THE POLITICS OF NAMING THE VIOLENCE: EXAMINING CONSTRUCTIONS OF "LESBIAN ABUSE" IN COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

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This thesis examines regimes of truth about race, class, sexual and gender identities, and the causes and nature of abuse in community educational discourses on lesbian abuse. It investigates how a universal lesbian and woman is constructed, normalizing certain identities and knowledges while subordinating others.

Analysis of educational materials (two booklets, one pamphlet), individual interviews and a focus group with five white, feminist, community-based educators, reveals that the context of heterosexism, racism and classism, anti-feminist backlash, denial of the existence of woman-to-woman abuse and tight material constraints, make it difficult to name the abuse and result in a simplified analytical framework. Educators address the interconnections between oppressions and explore complexities of identities and of abuse. The thesis examines how whiteness is embedded in the discourses and highlights the need to deconstruct whiteness, disrupt hierarchical relations between women and reconceptualize violence.
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I feel it is not until I actually read something, something that acknowledges that women can abuse that I realize how much I am affected by the absence and silence around the issues. It's like trying to work something out in a vacuum. Before I became aware that other women had similar experiences there was no place for it. I felt that nobody had the same experience, so my own could only exist in my head. For me, reading the experience of other women helped to bring back the memories, explain the way I felt; without the explanations there was only a blank space (Hall, A., 1992, p. 38-39).

Alison Hall, a survivor of abuse in a lesbian relationship.

Naming the Violence

This study examines constructions of "lesbian abuse" in feminist community-based educational discourses and explores their socio-political effects.\(^1\) As the title of this thesis indicates, I argue that the act of naming violence is a political one. Broadly speaking, this study is concerned with the politics surrounding the discursive and non-discursive conditions that determine and regulate what can be named and known, as well as what is unspeakable at specific historical points and socio-cultural locations. It is also interested in making visible the "epistemic violence" (Spivak quoted in Bannerji, 1995, p. 24) that is enacted through processes of naming, non-naming and misnaming, that are colonially (p. 23) and heteronormatively signified.

\(^1\)Until recently, most educational materials and workshops exclusively used the terms "lesbian battering" or "lesbians abuse". Other terms are also now being used: "woman-to-woman abuse", "same-sex domestic violence" and "abuse in queer relationships". I view these all as socially constructed categories, finding them all to be somewhat problematic for the exclusions they produce. Given that most educational discourses have relied on the construction "lesbian abuse" until recently, this is the term I use to describe the category "lesbian abuse education". However, I have been concerned throughout the research process that I am reinscribing some of the very constructions I find problematic. I also use the other terms listed here to reflect my dissatisfaction with one specific term and to reflect the multiple meanings conveyed through them. The exclusions produced through the construct "lesbian abuse" are explored further in Chapters Three and Four.
A common theme in the writing on lesbian abuse is that it has been difficult to publicly acknowledge this form of abuse. Titles of books and articles reflect this theme — *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering* (Lobel, 1986), "Unspeakable Acts: Women Who Abuse" (Kelly, 1991), "Abuse by Any Other Name: Feminism, Difference and Intralebian Violence" (Eaton, 1994), "Abuse That Dare Not Speak its Name" (Lundy, 1993), "Breaking the Silence: Lesbians Discuss Same-sex Domestic Violence" (Stewart, 1994), "Letting Out the Secret: Violence in Lesbian Relationships" (Lockhart, L. L., White, B. W., Causby, V. & Isaac, A., 1994). Therefore my title, "the politics of naming the violence", also indicates my interest in the political effects and implications of the discursive strategy of "naming" or "speaking out" that is used in educational strategies. I am interested in making visible the constructs in lesbian abuse education that both enable the bringing forth and suppression of certain subjectivities, forms of violence and histories of oppression (Razack, 1998a, p. 16). This study explores the multiple (and sometimes contradictory) effects of naming the violence. Specifically, it explores the discourses and constructs in educational pamphlets and workshops on lesbian abuse.

By interrogating the truth claims, or what Michel Foucault has called "regimes of truth" (1984, p.74), in educational discourses, this study explores their assumptions and asks what they offer (and to whom), what they produce and obscure. Following from Foucault (1980), I am interested in examining how certain discourses come to be dominant, legitimate and considered "true" through the delegitimization of other discourses (p. 82).

This research investigates the investments different educators have in solidifying (or disrupting) certain categories and frameworks and explores the risks feared or faced in opening up and shifting these. I am concerned with how feminist educators (including myself) strategically deploy or disrupt truth claims and how we negotiate the complexities and contradictions surrounding the issue of woman-to-woman abuse. I
argue that feminists educating about abuse in same-sex relationships between women need to critically examine how we construct the category lesbian abuse (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) and examine the connections between our subjectivities and our analytical frameworks — the links between the power relations between women (in terms of social location determined by race, class, ability, gender and sexuality) and the kinds of theorizing that circulates in feminist or queer circles (Mohanty & Alexander, 1997). A key question in my research is how power circulates in "oppositional" or "liberatory" discourses concerned with empowerment and social change, such as feminist anti-violence education.

Accessing a Discourse: Experience and Social Location

My own interest in this study was motivated by my experiences as a feminist community educator and survivor of abuse in a lesbian relationship. I believe experience is constituted through discourse and that it can be a useful starting point for analyzing and exploring the connection between the political and the social (Bannerji, 1991, p. 67). However, I am not using my experience to claim an essentialized identity or an authoritative voice on lesbian identity, or as a survivor of abuse, but rather use it as a point of entry — to make visible my social location and highlight the way I am constituted as a subject through various discourses (Scott, J., 1992). Social location refers to the way I am positioned in society in terms of power that comes from the privileges I experience (as someone who is white, from a middle-class family, who is university-educated and able-bodied), as well as the way I experience marginalization (as a lesbian and survivor of violence in a lesbian relationship). By locating my subject position in the

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2 Poststructuralist and postmodern theories problematize and denaturalize the modern, liberal, humanist notion of identity as stable, autonomous and ahistorical. The term "subject" refers to a sense of self that is socially produced, historically specific, discursively and multiply constituted and shifting. These theories will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Two.
research I seek to challenge notions of neutrality and objectivity in positivist approaches to research and to highlight the complexities of power in how I come to this topic.

Coincidentally, in the same year that the United States-based National Coalition Against Domestic Violence published *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering* (Lobel, 1986), I left my first lesbian relationship because of abuse. While I currently identify as a lesbian, I did not during the year of that relationship nor in the two years that followed when I was in a relationship with a man. At the time I didn't know any other women who were in same-sex relationships or any other individuals who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. I occasionally experimented with the words gay, lesbian and bisexual, but never felt that these words fully described my identity. Although I had never heard the terms *lesbian battering* or *lesbian abuse*, I used the word *abuse* to describe my experiences one month after leaving the relationship.

Three years after I left the relationship, I "came out" as a lesbian and entered my second relationship with a woman. At an International Women's Day information fair in Toronto that year, I first encountered the words "violence in lesbian relationships" in a pamphlet produced by the Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays, which announced a group for lesbian survivors of abuse. As I read the pamphlet I felt a mixture of surprise, shame, and extreme validation. The pamphlet's descriptions of physical, emotional and sexual abuse reflected many of my experiences. I had never imagined there were other women who had experienced the same forms of abuse I had experienced in a relationship with a woman. I was isolated (as a lesbian and as a survivor) and believed that my experience of violence was an anomaly and that it marked me as 'one of those weird or freakish lesbians'.

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3 The woman who abused me was also a white, middle-class, able-bodied woman of a similar age to myself. *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering* (Lobel, 1986) was the first anthology of feminist writings about lesbian battering.
Two years later the centre produced an educational booklet for lesbians, service providers, family and friends, entitled *Abuse in Lesbian Relationships: A Handbook of Information and Resources* (Chesley, MacAuley, & Ristock 1991) which provided me with a discourse that I accessed to make sense of my experience. This lesbian feminist discourse helped me to resist pathologizing, heterosexual discourses about lesbians and violence and it also helped me to heal from the violence. In the years that followed, I used this booklet (in addition to other materials) in facilitating staff and volunteer training and community education on abuse in lesbian relationships.

Based in part of my experience, this research explores what kind of subject can access educational discourses on lesbian abuse, as well as the related question of what kind of subjectivity is produced through them. While certain women in the late 1970s to mid-80s (most often, although not exclusively, white, middle-class, able-bodied lesbian feminists) were able to access and revise the available Western feminist, heterosexual domestic violence or battering discourse to provide a framework for understanding our experiences of violence in same-sex relationships, other women (including women of colour, First Nations women, working-class and poor women, bisexuals and transgendered women) have been alienated by universalist feminist discourses that obscure and delegitimize their knowledges and subjectivities by conceptualizing violence through a colonialist, classist, ableist, biphobic and transphobic lens. I am interested in exploring what made

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4While I recognize that the term "women of colour" can have a homogenizing effect, I am using the term as a strategic and political term chosen by women of diverse cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds who experience racism in a white supremacist society. I am using the term First Nations as a preferred term of Aboriginal peoples that refers to many culturally and linguistically diverse indigenous peoples in Canada (Turpel, 1993). I recognize that indigenous people also use the terms "Aboriginal", "Indian" and "Native". While I recognize the distinct histories, identities and experiences of Métis people in Canada, in this thesis I use the term First Nations to include Métis people.

5The term transgender is used and understood in a variety of ways. I am drawing on Ki Namaste's (1994) definition: "[it] is used to designate the lives and experiences of a diverse group of people who live outside normative sex/gender relationship i.e., where the biology of one's body is taken to determine how one will live and interact in the social world. The transgender community is made up of transsexuals (pre-, post-, and nonoperative) transvestites, drag queens, passing women, hermaphrodites, stone butches, and gender outlaws who defy regulatory sex/gender taxonomies" (p. 228). Also see (Feinberg, 1996).
this educational discourse (as seen in the above booklet) available to me as a white, middle-class, able-bodied lesbian. What conditions make it possible for someone to access this category of lesbian abuse?

I am also interested in examining the relational quality of spaces and subjectivities — that is, how spaces and subject positions are socially and mutually constitutive of one another in different and unequal ways (Razack, 1998a, p.158). The status or privilege that comes from the construction of certain spaces, categories or subjectivities is dependent upon the subordinate status of another. This thesis explores how categories depend on one another and how certain constructs mask this relational quality, for example, the relational nature of lesbian and bisexual subjectivities, and of violences in private (or domestic) and public spaces. Locating my subject position in the research is important for interrogating how my subjectivity is constituted through this discourse of lesbian abuse (Ristock, 1998) and how it is dependent upon the subordination of other women (Razack, 1998a).

Urgency, Controversies and "Regimes of Truth"

In this work as a community educator and organizer, I have become increasingly concerned about the "truth claims" made in workshops and educational materials. There is often an urgency amongst educators, researchers and front-line workers (including myself) to make fixed claims about abuse in same-sex relationships so that we can move forward and respond to the violence. Yet I speculate that this urgency may mask other motivations or investments (conscious and unconscious) for the claims we make about these forms of violence — such as investments in theories of violence that are based in white middle-class Western feminism, or investments in specific subject positions, or certain notions about who can occupy the categories "woman", "lesbian", "survivor" and "batterer", for example.
At the same time, in community forums, workshops and coalitions frequent debates arise amongst women about many of the same issues that are presented as facts in educational materials (for example debates about "mutual abuse", the participation of bissexuals and transgendered people within lesbian and women's spaces, definitions of abuse that include consensual S/M practices, how to understand and respond to violence in inter-racial relationships and whether racism in queer or feminist communities falls within the definition of abuse, to name a few). However, these controversies do not usually show up in feminist educational texts, which present a unified, expert voice.

I am not suggesting that all debates and perspectives should be included in a pamphlet or presented by an educator in a workshop. I also recognize that community educators often go through an intensive process of discussion when designing curriculum and educational materials and that the unified narrative in printed educational materials does not necessarily reflect the multitude of perspectives that exist amongst educators themselves. However, I am interested in examining how certain discourses come to be dominant (and considered true) and how this is dependent upon the delegitimization of other discourses. In this research, I set out to explore the socio-political and material effects of these discourses, rather than to prove them "true or false". Also, I approach this investigation with an important reflective look at my complicity in circulating and constructing these discourses and an interest in exploring strategies for change.

One of the experiences that brought me to these questions was my involvement in a community organizing group — comprised of six white, able-bodied lesbians, of mixed class backgrounds, ranging in age from mid-20s to mid-40s, members of leather and S/M communities, as well as those with little or no knowledge of S/M practices — that planned two educational forums on woman-to-woman abuse in a large urban centre in Canada in the early 1990s. As I look back now, I see how the discussions and debates

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6One of the participants in this study was involved in this group. I have chosen to omit the names of cities as well as the research participants' geographical locations in order to protect their anonymity. For a longer discussion of confidentiality, see Chapter Two.
that arose through this organizing work formed the basis for my areas of inquiry in this research. These discussions centred on the following themes or issues: definitions of abuse (including whether mutual abuse occurred in some relationships); the inclusion of "batterers" in the forums and the definition and provision of safe spaces for "survivors"; the meaning of accountability and community responses to batterers; whether consensual S/M practices are inherently abusive; the differences and/or connections between violence in intimate relationships and violence in communities; the relationship between racism, classism and ableism and violence between women; and finally, the racism and unexamined white privilege of our organizing group and its relationship to our analyses of woman-to-woman abuse and our community organizing process.

After observing these issues surfacing in other educational workshops and coalitions, I wanted to understand what was happening in lesbian abuse education and thus began asking the questions I raised earlier. I also wanted to talk with other educators about some of these issues to break our isolation from one another and to create a space for critical reflection and dialogue with the hope that this would strengthen our analysis and responses to woman-to-woman abuse. To this end, I decided to interview other community-based educators individually and in a focus group.

Through these experiences as an educator, I also came to realize the critical importance of interrogating whiteness in lesbian abuse education. I am interested in understanding how white lesbian subjectivity is constituted through lesbian abuse discourses and exploring what strategies might be used for dismantling the hegemony of whiteness. While I recognize race, class, gender, sexuality and dis/ability to be related categories, this thesis focuses specifically on processes of racialization and the way whiteness structures lesbian abuse education.

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7I am using the term "whiteness" to refer to a socially constructed identity of social privilege and as Sherene Razack (1998) has defined it as a colour of domination (p. 11). Theories on whiteness will be explored further in Chapter Two.
It is important to locate an examination of these issues within the socio-political and historical context of lesbian abuse education.

History of Lesbian Abuse Education

Feminist educational discourses on lesbian abuse emerged — in the United States in the late 1970s to early 1980s (Lobel, 1986) and in Canada in the mid-to-late 1980s (Le Feuvre, 1984; Le Routgetel, 1993) — as both practical tool and political strategy. US lesbian feminist Barbara Hart notes that she first provided shelter to a battered lesbian in 1978 and was asked to give her first workshop on lesbian battering in 1981 (Lobel, 1986, p. 11). In 1983, at the conference of the United States-based National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), the Lesbian Task Force spoke of the seriousness of the issue of lesbian battering and the importance of responding to survivors and educating shelters and social services (p. 2). A year later, in 1984, the first published accounts from survivors appeared in the lesbian and feminist popular press in the United States, naming the silences and extreme difficulties in speaking about lesbian abuse in lesbian communities (Browning, 1995). In Canada, the YWCA produced a publication on violence against women in 1984 titled *Fresh Start* which included a section on abuse in lesbian relationships (Le Feuvre, 1984), and the now defunct Toronto gay and lesbian newspaper *Rites* published a survivor's story (Simone, 1986). Winnipeg counsellor Sally Papsco has noted that she attended her first workshop on lesbian battering in 1986 (Le Routgetel, 1993). As previously mentioned, in 1986 the NCADV published the first anthology of feminist writings on lesbian battering titled *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering* (Lobel, 1986). And in 1987 and 1989, respectively, the feminist papers *Kinesis* (Vancouver) and *Broadside* (Toronto) published a survivor's story and an article on lesbian abuse. In 1990, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women produced two feminist training manuals for anti-violence programs titled
Confronting Homophobia (Elliot, 1990a) and Confronting Lesbian Battering (Elliot, 1990b).

As practical tools, often published in booklet and pamphlet form, educational materials provide information and resources to communities in a relatively inexpensive and accessible manner. Front-line workers and educators freely use each other's materials — revising, adding to them, copying directly, adopting categories and frameworks (with or without acknowledging the sources) — just as they did when models were first developed to understand violence against women in heterosexual relationships. Printed educational materials also consist of training manuals for service providers.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, various communities across North America have organized workshops and forums, as well as group and individual support and education for survivors. Individual women have informally educated friends, acquaintances and colleagues. In addition to the material published by community organizations and in the popular press, academic journal articles, theses, chapters and a few books have been written and papers have been presented at conferences.

Educational materials and workshops on lesbian abuse have been produced or organized by a variety of groups, such as feminist anti-violence organizations, lesbian, gay and bisexual organizations, university student services, First Nations organizations, disabled women's groups and others. Lesbian abuse education takes three main forms — pamphlets and booklets, support and education groups for survivors, and workshops, forums or training sessions — and is directed at three main audiences: i) lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer communities; ii) feminist anti-violence workers (shelter, transition house and rape crisis advocates and counsellors); and iii) mainstream service providers (social workers, counsellors, health care providers, lawyers, police). Training workshops usually incorporate or follow an anti-homophobia/heterosexism component (Lobel, 1986; Elliot, 1990b; Balan, Chorney & Ristock, 1995). In some cases, they may be a part of a larger anti-oppression training. Workshops can range in length from two to three hours, a full
day or a three-day training. Support and education groups for survivors operate on a closed or open (usually with pre-group screening to determine if the woman is the survivor and not the batterer) format and usually meet weekly or bi-weekly. Some feminists emphasize these as educational groups, loosely based on a feminist model (developed originally for women abused by men) that emphasizes a critical education approach drawn from the work of Paulo Friere (Pence, 1987). This model challenges a reliance on psychology or therapy discourses and uses techniques from popular education.⁸

While it appears that most educational discourses can be traced to feminist anti-violence organizing in large urban centres, rural communities and small cities in the United States and Canada have also been active in producing educational discourses on lesbian abuse.⁹ Most educational work has focused primarily (or exclusively) on lesbian identity, although there have been recent efforts to change the language and analytical framework to include women who identify as bisexual, queer or transgendered, or who do not claim any of these identities.

The Political Context

While educational materials exist and many communities have organized workshops or training sessions, it is crucial to note that educational discourses are not circulating everywhere. Due to pervasive homophobia, heterosexism and investment in a model of gender-based oppression and male violence against women, many feminist anti-violence

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⁸Not all lesbian abuse education challenges a reliance on psychology. As well, many people consider groups for survivors to be "clinical" work rather than "educational". I include this because some of the educators interviewed in this study view support and education groups for survivors as one part of their educational work.

⁹ Educational materials on lesbian abuse in Canada have been produced by organizations in urban centres in Canada such as Toronto, London, Winnipeg and Vancouver. In rural communities, these are the materials most often used and reprinted.
organizations refuse to discuss abuse in same-sex relationships or to provide services to women who have been abused by a woman partner (Ristock, 1994, p. 418).

In response to the construction of "the lesbian" as abnormal and deviant, many Western lesbian-feminists in the 1970s (and some continuing in the 1980s and 1990s) (largely middle-class and white, although not exclusively) constructed notions of "lesbian utopia", based on the assumption that women are inherently non-violent, caring and gentle, and that all lesbian relationships are based on an equal sharing of power. While this was not a monolithic or stable discourse (Ross, 1995), it has continued to influence the conceptualization and formation of lesbian identities and relationships as the polar opposite to the pathological construction (Taylor & Chandler, 1995; Ristock, 1997). The lesbian utopia discourse constructed a "normal" lesbian as a strong woman engaged in healthy, stable, conflict-free, woman-loving-woman relationships. This has the effect of masking power relations and violence between women and works to keep systems of domination intact by reproducing the binary construct of the normal/abnormal.

As a result of this investment in a model of gender-based oppression and the construct of lesbian utopia, many women fear that they will not be believed when they disclose or report same-sex abuse. They may also fear that in speaking out about the abuse, others will reduce the experience to a "relationship conflict" or assume the abuse is mutual (London Battered Women's Advocacy Centre, 1993). Additionally, many women have been reluctant to acknowledge the abuse for fear of perpetuating heterosexist stereotypes about lesbians and queers as degenerate, abnormal, sick, violent or pathological. The association of violence with masculinity and heterosexist assumptions that lesbians are role-playing, are not "real" women, and are really like men (Ristock, 1997, p. 147), may have further motivated some women in same-sex relationships to keep a lid on the issue of abuse in relationships. As well, queer women may not even consider describing their experiences using the language of abuse or battering because of the heteronormative, gendered, racialized and classed assumptions implied within these narratives.
Racism in society at large and within queer and feminist communities impacts on lesbian, bi and trans women of colour and Two-Spirited\(^{10}\) women's decisions to speak out or not about abuse in an intimate relationship. As Valli Kanuha (1990) has noted, people of colour and First Nations people have experienced racist attacks from white people who have used evidence of violence in relationships as proof of "degeneracy" or "problems in the race". As well, labeling people of colour pathological and/or violent has been a racist and colonial tactic used to maintain systemic oppression of people of colour. And when queer women of colour and Two-Spirited women leave abusive relationships, they frequently encounter racist-heterosexism as barriers to services (Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996). Also, small friendship networks in some queer communities of colour may intensify isolation and contribute to complex consequences in speaking out about the abuse (Waldron, 1996).

Many feminists (both heterosexual and queer) are also concerned that attention on the issue of woman-to-woman abuse will be used to fuel an existing backlash against feminist work on violence against women. Conservative or anti-feminist writers are critical of feminist analyses on violence for presenting women only as victims and not acknowledging that we can be perpetrators of violence. Recently, conservative and anti-feminist writers have focused on lesbian abuse as proof that a gender analysis is passé, that violence is about individual pathology rather than systemic oppression (Sommers, 1995) and that women (or only lesbians) are just as violent as men (Pearson, 1997, Sommers, 1995). Patricia Pearson (1997) uses survivors of lesbian abuse to show how much they have in common with "battered men" (men who claim to be battered by women), claiming that both have been ignored or marginalized by the feminist anti-violence movement and both have been victims of violent women. The following quote from Christina Sommers (1995) illustrates how lesbian abuse is taken up in this way:

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\(^{10}\)Two-Spirited is a term chosen by many First Nations people to refer to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered First Nations people.
"Once again, it appears battery may have very little to do with patriarchy or gender bias. Where noncriminals are involved, battery seems to be a pathology of intimacy, as frequent among gays as among straight people" (p. 200).

In this political context and due to this fear, some feminists downplay or deny the abuse that exists or question the legitimacy of survivors' stories. In her analysis of the exclusion of survivors in feminist discourse on violence against women, First Nations scholar Bonita Lawrence (1996) notes that it is "the dissident voices, those women whose interpretations of their experiences have led them to different conclusions than those usually expressed with the framework of feminist perspectives on wife abuse" that are too often excluded from feminist anti-violence discourse "as if they are motivated solely by the goal of discrediting feminism, rather than seeking to broaden its parameters to include one's own experiences" (p. 16).

Negotiating the terrain of silences, exclusions and denial of abuse amongst feminists and lesbians on the one hand, and anti-feminist backlash and right wing attacks against women, people of colour, First Nations people, poor people and queers on the other, is one of the greatest challenges faced by front-line workers, educators and researchers working to end violence in queer relationships. Throughout my research I have struggled with the political implications and consequences of raising certain issues and using specific methodological tools to analyze assumptions in lesbian abuse education. At times I fear that my work could be taken up and used out of context to serve political interests that are contrary to my own and that may hurt feminist, queer efforts to end violence. For these reasons, it is important for me to locate my research within this current political context and to continually assert the politics of naming the violence and to distinguish my political goals from those of backlash, conservative, liberal or anti-feminist writers. This

research is grounded in the assumption that there are real power differences in society and it supports a feminist politic of accountability and anti-subordination (Razack, 1998a).

**Material Resources and Power Relations**

It is crucial to pay attention to the inequities in the material circumstances related to the distribution of power in the circulation of discourses on sexuality (Adams, 1997, p. 15). The power a discourse carries is directly connected, in part, to the material resources available, such as money, access to publishers, printing presses, institutional resources, etc. (p. 6, p. 15). Access to material resources is tied to social, economic and political power.

Lesbian abuse education occurs within a context of limited material resources for community-based education and for lesbian or queer-specific projects. Very few women work in full-time, paid positions that are designed exclusively for education on same-sex partner abuse. To my knowledge, the only paid positions devoted exclusively to community education on woman-to-woman abuse in Canada have been short-term contract positions funded through government or community grants.\(^\text{12}\) The majority of educators and community organizers do this work part-time in a variety of ways: as volunteers, as part-time consultants or facilitators hired on contract, or as a small part of their work in feminist anti-violence organizations established initially and primarily to respond to male violence against women and children. In addition, most educators work as advocates or counsellors with women who've experienced violence. A crucial, but often invisible, form of educational work occurs informally amongst co-workers, friends and acquaintances.

\(^\text{12}\)For example, federal and provincial government grants have funded community education and training projects in the 1990s in Ontario, British Columbia and Manitoba. Other grants have come from community fundraising or foundations.
In the United States, there are a few non-profit queer organizations that exist solely to provide support, advocacy and education on the issue of abuse in same-sex relationships. In Canada, while there are no organizations with the exclusive mandate to work on woman-to-woman abuse, some feminist and queer organizations include service provision and education on abuse in same-sex relationships between women as part of their mandate. In recent years, coalitions and networks have formed — such as The Coalition Against Same-Sex Partner Abuse in Toronto; CLOSE: The Coalition of Lesbians on Support and Education in Winnipeg; and The Network Against Abuse in Queer Relationships in Vancouver — that provide an opportunity for individuals to come together to network, strategize and co-ordinate education, support and advocacy. Conflicts have arisen surrounding many of the issues I have highlighted above, as well as around the exclusion of bisexuals and transgendered people and around political differences between gay men and lesbians regarding feminist analyses and organizing process.13

Educational discourses have been produced within the above context where systemic oppressions impact on individuals' and organizations' ability to access material resources. Asserting the legitimacy of "the cause" and the credibility of one's organizational affiliation has often been a requirement for accessing funds. While most women's groups face these problems, immigrant women, women of colour, First Nations women, (Shin, 1991) working-class women, lesbians/bisexual/transgendered women, prostitutes, women with disabilities, and former residents of transition houses, have encountered further systemic oppression and paternalism when applying for funding (Shin, 1991; Stern & Leppard, 1995). As Maria Shin (1991) notes, the state frequently funds mainstream groups (dominated by white, middle-class professionals) to do outreach to immigrant women and women of colour rather than providing ongoing core funding to these

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13 For additional references to conflicts and debates in coalitions and education on lesbian abuse, see (Ristock and Pennell, 1996; Faulkner, 1995).
communities directly. Systemic oppression affects many factors in the production of knowledge, such as who gets funding, hired, published, and whose analysis is given currency and weight.

Because of societal systemic oppression and oppression within oppositional movements, some marginalized women have organized separately. However, this has usually meant less access to material resources to produce and circulate educational discourses. It is not that multiple discourses are not being produced, but rather that certain knowledges are delegitimized or subjugated. Unequal power relations limit who has access to the means for circulating and granting legitimacy and power to discourses. In 1990 Valli Kanuha wrote that the literature on "lesbian battering [has] been limited to the perspectives of white lesbians" as the result of racism in lesbian communities and society at large (p. 143). Based on my review of the literature, I would argue that there have been minimal changes nearly a decade later.\textsuperscript{14} It is crucial to note that queer and heterosexual women of colour have been actively involved in the movement to end violence against women since its inception. However as Charlene Waldron (1996) confirms,

\begin{quote}
our [women of colour's] contributions and the value of our work to the movement have often been marginalized, viewed as appendices to the 'central' work. We and the work we do are often considered expendable when conflicts over budgets and/or ideas arise. (p.49)
\end{quote}

While formal and informal feminist community-based organizing and theorizing on same-sex abuse between women exists, the majority of the research on the topic has come from researchers with academic credentials. Accessing research funding through state and independent research institutes is usually dependent upon academic affiliation and credentials, which privileges certain people's knowledge. In her reference to Western feminism, Aida Hurtado (cited in Bhattacharjee, 1997) states that "academic production

\textsuperscript{14} It is important to emphasize that this does not reflect the subject positions of the educators, organizers and service providers who are working to end woman-to-woman abuse. Also in 1998, two Aboriginal newsletters in Canada published an article on abuse in Two-Spirited Relationships (Meloche, 1998). In Vancouver in 1993, Two-Spirited women and lesbians of colour organized an educational workshop specifically for their communities. Also see (Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996; Mendez, 1996).
requires time and financial resources.....Not surprisingly, therefore, most contemporary published feminist theory in the United States [and Canada; my addition] has been written by white, educated women" (p. 396).

In the context of conservative heterosexist political rhetoric, funding research on lesbian abuse violence is risky. Among queer feminists there is often concern that when same-sex abuse education receives funding, it is because it is safer and easier to fund something to do with lesbians and violence than to fund anti-heterosexism education or support and educational programs for queer youth. In addition, government funders may be reluctant to fund projects on the issue due to their own heterosexist policy guidelines, as well as fear of criticism from feminists, anti-feminists and anti-lesbian and gay activists. When the C.L.O.S.E. project in Winnipeg received federal funding for research and education on lesbian abuse, the Family Violence Initiative indicated that it was one of the riskiest projects receiving their support (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 102).

**Anti-Homophobia and Western Feminist Anti-Violence Education**

In the precarious context outlined above, lesbian abuse education draws on the central tenets of Western anti-homophobia education and feminist anti-violence education discourses. Anti-homophobia education, as Rhonda Chorney (1997) has demonstrated, takes an informational approach to achieving its goals of equality and tolerance for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. This approach assumes that homophobia is a problem of

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15In using the term "Western feminist anti-violence discourse" I am referring to the dominant discourse which has largely been white, middle-class and heterosexual. I do not wish to homogenize or obscure the differences in feminist anti-violence work in the West but want to highlight and problematize the dominant mainstream feminist discourse. I am referring to a discourse about sexual assault, battering or domestic violence which was created primarily to respond to and stop men's violence against women and their children in heterosexual relationships. It could be argued that this category now includes same-sex violence within its definitions, but this is not widespread. Most feminist anti-violence education focuses on men's violence against women and children and this is what I am referring to in this section.

16Most anti-homophobia education to date has not included an analysis of transphobia and does not focus on tolerance and equality for transsexuals and transgendered people. In some communities this is changing, but the majority of anti-homophobia workshops focus on gay, lesbian (and occasionally bisexual) identities. This is discussed further in Chapter Three.
"lack of information about the other" and that by providing "facts about gays, lesbians and the oppressive systems of homophobia, people would change their attitudes and practices" (p. 2). Chorney and other critical educators (Razack, 1998a) have argued that an informational and tolerance approach ignores power relations between dominant and subordinate subjects, specifically ignoring how the identity formation of dominant subjects is dependent upon the construction of an Other. Thus this approach does not disrupt the hegemony of heterosexuality, whiteness and other systems of domination.

Western feminist anti-violence education also often takes this informational approach to educating about violence, assuming that the provision of information will eradicate the violence. Including dispelling "myths" with "facts", this approach provides models for understanding the violence (such as the cycle of violence or the power and control wheel; see Appendix A 17), cites statistics about the prevalence of violence, describes the social context of domination and oppression (patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, and sometimes discusses connections with racism, classism, heterosexism and ableism), describes the "victim/survivor's" perspective ("what does a battered woman/sexual assault survivor feel?"), provides resources for survivors and perpetrators, and provides information on "helping", counselling or advocacy skills for service providers.

Most pamphlets and workshops on lesbian abuse seek to dispel "myths and stereotypes" about lesbians and violence by providing information or "facts" about homophobia and heterosexism, lesbians and abuse. The central goals are to i) "raise awareness" or "break the silence" about the violence; ii) establish its legitimacy as an important social issue by discussing the nature and prevalence of abuse; iii) dispel myths and stereotypes about lesbians, lesbian relationships and violence; iv) provide information and resources to help women in abusive same-sex relationships; and v) provide information for service providers, friends and families on how to help. It is

17The power and control wheel is discussed in Chapter Three.
assumed that by challenging myths, providing information or facts about abuse, and by removing homophobic and heterosexist barriers to services, women will have greater options and will be able to leave abusive relationships or will seek help to end their abusive behaviours.

In addition to these goals, most feminist education frames lesbian abuse through an analysis of systemic domination and oppression. Most focuses primarily on the social context of patriarchy, heterosexism and misogyny and some includes mention of their connection to racism, sexism, classism and ableism. While some feminists seek to disrupt social relations of domination, pamphlets and workshops often re-centre heterosexuality and whiteness as the norm through modernist liberal discourses of "tolerance" and the construction of a universal subject. Furthermore, much of the education for front-line workers, counsellors, health care workers and others relies heavily on a discourse of "helping" and "service provision". As this research shows, many feminist educators are struggling to develop a feminist critical education model that disrupts systems of domination, while also working on the short-term goals of providing basic information and practical strategies and of removing barriers to service for women who have been in abusive same-sex relationships.

The "Lesbian Abuse" Literature Informing Community Education

Educational discourses are shaped and influenced by one another, as well as by academic research and the literature published in the feminist and popular press. I want to emphasize however, that most community educators have very little access to, or time to read, much of this literature due to the material constraints discussed earlier. The

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19 The social context discourse is discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.

19 From my observations and experiences in community-based organizations, the materials produced by community groups (handouts, booklets) tend to be read the most because they are short and written in an accessible language. And yet the academic literature often informs what is printed and is sometimes included in community-based educational materials with reference to statistics on prevalence. While the following list represents available resources in the six feminist anti-violence organizations I have worked
academic literature informing lesbian abuse education is situated within the fields of social work, sociology, psychology, health, law, criminology. With a few exceptions, the literature has largely relied on modernist discourses and constructs such as: a positivist approach to research, the construction of a universal woman or a universal lesbian, and an additive approach to analyzing and conceptualizing violence.\textsuperscript{20} I will briefly outline these three problems in this section and will discuss the latter two in further depth throughout the thesis.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{Positivism.} Much of the published literature that informs woman-to-woman abuse education relies on quantitative studies and a positivist approach to research. Positivism assumes a clear distinction between facts and values and between subjectivity and objectivity and also assumes that knowledge must be detached from experience (Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997). Positivist research methods assume that there is one objective and universal truth and that it is the task of the researcher to find it. In the context of violence, they often rely on measurement tools such as the Conflict Tactics Scale, which I will discuss below.

Canadian researcher Janice Ristock (1996) is a white lesbian feminist who has been studying lesbian abuse for the past ten years. She has speculated that this positivist trend is an attempt to "legitimize research in this area by following non-feminist, heterosexist

\textsuperscript{20}In some cases the feminist theory developed in these fields seeks to disrupt modernist categories and discourses (Ristock, 1996, 1998). Ellen Faulkner (1998) and Janice Ristock (1994, 1996, 1997, 1998) are two Canadian lesbian feminist researchers working in the fields of sociology, psychology, women's studies and lesbian/gay studies who are currently examining epistemological questions about the knowledge being produced about lesbian abuse.

\textsuperscript{21}This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the literature on abuse in same-sex relationships between women. For a more comprehensive review of the literature, see (Browning, 1995; Faulkner, 1998).
paradigms, leaving all the assumptions of previous works unchallenged, and paying little attention to feminist methodological approaches or critiques" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 73). Ristock notes that in keeping with this positivist approach, most writers and researchers (with a few exceptions) have not critically examined their subjectivity in relation to their research (p. 73).

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) is a positivist research tool developed by Murray Straus (1979) to measure violence in relationships. It has been used in much of the research on lesbian abuse (Renzetti, 1992; Lie and Gentlewarrior, 1991; Lockhart et al., 1994) despite being criticized by numerous heterosexual and lesbian feminists (Faulkner, 1998; Ristock, 1994; Scott, S., 1994; Carlson, 1992) for its gender-neutral approach to studying violence and its lack of analysis of power and control. The CTS assumes that violence is a tactic used in resolving conflicts between individuals. It "does not assess the meanings, contexts or consequences of these individual acts" (Scott, S., 1994, p. 38). By de-contextualizing the violence, it also ignores the motives behind different violent acts. By homogenizing all acts of violence, researchers who have used the CTS to study lesbian abuse have ignored whether acts of violence are in self-defense or retaliation (Ristock, 1994; Faulkner, 1998). Interestingly, although Claire Renzetti (1992) used the CTS in her large (and widely known) study on lesbian abuse, she has recently critiqued the measurement tool (1999), arguing the same points outlined above.

Numerous researchers (Ristock, 1994; Scott, S., 1994; Faulkner, 1998; Renzetti, 1999), have critiqued what Faulkner calls 'liberal and system approaches' in lesbian abuse

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22One example of this is Claire Renzetti's research (1992). Renzetti (a heterosexual woman) does not explore the political implications of doing research on a marginalized group when one is from the dominant group. She does not identify her social location in terms of race and class.

23Although Renzetti used the CTS in her earlier study, she did acknowledge some of the problems with the tool and said she only used it to measure how disagreements were handled rather than to measure violence (1990, footnote, p. 24). However, I would still argue that its use in this way is equally problematic.
research for making generalizing statements that individualize and neutralize violence rather than examining it within a socio-political, cultural and historical context.

Additive Approaches and the Construct of the Universal Woman/Lesbian. I would argue, as Janice Ristock (1994), Ellen Faulkner (1998), Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (1987), Bonnie Burstow (n.d.) and others have, that heteronormative assumptions pervade the research on woman-to-woman abuse. This research has taken the approach of adding lesbians to the existing heterosexual framework for understanding violence against women, manifesting in heterocentric conceptualizations of power in lesbian relationships (for example in Renzetti's research; Ristock, 1994, p. 417) that ignore differences and that minimizes systemic power relations (such as heterosexism, racism, classism) and the ways these impact on same-sex relationships between women.

Challenging homophobic, heterosexist and utopian constructs of lesbians and of abuse has been a central part of the educational discourse. However, this has often resulted in the construction of a unified and essential lesbian experience (Faulkner, 1991, p. 264). As I will discuss in Chapter Two, the construction of an unitary subject is accomplished through processes of othering.

With a few important exceptions, which I will discuss below (Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996; Mendez, 1996; Ristock, 1998; Almeida, Woods, Messineo, Font & Heer, 1994), most of the research to date has not integrated the extensive anti-racist critiques from feminists of colour and First Nations women of the dominant (white) gendered analysis of violence against women, and as such has taken an additive approach to discussing the violence experienced by lesbians of colour.24

Of the existing literature, three articles were written — two by lesbians of colour (Kanuha, 1990; Waldon, 1996) and one by a gay man of colour (Méndez, 1996) — to

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explicitly address issues facing lesbians and gay men of colour in abusive same-sex relationships. Two address the problem of universalism within feminist anti-violence movement and lesbian communities which has resulted in the marginalization of women of colour (Waldon, 1996, Kanuha, 1990). They discuss the relationship between systemic racism, heterosexism, homophobia and abuse experienced and perpetrated by lesbians of colour and emphasize the importance of understanding the role of racism in abusive mixed-race relationships between white women and women of colour (Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996); for example "a white lesbian may say that she feels threatened by her lover when her lover [a woman of colour] raises her voice...it may be that the white lesbian has assumed that because a woman of colour gets loud, she will naturally get violent" (Waldron, 1996; p. 49). The third article raises issues related to service provision to gay and lesbians of colour who have been in abusive same-sex relationships, stressing the importance of understanding and addressing immigration issues and how racism is a barrier to effective responses from the criminal justice system (Méndez, 1996).

The efforts of these authors notwithstanding, whiteness is re-centred in much of the existing lesbian abuse research in a number of ways. Many research samples have been dominated by white women — for example, 95% in Renzetti (1992), 92% in Lockhart et al. (1994), 87% in Lie and Gentlewarrior (1991). And as Aboriginal scholars Sharon McIvor and Teressa Nahanee (1998) note in their survey of literature on violence against women (including lesbian abuse), none of the articles specifically address the experiences of Aboriginal lesbians' experiences of same-sex abuse. One researcher (Renzetti, 1992) has problematically suggested that "violence may be more rare in minority lesbian relationships" based on the fact that the majority (95%) of respondents in her study were white (p. 14). In some educational workshops these statistics are cited to discuss the prevalence of same-sex abuse and they are often applied universally without mentioning the limitations of the research based on a majority of white respondents.
In some cases where researchers have made attempts to expand their sample to include more women of colour, it is still presented in a positivist framework and an additive approach is used. For example, in Teresa Scherzer's 1998 study, from a sample of 256 surveys, 44% of respondents were women of colour (Asian and Pacific Islander, African American, Latina, First Nations, and multiracial women). Scherzer notes that the racial diversity of respondents was a result of intensive outreach and community participation (p. 37). Nonetheless, she does not examine the interconnections between race, sexuality, gender and class and concludes that there is "no significant differences among any of the racial groups and the reporting" of abuse (p. 44).

While researchers must examine the conditions contributing to low responses from lesbians and bisexual women of colour and must interrogate the limitations and exclusions produced through our research design and methods, simply adding more lesbians of colour to the sample does not make the research more accountable, less white, nor does it mean that power relations based on race are being addressed in the research. When race is seen as a problem of the Other, white subjectivity in research is left unexamined.

Of the literature that is informed by feminist anti-racist analyses, there are some researchers who attempt to move beyond additive approaches by examining the relationship between the public and private violences of racism, classism and heterosexism (Almeida, et al., 1994), whiteness (Ristock, 1998), and references to the intersectionality of race, class, gender and sexuality (Renzetti, 1998).

For example, Rhea Almeida et al. (1994) have examined the relationship between the public and private violences and critiqued the tendency in feminist analyses to focus on the private oppression of white women in families, thus ignoring the relationship between the public forms of violence (racism, classism and heterosexism) and abuse in intimate relationships. To my knowledge, Janice Ristock's most recent article (1998) is the first that begins to ask questions about how subjectivities are racialized and classed and how
whiteness is constructed in discourses of lesbian abuse. And in a shift from her earlier work, Claire Renzetti (1998) recently has argued against a "one-model fits all" approach and uses the term "intersectionality" to talk about the importance of examining how racism, classism, sexism and heterosexism influence the causes and impacts of abuse. Yet, this shift in her analytical framework has yet to be fully demonstrated in her research.

These examples notwithstanding, the majority of the research has not moved away from positivist approaches that tend to universalize and ignore the socially constructed nature of categories and the meanings produced through language and ideologies. While some researchers are attempting to address race by broadening their sample to include women of colour, it is not sufficient to simply include women of colour in the sample. The assumptions guiding the research design, methods, and most importantly analysis that must shift. While there are a few examples where the literature challenges an additive approach or begins to addresses power relations based on race and class, the research does not always inform practice. And, as I discuss in this thesis, even when we do have an intellectual understanding of the problems with an additive approach, we do not always know how to move towards an interlocking analysis in practice.

In discussing her recent review of the existing research on lesbian abuse, Ellen Faulkner (1998) sums up:

The social construction of abuse; the institution of heterosexism; and the dearth of analyses of race, class, sexism and ableism generate understandings of lesbian battery from a white, middle-class, heterosexist, Western standpoint. Such understandings all lack contextual, theoretical and political depth. (p. 59)

It is within this context that community-based education on woman-to-woman abuse occurs. As I discuss in Chapter Four, educators are critical of many of these problems, and struggle to move beyond additive approaches that universalize, while also hanging onto essentialist categories in our attempts to end violence and systemic oppression.
Research Design

As I have outlined in this chapter, this research investigates the politics of naming the violence in community education. It examines the links between the hierarchical relations between women (based on race, gender, sexuality, class and ability) and the conceptual frameworks feminist educators develop and use to understand woman-to-woman abuse. A central problem this study examines is how a universal lesbian is constructed through lesbian abuse education, which normalizes certain identities and knowledges while subordinating others. Of primary interest is an examination of how whiteness is embedded in the discourses of lesbian abuse education. I explore about how we might deconstruct whiteness and shift hierarchical relations between women.

In the next chapter, I outline the theoretical tools that I use to analyze lesbian abuse discourses along with the qualitative research methodology that I used to collect the data for this study. I draw on analytical tools from feminist postmodern, anti-racist and queer theories to study community-based lesbian abuse education discourses. As I have indicated thus far, I am concerned with the effects of truth claims in lesbian abuse education and Chapter Two discusses Foucault's (1984) concepts of discourse and regimes of truth. It also discusses the difference between an additive and interlocking approach to examining systems of domination and briefly outlines some feminist theories on violence against women. In order to learn about and make visible some of the complexities of the discourses, I interviewed five white feminist community-based educators (including myself) in individual interviews and a focus group. I discuss in Chapter Two the selection process, my reasons for interviewing and my reflections on the interview and focus group process.

Chapter Three is divided into two parts. The first provides an analysis of some of the discourses operating in three Canadian educational texts (two booklets and one pamphlet) on lesbian abuse. I am not suggesting that these pamphlets are representative of all education on lesbian abuse, yet they do represent a dominant discourse and I use them to
illustrate some of the assumptions embedded within it. Part two looks at the data from the interviews and focus group and explores how the educators I interviewed negotiate the discourses they find themselves in. It discusses the difficulties educators (and survivors) face in naming woman-to-woman abuse. A discussion of workshops follows — how we use personal experience, how gender and sexual categories are constructed and deconstructed (specifically who's a lesbian and who's a woman?) and how we educate about the causes and nature of woman-to-woman abuse. The chapter reveals that educators struggle to engage with complexities and disrupt some constructs while still holding onto certain truth claims, thereby reproducing essentialist categories and hierarchies among women.

Chapter Four continues the discussion of the conceptual frameworks and models that educators use, but looks specifically at constructions of race and class. I discuss some of our efforts to shift the focus away from unidimensional analyses and the influences of privilege on our analyses and practice. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications for future work.
Chapter Two:

Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approaches

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. (Foucault, 1985, p. 61)

This chapter outlines the postmodern, anti-colonial, feminist and queer theoretical framework I am using to analyze and make sense of the stories told (and not told) in the educational materials, interviews and focus group in this research. This framework shaped the direction of the research (such as the questions I asked, the areas I chose to focus on). In this chapter I also reflect on the process of interviewing and interpreting the data and discuss questions raised by various theorists about the practice of qualitative research.

Part One: Theoretical Framework

Knowledge and Objectivity

One of the assumptions guiding my methodology is that all research makes knowledge claims and therefore it is crucial to explore epistemological questions about how knowledge is constructed and socially organized — to ask how we know what we know and what counts as knowledge. This methodology challenges positivist approaches to research that view knowledge as value-neutral, ahistorical and detached from experience (Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997).

Many feminist, anti-colonial and postmodern researchers have challenged positivist claims, arguing that knowledge production is never neutral and is always implicated in power relations. They emphasize the importance of asking whose interests are served by
the research. Donna Haraway (1991) suggests that a "feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for *what we learn how to see*" (italics mine; p. 190). This kind of positioning in knowledge production can move us towards responsibility and accountability by encouraging us as researchers to explore how our subjectivities influence the research process — the questions we ask (and don't ask), what we see (and don't see), and how we construct and assign meanings to stories. In the next two sections I describe feminist postmodern tools for examining the relationship between power and knowledge.

**Feminist Postmodernism**

In this thesis I draw on postmodern interpretive tools for unearthing the assumptions within, and the effects of, taken-for-granted beliefs or "truths". Feminist postmodern approaches to research seek to disrupt universalizing narratives and essentialist constructs (Ristock and Pennell, 1996; Razack, 1998a; Lather, 1991). I am using the term postmodernism as understood by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994) "as a critique of modernist agendas as they are manifested in various forms and locations around the world" (p. 2). Grewal and Kaplan's feminist postmodernism is anti-colonial. They critique the way certain forms of feminism are produced by and willingly support modernist agendas and thus how many feminists are complicit in sustaining colonial, Western hegemonies that perpetuate oppression and exploitation of other women (p. 2). As they explain, modernist discourses, practices and cultures are not only of a past epoch we call modernity, but continue to manifest themselves in powerful ways in the postmodern present. "Postmodernism calls into question the belief (or hope) that there is some form of innocent knowledge to be had" (Flax, 1992, p. 447). Postmodernism offers methodological tools such as deconstruction and discourse analysis for disrupting meta-narratives, challenging essentialism and for exploring taken-for-granted assumptions
(Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Namaste, 1998; Lather, 1991). I turn now to discuss how my analytical framework is informed by postmodern feminists who draw on a Foucauldian notion of discourse.

**Discourse and Power/Knowledge**

A discourse is "a set of assumptions, socially shared and often unconscious, reflected in language" (Ristock & Pennell, p. 114, 1996) that constructs knowledge, produces meaning and organizes social relations. A Foucauldian understanding of discourse refers to the way power and knowledge are constituted in and through each other (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Power operates through the construction of knowledge, producing "regimes of truth" that legitimize certain knowledges and delegitimize others (Foucault, 1984). Foucault refers to these delegitimized or disqualified knowledges as "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82).

Linda Martín Alcoff and Laura Gray-Rosendale (1996) use Foucault's concept of discourse to examine the "political effects of survivor discourse and the effects on the construction of women's subjectivities" (p. 199). Similar to my project, their research explores the multiple (and sometimes paradoxical) effects produced through feminist 'oppositional' discourses on violence (p. 200). Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale's detailed description of discourse is worth citing at length for it captures how I understand and apply this concept to my research on lesbian abuse education:

Through rules of exclusion and classificatory divisions that operate as unconscious background assumptions, a discourse can be said to set out not what is true and what is false but what can have a truth value at all — in other words, what is statable. Discourses structure what it is possible to say through systems of exclusion such as the prohibition of certain words, the division of mad and sane speech, and the (historically contingent) disjunction between true and false. In any given context there may exist more than one discourse, although discourses will exist in hierarchical relations with one another. (p. 202)

These systems of exclusion that prohibit certain speech and categorize discourses as legitimate and delegitimate — regimes of truth — are a central area of enquiry in my
In Chapters Three and Four I excavate some of the regimes of truth about lesbian identity and the causes and nature of abuse that circulate in lesbian abuse education.

I am interested in how our thinking and seeing is tied to our identities, in other words, how our subject positions limit or make possible what we see. This research is interested in the relationship between regimes of truth in lesbian abuse education and certain women's investments in specific conceptual frameworks for understanding identity, society and violence. My interest is in rupturing harmful regimes of truth which make (im)possible some identities and experiences.

According to Foucault (1978), discourses are shifting and unstable: a "discourse can be 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" (p. 101). Thus, the possibility of a "reverse" discourse always exists (p. 101).

My research is part of a growing body of feminist work that uses a Foucauldian notion of discourse to study constructions of violence against women (Ristock 1998; Ristock and Pennell, 1996; Razack, 1998a; Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale, 1996; Ferraro, 1996; Lawrence, 1996; O'Neill, 1998; Burton, 1998). Janice Ristock (1996, 1998) uses a similar approach to the one I take up in this study in her research on abuse in lesbian relationships. She is using discourse analysis and deconstruction as tools for disrupting heterosexist theorizing on violence against women and for examining the social discourses through which lesbians construct meaning of their experiences of violence. Ristock emphasizes that a key objective of her work is also researching the material conditions of lesbians' lives as "a way to encourage social action" and to also (re)search herself as "a way of engaging reflexivity/self-reflexivity in order to be 'answerable for

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25Foucault describes a "regime of truth" as follows: " 'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with the systems of power which produce and sustain it, and effects of power which it induces and which extends it. " (Foucault, 1984, p. 74)
what we learn how to see' " (1998, p. 141). Specifically, in my research this has meant paying attention to the material and socio-political context of community-based lesbian abuse education as well as holding onto the very fact of violence while examining how it is also constructed.

Subjectivity, Identity, Experience

I use excerpts from the interview transcripts as illustrations of discourse. The focus of my investigation is not the women them/ourselves, but rather the discourses that constitute us as subjects. It is this relationship between subjectivity (identity formation) and discourse that I am exploring in this thesis. That being said, I do not view subjects as passive and unimplicated in the statements we produce through discourse. Following from Joan Scott (1992), I assume that "it is not individuals that have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (p. 26). I am not relying on the modern liberal notion of the autonomous individual, but rather take up Foucault's (1982) point that we must liberate ourselves from this notion of individuality and imagine and promote new forms of subjectivity (p. 785). Subjectivity refers to a concept of the 'self' as socially produced, historically specific, discursively and multiply constituted and shifting.

In this thesis I am concerned not only with the production of categories or subject positions through discourse, but also how these positions are relational: for example how heterosexuality depends on homosexuality for its meaning, or how lesbian identity relates to bisexual identity, or how white queer identities are dependent on the identities of queer women of colour and Two-Spirited women. Stuart Hall (1996) describes this process:

...identities are constructed through, not outside difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its

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26 Drawing on Ristock and Pennell's (1996) work, my examination of how violence is discursively constructed also recognizes "the materiality of violence and its effects" (p. 8).
constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term — and thus its 'identity' — can be constructed. (p. 4)

Lesbian identity does not exist in a social and historical vacuum. It is not "difference" that is problematic per se — for as Hall (1997) argues, difference is ambivalent (p. 238) — but the strategy of naturalizing difference that fixes and essentializes it that can be dangerous. Namaste (1996) points to this danger when she notes the tendency of "lesbian and gay identities [to] stabilize themselves as natural, while simultaneously relegating other positions [transsexuals, transgendered people] to that of 'anomaly' " (p. 188).

Discourses (and the subject positions and categories produced through them) depend on one another in symbiotic ways to sustain systems of domination. In my research I use this understanding of the interplay between subjectivity and discourse to think about the categories that are produced through lesbian abuse education and how they are related to and implicated in exclusions. For example: How is whiteness embedded within the construction of lesbian identity in lesbian abuse education and how is this identity predicated upon the presence of unnamed racialized Others?

Absent Presences

Drawing on this understanding of the relational quality of categories, this thesis explores how a present but unnamed Other is relied on to give meaning and substance to dominant identities, and, in fact, how the Other is informing and constituting dominant subjects even in its absence. I am drawing on Toni Morrison's (1992) work on how the shadow of the non-white Other occupies the white imagination and how this constructed Other is necessary for whites to imagine themselves as white.

In Chapter Four I discuss how debates about definitions of violence, transgenderism and bisexuality in lesbian abuse organizing are also about the absent presence of women of colour and Aboriginal women. However, I want to emphasize that these women are not necessarily physically absent in these debates. In using Morrison's work, I want to
ask how certain narratives are constructed through processes of othering. For example, a conversation about women's abuse of power over other women is not a new topic of discussion within feminist anti-violence organizing. Women of colour and Aboriginal women have been addressing the violence of white women's racism and complicity in white supremacy for nearly two decades within feminist organizing.

Imperialism, Race and Knowledge Production

I have turned to the work of Sherene Razack (1998a), Mary Louise Pratt (1992), Toni Morrison (1992), and Anne McCintock (1995) for theoretical tools for examining how imperialism, racism and the construction of race are implicated in knowledge production in the context of modern liberal humanism. These scholars offer concepts and methods for tracing how racializations and racism are embedded in various discourses and methods of knowledge production.

For example, Pratt's work (1992) is useful for historicizing the Euro-imperial narratives of "reciprocity", "humanism" and "anti-conquest" that are part of the "claim to the innocent pursuit of knowledge" (p. 84). For instance, Pratt's study of Euro-imperialist travel and exploration narratives reveals that the grand story of "anti-conquest" is an integral part of imperialism. As she describes it, anti-conquest refers "to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (p. 7). She shows that the trope of

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27 One early article (originally written in 1980) that addressed the everyday violences of racism was Audre Lorde's "Age, Race, Class and Sex" (1984). Working-class women and women with disabilities have also addressed and challenged (and continue to challenge) middle-class and able-bodied women's abuses of power and the ways classism and ableism operate in feminist organizing. Recently biphobia and transphobia have been highlighted as forms of oppression and discrimination among women. For a list of references on the literature showing how different groups of women are implicated in the oppression of other women based on hierarchies of race, gender, disability and sexuality, see (Fellows & Razack, 1998). For discussion of the exclusion of bisexuals and transgendered people within lesbian and queer theorizing and within certain forms of feminism, see the following: on bisexual women, (Hutchins & Ka'ahumanu, 1991; Beemyn & Eliaison, 1996; Namaste, 1998); on transgendered people see (Feinberg, 1996; Califia, 1997; Pratt, 1995; Namaste, 1996). For discussion of classism within queer communities and within lesbian and queer communities, see (Kadi, 1996; Penelope, 1994).
"reciprocity" is used by imperialists to confirm their position of innocence as anti-conquerors (p. 82). If a story about reciprocity and anti-conquest structured the imperial "European knowledge-building project" (p. 38) and enabled imperialists to construct themselves as innocent, all the while violently colonizing people and their lands, what are the implications for the pursuit of knowledge through social science research? Clearly, knowledge production must be decolonized. In this research, I attempt to explore how these moves (my own and those of other community educators) show up in knowledge production to secure dominant subjectivities.

All of this leads me to interrogate the production of whiteness in lesbian abuse education, so as to dislodge it from its unmarked and unnamed status and to deconstruct the power it carries (Frankenberg, 1993; Dyer, 1997). I have found Ruth Frankenberg (1993), bell hooks (1992), Richard Dyer (1997) and Toni Morrison (1992) helpful for investigating how whiteness is constituted through discursive processes of othering and how "embedded assumptions of racial (not racist) language work" in narratives (p. xii). Whiteness manifests as taken-for-granted dominance: the privilege of not noticing one is white. Whiteness as the colour of domination shows up in moves of innocence and denial of one's position of dominance and complicity in systems of domination (hooks, 1994; Razack, 1998a).

As a white woman I am interested in examining how practices of domination affect and impact those who are perpetuating it. In discussing Canadian court cases of sexual violence in Aboriginal communities, Sherene Razack (1998a) points out that in the context of law:

Colonization, when it is mentioned, achieves the status of a cultural characteristic, pre-given and involving only Aboriginal people, not white colonizers. We may know how colonization changed Aboriginal people, but do we know how it changed, and continues to change, white people? (Razack, 1998a, p. 19)

In the context of my research this is relevant, in part because I am exploring how white lesbian educators understand the nature of domination and abuse.
Historically specific constructions racialized by class, religion, accent, and geography result in different gradations or shades of whiteness; for example, Jewish people have been racialized (Dyer, 1997, p. 12). In tracing how race, class, gender and sexuality shaped British imperialism, Anne McClintock (1995) investigates how "the invention of race in the urban metropoles...became central not only to the self-definition of the middle-class but also to the policing of the 'dangerous classes': the working class, the Irish, Jews, prostitutes, feminists, gays and lesbians, criminals, the militant crowd and so on" (p. 5). In various socio-historical and cultural contexts, "skin colour as a marker of power" has been "imprecise and inadequate" (p. 53). Exploring how discourses racialize bodies as degenerate in order to mark other bodies as respectable, is important for my research because I want to understand how processes of racialization operate in the construction of lesbian abuse — for example, the construction of survivors and batterers.

Queer Theory

Similar to the feminist postmodern and anti-colonial theories discussed above, queer theories offer analytical tools for challenging essentialist notions of sexuality and gender as stable, individual and ahistorical. Although strongly influenced by postmodernism, queer theory grew out of (and thus is informed by) many different political and theoretical movements, such as the homophile movement, gay liberation and lesbian feminism (Jagose, 1996).

Rather than solidifying sexual and gender categories, queer theory seeks to destabilize and denaturalize them. Drawing on Foucault (1978), queer theory challenges the notion that sexuality is a natural condition and explores how sexualities are discursively produced, regulated and resisted. Elaborating on Foucault's work, queer theorist Judith Butler (1990) argues that categories of gender and sexuality come to be naturalized (regulated and resisted) through the reiteration, or performance, of a norm or a set of norms. Butler's theory of performativity addresses the discursive process of reiteration
through which a subject is constituted and produced (1993, p. 95). For example, heterosexual identity seeks to naturalize itself as the original, the normal, and the real through the compulsory endless repetition of the category heterosexual (1991, p. 21). It is through this "heterosexual matrix" (a "grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized", 1990; p. 151) that lesbian identity is constructed as imitating the (original) heterosexual. Butler emphasizes that gender and sexuality are "not organized in terms of originality and imitation. What they manifest instead is the endless — though heavily regulated — possibilities of performativity." (Jagose, 1996, p. 85).

In response to the claim that lesbians and gays must secure these identities, Butler (1991) raises some important questions:

There is no question that gays and lesbians are threatened by the violence of public erasure, but the decision to counter that violence must be careful not to reinstall another in its place. Which version of lesbian or gay ought to be rendered visible, and which internal exclusions will that rendering visible institute? Can the visibility of identity suffice as a political strategy, or can it only be the starting point for a strategic intervention which call for a transformation of policy? Is it not a sign of despair over public politics when identity becomes its own policy, bringing with it those who would 'police' it from various sides? And this is not a call to return to silence or invisibility, but, rather, to make use of a category that can be called into question, made to account for what it excludes. (p. 19)

Butler is not saying that one should never name oneself 'lesbian' or 'gay'. She is emphasizing the importance of examining the exclusionary effects of naming and of exploring multiple strategies for socio-political change. For Butler, "identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (1991, pp. 13-14).

Similarly, this thesis is interested in interrogating the regimes of truth that produce exclusions within liberatory or oppositional discourses, including queer, such as those that exclude bisexuals, transgendered people and people of colour. Queer theory has been criticized by some scholars and activists for its tendency to re-centre whiteness, produce
elitism and for its lack of engaged theorizing about the interlocking nature of race, sexuality and gender (Storr, 1997; Jagose, 1996; Beemyn & Eliason, 1996). A case is point is the way Butler misses the racial dimension inherent within the heterosexual matrix (Storr, 1997). As Merl Storr (1997) argues, "the racial logic at the heart of the matrix" can be seen "particularly in the constitution of heterosexuality as procreation — surely not an incidental feature of the discourse of heterosexuality as 'natural' and as a crucially racialized feature..." (pp. 77-78). Sexological constructions such as the "homosexual", "bisexual" or "heterosexual", cannot be understood without examining race, because racial categories came into being in and through sexual ones (Storr, 1997). Race was the organizing principle of sexuality for the early sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who relied on anthropological discourses about classification of "the races", which assumed that signs of abnormality could be found in anatomical (sexual/racial) markers on the body (Sommerville, 1994). The sexologists and others, had pervasive anxieties about mixed bodies (black and white; male and female) and used theories about the abnormalcy of the hybrid body — the "mulatto" — to make sense of the sexual "invert" (Sommerville, 1994; Storr, 1997). This shows how racial and sexual categories rely on each other to define boundaries and illustrates the inextricability of race from the study of sexuality (Sommerville, 1994).

Moves within queer theory that seek to disrupt binary sex/gender relations offer potential openings for bisexual and transgendered subjectivities. But much queer theory relies on some of the very binaries (such as male/female, hetero/homo) that it claims to dismantle, which renders transgender experience and bisexuality invisible or marginalizes these positions as Other (Beemyn & Eliason, 1996; Storr, 1997). Discursive postmodern gestures that highlight the fluidity and multiplicity of identities have not always manifested in a connection with the material realities of people's lives. As Ki Namaste (1996) points out:
Critics in queer theory are fond of writing about the ways in which specific acts of gender transgression can help dismantle binary gender relations and hegemonic heterosexuality. While such an intellectual program is important, it is equally imperative that we reflect on which aspects of transgender lives are presented and how this discussion is framed. For example, critics in queer theory write page after page on the inherent liberation in the transgression of gender codes, but they have nothing to say about the precarious position of the transsexual woman who is battered, and who is unable to access a woman's shelter because she was not born a biological woman. (Namaste, 1996, p. 185)

My methodology is informed by the work of the above scholars and activists who address transgender and bisexual subjectivities and who make links between the social, material and discursive processes of racialization, sexualization and gendering of bodies.28

By adopting an analytical framework of queerness, I seek to examine and challenge heteronormative discourses that produce regimes of truth about sexuality, gender and violence. How and who can claim experiences of violence? What possibilities exist for marginalized subjects in re-writing or creating new discourses?

Interlocking Systems

I am relying on theoretical tools that enable me to trace how systems and categories are dependent on one another — in other words how they interlock. Anne McClintock (1995) has demonstrated that race and sexuality were ordering principles in the emergence of imperial modernity and from the outset they relied fundamentally on specific constructions of gender in securing and maintaining the imperial enterprise (p. 7). Similar to McClintock's claim that categories of race, gender, class and sexuality are "articulated categories that come into existence in and through relation to each other" (p. 5), Patricia Hill Collins (1990) has argued that an interlocking analysis focuses on how

28The use of queer as an identity has been controversial and seen as oxymoronic since queer theory deconstructs the very notion of identity politics (Jagose, 1996). As well, mobilizing queer as an umbrella term to refer to a broad group of diverse sexual/gender identities, can have a homogenizing effect. However, it also offers the potential of celebrating fluidity and multiplicity, and for "producing a coalition of non-normative sexual identities" (p. 114). When I refer to "queer people" in this thesis, I do so acknowledging that there is no unity in this identification, but rather a connection with a movement that denaturalizes sexual and gender identities and recognizes the multiplicity of these identities.
"each system needs the others in order to function" (p. 222). Interlocking analyses differ from additive models. "Additive models of oppression", as described by Hill Collins (1990)

are firmly rooted in the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought...This emphasis on quantification and categorization occurs in conjunction with the belief that either/or categories must be ranked...Privilege becomes defined in relation to its other. (p. 225)

In this thesis, I argue that lesbian abuse education discourses have often relied on an additive approach that supports the construct of the universal woman, which props up white supremacy, capitalism, and ableism. Because these systems interlock, these discourses also leave the institution of heteropatriarchy intact as well. Lesbian abuse discourses that add differences or oppressions based on race, class and disability onto an existing and essential lesbian experience construct a universal woman who identifies as lesbian, who is white, middle-class and able-bodied. Janice Ristock (1994) has argued that the majority of the research on violence against women (including research about lesbian abuse) assumes "that violent relationships are similar regardless of the sexual identity of those involved" (p. 416). Valli Kanuha (1990, 1996), Sherene Razack (1998a), Kimberly Crenshaw (1994), Patricia Monture-Angus (1995), Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell (1996) and others have also critiqued the limitations with the dominant feminist theorizing on violence against women, which has often assumed that violence is similar regardless of the race and class identities of those involved. By constructing theories on lesbian abuse using an additive approach that focuses on comparisons (similarities and differences) with heterosexual abuse, heterosexual women's experiences of violence become the norm (Faulkner, 1991). Additive analyses can also support relativist statements that ignore how systems of domination work together.

Lesbians, bisexual and transgendered women of colour and Two-Spirited women have consistently challenged white lesbian feminists for our tendency to rank oppressions putting sexism and heterosexism at the pinnacle and thus focusing solely on our
oppression and marginalization as lesbians (Kanuha, 1990; Silvera, 1991; Waldron, 1996). Drawing on Sherene Razack (1998a) and Maria Lugones' (1990) point that it is Anglo/White women who can see themselves solely as women or human (p. 49-50), a central question in this thesis is: Who is the woman who sees herself first and only as a lesbian?

This problem of ranking oppressions and the importance of interlocking analyses has also been examined by Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack (1998). As they show, this discursive move of ranking oppressions or trying "to change one system while leaving the others intact", ignores how various systems mutually construct and rely on one another, and leaves "in place the structure of domination that is made up of interlocking hierarchies" (p. 3). By employing an interlocking analysis in their research on hierarchical relations between women, they show that the problem of competing marginalities revolves "around the deeply felt belief that each of us, as women, are not implicated in the subordination of other women" (p. 2). This leads women to "race to innocence". They describe the problem of competing marginalities and the race to innocence:

We draw the conclusion that the systems of domination that position white, middle-class, heterosexual, nondisabled men at the centre, continue to operate among all other groups, limiting in various ways what women know and feel about each other. Feeling only the ways that she is positioned as subordinate, each woman strives to maintain her dominant positions. Paradoxically, each woman asserts her dominance in this way because she feels like it is the only way in which she can win respect for her claim of subordination. We describe this practice as securing a "toehold on respectability". (p. 4)

This practice secures a subject's position of dominance at the centre by marking and containing the Other (pp. 13-15).

In writing about violence in lesbian of colour relationships, Valli Kanuha (1990) has argued that the battered women's movement has gained respectability and credibility in part through minimizing and excluding the perspectives of women of colour and lesbians (p. 150). She has suggested that "acknowledging lesbians of colour in battering
relationships will surely shatter some of that stability" (p. 150). Drawing on Fellows and Razack (1998) and Kanuha (1996), my research explores how certain women (white, middle-class, able-bodied lesbians and heterosexual women) have gained and maintained their respectability and privilege through subordinating other women (poor women, prostitutes, women of colour and First Nations women, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people) in feminist anti-violence organizing (including lesbian abuse education and organizing). Investments in white, middle-class, and in some cases biologically-defined feminist conceptualizations of woman, lesbian and violence are directly linked to securing this respectability and privilege. Many of these gains are achieved by colluding with specific systems of domination, such as white supremacy, capitalism and heteropatriarchy. In Chapter Four I discuss how the educators I interviewed attempt to move beyond additive models and show how our privilege and investments in seeing ourselves as innocent influence our educational work.

Theories on Violence Against Women

As I have discussed thus far, this study investigates how certain stories and constructs make visible some forms of violence and oppression while concealing others, and the related denial of complicity in these forms of oppression (Razack, 1998a). By focusing exclusively on gender and paying little attention to the social, historical and political context in which violence against women occurs (for example, white supremacy, colonialism, globalization), white Western feminist theories of violence have positioned white women at the centre (Davis, 1987; Allard, 1991; Bannerji, 1995; Lawrence, 1996; Razack, 1998a; Razack, 1998b; Monture-Angus, 1995; Bhattacharjee, 1997; Kanuha, 1990, 1996). This grand narrative of violence also assumes a male perpetrator and a

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29 And while acknowledgement is the first step, it can often take the form of "adding" difference (tokenism) rather than deconstructing the constructs that maintain, in this case, white women's and heterosexual women's privilege.

The above scholars who disrupt this grand narrative have suggested that feminist anti-violence theories must incorporate an analysis of immigration laws, history and processes of globalization (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Razack, 1998a, Bhattacharjee, 1997), the violences of colonialism, poverty (Monture-Angus, 1995; Lawrence, 1996), and heterosexism (Ristock, 1994, 1998; Faulkner, 1991; 1998; Alexander 1997, Eaton, 1994). These theorists emphasize the importance of expanding the existing narrow definition of violence against women, which not only excludes some experiences but naturalizes certain forms of violence.

A central theme evident in the work of these scholars is the need to break down the discursive construction of public and private spaces. In effect, in different ways these scholars argue for a spatial analysis of violence, that is, that we pay attention to the violence enacted on women's bodies at different sites and from multiple sources. The public/private dichotomy masks how the construction of, and the violences within, each space depend upon one another.31 The thesis will pay attention to these arguments primarily by attempting to be vigilant about the reinstatement of a unified subject (either the universal woman or the universal lesbian) in the educational materials and interviews. The educators interviewed grappled with the problems with the public/private dichotomy in lesbian abuse education and I discuss this in Chapter Four.

30The phrase "the grand narrative of violence against women" is from Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell (1996).

31Although feminists such as Catherine MacKinnon (1989) and others have emphasized that these spaces are not unrelated, they continue to be conceptualized as separate, distinct knowable spheres and certain forms of violence in spaces defined as public (such as genocide, immigration laws), are often de-emphasized. For an anti-racist analysis of MacKinnon and other white Western feminists conceptualizations of public/private, see (Bhattacharjee, 1997; Razack, 1998).
"We" must move away from strategies of "inclusion" that tokenize and marginalize certain women and instead we must reconceptualize the entire white, Western, imperialist, middle-class, heterosexist conceptual framework for examining violence against women. A crucial question that must accompany the question "who's been excluded" is: how have "our" subjectivities been produced through these exclusions?

Part Two:
Qualitative Research Methods and Self-Reflection

In order to address these questions about truth claims in lesbian abuse education, I interviewed five women (including myself) who do feminist community-based education on the issue of abuse in same-sex relationships between women. I have used multiple research methods including: i) discourse analysis of printed educational materials; ii) individual interviews; iii) a focus group; and iv) my own research journal.

Why Interviewing?

I approached the opportunity to undertake a qualitative research project with both enthusiasm and trepidation. I was enthusiastic because I believed qualitative research could be empowering. I had previous experience with feminist and participatory action research methodology and, although I had concerns about unequal power relations in research, I continued to believe that qualitative, feminist, anti-racist research could be used to facilitate social, political and personal change. I also believed that interviewing could make visible knowledge that had been previously marginalized or disqualified. Without qualitative data, I thought my research would be less accountable to the people who would be most affected by it, specifically lesbian, bisexual and queer women who are involved in educating about abuse in same-sex relationships. I also wanted to provide
opportunities for collective critical reflection and theorizing, a context which quantitative data does not provide.

While lesbian abuse education has been happening throughout North America for the past 15 years, it remains unknown to many people. Some of this work has been documented (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Ristock, 1998; Balan et al., 1995; Faulkner, 1995), but much of the knowledge exists in "people's heads". I could have devoted my research solely to a textual analysis of printed educational materials, but for a variety of reasons I wanted to combine this with interviewing. In this research I am not documenting the knowledge base that exists but rather am showing examples of discourses that circulate in community education.

My decision to do interviewing was informed by my belief that hearing directly from lesbian, bisexual and queer educators was necessary to make this work visible. In recent years, other gay and lesbian researchers have used oral history or ethnography for similar reasons, as a way of pointing to experiences and knowledge that has been undervalued (Riorden, 1996; Kennedy & Davis, 1993/1994; Ross, 1995; Ristock, 1998). As Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis (1993/1994) write about their use of oral history with lesbians, this "can be an invaluable method for documenting the experience of the invisible; it allows the narrators to speak in their own voices of their lives, loves and struggles" (Kennedy & Davis, 1993/1994, p. 15).

My own experience as an educator and survivor contributed to my decision to do interviews and a focus group. Personally, I yearned for the opportunity to talk with others working on this issue. I have often felt that other feminist anti-violence workers did not consider woman-to-woman abuse to be a legitimate or important issue. In doing this research, I have been reminded of how selective I've been in the past in disclosing my experiences of abuse, as well as my work as an educator. While this could be related to shame about my own experiences of violence, it is also related to pressure from many feminist anti-violence workers (heterosexuals and lesbians) to focus exclusively on male
violence against women and for workers to not speak out about our own experiences of surviving violence.

Interview Structure

The interviews and focus group were tape recorded and transcribed. Two of the interviews were conducted in person (one at a woman's home, another at a woman's workplace) and the other two were conducted by phone due to geographical distance. Each interview was between 1-1/2 and 2 hours. I conducted one follow-up interview on the phone.

The interviews and focus group were semi-structured. I followed an interview guide (see Appendix C) of themes and questions. I told each woman that she had the options of adding and refusing any of these questions. While I intended to cover the same questions and topics in each interview, there were some differences when the dialogue took us in new directions or in more depth on certain issues.

Participants — Criteria for Selection

The criteria for involvement in the research was established prior to recruiting participants; however, it shifted during the recruitment process. Given the time limitations for this project, I intended to interview five women, plus myself. I decided to have someone interview me as a research subject because I wanted to highlight my own position as an educator implicated and invested in the same issues I explored with the other educators. One participant withdrew from the research prior to the interview and it was not possible to recruit someone else at such late notice. I decided that all participants needed to self-identify as having previous experience as a community-based educator (paid or unpaid) on the issue of abuse in same-sex relationships between

32 This woman stated that she was withdrawing from the research for personal reasons, one of which was that she was concerned about confidentiality and safety, both inside and outside of the focus group.
women. I defined community education broadly to include a range of activities such as facilitation of workshops, volunteer or staff training, community organizing, as well as educational/support work with survivors of abuse. Initially I limited participation to educators from the immediate area surrounding the large urban centre within which I conducted the interviews.33

I did not specifically ask participants to identify their age, disability, sexual, gender, class, race, cultural or ethnic identities. The following information was shared in the course of the focus groups and individual interviews: All five participants identified as survivors of woman-to-woman abuse; three women identified as middle-class, one as mixed-class (working/middle-class), and one identified as working-class; all identified as white women, but one woman also identifies with a specific ethnicity34; four women used the term queer in addition to other identifiers such as dyke, lesbian and femme to refer to themselves, while one woman exclusively used the term lesbian; one woman lives and works in a rural environment while the others are based in urban centres; with the exception of myself, everyone is currently employed in feminist anti-violence organizations (two women work at an organization that specifically addresses woman-to-woman abuse); all have worked with heterosexual women abused by men and in a variety of feminist anti-violence programs; our educational work includes volunteer training, workshop facilitation with service providers, police, feminist anti-violence workers,

33Some queer women of colour, Two-Spirited women, transgendered people and working-class women may not self-identify as educators per se, but may do the work of informal education within their communities. Therefore these women's experiences are often absent in research and discussions about what constitutes education on same-sex abuse and who does it. This study focuses on educational discourses in workshops and pamphlets. In future research, informal educational discourses might be made visible by soliciting stories from women about the support and education they engage in with their friends and acquaintances. This is important work and should not be underestimated. Also the very act of speaking about our experiences of violence in queer relationships can and does educate health care and service providers, as well as friends, acquaintances, family members and strangers.

34She asked me to omit this information for reasons of confidentiality and safety.
lesbian, gay and queer communities and ranges from volunteer work, paid contract work and as full or part-time positions in anti-violence organizations.

**Selection Process — Critical Reflection**

There are very few women doing this work within the province I chose to conduct the focus group and interviews. At the same time, I did not want to assume that I knew everyone and I recognized the inherent race, class, ability limitations of the "snowball sampling" technique. I contacted feminist and queer organizations that do educational or support work on same-sex partner abuse. I also contacted First Nations organizations that offer support services to Two-Spirited people who have experienced abuse. Of the thirteen women referred to me, eight were white women, two were women of colour and three were Two-Spirited women. Only two of the non-white women had specifically done educational work on this issue. Of these two, one woman didn't respond to my calls and the other initially agreed to be involved, but withdrew from the research prior to the interview for personal reasons.

The inclusion of women of colour and Two-Spirited women in the research was always on my mind when selecting participants, but I didn't always make this explicit. Differences based on dis/ability, class, age, gender and sexuality were also on my mind but I did not prioritize these, perhaps reflecting anxieties about my own racism and perhaps also reflecting a problematic reliance on a hierarchical framework of oppressions. I can remember thinking during the selection process that I didn't want to "get caught up" in checking off identity categories in a way that implied that diversity would make my research more valid, more innocent or less implicated in practices of othering.

I wanted to recognize the systemic racism that women of colour and Two-Spirited women experience in general, and specifically in feminist and queer organizations (which may manifest itself in fewer jobs or contracts doing educational work than some white
queer women have), and for these reasons it might *appear* that women of colour and Two-Spirited women have not been active in educating on the issue of woman-to-woman abuse. I did not want my criteria to exclude women of colour and Two-Spirited women who did not use the same language as I did to talk about *education*. At the same time I did not want to position myself as the innocent, imperial saviour setting out to liberate the subjugated voices of women of colour. I wanted my research to challenge a politics of inclusion and did not want to tokenize women of colour and Two-Spirited women. And *if* the educational work on lesbian abuse has been dominated by white women, and if the discourse relies on racialized constructions or narratives that support processes of othering, I wanted my research to problematize this. And yet I struggled with how to do this without reproducing whiteness.

After reflecting on this, I decided that identifying as having some experience as an educator (broadly defined) on woman-to-woman abuse was important, but I did not want to be in the position of legitimizing or delegitimizing people's experience. When contacting individuals I tried to validate any experiences that might be applicable even if the woman herself did not think she "fit" the criteria.

During the selection process, three women suggested I contact an organization in the United States that does education on abuse in same-sex relationships between women. Each woman who suggested I contact them mentioned they thought the staff were women of colour. I was familiar with their work (although I had never met the staff) and thought their extensive experience would be valuable to the research.35 All of these factors contributed to my decision to expand the geographical criteria to include them. The fact they were identified to me as women of colour was not the primary reason for this, but factored significantly in my decision to contact them. As I discovered through the interviewing process, the staff members I interviewed are both white women. The two

35The Canadian educational discourses rely heavily on materials and research from the United States.
full-time staff who were women of colour no longer work with the organization. In reflecting on this process, I see how my attempts at including women of colour and Two-Spirited women in the research may also have been an attempt to save myself (and my research) from appearing white.

**Individual Interviews Prior to the Focus Group**

I planned to do all of the individual interviews prior to the focus group seeing them as an opportunity for women to talk about any issues they might not feel comfortable discussing in the group. I also wanted to hear women's individual thoughts and ideas prior to the influence of others' ideas. This reflects my assumption that women's autonomous and thus "real" ideas and thoughts would be potentially tainted by the influence of other women's ideas in the focus group.

My assumptions were contradictory. I was also excited by the chance for critical reflection and collective theorizing and wanted to conduct a focus group because of the potential for shifting our thinking about the meanings embedded in the constructs in the educational discourses. I wonder now if conducting the individual interviews after the focus group might have given participants a chance to reflect on issues discussed, as well as to expand on or disagree with them. I wonder if it might have encouraged more in-depth discussion.

I interviewed all but one woman prior to the group (we had planned to do the interview before the group but due to her busy work schedule, we agreed to do it after the group). It is difficult to speculate how the timing influenced what women chose to say or not say in the group or one-to-one interviews.

**Focus Group**

I chose to conduct a focus group in addition to individual interviews because I wanted to bring educators together for dialogue and discussion. A focus group offers
opportunities for participants to critically reflect, compare experiences and allows for the possibility of consciousness-raising (Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

The focus group took place in one of the participants' homes and was approximately 3-1/2 hours long. Similar to the individual interviews, I prepared a guide of questions and distributed these to participants ahead of time (see Appendix D). While I tried to follow this guide, the discussion went in other directions as educators engaged with one another's comments and raised many additional issues and questions.

This particular group of women would not likely have come together without the structure of this research. Although two of the women work together, the other two had met before and I knew two women prior to the research, everyone would not likely have had all of these conversations together outside of this research. Funding, time limitations and geographical distance make it difficult to network and take the time for lengthy discussions.

The focus group was a lively and interactive discussion. I began the group by initiating a discussion about "group agreements or "guidelines" (such as confidentiality) before we started. This was the only time in the group when there was silence and I sensed some awkwardness. This shifted when one woman raised concerns about how group agreements are often used to mask power relations in women's groups and reflect classist and racist assumptions (e.g. in the "rule" of "no interrupting"). Foregoing the discussion on group agreements, we briefly discussed confidentiality and then moved into introductions. Although some women spoke more than others, everyone had a lot to say and there was a high level of engagement with each others' comments and ideas — so much so that we had difficulty ending after 3-1/2 hours. After the group, a number of participants indicated they found the discussion stimulating and thought-provoking, although I was aware that strong disagreements (if they existed) were not voiced or discussed.
Benefits of Multiple Methods — Benefits of Interviewing

Combining an analysis of themes in both printed educational materials and in interview/focus group transcripts allowed for a more nuanced and complex representation of educational discourses. If I had not interviewed educators, I might have constructed a more coherent and less contradictory story about the motivations and effects of educational discourses. By hearing from educators, I could be attentive to the ways we strategically employ certain discourses as well as our struggles to hold onto the conceptual and material complexities surrounding the issue. The focus group was also a rare opportunity for community workers to engage in discussions without any pressure to produce a pamphlet or make decisions about workshops or policies. I saw the interviews and focus group as opportunities for continued theorizing and learning and as an opportunity for collective critical reflection on our practices and theories about abuse, systemic oppression and education. As Janice Ristock (1998) has emphasized, this is an important part of the research process which is sometimes overlooked:

But even alternative approaches to research that are not driven by a positivist-empirical paradigm are often more concerned with developing a critical analysis (meaning making), and less concerned with the relationship between researcher and participant and the learning process they engage in as part of 'doing' research. (p. 139)

This is the challenge I have faced in my research: to critically analyze discourses, the meanings, subjectivities and social relations they produce, while also holding onto the material conditions affecting educators and women who have experienced violence in same-sex relationships and the learning process we engaged in through this research (Ristock, 1998).

Accountability to Participants

Throughout the interviewing process I was concerned with how to ensure accountability to the participants. When I disagreed with a participant I sometimes felt
confused about whether or not to indicate my disagreement. I worried that participants might already be concerned with saying what they thought I wanted them to say, and so I didn't want to influence this. I didn't want to position myself, or be positioned by the participants, as the expert. I also struggled with how much to share of my own opinions, not wanting to take the focus away from the women who had volunteered their time to participate. By the last interview, I shared more of my own ideas and experiences but more than once, I left the interview wondering if I should have made my differing analysis or political position visible. Ristock and Pennell (1996) emphasize that accountability to the research participants means "...showing how our work has integrity and value by making our own critical analysis visible, not keeping it from them" (p. 50). I suspect that there were times when my silence permitted the participant the space and freedom she needed to articulate her own analysis and ideas, and also times when I think I would have been more accountable to a participant had I made my analysis more visible. I'm aware that my opinions on many issues will be visible to the participants for the first time when they read this thesis which leaves me with a uneasy feeling.

Before and during the interviews, I encouraged participants to share their suggestions and comments about the research. Each educator received a copy of her interview and focus group transcript. One woman changed a few words and sentences in her transcript while another asked me to delete some identifying information for reasons of confidentiality. I have given each woman a copy of the thesis.

Had there been more time I would have attempted to solicit feedback from the participants on my interpretation and to incorporate their comments and analyses (including areas of contradictions and disagreements) into the final draft. I think this would have pushed me to confront and explore taken-for-granted assumptions, produced a more complex story about the educational discourses and been more accountable to the participants.
Saying the "Right" Thing

At times I sensed that some of the participants were concerned with saying the "right" thing. While transcribing I wrote in my research journal, "When listening to the interview tapes I could feel my stomach tightening, a nervousness, anxiousness. When she starts to talk about issues she isn't sure about, I see how I (and the interview process) set things up so that she feels that she has to have the answers — the right answers. Also that she has to have an answer." I speculate that my prior relationship (as colleagues/friends) with two of the women may have influenced some of this unease. Researcher Pamela Cotterill (1996) raises the issue of interviewing friends and notes that "respondents may feel more comfortable talking to a 'friendly stranger' because it allows them to exercise some control over the relationship" (p. 596).

In addition to these influences, I also speculate that women felt concerned about giving the right feminist and/or lesbian or queer position on different topics and may have feared judgement about their positions and ideas. Feminist educator Patti Lather (1991) has written about this in her work on student resistance to liberatory curriculum. She argues that we need to move away from notions of "false consciousness" when students resist totalizing discourses or "group think" (p. 141) and to focus on "the power-saturated discourses that monitor and normalize our sense of who we are and what is possible" (p. 142). Anxieties about "saying the right thing" can thus be read as an effect of the discourses educators are located in.

Through interviewing, taping and transcribing, our talk becomes fixed as text. This is one of the irresolvable tensions with qualitative research — how to represent "what happened" when the very process of representation works to fix our talk, making it appear static and definite. At numerous points in the interviews and focus group, women (including myself) made comments such as — "I don't know", "I'm not sure about this", "I'm talking off the top of my head here", "I haven't presented on this" or "I wouldn't want to go on a talk show and say this" — which indicates that educators want to
foreground the partial and shifting nature of our knowledge and do not want our thoughts
to be seen as fixed. We are also conscious of the potential risks faced in saying certain
things in a conservative political context. In Chapter Three I discuss some of the risks we
face as white queer/lesbian women in having these conversations about the murky and
contradictory places in lesbian abuse education.

Another element affecting the way participants felt in the interviews and focus group
may be the way expertise and expert positions are socially and discursively constructed. I
am aware that academic credentials and institutional location confer power, privilege and
expert status. Some of the participants expressed surprise upon hearing the names of the
professors on my thesis committee. Given that the committee members are well-known in
Canada for their feminist research in the areas of lesbian abuse, violence against women,
and racism, some of the participants may have felt anxious about how they would be
perceived by the "experts". As well, my middle-class privilege (manifesting in classist
assumptions and language in the interviews) and the privilege and power associated with
academia may have impacted on how some women felt about the interview process. As
Joanna Kadi (1996) writes

Capitalism relies on various institutions, such as the university, to pass on relevant
knowledge about the system. Universities need to replicate and reinforce central
ideologies. Such as poor people stupid, rich people smart — a perfect example of
the kind of polarized thinking that has hindered and weakened Western thought
for centuries. These categorizations feed into an either/or mentality and ignore
complications and complexities. They also shore up oppressive systems of racism,
sexism and classism because of the positive meaning attached to one half of the
equation and the negative meaning attached to the other — male/female,
white/back, heterosexual/homosexual, virgin/whore, thinking/feeling. I always
include rich/poor and smart/stupid in this list of important categories; lately I've
begun to perceive the ways they map on to each other to become
richsmart/poorstupid. (pp. 50-51)

Reflecting on Interviewing

In the interviews and focus group, I tried to push resistances and limits (my own and
those of the participants) on issues I felt were difficult to talk about by redirecting the
conversation to these questions. I often felt awkward in these situations, stumbling with how to articulate my questions. This was most often surrounding issues related to race, white privilege, theorizing interlocking systems of oppression, mutual abuse, the categories survivor and batterer and how to respond to batterers. These moments show up in the transcripts as interruptions in the discourse and they produce tensions — things spoken that we are usually silent about, interruptions in the rules of formation of statements (such as the complexities of the categories survivor and batterer and the examination of how white privilege and dominance influences our thinking, actions and pedagogy). I will discuss this further below.

The following examples show my anxieties about discussing white privilege. In a follow-up interview with Cheryl, I stumbled through three attempts before clarifying my question about the ways white privilege influences our thinking and practice of education on lesbian abuse.

...I'm not even sure if I'm using the right words here (sigh) I'm still trying to figure out how to even phrase this question...

...and I'm not sure like, don't feel like you have to have the answer to this, because I'm trying to figure this out too...

...so anyway, just to make you feel like I'm not putting you on the hot seat here, um but I guess because I mean both of us as white women and recognizing I guess, trying to think about our identity as white women and the privileges we have, how does that, you know, how does that influence what we do and what we say? Do you have any examples or thoughts on that? (Cindy — Cheryl's second interview)

By asking this question I was seeking to dislodge whiteness from its taken-for-granted and naturalized position of dominance. These examples show how I feared that talking about white privilege was "putting her on the hot seat". I didn't want her to feel that I was positioning myself as a "better" (i.e. non-racist) white person and wanted to reassure her that I find it difficult to talk about my privilege and that I too am still trying to "figure this [white privilege and its effects] out". This is similar to the position Ruth Frankenberg
(1993) took in her research with white women about their understandings of race, where she positioned herself as "explicitly involved in the questions" (p. 30).

But the above example also shows how uncomfortable it is for white women to talk about how whiteness (dominance) structures our thinking and seeing and how rare it is for us to talk with one another about our privilege and complicity in domination. In most of the interviews, participants prefaced their responses to this question with awkward heavy sighs, pauses, laughter and statements such as "Oh my gosh" and "Wow". In a few cases, women spoke about other white women who were racist or abusing power-over women of colour rather than talking about their own privilege and complicity. As I will discuss further in Chapter Four, the educators interviewed in this research make efforts to critically examine their privilege and to unlearn practices of domination. However, at times there is a fine line here between disrupting whiteness and talking about our privilege as something fixed and natural — an unfortunate state of the world, but something that just is. For example, Frankenberg (1993) has described how white feminists often view "anti-racist work as an act of compassion for an 'other', an optional extra project but not one intimately and organically linked to our own lives. Racism can, in short, be conceived as something external to us rather than as a system that shapes our daily experiences and sense of self" (p. 6).

Confidentiality

I initiated discussions about confidentiality in the interviews and focus group and worked strategically with participants to find ways to protect their identities while not obscuring the specificities of their identities and experiences. This has been challenging given the small number of same-sex abuse educators in this geographical location. I have used pseudonyms in all of my research notes, transcripts and thesis, and all of the participants know each other's pseudonyms. This also means they can determine "who said what" in the individual interviews. Changing the pseudonyms would not have made
a difference since everyone could still decipher "who's who" based on the focus group transcript. As I indicated above, everyone agreed in the focus group to respect the confidentiality of other participants.

All of the educators made references (some more than others) to their personal experiences of abuse in a same-sex relationship. Even though all of these women have done educational work as "out" lesbians or queer women, they are selective about how, where and with whom they disclose and discuss their experiences of abuse. Some of the women live in the same city as the woman who abused them, while others have been forced to relocate geographically due to the abuse they experienced, and therefore issues of confidentiality are important for safety reasons. Also women move around (across the country and between Canada and the US) and because of the small networks within lesbian, queer, feminist communities and same-sex abuse organizing it was especially important to conceal the educators' identities. 36

Data Analysis

In analyzing the collected data from the interviews, focus group and educational pamphlets, I primarily paid attention to repetitive themes. I read the transcripts numerous times, noting words, phrases and themes that repeated themselves and used a colour-coding scheme to organize these. I did not use the focus group to analyze conversation — what gets said or left unsaid in a group dynamic. However, I did try to highlight gaps and silences about race and white privilege.

After coding broad categories, I subsequently coded sub-categories. I also highlighted overlapping themes and analyzed connections between them. I used web diagrams on flip-chart paper which enabled me to visually organize the data in relation to my central research question and to see patterns and links between data categories (Kirby &

36However at times this has felt artificial since anyone who knows me could likely determine where these interviews took place and might be able to speculate about the identities of the participants.
McKenna, 1989). In addition, the longer I stayed with the data, the more connections I saw, and in some cases, this resulted in shifts to my initial analysis.

Part of using a feminist postmodern methodology meant that I tried to be critically self-reflexive and thus flexible in reshaping my design and analysis based on the things I learned through the research process (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Lather, 1991). Postmodern research is "an injunction to be constantly vigilant, to take nothing for granted in doing research...to ask not only 'what is my research finding out?', but also 'where is it coming from?', 'what is it doing?', and 'what is it implicated in?'" (Usher et al., 1997, p. 208). The research journal encouraged this by providing a place to write and examine observations, analyses, feelings and questions about the research process and data analysis.

I identified concepts and categories that educators rely on to construct meaning about woman-to-woman abuse. I used deconstruction — a method for taking apart social categories to see how a particular world is constructed (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) — to uncover and examine discourses and assumptions in lesbian abuse educational materials (for example, the categories "lesbian" and "the social context of violence"). I also tried to look at the relational nature of binary categories in the data to examine how meanings are produced, for example what a category excludes and how the exclusion is implicated in the category (Hall, S., 1997).

The data was examined with regard to these broad areas: difficulties in naming abuse — being caught between anti-feminist backlash and feminist and lesbian denial of woman-to-woman abuse; constructions of gender and sexuality in education (lesbian, bisexual and transgender); survivor/batterer dichotomy; educating about the social context of domination, and representations of race and class; the use of personal experiences of abuse; the influences of psychology; how the dominant aspects of our identities shape our analyses and educational strategies.
When choosing quotes to represent themes or issues, I tried to balance responses of the participants and incorporate their ideas equally. Nevertheless, I recognize that in organizing their comments, I have chosen excerpts that best describe what I am trying to say. In this process of organizing and condensing the issues, I have been forced to leave out many details of the discussion. As well some participants' voices are represented more than others due to their level of engagement in the focus group discussion.

Through all of this I tried to challenge a positivist approach to research which posits a binary between the "real" and "representation" and attempts to distinguish between false and true accounts. Representational analysts "often see themselves as unmasking the delusions of lay people from a stance guaranteed by the authority of science and scientific fact" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 6). Rather than viewing myself or the research participants as simply representing the real, I have tried to hold onto questions about how the research constructs or inscribes the real, which is always unstable and contingent (Usher et al., 1997).

In this chapter I have outlined the multi-disciplinary approach I have taken to explore regimes of truth in lesbian abuse educational discourses. The theories outlined above informed my research design, process and analysis. In the following chapter, I look closely at some assumptions and constructs in community educational materials and then turn to examine the difficult context of woman-to-woman abuse education, and how educators grapple with the complexities of the issues we see and face in the work we do.
Chapter Three:
Disrupting and Reproducing Truth Claims

In this chapter I examine the language used and stories told in two areas of lesbian abuse education — booklets/pamphlets and workshops. I examine three educational texts and data from the interviews and focus group with community educators, seeking to make visible the meanings produced through lesbian abuse education discourses.

Although not unified, the pamphlets discussed below show us a dominant discourse in lesbian abuse education — the one granted the status of truth, the agreed-upon framework of language and meaning (Mareck, 1999). In part because of risks in naming the abuse, educators have relied on a simple conceptual framework as represented in the pamphlets. This framework makes complexities around gender, sexuality, race, disability and class, as well as complexities around the violence itself, hard to introduce. While simplicity helps when educators are faced with the risks and limitations in a short pamphlet or workshop, the cost is the privileging of white, middle-class, able-bodied women’s experiences.

Demonstrating an awareness of the framework’s limitations, educators I interviewed struggled to expand it to incorporate the above complexities. However, our best intentions notwithstanding, the fundamental assumptions that underpin lesbian abuse education remain, and while the framework will give a little, it will not give enough. From this research I suggest that the model predictably breaks down around race and that the entire framework for understanding and responding to violence needs to be re-worked.

The chapter is divided in two main sections. The first part examines discourses in three educational booklets/pamphlets. The second examines the data from the interviews and focus group and specifically explores how educators negotiate risks and complexities in community organizing and workshops.
The Educational Booklets and Pamphlets

The three educational texts (two booklets and one pamphlet) on lesbian abuse I am analyzing were produced in Canada in the early to mid 1990s. They are: i) Abuse in Lesbian Relationships: A Handbook of Information and Resources (Chesley et al., 1992), ii) Assisting Abused Lesbians: A Guide for Health Professionals and Service Providers (Champagne, Lapp & Lee, 1994), and iii) Violence in Lesbian Relationships: Are Relationships Dangerous? (Simon Fraser University, n.d.). I chose these to illustrate a dominant discourse on lesbian abuse that circulates in workshops, forums, feminist anti-violence programs, gay and lesbian centres, health and counselling centres and universities. At the same time, it is important to note that these are not considered to be the central or "authoritative" texts on the subject that influence the educators. Also, I am not suggesting they are representative of all education on woman-to-woman abuse but am using them as examples of materials produced and used by community educators which represent a dominant discourse.37

The booklet Abuse in Lesbian Relationships: A Handbook of Information and Resources (Chesley et al., 1992) was the first educational booklet on the subject produced in Canada. It was produced by the Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays in 1991 at a time when little research had been published on the topic in Canada. It was revised and reprinted in 1992 and 1994. This year, it has been revised again and is being published and distributed by the National Clearinghouse on Family

37While I believe it is important to analyze assumptions in these texts, it is not my intention to discredit the authors or organizations that produced them. Many of these materials have been crucial resources for women who have been in abusive same-sex relationships (including myself), and they have challenged the heteronormative assumptions of many service providers. Also the materials do not necessarily reflect the current analyses of the authors.
Violence. These different editions continue to be used by feminist anti-violence organizations and queer communities across Canada. I am analyzing the 1992 version because it is the one I have seen most frequently reproduced in other educational texts and used in community organizations. It addresses various audiences: women who might be in an abusive lesbian relationship (identifying as either abused or abusive), friends and relatives, lesbian communities, and professionals.

In 1993, The London (Ontario) Battered Women's Advocacy Centre produced the booklet *Confronting Lesbian Battering* (London Battered Women's Advocacy Centre Research Committee and Staff, 1993) and then in 1994, *Assisting Abused Lesbians: A Guide for Health Care Professionals and Service Providers* (Champagne et al., 1994), as part of their anti-heterosexist and anti-racist initiatives "to respond to all abused women in more diverse, complex and accessible ways" (J. Lee, letter attached to *Confronting Lesbian Battering*, June, 1993). The 1994 booklet is directed at health care and service providers.

*Violence in Lesbian Relationships: Are Relationships Dangerous?* (n.d.) is a pamphlet first produced by the Student Services of Simon Fraser University and then reproduced by the Student Services of the University of British Columbia. It seeks to educate university students by providing information about "date rape" and "relationship violence". Although not produced by a feminist or queer organization, I include it here

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38Janice Ristock, personal correspondence.

39Abuse in Lesbian Relationships (Chesley et al., 1992) emerged out of the authors' work as counsellors at the Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays. The impetus to write the booklet came from hearing more and more women talk about the violence they had experienced in their relationships with other women (p. 1). In response, in 1988 they offered the first support group in Toronto for women who had experienced abuse in a lesbian relationship. To gain more information, they also conducted a survey, the findings of which they include in the booklet. They distributed 550 questionnaires to a group of women who were attending a talk given by "a well-known lesbian" speaker in Toronto and received 189 responses (the majority of the respondents were white, middle-class, able-bodied lesbians) (p. 1). Because of the small sample and the relative homogeneity of the respondents the authors cautioned that their work should not be viewed as conclusive or exhaustive but a "beginning look at this issue" (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 8). For further discussion of this see: (Ristock, 1996).
because it cites lesbian and feminist texts in its suggested resources list and relies on many of the same central assumptions from feminist and lesbian theories of violence. However, of the three texts examined here, it relies least on lesbian feminist analyses and there are more contradictions in this text, which is perhaps reflective of the context within which it was produced (university student services).

All three texts challenge heterosexist and utopian assumptions by discussing myths and facts about lesbians and abuse, forms of abuse, and similarities with and differences from heterosexual abuse. The first two include information for service providers on how to work with abused lesbians from a anti-heterosexist or lesbian-positive perspective. One text (Champagne et al., 1994) includes anecdotes that describe scenarios of abused lesbians seeking health care services. All three include resources and phone numbers for women in abusive relationships. Excerpts from the first two have been reprinted in other educational booklets in Canada. They range in length from two pages (pamphlet) to thirty (booklet).

Although these materials have helped and educated many women in abusive relationships (including myself) and their friends, families and service providers, at the same time the everyday, taken-for-granted assumptions about the category lesbian abuse contained within them produces exclusions. From my experience as a community educator I know the discourse is not accessible to all women.

The purpose of educational pamphlets and booklets is necessarily to convey information simply. Sometimes they are the only materials people read on the subject. They have limited scope and when they seek to disrupt problematic assumptions, they do so in a simplified manner. Their simplicity and ease of reading is one of their strengths and the primary reason we (educators and front-line workers) produce them. Nevertheless, certain stories are told and others not, and in the process these pamphlets and booklets influence what comes to be known as "facts" or "truths" about the topic.
"Abuse has been hidden" Discourse

The educational discourse in the pamphlets begins with the foundational claim that abuse has been hidden in Western society until recently and specifically that abuse in lesbian relationships has been hidden or difficult to publicly acknowledge (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 1; Champagne et al., 1994, p. 2; SFU, n.d.). It also states that violence in lesbian relationships is something that lesbians do not usually discuss or know about each other (SFU, n.d.; Champagne et al., 1994, p. 2) and has been "kept 'behind closed doors' until fairly recently" (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 1).40

The texts list the following reasons contributing to invisibility and silence: homophobia and heterosexism; fear that discussion about abuse will fuel negative stereotypes about lesbians; denial that women can hurt other women; inappropriate batterer/victim identification (people assume it is mutual and deny the abuse); assumption that abuse occurs only in heterosexual relationships; "the lesbian community" and "the battered women's movement" do not want to destroy the myths of a "lesbian utopia" and that 'all violence is caused by men' (SFU, n.d.; Champagne et al., 1994, p. 3; Chesley et al., 1992, p. 1).

The narrative highlights the difficulties lesbians face in naming our experiences of violence in the context of heterosexism. While certain forms of abuse have indeed been hidden until recently, this story may also make it difficult to tell other stories. The discourse focuses primarily on hidden abuse in the domestic or private sphere. As I indicated in Chapter One, currently, debates have emerged in educational forums among white women, women of colour and Aboriginal women that revolve around white women's failure to see how assumptions about private violence can recentre a white, Eurocentric conceptualization of violence by ignoring the past and current

40 As I discussed in Chapter One, hidden abuse has been a theme in many of the writings on the subject to date. Lesbian historians Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis (1993/1994) have also observed this and note that Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering (Lobel, 1986) (which they view as the major text on the subject) deals primarily with hidden domestic violence and does not discuss public, visible violence in relationships, for example in lesbian bars.
effects of racism and the different experiences of private and public spaces (Almeida et al., 1994; Bhattacharjee, 1997).

Perhaps the hidden abuse discourse may apply most clearly to those groups of women who have been able to claim the privileges of privacy. In other words, it may best describe the experiences of white middle-class lesbians. One wonders whether the violence that working class or racialized women experience has been similarly cloaked in secrecy or for the same reasons. For example, in some working-class lesbian communities, violence "in the home" has not always been hidden but talked about and known; in addition, much of the violence in intimate relationships took place in public, in the bars (Kennedy & Davis, 1993/1994). As well, working class and racialized women (for example First Nations and Black women) have been marked as being more violent (and thus more criminal) than white middle-class women (Faith, 1993; Taylor & Chandler, 1995; Razack, 1998a; West, 1992; Hammonds, 1997; Allard, 1991). It is possible that for these groups, violence in intimate relationships may have been more visible, although naturalized and not necessarily acknowledged as anything but the "degeneracy" of racialized populations (Kanuha, 1990). As well, individual and community silence about abuse may be directly related to the fact that these groups of women do not have the privilege of privacy. In other words, violence being hidden can be a response to the public violence of racism, which constructs certain women of colour as inherently violent, as well as a response to systemic racism as a barrier to accessing help (Waldron, 1996; Taylor & Chandler, 1995).

So, while the abuse is hidden discourse highlights the invisibility of some forms of violence in lesbians' lives, it may have a universalizing effect, obscuring the experiences of women who have not had the privilege of privacy.

41For example, in working-class lesbian communities in Buffalo, New York in the 1950s and 60s, lesbians have indicated that violence in intimate relationships was not usually kept secret, nor were lesbians who experienced violence isolated or ashamed of it (Kennedy and Davis, 1993/1994, p. 319).
Lesbian Identity Discourse

Providing descriptions of lesbian identity that challenge heterosexist and utopian constructions is seen as a necessary first step in educating heterosexual service providers about lesbian abuse. This discourse is a central part of all three texts. Attempts are made to complicate a universal lesbian with references to "diversity" and to the problem of making generalizing statements about lesbians as a group (Chesley et al., 1992). Even though there are some disruptions to an unified identity, the texts still reinforce essentialist constructions of sexuality and gender and use a narrative of "diversity" which relies on an additive model. The central figure in the texts is a woman whose life is structured primarily by her sexuality and her private experiences of violence.

The texts do not explicitly state that gender and sexuality are products of biology, nor do they say that they are socially and historically constructed or fluid. However, statements such as "10 percent of the population is lesbian or gay" (Champagne et al., 1994, p. 5; Chesley et al., 1992, p. 3) present gay and lesbian identity as fixed and stable. In one text this statement is presented as a "fact" in response to a "myth" that "same-sex relationships are not natural" (Champagne et al., 1994, p. 5) and therefore implies that homosexuality is a naturally occurring part of human sexuality, thus promoting an essentialist approach to understanding sexuality. Using the "10 percent" strategy to promote acceptance or tolerance of gays and lesbians (a common educational strategy in anti-homophobia education) relies on biological explanations of sexuality — we just are lesbians (or heterosexuals). And yet contradictorily, these texts also highlight the social power relations that regulate sexualities by emphasizing that heterosexism is a form of oppression based on "the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, that it is (or should be) the universal sexual/intimate experience" (Champagne et al., 1994, p. 2; Chesley et al., 1992, p. 21).
The narrative of these texts focuses on dispelling stereotypes or myths such as the notion that there is an identifiable lesbian "type" (i.e. "masculine in appearance", "non-mother", "man-hater", "feminist"). Although one booklet makes the statement that "lesbians are women who have primary intimate/sexual relationships with other women" (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 3), implying that lesbians may have secondary relationships with men, there is no overt mention of bisexuality or of the possibility of shifting sexual and gender identities (such as transgender identities) that might not be easily slotted into categories.

Two texts argue that "most lesbians do not explicitly adopt butch/femme 'roles'", that lesbians cannot be put into two gendered categories in appearance or relationship practices, and that lesbians are not necessarily masculine or butch in appearance but fit all physical descriptions (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 3; Champagne et al., 1994, p. 5). The intent is to challenge stereotypes about lesbians mimicking male-female roles in heterosexual relationships and to emphasize the wide range of expressions of lesbian identity. As well, all three dispel the notion that violence occurs solely in butch/femme relationships or that abusive women are always butch. Given the pervasiveness of these stereotypes and their connection to a pathologizing sexology discourse, it is crucial to challenge them and emphasize the many expressions of lesbian identity. However, one of the effects of claiming "butch/femme roles" as myths is that we may be constructing a "normal" lesbian as a woman who does not identify or express herself as butch, femme or in drag. As well, the discourse doesn't acknowledge the possibility

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42 One booklet (Champagne et al., 1994) presents this statement as a "truth" but in another place in the text there is an acknowledgement that some lesbians do practice butch/femme roles with the statement "lesbian battering does not only occur in relationships where women practice butch/femme roles" (p. 3).

43 Sexological discourses construct "masculine" women as violent and predatory and "feminine" women as their passive prey. For further discussion of this see: Chauncey, 1989. A 1994 survey with lesbians, bisexual women and service providers, conducted by a Winnipeg group, C.L.O.S. E. (the Coalition of Lesbians on Support and Education), indicates that many social service workers continue to hold heterosexist beliefs about lesbians and about abuse in lesbian relationships (Balan et al., 1994) that stem from sexological discourses.
that social identities are not tied to biology; for example that the social identities of biological females could be male, masculine, shifting or variable.

When challenging stereotypes, it is important that educators ask ourselves if we are fostering disavowal of these stigmatized gender identities. Commenting on her anthology, *A Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (1992), femme activist Joan Nestle writes,

I wanted to do this book because, as a lesbian, I never want to hear again in my lifetime the defensive disclaimers I grew up with: not all lesbians are truck drivers; not all lesbians dress like men; not all lesbians play at being husband and wife. I am tired of these disavowals. We, of all people, must be able to cherish the woman in the stereotype and the cunning in the transformation of gender restrictions into gender rebellion. (p. 18)

In all three texts, multiple identities and oppressions are described in an additive fashion. By examining the relational quality of categories that are produced through this discourse, we can see how the category lesbian comes to mean "white lesbian". In the following example an additive approach secures whiteness as the invisible centre: "Lesbians have to face not only the sexist culture, but also a homophobic one as well. Lesbians of colour must face sexism, heterosexism and racism" (SFU, n.d.). Whiteness is concealed as neutral in two of the texts (SFU, n.d.; Chesley et al., 1992), while white lesbians (and lesbians of colour and disabled lesbians) are explicitly named in the third text (Champagne et al., 1994, p. 9-10).

In these texts, First Nations lesbians are subsumed within the category of "lesbians of colour". While lesbians of colour and Two-Spirited women share the experience of racist-heterosexism in the context of white supremacy, this discursive move of not naming First Nations women not only negates the historical specificities in experience of these groups in Canada, but also has the effect of negating the existence of First Nations lesbians.44

44 Neither category "women of colour" or "First Nations" is homogenous. I am highlighting here the marginalization of First Nations women within feminism (Lawrence, 1996). For reference to the exclusion/erasure of Aboriginal lesbians in lesbian abuse research see: (McIvor and Nahane, 1998).
As these examples show, the texts are effective in disrupting certain essentialist constructs (such as "lesbians are non-violent" and "lesbians all look the same"), but a reliance on essentialist and biological definitions of woman and lesbian shuts down the socio-historical construction of identity. As well, the texts reveal that lesbian identity is often structured around whiteness.

**Causes of Abuse Discourse**

All three texts draw on existing feminist theories about abuse in intimate heterosexual relationships to inform the analysis of violence in lesbian relationships and rely on a "comparison" model (i.e. similarities and differences with heterosexuals). Some ambiguity about the usefulness of this approach is mentioned in one text with the statement, "some studies have attempted comparisons but the question remains whether these comparisons are useful or valid" (Chesley et al., 1992, p.7). A comparison model could also be identified as an additive discourse which places the dominant Western feminist discourse on male violence against women (gender-based analysis of power) at the centre and then adds "differences".

The causes of abuse are described in two texts as lying in: a society that sanctions and maintains systems of domination, and teaches and reinforces power-over as acceptable behaviours and values; learned unhealthy patterns from families and society where some individuals learned to use violence to gain control and power in relationships (Chesley et al., 1992; Champagne, et al., 1993). In addition, two emphasize there is no simple cause and effect relationship between factors such as "childhood violence, stress, substance abuse and provocation" and abuse in lesbian relationships, emphasizing that an "abuser is responsible for her behaviour and can choose to control it" (Chesley et al., 1992; SFU, n.d.).

For a discussion of the shared experiences as well as the different risks faced in "talking culture" for First Nations women and women of colour in cases of sexual violence see: (Razack, 1998).
Challenges to a psychological discourse that attributes abuse to pathology or family dysfunction show up in two texts. Here violence is explained with a feminist analysis of the social context of oppression (Chesley et al., 1992; Champagne, et al., 1994). The third text (SFU, n.d.) is a slightly different case, in that it loosely draws on a feminist discourse but also reproduces the notion that lesbian relationships are inherently dangerous. The cover includes a photo of two young women smiling at one another. The question "Are Relationships Dangerous?" appears in bold, large capitals above the photo. In smaller light print, the line "violence in lesbian relationships" is almost lost on the cover, while the word "dangerous" stands out most significantly.

While all three texts refer to multiple systems of oppression, the social context of violence in lesbian relationships is primarily described as patriarchy and heterosexism. The Toronto booklet is the only one that discusses internalized patriarchy, heterosexism and homophobia as part of the causes and effects of abuse (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 5, 11). While two texts argue that heterosexism and homophobia affect everyone — heterosexual, gay or lesbian (Chesley et al., 1992; Champagne et al., 1994) — all three texts describe racism and classism as issues for "other people" (Champagne et al., 1994, p. 4) or lesbians of colour and working-class lesbians only (Chesley et al., 1992; SFU, n.d.). Both the Toronto and London booklets (Chesley et al., 1992; Champagne et al., 1994) make attempts at integrating the effects of racism, classism and ableism into the framework. For example there are a few references in the Toronto text to racism and classism being "linked" or "interwoven" with sexism and heterosexism. These attempts notwithstanding, a gender and sexuality-based analysis of power remains at the centre of the model and these "additional oppressions" are not fully integrated into the entire framework.

To sum up, we can see from the pamphlets that the central figure in the text is a woman whose life is structured primarily by her sexuality. Explanations for the abuse mention multiple systems of domination and refer to feminist psychological
explanations, but focus primarily on patriarchy and heterosexism. One text suggests that internalized patriarchy and heterosexism are part of the cause of abuse. With a focus on patriarchy and heterosexism, it is implied that this de-raced and de-classed woman is abusive because she has internalized or learned power-over from these systems — implying that she is acting like a patriarch.

The Nature of Abuse Discourse

The texts state there is most often or always one woman exerting power and control over her partner in an abusive lesbian relationship. Consistent with feminist and criminological explanations, a perpetrator/victim dichotomy is used. All three challenge the notion that abusive lesbian relationships are mutually abusive and emphasize that defending oneself against abuse does not make one an equal contributor.

Each text includes detailed descriptions of types of abuse which are categorized as: physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, threats, economic abuse and property destruction. The Toronto and London (Chesley et al., 1992; Champagne et al., 1994) booklets include heterosexist tactics as forms of abuse, and the Toronto text also includes racist, classist, and ableist forms of abuse and threats that affect child custody, legal or immigration status (Chesley et al., 1992).

Two texts use the construct of "vulnerability" or "double jeopardy" to describe multiple forms of oppression. The London booklet includes two "case illustrations" of abusive lesbian relationships, one in which Megan, a 45-year-old woman of colour with a disability, is being abused by Karen, her white able-bodied 38-year-old woman partner (Champagne et al., 1994, p.10). While the description of abuse hints at the presence of ableist, ageist, and racist abuse, it does not overtly state this and instead names race, age, and disability as reasons that "women like Megan" are "vulnerable to abuse". The Toronto booklet also mentions that disabled lesbians are "a particularly vulnerable population" (Chesley et al., 1992, p. 26). The intent is to highlight the "higher
rates of assault and sexual exploitation" (p. 26) that disabled women experience. Nevertheless, using a framework of vulnerability has the effect of implying that "women from historically disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable because they are more vulnerable" (Razack, 1998a, p. 138). This privatizes the violences of ableism, racism and ageism rather than examining how these social relations are produced to position women differently and unequally (p. 139).

In sum, the abuse is hidden discourse effectively "breaks the silence" about the violence, although assumes the privilege of privacy. The lesbian identity discourse entrenches essentialist notions of normal lesbians, relegating "other" lesbians and other sexualities as add-ons, even as it attempts to complicate the universal. The causes of abuse discourse add lesbians onto existing feminist theories of heterosexual violence and adds other systems of oppression as unique to other women, thus privileging white, middle-class and able-bodied women. Finally the nature of abuse discourse focuses on similarities and differences with heterosexual abuse, uses a perpetrator/victim model and uses the construct of "vulnerability" to describe the experiences of women who experience multiple oppressions. In these texts, it is at times hard to glimpse a woman whose life is structured fundamentally by racism and classism. When we do see her, it is briefly at the margins — the violence she experiences and the realities of her life are added on as important issues for her but unconnected to everyone else.

In analyzing these texts, I am not saying we should stop producing concise, short educational pamphlets, or that past and present educational materials are useless. But I want to suggest that many of the "assumptions have led to some predictable cul-de- sacs" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 7) and that in order to respond to and end violence in its various forms and locations, we must examine what they produce and limit.

In the following section of this chapter, I discuss the data from the interviews and focus group showing how we understand our educational work, specifically in the context of workshops. The same issues that show up in the analysis of the texts (as well
as others) plague the educators as we negotiate the discourses we find ourselves in — both disrupting and reproducing universalist constructs.

**Educational Workshops**

Most workshops that educators are engaged in are short in duration (from two hours to a full day) and usually one-time only (in some cases, training may extend over a longer period of time, such as three days). Workshops are designed for lesbian and queer communities, as well as service providers. In many workshops with service providers, the audience is largely comprised of heterosexual participants who work primarily with women abused by men in heterosexual relationships (for example, transition house workers, counsellors, social workers, health care providers, the police). At times, participants may have little or no political analysis of systemic oppression and heterosexism specifically, and may have heterosexist stereotypes about lesbians and woman-to-woman abuse. As a result, we often rely on a simplified story even though our own analysis may be more complex. In my interview, I spoke about the challenges of navigating this context in a two-hour workshop with heterosexual transition house workers:

....They had no anti-homophobia education, no anti-oppression training of any kind except the mainstream feminist analysis of violence but no discussion about racism or heterosexism. And that just felt ridiculous, but it was like just trying to alert them that they might have lesbians staying in the shelter....If anti-violence organizations haven't done any training around that stuff, it makes it really hard to go in and do work around the complexities of abuse or oppression. Also you don't have any other way, except to frame it in the context of what they're familiar with in the heterosexual model. And it's really hard because I don't think that's appropriate. It's very hard when you've got two hours to do a quick overview (Cindy, individual interview).

As exemplified by this quote, educators in this study report using the dominant discourse above and the use of personal experience to negotiate risks, name the abuse and eliminate barriers to service for survivors of woman-to-woman abuse. Educators
struggle to push beyond the limits of this framework and in some cases introduce complexities surrounding gender and sexuality, multiple oppressions, and the construction of batterers and survivors. However, race and class are often subsumed in this struggle or introduced in an additive fashion. The educators are cognizant of the problems with an additive approach and in Chapter Four I discuss our attempts to complicate the framework specifically with regards to race and class.

Difficulties in Naming Abuse

Women frequently state their motivation for embarking on community education as breaking the silence and acting for change. This strategy of encouraging women to speak out in public and private contexts about the abuse we have experienced has been effective in educating feminist, lesbian and queer communities, service and health care providers, the criminal justice system, friends and family members (Alcoff & Gray-Rosendale, 1996). It has also served to empower women by ending isolation and encouraging socio-political explanations rather than individual ones that pathologize survivors (Alcoff & Gray-Rosendale, 1996).

The educators all referred to our own and our friends' experiences of woman-to-woman abuse as part of the lens through which we understand this issue.\textsuperscript{45} All spoke about difficulties in naming their own experiences as abuse in the face of a heterosexist feminist discourse that has excluded the stories of women abused by their women partners. Exclusion from a discourse can contribute to self-doubt about one's experiences.

Similarly to Allison Hall's quote in the epigraph at the beginning of the thesis, we all spoke about the positive effects of a lesbian abuse discourse which enabled us to explain and name experiences where previously there had been "a blank space". In my

\textsuperscript{45}I did not ask them to describe the violence in their lives, but did ask how they use personal experiences of abuse (their own or others') in educating about same-sex abuse. This will be discussed later in this chapter.
individual interview, I spoke about the difficulties I experienced in talking about my experience of physical and sexual abuse and how I see this as being "deeply tied to ideas about lesbians and queers in general":

....I didn't talk about the physical abuse and sexual abuse...for many years and even still I find it hard to talk about specifically the sexual abuse....there's just so much wrapped up in it all around being a lesbian...I connected it to my sexual identity. Somehow the violence, or my taking it...was about me not being a good lesbian, or being 'one of those weird lesbians'...So the reason I started to get involved in doing [education] was...because I felt like my experience was invisible...[It was] combined with a sense of isolation that I felt...as a survivor of abuse in a lesbian relationship, that made me feel like this needs to be talked about...I think that having a language to talk about it and...a way to make connection with other people is a way to stop the shame... (Cindy, individual interview).

For three educators, educational materials (such as pamphlets or posters) specifically written for lesbians/bisexual women in abusive relationships or materials with gender neutral language, helped them to name their experiences as abuse. As well, having co-workers and friends describe their experiences as battering and hearing other stories of woman-to-woman abuse (for example, when working in a transition house), also enabled women to access the discourse.

One educator spoke about the way the same-sex abuse discourse helps by making queer survivors' experiences visible and "real". She understands the self-doubt described above as resulting from the invisibility of our experiences — "we can't believe that it's real and that it has meaning" (Marcia, individual interview). She compared this to the way femme experience has been made invisible or excluded within a certain lesbian identity discourse.

....It was as if...I couldn't exist until there was a history [about femmes] that had been documented. And I think until our history [as survivors of woman-to-woman abuse] is documented and solid and believed in, we're going to continue to doubt ourselves...you know, until it's like carved out some place, until we have like a basket to put our experiences in, you know? (Marcia, individual interview)

This metaphor of carving out a place or making a basket to put our experiences in describes the positive effects of a discourse. These excerpts show how the discourse
shapes our experience of the "real", how it enables our experiences to having meaning and significance — in other words, to be known and seen.

There are multiple risks and effects of speaking out. Fear of increased violence and retaliation from an abusive partner or increased oppression from heterosexist, classist, racist and ableist systems (legal, social services, medical systems), all combine to affect a survivor's decision to break the silence. One educator spoke about how classism, racism and heterosexism work together and how this affects people's relationship (and access) to institutions and systems, such as "... being vulnerable to the cops, especially when you start putting class and queerness, or race and queerness [together]; people who have, from different cultures, have reasons to be extremely afraid of the cops and the justice system" (Teresa, individual interview). Many women also fear that naming abuse will fuel heterosexist, racist and/or classist ideas about queer women as violent, pathological, sick and as victims or victimizers. As well, silence may be an effective survival strategy in certain contexts.

One educator described the effects of heterosexism this way:

....I think that for a lot of women it makes it hard and um, just wanting to protect your new little world that you've found, but I also just think it makes you really vulnerable and you don't think that a woman's going to treat you that way and you don't, there's something about finding community and finding a woman who, I don't know, you know, finding what you've always wanted and then it sucks.... (Joanne, individual interview).

Janice Ristock (1998) discusses three accounts from her research on lesbian abuse, that express this same narrative:

For example, within the dominant discourses available to women at the beginning of their first lesbian relationships, same-sex desire seems not to exist. The logical conclusion these women drew from the overwhelming heteronormative force of the dominant discourses was that they were extremely lucky to find someone else like them....(p. 146)

As Ristock notes, abuse in lesbian relationships can be seen then as an effect of heterosexism: "not in the way often meant by that claim (self-loathing women taking it out on their partners), but as an effect of desperateness...arising directly from the social
effects of having no nonheterosexist discourse through which to constitute oneself as other than desperate" (1998, p. 146).

The reluctance to name the violence may also stem from the risk of losing one's network of friends, community or family (chosen family or family of origin). In discussing violence against women and children in First Nations communities (primarily violence in heterosexual relationships and families), First Nations scholar Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) has emphasized there are complex reasons for silence in First Nations communities: "Can you really afford to further marginalize yourself or alienate yourself from the people who provide all the housing and social support systems in your community?" (p. 172-173). Lesbians of colour have also spoken about the way this contributes to silence about abuse (Taylor & Chandler, 1995; Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996). One educator described similar risks in speaking out about her experience of abuse in a relationship with a lesbian with whom she shared an ethnic identity.

My ex is [ethnic identity] and you know, that was part of it for me, "Oh my god, I've found this lover and we share so much". And I think that that was also something she really used. And then this other [abusive] woman I heard about that's [my ethnic identity] as well and then I think fuck, (pause) like the smaller your community, it's like "Oh where is my community now?" And....I can talk about that because it's [the interview] totally anonymous, but it's so obvious who these women are, who my community is, it's just so hard to talk about....(Joanne, individual interview).

She also made a connection with the difficulties lesbians of colour face in speaking out and how smallness of communities may limit access to services and support:

....because of dyke communities being really small and when you think about a politically active dykes of colour community, like that makes it even smaller. Like for me, you know, [women of my ethnicity], or like the smaller your community gets like then, it's like "Oh is Joanne working there?" (Joanne, individual interview)
Isolation and loss of community and friends can be a result of the abuse itself but it can often intensify when a woman speaks out. One educator spoke about how her political involvement and her abusive partner's involvement in a feminist anti-violence organization limited her access to safety and support because other queer workers did not take the violence seriously. She believes that at least two of these staff members were abusive women and that this contributed to their response.

...my situation was pretty public...[W]e had been a part of an anti-rape collective together planning the Take Back the Night March, and you know, after I realized that she had battered me, you know, I went to the collective and I said you know, "I'm not safe to come to meetings anymore with her there. I mean we sit around and talk about whether or not men can march in the Take Back the Night March and here's this woman who put her bleeding fist in my face, and then in the morning is sitting two chairs away from me in the meeting"...And what their response was, "Well Marcia, she's not going to assault you in public?" And well, of course not, right? Cause then there would be evidence... (Marcia, individual interview)

Marcia's speech challenges the dominant feminist discourse (women are inherently non-violent, women-only spaces are safe), but is simultaneously dismissed and her safety is not taken seriously.

At various sites and times "survivor speech" has been excluded or prohibited within dominant discourses and seen as untrue, mad or inconceivable (Alcoff & Gray-Rosendale, 1996, p. 203). While all survivors of violence have been silenced, it is certain survivors' speech that has been specifically dismissed and seen as untrue, such as that of Aboriginal women, women of colour, working-class and poor women, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals (Lawrence, 1996), transgendered people, ritual abuse survivors and prostitutes. Bonita Lawrence (1996) emphasizes that survivors "whose interpretations of their own experiences have led them to different — or more complex — conclusions than the narrow range of scenarios which are presented as textbook

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46It is important to note that while many women lose friends, family or community connections when they speak out about the abuse, this is not everyone's experience. Friends and families can and do provide support for women leaving abusive same-sex relationships.
cases" of abuse have been silenced or ignored within the feminist anti-violence movement (p. 17).

While the emergence of new statements and categories (such as "lesbian battering"; "survivor of woman-to-woman abuse") can have a disruptive and liberatory effect, they can also be used in ways that pathologize survivors and support hegemonic practices and systems, such as heteropatriarchy 47, white supremacy, neo-conservatism or liberalism. The educators I interviewed spoke about these systems and how they impact and shape educational strategies and theoretical positions. Although the primary focus of our talk is on these systems' external presence and impact on our lives, we also struggle to see how we are implicated in them.

"Being Caught" Between a Rock and a Hard Place

The educators expressed concern about the way a liberal humanist analysis starts to prevail when woman-to-woman abuse is taken up by anti-feminists as evidence that there are no societal power imbalances based on gender, race, class and sexuality (women are just as violent as men; everyone is violent). As previously mentioned, investments in utopic constructions of lesbian community and white feminist discourses of sisterhood and safety, contribute to overt and covert resistance to naming the abuse of power between women. Educators identified this context as posing challenges and barriers to their work. One woman spoke about "being caught in this reality":

....the Red Cross...does dating violence education in high schools in really conservative ways and they're very gender neutral and they've added this little blurb in their pamphlet about violence in queer relationships. Well, they're never going to support queers but it's almost...an excuse to use gender neutral language or to somehow fit into backlash or whatever. But there's way too much excitement, like it just makes me nervous. But then on the other hand I know...there's certainly been lots of dykes who are like, "We're not talkin' about the violence in our community cause we don't want it used against us". So it's

47 The term "heteropatriarchy" is Lynda Hart's (Hart, 1994).
kinda like being caught between the reality that it can be used against us but I also don't want to stop talking about it. (Joanne, focus group)

All of the educators have encountered heterosexuals who have expressed "excitement" or "fascination" with the topic and then use it to justify an anti-feminist discourse about "how women batter their husbands" (Teresa, focus group). Teresa noted we are often in the position of explaining how this move not only supports anti-feminism but is heterosexist. The potential for this heterosexual appropriation of the issue (even in discussions about fears of anti-feminist "backlash"), stifles the naming of woman-to-woman abuse and reinstalls heterosexual women at the centre of the anti-violence discourse.

Joanne suggests this excitement from heterosexuals is often part of a heterosexist and pathologizing discourse that sees woman-to-woman abuse as disconnected to the feminist analysis of violence against women and views it as "strange" and "new" (individual interview). Another educator referred to one of the pamphlets discussed earlier, (Violence in Lesbian Relationships: Are Relationships Dangerous? developed by the Student Services Department of Simon Fraser University) as an example of this heterosexist and "anti-woman" discourse on lesbian abuse: "they fit right into this, like I wondered who produced those? What was their agenda? Because they were very anti-woman...and the whole thing was like 'Women are bad' and 'If you're in a same-sex relationship watch out for the bad woman'..." (Cheryl, focus group). As these examples illustrate, processes of othering are one of the barriers to naming the violence.

The barriers to naming are intensified within the feminist anti-violence movement. All of the educators spoke about painful experiences of betrayal in feminist organizations where they were covertly or overtly "shut down", "driven out" or "forced to voluntarily leave" when they tried to address same-sex abuse, as well as women's abuse of power over other women in feminist organizing. Some gave examples of how this is related to: investments in protecting white, middle-class and heterosexual
feminist analyses of violence and privilege, attachments to notions of lesbian utopia, and to the presence of batterers in communities or the movement.

For example, one educator sees a discourse about fear of anti-feminist backlash as something used to "shut down" lesbians and bisexual women who are initiating the discussion about woman-to-woman abuse (Cheryl, focus group). Within the discussion on anti-feminist backlash, some educators stated that the domestic violence movement must move away from a "unidimensional" analysis of power and control with a focus on sexism. For Cheryl, part of the problem is

about not having a proper language, um, to explain the complexities of power and control. So we run the risk of being discredited by other feminist anti-violence workers and, um, by those attacking the feminist view. But if we adhere to a strict unidimensional analysis of power and control (pause) we lose all around in terms of violence experienced by heterosexual women and lesbians. (Cheryl, individual interview)

When organizations that have historically focused exclusively on male violence begin to address woman-to-woman abuse, it is often in a very limited and sometimes token way. Educators face resistance from heterosexual and lesbian anti-violence workers when we try to initiate education for staff and volunteers within a transition house:

I encountered enormous resistance from, um, mostly lesbians and a few straight women on staff...who were really angry and felt that it really wasn't an issue, it didn't happen very much and even if it did happen, it's not a place to be doing that within a context of feminist organizing around male violence. We had numerous debates...and I felt like the topic got shoved to the bottom of the list. It wasn't important. And there was a lot of fear that, um, if we start talking about violence in lesbian relationships...the movement to end male violence will be co-opted, we will lose the focus. (Cindy, individual interview)

Two women suggested that resistance takes the form of a discourse of "tolerance" about lesbians and the issue of lesbian abuse in feminist organizations.

...it was like 'Oh, I guess we better be dealing with [lesbian abuse] because well we don't want to be seen as homophobic, but we really don't want to take the focus away from male violence'... (Cindy, individual interview)

...it seemed like in that [transition] house the um, the main time that we did any educational work around lesbian battering was when there was a lesbian in the
house...there was a lot of resistance to talking about it...the pay [salary] was more directed at the idea that you're mainly working with heterosexual women and if a lesbian comes in though, you include that too. (Cheryl, individual interview).

A focus on tolerance and inclusion leaves the systems that produce the violence unexamined and re-centres heterosexual women's experiences of violence.

For Marcia and Teresa, a central part of their work involves calling for the domestic violence movement to address all the ways that women use power over other women. They believe that by not doing this it "... set(s) up every queer woman in every organization to be the one that's suspect in using power over..." (Teresa, focus group). In workshops, Teresa and her co-workers "say that the movement needs to address it [women's abuse of power over other women] and that in fact, we believe that...that's why issues of same-sex DV [domestic violence]...have not moved..." (focus group). They situate this within a discussion about how "the DV movement, and lesbians within that, have colluded to kind of keep on marginalizing groups of people" (Teresa, individual interview). Teresa understands this process of marginalization as directly linked to feminists within the anti-violence movement constructing ourselves as "healthy", "actualized", "egalitarian" and/or "victims".

... women in the DV movement don't look at how straight women are using power over other women, um, or how any women are using power over other women and so we're not looking at that, and we're experiencing ourselves as actualized and we experience ourselves as victims...we look at this as a lot about the DV movement wanting to hold onto that sense of themselves as not participating in using power over, and not tricked by the patriarchy, and holistic... (Teresa, individual interview)

Disrupting the notion that women are solely oppressed or victimized is an important part of Teresa's educational work. In this example, however, Teresa did not mention white and middle-class women. At other points in the research, Teresa and other educators discussed white, middle and upper-class women's racism and classism, yet at times it was difficult to sustain discussions about ways we ourselves have used power over other women.
All of the educators discussed, to varying degrees, how conceptualizing lesbian identity and women's spaces as unitary, stable, safe and non-violent makes it difficult to discuss complexities, address power imbalances and violence amongst women in communities and relationships. One educator's example illustrates how resistance to naming the abuse is tied to constructions of women's or lesbian spaces as "safe".

...[the resistance was connected to] a certain amount of homophobia, but I think there was also...this other weird thing...that I think a lot of women had about being lesbians, or that lesbian or women's space could be a sanctuary away from the violence and not wanting to challenge that....It was really about, there's no sanctuary, we have no safe place and not wanting to lose that. (Cheryl, individual interview)

While a sanctuary away from men's violence is important for survivors' healing and physical safety, these spaces have not been accessible to all women and have not necessarily provided safety from violence and oppression perpetrated by women (such as racism, heterosexism or an abusive woman partner). The notion of safety in white feminist groups relies on a universal woman and as a result, silences and displaces "other" women (Uttal, 1990).

Teresa spoke about this, saying, "We've made up this story about who are survivors" or a "definition of who's a woman" resulting in a reliance on certain ideas about what is appropriate behaviour for women. These ideas are used in racist ways to silence women of colour:

...in collectives, where it was very empowering for a lot of white women to have the experience of, um, coming to consensus — what some women of colour experienced that never really got heard, was having [to have] every white woman...sign off on their idea before they could move one iota on it... (Teresa, focus group).

Teresa's example shows how narratives about empowerment and consensus in feminist education and organizing are dependent upon whiteness.

As the above discussion shows, the educators frame the context of education and naming the violence as one of being caught between a rock and a hard place — the
denial of woman-to-woman abuse in feminist and lesbian communities on the one hand and heterosexism and anti-feminism on the other. We all acknowledged that women of colour and First Nations women face multiple risks in speaking out about abuse. However, racism was not something we named as a central issue when we discussed the risks and socio-political context of our educational work on lesbian abuse. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, educators did discuss white and middle-class women's abuse of power over women of colour, First Nations and working class women. Yet in this discussion, whiteness showed up in our talk when race was something applied to non-white women and racism becomes an issue for the Other.

A discourse about fear of anti-feminist backlash can be used to rationalize the subordination of certain categories, analyses and subject positions (such as anti-racist and anti-heterosexist analyses). This is often expressed as fear that "we will lose the focus" or "lose ground" and end up with a liberal or conservative analysis. While I do not want to imply that right-wing backlash is an irrational fear constructed by insecure feminists, I suggest we need to examine how concerns about preserving a gender analysis can also sometimes be about maintaining privilege and protecting investments in the white, middle-class, heteronormative gendered knowledge base of Western imperial feminism. Making a related point, Norma Alarcón (1990) has noted that "since the subject of feminist theory and its single theme — gender — go largely unquestioned, its point of view tends to suppress and repress voices that question its authority" (p. 359-360). We need to examine how gains secured through feminism (and in this case, through lesbian abuse discourses as well) have been secured through a reliance on other systems of oppression (for example, white supremacy and classism) for credibility.
The Use of Personal Experience

As we saw in the previous section, the pervasive denial of the very existence of woman-to-woman abuse makes it extremely difficult to name and organize against. In Chapter One, I noted that two of the central goals of lesbian abuse education are to: i) break the silence and convince participants that the abuse is real; and ii) establish it as a legitimate and urgent social problem to fight. For these reasons, survivors' accounts of their personal experiences of abuse have been a central part of feminist education. As with feminist anti-violence educators on heterosexual abuse, lesbian abuse advocates and organizers have emphasized that survivors of lesbian abuse must lead the way in determining effective strategies for empowering survivors and community responses to ending woman-to-woman abuse (Lobel, 1986). Therefore, lesbian abuse workshops usually incorporate survivors' stories, often in the form of panel presentations. In many cases, organizers attempt to represent the "diversity" of survivors' experiences (Balan et al., 1995). Training manuals and educational books on the topic have also included survivors' stories for these same purposes (Lobel, 1986; Elliot, 1990b; Taylor & Chandler, 1995). As the editor of one training manual wrote: "...We offer you personal stories of lesbian abuse so that you may feel, as well as intellectualize, how real lesbian battering is." (Elliot, 1990b).

In the focus group, I asked women if they incorporate their own or participants' personal experiences of abuse in education and what they think the benefits and problems might be with doing this. For all of the educators, our personal experiences of abuse influence what we say and do in education and most of us have used these experiences as part of the curriculum in workshops. In the interviews and focus group we discussed the pros and cons of this pedagogical tool. Everyone indicated that the primary reason we do this is to make the issue real for workshops participants.

Marcia usually "comes out as a survivor" in workshops because she believes that it "accomplishes credibility" and "helps people face the issues" and see that "it's
[woman-to-woman abuse] happening in this room...not 'out there'" (focus group). For Cheryl, "telling her story" gives people "something they can relate to on some level, something that speaks to them in an open way" (focus group). Both she and Marcia have also used fictitious stories as examples in workshops for this same reason. Two educators indicated they speak about their experience of abuse because it can be empowering for other survivors in the workshop (Teresa and Marcia, focus group).

Two educators choose not to talk about their experiences in workshops for safety reasons — for example to protect their anonymity in a workshop with the police, or due to their abusive ex-partner's presence in the same city and involvement in feminist and queer circles.

A number of educators also spoke about the problems with this educational strategy. Marcia identified one of the risks "with putting a face to it" is that "people will assume I'm the only voice and that the ways that I'm privileged will...form an idea...like in anti-homophobia education, that all lesbians are white...and that worries me" (focus group). I spoke about my concern that when I have used my experience in workshops, participants have universalized it: "it became a template, especially for the heterosexual women in the room, to say...'OK that's how we're going to understand all experiences' " (Cindy, in Cheryl's individual interview).

Another concern raised by one educator was that the use of participants' stories of abuse in workshops with lesbian and queer communities can be problematic in situations where a participant self-identifies as a survivor of abuse, but the educator speculates that she is in fact an abuser: "...all of a sudden [I'm] really aware of the possible dynamics and like if I validate that woman, like is her partner in the room?...[D]o I just support this woman as a survivor? Or do I just say — so that's something I don't think I've totally worked out...." (Teresa, focus group).

Educators use personal experience as a pedagogical tool to legitimize the issue and make it real so that workshop participants will take it seriously. We draw on personal
experience to break the silence, make survivors' experiences visible and empower other women who have experienced woman-to-woman abuse. Yet the tool is based on a modernist approach which views experience as incontestable evidence and authoritative "truth" (Scott, J., 1992). This is premised on the notion of a unitary, stable subject. Some of the educators spoke about our concerns with the universalism and subsequent othering produced through it. Yet even while recognizing these risks, we continue to use the tool (to varying degrees) because of some of the positive effects of it.

Who's a Lesbian? Who's a Woman?

As the analysis from the educational materials demonstrates, sexual and gender identity is frequently conceptualized as stable and unitary within lesbian abuse education. Essentialism has been produced in the attempts to name woman-to-woman abuse in a heterosexist social context where lesbian relationships are routinely delegitimized or denied. Conceptualizing identity as fixed and unitary has been one of the strategies employed while negotiating the risky context. Foregrounding the instability and multiplicity of gender and sexual subjectivities is threatening when people are faced with the dangers of extreme heterosexism that seeks to eradicate lesbian/gay identity. And yet, as Judith Butler (1991) suggests, we must carefully examine the internal exclusions produced through positioning lesbian identity as unified.

In contrast to the dominant discourse seen in the educational texts, the educators interviewed spoke at length about the production and regulation of sexual and gender identities and the positive and negative effects of gay and lesbian identity politics. Everyone is cognizant of the limits and exclusions produced through the discourse of a "unitary lesbian" and to varying degrees, attempts to shift and disrupt it.

In terms of the words we use, we really talk about lesbians and, um, I don't totally think that's useful. Not all women who are battered in relationships with women identify as lesbians. I mean even if they don't like that word and they
identify as dykes, or if they're bi, or if they're just not identifying. So that's something we haven't really [dealt with]... (Joanne, individual interview)

...in educational workshops we talked about lesbians being a coherent group who have a coherent sexual and gender identity. The only place that shifted a little bit was when we talked about butch/femme...but all we said was 'It's a myth that butches are more violent than femmes'...Sometimes we acknowledged that women in same-sex relationships might not talk about themselves as lesbians but it was still pretty limited. We rarely talked about bisexual women's experiences and never addressed trans issues. (Cindy, individual interview)

In discussing her current research on lesbian abuse, Janice Ristock (1998) grapples with these issues, emphasizing that

We have to be willing to see what the category 'lesbian' includes and excludes when we mobilize it for social-action purposes in research like this. Will a woman who is married and has sex with other women respond to a call for interviews with lesbians? What would a transgendered person's experience of abuse at the hands of her lover add to my work? (p. 149)

A central part of Teresa and Marcia's educational work explicitly addresses the limits and problems with an exclusive focus on lesbian identity. As Marcia explained: "In our program we resist putting up the barriers around however anybody is identifying" (individual interview). They both discussed how the word lesbian "doesn't reflect the people who do the work and a lot of people who come [for support]" (Teresa, individual interview), and how the exclusionary effects of a lesbian identity discourse are similar to the effects of abuse, therefore making it incompatible with work to end violence.

We've started being intentional about serving bisexual women and trans folks...in a way that's real different...not just you know...bringing folks in and having them be..."lesbian" while they're in this space,... like talk about their lesbian side of their life and their lesbian experiences whatever, I mean it's just an insane way to try to address ...silence, isolation, minimization (laughter). (Teresa, individual interview).

Marcia gave an example of how they educate in their "gender series":

...[we talk about] how our abusers use those vulnerabilities [around gender identities] and how queer community hands those tools to batterers to use against us...for example, for it to be a common joke in lesbian circles to be like, 'Well, and then I realized she was bisexual, cause she dated a man!' and for
everybody to go 'Oh my god!'...Like the ways we diminish bisexual experience gives tools to batterers to say to a bisexual woman in a relationship, 'Well you're not a real lesbian, you're just a traitor, you're always flirting with men, you always want male attention'...You know, that's a way the community colludes with batterers using those tools. (Marcia, individual interview).

While identity politics can produce exclusions which can be used to justify abusive behaviour, some educators also spoke about the benefits of identity politics and a concern about the way a critique of identity is sometimes used to erase the experiences of marginalized groups and deny power relations. In some cases the critique can turn into a liberal humanist discourse (we're all human; why do we need labels?).

...whenever you start to talk about gender issues, whether you're talking about butch/femme or whether you're talking about trans issues or, um, just gender expression, people get nervous...People start this whole "Why do we have to have labels?" crap, and when people say that, in my mind what I hear and what I really think it means is "Why do you have to exist?", you know? I mean labels give us visibility, at least I don't find them limiting for me, I understand that some people find them limiting [but]...I find them liberating. (Marcia, individual interview)

In other cases, it can show up as a misuse of a postmodern critique of identity when used as a way to silence marginalized groups (Razack, 1998a; hooks, 1994). In her discussion of this issue, bell hooks (1994) emphasizes that "a totalizing critique of 'subjectivity, essence, identity' can seem very threatening to marginalized groups, for whom it has been an active gesture of political resistance to name one's identity as part of a struggle to challenge domination" (p. 78).

Teresa believes that conceptualizing identity as static and ahistorical produces classifications and categories, creating divisions between "us and them".

[We] somehow expect our identities, our experiences to become static at some point so that we can say that...what the word lesbian means in 1998 is who I am and who I'm always going to be. ...[W]hat the word means changes...and my understanding of myself changes...even classifications like women and men — what we've experienced as static, like something we can depend on to be a way to split us up — when you start learning about trans stuff, you realize it is not static at all. It's not a static way to divide us from them. (Teresa, individual interview)
As Teresa clarified, she doesn't see identification as a problem, but rather sees the problem arising from viewing identity as static and unitary and then using it as the basis for political organizing and for building and defining a community. As she indicated, building a community on the illusion of sameness is not a condition to guarantee safety. In the next section, we see how bisexuality challenges static and unitary notions of sexual identity.

Bisexuality

Since the 1970s, strands of lesbian feminism have viewed bisexual women as "hiding", "fence sitting", "in denial" and benefitting from heterosexual privilege. At times, bisexual women have been "cast off [on political grounds] as untrustworthy because they slept with men" (Ross, 1995, p. 117). Despite the challenges from bisexual feminists over the past decade, in anti-violence organizing there continues to be what one educator called "the perennial bisexual/lesbian issue" (Joanne, individual interview). In the individual interviews — and interestingly, not in the focus group — some educators indicated confusion about bisexuality and how to integrate it into the categories created to name the violence. And in other cases, women made strong statements in support of bisexual women and spoke out against biphobia.

For Joanne, it is important to acknowledge the differences in experience, knowledge and privilege between women who identify as straight, lesbian or bisexual. She and her co-workers are struggling to sort out what this means in practice when educating about and supporting abused women. The involvement of bisexual women as facilitators of educational workshops and support groups on same-sex abuse between women, raises questions for her.

...I'm thinking...does it have to be women that identify as dykes?...As far as I'm concerned it's whether you have a connection with your experiences as queer as opposed to straight and...where do you come from when you're talking to women?...I'm thinking of this one woman who's bi and...in a relationship with a man and it's like, well 'Do you have things to say to women in a support group
who've been battered by another woman? Like do you have a place to talk about the experience of coming out, like you know? Can you do those things? (pause) And is it the right time for you to do it or from where do you speak?" Just as I would ask a dyke, I think, where she would speak from. I don't know. I think that the bisexual stuff is hard for me to figure out, all of it, but it's mostly about where does a woman place herself in the community. Does she have a male partner and basically live her life basically as if she was straight? I have a difficult time figuring out where she is.... (Joanne, individual interview).

This example is useful for showing how a lesbian feminist discourse on bisexuality "invokes essentialism to press constructionist choices: lesbians deploying this logic argue that because 'we are all heterosexual or homosexual, bisexuals should decide what they are' " (Ault, 1996, p. 210). Joanne recognizes that the category lesbian doesn't necessarily reflect the identities of all women in same-sex relationships, but finds it hard to understand bisexual women's experiences, especially when they are involved with men. She is trying to shift her language and way of conceptualizing sexuality without homogenizing differences in privilege between heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. In advertising for a support group for women abused in same-sex relationships, she and her co-workers have tried to acknowledge the multiplicity of identity categories women may choose. And yet, the participation of bisexual women who are involved with men as facilitators of workshops and support groups on same-sex abuse continues to raise questions for her. The assumption is that one must be firmly within the lesbian category of the hetero/homo binary. After raising questions about bisexual women's qualifications for facilitating a group for women abused by women, she adds that she would ask a dyke the same questions she would ask a bisexual woman. However, lesbians are not usually in the position of having to prove our lesbianism, unless of course, we sleep with men.

In some cases exclusions are maintained through policies within organizations that limit services or employment to lesbians or "women-born-women". Although Marcia was instructed by her supervisor to not admit bisexual women into the support and education group for survivors of woman-to-woman abuse, she subverted this regulation
by lying to her supervisor and bringing bisexual women into the group. When I asked about the rationale behind her supervisor's instructions, she explained:

Oh, well 'We don't want to be spending our time talking about anyone's boyfriend', you know. And I would say to people, 'Bisexual women are more interested in protecting themselves and not talking about any men they might be involved with, than you can ever imagine'. Cause they know, it's dangerous to talk about men in lesbian space. (Marcia, individual interview)

Marcia raised this to illustrate the way support and educational work about lesbian abuse has marginalized and stigmatized bisexual women. Frequently bisexual women's experiences are excluded from the category lesbian abuse and often the reasons given are that bisexual women (even if abused by a woman partner) are untrustworthy and will continue to use their "heterosexual privilege" to oppress lesbians in support groups by "talking about men they might be involved with". As Amber Ault (1996) notes, "The lesbian body attempts to maintain its integrity by employing discursive techniques of neutralization that construct and control 'the bisexual other' " (p. 213).

Transgendered People

Debates about the inclusion of transsexuals in feminist organizations have been circulating in North American feminist discourses for at least the past 20 years. Very few transition houses, shelters and rape crisis centres will (knowingly) provide support or shelter to transgendered people who have experienced violence. The most common reason given for the exclusion of transgendered people from feminist organizations is that they pose a threat to women's safety. But as transgendered activist Leslie Feinberg (1996) writes, "fear of gender variance also can't be allowed to deceptively cloak itself as a women's safety issue" (p. 116).

Educating about transgender experiences and transphobia has been a significant part of Teresa and Marcia's work on abuse in queer relationships. Teresa argues that transgendered people disrupt biological and universal notions of gender and sexual identity, and she sees this as connected to constructions of race. For Teresa and
Marcia, shifting the discourse on gender and sexuality in same-sex abuse education, goes beyond the act of "including" bisexuals and trans people to examining how lesbians have been complicit in marginalizing different groups and how racism, classism, transphobia and biphobia, are connected to constructions of "the ideal lesbian" — a white, biologically defined figure.

Joanne argues for a more complicated discussion and analysis of trans issues because she feels that the conversation between non-trans identified lesbian feminists and trans people is often too simplistic. She believes it is "really important to talk about like, um

what is the difference in experience between somebody who was born biologically a woman and somebody who was born biologically a man and changed their, their sex, their gender? And there are such important differences to talk about....". But she went on to say that having a more complex conversation is often difficult or impossible, because fear makes "women act horrible...[and] in ways that are so hate filled" (Joanne, focus group).

Many of us spoke of concerns about the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities and femininities within some oppositional discourses (such as femme/butch and transgender)⁴⁸. One educator is concerned about the way some female-to-male transgendered people (FTM) and butch lesbians are formulating sexist masculine identities which are sometimes used to justify abusive behaviour (Joanne, individual interview). A number of women emphasized the shifting nature of categories and the importance of envisioning and performing radical masculinities and femininities that disrupt systems of oppression.

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⁴⁸ For a discussion of white hegemonic femininities and masculinities in femme/butch identities see (Lee, 1996). For a discussion of the reproduction and disruption of hegemonic masculinities in butch and FTM transgender identities, see (Halberstam, 1998).
So while the pamphlets show a construction of a unitary lesbian identity among the victims and perpetrators of abuse, in practice educators in this study complicate that considerably pushing themselves to expand their boundaries and shifting the discourse, in some cases to address the experiences of bisexual women and transgendered people. However, there is still indication of a tendency in some cases to require educators themselves to be "real" lesbians. Similarly to the pamphlets, educators use an informational approach to challenge myths about lesbian relationships. At times, when faced with the threat of erasure, we present a stable unitary lesbian subject. We acknowledge that an identity politic can be politically useful for marginalized groups, but are concerned about the exclusions produced as a result. A number of the educators challenge the dominant discourse and foreground the multiple and shifting quality of gender and sexuality.

Educating about the Causes of Abuse

The majority of the discussion in the focus group and individual interviews centred on how educators conceptualize oppression, power and abuse. As we saw from the pamphlets, the conceptual framework includes a discussion of the context of lesbian abuse, or in other words, why abuse happens. This is interwoven with, or followed by a discussion about the nature of abuse, or what abuse is. The educators rely on the same framework outlined in the texts but with greater reference to multiple systems of oppression and an awareness of the problems with additive models.

Although there was a great deal of agreement amongst the educators, not everyone necessarily agreed with all these formations of causality that emerged in the interviews and focus group. They are:

- abuse is about power-over which stems from a society that allows and encourages violence as a way of dealing with conflict
- the need to control another person is learned — from society and from abusive families and relationships; learning by watching someone use power-over and seeing it "work" for them (such as a child witnessing abuse in a family)
• the need to control another person is a psychological need of some people in this society that is learned.

In keeping with feminist education on male violence against women, we all described abuse as behaviour that is learned from society and families and used to maintain power and control over another person. Although not representing the majority view, one educator described abuse as behaviour used to deal with conflict and as a learned psychological need. These three statements represent elements of an existing discourse on abuse that is prevalent in research on men's violence in heterosexual relationships (O’Neill, 1998). In workshops, all of the educators emphasize an abuser is choosing to be abusive, is responsible for his or her behaviour and can choose or learn to be non-abusive.

Similarly to the educational texts, the educators all rely on a conceptual framework that identifies abuse as something that stems from systemic societal domination and oppression. Another series of explanatory statements from the interviews and focus group that I pulled out demonstrate this:

• power-over is based in societal systems of domination and oppression  
• power-over is learned in a patriarchal society  
• power-over stems from a society where heterosexual relationships are structured around ownership  
• abuse stems from internalized heterosexism  
• power-over results from a capitalist society  
• power-over is the way of the colonizer; violence in relationships stems from a society (Canada) rooted in colonialism.

Reflecting the dominant discourse presented in the pamphlets, most educators focus primarily on patriarchy and heterosexism to describe the roots of woman-to-woman abuse, albeit with more sustained discussion about multiple systems and some mention of colonialism and capitalism.

The educators recognize that all women in abusive same-sex relationships do not face the same risks or barriers in speaking out or accessing services. As well, we acknowledge that heterosexism combines with racism, classism, ableism and ageism to position women differently and unequally. Similarly to the framework in the
pamphlets, we often used the language of "multiple oppressions", "double or triple jeopardy" or "double or triple vulnerabilities" when attempting to describe these differences.

Most of the educators mentioned "internalized oppression" (usually heterosexism, homophobia and sexism) as part of the context for understanding the causes of same-sex abuse. As discussed earlier, this discourse is present in some educational materials and in numerous resources on lesbian abuse (Lobel, 1986; Balan et al., 1995; Taylor & Chandler 1995; Renzetti & Miley, 1996; Elliot, 1990b; Chesley et al., 1992). The internalized oppression discourse asserts that abusive behaviour may be a result of internalized stereotypes and hatred of lesbians, queers or women in general.49

The internalized homophobia discourse is a psychological explanation of how the social context operates. Celia Kitzinger (1987) argues that the notion of internalized homophobia stems from a liberal humanist psychology discourse that distinguishes between the "healthy", "well-adjusted" or "whole" lesbian self versus the "sick", "self-hating" and "maladjusted" lesbian (p. 53). Lesbian abuse education often uses this discourse, which presents a universal woman or lesbian whose oppression is seen as one of the primary causes of her abusive behaviour. Her abusive behaviour is seen as resulting from internalized feelings of powerlessness rather than internalized dominance (Taylor & Chandler, 1995, p. 52). However, while the term "internalized dominance" was not used by the educators, everyone spoke about "internalized or learned power-over" which conveys a similar meaning. Internalized oppression and learned power-over were both described as causes or the context of lesbian abuse; however there was little connection between the concepts. The educators said we all learn power-over in a society structured around domination and oppression and referred to multiple systems. But what was lacking was a discussion about how this

49 Although it is not part of the dominant discourse, references to internalized racism in lesbian abuse show up in the following articles by lesbians of colour: (Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996).
learned power-over might be different for women in dominant or subordinate positions in society.

**Psychology Discourses**

Although I did not specifically ask questions about psychology, the influences of popular and feminist psychology can be seen in our talk about lesbian abuse education. Everyone is critical of traditional psychology for its tendency to pathologize or blame women survivors of violence and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. We are also critical of some feminist approaches for their collusion with traditional mental health, popular psychology or social service models. And yet, we do draw on elements of psychological discourses to varying degrees in our attempts to explain and educate about abuse.

In her work with heterosexual women abused by men, Joanne "rails against" mainstream psychology and its tendency to blame women. But she stated that she finds herself "being a little bit more psychologizing when [she] talk[s] about lesbian battering". She feels that the social context discourse doesn't "explain everything" about abuse in heterosexual or lesbian relationships; such as "why some people batter and some people don't" (Joanne, individual interview). She turns to psychology (combined with a feminist social analysis) to see if it might offer her additional explanations.

Although she draws on some psychological theories, Cheryl spoke about her concern about the prevalence of psychological theories about "fusion" in lesbian relationships which pathologize lesbians. In workshops she tries to get participants to question this because of the pervasive heterosexist assumption "'Oh lesbians are so fused, no wonder there's violence in lesbian relationships'" (Cheryl, individual interview).

While psychological explanations combined with feminist socio-political analyses may offer additional insights into the causes of abuse, it is also important for educators
to examine how a reliance on psychology discourses might contribute to pathologizing queer women who've experienced violence and how it may perpetuate other hierarchical relations between women (such as class-based hierarchies). It's important to ask ourselves why might we rely on psychological explanations more when it comes to abuse in lesbian relationships than with heterosexual ones. However, as Joanne noted, the existing (narrow) social context discourse is insufficient in explaining the causes of violence. And often our analysis of the social context is disconnected from the interpersonal dynamics of abuse in relationships. Moreover, acknowledging the existence of woman-to-woman abuse causes us as feminists to re-examine some of the grand narratives of violence against women and to expand our analyses in order to address some of the complex questions it raises, such as why some people are violent and others are not.

In sum, the educators rely on a similar framework to the one outlined in the educational pamphlets, where abuse is described as power and control learned from society and families that encourage and condones domination. We attempt to shift the primary focus on patriarchy and heterosexism with references to colonialism, racism and capitalism. However, in some cases patriarchy and heterosexism remain at the centre. Although critical of psychological explanations, we do draw on them in some cases, combined with a feminist analysis of the social context. The available discourses limit our ability to fully explain the complexities of woman-to-woman abuse. In the context of heteronormativity and in the absence of alternative discourses, we try to work with the simple storyline. In Chapter Four we return to this discussion, looking closely at how educators try to complicate this story around race and class.

**Educating About What Abuse Is**

Most educational workshops include information about the nature of abuse so people can assess which woman in the relationship is being abused and which abusive.
The educators in this study primarily used the words *battering*, *abuse* and *domestic violence*, although other terms such as *power-over* and *power and control* were sometimes used interchangeably with these words. The word *violence* to refer to abuse or battering, was used less often.

Over the years, feminist anti-violence activists have discussed and debated the meanings and usefulness of the terms battering and abuse. Some have indicated a preference for the latter arguing it encompasses a wider range of behaviours including physical, sexual, emotional, financial and spiritual abuse, while battering solely implies physical violence and excludes other forms of abuse. For example, bell hooks (1989) has argued that the term battering is problematic because it places a primary emphasis on repeated physical assaults. Other feminists view both words as having the same meaning. Preference for either term also varies over time and with geographical location. For example, feminists in Ontario tend to use the word "abuse" over "battering", while both terms are generally used interchangeably in British Columbia.

The terms battering and abuse are usually used to refer to patterns of power and control in intimate relationships. However, in this research they were applied by some more widely to describe abusive behaviours in workplaces, within the anti-violence movement, or to describe systemic oppression. As well, the educators distinguish between the use of violence in *self-defense* or *retaliation* against an abusive partner and the use of abusive or *provocative* or *aggressive* violence against a partner.

In the following section I briefly discuss some examples from the data that show how educators describe the nature of woman-to-woman abuse. On the whole, this follows the same main lines as the framework presented in the pamphlets: tactics and

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50 A discussion about "batterers in the movement" was a significant part of the research. Analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. At times it was difficult to discern if women were referring to feminist activists who were abusing their intimate partners, co-workers and colleagues, or both. While I agree that we need to expand our analyses and definitions of abuse (for example, to examine public violence and women's abuse of power in communities, not only in intimate relationships), at times the meanings assigned to the words can become nebulous. For a discussion of how this plays out in "trauma talk" in feminist therapy discourses, see (Mareck, 1999, p. 168).
forms of abuse; abuse is not mutual. However, in the focus group and individual interviews, the educators explored more complexities and questions about the nature of abuse, which reflects some of the discussions that often surface in educational workshops.

Tactics and Forms of Abuse

As indicated above, everyone describes abuse as power and control exercised over another person. In some cases, we spoke about "patterns" or "systematic" power and control but this was not consistent. In workshops, one educator emphasized: "we keep reminding people that control, not anger is the issue" (Marcia, focus group). Everyone referred to the power and control wheel developed in Duluth, Minnesota (Pence, 1987) as an important educational tool. The spokes on the wheel describe various tactics of power and control used in intimate relationships. While originally developed for education about violence against women in heterosexual relationships, it has been revised to address abuse in same-sex relationships (see Appendix A).  

As with the pamphlets, we often use a framework outlining similarities and differences between heterosexual and same-sex abuse. Some of the similarities are presented in the following:

...generally when I talk about abuse in same-sex relationships, I um, use a lot of the stuff that I know from straight relationships about how power and control impacts, is that what you mean? And in general, when we do education...about...battering in straight relationships, we talk about the impact of one person having power and control over another person... (Joanne, focus group).

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51 Recently the wheel has been expanded to show the relationship between abuse and heterosexism on different levels: private, family, public; however no-one in this research mentioned this. In addition to the power and control wheel, some women also mentioned their analyses had been influenced by: Confronting Lesbian Battering: A Manual for the Battered Women's Movement (Elliot, 1999b), Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering (Lobel, 1986), Violent Betrayal (Renzetti, 1992), articles written by Valli Kauhaa and Janice Ristock, as well as other educational pamphlets, books and academic dissertations (such as Coleman, 1990).
...[in general] violent relationships fall under that need to control another person, and the way to control another person is to have power over them (Cheryl, individual interview).

In a number of interviews women tried to differentiate between heterosexual and same-sex relationships, but found it difficult. As I stated: "Some of these forms of abuse are very similar to heterosexual abuse, but there are nuances that are different. And that is what I often found difficult to talk about [in workshops], is how things were different and what the nuances were..." (Cindy, individual interview).

Women gave specific examples of forms of abuse that reflect some of the tactics outlined on the original power and control wheel, including: sexual, physical, emotional and economic abuse; using isolation; using children; intimidation; using coercion and threats; minimizing, denying and blaming; jealousy or neediness when a partner spends time with friends, family or time alone; insults about race, culture, class, disability, sexuality, size and appearance, spirituality or religion; using privilege; abusing pets, damaging or destroying personal belongings or property. In discussing differences with abusive heterosexual relationships, some educators mentioned: threats or actions to "out" a partner to family, co-workers, ex-husband, or government ministries which could negatively influence custody, employment and immigration; as well as bi and transphobic insults.

The number of references to the ways abusive women may use their own vulnerabilities against their partners in abusive ways indicate this is a strong theme for the educators. Educators explained that abusers may use an illness, disability or feelings of vulnerability from a past experience of violence (such as rape or childhood abuse), suicide threats, or an alcohol/drug addiction to gain power and control over their partners by focusing exclusively on their own needs, insecurities, vulnerabilities or "preciousness". For example:

...one of the things we've been talking about wanting to add to the power and control wheel is a section called "using vulnerabilities", like using your vulnerabilities against a partner, like using an illness or like "don't step on my
"Your toes are the size of the entire room I can't help but step on your toes," you know what I mean?... (Marcia, focus group)

This was described in some cases as an abuser's intense dependency on the woman she is abusing. As well she may use these vulnerabilities as an excuse for her abusive behaviour: "a lot of what we hear [is] This is what my parents did to me and that's why I treat you this way, and why I need you with me every second of the day, and this is why I blow up at you" (Joanne, individual interview). This illustrates that some women are familiar with the theory of "the cycle of family violence" — learned violent behaviour or learned "victim" behaviour resulting from growing up in a violent family — and sometimes use it to justify their abusiveness.\(^5^2\)

In some cases educators described this "use of vulnerabilities" as a difference from abusive heterosexual relationships.

....a tactic of control that is different than how we talk about het relationships...[is] how a person can use the way they have been hurt or been um, raped or whatever in the past, to be really controlling and scary to a person who is trying to support them now...[T]hat's like a tool or a tactic that we don't, that we don't, um, you know that should be on the wheel for same-sex domestic violence...maybe it should be on the wheel for every domestic violence, I don't know... (Teresa, individual interview).

Others thought there were similarities:

...this is another thing too — and there's probably some similarities with male violence in heterosexual relationships — um like in my own experience so much of what kept me in the abusive relationship was the belief that [my partner] was more damaged than I was or ever could be, and that she was damaged by abuse in her family when she was a child and her mom's alcoholism and she would continually talk about her pain...and would say things like..."Without you I'd be no-where, I'd be dead"....And you start to believe that "Yeah, actually it's really important that I don't spend time with other people, I need to focus on this other person and I need to help her". (Cindy, individual interview).

\(^5^2\)Within mainstream and feminist psychology discourses on violence there are often two meanings referred to with the term "cycle of violence". One refers to learned behaviour from growing up in an abusive family and the other refers to patterns or phases of a cycle of violence; i.e. period of calm, tension-building, explosive/violent phase (Walker, 1979). I am referring to the former.
This challenges the claim in feminist theory which argues that women in "vulnerable" or marginalized positions will always be victimized. The discussion about the "use of vulnerabilities" as a tactic of power and control in abusive same-sex relationships requires that we think critically about political risks. In other words, if we add this to the power and control wheel for understanding woman-to-woman abuse, there is a danger it could lead to universalist statements that could position marginalized women (constructed as "vulnerable") as more suspect as "batterers". For example, to say that a woman with an illness, disability, or who has experienced multiple forms of violence and systemic oppression may be more likely to be abusive. In addition, a focus on the use of vulnerabilities against a partner without an examination of the context of the behaviours and the role of the other partner could leave the behaviour of a partner in a dominant position (such as an able-bodied partner) unexamined. The educators in this study did not use it in this way and would strongly speak out against this, however it is important to highlight the political risks this raises. The data in this research shows there is a need to strategize politically about how to talk, analyze and educate about this form of abuse because everyone highlighted it as a significant tactic of power and control in woman-to-woman abuse.

Abuse is Not Mutual

Discussions and debates about mutual abuse in lesbian abuse education have been prevalent since early organizing in the 1980s (Lobel, 1986). Consistent with the dominant feminist discourse, educators in this study dispute the notion there is something called mutual abuse and use a model of power and control to explain there is always a perpetrator and a victim in abusive relationships. The issue has been central for a number of reasons. The concept of mutual abuse has been readily applied to

53For further discussion about mutual abuse, see: (Marrujo and Kreger, 1996; Ristock, 1998; Renzetti, 1992; Asherah, 1990, Elliot, 1990b; Istar, 1996).
violent lesbian relationships (Renzetti, 1992). Given than one cannot rely on gender to
determine who's abusing whom, service providers, the police and friends have often
had difficulty determining which woman is the abuser (Hammond, 1989; Renzetti,
1992). It is often assumed there is equality between women and if there is violence, it
must be equal. The courts have issued mutual orders when they have been unable to
determine a perpetrator and a victim (Eaton, 1994). As well, some abusive women say
it is mutual to avoid responsibility (Asherah, 1990). In this heterosexist and risky
context, we circulate and produce the truth claim that one is either a survivor or a
batterer. However, in coalitions and educational forums there are often heated debates
about the issue in which women often get "entangled in a binary debate, falsely
positioning people as either...believing or not believing in the possibility of mutual

Two educators said they felt the need for more front-line experience in order to
fully understand the dynamics of power in woman-to-woman abuse. Three women
spoke about feeling confused in some cases where it was not clear who was the
perpetrator and who the victim. Yet in workshops, we all emphasize that it is important
to "keep working to figure out who has more power in the relationship" (Teresa,
individual interview) and say that mutual abuse as a harmful myth.

Although we rely heavily on a perpetrator/victim model to access claims for justice
for survivors and to hold abusive women accountable, a number of educators also
spoke about how the dichotomy can contribute to a narrow conceptualization of
violence in women's lives. As a category, mutual abuse was seen by everyone as
inaccurate and inadequate for discussing the complex dynamics of power and control
in abusive relationships. However, some educators indicated that the perpetrator/victim
dichotomy does not help with explaining complexities either; such as cases in which
someone might be abused in one relationship and abusive in another (and vice versa),
situations where power relations appear to be shifting or cases in which it seemed that
more than one form of abuse was occurring (such as racist abuse from a disabled white woman and ableist abuse from her able-bodied woman of colour partner).

Similarly to the claims in the pamphlets, everyone made the distinction between different forms of violence — for example, violence used to fight back against an abusive partner is not the same as abuse and therefore is not mutual. In one interview, different violent behaviours were defined as "provocative, aggressive, retaliatory, or defensive" and a survivor's use of violence would then be described as defensive or retaliatory in response to an abuser's provocative or aggressive use of violence (Teresa, individual interview).54

Educating about Assessment

Some educators spoke about limitations and problems with existing assessment tools, such as check-lists of abusive behaviours and profiles of survivors/batterers which produce problematic regimes of truth: they can essentialize, universalize, miss complexities and the context of behaviours. For example, one educator said that profiles of survivors are problematic because they link the abuse to specific constructs of types of women (Teresa, individual interview). She also challenged the notion that being a survivor is an "identity" arguing instead that it represents the experience of being acted upon and does not imbue the person with virtue. Another educator noted that check-lists of abusive behaviours can be problematic when the context of the relationship is not examined:

the way to tell the difference isn't necessarily like to check down a list of...[for example] who used the most horrible language, but how did that stuff get used and why and how did it function in the relationship?.... (Marcia, focus group).

54 Teresa stated this framework was developed by the Community United Against Violence, a US-based organization that works in the area of same-sex abuse.
While the educators recognized the problems with narrow, universalizing profiles of survivors, there was less resistance to the idea that there are identifiable characteristics of batterers. On the whole the batterer category was conceptualized in a static and essentialized manner (no accountability, manipulative, resistant to change), however a number of women spoke about the problem of vilifying, universalizing or constructing batterers as "evil".

Many of the educators indicated they find it difficult to imagine an abusive woman showing accountability and unlearning her abusive behaviour. One educator noted that it seemed taboo to suggest that some abusive women would want to and could change (Teresa, focus group). Another acknowledged that as a survivor of abuse, it is scary for her to think "about abusers as being real people" (Marcia, individual interview). A number of educators struggled with this same issue, noting that "drawing firm lines" between survivors and batterers has been necessary for safety. Our fear of acknowledging the messy complexities of the categories relates to the high incidence of abusive people denying their actions, blaming the victim and not making changes and the frequency with which survivors discount or minimize our own experiences of abuse. As a result, regimes of truth about mutual abuse and about survivors and batterers are produced in this context. The dominant discourse legitimizes some women's experiences of abuse but at the same time makes it difficult to speak other truths which marginalizes some women's experiences.

This section shows that educators largely use the dominant discourse to explain what is and is not abuse and expand it marginally with discussions about the abuser's "use of vulnerabilities against a partner". We use a similarities and differences model (heterosexual/same-sex) which helps to make same-sex abuse intelligible to (predominantly heterosexual) workshop participants and highlights the important differences queer women face. Nevertheless, this can unwittingly support a liberal humanist framework, leaving heterosexism unexamined and rendering power relations
invisible. Most importantly, the social context of domination and oppression tends to recede in the discussion of the abuse of power in intimate relationships and a somewhat generic batterer/survivor dichotomy prevails as a result of the simple analytical framework. The educators struggle deeply with how we construct batterers and survivors, with the complexities of power dynamics in abusive same-sex relationships, and with the multiple and unstable nature of identities. However, we return to a simple framework in the context of pervasive heterosexism and as I will discuss in the following chapter, white educators can use this framework because it seems to mirror our experiences and restrict our ability to see ourselves as dominant.

**Summary**

To sum up, lesbian abuse education occurs in a politically risky context. The analysis of the pamphlets shows some of the main analytical lines of the dominant conceptual framework educators rely on to negotiate these risks, name the violence and eliminate barriers for survivors of woman-to-woman abuse. The framework produces universalist and essentialist notions of lesbians and women — white, middle-class, lesbians and biologically defined women remain at the centre. The interview and focus group data reveals that while the educators rely on the dominant discourse, in practice there are greater references to multiple systems of oppression, more nuances and complexities. However, while educators contest the over-simplification, we nonetheless reproduce some of the same exclusions. In the following chapter I turn to look more closely at how we think and talk about race and class.
Chapter Four:
When Race and Class Enter the Picture

The educators interviewed are well aware of the limitations of the currently used conceptual framework and try to complicate it. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how we analyze and educate about race and class in particular. In individual interviews and the focus group, I specifically asked questions about race/racism, class/classism, the social context of violence, and privilege. As well, discussions about race and class surfaced in conversations about many other topics such as educating about gender and sexuality, the nature and causes of violence, and the complexities and risks in shifting our analytical frameworks.

In this chapter I examine some examples where the dominant framework (as examined in Chapter Three) breaks down and highlight some of the educators' critical analyses and reflections on this breakdown. I also discuss how our privilege as white, and in some cases middle-class, women influences our analytical frameworks and approaches to education.

The Social Context of Woman-to-Woman Abuse

As we saw in the previous chapter, lesbian abuse education is situated within a discussion of the social context of oppression and has focused primarily on patriarchy and heterosexism; however, the educators in this study attempted to shift this with references to colonialism, racism and capitalism. In workshops we use various educational tools to describe the connections between oppressions.

In workshops, Cheryl uses "a model of oppression and marginalized groups" that looks at "how oppression works to keep people on the outside of society" (individual interview). She focuses primarily on the ways different people experience marginalization and oppression based on race, class, gender and sexuality rather than
on practices of domination. Cheryl believes it is important to talk about isolation as a tool and effect of oppression because of the way it impacts on women's experiences in abusive same-sex relationships. She doesn't necessarily start with heterosexism but may begin by talking about racism or other forms of oppression.

[I] try to get people to at least start thinking of the fact that there is diversity and...[that everybody is not] awarded the same kind of status in this society, and then gradually narrow that down and sort of talk about or use more experiential things for people actually to get an idea of what some of the um, specific kinds of marginalization that would happen for a lesbian. (Cheryl, individual interview)

Three educators indicated that in workshops, women in positions of privilege have been able to understand other women's oppression by first connecting to their own feelings of marginalization. For example, Cheryl said: "I usually find that there's some place where just about every woman can recognize that feeling on the outside. If I can tap into that place for her, it's at least an opening to begin to hear about what that may be [like]...,even if it's a little tiny way, for a lesbian" (individual interview). I have also used this approach when I have felt that workshop participants have been resistant to examining their privilege. And it is a pedagogical tool that is often used in anti-oppression education. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, by initially focusing on our location on the margins (how we are oppressed), this strategy can create a problem of competing marginalities where each woman sees her own oppression as the most important or urgent (Fellows & Razack, 1998). In this we miss an examination of how we are implicated in the subordination of other women, and see ourselves as innocent (Fellows & Razack, 1998). In workshops, women often possess an awareness of different forms of oppression in women's lives, but do not see our complicity in these hierarchies between us. Seeing ourselves as uninvolved in the social relations of oppression, we focus on men (and sometimes heterosexuals) as being responsible for producing and maintaining these systems of domination.
Teresa uses a "dominance model", which she described as a triangle. She prefers it to the commonly used "normative/other chart...where they put white on one side and people of colour on the other side" because she sees the dominance model as "more dynamic" (individual interview). The normative/other chart that Teresa is referring to is outlined by white lesbian feminist activist Suzanne Pharr in Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering (Lobel, 1986). This produces a binary relationship between those positioned under the "Norm" and "Other" categories, rather than examining the complexity of multiple identities. However, Pharr suggests facilitators and participants can explore through discussion how "most people fall on both sides of the chart" (p. 213) as well as how marginalized groups are pitted against one another. Using the dominance model instead of the normative/other chart, Teresa believes, "makes space for the middle" and for the way different systems "work together and how different people are enlisted to do the dirty work" (individual interview). Like Pharr's work, this model emphasizes "how 'isms' divide us" and examines how scarcity, violence and institutions work together. Teresa finds this useful for addressing violence in relationships between queer people by asking "Who is it serving for us to be so hating...and suspicious...and judgemental of one another?" (individual interview).

While Teresa sees patriarchy as inseparable from and linked with heterosexism, capitalism, racism, and ableism, she referred primarily to "the patriarchy" as the central system of domination in her analysis of the social context. Teresa stated that there are problems with the way patriarchy is frequently conceptualized in feminist anti-violence work. She noted an analysis that ignores race and class obscures the way white, middle and upper-class women have investments in patriarchy and benefit from it, in some cases more than men of colour, First Nations and working-class men (focus group). She tries to give specific examples in workshops that will help people see "the complex relationships" between systems (focus group). For Teresa, part of this also
involves discussing how certain racist, classist, heterosexist and ableist "notions are superimposed onto people's experiences" and how this makes oppressed people vulnerable when dealing with specific institutions such as the criminal justice system (individual interview). As well, in workshops Teresa and Marcia challenge "myths that white middle-class folks have about who is more or less accepting of queers" [i.e. that working-class people and people of colour are more homophobic and therefore, working-class queers and queers of colour will be more isolated from their families and communities] (Teresa, individual interview).

Although there are some differences, Cheryl's and Teresa's descriptions of educating about oppression reflect common elements in the approach outlined by Pharr, whose work has been influential in anti-homophobia and lesbian abuse education (Pharr, 1988; Lobel, 1986; Chesley et al., 1992; Elliot, 1990a, 1990b). My previous work was also influenced by her analyses. For Pharr (1988), the system of sexism — "the system by which women are kept subordinate to men" (p. 9) — has three weapons which keep it in place: economics, violence and homophobia. Her work has been important for feminist anti-violence activists because of her emphasis on the common elements of different forms of oppression: institutional power, economic power, myth of scarcity, violence and the threat of violence, processes of Othering, invisibility, distortion of events, stereotyping, blaming the victim, internalized oppression, horizontal hostility, isolation, assimilation and tokenism and a focus on individual solutions (1988, p. 53-64). While she writes that "there is no hierarchy of oppressions", sexism remains the central system from which she examines the interconnections between oppressions.

Pharr's work has also emphasized that women must examine our complicity in all forms of oppression (p. 52). Yet the differences between oppressions and an analysis of how these systems work together is not always explored when we focus on commonalities. And even when the interconnections between oppressions are emphasized, by positioning patriarchy, sexism and homophobia as the dominant
systems structuring the oppression of women (as is evident in Pharr's title *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*), we can miss seeing how white supremacy and capitalism are integral to maintaining the institution of heteropatriarchy. Most of all, white and middle-class women can miss seeing their complicity.

In my previous work facilitating workshops, I used the framework as outlined in the pamphlets — focusing primarily on patriarchy, misogyny and heterosexism with mention of racism, classism and ableism as additional oppressions facing *other* women. In workshops and pamphlets, the social context of domination and oppression is frequently conceptualized around a gender division between men and women — men=oppressors and women=oppressed. As I stated in my interview: "I don't think we really have a sense of linking the social context and the personal and they become really separate and what exactly is the social context if it's not connected to us? It's almost like we talk about it like an entity 'out there'....it gets attached to men" (Cindy, individual interview). By attaching it to men, feminists have been able to avoid examining how we are implicated in the oppression of other women — we "race to innocence" as noted in Chapter Two. While emphasizing that white women do not experience racism or that heterosexual women do not experience heterosexism is important in educating about oppression and privilege, dominant groups sometimes use this focus on "who is oppressed" to evade an examination of "who is dominating whom"; or in other words, how we are complicit in these systems of oppression. A number of the educators interviewed, noted that when we (meaning feminists and lesbians broadly) conceptualize systems of domination as "out there", we avoid examining how oppression operates "inside" feminist and queer spaces and communities and the ways that women use power over other women. However in the focus group and individual interviews, we ourselves still went in and out of acknowledging our own uses of power over working-class women and women of colour.
Often lesbian abuse education uses an internalized oppression discourse to discuss the context of abuse, without examining how women are positioned hierarchically to one another and how different women have historically abused power over other women (for example through slavery and colonization). This discourse constructs women/lesbians primarily as victims in relation to men/heterosexuals.\textsuperscript{55} As Inderpal Grewal (1996) argues,

universalist feminist discourses that have seen themselves only in relation to men have, in fact been articulated in relation to other women. This use of other women, as Spivak and women of colour feminists in the United States such as bell hooks have suggested, has been part of the discourse of Western feminism in its utilization of the individual subject. Thus while much feminism in the West saw itself only in relation to men, what was implicit and crucial within it were the relations between women of other classes and races. (p. 11)

Teresa articulated a similar analysis about the problems with a de-raced and de-classed feminist framework that positions women as victims and as solely oppressed in relation to men and obscures white, middle and upper-class women’s investments and privilege (focus group).

\textit{Double or Triple Jeopardy}. The educators in this study are aware that racism, classism and ableism combine with heterosexism to position women differently and unequally. Despite efforts to move away from an additive model, in the end we do tend toward it with our use of the constructs "double or triple jeopardy" or "double or triple vulnerabilities". Double jeopardy is often used to describe "the second layer" of abusive tactics of power and control that a battered lesbian faces in the context of heterosexism (Champagne et al., 1994). In this research, the term triple jeopardy was used to refer to the combined oppression that lesbians or queer women of colour and Two-Spirited women face or that working-class or disabled lesbians or queer women experience.

\textsuperscript{55}An excellent example can be seen in the book \textit{Lesbians Talk Violent Relationships} (Taylor \& Chandler, 1995, p. 52).
The language of double or triple jeopardy is also used in two of the educational texts I discussed earlier (SFU, n.d.; Champagne et al., 1994). This may stem from its usage in an influential article by Valli Kanuha (1990) "Compounding the Triple Jeopardy: Battering in Lesbian of Colour Relationships", reprinted in a training manual on lesbian battering, Confronting Lesbian Battering: A Manual for the Battered Women's Movement (Elliot, 1990b). While recognizing differences in experience is crucially important, describing the multiple forms of violence in the lives of lesbians of colour, disabled lesbians and working-class lesbians in an additive fashion as one of triple jeopardy or vulnerability can have the effect of seeing these differences as essential, fixed characteristics of a biological or a social condition rather than as produced through social relations (Razack, 1998a). In examining the construct of vulnerability in discourses of violence against women with disabilities, Sherene Razack (1998a) has argued that it privatizes disability:

Relying on additive analysis (where disability plus gender equals double oppression), we have been content to describe the situation of women with disabilities as one of double vulnerabilities. With the concept of vulnerability, we successfully manage to see disability as a condition that is pre-given, a biological essence or even a social condition, but one that simply is. We privatize the condition of being disabled and do not ask questions about the social relations that transform a physical and mental situation into one of great vulnerability (p. 20-21).

Kanuha's (1990) critically important article on battering in lesbian of colour relationships does not privatize the experiences of lesbians of colour experiencing abuse and clearly locates the issues within the social and political context of racism and heterosexism. Her article addresses racism within lesbian and feminist communities and the complexities of experiences of lesbians of colour who are being abused or abusive.

However, following from Razack's analysis, I suggest that women from dominant groups may use the terms double or triple jeopardy or vulnerability to use an additive analysis of difference which secures our position at the centre. Constructing women
from historically disadvantaged groups as more vulnerable often invokes the emotional response of pity which does not necessarily lead to an examination of how those of us positioned as dominant are implicated in producing these power relations (Razack, 1998a. p. 138). When we, as feminist educators, "travel down the path of compound oppression — double and triple oppression — the relations between women, and the ways in which the advantages some women enjoy come at the expense of other women, are masked" (p. 131). This echoes Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) comments about white women viewing anti-racist work as a benevolent and optional act for the Other rather than about changing systems of domination that shape our subjectivity and lives.

This points to the need to critically examine how our descriptions and explanations about the violences in women's lives do not simply reflect reality but produce it. In other words, we need to search for a theory of difference that disrupts universalism and the processes of othering that accompany it. And the language we use does not always reflect or represent the depth of our own analyses. In this research, one women (Teresa) used this language but demonstrated an interlocking analysis of race and class. For example, throughout the research she addressed the way systems "interplay" with one another, the way categories are raced and classed, and the way some women's privileges are secured through the oppression of other women. We lack a language and theory of difference that enables us to talk about interdependency and how difference is a social relation.

Colonialism. All of the educators emphasized that we are trying to shift the dominant discourse and that our thinking has been strongly influenced by the theorizing and educational practices of feminists of colour and First Nations women. Joanne spoke about this influence, saying she has moved away from the dominant discourse which says that "everything stems from patriarchy", because it "ignores the ways that racism and patriarchy connect, or the privilege of white women or the experiences of
women of colour of having their lives totally moulded by racism" (individual interview). Previously in workshops she explained the causes of abuse by saying, "We live in a violent society". But now, "instead of adding on the oppressions [she says], 'We live in Canada which is rooted in colonialism'", and refers to racism and heterosexism as the "building blocks...of violence in relationships" (individual interview). At the same time, she acknowledged it is difficult to educate about interlocking systems in a way that is intelligible for participants in a workshop. She stressed the importance of using concrete examples to help people understand how systems work together, but in the interview did not outline specific examples that she uses in workshops.

Four educators mentioned colonialism as part of the social context of abuse. In some instances, it was mentioned exclusively with reference to the causes of violence or decolonization initiatives within First Nations or indigenous communities. A few educators mentioned decolonization initiatives and anti-racist analyses of violence as examples of shifts in the dominant anti-violence discourse and as important examples that we must learn from. Yet, there was very little discussion about the way colonialism influences white women. In the focus group I spoke about this, reflecting on my educational work:

...in the work I've done on, um, in educating around same-sex abuse...I've used a very white feminist analysis of violence and have kinda added on heterosexism and then...have added on racism to apply to other women...women of colour, First Nations women and we don't talk about racism, colonization in the big picture, how does it affect white women. What does, you know, what is white women's privilege and what, how does privilege and power work in that way?......(Cindy, focus group)

So, while we at times we mention colonialism as part of the social context of violence, the models we use still limit our ability to sustain an analysis about the ways we as white women are shaped by, and complicit in, the colonialism of the past and present. In this way they can allow us to see ourselves as innocent.
Moving Away From Biological Definitions. As discussed in Chapter Three, another way that some educators are shifting the dominant discourse is by examining the regulation of sexual and gender identities and the effects of universal and biological definitions of womanhood. As Teresa said: "We've made up this story about who are survivors" or a "definition of who's a woman" (focus group) which is based on racialized, classed and biological notions of womanhood (individual interview). In the focus group she described a debate at a feminist anti-violence conference about the inclusion of transgendered people and a proposed change to the title of the lesbian caucus to the queer caucus. Strong resistance came from white lesbian feminists. At one pivotal moment, one white lesbian said, "I don't feel safe because there's a penis in the room". This prompted Teresa and others to talk about "how white skin is a representation of like as much, if not more violence than the organ of a penis". It was at this point that the queer women of colour caucused amongst themselves and then returned to the group. As Teresa describes, they initiated a discussion about white privilege, constructions of safety and risks:

....it was the queer women of colour that just said, 'You know, you're not gonna get away from this. Like you're gonna be accountable for being in your uncomfortable place', (I'm speaking of the white women), 'of being uncomfortable and figuring out what being in a place that is uncomfortable to you. Welcome to dealing with privilege. Hello, here we are'. And once again taking risks to like put themselves out in that way, but also hold people accountable,....where all the time they [white women] ask women of colour to work with them in a space that's very risky for them....(Teresa, focus group)

This example highlights that safety is not only a gender issue, and shows how a focus on patriarchy and the penis as a representation of violence against women ignores white supremacy and the way whiteness is a representation of racist violence. Transgender activist Leslie Feinberg (1996) has emphasized that "creating safety in women's spaces means we have to define unsafe behaviour — like racist behaviour by white women towards women of colour, or dangerous insensitivity to women with disabilities" (p. 117).
In workshops with lesbian or queer audiences, Marcia and Teresa encourage participants to examine how lesbians have been complicit in marginalizing different groups and how racism, classism, transphobia and biphobia are connected to constructions of "the ideal lesbian". For example, in workshops and groups they discuss the historical context of femme/butch identities: "how gender was a part of queer experience for the 50s and 60s" and then how "we...degendered the issue in the 70s with lesbian feminists and the ways...that class played into that" (Marcia, individual interview). As well, in discussing the importance of deconstructing femininity and masculinity, Teresa spoke about the way certain "icons of femininity" are deeply connected to racism and classism (focus group).

_Social Context Summary_. We can see from the above discussion that educators draw on elements from the dominant discourse, but not uncritically. Our analyses of the social context of oppression are more nuanced and complex than the simple conceptual framework reflected in the educational pamphlets. Everyone possesses an intellectual awareness of the problems with a de-raced and de-classed models, additive approaches and unidimensional analyses of power and tries to move toward an interlocking analysis. We use various approaches to do this, such as a dominance model, a focus on marginalization, references to colonialism. In some cases educators use the language of patriarchy but with a critical analysis of the way classism and racism connect with patriarchy and heterosexism to position women hierarchically in relation to one another. Despite efforts to shift the focus away from a unidimensional analysis, some educators do take an additive approach to talking about racism and classism in discussions about "difference" or "diversity". In others cases, women begin with a discussion of colonialism and refer to racism and heterosexism as the roots of violence in relationships. While this is a significant and important shift, we (white women) may still refer to colonialism or racism in an additive fashion (colonialism plus
patriarchy equals doubly vulnerable woman). All of the educators indicated an awareness of the importance of examining how racism and colonialism influence and shape white women, but again at times this appeared as an intellectual awareness (i.e. we know we need to do this) rather than a sustained interlocking analysis and an examination of how we produce ourselves as dominant and how we are implicated in these systems. Some educators demonstrated a critical analysis of problems with the accepted storyline about "who's a woman/lesbian" and the way it privileges white, middle-class, biologically defined women.

So while we complicate the story considerably in workshops, the existing language and frameworks are failing us. As one educator put it, part of the problem is not having an understanding of power and control that captures "the breadth" of oppression (Cheryl, focus group). However, even in cases where we intellectually understand that systems are interlocked, white educators can continue to use these existing frameworks because they seem to account for our lives and can limit the extent to which we can see ourselves as dominant. All of the educators emphasized the way women are implicated in the oppression of other women and no-one disputed that we have privilege as white women. However, in some instances the focus remained on heterosexual women, "old guard" lesbian feminists, batterers in the movement, or "any woman" who could abuse power, rather than ourselves as white, and in some cases, middle-class women. In the next section we turn to look at the connection between the social context and abuse in intimate relationships.

**How Oppression Plays Out in Abusive Relationships**

Educators try to link our analysis about the social context with the dynamics of woman-to-woman abuse. In some cases, educators stated that in practice it is not always clear how our socio-political analysis of oppression connects with how we conceptualize abuse in intimate relationships. For example, one educator said that "in
some ways it kind of feels like the education work is outside of women's experience...I know in my head that that's not really true, and yet...how do I bring that into working with women who've been abused?" (Cheryl, individual interview). She went on to say "...it's not always apparent how homophobia and heterosexism and racism and classism all get woven in together or whatever ism you want to throw in, how that all gets woven in together to um, um become part of the dynamic in a relationship..." (Cheryl, individual interview).

Three educators spoke specifically about their difficulties in understanding how racism impacts on white women in abusive relationships. As the following examples show, these women were beginning to think about racism as a system that shapes white women's lives but were unclear about, in Toni Morrison's (1992) words, "the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it" (p. 11).

...[saying] 'patriarchy is the ultimate oppression that everything flows from', that totally ignores the ways that racism and patriarchy connect or the privilege or white women or the experiences of women of colour of having their lives totally moulded by racism and that that's you know, it's not just "and". Um and also that like, we have not understood and we still don't understand, I'm still in process around my understanding like of how racism impacts the experience of white women who are being battered as well or, like being battered by white men or middle-class and the systems response (sigh).... (Joanne, individual interview)

....And how does, when you have two women — two white women together — how does racism count in their relationship? I think it's a piece of our experience but um, it's not something that's there, how the various oppressions work and how we express ourselves in relation to that. Because I think it's a part of...the whole concept of abuse, but it's not something that's easy to get a handle on, either when you're trying to talk about — you can talk about it in a philosophical framework in a workshop but when you're actually talking with women one-on-one or in group who've been abused, it [racism] doesn't necessarily always come out unless it's really, really blatant. And yet how do you make that more visible, how do we make that more visible? (Cheryl, individual interview).

Educators acknowledged that we have a hard time holding onto an anti-racist analysis when both women are white. These examples are similar to Frankenberg's (1993) interviews with white feminists, where "the absence of a language with which to analyze in sufficiently complex fashion the relationship between the white self and
racism as a system of domination", left some interviewees feeling confused or stuck with how to proceed in "practicing anti-racism" (p. 168-9). While feelings of confusion can be a result of the absence of language, in some cases they are also productive in keeping us stuck — in other words securing our dominance. We have a limited analysis of white subjectivity and its relationship to systems of domination. These examples also point to the need to consider what enacting dominance means regardless of what our bodies look like. In other words, to examine what norms are being represented and reinforced through these behaviours.

Everyone sees racism, classism and ableism as forms of abuse in same-sex relationships, yet none of the educators specifically discussed abuse in mixed-race or mixed-class relationships. Working-class Arab-Canadian scholar Joanna Kadi (1993) has remarked that the lack of language and theory about power differences based on class, race and ability in intimate lesbian relationships has made it very difficult to resolve conflicts and build healthy and just lesbian relationships.56 In my interview, I said that I think it is a topic that has not been sufficiently addressed in lesbian abuse education or in the development of assessment tools.

...if racism isn't named as violence, then there are whole forms of abuse that are erased, that aren't even seen as violence and...is that part of our assessment tools? Are we looking for racist motivated abuse? I think our analysis of racism as violence is very simplistic and in any sort of assessment tools it's really simplistic. And so I think we need to do a lot of work around this. (Cindy, individual interview)

I also spoke about the historical and current context of denial of white women's racism which makes it difficult to talk about violence in inter-racial relationships perpetrated by white women against women of colour and vice versa.

So while the educators have an intellectual understanding of racism and classism as part of the social context of violence, the theoretical framework about the social context

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56 Kadi (1993) also discusses the limitations of feminist therapy in addressing power differences based on class, race and disability in lesbian relationships. For further discussion of racism, classism, ableism and abuse in mixed-race/class/ability lesbian relationships, see (Burstow, n.d.; Taylor & Chandler, 1995; Kanuha, 1990; Waldron, 1996).
(public) is often detached from our analysis of same-sex abuse in intimate relationships (private). Once again, it is the hegemony of whiteness that is frequently left unexamined in this framework. These issues are taken up further in the following section on the batterer/survivor dichotomy.

**Batterer/Survivor Dichotomy**

As discussed in Chapter Three, the claim is often made in lesbian abuse education that someone is *either* a batterer *or* a survivor. This truth claim marginalizes women's experiences in cases where they do not fit neatly into the categories. The batterer/survivor dichotomy makes it difficult to introduce complexities (shifting power relations, multiple subjectivities), most specifically of race and class. Furthermore, difficulties with being able to see batterers as "real" people, as one educator said, is an effect of another related regime of truth — survivor=innocent-good-pure / batterer=guilty-bad-evil.

In her interview Teresa challenged the construction of survivors as "pure and good". She spoke about the way the categories become racialized and classed: "....not that we can have a group of people who are pure and good survivors,...Like class is going to make a difference with who is [seen as] pure and good and like race is and everything is..." (individual interview). Constructing survivors as good, pure and virtuous requires a negative construction of the Other, thus constructing batterers as bad and evil. The othering of batterers means that we don't have to look at our own use of power-over in society at large, in feminist organizing, in queer communities, and in intimate relationships. We must continue to strategize politically about how to hold onto complexities and multiple identities within an interlocking political analysis of racism, classism and heterosexism. And part of this, as Teresa concluded, involves looking more closely and complexly at how we construct batterers, because if we don't, then "ultimately...it's only the people who are just more and more marginalized, those are
the batterers that we're able to look at. The most marginalized you are, then we'll be able to like, deal with you cause you don't have the power not to be dealt with" (Teresa, focus group).

The educators in this study are aware that racialized, classed and heteronormative constructions of women and lesbians are at work in influencing how innocence is determined within the criminal justice system (West, 1992; Ristock, 1994; Allard, 1991; Razack, 1998a). For example, "Aboriginal women and women of colour...are considered inherently less innocent and less worthy [of trust and protection] than white women" (Razack, 1998a, p. 68). In educational workshops, Teresa talks about the way certain notions about "who's redeemable" and who's not, are "superimposed onto" women's experiences and how this contributes to a high number of survivors being arrested by the police. In her interview, she said:

And in so many ways it's just about...the cops came and looked at who was redeemable...and not even like, who's bigger, who looked more masculine to them, but also who looked like the good person who was being trapped into this horrible lifestyle and who looked the trapper to them. And that is going to be so informed by class and race...so informed by even disability. Like who are the people who couldn't get a good man, and so now they're trying to trap this woman?...[A]nd so that...is so easily obscured and um kinda hard to hold onto, because it's not finite, you know? And it's all those things interplaying with one another so that you know, a femme woman — that can buy her some grace some times, right? But other times you know if her partner is a young middle-class looking kid, now this femme is the lech....[Y]ou know all those things interplay with each other...so you can't just, in one moment say "This is all of it", you know? But, we really try to acknowledge once again, to think complexly about it and listen to people's experience... (Teresa, individual interview).

Only one educator (Teresa) sustained a discussion of the way the batterer/survivor categories are racialized, classed and gendered. While other educators indicated an awareness that women of colour and working-class women are further oppressed by systems, such as the criminal justice system, we did not fully engage in an analysis of the way these dichotomies (batterer-evil, survivor-innocent) produce racialized and classed identities.
Public/Private Spaces and Violence

A number of the educators spoke about the limitations with the public/private construct in conceptualizations of "domestic violence". Three educators gave examples where the framework's exclusive focus on violence in the private sphere or in intimate relationships breaks down around race. Some of these examples stemmed from conflicts between white women and women of colour and First Nations women in educational workshops or panels presentations.

One educator described a conflict at a feminist anti-violence conference that erupted during a plenary with a panel presentation of survivors of woman-to-woman abuse. The panelists had been promised that anyone who identified as an abuser would not be on the panel. The conflict arose when conference participants interrupted the panel because one of the panelists — a Maori woman who was invited by the organizers so the panel would "be diverse" — spoke about times in her life when she had been abusive. A debate ensued about whether she was a batterer or not. Teresa described this as "a classic example of how women get pitted against each other" (Teresa, focus group):

they were not being respectful to like people's experiences there, because that woman — the Maori woman — had been in this whole process of the entire community of people...taking accountability for times they had used abuse and putting that in the context of colonization and putting it in the context of surviving. And she was coming from this perspective of having like all this support around looking holistically at this....and then it was like setting up the other women who were taking this giant risk in front of...literally 2000 [people]...to be at this thing, and then the fundamental premise they had been given [was that there would no batterers on the panel]...and then we were all up to judge, "Was she a batterer or not a batterer?" And the women of colour, not all the women of colour but a lot of the First Nations women, were saying "She's not a batterer and you've just set her up" and a lot of the other women were saying it was just this terrible thing. (Teresa, focus group)

This powerful example shows how the batterer/survivor dichotomy is unable to hold the complexities of multiple forms of violence, including the possibility that someone could be abusive and also be a survivor, as well as the "public" violence of colonialism and
racism. It cannot hold the complexities because the social context of violence (specifically racism) recedes in the discussion of dynamics of woman-to-woman abuse. The conceptual framework on "domestic abuse" excludes certain forms of violence (public, racism, colonialism) which forecloses an examination of how the white women survivors in the room stand as oppressors to the Maorian woman and other women of colour and First Nations women. It also illustrates how the model encourages women to police the categories to ensure "safety". Yet, once again, this space is not safe for an indigenous woman, who in this case is speaking about accountability for her abusive behaviour and sharing her experience of surviving colonization. The binary categories survivor/batterer and public/private can result in reductionist thinking that misses the multiplicity and complexities of identities as well as the relationship between the public and the private.

We can also see from this example, how panel presentations that use personal experience in this way (storytelling) to focus on the "diversity" of experience, avoid "naming and mapping out the general organization of social relations" (Bannerji, 1995, p. 84). By privatizing "difference", this liberal pluralist educational approach leaves no room for an examination of the "public" systems of domination that produce difference and once again obscures the dominant groups' complicity. Although storytelling can be a powerful pedagogical tool in anti-oppression education, too often we ignore the differences in power between the teller and the listener and the inequalities in risk-taking when this tool is used (Razack, 1998a, p. 50).

Cheryl and I both spoke about a similar example to the one Teresa described. Here, conflicts about racism and conceptualizations of public/private violence arose during the process of organizing educational forums on woman-to-woman abuse. The process that led up to these debates is important to the discussion about racialized exclusions in the public/private dichotomy because it highlights the racism in some white lesbian abuse educational strategies.
The organizing group was initially an all white group that took a liberal "inclusion" or "outreach" approach to addressing race/racism (i.e. "we need lesbians of colour to join us so as to not appear white"). Lesbians of colour challenged us about the racism inherent in our strategy, which tokenized women of colour and ignored issues of power (whose group was it? who was defining the agenda and who controlled the money?). After discussing these issues, the group decided to hold two forums, with one organized by and for women of colour and Two-Spirited women only. Secondly, lesbians of colour and Two-Spirited women challenged our focus on abuse in intimate relationships (private) and emphasized the importance of expanding the framework to include discussions about violence perpetrated by women in lesbian and feminist communities (public), specifically white women's racist violence. For the white women on the organizing committee and in the sponsoring feminist organization, initially this analytical shift felt confusing and threatening. As Cheryl and I discussed in her interview, this forced white women to see racism as a form of violence and to examine our complicity:

Cindy - ...And also for me, as a white woman to think about "OK, if women of colour are talking about violence within queer communities, or lesbian communities, then who is doing the violence? It's not just, I mean I have to take personal responsibility as a white woman for perpetrating racism". And it was naming racism as a form of violence which you know, I think that, I know that as white women there was a number of us who were resistant to that idea, I mean we would certainly recognize racism as violence but not when we get talking about

Cheryl - Us

Cindy - us, right, within lesbian communities. I mean we would sort of say, "Well there's those other people out there that are racist but not within our lesbian communities and not us."

In the focus group, Cheryl spoke about how one of the sponsoring organizations threatened to withdraw its support and funding because of the shift in the framework (to include racist violence perpetrated by women towards women in communities) and the
decision to hold one forum organized by and for women of colour and Two-Spirited women only.

....[women in the organization were saying] "Yeah you white girls can talk about what's happening, but you know, let's not really bring racism into this, let's not really look at the breadth of the problem, let's more just look at it in a good little middle-class lesbian family, you know, lesbian homes, that's where the violence is OK. But when you start to bring racism into it, and you start to look at, you know, expand a bit into looking at not just, not just what goes on within the home but what goes on within our whole organizing community, then that's where we draw the line" .... (Cheryl, focus group).

The resistance from some white feminists to expanding the dominant domestic violence framework is a good example of the way a discourse limits our thought, making some thoughts unthinkable (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). It also shows how our investments in these models are tied to seeing ourselves as unimplicated in the oppression of other women.

Similarly, Teresa explained how the existing domestic violence framework for talking about personal violence can obscure other forms of violence, such as systemic racism. She indicated that the categories "batterer" and "personal violence" can limit how we think about violence. She gave the example of a judge who gives a harsher sentence to a woman of colour than he would for a white man or woman.

We don't look at that as a relationship, like a relationship where racism is coming in, into play in a very personal way, um and look at that as violence, in a very personal, like personal violence just like we would look at "somebody punched me", you know? Like why can't we hold onto those kinds of moments as having like um, like two people having a relationship in that? And so, we don't really know (laughter) where to go with that....(Teresa, focus group).

As Teresa concluded, "we don't know where to go with that", and have a hard time holding onto these examples because of the limitations with the existing language and conceptual frameworks.

These examples show that the educators are trying to expand the dominant discourse. Part of the problem with a model that focuses exclusively on intimate relationships within the private sphere is that violence conceptualized as public (such as
racism and colonialism) is minimized and excluded from the category domestic violence. The private/public dichotomy and the victim/perpetrator dichotomy constructs these forms of violence, and the spaces within which they occur, as binary oppositions and misses how these are related. When the social context of domination is conceptualized as "out there" (responsibility of men) and detached from us as white and middle-class women, we can continue to see ourselves as innocent. As well, it contributes to an inability to link the public violences in the social context with violence in intimate relationships. This raises questions for educators: How do we talk about multiple forms of violence in different sites, making the connections between them, without also obscuring the differences between them?

Privilege and Investments

In the research I asked the educators questions about how the dominant aspects of our identities influence our analysis and educational work. Cheryl talked about how she has used a lesbian battering discourse which adds lesbians to the dominant (white and middle-class) framework for understanding violence in heterosexual relationships.

...what ends up happening I think, is that it's real easy for me to slip back into sort of using my own way of, and analysis of, coming from a very (pause) um, a very white, middle-class viewpoint of lesbian battering...cause I bring that into the work that I do around heterosexual violence. And so what it does is it forces me to sort of expand that, but (pause) I struggle with expanding it further to a larger picture. (Cheryl, individual interview)

Another educator spoke about how privilege "gives us blind spots" (Marcia, individual interview). As well, she acknowledged that she finds it hard at times to make connections between different oppressions and stated she can't think "as quickly" around "the corners of race and cultural difference". She believes this means she needs to work hard at incorporating the experiences of women of colour in training workshops in a way that isn't token (Marcia, individual interview).
One educator explained how white privilege influences her own and other white lesbian educators' analytical framework on lesbian abuse:

I think to a certain extent, it's um, it's easier for us to talk about it [lesbian battering] because it's very easy for us to go to a place where um race doesn't come into it. Even though we might be aware....I think it's easier for, for me — I can say this about myself — sometimes it's easier for me to see lesbian battering unidimensionally and to really only talk about lesbian battering in the context of an intimate relationship and not within a social context... (Cheryl, individual interview)

In this example, Cheryl makes a connection between white lesbian subjectivity, conceptualizations of the social context and the subsequent development of a unidimensional analysis of violence that focuses primarily on intimate relationships.

After I gave Cheryl a copy of her transcript, she wrote back to me with the following clarification about her comments about the social context and problems with a unidimensional analysis:

I think I mean here — the broader social context of racism beyond sexism, heterosexism, homophobia — maybe what I'm saying is that each time we expand the circle to bring in more components of the social context within which we live (i.e. oppression) we also have to look beyond the personal, the individual and look at the broader context of people's lives (Cheryl's comments on her transcript).

Out of fear of further oppression, denial about woman-to-woman abuse and fear of losing privilege, we often cling to truth claims and avoid exploring the areas that are messy, complex or contradictory. As Cheryl said in response to my question about how white women's privilege influences what we do and say in education: "...sometimes when I'm feeling really challenged it's easier for me to, um, it's easier for me to sort of make things simple and not more complex. And by making it simple what I'm doing is excluding the complexity of many, many lives" (individual interview). When I asked Marcia about what she perceives the risks to be in looking at complexities she said:

Well, I would like to say that we have everything to gain, but I'm not sure I really believe that. I think that the risks are handing tools to people who have been looking for tools to use against us forever, like Father's for Equal Rights people, you know, the right wing, etc....people who hate women, power feminists....you know what? I think the risks are mostly to ourselves, I think the
risks are always that we're gonna have to take more serious looks at us, and how we use behaviours and power and information and resources, and we're, we're going to have to give up privilege...and people don't do that easily. So I think that that's what we come up against, and I think there are gains to boiling things down and making them simple...(Marcia, individual interview).

The above examples show that the educators in this study are aware of the connection between the development of a simple analytical framework, the risks faced and our privileges as white, and in some cases middle-class, women.

At times in the research, discussion about whiteness was raised but diverted to other issues. As white women, we know that we need to address racism and white privilege, and yet we frequently have difficulty sustaining a conversation about woman-to-woman abuse that includes a discussion about our privilege and complicity in the oppression of other women. In my research journal I wrote: "I don't know how to have these conversations about violence, power and colonialism and its effects on me as a white women" (Research Journal). Not knowing "how" to have these conversations, may largely be about my reluctance to seeing how I perpetuate racism and how I make myself dominant.

As white women, we must begin to examine the places we have most avoided: "the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it" or in other words, "what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behaviour of masters" (Morrison, 1992, p. 11-12). This means examining the relationship between our position of dominance and our emotional attachments to seeing ourselves as innocent.

Conclusion

My primary concern in this thesis has been examining the way regimes of truth operate in and through lesbian abuse educational discourses and the relationship between power relations between women (specifically based on race, class, sexuality

Conclusion

My primary concern in this thesis has been examining the way regimes of truth operate in and through lesbian abuse educational discourses and the relationship between power relations between women (specifically based on race, class, sexuality
and gender) and the knowledge we produce. As a white, middle-class lesbian community educator, I initiated this study to deepen my analysis, engage with other community educators and strategize for change.

I have shown that the context of systemic oppression (heterosexism, racism and classism), anti-feminist backlash, and the denial of the very existence of woman-to-woman abuse, make it extremely difficult to name the abuse. As well, most same-sex abuse education occurs within very narrow material constraints — limited or no financial resources, short and one-time only workshops, the issue frequently tacked onto an existing heterosexual anti-violence model. Educators attempt to navigate this precarious context by using personal experiences of abuse (our own or others) to legitimate the problem and empower survivors, and by using a simplified analytical framework even though our own analysis is usually much more complex. Simplicity is useful and has been effective in naming the violence, but the regimes of truth thus produced through this result in privileging the experiences of white, middle-class, able-bodied and biologically defined women. "Other" women's experiences are added-on, delegitimized or discounted altogether. Educators attempt to address these problems and in some cases disrupt harmful regimes of truth by introducing counter-hegemonic discourses, such as the introduction of bisexual and transgendered subjectivities and discussions about colonialism.

The dominant domestic violence framework (heterosexual and lesbian) has focused primarily on men as the oppressor and women as the oppressed. The social context of violence has been predominantly described as patriarchy and heterosexism, while racism, colonialism and imperialism are added-on as issues facing other women. By attaching dominance to men and taking an additive approach to race, class and disability, white middle-class and able-bodied women can miss seeing our complicity in systems of domination and specifically how we oppress other women. The educators interviewed are cognizant of these problems and try to address these issues in
workshops; yet we continue to produce additive analyses and sometimes race to innocence even in our efforts to change. While we emphasize connections between oppressions and the importance of locating woman-to-woman abuse within the social context of domination, nonetheless, there is often a gap between the social context of violence and our understanding of dynamics of abuse in intimate relationships.

An exclusive focus on the private sphere or violence in intimate relationships conceals the relationship with public violences. Educators in this study demonstrate an awareness of many of these gaps and limitations and search for new language and models that would capture greater complexities. Nonetheless, we fall back on the simplified models when faced with heterosexism, tight structural constraints and risks. Most significantly, we are able use these models because they seem to reflect our lives and limit the extent to which we can see ourselves as dominant. These enormous advantages constitute our privilege.

Throughout this thesis I have emphasized that we must critically reflect on what we are constructing in lesbian abuse education. Specifically, I suggest that we must be constantly vigilant about what and who is excluded through the truth claims we produce and how these exclusions are tied to dominance and privilege. By deconstructing categories produced in lesbian abuse educational discourses, I am not suggesting that we abandon the urgent material needs of women in abusive same-sex relationships, but rather that we must ask what needs of which women? We must examine what the discourse legitimizes as the "real" or "true" needs and issues facing women in abusive relationships and specifically which women. Examples from the data show that the real needs for safety of some women were competing with the real needs of other women (e.g. of survivors on an educational panel, of lesbians and transgendered people in a queer caucus, and of white lesbians and lesbians of colour in educational forums). We must explore how whiteness and class privilege influence what are considered to be the real or true needs of women in abusive same-sex relationships.
The implications of a queer analytical framework for lesbian abuse education are that we foreground the fluidity of gender and sexuality and challenge an impulse to fall back on stable, essential or biological definitions of lesbian or woman in our attempts to achieve social justice. Although stabilizing lesbian identity can be politically advantageous, it has a universalizing effect which produces exclusions. While deploying queer as an identity can be a useful strategy, it can also have the effect of homogenizing different sexual and gender identities and experiences. One educator spoke about this problem and suggested that future work is needed which examines the specificities of experiences of abuse and subsequent different needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (Joanne, individual interview).

By highlighting the inherent exclusions in the category domestic violence, I am not suggesting that we should stop looking at or examining abuse in intimate relationships (i.e. from a partner or family member). Rather, when we look at the private, domestic or home as the site of violence as separate from the public, we must ask whose life are we talking and thinking about and what forms of violence can even be imagined or stated in this exclusive focus on the domestic. We must ask what and who the same-sex abuse discourse prohibits or delegitimizes. For example, at the anti-violence conference, the violences in the life of a Maori woman (surviving the violence of colonialism) were discounted.

We can also miss seeing how violence is understood and experienced in lesbian and queer relationships where the violence occurs outside of the traditionally defined home or domestic sphere and when the violence is not hidden, but visible. For example, many queer youth have stated that the category domestic violence does not fit their experiences of relationship violence because the violence from their lover/girlfriend does not necessarily happen at "home" (they do not necessarily live together and in some cases live on the street or have unstable homes) and the violence in their lives is not confined to the domestic sphere (violence on the street, violence at school). As
well, as immigrant women have argued, definitions of "home" are shifting and multiple.

As Anannya Bhattacharjee (1997) describes,

"'home', commonly accepted as the primary site of domestic violence, represents multiple concepts for people whose consciousnesses are shaped by migration. An analysis of the entire range of meanings of 'home', as experienced by a South Asian immigrant woman, changes conventional notions of 'private' and 'public' " (p. 308).

This suggests that we must pay greater attention to the ways that the meanings of abuse are constructed and reconstructed depending on which voices are highlighted (adult/youth; middle-class/working-class/poor; white women/women of colour/indigenous women) (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Too often domestic violence is conceptualized in a very narrow way which limits our ability to think about or even see certain forms of violence (race and class based violence). This also makes it difficult to continually see and make the links between the social context of racism and classism with the personal, when it comes to abuse in intimate relationships. We need to find new narratives that will infuse an interlocking social analysis into our thinking about abuse in intimate relationships.

Certain conceptualizations of violence have been politically instrumental for certain women. For others, the violences framing their social contexts and impacting their personal lives remains hidden or excluded. For example, we saw earlier how a feminist anti-violence organization strongly insisted that racist violence in lesbian and women's communities was inappropriate for an educational forum on woman-to-woman abuse because it detracted from the focus on 'intimate' relationships. The problem is that we keep separating out all these different forms of violence perpetrated by women on other women and miss seeing how they are connected.

As a result, educators need (as some women stated in this research) to expand the discussion of women's use of violence to look at the historical and current day hierarchies and violences perpetrated by women towards other women, and women in dominant positions must examine our complicity. This research highlights "the need to
address decolonization as a fundamental aspect of feminist struggle" (Mohanty & Alexander, 1997, p. xxxix). This is a new direction for same-sex abuse education. Specifically, we must examine the effect of colonialism and racism on the colonizer, as well as the colonized. One of the effects of perpetuating domination, as Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and others have shown (Fellows & Razack, 1998), is the production of the white subject as innocent. The implications of an anti-colonial framework for woman-to-woman abuse education are the need to reconceptualize violence and to radically transform ourselves.

These issues surface as well when we look at the construction of survivors and batterers. For those of us who identify as survivors, we must also examine how we are making ourselves through this discourse. I am concerned that the categories of survivor and batterer are conceptualized as fixed, stable and autonomous. It does become an identity and I suggest that when we are challenged or when there are debates about abuse, we see this as a threat to our identity which is conceptualized as fixed and stable. This does not mean that we should minimize the violence or blame ourselves for the abuse, or stop talking about our strengths in surviving the violence. But we must think critically about what it means for us to "be" survivors. Can we see ourselves as survivors and also see the way we use systemic power over in society? This relates to the following point raised by Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell (1996):

We have to resist binary ('either/or') constructions of social reality and challenge ourselves with constructions that can include 'both/and' or 'neither/nor'. For example, we need both to hold abusers accountable for their actions and to hold all of us accountable for recreating a society in which we are neither abused nor abusing (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 9).

"Either/or" thinking does not enable us to think about the ways violence is produced and the relationship between identities and the spaces in which violence occurs. We need new narratives to think about multiple sites and sources of violence and about who we are.
All of the educators stressed the importance of holding onto complexities and contradictions, even though we acknowledged that it is difficult to do so. As Teresa stated, we must strive to move beyond "rigid", "narrow", "flat two-dimensional models" for understanding violence (focus group). Cheryl emphasized that in workshops she tells participants that, "our understanding of this [woman-to-woman abuse] is in process" (individual interview). And as discussed in Chapter Three, all of the educators stated that the risk of foregrounding complexities, women's complicity, and the connections between systems, is that it will be used against us and a liberal humanist analysis (everybody's violent; no power differences; no abuse) will prevail.

This research reveals some of the exclusions produced through a reliance on the notion of a stable autonomous subject. However, the questions raised through a feminist postmodern analysis are not easily resolved. As the educators described in the focus group and individual interviews, there are real risks faced in emphasizing the fluidity, multiplicity and instability of categories. The risk is always that the violence will be erased. It is clear from this research, that while we must question essentialized and stable categories (such as woman, lesbian, survivor, batterer) amongst ourselves as feminist anti-violence activists, we will no doubt have to strategically use them "externally" in our work for social justice. We must continually ask ourselves and one another: "How does essentialism or anti-essentialism contribute to anti-subordination?" (Razack, 1998a, p. 160).

**Recommendations for Future Work**

There is an urgent need for feminist anti-violence and queer organizations to take the issue of woman-to-woman abuse seriously by designating financial resources, energy and time for education, political strategizing, advocacy and support services. Feminist anti-violence movements and lesbian and queer communities must stop denying that the violence exists and must move away from a tolerance approach that
adds lesbian abuse to an existing heterosexual model. Pervasive heterosexism and the lack of resources for education and support services seriously constrains our ability to develop new models, pedagogical practices and educational materials. Although it is constrained in this context, educators must strive to find time for critical reflection about our strategies and their socio-political effects.

This study focuses primarily on the power relations between women and the knowledge we produce, with an exploration of how whiteness is embedded in lesbian abuse education discourses. The data highlights the need for further research that explores new pedagogical strategies that draw on anti-colonial feminist analyses to disrupt the hegemony of whiteness. Future research is also needed to explore in greater detail the way survivor/batterer categories produce racialized identities. Feminist anti-violence educators must also draw on anti-colonial feminist analyses of violence to deepen our understanding of the nature of domination. We need to critically examine from an anti-colonial analysis, what norms are performed through abusive behaviour.

While I have attempted to pay attention to class hierarchies, further research is needed to explore the way middle-class assumptions and classed power relations are embedded in pedagogical practices and analytical frameworks for understanding violence.

Some topics that the educators discussed were left unaddressed in this thesis due to time and space limitations, and these could be areas for future research. Educating about the differences between S/M and abuse was an issue that some women discussed in their individual interviews. As well, in the focus group, educators engaged in a dialogue about how to respond to, work with and educate about batterers. This involved a discussion about the meaning of accountability and about ways to encourage and promote values that would sustain accountability on many levels — interpersonal, social and political.
In the focus group, educators stated the need to develop a more complex analysis of how we conceptualize power in feminist organizing and education. Too often our analysis of power is disconnected from a socio-historical and political framework or it is conceptualized as a fixed possession. Future research could explore the implications of Foucault's (1980) understanding of power as a relation of force, for both our analyses of same-sex abuse in intimate relationships and power relations between women more broadly.

To conclude, lesbian abuse educational discourse is not static. There are openings for change. All of the educators are attempting to shift the dominant framework. The educators emphasized it is important for feminist anti-violence activists to examine how women abuse power over other women and to stop seeing women as solely oppressed in relation to men. As well, some stressed that we must examine and let go of our investments in systems of domination and must foreground the interconnections between oppressions. Everyone noted that critical reflection and openness to change is important. We try to hold onto complexities, while not lapsing into relativism, by emphasizing social power relations, accountability and responsibility. The woman-to-woman abuse educators interviewed demonstrate great creativity, courage and determination in negotiating difficult terrain.

This research suggests that we must deepen our understanding of how we are emotionally attached to seeing ourselves as innocent. We do not always understand how this is tied to perpetuating domination. While this research shows that in many cases we have an intellectual understanding of these issues, it remains to be seen if it will be sustained and how we will use this understanding to transform woman-to-woman abuse education and most importantly transform ourselves as white (and in some cases) middle-class women.
Many of the issues and themes that I (and the other educators) raise in this thesis are not new. Women of colour and First Nations women have been talking about white women's abuse of power over other women and white women's complicity in systems of domination for years. I raise this again in the conclusion because frequently when white women hear other white women articulating an anti-racist analysis, we think it is new. Seeing these issues as new is convenient because we then do not have to look at how we have been complicit all along.

We need to develop new models that foreground the interdependency of systems of domination. Most importantly, these models need to encourage workshop participants and educators to examine how we are dominant and how this dominance is tied to our emotional and psychic attachments to seeing ourselves as innocent (Fellows & Razack, 1998). "Although we know we are complicitous in the oppression of other women, we seldom feel this to be true" (p. 6). We must create practices and models that sustain accountability and that enable us to develop non-hegemonic selves.
Appendix A:

Power and Control Wheel

POWER AND CONTROL

USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away.

USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.

MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income.

HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE
"Threats to tell family, friends, employers others that you're a lesbian" Accusing you of not being a real lesbian • implying that as a lesbian you won't be able to find help • telling you that other lesbians won't help you because they don't believe that women can be abusive

USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.

USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty.

VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL

SEXUAL

Adapted by Advocates for Abused & Battered Lesbians, Seattle, WA, from Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 206 West Fourth Street, Duluth, MN
Appendix B

Informed Consent

Date

Dear Participant,

I am writing to give you some information about the research project that I've previously discussed with you and to outline the ethical conduct for the research. This letter also serves as a written record of your informed consent to participate in the research.

As you know, I have worked as a counsellor, educator and organizer in the area of violence against women for many years. I have also been involved in organizing/educating about abuse in same-sex relationships between women. I am currently a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto in the process of completing a Masters of Arts degree in Sociology and Equity Studies in Education. This research project is part of the requirements for this degree and will be the basis for my thesis. The title of the thesis is: "The Politics of Naming the Violence: Examining Constructions of 'Lesbian Abuse' in Community-Based Educational Discourses". The supervisor of the thesis is Dr. Sherene Razack and the second committee member is Dr. Janice Ristock of the University of Manitoba.

Informed Consent

I agree to participate in the research study being carried out by Cindy Holmes for the purposes of meeting the requirements for this MA thesis within the department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

I understand that:

i) the purpose of the research is to i) gather and explore descriptions about community-based education on the issue of "lesbian abuse"; ii) find out how women educate about this issue and the socio-political effects of these educational strategies and discourses. For example the study will examine the kinds of challenges and/or barriers educators face; the context, content and format of the education; the external influences on their analysis and practice; how differences, contentious issues and disagreements are dealt with amongst educators, service providers and within communities; educators' philosophical and political perspectives about lesbian abuse, including how this informs their work; educators' motivations and reasons for doing this work; educators' suggestions and strategies for change in the area of education and community organizing on this issue. The study will aim to offer educators/organizers opportunities for discussion, critical reflection and analysis, and strategizing for new educational methods and new conceptualizations of violence.
ii) I agree to be interviewed by myself and in a focus group. The individual interview will take approximately 1-1/2 hours and the focus group will be approximately 2-1/2 to 3 hours. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed.

iii) I realize that I am under no obligation to participate, and I may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions and can suggest additional questions and feedback for the research.

iv) I will have up to 2 weeks after I receive the transcripts to request that information from my interview be taken out and not included in the thesis.

v) I understand that all steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality (including the use of pseudonyms and changes to all identifying information). The only person who will have access to my name and the interview transcripts will be Cindy Holmes and her Thesis Committee (Dr. Sherene Razack and Dr. Janice Ristock). All transcripts, written materials, names, tapes, etc. will be kept in locked files and the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed when the thesis is completed and accepted by the thesis committee and OISE/UT.

I understand the procedures for this project and acknowledge that I have been offered a copy of this consent form and will also receive a copy of the thesis when it is completed.

____________________________________
Signature of Interview Participant

____________________________________
Signature of Interviewer

____________________________________
Date
Appendix C

Interview Guide

These questions are intended as a guide. Please feel free to add and / or delete questions.

1) How and why did you get involved in educational work on lesbian abuse?

2) Can you tell me about the work you do / have done? (who are the participants?, is it paid/unpaid?, co-facilitation? what kind of education?)

3) How have your personal experiences or those of your friends / community affected your work as an educator / organizer on this issue?

4) What is your perspective about what and how much same-sex / lesbian abuse education is happening in this province, Canada, North America? (context, funding, isolation)

5) What are the challenges or barriers that educators face? (in queer and lesbian communities, feminist communities, social service / anti-violence organizations)

6) What do you tell workshop participants about why lesbian abuse happens? Some of the educational pamphlets I have seen, refer to the social context of abuse. In my previous work I have taken a similar approach to that outlined in some of the pamphlets, where the focus was on patriarchy, heterosexism, and misogyny and then other forms of oppression were talked about as they apply to women of colour and working-class women but the focus was on patriarchy and heterosexism. Does that work? How do you talk / educate about this?

7) What do you say about what abuse is?

8) How do you talk about gender and sexual identity in the work you do?
9) What or who has influenced your perspectives about this issue? When you do a workshop or group, where does the information you present come from? How do we as educators develop this knowledge?

10) There are often debates in educational workshops and forums on many contentious issues surrounding lesbian abuse. What do you think some of these contentious issues are?

11) What are some of the risks we face in dealing with those areas we feel confused or in talking about the complexities? What do we have to lose? What are the risks?

12) Are issues of disability, race, class, age and sexual diversity discussed in educational work or organizing on this issue? How are issues of power and privilege addressed in the work? Are these issues discussed in educational work?

13) How do you think the dominant aspects of our identities (where we have privilege) affect our analysis and the way we do the work?

Do you have anything to add?
Appendix D

Focus Group Discussion Guide

These questions are intended as a guide for our discussion. Please feel free to add and / or delete questions. The structure of the group is flexible.

1) What is educational work on same-sex partner abuse? What kind of educational work have you done?

2) Why do we do educational work on this issue? What do you hope to achieve?

3) a) When you educate about abuse how do you describe "what it looks like" or "what is the nature of abuse in same-sex relationships"?
b) How do you describe "why it happens"?

4) When I looked at some educational materials I pulled out some sets of assumptions to explore and to ask what they offer us and also what they might limit or obscure. The following questions stem from those parts of the educational materials.

a) How do you talk about sexual/gender identity in the work? Has this changed over time?

b) How do you talk about the social context for understanding abuse in same-sex relationships between women?

c) How do you deal with comparisons with abuse in heterosexual relationships? (eg. the material might say "it happens at the same rate as heterosexual battering")

d) Many materials include a section talking about the prevalence of violence. What do you think about this? Is it important to talk about this? If so, why? If not, why? Are we looking for "scientific data" and what counts as data?

e) Many of the materials talk about internalized oppression (eg. specifically heterosexism and misogyny) What do you think about this concept?
f) Feminist theories of violence against women usually use the language "survivor/abuser" or "perpetrator/victim" or "batterer/battered woman". It seems to me that we don't have a language to talk about the complexities of this. For example, how people can inhabit both places (i.e. survivor and abuser, in different relationships) How do we refer to that person?

g) In most of the educational materials I've gathered, there is a section that says that mutual abuse is a myth. What do you think about this?

5) Many women of colour and First Nations women have critiqued feminist analyses of violence against women, saying that these analyses keep viewing violence from a colonial and/or Eurocentric, white perspective. I'm interested in thinking about how the educational work around same-sex partner abuse disrupts and/or perpetuates some of these ways of thinking.

How can we start to think about and practice an interlocking analysis — how systems of oppression work together rather than an additive model where we add race, class, ability onto gender and sexuality?

6) In organizing educational forums in Vancouver a few years ago, there were numerous debates in communities. One of the issues raised by some women of colour was that the focus on abuse in intimate relationships was problematic and that it was important to talk about abuse and violence in queer and women's communities, not just intimate relationships (specifically addressing racist violence). What do you think about this?

7) S/M has been a widely debated topic within feminist and lesbian communities. How do you deal with or respond to questions about S/M and violence? What are some of the challenges you have faced in educational work around this topic? (eg. in educating the cops, in straight communities, in S/M communities, in feminist communities?)

8) How do you educate about, or work with, women who have been abusive?

9) Do you incorporate your own or participants' experience of abuse into the educational work? What do you think the benefits and/or problems might be in using personal experience in educational work on this issue?
10) a) Are there times when you censor yourself when you do educational work? Why? What do you exclude? b) What are the hard conversations to have amongst ourselves? Why do you think these conversations are hard?

11) What are the issues / possibilities / problems with coalition building on same-sex abuse? (For example, with gay men, transgendered people, others?)

12) b) What are some of the challenges and or barriers you (and other educators) have noticed in doing educational work on same-sex partner abuse?:
— within general feminist anti-violence movement
— within queer and/or lesbian communities
— within social service, medical, justice system, etc.

13) What do you think needs to happen now and in the future in education about abuse in same-sex relationships?

Anything you would like to add?

Other questions if we have time:
What is your perspective about how much educational work or community organizing is happening on this issue in Canada and in the US? What do you think are some of the differences between the work in the US and in Canada? What are the funding and material resources for this work?

How do you understand the relationship between the issue of abuse in same-sex relationships and feminist organizing against male violence?

Often we talk about creating a "safe space" for survivors. What are the conditions that we are hoping to create?

Language — I have used a variety of terms while doing this research and during my work in anti-violence organizing. Some of these have included "lesbian abuse/battering" as well as "same-sex partner abuse", "abuse in lesbian relationships", "abuse in relationships between women". What are some of the terms you have heard in doing this work? What language do you use now and why?
References


