohol use and mental state, function to create a 'believable' or 'unbelievable' rape victim, a 'founded' or 'unfounded' complaint, ultimately a 'rapable' or 'unrapable' woman:

The one clear and absolutely striking pattern revealed by our research, was the extent to which reported rapes were acknowledged to be 'real' only if they involve certain types of victims (Clark and Lewis, 1977:111).

Noticeably absent from this discussion of what makes women rapable or unrapable women are issues of race and disability. While one of the most powerful frameworks operating around issues of sexual violence was the black/whore, white/virgin dichotomy, which couldn't conceptually allow for rape of black women, this social position is not included in the more 'acceptable' feminist list of 'appearance, age, marital status, occupation, alcohol use and mental state'. Thus
"rape...was something that only happened to white women; what happened to black women was life" (Harris, 1991:247).

In response to the socially and legally sanctioned myth that restricted the 'victim profile' to only those women living within the frame of a particular version of femaleness and who "have not deviated from the norms expected of them" (Clark and Lewis, 1977:6), feminists claimed potential victimhood on behalf of all women. The reiteration that "any female may become a victim of rape" (Brownmiller, 1975:388) is one that echoes and reverberates throughout these texts. And so these early feminist anti-violence theorists invoked a standard strategy of refuting a simplistic and horrifying 'myth' (only certain women can be rape victims) with a simplistic and horrifying 'truth' of their own (all women are potential rape victims): "the point is this: there is no typical 'rape victim'; and conversely, every woman and girl is a typical rape victim" (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985:62). Thus the successful and paradoxical production of the always/already rapable woman: paradoxical because always/already lends a definite past/pre-accomplished sense to a concept that is in actuality potential, future, and indefinite.

It is not a difficult turn from the potential victimization of all women, to the notion that it is foolhardy and even dangerous to imagine that one could both be a woman and live outside of the victim construct. Russell writes:

Some people like to think that a woman who is confident and assertive and who carries around a don't-mess-with-me attitude toward men won't be bothered. While passivity and submissiveness may make women more rapable, it is a mistake to think that any woman is invulnerable to rape. Ms. Rawsen [an interviewee] is a very strong woman who earnestly rejects the traditional submissive female role. But this did not, and does not, make her invulnerable to rape [emphasis mine] (Russell, 1975:96).

In this framing vulnerability is being constructed in a very particular way, primarily here as a foregone conclusion. It is essentialized to become the property of women.
(simply by virtue of being woman one is vulnerable), and it is generalized into an essential aspect of the 'female condition.' The implication is that ultimately vulnerability is something about which little can be done because it has a primary source, and that source is in 'femaleness.' Hence, although we might be able to admit minor differences in levels of vulnerability, there is a sense in which it is shared by all women. What message, therefore, do we take from this passage? Is it 'don't think it can't happen to you,' or is the message, 'be afraid because you're destined to be victimized'? Certainly the message is both, and this discourse is burdened by its inability to draw a clear distinction between these messages.

Once the myth that 'only certain women can be raped' is denounced, the question is: how does the statement 'all women are vulnerable to rape' acquire a significance that is in no way tautological (as, for example, with the statement 'all women are vulnerable to breast cancer'), but rather comes to represent a deep and secret truth about what it is to be a woman? How, in other words, do we move so easily from statements like: "any woman is a natural target for a would-be rapist" (Brownmiller, 1975:388), and "the truth is that there is not a girl or women in this society who is not vulnerable to rape" (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985:62), to propositions like that of Susan Griffin's essential linking of victimization and rape as something, "which seemed to be central to us - at the core of something which we could not fully explain, perhaps our being" (Griffin, 1986:28)? To refuse to interpret one's potential victimization as a deep truth and to take more seriously one's strength would, in this perspective, amount to a denial of an essential part of oneself: "simply by virtue of being born with female bodies, we all face the possibility of being raped" (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985:64). Working alongside of the essentializing of women's rapability in many of these texts is an acknowledgment of women's social construction as victims:
Women are trained to be rape victims. To simply learn the word 'rape' is to take instruction in the power relationship between males and females. To talk about rape, even with nervous laughter, is to acknowledge a woman's special victim status... Rape seeps into our childhood consciousness by imperceptible degrees. Even before we learn to read we have become indoctrinated into a victim mentality (Brownmiller, 1975:343).

Brownmiller is aware of the social construction of victimhood perpetuated "in our modern culture by books, movies, popular songs and television serials in which women are most often portrayed as victims, seldom as survivors" (Brownmiller, 1975:375), but not of her part, of the role her text plays, in that construction. The 'victims' that are scattered across her pages function to establish and reinforce a victim-identity for many women far beyond the pages of these books. Equally well, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre can critique the mental health system's emphasis on individual treatment because it "encourages women to see themselves as helpless victims rather than helping them try to change the fact that women are victimized" (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 198:73) and like Brownmiller remain (apparently) unaware of how their linking of rape and victimhood to some universal female state operates to similar effect.

As I will discuss in more detail when looking at resistance, the inevitability of women's victimhood conversely also suggests the inevitability of resistance's failure: "when a potential victim and a potential offender are thrown together by the forces of fate, a complete process is inexorably set in motion" (Brownmiller, 1975:394).

RESISTANCE

In her typically compelling and grandiose style, Susan Brownmiller first broaches the subject of women's resistance to male sexual violence through a startling parable which situates rape at the origin of the use of tools:
In the violent landscape inhabited by primitive woman and man, some woman somewhere had a prescient vision of her right to her own physical integrity, and in my mind’s eye I can picture her fighting like hell to preserve it. After a thunderbolt of recognition that this particular incarnation of hairy, two-legged hominid was not the Homo sapiens with whom she would like to freely join parts, it might have been she, and not some man, who picked up the first stone and hurled it. How surprised he must have been, and what an unexpected battle must have taken place. Fleet of foot and spirited, she would have kicked, bitten, pushed and run, but she could not retaliate in kind (Brownmiller, 1975:4/5).

It is a common interpretation of the origin of technology that it arises in response to the ‘exigencies of life’ in the evolutionary struggle for survival. Through her parable, Brownmiller inscribes rape as the primordial exigency of life faced by women. As is often the case among the collection of texts I am examining, Brownmiller’s work serves to articulate the framework in which much of the discourse of the time operated. While giving us a rousing and empowering picture of women’s resistance to rape, Brownmiller concludes that, in fact, this resistance was by definition limited, in this case, because women could not do to men exactly what was being done to them. Her framework establishes rape as the ultimate crime, inescapable, unanswerable, and unsurpassable; women are deficient (that is, penis-less) and are therefore inadequate resisters. Thus, this seemingly empowering picture is rendered more and more futile, ineffectual, and depressing as the pages progress:

One possibility, and one possibility alone, was available to woman. Those of her own sex whom she might call to her aid were more often than not smaller and weaker than her male attackers. More critical, they lacked the basic physical wherewithal for punitive vengeance; at best they could maintain only a limited defensive action. But among those creatures who were her predators, some might serve as her chosen protectors (Brownmiller, 1975:6).

Brownmiller’s positing of women’s resistance is eroded to the point where men must be called upon as protectors due to women’s "disappoint[ment] and
disillusion[ment] by the inherent female incapacity to protect" (Brownmiller,1975:7). Thus follows, she argues, the first monogamous, heterosexual mating. Brownmiller's text was written at a time when society still operated under the false assumption that rape is predominantly committed by strangers, due in part to reliance on police records as primary sources of data. Hence there was no contradiction for Brownmiller in the notion of male protectors.

Brownmiller's construction of women's vulnerability, weakness, and inability to successfully resist is fascinating and troublesome given its appeal to an inherent and biological 'incapacity'. Certainly the discourse of sociobiology could more effectively be used to argue the opposite point: protective instincts are not spousal but filial and are demonstrated almost exclusively as a mother's instinct to protect her young. While appealing to nature and biology as the source of women's inability to resist, Brownmiller contradicts what is argued elsewhere in these texts, but less regularly acknowledged: the more likely socially constructed nature of women's perceived 'weakness,' grounded among other factors, in a learned devaluation of the female in patriarchal society and a deep training not to fight:

Being able to defend ourselves is only half the battle. Being willing to defend ourselves is the other half. Unlearning to not fight is equally as important as learning to fight (Russell,1975:109).

Women often express extreme disbelief in their ability to break even a nose (something that in physical terms alone requires very little strength), and yet when they speak of their children being threatened, they almost universally suggest they would kill the aggressor.17

The deeply held (and false) belief that women do not have the physical wherewithal to resist male violence is reiterated throughout the pages of most of the texts under study. Andrea Dworkin's facetious "I'm only a woman. There's nothing

17 This has been repeatedly demonstrated in the assault prevention course that I teach.
I can do about it" (Dworkin, 1988a:167) is significant for its reflection of a profoundly held disbelief in the female physical ability to fight. The women interviewed in Diana Russell's study repeatedly articulate the feeling that their lack of strength in relation to their aggressor made resistance impossible:

I was yelling at him at the top of my voice. But he was a lot stronger than me. I realized this when he hit me across the room. There wasn't any way I was going to be able to fight my way out of it (Russell, 1975:60).

I tried to defend myself, but he was definitely stronger than I was (Russell, 1975:76).

And I've got a losing battle against the wall. I'm pushing him, but obviously I'm not going to overcome him (Russell, 1975:93).

I was trying to fight him off, but he was a lot stronger than me (Russell, 1975:99).

I tried [to fight back], I struggled, but I realized his strength, and I didn't want to get hurt (Russell, 1975:114).

The construction of women's physical weakness as the primary reason for their inability to resist is, like Brownmiller's appeal to biological incapacity, a false one. It has been amply shown (see the Bart and O'Brien study, for example) that there is no sex-based deficiency that makes any woman innately unable to seriously harm her aggressor. This does not address the issue of how disability shapes capacity to harm an aggressor. For the moment I'm concerned with texts that presumed innate capabilities of women as opposed to men. I would argue that there are other, socialized factors which encourage a disbelief in female ability. Two of Diana Russell's interviewees, for example, demonstrate the deep female training not only to disbelieve our own ability and strength, but also to be 'unable' to hurt someone, even, in this case, one's rapist:

He started getting closer and closer to me, and he backed me up against an ironing board. I picked up the iron, and I was holding it in
my hand, and I said, 'Look,' I said, 'if you don't let me out that door, I'm going to hit you with this iron.' And he said, 'Go ahead and hit me.' I thought and thought about it, but, I don't know why, I just couldn't do it. So I put it down (Russell, 1975:54).

All I could think of to do to get him away from me was to poke him in the eyes, but I couldn't do it! I just couldn't do that, even if it meant being raped...
I'd never done anything as gruesome as poking someone's eyes out before. I just couldn't do it, which in some ways I felt good about at that time because I didn't really want to be able to do that to someone (Russell, 1975:99).

The socialization to not resist is both ambient and highly specific. On the one hand, Susan Griffin writes of the more generalized gendered passivity and impotence trained into many females:

...that same system of sexual values...has also provided womankind with an unwritten code of behaviour, called femininity, which makes a feminine woman the perfect victim of sexual aggression. If being chaste does not ward off the possibility of assault, being feminine certainly increases the chances that it will succeed. To be submissive is to defer to masculine strength; is to lack muscular development or any interest in defending oneself; is to let doors be opened, to have one's arm held when crossing the street. To be feminine is to wear shoes which make it difficult to run; skirts which inhibit one's stride; underclothes which inhibit the circulation. Is it not an intriguing observation that those very clothes which are thought to be flattering to the female and attractive to the male are those which make it impossible for a woman to defend herself against aggression?...Passivity itself prevents a woman from ever considering her own potential for self-defense and forces her to look to men for protection...Moreover the passive woman is taught to regard herself as impotent, unable to act, unable even to perceive, in no way self-sufficient... (Griffin, 1971:33).

On the other hand, Susan Brownmiller speaks to the ways in which women are rarely encouraged or trained to effectively resist violence:

It is no wonder, then, that most women confronted by physical aggression fall apart at the seams and suffer a paralysis of will. We have been trained to cry, to wheedle, to plead, to look for a male protector, but we have never been trained to fight and win.
Clark and Lewis, like Brownmiller and most of these authors, are completely equivocal as to the mythic or real status of women's defenselessness. Thus they can simultaneously point to the "stereotyping of men as strong and dominant and of women as weak and vulnerable" (Clark and Lewis, 1977:139), and in the next paragraph go on to deny the stereotype by positing women's lack of ability to resist as taken-for-granted physical fact:

Men's fear of women, and the misogyny it produces, rests on the awareness that women have good reason to seek revenge, and on the pure abstract possibility that women would revenge themselves on men if they could [emphasis mine] (Clark and Lewis, 1977:139).

Given the common-sense understanding in most of these texts of women as unable to resist, it is no surprise that examples of resistance are often glaringly absent. Both Diana Russell's and Susan Brownmiller's texts present a multitude of horror stories, with few examples of women resisting. In No Safe Place, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre begins their article on rape with a set of tremendously disturbing snapshots of a variety of rape situations. The intent in all of these books is perhaps to present the 'reality' and 'diversity' of what constitutes rape. Most feminist anti-violence writings of this era are working against very limited notions of what rape might look like, and the telling of a wide range of women's experiences serves to break down the stereotypical picture of rape, which denies the kinds of sexual assaults most women face. But the paucity of examples of resistance is crucial. The invisibility of women fighting back in these texts makes resistance seem impossible, and leaves the reader disempowered and hopeless.

While resistance is most commonly conspicuous by its absence in these writings, when it is taken up it is usually presented as ineffective and even dangerous. The inefficacy of resistance is demonstrated in scenarios such as:

The main resistance I offered was verbal. I pleaded with him for ten
minutes. I said, 'Please, Joe, don't. Please, please, don't!' I was pleading with him, almost crying... (Russell, 1975:38).

...we didn't get into a physical struggle because after that I knew that trying to fight him off was hopeless (Russell, 1975:102).

In these, and many other cases in these texts, resistance is pictured for the reader as useless and ineffective or is not even attempted because of the impossibility of success. "[Women] cannot win," writes Brownmiller, "at best [they] can escape defeat" (Brownmiller, 1975:402). In fact, Diana Russell suggests that although many women may feel they have the right to say 'no', they may "find it more traumatic to resist and be defeated" (Russell, 1975:71).

Furthermore, resistance is presented as not only useless, but as dangerous and thus more often than not the message is 'don't resist.' Susan Brownmiller's text is the most disturbing on this level. The vast majority of stories she relates in which the woman attempts to resist are followed by grave physical injury and often death to the resistor. A very particular picture of resistance is thus being established, a picture which is in stark contrast to what research by Bart and O'Brien and others reveals: that resisting increases one's chance of avoiding rape and that resistance does not in fact provoke increased violence from the aggressor:

Given the findings of this study and others, using active resistance and multiple strategies would seem more likely to improve a woman's chances of avoiding rape (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:9).

We know that women who resisted physically were more likely to avoid rape. But we also know that there was no relationship between the women's use of physical resistance and the rapist's use of additional physical force over and above the rape attempt (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:41).

There is considerable discrepancy between the few moments when Brownmiller theorizes resistance and the more passive construction of resistance via the narratives she relays. For on the one hand she comments:
I think it is important to mention here that despite the popular myths of male violence and the alleged safety in submission, it has never been demonstrated that resistance on the part of a rape victim in an attempt to escape 'provokes' an assailant to commit an act of murder (Brownmiller, 1975:226).

Is submissive behaviour in any way helpful to a victim of rape? It would appear that the answer is negative. Acquiescent cooperation by not screaming or struggling once the intent of the rapist is made manifest gives a victim no guarantee that she will be let off more easily...her numb compliance or lack of resistance gave her no blanket insurance against gratuitous physical damage (Brownmiller, 1975:403).

Yet the narratives she has selected for her book deny this reality. Here her rhetoric takes on a very curious inconclusiveness (things 'appear' to be this way and have 'never been demonstrated' to be otherwise). Where is the passion and conviction that animates her discussion of victimization? Brownmiller clearly privileges stories in which resistors are routinely badly hurt or killed for their efforts. We are made to wonder how she can be aware of certain facts (i.e. that resistance actually helps prevent violence) and yet still participate in a discourse which denies or effectively contradicts this knowledge. Likewise, in Russell's book we find repeated references to the dangers of resistance:

I think the way I handled it this time was about the best. By falling down on the floor and being completely submissive, I didn't get beat up (Russell, 1975:56).

I guess I got beaten up so much because I wouldn't submit to him (Russell, 1975:76).

The one way in which Russell sees resistance as useful is in its importance not in stopping rape, but rather in facilitating the laying of charges after the inevitable fact:

Ms. Fujimoto's advice that rape victims should not physically resist unless they believe they can overcome the rapist is quite widely shared and even more widely followed by rape victims. Unfortunately, passive submission usually makes it much more
difficult to press charges, and some rape victims feel very upset with themselves afterward if they reacted submissively (Russell, 1975:43).

The repeated deployment of resistance as at best ineffective and at worst deadly acts to entrench women's lack of possible control and agency into the discourse of the time. The solutions Diana Russell's interviewees give to how to avoid rape both reflect and structure this discourse:

I would tell [other women] not to resist, if they don't think they can overcome the person physically, and if they know they'll get physically hurt if they do resist (Russell, 1975:42).

I guess the best thing is just to have nothing to do with men. Ignore them totally (Russell, 1975:50).

To avoid being raped means not to be anywhere where men are, unless you've got a bodyguard or something (Russell, 1975:85).

Ultimately the only solution is to eliminate all the men! (Russell, 1975:108).

Sadly, the relative unlikelihood of living in a world devoid of men appears to be a more realistic and possible solution for these women than learning to resist violence.

In Bart and O'Brien's study of women who attempt to resist rape (both successfully: rape avoiders, and unsuccessfully: raped women) however, we glean a very different picture:

The most frequent response [to the question of what women could do to protect themselves from rape], given somewhat more often by avoiders than by raped women, was 'learn self-defense' (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:116).

Bart and O'Brien's text certainly stands out among the feminist anti-violence works of the decade under review for its unique focus on resistance. Rather than goals of correcting society's ignorance of rape, or enabling victims to feel less isolated (Russell, 1975:12), or aims to use an historical analysis of rape to "learn what we need to know about our current condition" (Brownmiller, 1975:3), Bart and O'Brien intend to concretely answer the question "what do I do if someone tries to rape me?"
(Bart and O'Brien, 1985:2). The different starting point for their study leads to an extremely different construction of resistance than is apparent in all the other texts I read (note that only near the very end of her book, for example, does Susan Brownmiller ask "do women fight back, and can women fight back successfully?") (Brownmiller, 1975:397). Although the authors engage briefly with the great debate on whether resistance leads to more violence or harm to the woman, Bart and O'Brien are consistently firm in their conclusions:

Probably no aspect of rape research is as fraught with dilemmas of policy and practical application as whether women have more to gain or lose by physically resisting a would-be rapist. Two dimensions are involved. First, does a woman enhance or diminish her chances of avoiding rape by resisting physically? Second, regardless of whether a woman is raped or avoids rape, does physical resistance increase her chances of severe injury? One continued to get the impression from much of the media coverage on rape that this is precisely the situation... It is striking how relatively few of the women in our study were severely hurt... Physical resistance much more frequently resulted in rape avoidance than a beating (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:111).

Their text, for the most part, deals with the variety of resistance strategies used by women in avoiding rape and thus posits a picture of resistance as realistic, hopeful, useful and empowering - in contradiction to the discourse of the majority of feminist texts (in the decade 1975-85 and currently) on violence-against-women. This, however, does not lead them to posit resistance as the basis of a new utopia. Despite their clear belief that resistance is effective, Bart and O'Brien are nonetheless aware that efficacy does not in all cases guarantee rape-avoidance. Resistance is not defined in terms of success but rather by the capacity of a woman to activate her agency to the best of her ability in a given situation:

...because these 51 women successfully used certain defense strategies to avoid rape does not mean women can always successfully defend themselves against rape by simply using the correct type and number of strategies (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:34).
Thus they acknowledge that there are situations in which "women were simply overpowered. Nothing they could have done would have stopped their rapes" (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:36).

There is an important delicacy in balancing agency and resistance with responsibility and blame in instances of sexual violence. Bart and O'Brien succeed in striking that balance in a way that many other texts of the era unfortunately failed to do. They acknowledge women's agency and look for ways to cultivate it with the goal of effectively resisting rape. They thus encourage women to accept a level of responsibility for their own defense, and crucially, distinguish this responsibility from any sense of blame.

However, in light of the blame women commonly receive for not resisting, the need to refuse that blame for their own rapes made many feminists (the authors of the texts under study included) wary of notions that would imply a degree of participation on the part of women in rape situations. Chief among these notions was the idea of "victim-precipitated rape" proposed by Menachem Amir in his 1971 study *Patterns of Forcible Rape* (cited in Clark and Lewis, 1975:152).

Victim precipitation is a new concept in criminology. It does not hold a victim responsible, but it seeks to define contributory behaviour. Victim precipitation says, in effect, an unlawful act has been committed but *had the victim behaved in a different fashion* [emphasis mine] the crime in question *might have been avoided* [emphasis in original] (Brownmiller, 1975:394).

In this case, victim precipitation implies a particular kind of participation on the part of the victim. Her role is seen to be causative; in some way at the root of the ensuing incident. In such cases it, indeed, seems inevitable that issues of blame and moral condemnation are implied, despite the social scientists' claims to the contrary. Clark and Lewis argue that concepts such as victim precipitation are open to misuse, and particularly in relation to rape, have been employed to questionable
The male researcher finds his escape [from the conclusion that since the rapist is a 'normal' man, other 'normal' men must be potential rapists] in victimology. He seeks the problem's cause in the behaviour of its victim, and goes on to persuade himself and the public at large that by changing that behaviour, the problem can be controlled [emphasis mine] (Clark and Lewis, 1977:150).

This suggestion that women's behaviour is in some way responsible for rape quite rightly outraged feminists. But the causative notion of victim-precipitation was perceived to be continuous with related, but clearly distinct, notions of the dynamics involved in the evolution of crime scenarios. Some social scientists tended to portray these notions as interchangeable and consequently feminists felt obliged to denounce in general all notions suggesting that women in any way participated in their rapes. As Clark and Lewis argue,

Given the disillusionment with mentalistic explanations of human behaviour, it was only natural that emphasis should shift towards seeing rape as an 'interplay' between persons, each of whom shared some degree of responsibility for what happened. The discovery that most rapists were 'normal' acted as a catalyst in this change in attitude towards rape, and the apparent normality of the rapist thus served as a springboard for the theory of victimology which portrayed the rape victim as a 'participant' in an event for which she was at least partially to blame (Clark and Lewis, 1977:148/9).

These notions were considered to be fraught with political dangers because of the perception that they functioned as a 'springboard' to victim-blaming and no thought was given to the manner in which they might function proactively in relation to anti-violence strategies. It is only when we perceive the value of such strategies that drawing the distinction between responsibility/blame and participation/agency becomes important. It is easier to perceive this importance today, in the wake of Foucault's theorization of the relational nature of power. From a Foucaultian perspective it does not make sense to resist seeing rape as an
`interplay between persons' or to deny that a woman, in some sense, is a `participant' in her rape. Once a woman's participant status is acknowledged and affirmed the door is opened to a variety of potential resistance strategies. We are then in a position to make use of the findings of Bart and O'Brien that a change in women's behaviour from passivity, pleading, begging, and frozen panic (the behaviour least likely to prevent an assault) (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:7/8), to assertive physical and verbal resistance (the behaviour most likely to prevent an assault) (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:7/8), could in fact serve to help reduce the incidence of sexual assault.

These options were not explored by the authors under study (with the obvious exception of Bart and O'Brien). Instead, in the effort to avoid victim-blaming, women's behaviour was constructed as irrelevant. Women had no role in the precipitation of rape (they could not be held responsible or blameworthy) but likewise responsibility in another, more pro-active sense, was also denied them. Responsibility in the sense of women's ability to respond (response/ability) on their own behalf and in their own defense was ignored. Women were considered incapable of influencing or altering the course of rape. These early feminist anti-violence theorists preferred to downplay women's agency and deny women's participation in assault rather than open a path to potential victim-blaming. The serious side-effect of this was the all but total effacing of women's agency in situations of sexual violence, an effect that is profoundly in operation today. This construction of the irrelevance of women's actions in assault leads smoothly into the following kinds of admonitions:

We want desperately to believe that we have some margin of choice in the matter and that women who do get raped have simply made the wrong choices... But a major point of this article is that, when it comes to rape, we have no choices because we did not create the rules [emphasis mine] (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985:62).
It is thus the deeply held belief, if not constructed then certainly enhanced by much feminist anti-violence rhetoric, that resistance is futile, impossible, dangerous, and ultimately not our responsibility, that prevents many women from embracing resistance as at least one part of the solution to the problem of violence-against-women.

PREVENTION

It is astonishing that in all our worlds of feminism and antisexism we never talk seriously about ending rape. Ending it. Stopping it. No more. No more rape. In the back of our minds, are we holding on to its inevitability as the last preserve of the biological? Do we think that it is always going to exist no matter what we do (Dworkin, 1988a:169)?

There is a distinction to be made between my use of the terms resistance and prevention in these texts. I am taking as resistance acts which operate `in the moment,' which are confined, most often, to the acts of individuals (which is not to say groups couldn't resist together). But I want to use the term prevention as a larger concept that involves the political organization, so to speak, of resistance. While resistance is the using of tools/strategies to attempt to stop a violent act, prevention is the making of these tools/strategies - it is the fabrication and cultivation of tools/strategies to make us better resisters. Prevention is thus not so much an act `in the moment,' but rather is more a cultivation of agency; a cultivation of the capacity to resist. It involves the planning, on a more organized and political level, of how resistance (and other strategies) might operate to end violence-against-women.

I have argued previously that resistance `in the moment' has been marginalized because the individual acts of women have been deemphasized in favour of an attempt to outline a universal logic of rape and to expose and
delegitimize that logic. While the individual woman is considered powerless in the face of her aggressor, women united through broad-based political organizing against rape seem more likely to constitute a force capable of real change. It might seem, then, that while resistance has been underemphasized, the texts under study demonstrate more of a commitment to prevention. However, central to the notion of prevention I want to propose is that it does not operate in the absence of resistance, and in fact serves no other ends than to cultivate the possibility of resistance in the moment.

Each of the texts I review does make a gesture towards some sort of prevention, yet it is consistently tacked on to the end of each book as a discrete and poorly integrated appendix. This structuring is not insignificant and signals the lack of continuity between strategies of breaking the silence around rape and strategies of prevention. Clark and Lewis' twelve-page conclusion is entitled Freedom from Rape, Susan Brownmiller's somewhat longer concluding chapter is entitled Women Fight Back, Diana Russell provides a closing appendix of Rape Prevention Tactics and Advice on What to Do if You Are Raped, Susan Griffin in Rape: The Politics of Consciousness also offers an appendix on statistics from Rape Crisis Centres, and the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre in No Safe Place poses possible prevention strategies at the end of their article on rape. We must turn then, to these concluding sections to ask, how is prevention being constituted, what does it look like, how might it work?

The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, certainly the most representative of the grassroots anti-rape movement in Canada of this era (among the authors of the texts being examined here) suggest that in addition to their feminist counselling services they are working towards the eradication of rape in a variety of ways. They

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18 Some authors present these sections as 'conclusions,' but the term appendix is more appropriately descriptive of their supplementary nature. In certain cases, Diana Russell and Susan Griffin's texts, for example, these sections appear as actual appendices.
envision their prevention initiatives in the following terms:

Of all the other social-service agencies...and groups which have made rape their concern in the past ten years, rape crisis centres are the only ones whose stated goals include eradicating rape. This is, in fact, the primary long-term goal of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres... What we came to see very quickly was that, though the women we counseled were in crisis, they were not the ones who were messed up; it was the world around them that was a mess. And, unless we were working towards changing that world and offering women alternatives and ways to fight back against what was wrong in the world, we as counsellors were not worthy of their trust. So rape crisis centres organized Take Back the Night marches as a way of asserting the basic right of women to walk unprotected and free from fear on the streets. We began to educate public school children and community groups and labour groups in rape prevention and sexism in an attempt to change attitudes. Many of us started organizing self-help groups for sexual-assault survivors, helping women to see that they are not alone or to blame. Rather, the responsibility for what happened to them rests squarely on the shoulders of our male-governed society. Some of us began helping women who wanted alternatives to the legal system to plan confrontations with their rapists. We began acting as a voice of criticism of the systems, particularly the justice system, that work with women who are raped (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985:82).

The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre presents an impressive and diverse list of concrete interventions making up their package of prevention. While these strategies are valuable ones, we need still ask to what degree they constitute effective prevention. Their strategies are empowering for women, and may in fact work in the long run to help create a more just society where rape will be a less acceptable, and therefore it is hoped, a less frequent crime. They do little, if anything, however, to help women experience less violence here and now. After a Take Back the Night march, after a public education forum on sexual assault, after a self-help group, a confrontation with a rapist, or a rally for legal reform, women still get raped. These strategies serve to empower women and they are actions which can be seen as strategic and political, yet they do not provide tools and skills to
allow women to resist violence in their daily lives. Prevention for the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre is thus used in only the most general way, alternately functioning via a kind of empowering consciousness raising (Take Back the Night, public education, self-help groups) or via legal reform (confrontations with rapists outside the system or critiquing the existing legal-justice process). Talk of prevention is often utopian and alarmingly vague. Hence, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre quote, exemplary of how prevention is theorized in these works, addresses the notion of educating various people in 'rape prevention and sexism,' leaving the reader with only the most general sense of what might actually constitute prevention. The rhetoric of prevention is drawn upon, the strategies remain elusive.

A very different model of prevention presented in these texts, and found in Russell's work particularly is that of victim control (Cooper, 1991:17). Victim control, as we have seen previously, consists of a series of rules, familiar to most women from childhood, which suggest things to do (or more often not to do) in order to avoid threatening or dangerous situations. Russell provides us with a lengthy list, including such classics as: don't talk to strangers, don't walk alone at night, check the back seat of your car before getting in, don't hitchhike, and many others (Russell, 1975:284). Unfortunately, victim control, a severely disempowering and ineffective kind of prevention, is an approach to preventing sexual violence which is still profoundly in operation today, echoed by many 'experts' in violence prevention, police and feminists alike, and interwoven with similar strategies of crime prevention for other types of crimes. The limitations of victim control as effective prevention in crimes of sexual assault are alarming. By proffering rules which govern the behaviour of the 'potential victim,' victim control strategies severely restrict women's freedoms and mobility. By focusing on violence committed by strangers, victim control leaves women unprepared to respond to the kind of violence they are most likely to face, that committed by people they know
and often trust. By not providing skills and tools to resist violence in the moment (but rather only to avoid potential violence) they leave women more, rather than less, fearful, and powerless in the face of violence they have been unable to avoid: ultimately victim control serves to reduce the quality of women's lives.

The act of speaking the truth about rape, of breaking the silence, is, as we have seen, thought to embody a strong preventative force, driving rape and rapists out of the shadows and into the light of public consciousness. It is precisely this strategy, ubiquitous within the anti-rape movement, which serves as another of the central notions of prevention in these texts:

The issues discussed in *No Safe Place* are all linked... Placing the issues side by side in a single source should highlight their common roots and links, and hopefully, *help us on a viable course towards alleviating the problem* [emphasis mine] (Guberman and Wolfe, 1985: 15).

From any perspective, this [silence around rape] represents a decidedly ostrich-like stance. We cannot help what we do not know about (Clark and Lewis, 1977: 26).

In making rape a speakable crime, not a matter of shame, the women's movement has already fired the first retaliatory shots in a war as ancient as civilization (Brownmiller, 1975: 445).

It is these very texts and many others like them, which served to drag North American society out of the era of silence in regards to violence-against-women. As such they served a radical purpose, for without the gradual dismantling of the wall of silence we would be in no position to be suggesting paths towards prevention. But Susan Griffin has questioned whether the act of naming rape in itself constitutes prevention: "...we do not yet have the end of rape. All we have is the feat of naming rape a crime against us" (Griffin, 1986: 33/4). She insists that she wants "more than the mere unmasking or naming of atrocity" (Griffin, 1986: 26). For Griffin, self-defense poses a hopeful path to violence prevention: "it is part of human dignity to be able to defend oneself" (Griffin, 1971: 35), and she opens her book with the
Martial arts and self defense study offer a way of self reflection and change...I find that I learned the lessons of patriarchy in my muscles and sinews, as well as in my mind and soul; and this martial arts study is both an UNconditioning process, as well as the condition and creating of a new self (Culpepper quoted in Griffin,1986:1).

Like Griffin, most of the other authors of these texts do acknowledge (albeit often only in passing) the potential value of self-defense. They cite several women who have been raped who consider the possibility of fighting back as a strategy in retrospect:

I think I would be much more tempted to fight [if it happened again] (Russell,1975:197).

I think women should resist and fight rapes more (Russell,1975:219).

When I think about it now, I'm sure I could have fought him off (Brownmiller,1975:402).

In these passages self-defense appears in its straightforward simplicity. But there is also a tendency in these texts to complicate these strategies. This it seems, is related to a tendency to mythologize self-defense or rather, to mythologize strength. Strength is considered to be the domain of men, to be something that women could possibly attain, but do not at present possess. Thus while one of Diana Russell's interviewees suggests that, "the solution is for women to become strong" (Russell,1975:168), the three women cited above seemed to sense that the solution is rather to get in touch with their own existing strength, to connect with the strength they already possess.

Susan Brownmiller presents most clearly the ambivalence which surrounds self-defense and resistance as a strategy to prevent violence-against-women. On the second last page of her book, after scores of dead resistors litter the preceding 450 pages, she writes:
Unthinkingly cruel, because it is deceptive, is the confidential advice
given from men to women...or even from women to women in some
feminist literature, that a sharp kick to the groin or a thumb in the eye
will work miracles. Such advice is often accompanied by a diagram in
which the vulnerable points of the human anatomy are clearly marked
- as if the mere knowledge of these pressure spots can translate into
devastating action. It is true that this knowledge has been deliberately
obscured or withheld from us in the past, but mere knowledge is not
enough. What women need is systematic training in self-defense that
begins in childhood, so that the inhibition resulting from the
prohibition may be overcome (Brownmiller, 1975:452/3).

Thus, while self-defense is taken up as a possible solution, it is constructed
by Brownmiller as ineffective and nonviable through her portrayal of it as complex,
inaccessible, and necessitating 'systematic training from childhood.' The claim that
'casual' self-defense strategies (the kind for example that women learn in a weekend
self-defense course) offer a problematically false sense of security is not an
uncommon one among women and feminists. One of the important reasons for this
skepticism is the fact that many women equate self-defense with the learning of
martial arts techniques, skills of great subtlety which many people spend a lifetime
perfecting. Indeed many self-defense courses for women, growing out of the
martial arts, are inadequate to the extent that they aim simply to provide an
introduction to martial arts in a brief format, while lacking a feminist analysis of
empowerment for women. This results in an extremely impoverished view of what
a good self-defense course seeks to provide, and renders more practical and simple
verbal and physical techniques unbelievable, and thus 'unthinkingly cruel and
deceptive.'

In fact, good self-defense offers women simple, effective, easy-to-learn
strategies which rely neither on physical strength nor extensive training, but rather
on a realistic belief in one's ability to fight: an ability that we all possess no matter
our strength or stature. Feminist self-defense operates not to cultivate

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19 Good and empowering self-defense teaches a variety of both physical and verbal techniques that can be used
unpossessed strength, but rather to foster the belief that we are worth fighting for, and that we absolutely have the ability to do so in ways that do not require we be bigger or stronger than our aggressors. Self-defense for women involves simple techniques, easily learned and employed, that do not offer a 'false sense of security,' but rather effective strategies for reducing and preventing violence in women's day to day lives.

The authors of these texts demonstrate a striking ambivalence towards self-defense. On the one hand harshly critiqued as an individual and unrealistic solution, it is, on the other hand, used to provide powerful (albeit empty) rhetorical flourishes in the concluding chapters of most of these texts. In Brownmiller's concluding sentences she writes:

"Fighting back. On a multiplicity of levels, that is the activity we must engage in, together, if we - women - are to redress the imbalance and rid ourselves and men of the ideology of rape (Brownmiller, 1975:454).

There is clearly something seductive to these authors in the notion of self-defense. Yet in the end we are made to feel that the physical and verbal strategies of self-defense are for the most part too removed from women's domain to be of concrete and practical use. The texts of this era left a disturbing legacy in the feminist anti-violence movement; a legacy in which self-defense is marginalized and rarely seen as a viable strategy for violence prevention.

A more practical path to prevention which appeals to all of the authors is

in different ways by women (and children) of very differing strengths and abilities. Size, shape, strength and ability may condition which strategies are most effective and useful for a particular woman, but almost all women are capable of resisting violence in one way or another. This is a vitally important point for this thesis, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4 when I look at the theory and practice of self-defense. It is fundamental that we not use physical (dis)ability to erase women's ability to resist, for to do so is to not sufficiently unseettle and distance ourselves from the notion that women can't resist because men are stronger. Capacity is never absent (although it may be different), it is always there to be cultivated (even if it is only voice or eye-contact). The methods and strategies differently abled women will draw on to resist will, of course, be different, however wherever power exists, there is resistance, and it is the cultivation of this resistance that self-defense fosters. Self-defense is not about bodily strength or ability, it is, as we shall see in Chapter 4, about a much wider and more complex range of issues. Strength certainly can be a tool for resistance, but it is not to be confused with resistance itself.
legal reform. Clark and Lewis, for example, suggest that:

...the way to attack sexism in our society [and thus rape] is to undermine and destroy the structures which preserve the unequal legal status of men and women. Only fundamental changes in...society's legal and social structures will, ultimately resolve the problem of rape... It is certainly our belief that rape would cease to be a problem if persons were sexually and reproductively autonomous, both legally and practically speaking (Clark and Lewis, 1977:177-182).

Each of these texts, in their concluding pages on prevention, speak to legal reform as a central piece in the struggle to end violence-against-women. It is important to identify how the construction of legal reform as the `solution' to rape is grounded in part in the construction of the `problem.' As Clark and Lewis identify it:

Since the status of women as private, sexual and reproductive property has created the problem of rape as we know it, it seems obvious to us that the problem cannot be resolved until women are no longer accorded that status but are regarded as having the right to sexual and reproductive autonomy (Clark and Lewis, 1977:174).

According to this construction of the root causes of rape (women as private property), changing laws does in fact serve to address certain structural inequalities which render rape a relatively insignificant and `private' crime according to the legal-justice system. Likewise, when the root cause of rape is posited as something inherent to men's nature, as Brownmiller is want to suggest ("what it all boils down to is that the human male can rape... when men discovered that they could rape, they proceeded to do it") (Brownmiller, 1975:4), then the solution again springs from this construction. In this case, men will simply have to chose to stop raping in order for rape to end. Thus despite any action women might take, ultimate rape prevention is in the hands of men:

Some women have learned karate; some to shoot guns. And yet we will not be free until the threat of rape and the atmosphere of violence
is ended, and to end that the nature of male behaviour must change (Griffin, 1971:35).

In an effort to coax men toward change, legal reform often takes the form of offender control (Cooper, 1991:17). Offender control strategies rely on legal sanctions to control the behaviour of those who perpetuate violence. The aim is to persuade men, by threat of reprisal, to stop raping. Like victim control, offender control is profoundly limited as effective prevention. In the first place offender control strategies presuppose already victimized women. Any strategy which requires women to first experience violence in order to be enacted cannot be properly identified as prevention. Hand in hand with the 'after the fact' nature of offender control, is the problem that it does not provide women with tools to deal with and stop violence as they are experiencing it. While laws are being challenged and jail terms toughened, violence in women's lives is not being reduced. Thus offender control, like its counterpart victim control, does little to empower or liberate women. Finally, since women are far more reticent to bring assault by a known aggressor to the legal justice system, offender control impacts only upon the kind of violence women are least likely to face, that committed by a stranger.

Several of the authors, despite their call for legal reform, acknowledge the limitations of a toughened legal-justice system to prevent violence:

In truth, changing the procedures of the judicial system does not stop rape (Griffin, 1986:29).

But prevention of rape and far-reaching social changes have never been within the realm of the legal system, and we are calling into the wind if we ask that such change be generated from within the legal system (Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, 1985:79).

While legal reform and equality under the law are critical strategies in the struggle to end violence-against women, they suffer from being long-term and

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20 Importantly, to the best of my knowledge, there have been no studies which have conclusively proven that increased legal sanctions operate as any significant deterrent to sexual violence.
perhaps only utopian solutions. Certainly legal reform serves important purposes, but it does little in the moment to allow women, here and now, to experience less violence.

In these texts systemic change is posited as the most effective route to ending violence-against-women since "there can be no private solution to the problem of rape" (Brownmiller, 1975:449). The authors of these texts draw a distinction between 'individual' attempts at 'avoidance,' and more fundamental systemic strategies of eradication: "rape can be eradicated, not merely controlled or avoided on an individual basis, but the approach must be long-range and cooperative" (Brownmiller, 1975:454). There is thus a clear privileging of systemic over 'in the moment' strategies, and in fact, these authors fail to see effective resistance in the moment as any sort of real solution to the problem of rape.

In truth, however, the 'systemic eradication of rape' is fraught with stumbling blocks, both practical and theoretical. Unfortunately, as we reflect on the past twenty years, we have not witnessed a decrease in the incidence of rape despite the systemic change which continues to take place. In light of this experience, the skepticism concerning so-called 'individual' strategies needs to be challenged today more than ever. It is not difficult to imagine that if all, or even most, girls and women were trained in self-defense and assault prevention skills, rape would likely decrease drastically, both in terms of successfully completed rapes, but also in terms of attempts. There would be nothing 'individual' about resistance in the moment were it to be embraced as an effective strategy and cultivated in a broad-based, coordinated fashion.

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The texts that have been examined in this paper are vitally important. They
launched North American feminists and others into an era of anti-violence work that has had many significant and far-reaching repercussions for women who experience violence and for society more generally. Their emphasis on 'breaking the silence' was crucial, serving to bring violence-against-women from the domain of the private, into the public world where it could be problematized, critiqued, and ultimately, fought against.

This chapter has attempted to address the fact that while critically challenging traditional and misogynist analyses of violence-against-women, these texts mobilized a rhetoric which was designed to 'liberate' women from violence, but which simultaneously undermined their agency and capacity for resistance.

While drawing on the valuable legacy of these early texts, our current anti-violence work must no longer marginalize resistance and prevention but must rather cultivate and nurture women's agency. We need to ask very simple, yet significant questions of all the anti-violence work we do: does it promote women's strengths, reduce our fears, increase our mobility and freedoms, and ultimately does it serve to improve the quality of our lives? If we can answer affirmatively to these questions, then we are well on the way to doing anti-violence work differently, and hopefully more effectively, than it has been done to date.
Chapter Three
Fear, Victimhood, Resistance, and Prevention: New Possibilities

While the previous chapter examined concepts of fear, victimhood, resistance and prevention in the context of some of the originating feminist texts on violence against women, and critiqued the limitations they unwittingly placed upon women's agency, this chapter takes a turn to the more proactive. We have now seen how feminist anti-violence discourse has mobilized particular meanings around a set of concepts, liberatory in their intent, but certainly also limiting in their effect. We turn now to an effort at re-thinking and re-imagining diverse meanings of notions of fear, victimhood, resistance and prevention and the possibilities they might enable or foreclose upon. The feminist anti-violence discourse I have examined is far from a single, united voice. It does not offer us, despite its currency, an unassailable, monolithic rhetoric. Instead, this discourse is filled with fissures of possibility, moments where different images of violence, the subject of violence, and of the possibilities for preventing violence, emerge. Following Foucault, I want to understand freedom (in this case from violence) as a practice rather than a state. This chapter constitutes a moment of practice, an effort to practice freedom rather than create it as a static state, an effort to avoid the tendency for freedom, once institutionalized, to "transmogrify] into its opposite" (Brown, 1995:8).

FEAR

Even when the reality [of rape] did not touch me directly, I was still driven by fear of that reality (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:i).

To see terror and to see through terror to myself is to claim my life apart from, in rupture with, the constructs of male dominance (Allen, 1986:27).
For many women, to be raped is, in essence, to die (Gordon and Riger, 1989:9).

The language of rape solicits women to position ourselves as endangered, violable and fearful (Marcus, 1992:390).

It is not after all, nor has it forever been, the universal condition of women to be so afraid. The current association between being afraid and being a woman is the effect of a certain feminist discourse which makes the experience or anticipation of violence a major aspect of what it means to be a woman (Scott, 1993:439).

How might fear be conceptualized, and therefore perhaps experienced, differently? How might we unsettle ways of thinking about fear articulated in the first decades of the North American anti-violence movement, in the hopes of offering new ways of thinking and acting in relation to violence against women?

Though feminist theorists of rape have thoroughly analyzed how women serve as objects of violence, they have focused less consistently on how women become subjects of fear and what effect this subjection has on our enactment of rape scripts. (Marcus, 1992:394).

Given a culture in which some level of fear seems to be endemic to most women's lives (Gordon and Riger, 1989; Stanko, 1985), my desire is not utopian. I imagine we will not easily rid an entire population of very real (and sometimes useful) fears. Rather, I am hoping for both a theoretical and practical shift which would allow us to better know when fear is limiting to our lives, and therefore best reduced, and when we might want to use fear transformatively, to aid in resistance of violence rather than to be only an effect of this violence. The fear that many North American women experience is complex. On the one hand it is ubiquitous, vague, and anticipatory, while on the other it is the very concrete and focused fear
that is experienced in the face of an actual assault. The former is fear that, in excess, has a tendency to significantly reduce the quality of women's lives, limit our freedoms and mobility, and prevent us from engaging fully in our own lives. The latter, coupled with the proper tools, is fear that we can more easily use transformatively, fear that can give us strength and power and ingenuity in the face of a would-be rape.

Interestingly and probably not surprisingly the 'geography of fear' (Bart and Scheppelle, 1983:65) is a highly gendered one. While men are far more likely, statistically, to face some form of violent crime (Madriz, 1997a:348; Stanko, 1996:59), it is women who carry, disproportionately, the burden of fear in North American societies (Gordon and Riger, 1989:54). Among women, it is often suggested that it is those who live with economic, race, age and other inequities who bear the heaviest burden of fear (Gordon and Riger, 1989:118). It also seems that socialized (and even biological) gender-specific behaviour is often seen to have its effects on how we respond to fear. In the face of fear it is predictably projected that men are more likely to respond with 'fight or flight' instincts, while women are more likely to experience "familiar sensations of "freezing" - involuntary immobility and silence" (Marucs, 1992:394). Certainly it can be argued that fear is a rational and logical response of women to the dangerous world we/they face. Fear is an expression of insecurity, and in the face of sexualized violence, women are insecure. Women are trained into fear in consistent and powerful ways, from childhood on, and this training, combined with the acceptability of fear as a female emotion, render women's reactions of fear normal and apparently ubiquitous. As we have seen previously, not-to-fear is in many ways to rupture with accepted norms of femininity and to act 'irrationally' and even foolishly.

Among feminists too there is often an assumption of the value of fear in keeping women safe. Notions that "appropriate fear may promote the use of
precautions which may help keep women safe, or at least keep them feeling safe" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:122) reinforce ideas of fear as the most appropriate (often as the only appropriate) response to male violence. This kind of thinking is remarkable only for its appeal to common-sense understandings of women's possible responses to violence, and for the defeated way in which truly being safe seems to be denied women (the best we can hope for is help women feel safe).

There is also often a grudging acceptance that fear will remain a central part of the female landscape until the reason for our fear (sexualized violence) is well and truly eliminated. "Given the fact that violent crime is still very much a part of the...urban scene, can women afford to reduce their fear before rape has been substantially reduced or eliminated" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:122)? These two projects, the elimination of sexualized violence and the reduction of fear, are seen as discrete problems, their intertwined nature rarely overtly acknowledged. A significant catch-22 is established in this linear equation, women may only abdicate fear when they have nothing to fear. What disappears in this scenario is not only the recognition that "often rapes succeed as a result of women's fears" (Marcus, 1992:394), but that fear reduction resulting from increased abilities to prevent a sexual assault could in fact bring together and successfully challenge these two, apparently discrete, problems. If we had the skills to resist and prevent violence in our lives, would its specter not be much less fear-inducing? We need not await the utopian dream and rid the world of sexualized violence entirely in order to generate strategies and skills to reduce our fear.

The costs of fear for women are significant, "high fear...shrink[s] the scope of women's choices about their lives by restricting their movement through time and space" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:121). We want, therefore, to find ways to refigure fear so that the possibilities for when, to what degree, and how much we respond to fear might be opened, allowing for greater freedom and mobility for women. This
project is particularly important in a culture saturated by fear more generally, a
culture in which, Brian Massumi has argued, the clear borders between an event,
and fear of that event have been dismantled:

Not only have the specific qualities of the threat been superseded by
the strange perpetuity of its elsewhen and the elsewhereness of its
ubiquity; whether or not the event even happens is in a strange way a
matter of indifference. The accident and its avoidance have come to be
interchangeable (Massumi, 1993:12).

Massumi points to the important notion that rape always/already exists for
us, whether or not it happens 'in reality' is not the central issue. Gordon and Riger's
The Female Fear, as well as a plethora of texts which focus on women's fear of
sexualized violence, highlight Massumi's perhaps slightly but not outrageously
exaggerated point; the event (sexualized violence) is no longer the central issue,
instead we are focused on the fear, the anticipation of the event. In this disturbing
scenario avoidance (prevention/resistance) necessarily becomes extraneous, not the
point, interchangeable, as Massumi suggests, with the rape itself. If we can bring
Massumi's thinking to bear on issues of violence against women, we need not deny
women's fear, but rather begin to question, delve into, and resist the particular
collection of fear fed to us daily, certainly by the media and misogynist
institutions, but also by the very feminist anti-violence discourses in which we may
ourselves be immersed. In fact, Massumi suggests that it is not fear per se which is
so problematic, but rather the uniformity, the 'everywhen' and 'everywhereness' of
fear that needs to be challenged: "The 'flow of stupidity' in contemporary society
consists in the translation of the 'she' to the 'we,' of everywoman to everyone: a loss
of the specificity of the landscape of fear" (Massumi, 1993:24).

It is this tendency that I want to resist, the move from the specific and
contingent nature of fear to the ubiquity of fear. Allowing for the necessarily

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21 See the references in Gordon and Riger's The Female Fear for a thorough listing of texts on women's fear.
diverse ways women respond to fear of sexualized violence allows for diverse strategies of resistance and prevention, rather than to fear-induced ‘freezing’ as the primary/visible response of women to sexualized violence. It also removes the lenses which induce us to see fear everywhere, even where it does not necessarily rest:

One gets the impression that people who are afraid of crime or interpersonal violence are in a constant state of anxiety. No doubt, there is a sizable minority of individuals who feel that way under certain circumstances... But the majority of people actually cope with their anxieties on most levels... (Stanko,1990:7).

An a priori assumption of fear and of what that fear engenders in us, takes from us the possibilities of responding differently to events of violence in our lives. Gordon and Riger (1989:3) offer us an apt and not unusual example of this a priori assumption which appears to eclipse all other possibilities "Some women," they write, "deny fear - but take precautions such as carrying mace - which would seem to belie their words." It seems that, according to the authors' interpretation, carrying mace, and therefore perhaps feeling better prepared to deal with an aggressor, cannot be seen as actually reducing (or perhaps even eliminating?) fear. Rather this possibility is disallowed in favour of the assumption of a kind of a denial, lying, or false consciousness on the part of the mace-carrying women. What we want, then, is to not assume fear across time and space for all women, and to allow for the very diverse (and certainly often contradictory) ways women actively work to reduce and transform the fear in their lives. We want, for example, to be able to hear and incorporate, rather than deny in a crazy kind of schizophrenia, the information, both theoretical (from academic studies) and experiential (from stories we hear) that inform us that resistance, learning to feel strength in our own bodies, in fact reduces our fear. This information is certainly available. While it exists in the more unusual texts on women's resistance to violence (such as Bart and O'Brien's
Stopping Rape) it also rests within the bodies of the very texts concerned primarily with the ubiquity of fear and women's inevitable place in a fear-filled terrain. Gordon and Riger (1989:54) themselves address, albeit briefly, how self-defense reduces women's fear, how the feelings of strength and control which often arise from self-defense classes for women, work to help women feel less afraid. Rather than gloss over this apparently deeply significant information, we need to find ways to incorporate it into our thinking and our practices of resisting violence. A text on female fear needs to incorporate into its analysis the ways in which we can both reduce and transform fear, rather than to assume it to be irreducible and unitary/consistent, or to rely on only external or utopian methods to improve the quality of women's lives.

The unchallenged ubiquity of a universal fear among women poses another and equally troubling problem, namely that discourses of fear are not only gendered, but are also highly racialized. As women primarily and incorrectly fear sexual violence visited upon them by strangers, so too do they predominantly seem to expect and fear sexual violence by men of colour. In a recent study on women's fear, Esther Madriz' findings echo what has been reported tirelessly: most women, regardless of their own racial and ethnic backgrounds, continue to disproportionately fear rape by black and Latino men (Madriz, 1997a:345). We must then pose the questions: how might we interrupt the 'flow of stupidity' and as Massumi suggests, 'regain the specificity of the landscape of fear'? For while fear can play an important and pro- (not merely re-) active role in preparing us to respond effectively to violence, it is a disabling tool if we are in constant fear of the

22 Madriz' study, like many others referenced in this work, is American, and we might expect, therefore, that fear of particular groups (in this case black and Latino) is particular to this setting. However, although the particularities may differ, fear of 'otherness' is central to women's fear of sexualized violence. When the scene is transported to Britain, for example, while Latino men may not be writ large in the fearful imaginings of white women, certainly other men of colour (often identified as 'immigrants' both in the US and other settings) simply take their place.
wrong thing. We need to work to address the problem which arises when "the
geography of fear does not...parallel the geography of rape" (Bart and
Scheppelle,1983:65) both because we remain misinformed and less able to anticipate
and protect ourselves from violence and because we unwittingly perpetuate racist
assumptions and stereotypes. Racist assumptions about the 'normal' aggressor are,
of course, echoed in the equally racist set of beliefs about the acceptable and normal
victim. It appears that images of acceptable and believable victims continue to be
predictably alarming: white, middle-class, young, physically able but petite and,
therefore, particularly vulnerable (Madriz,1997a:348). Despite several decades of
public education by the feminist anti-violence movement, it seems likely that these
two stereotypical images, of average aggressors and average victims, have changed
little. Madriz (1997a) reports what we might also expect, that even when we know
(intellectually) differently, our minds and hearts often retreat to the place of
stereotypes fed to us and reinforced in a myriad of ways in a racist, classist culture.

We might, then, want to begin thinking differently about the role fear could
play. Living consumed by fear, for example, is a vastly different experience than
using fear as an early-warning system signaling threatening or dangerous
situations. We might then question the apparently understood claim that most
women live in a state of fear most of the time. Fear is, as I have noted, not constant,
transparent, or uniform, but is rather situational and deeply embedded in our
unique and shifting subjectivities.

...while it is true that people fear all sorts of objects it is not accurate to
claim that the quantification and/or qualification of objects leads to
any definite insight into the experience of fear... In the final
analysis...fear is a function of subjectivity; it is a subject's act
(McFarlane,1996:65).

This is not, clearly, to lay accusations of unnecessary phobias or false consciousness
at the feet of the fearful - but rather to imagine that fear is a diverse and contingent
experience, interpreted continually through different lenses. It is also to think proactively rather than passively of fear, for we are not necessarily or always passive subjects acted upon by overwhelming fear (although this might be part of our experience). A typology which suggests that we might live in fear, by fear, or with fear (McFarlane, 1996:87-104), and that each of these offers significantly different modes of being has the potential to move us beyond a static notion of lived experiences of fear, and offers confirmation of a level of agency we can exert in our daily lives. This is, again, not to invoke some individualist level playing field, devoid of both personal and social locations and experiences which inform the ways we might be able to live. It is, however, to allow for the spaces where, fully engaged with our diverse and shifting subjectivities, we can exert choice and even control over our experiences. It allows for the possibility of using fear in positive rather than solely negative ways.

"To live in fear is to experience the world as threatening without complete confidence in averting the threats. Insecurity, vulnerability and helplessness are but a few of the descriptive terms for this state" [emphasis mine] (McFarlane, 1996:87/8). Undoubtedly living in fear, or in a state of low- (or high) level terror is the reality for some women. Much like a fear of terrorism or war, fear of sexual violence is for some ubiquitous and uncontrollable, bound to no rhyme or reason, always possible. This is the kind of fear that we are fed through the media and that women and children in particular are fed through the daily common-sense knowledge of our culture. We are inculcated with fear, with few resources at our finger-tips for 'averting the threats,' and are thus left helpless, hopeless, and ever more fearful.

The feminist anti-violence movement has an interesting and often contradictory relationship to this kind of fear. On the one hand we critique it deeply, claiming that this fear is not innocent, but is rather part of the grand patriarchal plan to keep women in a constant state of self-absorbed tension, unable to develop to our
potential, contribute fully, and thus remain less than fully human. On the other hand, there has been a need to hold on to this fear, to use unsettling descriptors of women's experiences of fear in order to convince others of the horrors women must live through, and of the ways in which fear curtails our lives. The feminist anti-violence movement has often drawn on women's experiences of fear to generate an informed and sympathetic understanding of the level of violence we/they face. In the face of institutions which deny or belittle women's experiences, this has been an important strategy, for "one of the recurring concerns of criminologists is that [women's] fear of crime is somewhat unfounded" (Stanko, 1990:4).

However, in addition to using fear as a justification for more focus on violence against women, for more services for survivors of sexual violence, for providing a kind of legitimacy to what is often seen as a minor and special-interest group problem, we might also want to use this kind of fear as a springboard to better ways of living with fear.

The movement from living in fear to living by fear is a complex one. It takes much more than a decision to effect this change. In fact, the fear is not removed, only its vector. Instead of tackling a stormy headwind, one turns around, or is turned around, and uses the wind to her advantage [emphasis mine] (McFarlane, 1996:92).

Interestingly, then, we see here another way of imagining the role of fear in women's lives - not the driving force that terror can be, but rather a less extreme force, guiding our actions, but perhaps not controlling them. "The individual still fears," writes McFarlane (1996:93), "but she is no longer limited by her fears, she is driven by them." Fear, in this scenario, might lead us to avoid situations we find threatening or dangerous, to fashion lives for ourselves that reduce or rid us of fearful circumstances, or to find mechanisms to deal with fear when we face it:

...rather than viewing violence as a disruption of the supposedly calm life we lead, I perceive it as an ordinary part of life. This is not to say
that I accept violence as good or even natural, simply that modern
social conditions make danger a reality. Nor is it to say that most
individuals experience violence on a daily basis. Some do. But the
majority have learnt to manage violence, some with more success than
others. If any of us takes measures to try to guarantee our safety —
such as staying alert on the street, resisting arguments with our
intimates because their bad tempers might lead to a beating, or
avoiding certain public places that make us feel uneasy — we are
automatically taking violence into account as a possible occurrence in
our lives (Stanko, 1990:5).

Although not an entirely empowering or free picture, this alternative does seem to
offer more space for challenging the horror and ubiquity of fear that we often
believe to be the norm.

Living with fear offers a third way of incorporating fear into our lives. In
McFarlane's (1996:99) terms, "living with fear is living courageously," and it offers
us the possibilities of facing fears, engaging with them, seeking to penetrate them
rather than to simply circumvent them (1996:100). What might this offer women
who's lives are imbued with the reality of sexual violence? It might, for instance,
allow women to take a level of responsibility for their fear, not to be blameworthy
for the environments and social structures which allow for sexual violence, but
rather to think of ways of acting in and on their fear. It might allow for ways to
imagine reducing our fear by facing and resisting violence, rather than working
only to avoid fear and the circumstances which give rise to it. This also seems to
allow space for hope that is often denied when fear is overwhelming and all-
powerful. The hope for overcoming violence, for responding powerfully to it, for
preventing it should it come our way, is a radically different possibility than
prevailing assumptions about fear usually allow — and it is one that is ultimately far
more empowering. Perhaps, also, this conceptualizing of fear makes room not only
for fear but also confidence, freedom, a better quality of life, and other spaces we
often consider erased by fear. Living with fear in this construct allows for the
complexity and plurality of life, rather than for the reduction of life to fear alone, and for this reason it is a possibility to be embraced.

While the tidiness of McFarlane’s typology is insufficient for our purposes here, it is engaging because it offers a rare glimpse into conceptualizing fear in new ways, allowing for the diversity of our lives and circumstances, and offering possibilities for being beyond what we might imagine:

...there is a dialectical relationship between the subject who fears and his fear. He might be overcome by his fears and live in fear (terror), avoid his fears and live by fear (obsession), or learn to live with his fears (courage). These are not simply options to be tried, but an important part of the trajectory of becoming (McFarlane, 1996:103/4).

In an effort to reclaim or reconceptualize fear as a powerful tool for our own protection, we need to unsettle our fears; investigate them, test them against the multiple realities we face. For fear, of course, has its values. Instigating the release of adrenaline into our systems, fear can work very practically to make us physically stronger and to heighten our pain threshold, allowing us to resist assaults more effectively. These ‘truths’ might be used to unsettle common-sense knowledge about fear, knowledge which is both racist and classist, but which also maintains a state of ignorance about the sexual violence we might face.

In The Gift of Fear, Gavin de Becker points to the misuse of fear. In keeping with the title of his book, de Becker suggests that fear is a powerful tool in preventing and avoiding violence. However, not dissimilarly to erroneously fearing strangers over those we know, ‘others’ over those of shared cultural and racial locations, dark alleys over our own homes, we often deny fear where it is valuable, and allow for it where it is less useful or accurate.

A woman could offer no greater cooperation to her soon-to-be attacker than to spend her time telling herself, "But he seems like such a nice man." Yet this is exactly what many people do. A woman is waiting for an elevator, and when the doors open she sees a man inside who
causes her apprehension. Since she is not usually afraid, it may be the late hour, his size, the way he looks at her, the rate of attacks in the neighborhood, an article she read a year ago — it doesn't matter why. The point is, she gets a feeling of fear. How does she respond to nature's strongest survival signal? She suppresses it, telling herself: "I'm not going to live like that; I'm not going to insult this guy by letting the door close in his face." When the fear doesn't go away, she tells herself not to be so silly, and she gets into the elevator. Now, which is sillier: waiting a moment for the next elevator, or getting into a soundproofed steel chamber with a stranger she is afraid of? (de Becker, 1986:31).

While de Becker lacks a certain feminist sensitivity to why women might make these 'silly' decisions (that is, we are not simply making bad decisions, we are well-trained not to make a scene, to respect the feelings of others over our own, to treat our own responses as hysterical, etc.), he does provide an important analysis of North American culture's tendency to deny our instincts and to ignore signals of fear, or more accurately in the case of women, to misplace our fear (that is, we fear strangers, 'others,' dark alleys, etc.). For de Becker, fear is central to our safety, an emotion to be well-examined and exploited. Again, this offers a radically different vision of fear than many of us are used to hearing. de Becker would argue that we in fact don't want to do away with fear, rather we want to heed it, and hone it, base it on accurate information so that it may better work for us.

Of course this way of thinking about fear is not new. John Bowlby, countering Freudian and other psychoanalytic perspectives which see many fears as phobic or infantile, lays out a perspective in which fears are 'natural' (and biologically inherent) responses to situations that in historical/evolutionary terms have tended to portend danger (Bowlby, 1973:109). Although the argument that fear is biological and therefore natural is potentially a troubling one, the point here is rather that it might be useful to shift/transform conceptualizations of fear from necessarily negative (at best to be suffered) to potentially transformative and positive. This shift can be marred by relying on simplistic and uniformly
cataclysmic views of what happens should we have to face sexualized violence ('to be raped is, in essence, to die'), for if we are facing death at every turn, without recourse to effective resistance, then the inevitability of fear is firmly planted. If, however, we can acknowledge a continuum of sexualized violences, some more devastating than others, we can find in the interstices between this moment of violence and that, places of 'positive fear' which can work to help us resist and prevent rather than face death immobilized.

We are left, then, with the important questions; under what circumstances might fear function in a more positive and useful way, how can we both think about ways to reduce ambient and anticipatory fear which limits our lives, and use fear transformatively in those instances moments when it is useful to us? While we may talk about fear, decry its necessity and reality, search for its validity and attempt to connect or distance it from the realities of women's lives, the most obvious and proactive of questions seems rarely to be asked - how might we reduce fear, and how might we transform what is left to our aid? One of the typical answers to this question is based in notions of 'truth' and information. The idea that "female fear feeds on misinformation about rape" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:6) is often the rationale for the many studies on women's fear. The fact that sexual violence has been so absent from the public discourse in any real way for so long, ("because for so many years rape has been a taboo topic shrouded in mystery and shame" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:6)), has meant a tendency on the part of much feminist strategizing to assume that if women are informed about the 'realities' (as opposed to the commonly held 'myths') of sexual violence, they will be able to break away from their tight bond with fear. This is an interesting assumption for several reasons. On the one hand it assumes that in bringing truth to light, bringing truth into discourse we will be better off - that knowing the truth will reduce fear simply by virtue of it being 'truth'. It assumes that the truth is, in fact, less scary than the
myths - an assumption that is unlikely to be borne out. The myth, for example, that only certain, promiscuous women who 'ask for it' get raped is often replaced with the feminist 'truth' that all women are potential rape victims. This new 'truth,' while serving to move rape consciousness away from the old victim-blaming mode, leaves women frightfully trapped in an invisible web in which there is nothing about us which might make us more or less vulnerable to rape. Ultimately to believe that we, and all women, are potential rape victims might be much more fear-inducing than the false albeit comforting belief that only certain 'other' women get raped. The same point could be made concerning the move from the rapist as an easily identifiable sick/crazy stranger, to potentially everyman, our fathers, neighbours, doctors, teachers, friends. Not dissimilarly, it seems much less fear-inducing to believe that rape is something that happens outside, at night in dark alleys rather than to realize that statistically we are less safe in our own homes and cars than in dark alleys.

The point is not to argue that it is better not to know the 'truth,' although it might certainly be to challenge what that 'truth' actually is (that is, the claim that all women are potential victims and all men potential rapists is as infused with ideological stances as the claim that only bad women get raped and only sick men rape). The point is, however, that revealing the truth as a strategy to reduce women's fear of potential violence may not be the most effective method.

We need also to consider, as we shall in greater depth in the next chapter, the possibilities of learning the skills to protect ourselves as a route to both the reduction of anticipatory fear and the transformation of fear into something useful in the face of specific acts of sexualized violence. The tautological suggestion that women should in all good consciousness continue to fear until there is nothing left to fear, needs to be broken with the notion that we possess the skills and ability to significantly decrease our chances of having to face sexualized violence.
Interestingly Gordon and Riger (1989:112) provide us an apt example of how this possibility seems so marginal to mainstream feminist theorizing about sexualized violence and the fear it induces. In a study of seven women who have been raped, the authors examine these women's coping strategies as a result of the rape, and use a number of variables to explain the differing fear levels of these women. Levels of fear, according to the authors' analysis are predicated upon three variables: whether the woman knows a rape victim (increases fear); what her degree of education is (higher level of education equals less fear); and whether she works outside the home (working outside the home reduces fear). A common theme that emerges in the women's actual accounts of their experiences however, is whether they resisted and/or prevented the rape. Despite the correlation between having resisted/prevented and being less fearful, this is not a 'variable' Gordon and Riger think to address.

This oversight, if we even wish to think of it in this way, is not surprising in a milieu, even a feminist one, which continues to eschew a politics of resistance or prevention in favour of established scripts concerning women's abilities to fight and prevent sexualized violence.

At the broadest level...the grammar of violence dictates that feminine fear concentrate the self on the anticipation of pain, the inefficacy of action, and the conviction that the self will be destroyed. Feminine fear precipitates all violence and agency outside of its subject; it thus disables its subject from risking possible pain or death in order to defend herself, since that risk can seem viable only if the subject perceives herself as possessing some violent capacity on which she can draw to try to survive pain or elude injury (Marcus,1992:394).

Marcus is writing of the ubiquitous, immobility-generating, silence-inducing, fear we have come to associate with women's responses to sexualized violence. While this kind of fear remains a very real part of lived experiences of some women, and while it remains central to much feminist anti-violence theorizing, we need to think,
theorize, and act in new directions which more accurately reflect the diversity of ways fear acts on and through our bodies, allowing us to move both in theories and practices, closer to a politics of resistance.

VICTIMHOOD

While more immediate survival concerns may preoccupy poor women, including many women of colour, I am still convinced that violence against women is a key issue for all but the most powerful, protected and independent of women. As such, it still has the potential to unite women across differences, when we approach the issue informed by our differences (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:67).

If 'woman' is just an empty category, then why am I afraid to walk alone at night (Downs, 1993:414)?

The vision of Sisterhood evoked by women's liberationists was based on the idea of common oppression. Needless to say, it was primarily bourgeois white women...who professed belief in the notion of common oppression. The idea of 'common oppression' was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality (hooks, 1984a:43/4).

This story of woman as victim is meant to encourage solidarity by emphasizing women's shared oppression, thus denying or minimizing difference, and to further the notion of an essential woman - she who is victimized (Harris, 1991:254).

It is not a denial of their victimization to notice also their bravery, resilience, and ingenuity, often with very limited resources, in trying to protect and nurture themselves and their children (Gordon, 1988:251).
For the North American feminist anti-violence movement of the 1970's and '80's, the concept of victimhood, perhaps ironically, came to serve as a "foundational analytic category and was absolutely pivotal to [the] liberatory project" (McLeod, 1997:3). The fact that such an unequivocally negative state could become, in some twist or slip of fate something so important and central to the project of eradicating sexualized violences against women is an important one to understand as we make efforts to rethink victimhood in new and different ways. Perhaps because of its very centrality, and the contested nature of its meanings, victimhood is a term fraught with difficulty and complexity. In the search to generate new meanings and reclaim or refigure the four central concepts of this thesis, victimhood has often left me at a loss. Is it, in fact, a concept we would choose to 'reclaim' at all, and is there a way to do so while maintaining a vision of empowerment and agency for women?

The questions I am interested in asking are how we can use the term in meaningful ways that does not conflate women's very being with a state of victimhood. How is it that gendered subjects come to be constituted as victims? As I have tried to show with the notions of fear, victimhood, too, is a concept that has been used in strategic ways by feminist anti-violence activists and theorists, and this use has served, at times to liberate and offer certain political and legal gains to women survivors of sexual violence, but also to trap women in the very vulnerability they are seeking to challenge and escape. The very nature of "fighting oppression requires describing and confronting it" (Mahoney, 1994:59), and the anti-violence movement has had to struggle, as have many other parts of the women's movement, "with the problem of documenting women's position as victims of their culturally constructed subordinate status while also celebrating women's strength and creativity in resisting that subordination" (Mahoney and Yngvesson, 1992:44). Undoubtedly, in a corrective to past denials of violence against women, we need to
talk of the violence, expose it in order to resist it - and yet how we might do so without reinscribing victimhood for women is not a simple question. In fact, it is probable that in dealing with issues of sexualized violence, there is a less obvious opening to celebration of strength and to positive forces of joy than for other parts of the movement dealing with other areas of oppression. Although, for example, there is a tension between describing and confronting homophobia, racism, or anti-semitism, on the one hand, and celebrating the particular joys of being lesbian, black, or Jewish, on the other, these tensions, although considerable, are at least readily apparent. The joyful, empowering and positive aspects of violence against women are not so easily discoverable or even believable. They reside chiefly in the celebration, embracing, and cultivation of women's strength and ingenuity in resisting and preventing violence. This, perhaps more hidden tension, calls for attention, however, and for our own ingenuity in finding ways to address women's victimization without an unproblematized reinscribing of that state.

I want to argue, along with Sharon Marcus, that "rape does not happen to preconstituted victims, it momentarily makes victims" (Marcus,1992:391). This temporal shift of victim status, from the always/already victimized, from an ongoing, inevitable, perpetual state, to a temporary one is important for it allows women a distance from the victim identity we are solicited to inhabit by dominant and feminist ideologies alike (albeit with very different intents at heart). "I...argue," says Marcus, "against the political efficacy of seeing rape as the fixed reality of women's lives, against an identity politics which defines women by our violability" (Marcus,1992:387).

The risk, in this kind of critique of feminists claims of victimhood, is of course the conflation of my thinking with that of a group of mostly American conservative theorists23 who rally to critique the (broadly defined) women's

movement for its focus on victimhood. In a blithe and highly individualistic manner, these critiques blame feminism for a certain negative dirge-like nature, for eschewing women's power and strength and for hanging pathetically onto notions of women as weak and victimized:

Much recent social commentary has criticized overly describing women as victims. Some of these voices come from the right: in these accounts, feminists harm our own cause and our own gender by constructing women as victims, by 'whining,' and by exaggerating the incidence of rape, abuse, and other violations of women (Mahoney, 1994:59).

Without gracing these theories with much attention, I seek to make clear that my critique is based on entirely different grounds. While this 'new individualism' invokes a level playing field where everyone is equally capable and responsible for themselves (for pulling themselves up by the proverbial bootstraps), I make no claims about lack of socially structured power imbalances which would allow each of us to make unencumbered decisions about our lives, free of the constraints of location and varying subjectivities. In contrast, notions of differing subject locations and the varying ways they inform our abilities to think and act in relation to violence are central to my thinking. My concern with feminist uses of victimhood are grounded rather in the desire to move towards a politics of resistance and prevention which allows women greater freedom, mobility, improved quality of life, and to imagine ways in which concepts of victimhood for women limit these possibilities:

Feminists have also expressed concerns about the ways in which stereotypes of women's helplessness and dependency can be exacerbated in the course of fighting against the abuse of women. These arguments [those of feminists and those from the right] have quite different emphases and implications, but both point toward avoiding overemphasis on victimization (Mahoney, 1994:59).
In defense of the critique of overemphasis on victimhood, it has been argued that those who critique feminist work on sexual violence as "essentialist and [as] construct[ing] and position[ing] women as inevitable 'victims'," (Radford et al, 1996:9), don't acknowledge the survivor focus of the feminist anti-violence movement:

What is noticeably absent is reference to and awareness of feminist practice in providing support to women and children who have been abused, which has been based on the concepts of survival/survivor. This absence is particularly worrying given that the feminist perspective on survival and survivors has been enormously influential in changing both research, policy and practice agendas globally (Radford et al, 1996:9).

It is, of course, essential to acknowledge the political shift from notions of victims to notions of survivors. This move within the feminist anti-violence movement has not been an innocent one, and undoubtedly serves in part to shift focus to women's abilities to endure violence, and to highlight, therefore our strength and abilities to not be defeated by it. Interestingly, however, this shift does not necessarily render victimhood any less significant for the movement - in order to survive, one has to first have been victimized, and while the focus of much of the activist feminist anti-violence movement has been to help women overcome their victimhood (and become survivors), there has not been equivalent efforts placed on preventing victimhood in the first place, or, importantly, in questioning the easy link between women and victimhood. The shift in language from victim to survivor is intended primarily to reflect a shift in the meaning-making around sexual violence. It does not necessarily interrupt the woman/victim link, but rather makes women's victimhood only one part of a linear process whereby women start out as victims and move, as a result of both healing and greater political awareness of their location in a social world where women are often victimized, to become survivors. Certainly many feminists have "substituted the word 'survivor' for 'victim' in order
to both challenge victim-blame and make visible women and children's resistance and coping strategies" (Radford et al, 1996:20). However, in so doing, the 'starting point' of woman as victim is not challenged or upset, merely 'left behind' as women become more politically connected to the nature of the offense against them. The very construction of the gendered victim goes untouched.

A sympathetic and informed understanding of the role of both victimhood and survivorship for the feminist anti-violence movement is important, and a strategic use of victimhood has served as a valuable tool for the movement. However, it is possible that the promises offered by drawing on this concept have been mitigated by the tendency for women to get 'stuck' in the location, and in fact for its strategic use to elide with a more political claiming of victimhood as an identity central to the category woman. The ironic notion that weakness in fact provides us with more power is not unusual, and problems with believing that "women can derive power from proving that they have been made powerless and from identifying the perpetrators of this victimization" (Marcus, 1992:386) are perhaps obvious. The assumed understanding of women as potential victims remains strong in our culture, in feminist circles as much as elsewhere. These assumptions can work in disabling ways which do little to decrease our potential to experience violence or to gain tools of resistance and which allow our violability to become one of the most significant markers of our oppression.

Concerns and debate over the use of the psychological concept of 'rape trauma syndrome' exemplify both the advantages and disadvantages of drawing on victimhood for women as a tool for improving our status vis a vis sexual violence. In 1979 Burgess and Holstrom's *Rape Crisis and Recovery* first systematized the responses of women to rape and other sexual trauma. Rape trauma syndrome was used primarily within the courts, but also within grassroots anti-rape movements as a way of identifying the range of responses of women to sexual violence and as a
way of categorizing and explaining the degree of trauma women suffered. The use of rape trauma syndrome, especially in the courts, was intended to legitimate a wide range of women's responses to rape, in the hope of leading to more convictions. Rape trauma syndrome soon showed itself as a truly double-edged word, leaving us with much to applaud and much to decry. While it has helped women both to gain legal victories over abusers and to explain their own violent responses (including murder) to abusing partners, this has only been achieved "by making women embrace their victim status even more warmly" (Smart, 1989:45). Thus psychological accounts of women's victimization, while tempting, and sometimes strategically useful for particular goals, serve to reinscribe victimhood for women, strengthening and even making sacrosanct the link to their victimization.

The problem of how to speak of sexualized violence without reinscribing victimhood for women is a complex one:

All work with subordinated people confronts, at least to some extent, the challenge of analyzing structures of oppression while including an account of the resistance, struggles, and achievements of the oppressed (Mahoney, 1994:59).

The corrective to past silences about women's victimizations at the hands of men has led the feminist anti-rape movement to draw extensively on women's stories of victimization and on the credo that the 'truth will set us free,' and to not question seriously enough the consequences of this 'truth-telling.' We have not adequately 'confronted the challenge' posed by Mahoney, and have instead let revelations of our victimization override our stories of 'resistance, struggles, and achievements':

The denial of the 'truth' of women's stories of sexual violence has justifiably led feminism to take up the project of representing that truth to the world, to insisting on the reality of sexual violence. However, in this struggle, the expectation that the experience of suffering inevitably is or will be transparent to representation and
social understanding, and that there are only gains to be had in the articulation of that experience, has gone unchallenged (Heberle, 1996:67).

When speaking of and working against violence against women, concepts of women’s agency, our abilities and strengths in the face of sexualized violence, are noticeably absent and have not shone through our telling about our victimization. It appears that victimization offers us the primary discourse for our thinking about this topic, and interestingly, that agency and victimhood appear to be mutually exclusive terms in the terrain of thinking about violence against women. Agency is often understood to be "exercised by a self-determining individual, one who is not victimized by others" (Mahoney, 1994:61). It is useful to examine, therefore, not only how our speaking and telling about sexual violence, but also how our thinking, our analytical tools and categories continue to support the woman-victim link. How has it become so difficult to "portray both oppression and struggle in women's experience" (Mahoney, 1994:59)? How have the concepts of victimization and agency come to be understood only in relation to each other, or more accurately, as dichotomous:

Why is it so difficult to see both agency and oppression in the lives of women? Why did society and law respond to a movement against battering with a concept of 'battered woman' that defined the woman by the harm that had been done to her? I have come to believe that the problem lies in part in prevailing social and legal concepts of agency. In our society, agency and victimization are each known by the absence of the other: you are an agent if you are not a victim, and you are a victim if you are in no way an agent. In this concept, agency does not mean acting for oneself under conditions of oppression or never having experienced it at all. This all-agent or all-victim conceptual dichotomy will not be easy to escape or transform (Mahoney, 1994:64).

Drawing on these conceptual categories, it appears impossible to be both victim and agent, to carry out powerful moments of resistance while simultaneously being victimized. Mahoney points to this victimhood/agency dichotomy in addressing
how women in battering relationships are pressed into a stay/separate dichotomy (Mahoney, 1994:60), allowing little room for victimhood and agency or resistance to (perhaps uncomfortably, but no doubt far more realistically) co-exist. We can understand the troubling effects of this false dichotomy in most instances of sexual violence. If we are either victims or agents with little room for the coexistence of these states, then the myriad of ways women resist are lost or obscured under the ubiquitous and hegemonic mantle of victimhood. A yell or punch which ensures that one is raped but not killed, a negotiation for oral rape over a vaginal one, convincing a rapist to use a condom, all of these can be moments when women actively work to subvert and challenge their experience of sexual violence, even if the violence is not entirely or even mostly, prevented. When agency for women is placed within the realm of the utopian, our less-than-perfect resistances and acts are rendered invisible. As much as we tend to see agency as only a sliver of possibility, an almost-unattainable option for women facing an apparently all-powerful aggressor, so too might we acknowledge the fragility, contingency, and importantly the partiality of victimhood. To do so offers up the possibility of breaking the easy slippage between 'woman' and 'victim' and allows for the ways we can be victim and not victim, often in the very same moments.

In law and popular culture, to challenge the current ideology in which agency and victimization are each the flip side of the other and each known by the absence of the other, we need strategies that reveal both agency and oppression and facilitate resistance. ...The popular concept that treats agency in women as synonymous with exit from violent relationships [or total prevention of a sexual assault] must be challenged to make comprehensible the many ways women assert ourselves in response to violence (Mahoney, 1994:72/3).

While it is easy for feminists to level this critique against the courts, the police, and other institutions known for their lack of sensitivity towards feminist understandings of sexual violence, we need also to question our own movements
and wonder why our own acts of agency and resistance remain invisible in these realms as well. The tendency for women to deny our own moments of agency, be they within larger instances of victimization or even be they wholly successful prevention of assaults, is a strong, and not innocent one. We have been trained, after all, to identify ourselves as victims, to think first and foremost of how we are responsible for what happened to us and not for how we acted to change and control and resist the violence visited upon us. We are well-trained into a passive subjectivity which does not allow us to see ourselves as participating in a 'rape script' (Marcus, 1992:390).

To take male violence or female vulnerability as the first and last instances in any explanation of rape is to make the identities of rapist and raped preexist the rape itself. If we eschew this view and consider rape as a scripted interaction in which one person auditions for the role of rapist and strives to maneuver another person into the role of victim, we can see rape as a process of sexist gendering which we can attempt to disrupt. ...The rapist does not simply have the power to rape; the social script and the extent to which that script succeeds in soliciting its target's participation help to create the rapist's power. The rape script preexists instances of rape but neither the script nor the rape act results from or creates immutable identities of rapist and raped (Marcus, 1992:391).

To assert our participation in a 'scripted interaction' is not to assert our responsibility for that interaction. One of the reasons even feminist anti-violence activists and theorists (and perhaps particularly these groups) have rejected notions of women's agency in moments of sexualized violence has been the fear that an understanding of her participation will lead us too easily back to notions of women's responsibility for sexual violence. We need not succumb to this slippage, and to turn away from theorizing and acting on women's agency in order to protect ourselves from possible misogynist interpretations, ironically leaves us in locations of greater vulnerability and victimhood.
The claiming of women's innocence in crimes of sexual violence leads, however, to important questions about the construction of victimhood, and about who, in fact, has the right to claim victimhood in the first place. While the ideal(ized) victim is wholly innocent and wholly vulnerable with no place for her participation in a rape script, she is also, in her innocence, a truly believable victim. In the current socio-political setting of North America this 'true' victim is as raced and classed, as she is heterosexual, neither too young nor too old, able-bodied, and occupies a myriad of other identifying locations of dominance which are, to those that occupy them, invisible (nothing/normal). Access to innocent victimhood is not distributed equally across locations and identities, and women who do not map perfectly onto the picture of the true and innocent victim have less hold on and fewer rights to claim victimhood. The legacy of the link between whiteness and innocence, for example, is still with us, leaving women of colour more vulnerable to blame for 'asking for' or even 'deserving' their rapes. Likewise class operates powerfully to hold poor and work class women in categories ('white trash'/'slut') that effectively bar them from access to innocent victimhood when it comes to sexual violence.

Locations of innocence serve other important political purposes for feminists in our struggles for social change, however dubious some of their effects may be. While a predominantly white feminist and grass-roots anti-rape movement spent much effort identifying women's innocence in crimes of sexual violence, this innocence served a secondary purpose: that of locating women firmly in the margins and therefore allowing them/us not to have to see our implicatedness in the subordination of other women, allowing us to remain on the side of 'good,' and ultimately to have the closest link to the 'truth' of oppression:

Not only the truth of oppression but the truth of human existence and human needs is apprehended by, because produced by, the daily
experience of society's most exploited and devalued. With their unique capacity for seeing truth and their standing as the new universal class (the class that represents universal interests because its interests lie with the complete abolition of class), this population also has a singular purchase on 'the good' (Brown,1995:47).

To give up innocence would have meant for many women in the anti-violence movement, not only the ability to see the empowering possibilities inherent in the notion that we are players in our own rapes and therefore can act to change them, but would also have required that women see their participation in the subordination of Others, to have removed them from the site of the 'good.' Our innocence as 'women' meant we did not have to address the implications of our less-than-innocent involvement in locations of privilege which in fact kept other women in positions of subordination to us. Razack and Fellows' (1998:2) notion of "competing marginalities" gives depth to the way in which innocence remains a fought-for commodity within feminist politics, both scholarly and activist. Innocence is a coveted position, once we have it, we hold tenaciously to it. While the costs of this in a more generalized feminist context are to maintain privilege via denial of the "interlocking" nature of systems of oppression (Razack and Fellows,1998:2), the costs in connection to victimhood and sexualized violence are self-inflicted wounds. Our unquestioned innocence makes any move to recognize our participation in our rapes futile and perhaps even a declaration of culpability, rather than an agentic move to resistance and self-protection.

Despite the fact that the cult of shared victimhood, so often espoused by white parts of the women's movement, is in fact not a lived reality for many women of colour, it is still used to claim a high moral ground and to quieten women's anxieties and fears about surrendering the old-time certainties of gender identity. As women we may be less powerful than men, but we could claim a monopoly on virtue. Such compensations of the powerless...are not easy to relinquish (Segal,1991:229).
While the tactic of using our victimhood and apparent innocence to bolster a clear gender identity and to unite women across difference belies the realities of many women, it also creates a depressing and tenuous ground for a united women's movement. Shared victimhood and oppression does not offer us much in the way of an affirmative rallying cry for change, and again we are faced with the tensions between expressing our experiences of oppression, and developing tactics to fight this oppression and improve the qualities of our lives:

Women are enriched when we bond with one another, but we cannot develop sustaining ties or political solidarity using [a victim] model of Sisterhood created by bourgeois women's liberationists. According to their analysis, the basis for bonding was shared victimization, hence the emphasis on common oppression. This concept of bonding directly reflects male supremacist thinking. Sexist ideology teaches women that to be female is to be a victim. Rather than repudiate this equation (which mystifies female experience - in their daily lives most women are not continually passive, helpless, or powerless 'victims'), women's liberationists embraced it, making shared victimization the basis for woman bonding. This meant that women had to conceive of themselves as 'victims' in order to feel that feminist movement was relevant to their lives (hooks, 1984a:45).

This critique, coming most often, although not exclusively, from women of colour, pushes us to imagine new ways of working together against the oppression (as diverse and non-unified as that may be) of sexualized violence, that do not call up either innocence or notions of shared victimhood to support our cause. To break with this essentializing link between woman and victim is to begin already, before we have even begun to discuss punches and yells and flight, to resist the diverse mechanisms of power which work to keep women in locations of fear and victimhood alone. As Massumi suggests, the "she" of our imaginings "...has regular qualities, a 'privileged' specific identity, a predictable function: victim. Capitalist power determines being a woman as the future-past of male violence" (Massumi, 1993:24). By disrupting the essential link between woman and victim, we
begin to disrupt the always/already raped woman and to challenge our status as the future-past of male violence.

...black women can help feminist movement move beyond its fascination with essentialism through recognition that wholeness of the self and commonality with others are asserted...through creative action, not realized in shared victimization. Feminist theory at present...tends to focus on women as passive victims...Women are the victims, the acted-upon, the helpless, until by radical enlightenment they are somehow empowered to act for themselves (Harris, 1991:253).

Interestingly, it may be that this 'shared political action,' rather than a dwelling on victimhood, is more integral to women whose lives are imbued with other locations of oppression besides their gender:

Women who are exploited and oppressed daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control, however relative, over their lives. They cannot afford to see themselves solely as 'victims' because their survival depends on continued exercise of whatever personal powers they possess. It would be psychologically demoralizing for these women to bond with other women on the basis of shared victimization. They bond with other women on the basis of shared strengths and resources (hooks, 1984a:45).

While it is important to question the preoccupation with victimhood as, ironically, the obsession of the more privileged or as a certain indulgence only afforded those whose lives are less encumbered by oppression, it seems simultaneously important not to fall into a process of discursive and political 'othering.' While multiple oppressions may make clinging to theories of victimhood less realistic and less reflective of the lived realities of some women's lives, we must also not unduly reify the strength and agency of the multiply oppressed, thus denying, in other ways, the realities of diverse lives.

We might also, then, want to imagine that in this call for the release of our hold on victimhood, there are in fact those who have a stronger need to maintain, or claim victimhood than others, that distancing ourselves from victimhood relies on
our ability to claim it in the first place, an ability, as stated above, not equally available to all women. In a critique of the hold on victim status for women, we need to attend to the different locations, both past and present, that might make victim status more or less needed and continually significant and relevant for different groups of women:

Until quite recently...when historians talked of rape in the slavery experience they often bemoaned the damage this act did to the Black male's sense of esteem and respect. He was powerless to protect his woman from white rapists. Few scholars probed the effect that rape...had on the psychic development of the female victims (Hine, 1989:917).

According to Hine and others (see Davis, 1984) the intersection of race and gender 'blind spots' combined to erase black women's rape, and the subsequent 'need' to bring to light their victimization may be more immediate and certainly different than it is for others, differently positioned, who have had more 'access' to victimhood.

To view women's position in relation to our experiences of sexualized violence solely in terms of our victimization upholds an erasure I do not seek to perpetuate. The history of women's daily struggles and resistances to violence is a rich one, and it is a history, which with few exceptions, has not been written. "The limitations of any field of study are most strikingly revealed in its shared definitions of what counts as relevant" (Scott, 1985:xv). The North American feminist anti-violence movement of the last few decades has counted as relevant women's stories of their/our victimization, not the stories of our resistances. Rarely at a rally, march, conference, meeting do we hear women proudly proclaiming the ways they have prevented or altered an assault. Yet graphically moving and detailed stories of our sexual victimization at the hands of men are not uncommon. There are a vast array of interconnected reasons for this focus, many compelling and understandable
and politically astute reasons. Yet they have left us with a terribly skewed picture of our own history, of our own daily lives. The stories and honouring of our pain and victimization serve women in problematic ways by solidifying a totalizing picture of women's experience that, as any generalized picture does, draws a falsely hegemonic frame around our diverse, complex, competing and contradictory experiences. By adding our stories of struggle, resistance, ingenuity and strength in facing daily violence we do not negate, belittle or marginalize our victimization, rather we make it one piece of a complex story about how women live lives of both pain and joy, oppression and resistance, both weakness and strength:

...the creativity and strength under conditions of oppression shown by many women of colour add a complex vision of women's experience to accounts of exploitation of women (Mahoney, 1994:63).

It is an acknowledgment and celebration of this complexity that I hope here to foster. Not a denial of our victimization, but perhaps removal of it from centre-stage so that we may live lives more imbued with a sense of empowerment, strength, and non-utopian hope.

RESISTANCE

What Nietzsche calls weak or slavish is not the least strong but that which, whatever its strength, is separated from what it can do. The least strong is as strong as the strong if he [sic] goes to the limit... (Deleuze, 1983:61).

...the boundaries I must defend first are those of my body, my life blood, my world (Allen, 1986:27)
If victim behaviour is learned behaviour, then it is equally important to realize that resister behaviour is also learned behaviour (Fein, 1993:29).

Where there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, 1980:95).

The deep disavowal of resistance in the feminist anti-violence movement is a source of both ongoing wonder and deep concern. The mistrust and misunderstanding of women's connecting to their strength and power, of their/our ability to fight in a myriad of ways that include physical strength, but also ingenuity, craftiness, sheer daring and love of life, is demonstrated repeatedly in both the theories and the practices of diverse parts of the movement. Resistance is noticeable most often, in recent years as in the early decades of the movement, by its glaring and loud absence. When acknowledged, it continues to be followed by qualifiers which undermine the very support intended.

My particular meanings for and uses of the concept resistance are by no means transparent, and call for at least some explanation. Certainly my assumptions and uses of the concept differ from many of the ways it is currently used, both within the anti-violence movement and elsewhere. Resistance is, here, any act which challenges the taking of power and control by one person over another. It might involve physical force, but might also, or rather, include language, both body and verbal. Its purpose and aim in this context is to increase women's safety, to reduce the likelihood of facing a sexual aggression, and to promote the skills and strategies to be able to stop such an assault should it be begun. The limitations to my use of the concept is that resistance is the attempt to take back control 'in the moment.' This would exclude, therefore, a variety of actions that take place long after the instance of violence has occurred. This distinction is useful to me in that what I seek to render more intelligible and accessible to myself and
others are the ways we can act to *prevent* violence *as or before it occurs*. This notion of resistance serves more than the politicizing or healing purpose often articulated by rape crisis centres, for example, for whom the very politicized act of crisis counselling is in itself a kind of resistance. I do not dispute for an instant the value of this work, and applaud its conceptualizing as a kind of resistance to the forces of violence against women. My effort here, however, is not only or even primarily to address how we can stop violence 'next time,' but rather to explore the act or actions used *in the moment* of experiencing violence in order to theorize the process of resistance to violence *as we face it*.

Another frame I draw around my conceptualizing of resistance is that it is something empowering, not degrading. This is a fraught and complex distinction, open to interpretation, beyond definition, highly contextual and contingent. I am not concerned with absolute notions of empowering/degrading actions, but rather with how actors themselves experience their actions. Acting 'crazed' to deter a potential rapist by barking or drooling, for example, might for one person be a degrading and disempowering attempt to stop a violent situation, while for another it might be entirely empowering. Resistance here, needs to leave the resistor with a feeling of having attempted to take control in a way that is strengthening and enabling, rather than disempowering and limiting.

What then, of the requirement for resistance to be 'successful?' Need an aggression have been stopped/prevented in order for resistance to have occurred? This is, in my view, the wrong question. Rather, we might want to incorporate notions of effectiveness into our thinking about the concept. To yell in a loud, low, assertive voice is usually more effective in stopping violence than is screaming in a high-pitched manner, which is most often read as helpless. To punch and break a nose is more effective (and requires no more force) than to pound on one of the most well-protected parts of the male body, the chest. To assertively order someone to
leave us alone is more effective than pleading for them to do so. While we can read
high-pitched screaming, chest-pounding, and pleading as resistance, we can not
read them as the most effective kinds of resistance.

On the one hand, I want to open up our understanding and conceptualizing
of resistance, so that actions such as eye-contact, body language, tone of voice, and
the use of humour, can be identified as resistance. In so doing my hope is to begin
to enlarge the currently limited discourse around resistance, providing increased
options for us to draw on in our attempts to prevent violence, to disrupt Marcus'
'rape script' through which we are solicited to take up the location of frozen
victimhood. There is, for example, a strong incentive to identify the actions of the
three survivors of Marc Lepine's first classroom at the Ecole Polytechnique, as
resistance. These actions were simple - eye contact, talking to the aggressor, turning
a head, ducking - however they saved three lives. If we could come to talk about
these as acts of resistance, as interruptions of the rape script in which these women
were intended to obey and go silently to their deaths, they might then enter the
terrain of the speakable and the imaginable, we will have unearthed valuable tools,
tools which will be circulated, broadening our possibilities for resistance. On the
other hand, my desire is to make more effective our ability to resist violence. So
while many actions need be identified as resistance, it is important still to speak of
yelling instead of screaming, nose-breaking instead of chest-pounding, ordering
instead of pleading.

In this light, we need to reexamine the following kinds of constructions. We
find a paragraph citing one of the few acknowledged sources in the field concerning
women's ability to fight back, Bart and O'Brien's *Stopping Rape*. Bart and O'Brien
provide a clear confirmation of the value, both in terms of physical safety and
emotional health, of resisting sexualized violence:
Two recent studies comparing women who were raped with those who managed to deflect an attack found that successful resisters were those who from the moment they realized they might be in danger used a combination of self-protective strategies, for example, physical resistance, screaming, and trying to flee, and the like. Active forceful fighting at the onset of an attack rather than passive pleading or screaming appears to be more successful in warding off attackers. In addition to thwarting the assault, resistance appears to help many women preserve their self-esteem and lessen the psychological damage done by rape (Gordon and Riger, 1989:120).

As though incapable of being able to 'leave it at that,' Gordon and Riger conclude this otherwise positive rendition of Bart and O'Brien's research with the caution, the qualifier, the point which leaves one not feeling confident or perhaps just hopeful about resisting, but rather returns all our well-socialized doubts: "However, in the presence of weapons such as knives or guns, such struggling may be ill-advised, so it is unwise to advocate any specific action as the best for all situations" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:120). Not that the authors being cited had ever suggested advocating any specific action for all situations.

We cannot, of course, blame any individual author, even theorists of women's experiences of violence, for echoing the deeply rooted cultural belief that women are not capable of fighting, and that even if we allow for it on occasion, it surely cannot measure up to knives and guns. I do seek, however, to unsettle a kind of thinking that only allows for one kind of resistance, that doesn't think multiplicatively about the concept and the practice, that is unable or unwilling to distinguish between different kinds of resistance. There is a remarkable difference between "using a combination of self-protective strategies" such as those cited above (physical force, screaming, fleeing, etc.), and struggling ineffectively in the face of weapons. There certainly is something limiting our vision and our thinking if we imagine that advocating resistance means advocating a small number of limited techniques to be used at all times, under all circumstances, without discernment. One way around such a limited imagination is to articulate a difference between
'struggling' and what we could call 'fighting back'. This difference has to do with effectiveness, but also with control, with connection to one's strength and power. These terms are by no means dichotomous, and defy easy definition: one woman's struggle may be another's fight. However, as a starting point we can complexify our thinking about resistance by imagining the many, diverse ways women can and do respond to violence.

Struggling is, undoubtedly, what we most often learn, in this culture, to be women's primary way of 'resisting' violence. The ubiquitous, and humorous if they weren't so tragic, images of women: begging, pleading, appealing to the humanity of their would-be rapists; running pointlessly down dead-end alleys, or up endless flights of stairs to an attic with no hope of escape other than a death-defying leap; hobbling on stiletto heels; pounding pointlessly on chests; avoiding eye contact; freezing in panic. If these are the images and scripts that ground our notions of women's resistance, as they most often are - served to us not only in movie's, on television, but also in the newspapers, mouthed by police and other protectors of women - then no wonder we believe women should acquiesce, for certainly these are usually not effective or empowering ways to prevent an assault. If our images of resistance drew on the idea of women 'fighting back,' which centrally involves a negotiation for control and power which is mostly left out of 'struggle,' as I am using it here, then we might be able to better imagine the kind of resistance I would like to posit. Almost any woman (including most women with disabilities) has some part of her body that is stronger than some part of her aggressors body. She need not be stronger in her entirety in order to break a nose with fist, break the soft bones of a foot with her heel, release herself from a grip enforced only by a thumb with the whole strength of her arm and upper body, even break an eardrum with her voice. She need not, also, be entirely free of fear or have some unusual and amazing store of inner courage to look her aggressor in the eye, to take up space...
rather than retreat into herself, to yell 'NO!' with the passion of saving her child's life, rather than plead 'no?' with the well-ingrained lack of belief that our own lives are worth just as much.

This is not to re-prescribe, to offer a new pill in replace of the old one, to replace old injunctions with new ones. Neither is it to blame or deny responsibility where responsibility is due. It is, however, to refigure the terrain of the imaginable when it comes to resistance, to understand that when we are cautioned not to resist, we are most often being cautioned not to struggle, not to plead, beg, punch uselessly, flail wildly, pull hair or scratch ineffectively.

As is often the case with borders, those between struggling and fighting back are permeable. A plea certainly might be the resistance of choice in some circumstances, as a powerful kick might not be the right thing in others. To cry could be struggling, or it could be the most perfect way to maintain one's humanity and sanity in an unthinkable situation. The directives based on rules for behaviour when facing an aggressor need be replaced by the flexible, contingent, variable, and even sometimes contradictory skills offered by a wide-open tool box.

The rationales, however, for the subtle and constant undermining of resistance within the very domain in which one would expect them to be revered, are multiplicitous, and easily imaginable. From our well-founded fear that to advocate our ability to prevent violence is to abdicate notions of responsibility for aggressors, to the well-ingrained, and false idea that to fight back will 'make things worse,' we have "learned the lessens of patriarchy in [our] muscles and sinews, as well as in [our] mind and soul" (Culpepper, quoted in Griffin, 1986:1). We have learned fear, we have distanced ourselves from a deep sense of our power, we have been trained into cooperative and frozen victimhood. With much good reason we have been wary of throwing punches, releasing deep low yells, fleeing, bargaining, stomping, refusing. Our victimhood has been cultivated, our agency has not. We
have, in some ultimate patriarchal joke, been aligned so closely with 'nature,' made to be the honourable carriers and guardians of a culture of non-violence, that to fight, other perhaps than in the protection of our young, is down-right unnatural. "The bond that men proclaim between women and non-violence becomes the condition for men's successful terrorization of women" (Allen, 1986:35). While our honour is being so valuably upheld, our vulnerability remains intact. "When our mythology instructs any class of adults that it is their role to be gentler and more virtuous or humbler than the powerful, it operates as a form of social control" (Janeway, 1980:158).

We have, of course, also been well-socialized into avoidance - into a series of rules that direct those potentially vulnerable to violence what to do, or more often not to do, to avoid assault. Almost any woman who has grown up in Western, and certainly North American cultural dominance, will recite a litany of do's and don'ts intended to guard her safety: don't walk alone at night, don't talk to strangers; don't answer the door if you are home alone; don't dress provocatively; don't give directions, take rides with people you don't know well, park in underground garages, go to bars unaccompanied, and so on. These rules of avoidance circumscribe our lives, limiting our choices, freedoms, reducing the quality of our daily experiences. They do serve, being part of the dominant narrative about safety for women, to keep some women feeling safe. However, it is important to categorize them conceptually as distinct from resistance. Avoidance techniques function to, we hope, keep us out of situations in which violence might arise. By not being in the wrong place, with the wrong person, at the wrong time, we hope to bypass the violence of our society. This kind of 'victim-control' (Cooper, 1991:17) works for us only 'before' but not during, not in the moment, and ironically, does tend to have its effects in the after-math of violence. Those who do not follow the prescribed rules are likely to receive less support and more blame once victimized.
Despite the ubiquity of victim control strategies and rules, the level of comfort and ease these provide is certainly contested:

Despite all these restrictive precautions, women believe that more assertive strategies are actually more efficacious. It is as if they behave in a restrictive manner only because that is what they have been taught they should do, not because they believe it will keep them safe. Perhaps they believe that if they do what they've been taught and get raped anyway, they are more likely to get sympathy and support (Gordon and Riger, 1989:122).

It seems that many of us are well-trained into restrictive behaviours, and poorly prepared to adopt and incorporate the more assertive strategies that provide greater likelihood of a life with less violence.

We do not all, as women, follow the rules of victim control, or adopt more agentic strategies of resistance to the same degree or in the same ways. While a myriad of personal and individualized experiences effect our abilities and desires to take up, utilize or reject strategies of avoidance or resistance, more obviously categorizeable social positions also figure into our choices and decisions. Patricia Hill Collins suggests that "African-American women are aware of their lack of protection [by white institutions such as the legal justice system] and that they resist more rapists than other groups" (Collins, 1991:179). This is an interesting unsettling of the oft-assumed notion that the more 'oppressed' women are, the more likely they are to be victimized. It offers us another challenge to prevailing notions of victimization, whereby those oppressed in one way, fall prey to the ubiquitous label of 'victim.'

We might also imagine that the social positioning of lesbians in relation to men offers the possibilities of a different relationship to resistance. Jeffner Allen writes:

The ideology of heterosexual virtue forms the cornerstone of the designation of women as non-violent... The ideology of heterosexual
virtue entitles men to terrorize - possess, humiliate, violate, objectify - women and forecloses the possibility of women's active response to men's sexual terrorization (Allen, 1986:35).

Allen thus points to how constructions of heterosexuality play into victimhood for women, and also directs us to think about how lesbians, bisexual women, and also heterosexual women who self-consciously challenge established norms of heterosexuality, might position themselves differently in relation to male violence and specifically in relation to active resistance strategies. If we identify the norms of female behaviour such as obedience, politeness, and friendliness (to men) as, in fact, intimately tied to heterosexual women, and if we assume these traits (if adopted indiscriminately as they often are) to contribute to women's vulnerability to sexual violence, then women who don't buy into these norms, who are actively disengaged from pleasing men, might be positioned differently in relation to using violence or other resistance strategies to protect their bodies/boundaries.

The question, then, in aid of the very practical project of how we might experience less violence in our lives and undo some of the wide-ranging social controls that keep us distanced from our ability to resist, is not so much the how and why of this present state, but rather the how of a different future. One of our first moves is certainly to reconceptualize resistance. To remove it both from the realm of the utopian (that is, resistance is only resistance when wholly 'successful') and from the realm of the privileged and powerful. Resistance needs to be understood as the multitude of acts that occur daily as we negotiate through the power relations with which our lives are imbued. We never do not resist, we are always resisting, to live in a field of forces of power is to live with resistance. How we think and cultivate this resistance is perhaps more to the point.

These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case:
resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial (Foucault, 1980:95/6).

Resistance, thus, is the tool of the weak as much as that of the strong. Certainly in sheer physical terms alone, we know that women, despite their generally smaller stature and perhaps even lesser strength than their male aggressors, have far more strength than is required to break a nose, a knee-cap, a collar bone. We have the strength, in fact, to kill.24 We must finally and terminally let go of the age-old and heavily ideologically-informed misconception that it is our lack of strength which prevents us from fighting back. What requires more attention than men's apparent superior strength is both their, and our, belief in that strength and in the social scripts that predetermine weakness for women in relation to their aggressors.

Rapists do not prevail simply because as men they are really, biologically, and unavoidably stronger than women. A rapist follows a social script and enacts conventional, gendered structures of feeling and action which seek to draw the rape target into a dialogue which is skewed against her. A rapist's ability to accost a woman verbally, to demand her attention, and even to attack her physically depends more on how he positions himself relative to her socially than it does on his allegedly superior physical strength. His belief that he has more strength than a woman and that he can use it to rape her merits more analysis than the putative fact of that strength, because that belief

24 What then, of women who do kill? It is interesting to think about what these extreme cases have to teach us about resistance. While on the one hand, the knowledge that women can kill, are physically and psychologically capable of killing, is vital to self-defense strategies. it is important to note that legal defense for women who kill has most often appealed to their very weakness (they were suffering battered women's syndrome, they were crazed by their endless victimization, etc.). It is thus possible to see the argument that women can kill as going much further to support women as victims than as a validation of their/our agency and strength. Hence the following concern: "Popular writing about battered women who kill their abusers reflects the fear that women will evade responsibility for their actions by claiming weakness" (Mahoney, 1994:61). McCaughey expands this concern: "Here's how feminism is now tied into a knot: Elements of feminism fight against notions of women as helpless while simultaneously sustaining and promoting the logic of denial and exculpation of women's violence. A woman's violence not only disturbs a prevailing understanding of women as peaceful and passive, but certain feminist ideals as well. Thus feminists and society more broadly seek to reposition the violent woman in some less uncomfortable status. Attempts to position women as victims in order to defend their violence reveals a central tension in feminism between victimization and agency: women are not seen as justified agents of violent acts, and so their victimization is invoked to construe them as non-agents (McCaughey, 1997:196)."
often produces as an effect the male power that appears to be rape's cause (Marcus, 1992:390).

As we must dispense with the physical strength problem, so too must we move to see resistance as part of everyday power relations, used by and available to those in positions of lesser control and with less ability to enact power in any given moment. We need, then, to peel off the glasses which see resistance as the domain of the privileged and powerful and learn to look microscopically at the tiny and ubiquitous moments of resistance enacted in every moment of every day. Much has been written, often in other contexts, about the need to understand resistance as non-utopian, not as "the Great Refusal" of revolution and organized revolt, but rather as the much quieter, quotidian acts of survival. In Weapons of the Weak, James Scott addresses this shift of focus in relation to peasant resistance. He argues both that the emphasis on the big revolts, rebellions and revolutions is mistaken because of "the simple fact that most subordinate classes throughout most of history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity" (Scott, 1985:xv), but also that to do so is to ignore and even deny the everyday forms of resistance, "the prosaic but constant struggle" that characterize the oppressed (Scott, 1985:xvi).

While understanding the ubiquity of resistance, we must learn to see and identify what has been previously occluded by the belief that women did not, and could not, resist. "Women's successes at ending violence are virtually invisible" (Mahoney, 1994:76). Mahoney is writing specifically of women in battering relationships, and of how our construction of 'successful' resistance obliterates many valiant and important, and in fact effective resistance efforts:

If the woman succeeds in continuing [a previously battering] relationship without further violence - if he does not hurt her again - no one will know it. She disappears from the radar screen: no shelter requests, no emergency calls, no police reports (Mahoney, 1994:76).
This challenges us to open our eyes to acts of resistance that will never enter any formal statistics, but also to begin to imagine the violence that never happens as the result of resistances. A woman who makes direct eye contact, holds her head high, and walks confidently and who thus sends a would-be rapist on to a more acceptable looking victim, will of course, never be cited as having prevented a rape. And yet she did not "do nothing." She simply didn't do what we have come to count as meaningful victim behaviour. How, then, to make this resistance visible? And how not to reinscribe it in a new terrain of the ideal. That same eye contact, high head and confident walk would perhaps, in some other situation, with some other aggressor, have been entirely ineffective, would not have begun to prevent the intended violence. We need not generate a new conceptual trap to replace the old one, instead we want to unearth the various acts of resistance currently so invisible and add them to the tool box of possibilities from which we might draw. We need, simultaneously, to challenge the given categories of successful and unsuccessful because of the ideology infused in these terms which keeps women conforming to norms of femininity, victimhood, and weakness at the expense of their freedoms, quality of life, and autonomy:

Women who 'succeed' in stopping violence...have made decisions that are not treated as legitimate or intelligent in women who 'fail' to halt the violence in their lovers. ... The social insistence that women should leave [their battering husbands] treats the actions women often take as illegitimate unless those actions succeed in stopping violence" (Mahoney,1994:77).

Thus the daily resistance that might, for example, protect a child from being abused, protect a child from witnessing the abuse of his/her mother, that might mean a lesser beating, or physical abuse without a concomitant rape, is rarely defined or counted as resistance. "This view," argues Mahoney, "actually increases inequality by
stripping legitimacy and social respect from the very things most women do" (Mahoney, 1994:78).

The fact is, then, that women do resist, daily, invisibly, unromantically. We do so, despite endless advice and cautioning to the contrary, advice which would rather have us be raped than experience the increased likelihood of bruises cuts and scrapes which are the consequences of resistance. The traditional and dominant belief that to resist is to bring increased risk of violence is only valid if we don't define rape as violence, and does not allow for the studies and statistics which show us that when we resist our chances of minor injuries, cuts, bruises, scrapes increase, however our chances of major injuries, stabbings, broken bones, rape, death, decrease (Bart and O'Brien, 1984). Traditional stances, those expounded often by police, and by a plethora of non-feminist self-defense approaches, which view our sexual violation as more acceptable than our physical violation, caution us against kicks, yells, punches, suggest we surrender to rape in order to escape, in paradoxical terms, unscathed:

We are taught the following fallacy - that we can best avoid getting hurt by letting someone hurt us. We absorb the following paradox - that rape is death, but that in a rape the only way to avoid death is to accept it (Marcus, 1992:395).

Finally, it is worth examining resistance as perhaps our ultimate fear-reduction technique. I would argue that far more effective than denial, than avoidance, than organized political movement in the effort to make our daily lives more safe, is the ability to resist. The authors of the Female Fear conclude their book with four reasons why enhancing one's physical ability to protect oneself is so important:

First, women who feel physically competent report less fear. Second, women who are less fearful use fewer restrictive precautions, thus limiting their lives less. Third, women who feel more physically competent are more likely to resist a rapist, if attacked, and more
likely to avoid being raped. Finally, believing there is something they can do to prevent future rapes may make it easier for women to cope with the effects of rape (Gordon and Riger, 1989:136).

Given the resources devoted to educating women about the 'myths and realities' of sexualized violence; given the resources, both human and financial spent counselling those who have survived sexual assault; given the many ways the feminist anti-violence movement chooses to work to eradicate rape, it remains unimaginable to me that we are not responding, concretely, daily, practically to the information above. While marching on the streets for changed laws, while not parking in underground parking lots just in case, while hoping that rape will happen to someone else - I need also be training my daughters to resist. Simply to yell and punch and flee. If so I will have given them a gift usable in their lifetimes, not the utopian days of no more violence against women, but for here and now, the gifts of less fear, less restricted lives, less likelihood of rape, and better coping skills should they be raped.

PREVENTION

As I have suggested previously, the primary distinction to be made between my use of the terms resistance and prevention is one of scope. While resistance is being used here primarily in terms of acts in the moment, prevention is more clearly the larger-scale attempts to eradicate sexualized violence. Resistance operates in the moment and is confined, most often, to the acts of individuals. Prevention, while it operates to provide tools for people to experience less violence now, is a larger concept and involves the political and collective organization of resistance. While resistance is the using of tools and strategies to attempt to stop violence, prevention is the making of these tools and strategies - it is the fabrication and cultivation of
tools to make us better resisters. Prevention is not so much an act 'in the moment' as it is the cultivation of agency; a cultivation of the capacity to resist.

In discussing the limits of how prevention has been theorized and practiced in the feminist and grassroots anti-rape movement, and in imagining more effective ways of practicing and theorizing prevention in the future, I need to revisit one of my premises in this work, one that is central to my understanding of prevention, and one that falls far outside the taken-for-granted and common-sense thinking about violence prevention among feminists. My work is steeped in the notion that women, individually or collectively - even on their own in the face of an aggressor - can most often stop an assault. I am working from the deeply held conviction that women have diverse resources to draw upon in the face of assault, and are most-often able to fight off an aggressor intent on rape. That there are specific moments and circumstances in which this is not so is understood. That women have specific (and socialized) trainings and experiences to make fighting back very difficult and sometimes impossible from a psychological/emotional point of view is also understood. However, I make no assumptions about what these moments and circumstances and experiences are. I am not willing to concede that in the face of a weapon it is impossible for a women to prevent assault. I am not willing to concede that in the face of gang assault there is nothing to do. The specifics of sexual assault are truly specific, and it may be that an attempted rape by an old family friend, in the bathroom, a yell's distance away from a huge family party replete with more than a hundred times the protection you need is much more difficult to fight against than someone wielding a gun in an isolated alley late at night. Much of what I suggest in the following pages is that the anti-violence movement's prevention strategies have suffered from their singularity of focus; that they have leaned

25 Please refer to footnote 8 in Chapter 2 of this thesis for an explanation of why we need to remember that what is at stake here are not issues of strength or ability. See Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of self-defense.
toward believing in and working for one or two great solutions, rather than generating the tool box of strategies we need. Moreover, women’s ability to stop violence in the moment, our ability to seriously harm, to escape from, to even kill our aggressors is almost always denied, and certainly is rarely seen as central to violence prevention. It is this irony which I seek to upset.

One of the trappings of prevention as it has tended to be conceptualized in feminist anti-violence theory and practice is that it retains a highly utopian focus, proffering long-term solutions that do little to change the here and now. While these long-term strategies are integral and essential to notions of prevention, they have not succeeded in changing the daily, lived reality of violence that so many women face. They are, however, the strategies that many maintain are the most important, the most effective, precisely perhaps, because of their long-term, systemic change nature:

Ironically, although women feel compelled to take so many precautions, they do not think these actions are effective in preventing rape. Nor do men. Effective rape prevention strategies, people say, are not the tactics individual women can use to prevent their own rapes. More effective, long-term strategies are much more difficult to achieve. These include promoting greater equality of the sexes through elimination of sexist language in textbooks and school, and fostering equality of work opportunities and rewards (Gordon and Riger, 1989:123).

The continued focus of the anti-violence movement, and certainly of anti-violence theorizing, on the long-term goals of gender equality as the basis for the eradication of rape, has played no small part in Gordon and Riger’s observation that many people, in fact, think that individual actions are less effective than long-term systemic ones in preventing violence. Rape prevention is seen to be a communal, social act, not something available to individuals. This distinction, while understandable, leaves women reliant on the Great Refusal, coordinated and lead, denying the multiple ways individuals can and do work to prevent violence. It also
leads to the following constructions: "What can be done to reduce the burdens of day-to-day female fear for women, and reduce costs for society? Women, especially women in isolation, cannot do it alone, anymore than they alone can prevent rape" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:125). In the struggle to wrestle rape from the realm of the private and the individual and to call for collective social responsibility for the rape culture in which we live, some of the effects of these new discourses have gone unchallenged. The messages we imbibe when such claims are made are at least twofold: the larger social group is responsible for rape and must act to prevent it, but simultaneously, women are not capable of preventing rape. In attempts to place responsibility for rape where it belongs and where it has long been denied, we have also shored up an image of women as incapable of resistance, as ultimately unable to stop the violence visited upon them.

What I seek here, is to allow for these two narrative to exist simultaneously, rather than to cancel each other out. To lay blame where it need be laid, to demand and fight for broader social changes, and to also bolster women's agency in preventing rape, even individually, even in isolation, perhaps particularly in these circumstances, for rape most often happens in isolation. While our efforts have been to expound the need for far-reaching community and social change, and the need for collective action is an important one, this kind of framing of responsibility also actively works to suppress women's individual agency, to deny our abilities to act, even on our own. I seek, then, to mesh the longer-term and utopian notions that most often pass for prevention, with the immediate and proactive goal of reducing violence today, not in some future when gender relations are profoundly altered and laws significantly improved.

One block to the realization of this desire to draw together two not entirely compatible narratives is the continued resistance in the feminist movement to women's responsibility in any violent interaction. The need to maintain
blamelessness for women slips easily into the claim that women not only should not take responsibility (ie. resist), but that they cannot do so. This point is more palatable if framed in more proactive terms, calling for the need for collective action and broader social change:

[We] must shift emphasis from what individuals can do to what groups, organizations and institutions can do. Continued emphasis on what individual women can do to prevent their own rapes enhances the likelihood that victims will continue to be blamed for their own predicaments (Gordon and Riger, 1989:125).

Thus not only is individual prevention deemed ineffective, but there is a moral imperative to abandon such attempts in favour of larger strategies for political change. We find ourselves caught in a highly problematic tension where to fight sexualized violence individually is to lend support to an individualistic vision of violence-against-women, to ultimately harm the political and collective cause of women.

The desire for rape prevention to be achieved through broad social movement and political change has generated two central areas of focus that have emerged most consistently in feminist anti-violence theorizing and practice as the routes to ending violence against women. The first of these, certainly first chronologically, and probably also in terms of commitment and focus within the grass-roots and feminist anti-violence movement, is the raising of consciousness of sexualized violence. The intent of consciousness-raising is to alter the gender relations and social structures which give rise to, condone, and continue to allow for the existence of wide-spread sexualized violence. This is probably the biggest prevention 'project' of the movement, going by names such as consciousness raising, speaking out, and breaking the silence, depending on the context and particular focus. The technique is to use language, to tell of horrors so long silenced and marginalized, the intent is to drag a misogynist culture out of its state of denial and
to force it to face its reality as a rape culture. The hope, determined and endlessly resilient, is that once the truth about sexual violence is truly understood and accepted, there will be no choice but for a massive social shift, the truth will, it is hoped and dreamed and argued, set us free:

The immediate call in response to increased levels of violence is for more speech. If society has not yet been persuaded as to its reality as a rape culture, more stories must be told and retold and the reality continually pieced together like a strange puzzle that resists finishing. The stories provide testimony to the reality of rape culture. They will, it is thought, encourage the eradication of images and practices of sexual violence altogether. Women express their pain and victimization because of their outrage, and to move toward healing themselves through the catharsis of recognition. But they also express themselves out of the conviction that once society understands the truth about itself, it will transform its terms of existence (Heberle, 1996:64).

The eradication of rape is to be achieved through language. If we tell enough, talk loud enough, expose enough of the truth, then minds will, inevitably, change. This strategy has its strengths, and is grounded in an understanding, albeit perhaps an uncomfortable one for some, of the political nature of narrative:

A discursive terrain has been more or less deliberately developed to allow for the representation of violations previously held in silence or obscured within the realm of private affairs. This discourse is understood as a means to make society take public or social responsibility for them and change the course of history. Further, the framing of an imperative to 'believe the woman' in response to the time-honoured and deeply embedded assumption that women lie about their desire for sex, indicates the movement in some way understands women's descriptions of their experience as acts of political will rather than as mere expressions or reflections of reality (Heberle, 1996:74).

It is reasonable to imagine that the end, or at least diminishment of violence against women relies on altered gender relations, and that current gender relations rest on a historical framing that goes, most often, unquestioned and unchallenged. Speaking as a route to healing is often cited as an important part of the movement's work, as
is the process of politicizing women about their rapes, helping them to create the conceptual categories which allow them to resist self-blame and understand their place in a terrain of gender-based violence. Making space for voices to emerge from the margins, to generate a different picture of the reality of daily experience is a valuable and politicizing process. However, I want to upset the notion that to speak violence is to end it, that the truth will set us free, that sexualized violence will end simply because we now know it exists, know to what extent it exists, and know the true horrors of it. We need to be cautious about the slippage that occurs between exposing violence and "using women who have been raped as horror stories in a kind of propaganda war" (Smart, 1989:48). Certainly the grass-roots movement has made every effort to walk this fine line, making space for the telling of stories, while simultaneously protecting individual women from being used as pawns to further a cause. Yet these efforts cannot always be successful. "It is a dubious practice," continues Smart, "that puts vulnerable women who have 'gone public' on their abuse in the vanguard of a struggle that concerns all women" (Smart, 1989:48/9).

It is difficult not to valorize and essentialize these brave abused women. Our focus on speaking can at times allow us to slip into problems of reified victimhood. Many can cite the Alice-through-the-looking-glass moment when they realized the odd slippage that had taken place whereby victimhood became a badge, a symbol of belonging to a club of women hurt by men, the moment when we began to develop what Brown (1995:52) terms "wounded attachments" to our positions of victimhood. We know, many of us personally as well as theoretically, that women are hurt, more and less violently, with more and less scars left, with more and less parts of themselves damaged. We have sought in the feminist anti-violence movement, to make the world a better place for women, to offer hope, to heal wounds, to create safety. We have not adequately, however, questioned that slippage, to a place where victimhood becomes venerated, where our talking takes
on a life of its own, no longer necessarily connected to the eradication of violence. Renee Heberle would take us a step further, and suggest that in fact our talking serves not only to reify victimhood for women, but also to venerate male power, to solidify what might in reality be tenuous and unstable:

But what if in emphasizing the strategy of piecing together our reality as a rape culture through speakouts and detailed descriptions of experience, we participate in setting up the event of sexual violence as a defining moment of women's possibilities for being in the world? What if, in our empathic responses to women's suffering and insistence that 'it could happen to any of us' we participate in conferring a monolithic reality onto an otherwise phantasmatic, illegitimate, and therefore fragile edifice of masculinist dominance rent with contradiction and internal conflict? What if there is an immanent fragility to masculinist dominance that has been obscured by the construction of a political strategy grounded upon the exposure of women's suffering? Simply put, what if this strategy furthers the reification of masculinist dominance (Heberle, 1996:65)?

What if then, in our telling of the violence we have lived, we are not challenging but, in fact, helping to constitute male dominance? In holding rape as one of the primary sites of gender domination might we not in fact shore up male supremacy rather than topple it? The important next questions we need to ask, are of course, what if this strategy has not only reified masculinist dominance, but has also consistently limited our visioning and practicing of other, more effective kinds of change? What if it has rendered our victim status more inevitable, tied us ever more deeply to our sites of injury rather than our sites of strength, and has maintained and reified not just masculinist dominance, but the concomitant women's vulnerability? What if this strategy has taken energy and vision from the anti-rape movement that might have gone more usefully elsewhere? I ask these questions not to simply look back, with the gift and clarity of hindsight, at the mistakes of the past, but more helpfully, to help envision new strategies that might escape some of the traps of our past efforts.
The second broad area of focus adopted by the grass-roots and feminist anti-violence movement in North America, in its project of preventing sexualized violence, has been legal reform. Legal reform has gone hand in hand with consciousness raising and its concomitant aim of altered gender relations and social structures. In examining legal reform as a prevention strategy, I want to understand its potential usefulness, but to remain wary of its dangers as well. I want, therefore, to remain open to both the possibilities and limitations, to what is enabled and what is limited, by the use of this strategy. While I want to acknowledge the importance of multiple strategies for violence prevention, and I want to see legal reform as one potential strategy, this emphasis does not alleviate the burden of criticism, does not allow me to escape from the need for critical analysis of a strategy that has generated both gains and losses for women. To draw on a multiple-strategy approach is not to say that all strategies are good, nor that all strategies are created equal. Neither is it to say that we need simply to mix and match as many strategies as possible in the hope of preventing sexualized violence. Rather, it is to remain open to the possibility that any point where power meets resistance is a place that can be turned to someone's advantage, and while that someone might be 'us,' it isn't necessarily. It is to stay open to the possibility of effective strategies, and to not presuppose the effectiveness of any. It means, of course, that we can find usefulness in a variety of tools, but it doesn't mean that we don't prioritize our strategies in terms of effectiveness and reliability. Critically analyzing strategies is essential, for some strategies are only likely to be of benefit if they are used in light of appropriate concern for their problematic nature. I argue that legal reform is exactly one such strategy.

In moving to the law as a site to regulate sexualized violence, the feminist anti-violence has done what many other movements have done before and since, it has turned to the law to legislate change. Martha Fineman suggests:
When social norms are in a state of flux (as they certainly are in regard to matters of sexual intimacy and gender relations) the law tends to become identified as a significant site of contest. Competing societal factions seek to codify their worldview, thereby giving legitimacy to the stories they tell about what are appropriate ideals and values (Fineman, 1994:xii).

It is certainly to be expected that the law is seen as a site a reform, and that legal reform is so often seen to be a site of change. As we must look critically at the insignificant reduction (and some would argue even the rise) in sexual violence, despite several decades of consciousness raising and silence-breaking, so too must we admit, that hard-won legal changes appear to have done little to reduce incidence of sexual violence. Legal shifts have had effects, but most often not preventative ones: they can account for tougher jail sentences, for perhaps more cases coming to trial, even for increased awareness of sexual violence, but they have done little to stop the violence before it occurs. Fineman continues, in the preface to a collection of essays centred around feminism and legal theory:

One final point of caution for the uninitiated who view law as having significant potential to transform society and curtail behaviour. In regard to the role of law in addressing private violence, many of the chapters illustrate that there are some serious questions about the extent to which law can realistically carry the major burden of reform (Fineman, 1994:xv).

However, my concern with the limitations of legal reform is more than one of inefficacy. Wendy Brown offers an analysis of the paradoxes of feminist reliance on the law to redress and prevent [sexualized violence] as part of a larger, and problematic, shift on the left in which,

...Western leftists have largely forsaken analyses of the liberal state and capitalism as sites of domination and have focused instead on their implication in political and economic inequalities. At the same time, progressives have implicitly assumed the relatively unproblematic instrumental value of the state and capitalism in redressing such inequalities (Brown, 1995:10).
Feminist reliance on the state is particularly troubling and limiting, not only, because as a strategy of violence prevention it is simply ineffective, but also because of the ever-deepening links to our victimhood, to our 'states of injury' (Brown, 1995) it supports. Thus Brown asks:

> While the effort to replace liberalism's abstract formulation of equality with legal recognition of injurious social stratifications is understandable, what such arguments do not query is whether legal 'protection' for a certain injury-forming identity discursively entrenches the injury-identity connection it denounces. Might such protection codify within the law the very powerlessness it aims to redress? Might it discursively collude with the conversion of attribute into identity, of a historical effect of power into a presumed cause of victimization (Brown, 1995:21)?

Notions of victimhood have become far too tightly aligned with women in the arena of sexual violence, and the strategy of relying on the state/law to prevent that violence is one part of that alignment. Brown is concerned, and I share this worry, about the "codification of injury and powerlessness" (1995:27) that a turn to the law as a site of prevention and redress entails. Suggesting that reliance on the state as protector, and more obviously as enforcer of punishment, shares many of the attributes of Nietzsche's ressentiment, she urges us to think about the problematic entrenching of social positions that accompanies a reliance on the state to punish the perpetrator and protect the victim:

> Developing a righteous critique of power from the perspective of the injured, it delimits a specific site of blame for suffering by constituting sovereign subjects and events as responsible for the 'injury' of social subordination. It fixes the identities of the injured and the injuring as social positions, and codifies as well the meanings of their actions against all possibilities of indeterminacy, ambiguity, and struggle for resignification or repositioning. This effort also casts the law in particular and the state more generally as neutral arbiters of injury rather than as themselves invested with the power to injure. Thus, the effort to 'outlaw' social injury powerfully legitimizes law and the state as appropriate protectors against injury and casts injured individuals as needing such protection by such protectors. Finally, in its economy
of perpetrator and victim, this project seeks not power or emancipation for the injured or the subordinated, but the revenge of punishment, making the perpetrator hurt as the sufferer does (Brown, 1995:27).

Not only, as Brown suggests, does this turn entrench social positionings of injured and injurer, but it also fixes the event, the 'injury' itself, leaving no space for the "indeterminacy, ambiguity and struggle for resignification" which might allow women to experience sexual violence in ways more diverse and unimaginable than the limited vision of the law might allow for.

In assessing to what extent (and perhaps at the expense of what other efforts) legal reform is a useful prevention strategy, there is a need to articulate differing criteria for effectivity. Is there a difference, we need to ask, between working to prevent violence in the broader sense, that is working to shift social norms and gender relations so that sexualized violence is no longer such an integral part of our social fabric, and working to prevent violence in the instant, to make the daily experience of women better (that is, fraught with less violence)? This difference is one of specificity, aiming to eradicate violence as a very general kind of concept, and aiming to reduce daily experiences of violence. The feminist anti-violence movement has been noticeably silent on these distinctions, and on the differing criteria of effectivity they suggest. The movement has shied away from an in-depth and prolonged critical debate about what prevention might look like. For this reason, prevention is most often left at the macro level, it is the move towards far-reaching social change, and the discussion of the resistance acts of individual women are left out of whatever meager theorization of prevention there is. When we don't make these distinctions, when we leave untheorized our differing visions of prevention, we lose valuable criteria and tools for assessing our actions.

I want to argue that prevention which has so far been concerned primarily with the reorganization of social relations in order to prevent sexualized violence,
needs also to make room for individual resistance acts as part of the prevention
effort. When we take the desire to reduce daily violence in women's lives as a
criteria of effectivity in prevention efforts, legal reform is highlighted for the partial
strategy it is, functioning in an after-the-fact way, offering disincentives for violent
behaviour rather than stepping in to truly prevent violence. As I have suggested,
there is no evidence to suggest that the threat of punishment works to effectively
convince aggressors not to aggress:

Even if one believes in the abstract possibility of change and progress,
it is not likely that widespread redistribution of power within families
or between women and men will be accomplished by mere legal
restructuring. Law is more reflective than constitutive of social
realities, tracking closely to existing power alignments. Law is a very
crude instrument with which to fashion and further social policy -
much better at fashioning prohibition and determining punishment
than it is at creating affirmative incentives for behaviour. In either
case, whether developed to structure incentives or to define
punishments for certain behaviour, law is most effective when it tracks
societal norms and values about which there is strong agreement.
Therefore, it is no surprise that law incorporates dominant stereotypes,
and replicates existing ingrained inequities (Fineman, 1994:xvi).

This is an important caution about the use of law, and sheds light on the raced and
classed aspects of using the law to prevent sexualized violence. The legal-justice
system is constituted by, not constitutive of, social norms, it reflects, and certainly
upholds the racist, classist and abelist misconceptions which continue to be central
to much thinking about violence-against-women. Simultaneously it hinges on a
politics of protection, problematic for privileged women as well as those deemed
unworthy of such protection. Why would women of colour, poorer women, women
with disabilities, or any other woman who falls outside the narrow range of
"normal" chose protection from the very system which operates to maintain her
inequality and marginality? What would the costs be to her of doing so? We might
ask the questions for all women, even those privileged enough to be among those the law is apparently designed to protect:

If the institutions, practices, and discourses of the state are as inextricably bound up with the prerogatives of manhood in a male dominant society as they are with capital in a capitalist society and with white supremacy in a racist society, what are the implications for feminist politics (Brown, 1995:169)?

Brown further points us to the particular history of 'protection' as it relates to women, which served to circumscribe women's lives, offering protection to some, not to others, and in either case "legitimating women's exclusion from some sphere's of human endeavor and confinement within others": (Brown, 1995:169/70).

Operating simultaneously to link 'femininity' to privileged races and classes, protection codes are also markers and vehicles of such divisions among women, distinguishing those women constructed as violable and hence protectable from other women who are their own violation, who are logically inviolable because marked as sexual availability without sexual agency. Protection codes are thus key technologies in regulating privileged women as well as in intensifying the vulnerability and degradation of those on the unprotected side of the constructed divide between light and dark, wives and prostitutes, good girls and bad ones (Brown, 1995:170).

Thus the state/law actively produces the very categories used to regulate women differently.

Carol Smart warns us that "we should not make the mistake [of thinking] that law can provide the solution to the oppression that it celebrates and sustains" (Smart, 1989:49). The law is racist, as it is classist, abelist, and in many other ways oppressive - turning to it as a site to enforce and uphold a politics of prevention need not be abandoned, but such strategies to need to be critically assessed and examined for who in fact, they are intended to protect. The statistical likelihood of a black women in the United States successfully charging a white man with rape, remains minuscule in comparison to the 'reverse' white charges of rape by black
aggressors. Further, relying on the state to help prevent violence against women suggests a prioritizing of rape over other, equally urgent political and practical concerns. Heberle comments:

Turning to these institutions offers increased legitimacy to the violence of the state in general and to racist and patriarchal norms vis-a-vis justice and freedom of movement for women in particular. Advocating strong policing strategies as a means of protection places feminist critiques of the racist/patriarchal state in the background in light of the 'reality' of sexual violence (Heberle, 1996:69).

An uncritical reliance on legal and state sanctions against violence against women raises problematic questions about the work to be done based on a complex and yet practical theory and practice of the ways in which racism and sexism operate together, thus perhaps limiting the possibilities for "alliances to be made around race and gendered struggles for justice" (Heberle, 1996:75). Using police and courts which are bastions of institutionalized and individual racism as rape prevention potentially foregrounds sexual violence as more important than racism. It serves to excuse the racism of the police and the greater likelihood of them arresting and sentencing black men under the guise of an acceptable or at best unavoidable cost to stopping rape. We can see the 'whiteness' of this strategy - appealing to a racist institution to prevent rape of primarily white women (not because black women don't get raped but because the black women are much less likely to turn to the very institution that oppresses them and denies their redress) - however, as well, this argument has important appeal on grounds exceeding race:

If...state powers are no more gender neutral than they are with regard to class and race, such appeals involve seeking protection from masculinist institutions against men, a move more in keeping with the politics of feudalism than freedom. Indeed, to be 'protected' by the same power whose violation one fears perpetuates the very modality of dependence and powerlessness marking much of women's experience across widely diverse cultures and epochs (Brown, 1995:170).
We need to examine the costs and limitations of a potential shift of reliance from our traditional protectors (men), to a new, and still masculinist site of protection (the state):

...in what ways might women's deepening involvement with the state entail exchanging dependence upon individual men for regulation by contemporary institutionalized processes of male domination? And how might the abstractness, the ostensible neutrality, and the lack of a body and face in the latter help to disguise these processes, inhibiting women's consciousness of their situation qua women, and thereby circumscribing the impetus for substantive feminist political change (Brown, 1995:173)?

It seems to me that one important way in which this might happen is by the problematic and paradoxical nature of this relationship ceasing to forcefully present itself as problematic, dangerous, concrete, and as anything but neutral. We need then to be vigilant in asking in what ways are legal reform strategies in danger of reproducing, rather than escaping or redefining relations of domination vis-a-vis sexualized violence?

...domination, dependence, discipline, and protection, the terms marking the itinerary of women's subordination in vastly different cultures and epochs, are also characteristic effects of state power and therefore caste state-centred feminist politics under extreme suspicion for possibly reiterating rather than reworking the condition and construction of women (Brown, 1995:173).

The anti-rape movement, like other parts of the North American women's movement has been subject to much direly needed criticism about the whiteness of its participants and of the subjects it serves. Examining strategies for prevention for how they might include and exclude particular groups both as activists and as consumers of services is one important way of challenging this occlusion. It has been not-infrequently pointed out that "the failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of colour" (Crenshaw, 1994:99/100). The racism, as well
as the gender and class biases of the law, the courts and the police means that using them as tools of violence prevention tends to render these strategies ineffective for women of colour doubly oppressed by those institutions. The notion that women can unproblematically call on police protection or legal sanctions is a highly raced (and certainly classed) one. For women of colour who may chose not to draw on the police or the courts for protection from rape, "home is not simply a man's castle in patriarchal terms, but it is also a safe haven from the indignities of life in a racist society" (Crenshaw, 1994:103). The state, therefore, needs to be clearly and consistently identified as a site of production of difference and power as well as a site of political struggle. It needs to be seen for the ways that it upholds inequalities in much the same way as other major institutions of any culture, and in ways deeply connected to and enmeshed with the relations of domination articulated by individual men. Although strategic and informed efforts to use the law and other state bureaucratic institutions may be useful at times, this strategic use should not be confused with a lulled sense that these are neutral sites to be used naively for protection. Legal reform is not only a raced solution to the problem of violence against women, it ultimately undercuts the radical potential of the violence prevention movement by discursively and effectively recreating the very relations it seeks to upset. For these reasons we need to use it cautiously, vigilant always of what it limits as well as what it enables.

The grassroots feminist anti-violence movement is not naive, and is most often well-aware of the limits of the law both in terms of its oppressive nature towards 'others,' among which women as a category might be included, and in terms of its sluggishness and resistance to change. Many who continue to battle the state as a prime site of violence prevention are also highly critical of it as a site that reproduces rather than unsettles relations of domination. Yet it has continued to remain one of the two central loci of feminist organizing for change and prevention
of sexualized violence, and has continued to dominate thinking about prevention at the expense of, rather than with the inclusion of, other more immediate resistance strategies. The understanding, articulated here by Gordon and Riger that the "tendency to view rape in legal and medical terms results in emphasizing the consequences of a serious social problem, rather than its prevention" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:124), is often, as in this case, followed by a retreat to reliance on the very system we have just suggested cannot help us: "Until rape is seen as a product of social interaction in our society, policy makers will never promote the necessary changes to alter the norm of acceptable behaviour in our society" (Gordon and Riger, 1989:124). I want to argue that one explanation for this limited vision is the fact that women's resistance to violence, their daily acts of self-defense, remain mostly invisible at the level of prevention theory, and are therefore not available to augment strategies such as legal reform in the goal of violence prevention.

It is not, I argue, policy makers who will prevent rape. They have other important roles to play, but primary prevention is not their domain. When legal changes do occur, they often bring to light a whole new set of existing problems, often simply obscuring rather than eradicating, others. "Legal reforms are not simply slow, but they may be injurious to women, or may hide or relocate the fundamental problem" (Smart, 1989:43). Carol Smart provides a useful analysis of a significant Canadian legal reform, believed to be an important battle won in the war against sexual assault, the adoption in 1981 of Bill C-127, and of the dubious gains this change, fought for by feminist and grass-roots activists, actually conferred upon women. The new bill primarily did away with the legal concept of "rape" and replaced it with three levels of sexual assault of increasing severity, each carrying increased terms of imprisonment. Although the feminist aim was certainly to widen the conceptual net and include what many would see as normal male activity as "simple sexual assault" (the first of the three-tiered system), it has been argued
that the result has been, in fact, fewer convictions. Longer and more severe jail terms accompany these new levels of sexual assault (even simple assault carries with it a potential 10-year penalty), and thus the likelihood of conviction has declined. Judges and juries seem less likely to convict when the penalties are deemed to be too harsh for the crime. Thus Smart points out:

...the apparent feminist victory (even marital rape was criminalized) brought with it disadvantages... Whilst the feminists wanted a more effective criminal justice system, they did not want to support the conservative law and order argument which demanded harsher punishments (Smart, 1989:45).

The passing of Bill C-127 brought with it the inevitable dangers that accompany political strategies. Besides refiguring legal notions of rape and sexual assault, it was also used to increase arrests and penalties for sexual activities not necessarily violent, but seen to be deviant by the state, and thus seen to fall under the same umbrella as sexual assault. Under-age sex and gay sex in particular, were caught in a tightening net of regulation, and the apparent feminist victory thus brought with it other highly oppressive controls of sexual life:

As a general strategy [feminists] wanted to reduce the power of the state to regulate sexuality whilst increasing the autonomy of women by providing effective remedies against abuse. However, the feminist rape reform proposals became part of a package of greater regulation over sexual behaviours deemed undesirable... So the feminist reforms coincided with other demands for greater control over sexual behaviour, but only those which gave more powers to the criminal justice system were adopted... What was achieved was a promise of easier conviction for rape (a promise which may not be honoured in practice) in exchange for a tightening of the net of regulation (Smart, 1989:46).

Bill C-127 reminded us of the dangers of all political strategies. While certain gains were made for the feminist anti-violence movement, we were reminded that the law offers us a limited, and certainly complex and even contradictory route to rape prevention. The assumption by, in this case Canadian feminists and anti-rape
activists, that these kinds of legal changes would in fact 'increase the autonomy of
women by providing effective remedies against abuse' was a naive one. More
convictions for rape, even if this aim had been achieved, does not provide adequate
or 'effective remedies' against sexualized violence.

One of the reasons for the persistent turn to the law as a site of assault
prevention may be the continued belief in both collective and public actions as more
effective than individual and/or private ones. For example, Naomi Wolf,
presenting a troubling argument about the difference between "power feminism"
and "victim feminism" relays the story of university women writing the names of
their date-rapists on the bathroom walls. Wolf bemoans (and dismisses entirely)
this action as being next to useless, certainly an example of victim feminism because
"their action is not public, it does not demand structural change, it does not confront
the men in question with their accusers, nor does it give them the opportunity to
respond to the charge" (Wolf, 1994:xvii). Interestingly she makes no comment about
whether this might be an effective rape prevention strategy. (As an aside, she also
seems unable to conceptualize a women's bathroom in a university as a public
space, perhaps since only women use the space?). Wolf's suggestion is that these
well-educated and privileged women use their considerable resources "to put their
tuition in escrow, call a press conference, and demand a revised sexual assault
grievance procedure" (Wolf, 1994:xvii). Good suggestions of course, but not highly
preventative ones. When we assess prevention strategies, one of our questions need
always be: will this improve the quality of our lives, increase our freedoms, reduce
our fear? Passing on the names of violent men to other women is a wise and
perhaps effective form of prevention. Demanding that the university take greater
and better responsibility for the violent men on its campus is important, but will not
prevent the date-rape that night.
Another reason for the persistent pull towards legal reform is the oft-rationalized pragmatic one, that legal reform is what is available, that we need to rely on existing systems, legal justice and social service, to solve the problem of violence now, and that idealized and less messy and contradictory strategies are a luxury ill-afforded when we are in the middle of a war against women. There is, in fact, suggests Heberle, much pressure to turn to the state to remedy sexualized violence. When our picture of violence against women is so horrific, and women's ability to resist so undermined and denied, then the state seems one of the few institutions powerful enough to actually do anything to prevent violence:

The limits placed on women's agency through totalizing interpretations of the 'reality' of sexual violence may encourage feminists to continue to turn to the very social and political institutions which continue to represent public patriarchy. Through the years, for what are clearly pragmatic reasons, women have with increasing frequency turned to the 'legitimate' violence and paternalistic protection of the state. They turn to the courts for punitive justice against batterers and to the social service industry for physical and psychic sustenance. Feminism knows that these institutions are the representative sites of patriarchal rule, but antiviolence advocates argue for the pragmatic necessity of turning to them in order to cope with the immediacy and 'reality' of sexual violence (Heberle, 1996:68).

This kind of pragmatism rests on the belief that women are not capable of stopping violence, for surely teaching women to break a knee cap and flee is as pragmatic if not more so than trying to change the law, or getting counselling to help us heal and cope better the next time. Ultimately Heberle suggests that turning to the state or the law to remedy sexualized violence is not simply a benign and arguably ineffective strategy, but in fact a dangerous one: "state centred, bureaucratic, and legalistic strategies may do more to normalize violence as a constitutive aspect of political life than to prevent sexual violence as a constitutive aspect of social life" (Heberle, 1996:69). I argue, therefore, that the feminist anti-violence movement, if it is to continue to draw on the complex and often contradictory strategy of legal
reform, needs to remain vigilant of these very real dangers, and to use the law strategically:

...masculinist state power, consequent to its multiple and unsystematic composition, is something feminist can both exploit and subvert, but only by deeply comprehending in order to strategically outmaneuver its contemporary masculinist ruses (Brown, 1995:196).

The anti-rape movement's position on prevention is rendered ever-more complex by its relationship to state funding. In her book Confronting Rape: The Feminist Anti-Rape Movement and the State, Nancy Matthews suggests that reliance on state funding played a critical role in both the theoretical perspectives and the practical work of the grass-roots anti-rape movement in the United States. Her thesis, that reliance on state funding acted to shift the work of the movement from preventing rape to "managing" it, is an unsettling one, but one which offers much insight into the nature of the prevention work carried out by the movement.

Connecting the emergence of professionalized rape crisis work with funding of such services by the state, I argue that state agencies prefer and promote the individualized treatment model of addressing rape, rather than the more political analyses developed by early activists. State sponsorship of services and the related ascendancy of service-provision are a conservatizing influence on the movement because they shift the focus to therapeutically managing the aftermath of rape rather than to changing social relations in order to prevent rape (Matthews, 1994:xiv).

Prevention in the North American grass-roots anti-rape movement easily slid into an after-the-fact approach. Actions such as helping women heal from their assaults through crisis counselling, accompaniment to hospitals, police and courts, raising consciousness of violence-against-women among high-school students and other community groups, providing politicizing information to services providers (police, the crown, social workers, medical staff), organizing public demonstrations such as

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26 Although Matthews' research is American only, and specifically an examination of the anti-rape movement in the Los Angeles area. I believe her thesis is highly relevant to the movement as it developed in Canada, and certainly coincides with my experiences of the movement in Ontario.
Take Back the Night marches, came to be conceptualized as the prevention work of the movement. Thus while the opening lines of the Constitution of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres read: "The objectives of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres is to implement the legal, social and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent and ultimately eradicate rape and sexual assault" (CASAC, 1985:1), the prevention practices of the movement have been increasingly confined to the kinds of activities outlined above; activities which do enormous good in raising consciousness, in providing feminist crisis and counselling services to survivors of sexualized violence, but which function almost exclusively in the wake of violence. Even the most controversial work of the movement, for example the organizing and implementation of 'confrontations' in which a survivor of assault would confront her aggressor, accompanied by a group of rape crisis workers, with a clear and empowering script, functions only after-the-fact. While such an action may shame, embarrass, and most hopefully educate the aggressor, it does not stop the aggression that has happened.

It is important to recognize the grass-roots anti-rape movement as a contested terrain. Its policies and practices are not cleanly united, despite its common understanding of the problem of violence against women. Different parts of the movement, and different rape crisis centres were and continue to be swayed heavily by the particular people involved at any given time, and by the local contexts in which they work. To paint a uniform picture would be erroneous. For example, prevention was taken up by some parts of the movement in more proactive ways, self-defense courses were (and continue to be) sponsored, signs warning women of rapes in particular neighbourhoods were posted, help was given to women fleeing abusive relationships. These activities, which work more primarily to stop violence before it happens were, and continue to be, part of the movement's work. My argument is not that these strategies never exist, but rather that they are not the
focus of the work, they are not theorized in the ways causes and treatments of sexual violence are, and they are the activities left behind when funding is tight, when even staffing the crisis lines is difficult. These are the luxuries of the movement, the add-ons, both conceptually and practically.27

The limitations of practices of prevention, as well as severe short-falls in theorizing about prevention, have kept many women trapped in locations of victimhood. Despite several decades of anti-violence work we still need to ask the same questions:

Have we learned much beyond [the] myths about assault and the aggressor? Have we found alternatives to the rules that seriously restrict our behaviour and activities and that simply don't work? Few of us have been raised to consider ourselves as powerful and potential creative resisters of assault; few of us have been given instruction in how we might use our bodies, our voices, our minds and our will to survive so as to respond to diverse types of aggression that we encounter throughout our complex lives (Weintraub, 1995:1/2).

The strategies we might imagine for effective prevention are many, and range from learning the simplest punches and yells, to the complexities of negotiating or not giving up control, even when we are terrified and feeling powerless in the face of an aggressor. The easy rules of 'victim control' do not serve us well, and perhaps this is one of the reasons effective prevention is so hard to find: it is complex, adaptable, flexible, and it is based most deeply on women's strength in all its facets, physical, but also emotional and psychological. There is no easy answer, and yet it is simultaneously so simple; we need to shift our world view, to move to understand assault as a negotiated process not a foregone conclusion, and very simply, to begin to become narrators of new stories:

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27 I am not offering an historical analysis or broad study of the anti-rape movement, and many of my observations, although at times easily traced to written texts, come from my own work in the Ontario grassroots anti-rape movement between the years 1984 and 1990. For useful analysis and history of the anti-rape movement see Matthews (1994).
Self-consciously performative narratives that represent diverse experiences of sexual violence to the social world can emerge if we take seriously the significance of the multiple sites from which women experience sexual violence and include stories of resistance which subvert the images of women as vulnerable (Heberle, 1996:69).

The following chapter, theorizing the practice of self-defense, and arguing for its inclusion into the feminist theorization of prevention, will perhaps help us become narrators of new stories.

We all have the capacity to rise out of victimhood. As feminists and activists, we have an obligation to picture ourselves and others as capable of that freedom from victimization. Prevention strategies that help us develop that vision are fundamental to leading that whole life we all dream of (Weintraub, 1995:4).
Chapter 4
Tools Not Rules: A Politics of Resistance and Prevention

...self-defense is not merely an immediately effective and practical strategy; as female violence and as the refusal to accept the rapist's body as powerfully real and really powerful, this self-defense strikes at the heart of rape culture (Marcus, 1992:400).

Self-defense culture challenges feminism to elaborate the ways women can resist their subordination in a culture that demands specific kinds of bodies. It demands that feminism take seriously the corporeality and pleasure of that resistance. It demands that feminism get physical (McCaughey, 1997:xiii).

The heterosexual virtue which binds women to male-defined nonviolence is preeminently self-destructive, leading to the sole form of action permitted to women: martyrdom and suicide. To accept the patriarchal construct of nonviolence vs. violence is to side with men's terrorization of women and against women, its avoiders, resisters, and fervent opponents. By assigning to women the project of non-violence, heterosexual virtue focuses the cause of women's victimization on women, blames the victim, tries to reform the victim, but never challenges the ideology of male entitlement which itself creates woman as a construct (Allen, 1986:37).

Increasing public awareness, rallies, candlelight vigils, phone calls, lobbying for stiffer sentencing, and creating safe houses are all feminist moves -- and well they should be. But can't we do more (McCaughey, 1997:180/1).

This thesis has addressed, so far, the limitations of discourses, past and present, of violence against women and particularly of its prevention. I have attempted to imagine new discursive terrain that might offer more fertile and fruitful domains for thinking about resistance and prevention. I would like to shift now, from thinking that is tied (either in critique or even proactive resistance) to dominant and taken-for granted thinking about violence prevention to thinking
about possibilities not usually taken up in feminist violence prevention circles. I
would like to do this thinking without appeal to perfection, or to unitary solutions,
but rather in the spirit of expanding the scope of what we call prevention. I would
like, then, to move from thinking about discourses to thinking about practices
(which is not to say, of course, that discourse is not a kind of practice). In the
following pages I will look at self-defense as a kind of prevention of sexualized
violence which places women's agency and power at the fore, as a kind of practice
which "treats sexual violence as a variable practice of dominance rather than as an
immutable reality of gendered identity" (Heberle, 1996:70). To do so is not to deride
the strategies of legal reform or consciousness raising which have so far been the
main-stay of feminist prevention practice. It is, however, to acknowledge that self-
defense works to make real the fact that rape is an unfolding process with an
indeterminate end - and it does so in a more immediate and practical way than
either legal reform or consciousness raising can. My project, therefore, is to imagine
what prevention might look like if we added a new and critical component to its
make-up, and what this kind of prevention might do to our picture of sexualized
violence. I imagine and advocate self-defense as a diversifying tactic, a strategy to
add to our arsenal of anti-violence weapons, an attempt to move towards multiple
(and even sometimes contradictory) strategies in our fight for lives more free of
sexualized violence. In so doing, strategies that have been distasteful and
uncomfortable may come to be seen as important and legitimate parts of the
struggle. I cite the following for the moving way Lorraine Hansberry calls for
multiple practices in the face of racism:

I think, then, that Negroes must concern themselves with every single
means of struggle: legal, illegal, passive, active, violent and non-
violent. That they must harass, debate, petition, give money to court
struggles, sit-in, lie-down, boycott, sing hymns, pray on steps - and
shoot from their windows when the racists come cruising through their communities. And in the process, they must have no regard whatsoever for labels and pursed lips in the light of their efforts. The acceptance of our present condition is the only form of extremism which discredits us before our children (Hansberry cited in Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:65/6).

My hope here is to begin to articulate not only a politics of prevention (Marcus, 1992), but also a theory of self-defense (McCaughey, 1997) - to propose that self-defense need be part of the theoretical work of feminist anti-violence theorists, as well as part of the practical work of feminist anti-violence activists. I concur with Martha McCaughey (1997:xii) that "many feminists have neglected to consider seriously women's self-defense training as a means of subverting the embodied ethos of rape culture...self-defense lacks a political theory, and theorists don't discuss self-defense."

This chapter is grounded in the belief that when self-defense is left untheorized it remains (partially) invisible as a practice and a strategy. My aim is therefore to begin some of the work of articulating a theory and politics of prevention that includes self-defense at its core. This thesis has attempted to expose, examine, and ultimately unsettle established feminist discourses about violence against women. Self-defense is one way of interrupting these discourses because it offers new ways to think about what it means to be a victim, to be fearful, to resist or prevent violence, and to mobilize fear as a resource for resistance. Thinking about our ability to stop violence in its tracks must necessarily at the very least inform, and more likely significantly unsettle how we make sense of these ideas and the discourses which surround them. This chapter poses the possibility of physical resistance for women as a way of stopping sexualized violence, and simultaneously demands that feminist anti-violence theorizing make room for this action.
I am divided here, in my position as both insider and outsider to the feminist anti-violence movement. As outsider, researcher, academic and theoretician it seems painfully obvious and simple that physical resistance, self-defense, be part of any strategy of violence prevention. I am moved at times to abandon this work in frustration at stating the obvious. Certainly it could hardly be said more clearly than when Renee Heberle (1996:70) aptly sums up Sharon Marcus' work: "she argues that the movement focuses too much on the experience of rape that has already happened at the expense of exposing and thus strategically demobilizing cultural scripts that constitute women as rapable." As insider, however, I never cease to arrive face to face with feminist resistance to women's use of their bodies, in physically aggressive ways, to defend themselves. At a recent meeting, where I was explaining my work to the director of a feminist research institute on prevention of violence against women, I was asked, "So you actually advocate women using violence?" The question was asked in such a way that made the problematic nature of this position clear, even to the director of an organization committed to preventing sexualized violence. While I do not seek here to lay out a history of the resistance to women's use of aggression, such a history continues to exert significant influence on the thinking and practice of both feminist activists and theorists (and, of course, more obviously on non-feminists as well). When discussion of women's physical resistance arises it seems to get lost in a vacuum of fear, derision, or political mistrust (in activist and theoretical worlds alike).

In response to violence, it's natural to consider violence. Yet as a movement we don't. If a woman is abused and strikes back, we often work for her defense. We respond to her risk. But we do not ourselves shoulder it, even as a movement. Nor do we encourage women to avail ourselves of violence as a serious, perhaps effective option. Why? (Kaye/Kantrowitz,1992:19).

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See McCaughey (1997) Chapter 1 for such an overview.
The answer to Kaye/Kantrowitz's 'why?' is in part the work of this chapter.

There are several related and important areas that might fall under a discussion of self-defense which I will not be addressing in these pages. The first of these is the broad ranging discussion about the legality of self-defense. This topic has been well-rehearsed within arenas of philosophy, political science, criminology, and law. Recently it has also become the focus of discussions within feminist legal and anti-violence theorizing, particularly as it relates to women who kill their aggressors (usually batterers) in self-defense. While the topic is a fascinating one, it is not the focus of my discussion here. I hesitate to become bogged down in discussions of the legal constraints and ramifications of self-defense, given that my focus is more directly a discussion of the sociological reasons women do not use their bodies to defend themselves. While there certainly are many complexities about the legal rights and costs of using self-defense, I don't believe that at this particular juncture in time, they are the constraining force in women's use of self-defense - and so I leave this discussion for another time.

A second area I will not address other than peripherally, is women's use of firearms in self-defense. Women and guns is a topic of increasing scrutiny, more directly in the United States than in Canada, and although it is significantly connected to women defending themselves from sexual violence, it also begs the question of women's use of their own bodies as weapons of self-defense. While many would agree that if they could only learn how to shoot a gun they would be able to fend off an attacker, there are far fewer women who believe that even with training they would be able to disable an aggressor long enough to escape by simply using what are usually referred to in self-defense language as 'body weapons' alone. In the context of this thesis, I am interested in self-defense not only practically as a tool of violence prevention, but also as a technique that disrupts gender relations, and that challenges feminist focus on women's victimhood. While
the issues raised by women using guns are connected to and both influence and are influenced by women's self-defense, they are also far more complex and are rightfully the focus of another paper.

What, then, do we imagine to be included in the concept and practice of 'self-defense'? There are a range of activities that fall under the broad notion of self-defense, not by any means all feminist. In concrete terms, Bart and O'Brien, among the few academics to have studied women's physical resistance to violence describe a range of distinct defense techniques women report using to attempt to prevent their assaults. The techniques most commonly cited are to:

1. flee or try to flee;
2. scream, yell, or talk loudly - usually in an effort to attract attention;
3. use 'affective verbal' techniques such as begging and pleading with the assailant in order to gain his sympathy;
4. use 'cognitive verbal' techniques, which included attempting to reason with the assailant, 'conning' him, trying to make him 'see her as a person,' and stalling;
5. take advantage of environmental intervention - someone or something in the surrounding that intruded on the scene and either caused the assailant to stop the assault or gave her an opportunity to escape;
6. respond with physical force, the possibilities ranging from a simple push to self-defense techniques to use of a weapon (Bart and O'Brien, 1984:90).

Which of these techniques we might want to include in our thinking about self-defense and which we might want to discard will depend in part on our intent in thinking about the topic. As we have seen, what is empowering and what is effective as self-defense do not necessarily coincide. Bart and O'Brien's 'affective' verbal strategies are ones not often taught in feminist self-defense courses, where it is assumed that these techniques do not work to alter the power dynamics at play in a rape scenario and likely will serve only to reinforce the gender ideologies of masculine dominance and female vulnerability that structure instances of sexualized violence in the first place. Advice given to women from more traditional
sources, however, such as police or non-feminist self-defense instruction, may often draw upon exactly these strategies, certainly at least in part because they are accepted and understood behaviours for women in the way that yelling and physical resistance are not. Which of these strategies is most effective is a different question. Bart and O'Brien's (1984:90) study demonstrates that women who successfully prevent rape are those who use the greatest combination of strategies, and those in this study who employed no strategies were all raped. This in itself speaks loudly to the value of encouraging the concept of fighting back without needing to get bogged down in the perfect way to do so. Resisting at all is better than not resisting if your aim is to avoid being raped. Bart and O'Brien (1984:90) do also show, however, that some strategies are more effective than others: women who successfully avoided being raped were more likely to flee (or try to flee), to use a loud voice, and to use physical force; women who did not successfully stop their rape were more likely to plead with their aggressor.

Despite these distinctions, my concern here is less to examine a particular kind or method of self-defense, and rather to think more broadly about what it means, and what it might look like to foreground women's agency and physical strength in our thinking and practicing of violence prevention. There are two primary ways to avoid or reduce one's likelihood of sexual violence: to deny an aggressor the opportunity to begin the process of sexual assault, or to escape from, disable or otherwise stop the aggressor once an assault has begun (Brewer, 1994:144). Self-defense is concerned with the latter. While women are well-schooled in tactics of avoidance (albeit, as we have seen, tactics which usually severely curtail women's freedoms and which are only marginally effective), we are rarely schooled in techniques of self-defense. I am not talking about therefore, "models of rape prevention that keep women indoors after dark or otherwise put a restrictive onus on women and which do not challenge men's freedom relative to
women's" (McCaughey, 1997:3). Rather I am talking about rape prevention that assumes women's agency and even their power. Self-defense requires that women put their physical bodies on the line, use kicks and punches and loud voices to protect themselves. In physical terms alone, the kind of force needed for women to stop a sexual assault is quite minimal. Sexual aggressors are counting on terrified and passive victims, they are counting on and rely on women's fear. Fighting bodies are not part of their imagined equation, and will usually send them looking for an easier victim. In psychological terms, however, self-defense faces an inexplicable and almost indescribably hard obstacle. From the belief that they simply can't hit, to the belief that they shouldn't, women appear to be almost as terrified by self-defense as they are by rape - and the feminist anti-violence movement both echoes and helps structure this response.

In her book Real Knockouts, Martha McCaughey (1997:59) groups women's self defense into four possible categories: padded attacker courses; firearms courses; martial arts courses or martial arts oriented self-defense courses; and fitness oriented courses. Searles and Berger (1987:63) offer a typology of their own which divides self-defense for women into four different: police-sponsored courses; self-defense based on the martial arts model taught by men; self-defense based on the martial arts model taught by women; and feminist self-defense. Certainly we could offer a number of other possibilities. The range of activities taught in these courses varies greatly, and not everything passing as self-defense is equally committed to an empowering notion of women's rights to resist and fight back against violence. Searles and Berger (1987:64) suggest, for example, that the information given in police-lead courses "tends to encourage [women] to limit their mobility and avoid potentially dangerous situations. Police are generally cautious about advising women to 'fight back' and often recommend 'passive resistance' (telling the offender you have your period, playing along until you have a chance to escape) before or
instead of 'active resistance'." Likewise, McCaughey wonders about the effectiveness of martial arts courses that don't include an overtly feminist framework which would acknowledge the often considerable psychological impediments to women using physical aggression, even in self-defense. Others have echoed this concern, suggesting that,

many of the self-defense programs currently offered across the country [United States] do not adequately take into account the particular needs of women. It is common for self-defense courses to place most of their emphasis on physical skills, without demonstrating any real understanding of traditional female gender-role socialization and how this inhibits a woman from effectively acting in her own defense (Searles and Follansbee, 1984:65).

My aim here is not to evaluate particular methods of self-defense in relation to others, but is rather to examine what happens when women's use of physical aggression is brought into the centre of feminist violence prevention strategies. For this reason, I am less concerned with the particular ways and styles in which women have learned to fight back, than the fact that some women have chosen to do so. This is not to suggest that I am neutral in my assessment of better and worse ways to learn self defense, it is simply that this assessment is not what is at stake for the moment. Because I want to look at what happens to our thinking (and particularly feminist thinking) when we begin to see women kicking, yelling and punching as central to violence prevention efforts, I will, for the purposes of this discussion (and not for the purposes of arguing that this is the only physical self-defense training that might be useful for all women) draw on, in theoretical terms, the kind of self-defense which I seek to bring into the fold of the feminists anti-violence movement's prevention strategies: self-defense which is feminist (whether self-identified or not) in that it is grounded in an approach intended to empower women, increase their freedoms and mobility, improve their choices and quality of life and to reduce their fear. That there is self-defense training that does not meet
these criteria is clear, and that these other types and methods of self-defense might be useful and likable and effective for some women is also clear. My parameters of in- and exclusions are intended to allow us to talk about self-defense which serves not only to give women skills to kick and punch and yell and flee, but also which serves to disrupt gender ideologies of women's passivity and men's aggression. For this reason it is important that we imagine self-defense as openly and broadly as possible, not foreclosing on what might constitute fighting back only because it seems to us impractical, unlikely, inappropriate or unimaginable.

Most feminist self-defense courses incorporate a series of 'success stories,' tales of women's successful attempts in warding off a sexual assault. These stories are important, for even if we embrace the notion of self-defense for women, we are still often locked in a world of limited imagination when it comes to women fighting back.

...instructors attempt to undo women's belief that they cannot fight by sharing stories of women's successful fights. Sharing women's stories of triumph and survival are central to self-defense culture, and important for students because success stories are rarely reported in the media, thus perpetuating women's lack of confidence... These success stories help instill a sense of confidence and a broader less androcentric perspective of what counts as self-defense. For instance, self-defense is not necessarily a formulaic set of tightly controlled moves... It is a set of strategies employed that might begin with tricking or distracting an attacker, include only verbal self-defense and then running away, involve flailing and going ballistic, or may even include, in a gang attack for example, a strategic decision to submit to the first man in order to create an opportunity to escape. Sharing women's success stories helps redefine what counts as fighting...

(McCaughey, 1997:101).

Self-defense, women yelling at and fighting against their aggressors, is important to us not only because it serves the valuable purpose of helping individual women prevent individual assaults, but also because it "disrupts the gender ideology that
makes men's violence against women seem inevitable" (McCaughey, 1997:ix), it challenges rape culture.

IT WORKS

It is perhaps best to begin any discussion of self-defense with the very simple fact that it works: "when women are prepared to use violence, they are less likely to get raped, abused and murdered" (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:19). Despite the fact that many women know this to be true, and that many have successfully used self-defense to prevent violence, it is a far from easy task to convince people of the practicality and efficacy of women using their bodies to ward off attackers. This idea, of course, flies in the face of our most basic and deep-seated assumptions about men and women; that men are strong and women weak, that men are aggressive and women gentle. However, if you are standing facing a man intent upon raping you, and your dearest wish is not to be raped, the most effective way to stop that rape is to fight. Most self-defense instruction will divide 'fighting' into verbal and physical resistance. Women studying self-defense learn that verbal tactics "matching an assailant verbally, without ever getting physical, will usually successfully spoil his efforts" (McCaughey, 1997:10). And there are ample studies by now (Fein, 1993; Searles and Follansbee, 1984; Ullman and Knight, 1992; Searles and Berger, 1987; Bart and O'Brien, 1984) which show us, as conclusively as such studies can, that a combination of verbal and physical resistance is the most effective route to stopping an aggression - much more effective that the usual array of passive strategies such as pleading, cooperating, crying, reasoning. Those who decry its effectiveness seem to be primarily those who have never tried it and who are eschewing it on some theoretical or political ground (McCaughey, 1997:136), or those who are scared by it. "I was afraid [of stabbing him with a knife], corresponds to it won't work," writes Kaye/Kantrowitz (1992:20) in answer to her own question.
about why the movement doesn't advocate physical resistance to rape. "Using the knife might make it worse," she continues, "but how much worse could it get? He's already threatened to kill her."

Women have the strength to fight - our bodies are factually, physically capable of such activity. What we mean by self-defense is not complex - and can range from the most effective of all tactics, simply fleeing, to using bodies to break bones and give bruises, to using our bodies to kill. These acts are mythical for most women, but need not be. This is not to suggest that self-defense is a process whereby women discover that they are 'really' aggressive and violent, rather it is to begin to re-write the 'scripted interaction' (Marcus, 1992) that is rape. To share McCaughey's (1997:12) aim, it is to "examine and understand gender, aggression, and sexual assault in ways that create an opportunity for transforming our body-selves from objects of patriarchal reflection into agents against patriarchal oppression."

The disbelief in women's ability to fight is, in fact, one of the strengths of women's self-defense, and one of the reasons teaching women and children to fight back is such a different project from teaching men to fight. The subject-subject violence (Marcus, 1992:396) understood to be part of male fights, be they in bars, street brawls, wars, or in organized sports are premised on an engagement between two equally participating subjects. In some sense, even if a fight is not wanted and is unsolicited, male-male, subject-subject fights are based on a mutual agreement about fighting - they can expect to hurt and be hurt, and there is a certain accepted set of rules to this process. One of the shocking things about women fighting back is that a rape scenario is not a situation of subject-subject violence, but rather is one where the subject (rapist) engages an object (victim) who is denied access to the game as an agentic subject. Thus, when women break down these rules, and insert themselves into the rape scenario as acting subjects, either by fleeing and thus
refusing to play the game at all, or by fighting and taking their place as actors rather than the acted-upon, rapists frequently balk.

In order to understand the difference which fighting back can make, we must distinguish sexualized violence from subject-subject violence. Sexualized violence anticipates and seeks its target's subjection as a subject of fear, defenselessness, and acquiescence to injury. In subject-subject violence, each interlocutor expects and incites violence in the other, whereas in sexualized violence women are excluded from the community of violence. Subject-subject violence underlies intraracial masculine homosocial competition, in which men fight one another with the understanding that they are following the same rules and that one man can expect to receive from another any violence which he metes out to him. Although on one level the men are opponents, on another level they cooperate in their agreement to play the same game (Marcus, 1992:396).

Sexual violence is easily and obviously distinguishable from subject-subject violence because there is almost no expectation that women will ever even attempt to participate in the game other than as 'subjects of fear, defenselessness, and acquiescence to injury.' This way of thinking about rape so deeply structures our imaginings of the event that a picture of women actively fighting back (and here I am speaking of using powerful and effective physical and verbal strategies rather than pleading or begging or physically struggling in ineffective ways) is all but unimaginable. When women are cautioned, most often by police or other 'experts' in criminology not to fight back, it is most often because fighting back is unimaginable to them.

In an article in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, police officers are cautioned not to offer straight-forward advice to women about resisting rape. This caution is based on research and FBI experience which shows that the motivations of rapists vary greatly and that different techniques will therefore be appropriate in different situations. It is abundantly clear, however, that whether we are hearing the words of the FBI agents or those of convicted rapists who are quoted offering
advice to women about what they could do to stop a rape, neither imagines women using enough violence to disable an aggressor.

In our opinion, the most important unknown variable to consider when giving advice to potential victims is the type of rapist they may confront and the motivation that underlies his sexual attack. Is the victim being confronted by an inadequate male who has fantasized a mutually acceptable relationship? By a sexual sadist who delights in the victim's response to physical or emotional pain? Or by an offender who desires to punish or degrade women? In each case, the motivation is different, and the rapist's reaction to the victim's resistance is correspondingly different (Hazelwood and Harpold, 1986:4).

This passage, which seems rational enough, loses its sense when we imagine a woman breaking a knee-cap so the rapist can't run after her, breaking a collar bone so the rapist can't use his arm, and fleeing with a loud yell. It doesn't really matter whether the aggressor is an inadequate male, a sexual sadist, or just a misogynist if he can't walk or use his arms and his victim has long since fled the scene. There are, of course, particularities about assault situations that would and should lead women to adopt different strategies, and this is certainly not to suggest that any one technique is effective in all situations. But it is to suggest that the police are rarely thinking about effective self-defense when they caution women not to resist. We may assume that our rapists don't think much differently:

During an interview [with the rapist] about one of the rapes [he had committed], he was asked what his reaction would have been had the victim resisted him either physically or verbally. He thought for several moments and replied, 'I don't know, I might have left, but then again, I might have killed her. I just don't know' (Hazelwood and Harpold, 1986:3).

It is precisely the exclusion of women from the picture of subject-subject violence, the assumption that they will only be 'subjects of fear' and panicked immobility that allow aggressors to assume that they can kill any woman they want. "Every male-female interaction assumes: in a physical fight he will win. Every man assumes this
about every woman. This is the assumption behind rape" (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:21). It need not occur to this rapist that if his ear drum had been broken by a powerful blow to the side of his head, or if his shoulder was dislocated, or the wind knocked out of his lungs, he might not have quite the same ability to kill. While this disbelief can be infuriating in some instances, it is also one of our greatest allies, and one of the reasons it takes so little for women to stop a rapist - when the rules of the game change, and women enter the ring as active, aggressive, powerful subjects, rape is no longer just rape: "as self-defense changes the meanings of gender, aggression, and oppression, it also alters the meaning of rape" (McCaughey, 1997:11).

One of the feminist resistances to resistance has been grounded on the need to challenge the prevailing legal and social doctrine that if a woman did not resist, she could not have been raped. We have seen previously how the need to counter this misogynist belief lead feminists down a path towards an equally rigid world in which women not only were not required to resist in order for rape to be rape, but in fact our very ability to act in the face of male aggression was eradicated at the same time. One of the exciting and perhaps more radical aspects of self-defense is that it solicits women to position themselves as worthy of the fight. We need not, in fact should not, advocate resistance so that we will win the court battle after our inevitable rape. We need to advocate self-defense because it is in our own best interests, and because it is perhaps one of the most significant steps towards eradicating the 'social script' of rape which is predicated upon women's cooperation in the face of sexual violence:

...women [need not] demonstrate resistance to provide legal proof that sexual overtures were undesired. A resistance criterion for defending rape has often been used to absolve rapists by expecting women trained in passivity to be able to display the same levels of aggressivity as men. But clearly it is preferable to have stopped a rape
attempt ourselves than to have our raped selves vindicated in court. We should not be required to resist to prove our innocence at some later judicial date, but we should do so to serve our own immediate interests (Marcus, 1992:392).

The fact that self-defense works is not an integral part, if in fact it is part at all, of the discursive terrains concerning violence against women. While studies like Bart and O'Brien's (1984 and 1985) replicate many others in finding that women who employ a combination of yelling and physically fighting their aggressors are likely to escape rape, feminists and non-feminists alike cling to the notion that to fight back is to risk greater injury, is to anger a rapist and 'make things worse,' and is certainly not going to stop the rape. One of the problems in offering statistics to document the success of self-defense as a prevention tool, is that prevention is predictably hard to measure. After being followed for half an hour around a large public reference library (ironically while researching self-defense manuals) I was approached by a man who 'wanted to talk,' as he sat uncomfortably close to me while talking. It is difficult to measure the effects of my firm "well I don't want to talk to you" and the following increasingly persistent and loud responses I used to eventually send him off in another direction. These are daily occurrences for most women, that vary from mild harassment to the testing and pushing that eventually leads to a sexual assault. When women respond (self) defensively and stop a situation from moving from the 'testing' stage to the more overt assault stage (and this is certainly the most effective moment to stop an assault), it never becomes part of any statistical record. Studies of women's resistance to violence don't often include the question "tell us about a time when you stopped an assault," unless that assault was well under way.

But our disbelief in the effectiveness of self-defense extends well beyond the problem of difficulties in measuring prevention. We hold tenaciously to the notion that to fight back is to invite further injury which, as Bart and O'Brien (1985:40)
themselves suggest, assumes that the rape itself does not constitute injury, both physical and mental. The statistics showing that fighting back might increase one’s likelihood of minor injuries, cuts, scrapes, bruises - but that fighting reduces one’s likelihood of being raped - fall on the unheeding ears of both the theorists and activists in the feminist anti-violence movement.29

That verbal strategies alone are so often effective in thwarting rape should not lead us to shy away from the fact our bodies, our abilities to punch, kick, yell, and fight, remain a significant and useful weapon. Our knowledge and belief in our physical capabilities serve us well by allowing our verbal strategies to be enacted with greater force and confidence. It is much easier to yell at a would-be rapist when we know that if yelling is not effective, we can always break his nose, or shatter his knee cap.

The use of physical retaliation undermines the powerlessness which the scenario of violence and fear scripts for us. By talking back and fighting back we place ourselves as subjects who can engage in dialogic violence and respond to aggression in kind; in addition to offering us an opportunity to elude or even overpower an assailant, self-defense undermines a would-be rapist by catapulting him out of his role of omnipotent attacker and surprising him into having to fight someone whom he had marked out as a purely acquiescent victim (Marcus, 1992:397).

Because physical retaliation serves this dual purpose, both of freeing us from rape and upsetting the parametres of rape culture, it is a tremendously powerful and exciting event. Self-defense works as violence prevention strategy, but it also works as feminist practice which recuperates women's agency and brings our power from margin to centre.

29 See Bart and O'Brien (1985:40) for support of this, as well as reference to a number of other studies reporting similar findings.
MASTER'S TOOLS

Violence and aggression have been the domain of men, and feminists are wont to believe that using aggression, even in response to aggression is using the master's tools, which as we have been told, will never destroy the master's house (Lorde, 1984).

Feminists have opposed all sorts of violence, protesting not only rape and battery but war, the draft, and even what have come to be regarded as violent 'phallotechnologies'... Standing behind phrases like 'violence begets violence' and 'the ends don't justify the means,' many feminists have suspected that women's cultivation of aggressive personalities and bodies, especially when pleasurable, amounts to getting duped by male domination. Feminists have tried not to 'play into the patriarchy' by playing men's games and sharing 'male' values. From this vantage point, women's embrace of violence smacks of getting in the pigsty with the pigs (McCaughey, 1997:14).

Aggression as a prevention technique is not abandoned by the feminist anti-violence movement only or even primarily because its efficacy is questioned. At least as importantly, it is rejected because it is seen to be a political mistake. This discomfort with aggression is not to be snidely dismissed as the position of the uninformed, any more than those who advocate the use of physical resistance in the face of sexual violence should be pigeon-holed as suffering from some ignorant kind of false-consciousness about the best political tactics for violence prevention. The question of the use of violence to prevent violence is a serious one within the movement and is deeply tied to women's marginality:

The troublesome question of nonviolence haunts the women's movement and always has. We despise the brutality to which women are subjected by men, the arrogance and casual destructiveness of male violence as embodied in domestic battery, gang skirmishes, and officially sanctioned wars. Feminists have traditionally opposed police brutality, the draft, warfare, rape, blood sports, and other manifestations of the masculine fascination with dominance and death. Yet, like all oppressed peoples, women are divided on the essential question of violence as a tactic (Clarke, 1993:395).
Feminists have long battled apparently 'masculine' tactics and ways of being in the world. Seeing self-defense and women's use of violence as a 'using of the master's tools' brings up a range of concerns that lead us to shy away from it's use: will the world simply become more violent if women use violence?; will women get out of hand and start using violence randomly for far more than just self-defense?; will men just become more violent in response?30 These questions are unanswerable - we simply don't know, although we can hazard many conflicting guesses. They are also, however, questions that assume that women in the present moment are 'not violent,' the flip side of the aggressive male - and as such are based on a perspective which is deeply challenged by theorizing the practice of self-defense, namely that violence is somehow inherent and natural to men, and foreign to women.

Yet we are not always victims. We can be violent. How have we managed to avoid noticing?... The idea that women are inherently non-violent is...dangerous because it's not true. Any doctrine that idealizes us as the non-violent sex idealizes our victimization and institutionalizes who men say we are: intrinsically nurturing, inherently gentle, intuitive, emotional. Such an analysis dooms us to inappropriate kindness and passivity; overlooks both our capacity for and experience with violence; ignores in fact everything about us that we aren't sure we like, including how we sometimes abuse each other. Whatever we disapprove of, we call theirs, and then say, when women do these things - talk loud, use reason, fuck hard, act insensitive or competitive, ride motorcycles, carry weapons, explode with rage, fight - they are acting like men (Kaye/Kantrowitz,1992:24).

We might want to also consider that the notion that women's use of violence in self-defense is simply a reversal of male uses of violence to commit sexual violence, is based on a simplistic binarism where violence used in self-defense is collapsed into the mirror opposite of aggressive violence.

But role reversal never simply replicates the terms of an equation. The depiction of women committing acts of violence against men does not

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30 See Clarke,1993 and McCaughey,1997 Chapter 4 for more complete discussions of the these concerns and the impossibility of answering them.
simply use 'male' tactics of aggression for other ends; in fact, female violence transforms the symbolic function of the feminine within popular narratives and it simultaneously challenges the hegemonic insistence upon the linking of might and right under the sign of masculinity (Halberstam, 1993:191).

This may not make, for some, women's use of violence in self-defense more excusable or better, but it certainly makes it different - it challenges the notion that the master's tools are static solid devices untransformed by context. The cautions, not uncommon in the feminist anti-violence movement, that to use violence is to reproduce the very system we are attempting to change, come to structure how we think about self-defense. The belief that "to declare a war on violence is to replicate the culture that has to change" (Campbell, 1993:151), or that "if women are to avoid becoming like men, women must reject the use of violence" (Allen, 1986:37), leave women trapped in a moral and political imperative not to fight: "while we need to honor personally and privately our very legitimate anger about this problem [violence], we need to temper our public expression of it so that we do not become violators ourselves" (Campbell, 1993:151).

In some perverse sense, I would argue that women might want to consider becoming violators. In this case, the master's tools are extremely effective ones, and if the cost of rape is considerable physical pain to those men who would rape women, our aggressors may decide to reconsider. Further, we need to move from an essentialist and cloistering view that to enact violence is to act 'like a man,' as though that was a clearly defined and static position, and as though women had no part in being violent:

The woman who is violent is not acting like a man. She may be announcing a host of contradictions: that her condition is intolerable; that she is or isn't afraid; that she feels entitled; that she has nothing to lose or something to protect; that she needs physical release; that she's a bully; that she has lost or given over or seeks control (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:24/5).
It is interesting to examine the feminist practice of defining many kinds of oppression as 'violence,' and to explore what this does to our thinking about violence, and particularly about our ability to use it ourselves. The desire to encourage others to take seriously the range of sexual offenses (including harassment, sexist jokes, flashing, whistling, etc.) has often lead feminists to think of sexual violence in terms of a continuum and to categorize all acts on this continuum as forms of violence.

In order to draw public attention to the oppression of women, which is not always located on the body, feminists described nonbodily forms of oppression as 'violent.' Thus feminist politics have construed violence to mean oppressive or diminishing - hence some feminists claims that leers and patronizing jokes are cases of violence (McCaughey, 1997:155).

While this practice has in part served to render 'real' such acts as violations, it has also left little room for the use of "legitimate or non-oppressive violence" (McCaughey, 1997:155). It is as though the language of violence comes to colonize a range of very different acts and experiences, and in thus recouping so many more subtle acts of oppression under the mantle of 'violence' we have marked the tools of violence as unavailable to women. Perhaps more problematically we have created a framework which "subtly requires damaged, violated bodies to substantiate claims that women are oppressed" (McCaughey, 1997:155). The marking of such a broad range of acts as 'violence' and therefore as morally reprehensible has worked simultaneously to leave many women feeling that violence is not an acceptable solution to the problem of sexual assault; violence remains male territory, the tool of our abusers, never acceptable for women, even in self-defense.

Against the assumption that violence is the master's tool, Jeffner Allen (1986:29) suggests that women's non-violence is a patriarchal construct. The
hegemonic connection of women to pacifism and non-violence is one that serves men's sexually aggressive purposes well:

The bond that men proclaim between women and nonviolence becomes the condition for men's successful terrorization of women and for development of an ideology of nonviolence that has nothing to do with women's creation of genuine freedom (Allen, 1986:35).

Allen further suggests that "the ideology of heterosexual virtue forms the cornerstone of the designation of women as nonviolent" (Allen, 1986:35). The deeply embedded connection between women's victimhood, non-violence and 'heterosexual virtue' is disrupted when women begin to bring their bodies to work in aggressive ways to prevent violence.

The ideology of heterosexual virtue entitles men to terrorize - possess, humiliate, violate, objectify - women and forecloses the possibility of women's active response to men's sexual terrorization (Allen, 1986:35).

It is precisely this foreclosure which is denied when women fight back. This may, of course, be another of the reasons for resistance to women's self-defense. Once again what is being unsettled is one of the centre-pieces of our thinking about women: not only are women fighting and stopping rape, but they are dismantling the construct of obedient, male-pleasing heterosexuality.

There is another important perspective on the feminist injunction not to fight. Despite prevailing assumptions about the nature of men's rape of women, sexual violence has very little to do with physical force. This is not to say that rape does not sometimes involve physical violence alongside the sexual assault - but men do not need, most often, physical force or weaponry to overpower a victim - women are as well conditioned as their aggressors to believe that strength is not on their side, and it is therefore, not worth the fight. The important corollary to men needing little physical force to coerce a woman into an unwanted sexual situation is, of course, that women need little physical force to resist such an assault. The
assumption of women's fear-induced immobility, their passivity, and their complete acquiescence in the face of a male aggressor is so deep-seated that in most cases simply a loud noise is enough to deter a rapist. To erode the assumptions surrounding rape a level further, we need to understand that when it comes to rape, men's allegedly superior strength is, in fact, as much a myth as is the belief that white women are raped primarily by black men, or that rape is committed most often by strangers, or at night in dark alleys. That the myth of men's strength (or more aptly women's weakness) is not on the usual list of 'myths and facts' touted so ceaselessly by feminist anti-violence activists and theoreticians, is a testimony only to how deeply entrenched it remains in our collective consciousness. At the end of a two-day, 14 hour self-defense course, women almost without exception are able to smash fist or foot through a one-inch thick piece of pine. To break that board takes many times the strength required to break either nose, knee-cap or collarbone - all acts which would seriously deter all but the most determined of rapists.

Rapists do not prevail simply because as men they are really, biologically, and unavoidably stronger than women...A rapist's ability to accost a woman verbally, to demand her attention, and even to attack her physically depends more on how he positions himself relative to her socially than it does on his allegedly superior physical strength. His belief that he has more strength than a woman and that he can use it to rape her merits more analysis than the putative fact of that strength, because that belief often produces as an effect the male power that appears to be rape's cause (Marcus, 1992:390).

When it comes to rape, neither men's nor women's strength are often pushed to that point at which their abilities may begin to differ. Such moments appear in the Olympics, but are perhaps the least relevant factor in sexual assaults. Women usually give up long before their strength has been pushed to its limits, and men usually violate without using a fraction of their strength.
Self-defense's importance therefore lies, in part, in the fact that rape culture operates on the myth of women's weakness, and when that myth is exposed rape culture loses it's power. Heberle (1996:65) has asked if our talk about our victimization has worked to the opposite effects we had intended, has shored up rape culture rather than brought it falling to its knees. Similarly we need to ask if our ongoing and alarmingly solid belief in male strength and female weakness has not worked to shore up rape culture in different ways. Certainly the fact of women's physical ability to stop violence is one of the most obvious, most powerful, most effective interventions into rape culture. "Because violence against women depends upon the myth of male strength and female weakness, rape culture depends upon the impossibility and inappropriateness of women's aggression" (McCaughey, 1997:11). To challenge this myth, to replace it with the 'reality' of women's physical abilities and the irrelevance of men's marginally superior strength is to make significant incursions into the territory of rape culture; to begin the process of in fact bringing it to it's knees.

IMAGINED VIOLENCE
While we are busy debating the morality or immorality of women using violence, or questioning our abilities to do so, we are predictably mired in the status-quo where women either won't, or simply can't use violence anyway, and where women continue to be raped. The costs of acknowledging women's relationship to violence only in terms of our victimization, as we have seen, have been to maintain women in a place of passive non-resistance, where our only salvation comes from long-term strategies designed to restructure our social order. In her article Imagined Violence/Queer Violence, Judith Halberstam speaks to the possibilities opened up by imaginings, by representations that are, for the moment, only fictions; "this essay does not advocate violence in any simple sense," she suggests, "but it does advocate
an imagined violence, the violence that is native to... 'a place of rage'
(Halberstam, 1993:187). The value of these imaginings lies in their ability to unsettle some assumed links between, for example, women and pacifism, or masculinity and aggression - assumed dyads which are part of the continued landscape of violence against women. That there is no direct, simple, causal relationship between depictions of violence and the use of real violence is not as accepted as it should be by either the mainstream (Thelma and Louise will cause women to go out and randomly kill their rapists) or by feminists ('porn is the theory, rape is the practice'). However, imagined violence does have real effects, even if these are unpredictable. "The relationship between imagined violence and 'real' violence is unclear, contested, negotiable, unstable, and radically unpredictable" (Halberstam, 1993:187).

While Halberstam's (1993:189) "theory of the production of counterrealities as a powerful strategy of revolt," does not address in particular the 'real' experiences of rape and if and how women should fight back, she offers us a strategy that might usefully accompany the concrete and practical learning of skills to punch, kick, yell, - the fostering of images of resistance. This is not far removed from Heberle's (1996:72) call to tell stories of our successes in resisting sexual violence rather than to regale ourselves with stories of our victimizations and our defeats, or to the notion of describing and illuminating the unfamiliar (Campbell, 1993:141) in the hope of rendering possible the currently unimaginable. These strategies have in common at least the hope that thinking, talking, dreaming and watching, things to be different will allow us to think and even 'be' differently:

Women with guns confronting rapists has the potential to intervene in popular imaginings of violence and gender by resisting the moral imperative to not fight violence with violence. Films like Thelma and Louise suggest, therefore, not that we all pick up guns, but that we allow ourselves to imagine the possibilities of fighting violence with violence (Halberstam, 1993:191).
Imagining success as a route to being successful is an accepted strategy in a range of environments. Downhill skiers stand atop their slopes visualizing the route down so as to better execute it when the race is on. ‘Practicing’ in one’s mind is commonly understood to improve one’s skill in ‘reality’. In this light, saturating our social space with images of women successfully resisting sexual violence might actually serve to improve women’s skill at doing so.

Let’s face it, we still live in a world and a century in which a woman who walks (mistake) in the wrong part of town (oh dear) after dark (uh oh) alone (a big no-no) will be blamed by all and sundry if she is raped. People will ask what she expected, doing a fool thing like that. It’s interesting - amusing in a bitter kind of way - maybe even liberating - to envision a slightly different world. The man limps into the emergency room with one ear half torn off and multiple bruises. As he gasps out his story, the doctor shakes his head: ‘You mean you grabbed at her breasts and tried to pull her into your car? Well I mean, dummy, what did you expect?’ And he gets no sympathy, not a shred, not from anyone (Clarke,1993:402).

In addition to being interesting, amusing and liberating, imagining women fighting back might work to shift our world views and to allow us to seriously entertain the possibilities of women stopping violence. These imaginings offer us more than a retreat into fantasy, they also allow fantasy to be considered as a tool of violence prevention:

Women...long identified as victims rather than perpetrators of violence, have much to gain from new and different configurations of violence, terror, and fantasy. Within the ‘nervous system’ women are taught to fear certain spaces and certain individuals because they threaten rape: how do we produce a fear of retaliation in the rapist (Halberstam,1993:191)?

Repeated images in popular culture (the domain of Halberstam’s commentary) but also in news media and feminist discourses might work to disrupt the taken-for-granted success of sexual assaults, might make those intent on sexual aggression begin to question the presumed outcome of such an intent. The presupposed
success of a rape might begin to waver if images of women successfully resisting were to be as prevalent as those of women being successfully victimized. The range of issues that sexual aggressors take into account when deciding to assault most often need not include an analysis of potential success or failure. Success is presumed. A would-be rapist might weigh the possibilities of being caught, the likelihood of conviction, the potential of jail-time, even the impact on his relationship with the victim. There is little compelling him, in our current status quo, to think about how big of a fight it will be, if everyone will wonder the next day why his nose is broken, his eye blackened, his body bruised. At the moment these are the concerns of the victim alone. This is not, again, to assume a simple and causal relationship, but rather to ponder what new ways of thinking and acting could be enacted when the accepted scripts of male violence and female victimization are disrupted, even at the level of the imaginary:

Of course, there is no direct and simple relationship between imagined violence and real effects: just as it is impossible to judge the ways in which pornographic representation interacts with male sexual violence, it would only restabilize the relationship between the imagined and the real to claim that representing female violence quells male attacks (Halberstam, 1993:191).

Our goal need not be so simple. Disrupting male assumptions of success could go a long way to altering the landscape of violence against women.

I know that if every day the papers carried a story about some woman-abuser getting his head blown off, this would begin to change the climate in which we live. Abusive men would no longer feel invulnerable, as they have every reason to feel now. Women would get new ideas, instead of the ideas we are constantly fed, how we are vulnerable and they are not. I am not writing to encourage women to kill men, though I know (and so do you) that every abuser taken out is one less man around to rape or batter again. I am writing to encourage women to think about our responses to issues of violence; to explore our feelings about ourselves and other women as agents...

(Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:62).
In fact, our current thinking avoids these imaginings almost pathologically. How frustrating and ironic it is, for example, that in the recently published anthology, *Transforming a Rape Culture*, which the editors themselves suggest is a "...sourcebook of visions for a future without rape, strategies to achieve it, and current programs of action that are having some success in changing the climate that encourages sexual violence" (Buchwald et al., 1993:vii), in the spot in the index where "self-defense" should be listed, we find only "Seinfeld". "It's just not revolutionary enough," writes McCaughey (1997:14) in frustration about an article in this collection titled *Whose Body Is It, Anyway? Transforming Ourselves to Change a Rape Culture* (Fletcher, 1993). In response to Fletcher's musing "what ifs," as she reflects on what she and her friends might have done in response to assorted instances of sexual violence in her childhood - 'what ifs' that are confined to include only such actions as confronting the abusing boys, reporting to police, listening to the raped girlfriend, comforting and supporting the raped girlfriend - McCaughey explodes in frustration, "What if Rachel had broken some knees on that football field? What if Brenda had ruptured Danny's testicles? Violent resistance just doesn't seem to be an option in this long list of 'what ifs.' But just imagine" (McCaughey, 1997:14).

Imagining alternatives to the usual script of male aggression and female victimization has effects on those targeted for violence, as well as those perpetuating it. In a critique of a common method of anti-rape education in which images of women being abused are shown in order to sensitize the audience to the wrongs committed, McCaughey and King (1995:375) ask "what good does it do a woman to know that a man might rape her and that [popular media] helps make him feel better about it?" These concerns urge us to continue asking the questions Heberle has posed about how repeated stories and images of women's victimization serve larger purposes of maintaining and solidifying male power: "This project of exposure is not without risks... One of those risks is..."
of women's sexual suffering is pieced together, it becomes, in effect, the social 
insignia of male power" (Heberle, 1996:63).

In an attempt to offer an alternative within the world of rape education to 
repeated images of victimized women, McCaughey and King (1995:374) have 
created a "mean women" video "produced...by splicing together scenes from 
popular movies of women confronting, beating, and killing men." Their goal is to 
move beyond standard rape education which "tries to expose the fantasy of 
women's enjoyment of vulnerability and male power as sexist," and instead to in 
fact "challenge the fantasy of women's vulnerability or rapability" (McCaughey and 
King, 1995:377). McCaughey and King are appropriately cautious about the 
relationship between images of women using violence to hurt men and the 
possibility of women actually adopting these tactics. They suggest instead that "the 
point of any fantasy is not so much that people immediately engage in the specific 
behaviours depicted therein...as that they manage their behaviour with the depicted 
possibilities in mind" (McCaughey and King, 1995:377). When I spoke with Natalie 
Provost, one of the survivors of Lepine's Ecole Polytechnique massacre, she spoke to 
the need for alternative images of women and violence. As she lay among her 
murdered classmates she drew on one of the few scripts available to her, that of 
James Bond ripping his shirt to make tourniquets for gun-shot wounded colleagues. 
We can only imagine that if Natalie and others in that classroom had a wealth of 
images of resisting women upon which to draw, the Ecole Polytechnique scenario 
might have unfolded differently. "In the classroom," write McCaughey and King 
(1995:386) of their 'mean women' video, "we explicitly situate Mean Women as a 
fantasy of resistance, as a basis for exposing 'dangerous men' as another fantasy, 
and as a vehicle for positing new identities for men and for women."

Lest we think imaging to be an irrelevant strategy consider 
Kaye/Kantrowitz's scenario (synopsised from Griffin, 1979:23).
...all of a sudden he got this crazy look in his eye and he said to me, 'Now, I'm going to kill you.' Then I started saying my prayers. I knew there was nothing I could do. He started to hit me - I still wasn't sure if he wanted to rape me at this point - or just to kill me. He was hurting me, but hadn't yet gotten me into a strangehold because he was still drunk and off balance. Somehow we pushed into the kitchen where I kept looking at this big knife. But I didn't pick it up. Somehow no matter how much I hated him at that moment, I still couldn't imagine putting the knife in his flesh, and then I was afraid he would grab it and stick it into me...

I couldn't imagine.
I was afraid.

I couldn't imagine corresponds to it's wrong. Sticking the knife into his flesh is unimaginable, too horrible. This horror, this failure of imagination might have cost her life. Her life against his, and she chooses his.

... Let us begin to imagine putting the knife in his flesh. If we choose not to, let the reason not be that we couldn't imagine doing it (Kaye/Kantrowitz, 1992:19-20).

MORE THAN AN INDIVIDUAL SOLUTION

One of the feminist concerns about self-defense is that as a prevention tactic it suffers as an individual solution rather than a social or even global one (in the way we might see legal reform or raising of social consciousness). While this might make us consider what we are able to identify as acceptably political (changing masculine institutions and public consciousness, but not altering the consciousness and practice of women?), it should also encourage us to bring self-defense into the fold of feminist theorizing. Self-defense should become part of a politics and theory of prevention, and be understood within the context of "...the larger framework of sex inequality" (McCaughey, 1997:xii), rather than leaving it, as it most often currently is, as an isolated strategy, clearly marked away from most feminist work on violence prevention. Since self-defense works - it concretely reduces women's likelihood of being raped - it is not a difficult leap to imagine how its success on the
individual level could lead to a reduction of sexualized violence at the broader, social level:

If the risk involved in attacking a woman were greater, there might be fewer attacks. If women defended themselves violently, the amount of damage they were willing to do to would-be assailants would be the measure of their seriousness about the limits beyond which they would not be pushed. If more women killed husbands and boyfriends who abused them or their children, perhaps there would be less abuse. A large number of women refusing to be pushed any further would erode, however slowly, the myth of the masochistic female which threatens all our lives. Violent resistance to an attack has its advantages all around (Clarke, 1993:401).

Learning to fight is no less political, no less effective, and no slower a strategy than changing a law or raising compassionate non-violent sons. However, the feminist anti-violent movement has a long way to go in advocating this as part of our prevention strategy.

The view that suspects self-defense of being too individualistic to change society positions women's self-defense as an individual, privatized solution to a social problem that really demands collective action and legislative change. Training in self-defense certainly should not be the only solution to the social problem of violence against women. But neither should legal reforms or Take Back the Night rallies. Laws should reflect and spread devout intolerance for violence against women. Batterers and rapists should face the criminal justice system. Feminist health centres, bookstores, theatre groups, newspapers, and women's studies programs should challenge sexist ideas and practices. Women's self-defense affects women in positive ways that complement these efforts, and in fact can accomplish some things they cannot, namely the corporeal change that disrupts the embodied ethos of rape culture (McCaughey, 1997:211).

As we have seen, "self-defense is a counter-discourse: It represents woman, man, and aggression in new ways that oppose those we take for granted" (McCaughey, 1997:89). On this basis it moves far beyond an individual solution to the problem of sexualized violence. McCaughey argues that self-defense is 'physical
feminism,' feminism embodied and lived out in ways as political, if not more so, as any feminist theorizing can claim to be.

...because self-defense has such radical potential for disrupting rape culture and feminist activism, it exposes the need for a marriage of theory and practice, of consciousness and corporeality (McCaughey, 1997:177).

McCaughey's aim is to bring two disparate groups (intellectual, ivory-tower theoretical feminists and not-necessarily feminist self-defenders) together. In so doing she establishes a perhaps over-stated dichotomy, wherein self-defense counts as 'practicing' feminism and feminist theorizing is only talking about it: "what feminists talk about interrupting - femininity - self-defenders practice interrupting. They enact the deconstruction of femininity" (McCaughey, 1997:90). While I don't agree with the assumption that we cannot interrupt femininity in ways that are not physical, and while I would be wary of taking her notions of self-defense as 'feminism in the flesh' or 'physical feminism' to mean that intellectual and theoretical feminism cannot engage in the same task, I do share her belief that "substituting a physically competent, aggressive posture for a passive one" (McCaughey, 1997:88) works instant and immediate wonders in unsettling our assumptions about women's vulnerability and inevitable victimhood in the face of sexual violence. Because feminists have often discounted women's aggression, either because they believed women incapable or because they believed it to be a tainted and corrupted (masculinist) strategy, self-defense offers a new arena of both theory and practice for the feminist anti-rape movement. It is a strategy we need to understand as immediately effective and as deeply disruptive and redefining of accepted norms of femininity.

The fact that our feminine conditioning runs deep is attested to nowhere more clearly than in self-defense courses, where the most significant obstacle for women to overcome in learning to disable their rapists is the fear that they will hurt
them. In the collected stories in many of the books examined in the second chapter of this thesis, in the quotes offered up by McCaughey in her study of women taking self-defense, and in my own experience as an assault prevention instructor, the thread of concern about harming another human being, even a rapist, runs clear and (mostly) unbroken. For this reason, McCaughey's posing of self-defense as physical feminism has tremendous appeal, since it is true that it is only after hours and hours, and sometimes not at all, that women can deliver punches, blows, kicks and yells without smiling at and apologizing to the punching bags or padded attackers they are practicing on (McCaughey, 1997:91). It is true that woman after woman reports to Diana Russell or Susan Brownmiller that they wished they could have picked up the knife, or scissors, or scalding iron and used it against their attacker, but they simply couldn't hurt him. It is certainly true that women's reticence to deliver disabling blows is a matter of deep-seated conditioning in femininity,

It becomes clear that women's inability to fight is a cultural matter of sexual politics, not a matter of hormones, brawn, or life-affirming biological programming. The feminine demeanor that comes so 'naturally' to women, a collection of specific habits that otherwise may not seem problematic, is precisely what makes us terrible fighters (McCaughey, 1997:90).

If for no other reason than this we need to see self-defense as not only an effective and powerful strategy of violence prevention, but also as a feminist practice with other, far-reaching consequences. Self-defense instruction helps women prevent sexualized violence, and it also opens the possibilities to living differently as women, to expanding the realm of the acceptable, to shattering constrictions and restrictions so common to many women's lives:

If rapists rely on a script of femininity to overpower women, then women must begin to rehearse a new script. But unlike a traditional script that an actor reads, women's scripts are written into their bodies, and the physical nature of the instruction begins to write a new story of womanhood (McCaughey, 1997:104).
Perhaps most singularly, self-defense offers us more than an individual solution to a wide-spread social problem because it destabilizes the event of rape itself. As we begin to accept women's ability to prevent rape, to stop it in mid-flow, or even before it begins, we necessarily come face to face with the possibility that rape might no longer be one of the defining moments, one of the centre-pieces of women's lives. While this may be troubling for a movement that has used the physical fact of sexualized violence as a foundation for political alliance and action, it is simultaneously tremendously exciting, for it exposes the "socially constructed quality" (Heberle, 1996:70) of that violence, moving it from an immutable fact to an eminently permeable, changeable, and ultimately preventable event. Sharon Marcus pushes us further to stop conceiving of rape as 'an event' at all (which is not to suggest that rape is not real nor that it doesn't really happen to women) and rather to use her concept of a 'script.' In so doing we are able to interrupt and subvert what she calls the "gendered grammars of violence" (Marcus, 1992:393).

Self-defense is one of the most obvious and most effective methods of interruption and subversion. Put this way it is extremely short-sighted to see self-defense as an act confined to the realm of the individual.

One of the most compelling reasons to consider self-defense as a primary prevention strategy and to insist on identifying it as a broad-ranging political and social, is the effect it is reported to have on reducing fear in those who learn it. That women who have taken some form of self-defense routinely report "feeling more active, brave, in control, independent" (cited in Madden, 1995:900) should offer us incentive to consider offering these skills to all those we might identify as particularly vulnerable to, or fearful of, violence. Madden's study, which points to decreased feelings of vulnerability and an increased sense of control among women who enrolled in martial arts and self-defense courses, cites a plethora of other research leading to similar conclusions. Given the focus in feminist anti-violence
talk about finding ways to reduce women's fear, self-defense training offers what so many other strategies lack: an immediately usable and practical set of skills to prevent oneself from being raped, an extremely powerful fear-reduction tool. "Studies of female self-defense students suggest that self-defense courses for women enhanced participants perceptions of their own efficacy and control, decreased their feelings of vulnerability to assault, and reduced intrusive, anxious cognitions" (Madden, 1990:787). Self-defense offers us a way of using fear to our advantage, it does not try to do away with fear, or deny it, but rather to rechannel it in our aid: "Instructors do not tell women to stop being afraid; they tell them to use their fear by turning it into anger or energy. Fear is what gives women the boost of adrenaline they use to fight powerfully" (McCaughey, 1997:109).

While the ethical burden to prevent rape does not lie with us but with rapists and a society which upholds them, we will be waiting a very long time if we wait for men to decide not to rape. To construct a society in which we would know no fear, we may first have to frighten rape culture to death (Marcus, 1992:401).

If, as Heberle (1996:72) has suggested, "sexual violence shores up patriarchy at its edges," rather than serving as the SS or the sadistic, military vanguard of male supremacy (Dworkin, 1988b:309), then it is a far cry from immutable and inviolable. Sexual violence is, in these terms, as it is in the practical moment of kicking and punching and yelling, fragile, vulnerable, and usually quite easily pushed aside.

Finally, I would suggest that the feminist anti-violence movement needs to embrace self-defense not only because it offers us a practical, effective, political strategy towards the end of violence against women, but also because it is pleasurable. Clearly it is not pleasurable to experience an assault, to have one's boundaries invaded by someone intent on harm or even simply 'having his way.' But self-defense is exciting and it is empowering. It is pleasurable to learn to use one's body in physical ways often unfamiliar and even unavailable to women. And
it is immensely satisfying to feel safe in the world. "A self-defense course is the first time many women fully experience their bodies as active agents," writes McCaughey, and "learning to fight back also simply feels liberating and pleasurable" (McCaughey, 1997:119).

There is little enough to celebrate in the anti-rape movement. The work is most often troubling, depressing, an uphill battle where we seem to be losing ground as often as we gain it. Self-defense interjects into the work of the movement a moment of power and agency, where women - those learning self-defense and those teaching it - can come face to face with their abilities to live differently in their worlds:

Self-defenders replace an old embodied code with a new one - a more pleasurable one and a differently consequential one. In the context of self-defense, imitation becomes mimesis. That is, conscious acts of female aggression (imitation) become new aspects of who the women are, such that, much as they did not think of the feminine dispositions they had when they arrived to their first self-defense class as imitative, they no longer think of themselves as imitating anything in acting aggressively. By the end, self-defenders have effected an art of living, based on a new aesthetics of existence (McCaughey, 1997:116).

The drive for pleasure and celebration is an important one in political movements, the thing that often keeps us able to continue our work. There often seems little of pleasure, or much to celebrate within the feminist anti-violence movement. I believe that self-defense, besides significantly improving the quality of women's lives, offers a political strategy based on pleasure and excitement.

Social movements, feminism included, move toward a vision; they cannot operate solely on fear. It is not enough to move women away from danger and oppression; it is necessary to move toward something; toward pleasure, agency, self-definition. Feminism must increase women's pleasure and joy, not just decrease our misery. It is difficult for political movements to speak for any extended time to the ambiguities, ambivalences, and complexities that underscore human experience. Yet movements remain vital and vigorous to the extent that they are able to tap this wellspring of human experience. Without
it, they become dogmatic, dry, compulsive, and ineffective. To persist amid frustrations and obstacles, feminism must reach deeply into women's pleasure and draw on this energy (Vance, 1984:24).

Self-defense offers us this moment, a political strategy that is not only personal but profoundly political. It is based on pleasure, agency and self-definition. It is certainly also complex, as it exists primarily in relation to sexualized violence. While we may wish we did not need it, and dream of worlds where we will not need it, in our current lives, it offers hope, both practical and theoretical, for the end of sexualized violence.

A corollary to the 'pleasures' of fighting back is the possibility that as women are better able to refuse unwanted sexual encounters, our yes's take on new meaning and validity. 'Yes' to sex teeters on the edge of meaninglessness if we might be raped for saying 'no.' In this way self-defense operates to "construe women as sexual agents in the fullest sense" (McCaughey, 1997:150), for in having the confidence to stop a sexual assault we are more free to engage in sexual encounters as desiring and equal subjects.

Self-defense makes possible the view of women not as passive but instead as active desiring subjects. This helps remove women from the impossible place of innocence in which they can only forcefully claim their victimhood, when victimized, via a notion of female asexual innocence. Self-defense allows women to be pro-sex and anti-rape simultaneously (McCaughey, 1997:150).

My hope is that feminism, and the feminist anti-violence movement in particular, find ways of embracing self-defense, of making it a central part of their strategy to end violence, and begin theorizing its importance. Every time we hear a strategy for legal reform, for better lighting, for greater policing, longer jail sentences and more education, my hope is that we tack on to the end of the thought, 'and we could also be teaching women and children to have the physical skills to stop an assault as it is happening.' This need not portend the demise of any currently existing practices of resistance or prevention. However, it might augment
them, broaden them, and make more holistic, perhaps even more practical and effective, our efforts to end sexualized violence.
Conclusion

It's not a "happy ending" we need, but a non-ending. That's why none of the narratives of masculinist, patriarchal apocalypses will do. The System is not closed; the sacred image of the same is not coming. The world is not full (Haraway, 1992:327).

In academia, as in politics, there is always more work to be done. New projects which now appear vitally important to me were perhaps not even imagined at the outset of this project. While I expressed certain reservations concerning the sufficiency of legal reform as a prevention strategy and suggested some of the ways in which feminist legal reform has played a formative role in the production of anti-violence discourse, my analysis and speculations raise many questions that the thesis was not able to address. I expect that an examination of legislative change and case-law studies, as well as a more sociological and historical analysis of the feminist anti-violence movement's legal reform projects of the last three decades would unearth much of interest. My chief aim would be to study in greater detail the means by which victimhood was constructed as a contradictory and contested site of oppression and strategic advantage.

Following McCaughey's recent work, there would be considerable value to doing a study of women who had taken self-defense to examine not only the effects of learning to defend oneself on fear and feelings of victimhood, but also to examine the potential of self-defense to transform patriarchy and patriarchal constructions of femininity.

In the course of discussing my thesis research with friends and acquaintances, I not infrequently encountered women who responded to me by
sharing experiences of their own which resonated with my description of mundane and inconspicuous resistance although they themselves had rarely understood their actions in terms of 'resistance'. They were describing strange turns of events rather than obvious consequences of their own agency. I was intrigued by the fact that the great majority of these women had never taken a self-defense course and by the fact that most of these stories, given different circumstances, would never have been collected as stories of successful resistance. I have come to see these stories as signs of a vast base of ethnographic resource material. There have always been effective resistors. I am fascinated by the question of what, in the absence of formal self-defense training, enables certain women to resist? What tools do they draw on? What insights might these unexamined experiences offer us?

If the present work can make a contribution to feminist theory and practice, I hope that it is to expand and deepen our vision of a politics of prevention. All aspects of this work have been motivated by this desire. Of course, the bulk of the thesis was focused around the examination and critiques of early feminist anti-violence texts and their effects on possibilities for resistance and prevention. While I believe this work helps to articulate the forces by which anti-violence discourse has been constituted and upheld, and to understand the scope and limits of current concepts, it is, nonetheless, always regrettable if the work of criticism (of objecting to existing concepts of resistance and prevention) is allowed to overshadow the work which tries to offer something new; to forge new possibilities for resistance and prevention. It is often assumed that the work of negative criticism, of destruction and ground clearing, is the prerequisite to building anything new. On the contrary, however, Deleuze has insistently suggested that, "a concept does not die simply when one wants it to, but only when new functions in new fields discharge it. This is also why it is never very interesting to criticize a concept: it is
better to build the new functions and discover the new fields that make it useless or inadequate" (Deleuze, 1991:94).

A further worry I have with critique-based projects concerns how they will be interpreted once they move beyond the secluded walls of academe. I remain cognisant of the gulf which separates the world of the university from the world of grass roots politics. This is not a gulf between theory and practice since theory and practice inhabit both of these worlds (although in differing manners and measures). However, the motivating concerns which forge the union between theory and practice remain, in the two worlds, quite distinct. As with many, I live on both sides of this gulf. Not long ago, I was working for an organization who's job it was, among other things, to examine and license foreign-trained professionals. While doing this work I was contacted by a researcher wanting statistics, perspectives and information I certainly had no time to gather in this intense job. Her academic work was grounded in a critique of this particular movement, and of the racism that had been at play in keeping these foreign trained professionals out of the profession. It was a sobering moment for me, pushing me to reflect on the very academic project upon which I had myself embarked. While the issues raised by this researcher were deeply important ones and were cause for serious reflection and action within the movement she was critiquing, I was never more aware of the detachment of academic critique, the luxury of being able to dream the utopian dream, and critique those who failed to live up to it. The difficulties of labouring in an underfunded environment, the frustrations of being committed to a cause that in practice did not work out perfectly, the outrage at being subsumed under a universalizing perspective which did not allow for the complexities and contradictions in the practice of any political project, remain with me in powerful ways.
I have tried in this thesis, to offer up a compassionate critique, one that recognizes the remarkable achievements of the anti-violence movement and the role anti-violence rhetoric has played in these. Yet, at the same time, the challenge is to continually rethink our concepts and strategies in terms of the kinds of thoughts and acts they enable and limit. Strategies, like the fields of power they inhabit, are unstable. They need always to be reevaluated. To these ends, the following familiar injunction has significantly framed my thinking about the risks of all political work:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do ... I think the ethico-political choice we have to make everyday is to determine what is the main danger (Foucault, 1982b:231/2).

The goal of this thesis has been to render visible what has remained invisible or marginalized within feminist anti-violence theorizing about the ways to reduce sexualized violence against women. I have sought to ask a new set of questions about the constraints and limitations imposed by the liberatory feminist anti-violence discourse emerging in the 1970's and early part of the 1980's in North America, and to pose the possibility of self-defense as one possible route out of the risks of overemphasis on fear and victimhood.

We have seen that despite repeated statistical support for the notion that in fact women usually need do very little to stop an assault, we still conceptualize self-defense as an overwhelming feat of strength and stamina, not available to the average woman (let alone to women with disabilities).

...surveys of women who prevented rape attempts consistently show that resistance does work, and that often minimal signs of it - an assertive remark, a push, a loud scream, flight - can suffice to block a man from continuing a rape attempt (Marcus, 1992:396).
What makes rape resistance effective is a combination of refusing to play the game, to 'participate in the script' in Marcus' terms, and asserting agency and power rather than vulnerability and powerlessness (Marcus, 1992:396). Effective self-defense is a prevention strategy reliant on women's agency, on placing ourselves firmly in the centre of the assault scenario as subjects not objects, and thus changing the rules of the game.

The reason this vision of the world appears to be so unimaginable is not difficult to discern. Violence against women, and the assumptions upon which women's lack of resistance are predicated, are part of our world order, and their disruption, their actual in-the-moment prevention, as opposed to the long-term political strategies to change the world order, are almost unthinkable. Ultimately, it seems, to imagine a woman smashing a fist into a nose and breaking it, or shattering a knee-cap with the ball of her foot, are far more disruptive to the status quo than the prospect of educating the various players in the legal justice system to understand women's plight, or putting convicted rapists away for longer and longer periods of incarceration, or even than offering victim services like rape crisis centres which may simultaneously serve to reinforce the status quo (Matthews, 1994). This should, perhaps, not be surprising. To advocate a slowly reformed legal system, to make calls for shifted consciousness that would force men to see the error of their ways, or to support and counsel raped women, these are strategies that have relatively little immediate impact upon would-be aggressors. To attempt rape and be faced with a fighting body intent on inflicting as much pain as needed to escape not only poses a very different rape scenario for the rapist, but it also offers a profound challenge to accepted notions about the world order as it relates to the roles of women and men. What is revealed by self-defense is therefore profoundly disturbing, that "what is usually taken for granted as a fact of nature - that a woman
simply cannot physically challenge a man - is revealed as a social script which privileges men at the expense of women" (McCaughey, 1997:7).

The range of reasons given to decry women's use of violence vary from displeasure with vigilantism to the belief that women are morally superior beings and should not stoop so low. Let us abandon the notion that women are the home of some universal good which will be corrupted when we start to punch and kick. We are not the guardians of all things peaceful and loving. We are as debauched as men. Our crimes may be different, but it would be difficult to argue that they are less. We steal, fight, commit random acts of racism, beat our children, are terrified by, furious at, and step on those who have less, we inflict pain upon ourselves, we fight dirty in politics, we support and participate in wars, "[we] bless...give permission for, [and]...accept men's most atrocious actions" (Stiehm, 1994:584) - we are not innocent or pure. So what self-defeating moment makes us resist resistance so fully? In our own self-interest, why not learn to kick and punch? We need not advocate death to our rapists (unless we are facing the same at their hands), but simply inflict enough pain to make them stop long enough for us to escape. A broken nose will heal, so will a broken collar bone, or knee cap, or burst ear-drum. Shattering the temple or sending nose bones upward into the brain are tactics of death available to us, but ones we rarely need. Simply a loud yell and a swift kick to the painful but really undamageable shin will usually do.

Rarely if ever do we hear what seems to be at the heart of the matter: it is simply terrifying to imagine a world where women routinely harm their sexual aggressors to the point of disabling them and preventing them from raping. This is a disruptive thought. It is a scary thought. It is also, of course, an empowering and exciting thought.

I have attempted to demonstrate that self-defense serves, along with the obvious purpose of protecting women from sexualized violence, to disrupt rape as
one of the main signifying events of women's lives, to challenge the apocalyptic way in which rape is constructed as the worst event of a woman's life, inevitable, and certainly unchangeable.

Many current theories of rape present rape as an inevitable material fact of life and assume that a rapist's ability to physically overcome his target is the function of rape...Such a view takes violence as the self-explanatory first cause and endows it with an inevitable and terrifying facticity which stymies our ability to challenge and demystify rape. To treat rape simply as one of...the realities that circumscribe women's lives' can mean to consider rape as terrifyingly unnamable and unrepresentable, a reality that lies beyond our grasp and which we can only experience as grasping and encircling us. In its efforts to convey the horror and iniquity of rape, such a view often concurs with masculinist culture in its designation of rape as a fate worse than, or tantamount to, death; the apocalyptic tone which it adopts and the metaphysical status which it assigns to rape implies that rape can only be feared or legally repaired, not fought (Marcus, 1992:387).

Self-defense simply unsettles these assumptions, prevalent, as Marcus suggests, among feminists as well as the main stream. Knowing that we can raise a fist or a voice and scare off or hurt a potential aggressor significantly alters women's relationship to rape, and as well, Marcus is suggesting, potentially alters the centrality of rape in women's lives. When we understand self-defense to be one of the few kinds of prevention that are enacted prior to the event rather than in the aftermath of violence, one of the few strategies which are able to stop a rapist in his tracks, rather than work as a post-event interaction capable only (possibly) of averting some future assault, we can see the compelling argument to hold self-defense at the centre rather than the margins of a politics of rape prevention.

Sharon Marcus argues theoretically and eloquently for what many self-defense teachers offer practically, the skills required to "enable women to sabotage men's power to rape, which will empower women to take the ability to rape completely out of men's hands" (Marcus, 1992:388). Rather than either reducing women's lives to a state of enforced seclusion and lost freedoms that a victim control
prevention perspective entails, and rather than attempting to convince men not to rape "by means of threatened punishment from a masculinized state or legal system" (Marcus, 1992:388), which an offender control approach assumes, self-defense fundamentally alters the event of rape, remaking it as a contested terrain, as interruptable and stoppable as many other crimes. When rape loses its special status in this way, and becomes a crime to be countered along with many others, it unquestionably shakes the tenuous ground on which many women have forged alliances of vulnerability. In its most exciting sense, however, it also allows for the possibility of women living lives more free of sexualized violence.

Since self-defense can work to so radically alter the status quo, it is an important tool for the feminist anti-violence movement. Rather than the uneasy and sometimes even hostile relationship between feminist politics and the self-defense movement, 31 we need to begin to think about self-defense in all its theoretical richness, as offering a further step in the feminist critique of and challenge to rape culture:

The anti-sexual assault movement and feminist theory could better challenge rape culture at its core. While knowing 'in theory' that violence against women is not natural or inevitable, we have overlooked the potential of training women to fight back and have given all the power to stop violence to men. We have inadvertently preserved a fundamental association between masculinity and violence. We have not adequately challenged the rape myth that men rape because of size and strength (McCaughey, 1997:18).

As an important corollary to challenging the presupposition of women's physical incapacity, I have wanted to suggest that male violence against women may in fact be far more fragile than we are led to believe 32, and therefore that our possibilities for stopping it may be far more numerous than we have been led to

31 See the preface in McCaughey for an elaboration of the strained relationship between feminist theorists and self-defense activists.
32 There is, I believe, good evidence of this in the empirical and anecdotal data describing the relatively insignificant actions that have thoroughly disrupted the commission of a sexual assault.
believe. While those overarching strategies for violence prevention (which seek to significantly challenge, unsettle, and ultimately reorganize the social order in order to reduce violence) are one route on the road to stopping men from raping, it may also be that we have to come to understand male violence not as the tip of the iceberg of male power, but rather as the last vestige of that power, the final attempt to assert failing control. If we do so, our notions of resistance need not seek to dismantle something unwieldy and overpowering. Resistance then, as we have seen, becomes a vastly wide range of actions, certainly possibly physically fighting or yelling, but also far more incidental strategies that might come down to something as apparently insignificant as eye contact or tone of voice. This too, can be resistance, and we need to be able to recognize it. No doubt, lives very literally could depend on it.
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