Prostitution in U.S. Society: Moving Beyond Traditional Feminist Frameworks of Analysis

Megan M. Coats

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PROSTITUTION IN U.S. SOCIETY: MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS OF ANALYSIS

by

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PROSTITUTION IN U. S. SOCIETY: MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS OF ANALYSIS

Megan M. Coats, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1998

In this thesis, I explore the different ways that prostitute women's voices have been silenced by groups which have historically controlled the social and academic discourse on prostitution. Utilizing the research method of standpoint epistemology, I first discuss why the prostitute activist's voices must be considered as the central source for scientists theorizing on prostitution. Next, I give an account of some historical influences which have shaped the discourse on prostitution, affecting the development of legislation regulating prostitution. Then, I provide a history of the development of the liberal and radical feminist discourse on prostitution. I also include some contemporary writers representing both perspectives, as well as a description of each perspective's position on prostitution. Finally, I look at the development of the prostitute's rights movement, and present some of the central ideas spoken and written by prostitute activists. Overall, I show how the treatment of prostitute voices as central resources by social scientists, specifically feminist social scientists, will create better and more holistic theories, and will further legitimate the perspectives of prostitute women in the United States.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Goals of My Research

Throughout history, prostitution has been a popular subject of study for many different types of researchers. The resulting literature, which has shaped the historic discourse on studying prostitution as a social, medical or behavioral problem was originally dominated by the theorizing and writing of male researchers. In these writings, prostitute women were considered abnormal and morally deficient—as a type of woman different from all others. However, over the past fifteen years a feminist perspective of sociology has developed. The development of this perspective has led to the creation of different feminist interpretations within academia that redefine and readdress what prostitution represents in the United States. Feminist interpretations of prostitution not only use certain feminist assumptions to explain what prostitution represents in our society, but also use feminist frameworks of analysis to discuss the different types of violence that prostitute women experience.

This thesis examines the discourse around both prostitution and the types of violence that prostitutes experience. In doing so, attention is paid to the necessity of standpoint epistemology. Drawing on the importance of standpoint epistemology, several questions
have arisen regarding the role of academic discourse in the study of prostitute women. I see these questions as representing central themes which have created and continue to create the discourse on prostitute women. This discourse occurs in both the public world, reflected in the existing public policies regarding prostitution, and in academic circles, specifically in feminist academic circles.

Therefore, these approaches to discourse will be key to this analysis. What follows is a definition of prostitution and a review of some forms of violence they experience, an explanation of standpoint epistemology and its applicability, and a brief overview of three key historical developments which will be further developed in this thesis.

**Defining Prostitution and Some of the Types of Violence Faced by Prostitute Women**

To begin, it is first necessary for me to define what prostitution represents in this paper. Miller, Romenesko and Wondolowski (1993) explain that, "Though legal definitions of prostitution vary on federal, state and local levels, the majority of laws define prostitution as an exchange of money for sex" (p. 103). One estimate of the number of people engaged in prostitution reveals that nearly half a million prostitutes (male and female) have been working in the United States in any ten year period (Reynolds, 1986). I chose to focus on the sex work of female street walking prostitutes because they represent the group most stigmatized and vulnerable out of all other groups of sex workers. Street walking prostitutes have
the least control over the environment within which they work. Also, because of their high visibility they are the group most targeted for violence and law intervention out of all other types of sex services.

In a study done in San Francisco, the researchers found that women and transgender prostitutes experienced significantly more physical assaults and rapes than did male prostitutes, showing that to be female, or at least to be perceived as female, is to be more intensely targeted for forms of violence (Farley & Hotaling, 1995). Many prostitutes experience physical and/or emotional abuse by their pimps, and physical assault, rape or robbery of their persons by men posing as johns (customers) (Meyer, 1993). Many women are physically threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon with some frequency (Farley & Hotaling, 1995).

It has also been well reported in the writings and statements by prostitute women that sometimes prostitutes are abused by the police in their area. This abuse has come in the forms of physical beatings during arrest procedures, sexual harassment or assault before arrest, or general harassment such as destroying condoms found on the prostitute, or driving prostitute women to desolate areas of a city and leaving them (which places them in extreme danger of being harmed) (Roberts, 1992).

Many of these crimes are not reported to the police or other authorities. This is generally a result of the fact that violence against prostitutes is not an issue addressed in a serious manner by
law enforcement, because of the negative moral stigma that is attached to a prostitute's personal character. Prostitute women are also fearful that, when attempting to report a crime or victimization against their person to the police, they will be arrested and charged with the crime of prostitution. Prostitute women also suffer the extra financial burden of fines for their offense, and end up jailed if they are unable to pay the amount fined. Some women also lose custody of their children, sue to the illegality of their job, and some do not ever get their children back, as their status as a prostitute is enough to have them declared an unfit parent (O'Neill, 1997).

Sources addressing violence in prostitute women's lives (e.g., Delecoste & Alexander, 1987; Roberts, 1992) also suggest that, due to the extreme vulnerability of streetwalking prostitutes and the lack of seriousness paid by law enforcement to crimes against prostitutes, they are a group targeted for victimization by serial murderers. Roberts (1992) notes that in the late 1970s, the Ripper, a serial murderer, killed fourteen women before police organized a task force to address the murders, since most of the women murdered were prostitutes. Looking at how the passive behavior of law enforcement essentially condoned the murders of these women, she discusses how the police attempted a strategy to get him to come forward and confess by sympathizing with his view of his murders as an act of cleaning up the filth off the streets. One police officer publicly stated that "He has made it clear that he hates prosti-
tutes. Many people do" and that he (the Ripper) had, "... made
[his] point. Give yourself up before another innocent [non-prostitu­

At an intrapersonal level, prostitutes must emotionally cope
with the fact that they are performing an illegal act in order to
make money and survive. They must also emotionally struggle with
the social stigma of being labeled a whore. The illegitimacy of
prostitution also keeps prostitute women constantly exposed to dif­
ferent diseases but not eligible for any type of public health or
insurance benefits (Meyer, 1993). In essence, the illegality of
prostitution works as a gag to silence prostitute women who suffer
from violent episodes and would report it to the state, but cannot
for the reasons described in the above paragraphs. In order to fur­
ther understand how prostitutes became so marginalized and stig­
mated in U.S. society and therefore became easy targets for differ­
et types of violence, a historical analysis of the development and
treatment of prostitutes and prostitution within the Western world
is provided, with an emphasis on the United States. This will be
addressed later on in this thesis. What follows next is an over­
view of the importance of standpoint epistemology to this research.

An Explanation of Standpoint Epistemology and Its Applicability
to Prostitutes and Prostitution in the U.S.

Respect for voice is a central theme to this paper. The ab­
sence of prostitute voices in what can be labeled as socially legit­
imate arenas has occurred throughout history, and has created per­
ceptions and definitions of prostitute women's lives which are biased in different ways. Their voices have historically been disregarded in most discussions by social scientists studying prostitution as a topic for concern. This has further developed the stigmatization which has labeled them as deviant. As an oppressed and marginalized group, they therefore have no power to change the social definitions of them and what their lives represent. I view this silencing of voice as a form of repression of prostitute women. Because no social legitimacy is granted to their voices, this forced silencing makes them powerless to define their own lives and prevents their experiences as prostitutes from being legitimated in a lot of ways.

In order to understand how traditional methodologies for studying prostitution as a social problem have worked to disempower prostitute women it is useful to review a feminist method of research labeled standpoint epistemology. This approach is very applicable to how the situation of prostitution might be alternatively approached by researchers.

Nancy Hartsock defines a standpoint as being more than just a position taken by an interested person on a topic. In her opinion, what makes a standpoint a perspective is that it inherently carries with it a level of reality which is deeper than the distorted surface reality of social relations as defined and presented to people by the ruling class vision (Hartsock, 1983). She notes that a standpoint "...carries with it the contention that there are some per-
spectives on society from which...the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible" (p. 285). Therefore, standpoint as approached in epistemology suggests that there are two levels of reality--the one presented to us by those that have the power to shape and create social relations, and the realities that exist for people who's experiences represent the effects created by both the social and economic structures within society (Hartsock, 1983).

Part of this approach analyzes how social scientists, in order to gain knowledge, often work with traditional structures and concepts in order to explain specific activities occurring within society. Because of this traditional method of studying phenomena, social scientists actually work to rationalize and justify the ruling order promoted by current ideology (Smith, 1990). Smith (1990) states that "The governing of our society is done in abstract concepts and symbols, and sociology helps create them by transposing the actualities of people's lives and experience into the conceptual currency with which they can be governed" (p. 14). In other words, social scientists are taught to think sociologically in certain ways, and therefore practice sociological inquiry using the traditional methods they have been taught. They are told what topics are relevant for study, and how these topics can be fit into a preconceived conceptual framework. Personal feelings and experiences are disregarded due to the objective position that members of the discipline are expected to take. Social scientists then become
dependent on others for the meanings of different representations of reality. When they study a topic, they end up entering into a conceptually ordered investigation, often without analyzing how something becomes observable to them. Boundaries of inquiry are set within a framework of what has already been established (Smith, 1990). Smith (1990) notes that

sociological methods of analyzing experience and of writing society produce an objectified version that subsumes people's actual speech and what they have to tell about themselves; its statements eliminate the presence of subjects as agents in sociological texts; it converts people from subjects to objects of investigation. (p. 31)

Therefore, a stance has been taken within the social sciences which assumes that concepts and frameworks occur before actual behavior. When this happens, activity in society becomes relevant only to the extent with which a particular person performing an action fits within a preconceived framework of explanation. Experiencing reality does not seem to be enough.

This type of objectified knowledge discards the possibility that knowledge can be located in the feelings of people engaged within the activities and the relations occurring around the topic of study. Further, an abstract conceptual framework encourages a disassociation and, to some extent, a certain disregard for the context of the people working within the actual circumstances of a situation. Therefore, this method of feminist research calls for social situations to be analyzed by subjects who are themselves involved in the experiences under study, and who are able to look at their situation from the knowledge they have as a result of their
own involvement. They have a special perspective to share with others, as they are able to analyze the topic of discussion from a special outsider within (Smith, 1990) perspective.

As previously mentioned, the exclusion of prostitute voices by groups of researchers has historically occurred. The methods by which prostitution has been addressed in U.S. society have been dictated by groups having the social power in society to define what prostitution means and represents. It is important to apply the perspective of standpoint epistemology to prostitute voices, because as this thesis will demonstrate, there is important knowledge that prostitute women share about their status. By treating the perspectives of prostitute women as central sources guiding research on prostitution, researchers will legitimate the perspectives of prostitute women and help them move toward their goal to define themselves within the discourse on prostitution. To further demonstrate the importance of standpoint epistemology, this thesis details three key historical developments that surround the discourse on prostitution. A brief review of these developments follows, and each will be further delineated in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Three Key Historical Developments Central to the Prostitution Discourse

The History of Prostitution

To develop my knowledge of the importance of prostitute voices and the reality of their absence from feminist literature, I needed
to analyze what social influences have defined public perceptions of prostitute women. I critically analyzed the multiple historical circumstances, both social and political, that have shaped existing public attitudes and the current treatment of prostitution. This historical analysis demonstrates how different social meanings have been attached to prostitution and provides information on how, throughout history, women's sexuality was increasingly being restricted. It also shows how public morality became defined through good women versus bad women, how U.S. participation in national and international wars affected the prostitute's existence and safety, and how legal regulations were put in place but implemented with great discretion. Therefore, this history provides information on how the politics of prostitution reflect both historic time periods and cultural contexts (Hobson, 1987).

The History of Academic Discourse on Prostitution

I wondered what types of feminist interpretations for prostitution were being provided within feminist academic circles. Many different feminist perspectives (at least twelve formally recognized in academia) exist, all of which are based on different domain assumptions about women's oppression in society. However, I chose to restrict my analysis to the two most well known feminist perspectives, the liberal and radical perspectives, both of which essentially created the beginning feminist response to issues surrounding prostitution in U.S. society. As I read the literature of both
perspectives and their interpretations of prostitution, my original observation was supported. The writings by many liberal and radical feminist women about prostitution were presented authoritatively, as if they were all-encompassing truths. Significantly, these writings only included a few, if any, prostitute voices. Seeming to be a popular issue of discussion for both feminist groups, I wondered why prostitutes themselves were being excluded from having a say about their realities. A critical analysis of both liberal and radical theories and writings pointed to some assumptions that form the basis for each perspective's theoretical framework.

From this analysis I concluded that the feminist discourse on prostitution has historically excluded prostitute women voices because the realities expressed by prostitute women do not ideally fit into either feminist theoretical framework. With this in mind, I realized that the solutions put forth by these two groups to end the different forms of violence faced by prostitute women were inadequate, idealistic, and incomplete.

The effects from the exclusion of prostitute perspectives are magnified by the discord that exists between the two feminist groups as a result of their opposing theoretical assumptions. I began to think about how this discord between feminist groups has worked to prevent existing women's groups from forming any kind of collective, which could be used to gain political force and give prostitute women some protection under the law. This protection for prostitute women could prevent or decrease the amount of violence they exper-
ience on the job. Therefore, from this information I concluded that the exclusion of prostitute voices from academic feminist discussions and theorizing, the discord existing between feminist groups, and the resulting rhetoric used by each group to defend the assumptions of their theoretical framework, has to some degree worked to support the stigma associated with prostitution and the discretionary treatment of prostitutes by law enforcers.

A History of Prostitute Voices

In the course of this study, I discovered a lot of writings by prostitute women. It was within these writings that I began to find suggestions for political action which directly targeted the more apparent forms of abuse suffered by prostitutes. In fact, I discovered that the prostitute rights movement had partially developed as a result of feminist voices excluding prostitutes from their authoritative discussions on prostitutes and prostitution. A review of the development of this movement, and of some of the issues raised by prostitutes, prostitute activists and prostitute rights organizations provides information reflecting both common themes and a wide variety of beliefs that prostitutes have regarding what they feel are effective methods for reducing the violence they experience.

The value of prostitute women sharing their experiences with non-prostitute academic feminists, social scientists and others (law makers and the public) is immeasurable. After demonstrating why I
believe this to be true, through the information presented in this thesis, I offer some suggestions regarding the role that academic feminists might take in order for the academic discourse on prostitution to be more fruitful in helping change the situation of prostitute women.

Summary

Having provided a definition of prostitution, some of the types of violence that prostitute women experience, the importance of standpoint epistemology as an alternative approach to researching prostitution, and the organization of the framework of this thesis, I will now provide the historical information that informs the research on the discourse surrounding prostitution. First, in Chapter II, I will provide information on the historical development of the discourse on prostitution in the United States. Next, in Chapter III, I will give a historical development of the liberal and radical feminist perspectives, and some of their stated opinions within the feminist discourse on prostitution. In Chapter IV, I will provide a history of the prostitutes' rights movement, followed by a discussion of some of the effects on the discourse occurring as a result of this movement. In my last chapter, I will provide a summary of my research and a conclusion to this thesis.
CHAPTER II

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF PROSTITUTION

The Development of Prostitution
in the United States

There are many different social, political and economic events within the history of prostitution which have influenced the development of discourse on prostitution. For the purposes of this thesis, I will highlight only some key events of the history. It should also be understood that in this section, I have used secondary sources to analyze the history of the discourse on prostitution. These sources will reflect how the voices that defined the prostitute’s condition in society shaped the discourse, and therefore influenced a prostitute’s condition in U.S. society. This will show how, throughout history, the discourse on prostitution has not been very objective, as it has neglected women’s voices, especially prostitute voices. Importantly, many of the political and moral influences which defined the ways in which prostitution has historically been viewed and responded to in U.S. society still exist in current times.

From the 1600s to the 1800s, many different groups came to America. Settlers coming from the countries of England, France, Holland and Spain created a colonized mixture of religious attitudes and outlooks on moral and social questions in the United States.
Many of these groups were familiar with the treatment of prostitutes that occurred in their countries of origin. This treatment consisted of detailed legislation regarding the appropriate treatment of prostitutes by law enforcement. Though prostitution was not considered a crime in English or U.S. common law before World War One, to be a prostitute was still considered an offense. A woman offering sexual services for sale was subject to penalization for a number of behaviors. Woolston (1969) notes that, "Her loitering and wandering made her a vagrant, her solicitation was a disorderly act, while her frequenting or living in houses of ill-fame made her a dangerous/suspicious character subject to arrest" (p. 227). Punishment included varying amounts of fines, and varying lengths of imprisonment. But in reality, as most people were aware of, a general lack of enforcement of these regulations existed, as the act of prostitution itself, the selling of a sexual service, was not illegal (Woolston, 1969). This lenient attitude was combined with the Puritan settlers' beliefs of moral decency, conservatism and respect for authority. These attitudes were then reinforced by a general social attitude developing at the time which "...accepted as a matter of course a double standard of sexual morality and the belief in the physical necessity of sex for men..." (Woolston, 1969, p. 15).

In developing a perception of the social roles that prostitute women occupied in society throughout most of the Western world, it became very apparent that all women were subjected to strict gender-oppressive definitions of proper conduct for both public and private
areas of women's lives. Society's male-dominated definitions for women placed all women into the categories of either mothers, daughters or whores. Respectability for women during this time period depended upon their marital status, rather than their actual behavior (Roberts, 1992). These definitions for women were supported in Western society by a developing capitalist economic structure in which limited work options were available to all women. Also, as societies progressed into the mid-1800s, certain Victorian definitions of female sexuality and moral behavior were easily absorbed into the developing U.S. culture and economic structure.

Historical accounts reveal that limited work options were a major reason why many working-class women became involved in prostitution as a livelihood. Roberts (1992) notes that most young prostitutes came from working-class families or from broken homes or abusive parents. Most working-class women, unlike many of their middle-class counterparts, worked because they had no economic support from their family to support them until they were married. Unmarried women had very few job opportunities. There were two legitimated options. First, there was factory work, with the work shifts lasting 12-14 hours a day, the buildings being overcrowded, and there being air pollution along with a lack of proper ventilation in the buildings (Roberts, 1992). Second, there was domestic work, which many women felt to be a job which was degrading, dehumanizing, and consisted of long work hours, isolation and lack of freedom or control over their own lives (Hobson, 1990). These were the major job
options open to independent and unmarried women who were searching for respectable work which supposedly would not damage their moral character. Since this independence for young women was strongly discouraged, payment for these jobs was barely enough to support oneself.

Hobson (1990) notes that for working-class women, economic conditions forced them to earn a livelihood in a society where women were denied decent wages. The labor market and wage system were built around an ideology which supported the assumption that women were marginal or temporary workers. Roberts (1992) notes that for many women, working as a prostitute was much preferred over working at one of the more respectable jobs mentioned above in terms of both pay and working conditions. She states that, "...in nearly every sector of women's work, the low value of [women's] labor pushed them inexorably towards dependence on a man, or prostitution" (Roberts, 1992, p. 232). The economic aspect of prostitution outraged the middle-class senses of class placement. A single transaction made by a low paid whore was still more money than a week's wage doing legitimate, socially respectable work. Middle-class critics of prostitution were upset by the fact that lower-class women that prostituted themselves did not seem to know their place, unlike women working honest jobs, who could barely keep themselves out of poverty (Roberts, 1992). During this time period, prostitution itself was essentially women-controlled. Brothels were rare. Lodging and introduction houses which housed prostitutes were more common. The
houses were quite public, and this publicity made them very safe environments in which to work (Roberts, 1992).

Meanwhile, during this time period Victorian doctors were promoting some very strange analyses of female sexuality. Basically, they had decided that the majority of women had no sexual feelings, and that this was a normal trait of virtuous women. This propaganda not only pushed middle-class women into ignorance about their bodies and desires, it prevented prostitute women from being associated with any other social roles seen as characteristic of respectable women in society (Roberts, 1992). These Victorian definitions of female sexuality created a split between women who were sexually active and those that were married or not sexually active. The mothers and daughters became the good pure women, while unmarried and financially independent women were labeled as morally unclean prostitutes. Here we see the social labeling of a woman as a whore or prostitute transcend the act of selling sex. Basically, the lawmakers in communities assumed that any woman who chose to live independent of men was immorally living her life, and was either turning towards prostitution or was already prostituting herself. A prostitute was considered to be "...a woman who has lost her proper functions--those of a mother" (Roberts, 1992, p. 228). All sexuality became defined as male sexuality, with women being portrayed as helpless and absent of the masculine desire for sex.

Following this line of medical reasoning, further definitions of the prostitute portrayed them as the "...'sewers, cesspits and re-
fuse dumps' for male sexuality which threatened to ruin the purity of their wives at home" (Roberts, 1992, p. 223). The whore then, was seen as the antithesis for what women should be like, but was also considered necessary in order to satisfy definitions of male sexual needs. Prostitutes satisfied the social definitions of male sexuality but also flaunted a certain freedom, both sexually and socially, that their middle-class counterparts could not (Roberts, 1992). This disturbed many middle-class critics of prostitution, and when the second wave of industrialization occurred in the late part of the 19th century, more purity groups began to develop and force themselves in a variety of ways into the lives of prostitute women.

Once the second wave of industrialization occurred, there were many more job opportunities, though they still did not offer good pay to women and the work conditions were still horrendous. The continuing increase in immigrants created fear in people who were already established citizens. In an analysis of the increase of population in Boston, Massachusetts during this time, Hobson (1990) notes that

a constant flow of persons moved in and out daily. This transient population probably did increase petty crime and public prostitution, but a sea of anonymous faces also made the city appear less safe and less manageable. (p. 12)

Roberts (1992) notes that the culture of the immigrant urban poor population was sexually more liberal than their middle-class counterparts. They did not have many of the morally rigid standards for conduct between men and women that the middle-class had accepted
as appropriate. In response to the disruption of their social order by these immigrants, the middle class "...turned to its tradition of social discipline, the puritanical control of sexuality and worship of the work ethic inculcated in the patriarchal nuclear family" (Roberts, 1992, p. 245).

Purity crusaders, led by militant Christians and first-wave feminist reformers became more and more concerned with "...what they saw as increasing immorality especially among the 'dangerous classes' in the growing cities" (Miller et al., 1993, p. 303). These crusaders were attempting ideally to end the double standard of sexuality by promoting the idea of chastity for both sexes as the norm for moral behavior. Since the existence of the whore represented the opposite of this type of morality being promoted by the crusaders, the whore was therefore targeted, and became a symbol on which middle-class fears centered (Roberts, 1992). To address the existence of prostitution, these reformers promoted the fallen woman ideology, a strategy which defiled the reality of the lives of prostitute women. Propaganda was developed and spread professing that prostitutes rarely lived more than five years after beginning to prostitute themselves, and that a prostitute was sure to live her life in a continuous downward spiral leading to early death (Hobson, 1990).

Though few women achieved upward economic mobility from prostitution, historical registers of prostitutes show that most prostitutes were young upon entering the trade and it was a short-term occupation for most women. Also, many women moved between prostitu-
tion and other employments, the majority of women practiced prostitution only occasionally, seasonally, or off hours from their regular jobs, and many women when leaving the trade, simply returned to traditional working-class occupations (Hobson, 1990). As Hobson (1990) notes, during this time period, legal control strategies for prostitution had not yet been fixed. Therefore, the policies developed on prostitution were highly sensitive to pressures from moral reformers and neighborhood groups.

In the late 1800s, a number of laws were passed throughout the Western world which allowed police to use great discretion to restrict the actions of prostitute women. Guiding the development of these laws was the defining of prostitution as a status or style of living rather than as the act of selling one's sexual services (Hobson, 1990). Loitering became a prosecutable offense, a landlady owning a disorderly house became subject to prosecution by law, and legislation mimicking the policies contained in the Contagious Diseases Acts of Great Britain were passed, which gave the police a lot of power to accuse and arrest prostitutes.

The increase in this type of legislation was centered around the largely symbolic terror over the spread of the disease syphilis, occurring at the beginning of the first World War. At the onset of the war, people became intensely worried over, "...the menace of prostitution and venereal diseases to the young manhood of the country" (Woolston, 1969, p. 33). The spread of this disease was then used by moral purists to demonstrate the consequences of moral de-
viance: a life of sin would only result in disease and death (Roberts, 1992). Roberts (1992) notes that syphilis was considered to be a "...symbol of the bourgeoisie's fear of being polluted by the working class; if sex itself was dangerous, sex with a working-class woman was even more so" (p. 248). Public sentiment was aroused and regulation of prostitution by cities began. The Contagious Diseases Acts allowed for police moral squads to be set up in order to search out women who could be defined as common prostitutes, arrest them and confine them to what were called lock hospitals. These hospitals were essentially medical prisons for prostitutes or promiscuous women. The acts also required that prostitutes register with the authorities and undergo mandatory inspections. This led to the harassment of many working women, who were forced to undergo pseudo-medical examinations, many of which were performed in abusive ways. These examinations demonstrated the state's power over access to certain women's bodies, regardless of their consent. Eventually, the police could condemn any woman by labeling her as a prostitute (Roberts, 1992).

The authorities were very open about what types of women they would condemn to this label—all working women who had not restricted their lifestyles to being involved in monogamous long-term relationships with men (Roberts, 1992). The effects of these laws on the independent movement of individual prostitutes was devastating. Just having to appear in court and be subject to public investigation and public exposure seriously damaged a woman's reputation.
(Hobson, 1990). The publicity surrounding the activities of the police intimidated others as well. The fear of being registered by the police caused many non-prostitute women to stop associating with prostitute women, and stopped landladies from renting out their rooms to prostitutes. Because of this creation of a public record, a prostitute found it very difficult to cross social boundaries between respectability and disrepute, legal and illegal activities and public and private identities (Hobson, 1990).

In the late 1800s, female abolitionists began to fight for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. The abolitionists criticized the economic conditions that led women to prostitute themselves, and identified with prostitutes as women who were being deprived of their human rights (Roberts, 1992). However, this identification with prostitute women created from gender consciousness could not break through class differences, as middle-class reformers could not understand the motivations, moral codes and survival strategies of poor women, many of whom worked as prostitutes (Hobson, 1990). These reformers raised their issues within a framework that still supported the Victorian Christian ideology of separate public and private spheres for men and women. Caught within this ideology, prostitute women were expected to want to repent from their deviant lifestyle. The propaganda of the female abolitionists reinforced sexual stereotypes and ignored the idea that women had a right to work undisturbed in the sex trade and that their decision to enter into prostitution could be voluntary (Roberts, 1992). Rob-
erts (1992) notes that

...once depicted as solely the victims of lustful men and state tyranny, they could not be seen to be actively and unrepentedly engaging in prostitution for fear of undermining the conservative moral consensus upon which the campaign's by now popular appeal was based. (p. 252)

By promoting the image that all prostitute women were victims, this type of propaganda further reinforced the whore stigma into working-class mentality. It encouraged working-class men to think that by molding their families around the middle-class model of male as bread winner, that they were protecting their wives and daughters from a class-based oppression which could force their female family members into prostitution, and therefore into moral indecency (Roberts, 1992). Because of the work of the female abolitionists, the Contagious Diseases Acts were finally repealed in 1885. However, their influence on methods for describing prostitutes, defining their lives and depicting their moral character was significantly established within U.S. and European culture.

As mentioned before, the United States was closely copying the regulation of prostitution occurring in Europe at the time. Like their European counterparts, the female purity crusaders believed that it was "...the female's special mission to elevate the lustful masculine character to a higher stage of civilization" (Roberts, 1992, p. 260). In other words, the reformers worked to impose a single standard of chastity onto both men and women. However, as Hobson (1990) notes, in arguing that female purity was an advance ment for human civilization and that the sensual and promiscuous
woman was a reversion to a primitive type of woman, they widened the
gap between what were considered normal (natural) and abnormal (un-
natural) women implied in the fallen-woman paradigm. With this came
an increase in the definitions of chastity offenses. The age of
consent was raised from 10 to 16, then finally was set at 21 years
of age, which criminalized the sexual behaviors of many young women.
As a result, young girls who seemed to have any predilection for
potential sexual behavior, were diagnosed as pathological and in-
stitutionalized in reform schools, Magdalene houses, and private fe-
male reformatories (Hobson, 1990).

As part of the Newtonian paradigm of thinking (to be expanded
upon in a further section of this thesis), men and boys were consi-
dered to be rational actors, while women and girls were considered
to have malleable personalities and were thought to be in a state of
permanent emotional instability. Women who were classified as im-
moral were considered victims of male exploitation, but still viewed
as dangerous to the social order. Therefore, rehabilitation was
considered to be a necessary process for chastity offenders to un-
dergo, since their deviance was considered to be a result of a dis-
ruption in moral development which resulted in a loss of female
moral influence and domesticity. This basically meant that females
who violated chastity codes were guaranteed to be incarcerated for
an indeterminate period of time (Hobson, 1990).

Meanwhile, the segregated districts in which prostitution was
allowed to occur flourished, usually in the poorer areas of cities.
With public lewdness and night walking considered to be chastity crimes attached only to women, official policy was now reflective of the gender and class biases that had always existed in the treatment of moral offenders (Hobson, 1990). Because of the existence of segregated districts, in order for the trade to occur, politicians, policemen, landlords, cab drivers, pimps, doctors, barmen and waiters all became involved and began benefitting from the money involved in the sex trade (Roberts, 1992). Thus, the role of male middlemen involved in the prostitution transaction began to develop.

The primary place that prostitute women could work was in the streets. However, in the streets, prostitute women were vulnerable to violence and abuse by their clients and police. As a direct result of their vulnerability, the pimp, a middleman between their work and their client, became a permanent fixture in the existence of prostitution, providing protection, emotional support and legal assistance (Roberts, 1992).

By 1917 every big red light district in which prostitution had been occurring was forced to shut down (Roberts, 1992). The sex trade was forced to go completely underground. By this time, a whole new class of criminalized women had been formed, with a whole new segment of the criminal justice system developed to deal with prosecuting them. These circumstances paved the way for organized crime syndicates to become involved, and eventually these groups took over control of the sex trade. These groups made alliances with policemen and politicians, who then were able to continue bene-
fitting off of prostitution as they had during the time when the sex trade had been restricted to red light districts. The underworld feared by the social purists now existed as a result of their actions (Roberts, 1992). Roberts (1992) notes that, in essence, throughout the Western world, the whore was scapegoated by decent society: vilified, victimized and ostracized even in her own working-class subculture. This, then, was the moralist's victory: the creation of a subclass of outcast females. (p. 272)

After World War I, public concern about prostitution died down. The court system had prostitutes firmly entrenched in it's grip, and the concerns of the nation moved elsewhere. In the 1920s, female sexuality was finally recognized in the sciences as existing, though thanks to Freud it only existed in some very disturbing ways. Moral attitudes became a little more relaxed, but the division of all women into either good girls or bad girls still remained (Roberts, 1992). Though women's role in the work force was changing, with mass production of products leading to the opening up of clerical work for many women, job opportunities were still limited for women living independent of men. Prostitutes were still heavily watched by police authorities. Hobson (1992) notes that, "The network of underworld gangs and police protection in immigrant communities could easily track a prostitute who decided to become an independent operator" (p. 145). In the 1930s, the mob in control of the sex trade opened up juke joints, massage parlors, private dance studios and escort services from which prostitutes would work. The prostitute economy had become much more ordered and rationalized
into the economic social system. Both police and politicians were aware of their activities, and made huge profits from selling their silence to the mob, who were paying to keep their operations running. Any sex trade business that failed to pay the politicians and police was raided and closed down in the name of law and order (Roberts, 1992).

As World War II began, the state sanctioned further repression of prostitution. Brothels were closed down, and any woman that health officials or police suspected to be a sexual deviant could be subject to venereal disease exams. Women charged with moral offenses would now stay in jail for 4-5 days and were forced to counsel with social workers. As the war ended, the level of consumerism greatly increased, and the work force began to be made up of both married and unmarried women (Roberts, 1992).

From the 1950s onwards, the further legislation passed became largely cosmetic in its effect. Police and politicians became fearful of losing the huge profits they had gained from the illegal control of prostitution (Roberts, 1992). The revolving door method, in which prostitutes are arrested, taken to court, fined and then placed back in the streets where they engage in prostitution to make the money to pay their court fine, became a firmly implanted procedure for dealing with the crime of prostitution within the United States. This method continues to flourish today. Meanwhile, prostitute women continue to have no rights due to the illegality of their status, and suffer from all sorts of abuse from which they have no
protection. Arrest procedures and prosecution of prostitutes today are simply gestures performed by state agencies in order to keep up a facade of public morality that, in essence, does not exist—a result of moral beliefs that developed from Victorian notions of female sexuality and the activism performed by the social purity movements of the Western world (Roberts, 1992).

Discussion of the History

In critically analyzing the information provided by this history, one can note that the treatment of prostitution throughout history had four major social consequences which are nested within the structural framework of U.S. society and which continue to shape standards for women's behavior in modern society. Relating this discussion back to the theme of standpoint epistemology, these consequences continue to exist today in part because the voice of the prostitute was never utilized as a source of information when different groups decided to research, analyze, or define the realities of the lives of prostitute women. Because the law makers, scientists, social purists and feminist social reformers that historically had control over the discourse on prostitution assumed that the prostitute was a person who did not have enough moral strength to take care of herself, these women who defied many standards for female conduct were never allowed the legitimacy to speak. Therefore, other morally legitimate groups have historically been in control of shaping the image of prostitutes and prostitution in so-
ciety. The image of the prostitute became the antithesis for proper female behavior. This major consequence has been in effect since men started defining the rules of proper conduct for women, and filters into the three other consequences, as described below. By reinforcing the notion that prostitute women were distinctly different from all other women, these consequences have led to further ideological support for the oppression of all women and the discriminatory treatment of prostitutes.

The Creation of an Antithesis for Female Behavior

First, the historical information provided above shows how a double standard was permanently established concerning the proper sexual and social roles for women. Prostitution was given a special place in the way that U.S. society has structured female sexuality. As Morris (cited by Miller et al., 1993) notes, the "...sexuality of men and women has historically received different social response and has carried different moral meaning" (p. 321). As mentioned within the historical review, in the Western world and especially in the United States, there exists a double sexual standard for men and women. Schur (1988) notes that this double standard is the belief that women have sexual attractiveness, but men have the sexual drive. Following with this line of reasoning, in order for men to have the greater sexual freedom that this double standard implies, there must be a class of women with whom they can exercise that freedom. This class of women are prostitute women. Therefore, the
existence of the prostitute preserves the respectability of other types of women in social roles (i.e., wife, mother, daughter) considered appropriate for women. As a result of this double standard, women’s sexuality has, throughout history, been dichotamized into two categories--the madonna versus the whore. These social labels have categorized an infinite amount of female behavior into two groups--one good and one bad. To a certain extent, "...the 'respectability' of non-prostitute women still hinges on the existence (and stigmatization) of prostitutes" (Schur, 1988, p. 99).

This notion of the prostitute woman as a female other can be paralleled to the ideas of Patricia Hill Collins (1990). In her work on how the images of Black women have been shaped by racist and classist groups with power in society, she discusses how the social status of certain marginalized and oppressed groups of women in society, become the point from which other groups (in this case, other women) define their normality (in this case, sexual normality). In this regard, we must take notice of the incorporation of the concept of the whore into society’s law creation and enforcement, through the application of criminal legislation to the sexual behaviors of women that are perceived to be inappropriate. The treatment of prostitute women by both lawmakers and Christian moral reformers established the belief that in order to prevent women from losing their morality and suffering from an untimely death, they, as helpless women, needed to be protected. This protection came in the form of legislation which severely limited the movement and beha-
viors of independent women, while also establishing the moral beliefs transferred from the bourgeoisie of society to the middle-class members of society, and then to its working-class members. Women are still subjected to the terms of this double standard in present times.

The Power of Moral Reformers in the Creation of U.S. Laws

The review of the history of prostitution also reveals the power that moral reformers had over creating and instigating legislation which restricted the behaviors of working-class women living independent from men. Importantly, blaming women for sexually deviant behaviors has been a "...legacy of patriarchy and anti-vice campaigns" (Perkins as cited in Davis, 1993, p. 3). More often than not, the moral reformers have historically gained legitimacy simply because their moral crusades target specific groups that are then placed under more social control by the government (Davis, 1993). As this historical review demonstrates, moral reformers along with social and medical scientists were guided by the belief that women who entered into prostitution were morally underdeveloped, and that women, in general, did not have the rational mental capacity to take care of themselves independent from the protection a man could provide. So, it is no wonder that the voice of the prostitute was stifled by these groups, as the authorities on prostitution were so certain that women who sold sex did not have the sense enough to figure out that they could not take care of them-
selves without depending on a man in a patriarchal society.

Also, separate private and public spheres for men and women were considered to be natural components of social life, distinguishing between the proper social roles for men versus the proper social roles and subjugated positions for women. These attitudes were reinforced by the moral reformer's support of Victorian ideology, which was inherently classist. This classism was reflected by the reformer's inability, or perhaps lack of desire, to understand the set of options offered to working-class women in life: marriage, domestic work, factory work or prostitution. Therefore, these reformers essentially ignored the reality of young working-class women's lives. The power of their groups in the community caused the implementation of protective legislation which essentially took away the economic and physical independence of single working-class women, while offering no realistic alternatives that might have encouraged women to give up prostituting themselves.

The Development of Discriminatory Law Intervention Policies to Address Prostitution

Finally, this history reveals how discriminatory law intervention policies existing in the United States to address prostitution have come into effect. These policies developed as a result of the existence of an ideology developed from the afore mentioned Victorian ethics, its consequences which have already been described. Supporting this Victorian ideology, law makers could then superficially resolve conflicts arising from existing social and economic
structural inadequacies and appease the moral reformers by targeting a group with no power, whose actions had offended the moral reformers. This consequence is reflected in prostitution policies today which have been, and more importantly continue to be, overtly discriminatory and largely symbolic.

As has been described earlier, "dominant members of society [the moral majority] reinforced by institutional practices [law enforcement] have defined parameters of allowable public order" (Davis, 1993, p. 8). The parameters defined for prostitution seem to be dictated by a support for an out of sight, out of mind tolerance for its existence.

Most U.S. citizens do not consider prostitution to be a serious social problem unless it is extremely visible to them in their environment. It is the interplay between law enforcers and prostitutes which defines allowable public order for an area (Reynolds, 1986). This is an important reason for why the police have historically had a great amount of discretion in handling the types of prostitution existing within their communities. In essence, current laws exist only to limit the public sight of prostitution. Davis (1993) notes that police sweeps and crackdowns occasionally performed by the police are nothing but publicity stunts utilized by police and politicians to convince the public that they are keeping the communities free of crime and immorality. She also notes that these largely superficial shows actually strengthen the dependence of prostitutes on their pimps, since these men may be the only peo-
ple the prostitutes can turn to for bail money, child care, and legal help. The discriminatory behavior of law enforcement agencies also allows for the fact that streetwalkers, making up only 10-20% of all prostitutes, account for an estimated 85-90% of all prostitute arrests. In addition, an estimated 70% of those arrested for prostitution are female, while only 10% of the male customers are arrested, even though the laws actually prohibit both sides of the prostitute transaction (Miller et al., 1993).

Therefore, the history of prostitution reveals that legislation and law enforcement surrounding prostitution have reinforced existing social distinctions made between women depending on their sexual activity. In addition, they have reinforced the notion that classist accounts by powerful groups in society can adequately define female sexual deviance without considering the perspectives of the women considered to be deviant. In addition, such activities have reinforced male control over the definition of women's sexuality, further advanced control over women's bodies, and advanced this control in a manner which reinforces existing gender, race and class inequalities. This has been done while maintaining the appearance that such actions have been prompted by concern for the people, rather than out of self-interest by those in power that create the law and reap benefits from prostitution's illegality. All of these consequences have shaped the current discriminatory treatment of prostitutes within U.S. society, and have reinforced continuing social support for the domination of women by men in the
United States. Overall, the policies created for prostitution continue to guide people's beliefs into supporting patriarchal definitions for women's proper roles and functions in the United States. To further assess the ways in which prostitute's lives have been defined by groups claiming to have knowledge which makes them authorities on prostitution, the next chapter examines the development of academic feminist perspectives, both in general and then regarding their perspective on prostitution.
CHAPTER III

ACADEMIC FEMINISM AND THE DISCOURSE ON PROSTITUTION

The Feminist Struggle With Prostitution

My research revealed that on the topic of prostitution, feminist groups have historically struggled over what type of context within which to place both prostitutes and prostitution. As a result of these struggles within feminist academe, two main perspectives explaining prostitution and what it represents in society have been developed. These perspectives have been labeled the liberal and radical perspectives on prostitution. These perspectives are examined in order to understand the seemingly inherent underlying moral structure found in each group's theoretical framework.

As Tong (1989) notes, "...each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation" (p. 1). I look at each perspective regarding how they define prostitution, what elements are involved in shaping the context of prostitution, and what solutions each perspective offers regarding different problematic elements of prostitution. Both groups disagree on how the factors affecting the violent contexts in which prostitution occurs should be defined and analyzed. By understanding what inherent assumptions are located in each theoretical framework, it can be better understood why these two groups have not been
able to form any kind of union on the issue of prostitution. I propose that this disjunction essentially affects the aims of their theorizing on prostitution and its relationship to violence. I will begin with an analysis of liberal feminism.

The Liberal Feminist Perspective

Studying the development of liberal feminist theory is a thesis in itself, and goes beyond the parameters of this research. Therefore, I chose to cover the inherent assumptions of liberal political theory, and use the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill as examples of these early writers. Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem are then described and used as examples of contemporary approaches within liberal feminist theory.

Liberal feminism has stemmed from assumptions located inherently in liberal political theory. These assumptions are first, that human nature is unique because we have the capacity for rational thought, which other animals do not have. Second, that a priority of maintaining individual rights over the betterment of the community must always exist. Liberal political theory assumes that these rights provide a framework in which everybody has an equal chance at getting their own goods, as long as we do not deprive others of their separate goods (Tong, 1989). Finally, this theory contains the assumption that people have certain natural rights which governments cannot intrude upon (Donovan, 1985).
This idea of natural rights in liberal theory was developed from the Newtonian paradigm, where scientists advocated that the physical universe operates according to a few simple laws which could become knowable through human reason (Donovan, 1985). Newtonian theory encouraged the assumption that a rational world interpreted through simple human reasoning was the primary world, and that any type of subjective reality, in which emotions, moral values and aesthetic values existed, was not significant and was secondary to the rationality of the physical world (Donovan, 1985). Therefore, this Newtonian view of the world essentially split the world into two spheres: the public and private. The public world was guided by rational thought, and the private world, the secondary world, was determined to encompass the non-rational aspects of life. After the first wave of industrialization occurred throughout the Western world, and as women became increasingly isolated in the domestic sphere, the identification of rationalism as located in the public sphere of life activities became more identified with the activities of men, and the identification of the non-rational and the moral became more associated with women (Donovan, 1985).

Since a main priority of liberal theory is to encourage all individuals to freely exercise their autonomy of being and to fulfill themselves, liberal feminist theory developed as a result of women arguing against the inequity of their positions. The position was that they had as much natural rights as men did, according to what was being stated in documents such as the Constitution and the
Declaration of Independence. One of the first writers to advocate for this new position for women was Mary Wollstonecraft. In her writings, she focused on the idea that to search for fulfillment of personhood, society should give girls the same education as received by boys, since women have the same capacity for rationality as men, and ought to have the same chance to develop it. She wrote that married women had no chance to develop their rational powers because they were not allowed by the structuring of society to have any commitments beyond personal pleasures located within the home, and therefore they became overly emotional as this was the only part of their personhood that they were allowed to develop (Tong, 1989).

In her classic work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft argues that the socialization process stunts women's intellect by teaching them that their sole purpose in life is to serve men. Furthermore, if women's sole purpose is to develop their emotional side in order to better serve men, then this position for women lacked dignity because it denied women the ability to develop their rational skills. These skills would help women grow spiritually and develop their souls, as rational thought helps a person decide between good and bad (Donovan, 1985). Men are therefore preventing women from developing themselves spiritually. She argued that women should be included in the activities of public life and work, and proposed that the double standard set for women and men regarding sexuality be ended through the promotion of chastity for both sexes (Donovan, 1985).
In the 19th century, two other liberal political writers developing feminist perspectives came to the forefront--John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill. These writers argued that in order for sex equality to occur, society must go further than just giving women the same education as men, but must also provide women with the same economic opportunities and civil liberties as men. Taylor Mill looked at how sexual inequality had resulted from society's customs and traditions, and wrote about the possibility of women attaching an outside career to their duties as homemakers. She believed that in order to be fully liberated, women had to work outside of the home, to encourage partnership rather than servitude in their relationship with men (Tong, 1989). In her writings, she used the natural rights doctrine of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as being natural rights of both men and women. She also advocated civil and political equality for women through the opening of public jobs for women, and called for the state to have no say in marriage arrangements, particularly regarding divorce proceedings, as this was an area in which women had virtually no rights given to her (Donovan, 1985).

John Stuart Mill wrote about how the virtues praised in women were actually traits that impeded a women's progress to personhood. He believed that because of women’s over involvement with their home life, they overestimated family wants and needs and underestimated the wants and needs that would develop as a result of women becoming involved in societal activities occurring outside of the home. He
also believed that the intellectual achievement gap between men and women was a direct result of man's more thorough education and social positioning (Tong, 1989).

These writers of the 18th and 19th centuries, along with others, firmly believed that an individual's reason was her/his consciousness, that women and men had the same souls, that education was the most effective tool to be used for social change, and that an individual's dignity depended on their ability to be independent. As a result of these writers and the developing women's movement, women were able to gain the right to vote, laws governing both marriage and divorce changed to give women more control over property and their children, and women began to be allowed into certain colleges and professions. However, due to the moral reasoning behind these earlier writers, the notion of men's inclusion into the private sphere was untouched--these liberal writers thought that legal changes occurring in the public sphere would equalize women's status within the private sphere of the marriage and home, yet no alternatives to the tradition of homemaker and motherhood were given (Donovan, 1985). Also, a definite classism can be seen in their writings, as Tong (1989) notes that, "Only an upper middle-class woman, wealthy enough to hire several relatively disadvantaged women, stands a realistic chance of combining career and marriage successfully" (p. 19).

Contemporary liberal feminists, such as Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem developed the notion that structural impediments, occur-
ring as a result of the patriarchal social and economic structure, impede women’s progress. They argue that the patriarchal society defines the jobs for women as being mothers, teaching children, nursing and clerical/secretarial work (Tong, 1989). In Betty Friedan’s most popular works, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and *The Second Sex* (1981), she takes two different positions. First, she argues that women essentially should become more like men. She states that if women stay home to raise children, it will not be enough of a job and they will become bored and depressed, while their children will be socially underdeveloped. In her second work, she discusses how combining marriage and an outside career can be difficult to do, even for very privileged women. She writes that to balance the necessary assimilation of women into the work force, there must also be an assimilation of men into the private sphere of the family, along with work towards necessary change by both men and women regarding public values, leadership styles and institutional structures (Tong, 1989).

Gloria Steinem, co-founder of *Ms.* magazine, the first magazine in the United States centered on feminist politics, writes of rewriting women’s history, and eventually a people’s history that is "...accurate, nourishing and accessible" (Steinem, 1994, p. 408). In her opinion, politics and the struggle for women’s liberation are truly successful when they transcend their existence as official political stances and become incorporated into a society’s culture. She worked to include the struggles of African-American women and
promote racial diversity in the women's movement. She recognized that Black women had, for the most part, been excluded from the women's movement, perhaps because they attributed just as much of their oppression to race characteristics as attributing it to their gender (Tong, 1989).

Steinem can be viewed as almost radical in her writings on the common experiences of women and the control that men have over women's reproduction. However, she is liberal in her ideas for reform which focus on implementing policies like equal pay for women, the right to choose to have an abortion, equal access to education, and policies which would place more women into political office. She has also written about how homemaking and child rearing are men's responsibilities as well as women's, and that more men should be integrated into women's jobs (Schneir, 1994).

Liberal feminist solutions to inequality between the sexes concentrate on changing educational and legal practices which have impeded women from becoming equal to men. First, discriminatory policies and laws must be removed. Second, as a transitional measure to help women access jobs they had formerly been denied, liberal feminism calls for preferential hiring treatment for women to compensate for past and current impediments to their progress in the public sphere (Tong, 1989).

While the demands made by liberal feminists women have helped women move into the public sphere, there are some weaknesses to this theory that must be mentioned before a discussion of their position
on prostitution can be presented. First, by agreeing with the Newtonian theory that states the self as a rational and autonomous agent, a definition coming from a male paradigm of thought, liberal feminist thinkers continue to promote male reasoning as human reasoning. Second, by emphasizing individualism as being more important than the common good of a community, these theorists ignore certain class and race biases in society. Because of this classism inherent to many of their writings, power inequities related to class are not taken into account, and self-sufficiency is not correlated with the existence of resources or power in society (Tong, 1989). The complex social structures that inhibit the progress of women, in actuality a diverse group with many different wants and needs, are not fully considered. Also, as Jaggar considers (noted in Tong, 1989), "...our very identities are determined by our socially constituted wants and desires. We are, fundamentally, the selves our communities have created, a fact that challenges the U.S. myth of the self-sufficient individual" (p. 36). Both the strengths and weaknesses within liberal feminist theory on the oppression of women are very apparent in the liberal theorizing on the topic of prostitution.

Liberal Theories on Prostitution

Liberal feminists focus on addressing some of the more apparent sources of violence against prostitutes such as physical harm, contracting a disease, emotional and/or physical abuse by a customer
or pimp, and the effects of being labeled a whore by society. The main point of the liberal feminist perspective on prostitution is that the violence prostitute women experience occurs due to prostitution's illegality. Therefore, this perspective supports the belief that, "...laws outlining prostitution disproportionately harm women and that prostitution is one of the few occupations in which women can achieve economic power and a measure of social independence" (Cooper, 1989, p. 109). This perspective also supports the belief that prostitution is a personal choice and is therefore a legitimate choice. Liberal feminists support the notion that prostitution involves the sale of a service, and that this freedom of choice to sell sex is an important part of women being able to maintain a certain autonomy (Cooper, 1989). Liberal feminism opposes the criminalization of prostitution and justifies this position with the argument that because prostitution is illegal, prostitute women are defenseless against the violence perpetuated on them by pimps, customers, police and the state.

Therefore, this feminist perspective promotes the opinion that the most effective way to address the violence that prostitute women experience is through the decriminalization of the practice. Priscilla Alexander (1987) notes that, "Decriminalization would leave the businesses which surround prostitution subject to general civil, business, and professional codes that exist to cover all businesses," and "...such problems as fraud, theft, negligence, collusion, and force would be covered by existing penal codes" (p. 209). Lib-
eral feminists support the idea that this type of limited regulation would empower prostitutes, and get them adequate wages, protection from disease and abuse, and employment benefits (Meyer, 1993). By making some of the more direct and harmful elements occurring in the circumstances surrounding prostitution subject to prosecution and punishment, violence against prostitutes would decrease, while certain voluntary and non-abusive situations (such as a boyfriend who stays out with a streetwalker to make sure she is not alone) would not be targeted by police for intervention and/or harassment (Alexander, 1987). Therefore, this perspective asserts that if prostitution were decriminalized, much violence against prostitute women would decrease and if the occupation became a semi-legitimate occupation for women, then the whore-stigma would be reduced.

A critical analysis of this perspective shows that their theoretical framework prevents them from recognizing additional elements inherent to the act of prostitution that are harmful to prostitute women. Because a main assumption contained within their theoretical framework is that the individual rights and autonomy of a person must be maintained over the interest of the common good, liberal feminists are not concerned with looking at how the existence of prostitution can be seen as representing social support for the oppression and objectification of women in U.S. society, along with indicating a certain social condonation for sexual violence against women. The liberal perspective is also inherently classist, represented by the belief that prostitution is a free choice made by
all prostitute women, and is therefore a legitimate choice. This perspective does not adequately acknowledge that many women who enter the trade do it for may reasons, not all of which can be regarded as freely chosen. Also, this perspective emphasizes studying the violence prostitutes experience, yet because of the control that liberal and radical feminist perspectives have over the discourse, excluding the voices of prostitute women makes the discourse itself inherently violent.

The liberal feminist theoretical framework cannot accommodate information showing the different truths which lead a woman to choose to sell her sex. Therefore, instead of reworking liberal feminist theory to account for the reality of the existence of these factors, they are not addressed. However, the radical feminist perspective on prostitution has addressed these issues, and in fact it is exactly these issues that radical feminist interpretations of prostitution draw on for their knowledge of and explanations for prostitution.

The Radical Feminist Perspective

The development of radical feminism was in a lot of ways, a response to dissatisfaction with different parts of liberal feminist theory. Radical feminism looks at the oppression of women as resulting from men having the power to force women into oppressive social roles, rather than it being the fault of different economic and social conditions of society. Male control over definitions of bio-
logy is the central theme, or domain assumption, from which radical feminists theorize. Gender oppression occurs because men want to control women's bodies. Therefore, sexuality is the central component causing the oppression of women. Radical feminists analyze how in order for women to be liberated, female sexuality needs to be reconstructed by women, as women are chained to a system in which they have been socialized to accept a reality where their sexuality is male-defined and male-controlled (Tong, 1989).

To review the origins of radical feminism is, like reviewing liberal feminist theoretical origins, a whole separate area worth years of exploration. In order to keep the discussion focused, a history of the beginnings of radical feminism is given, with an emphasis on the major themes developed by these early writers. Then, for a review of contemporary practitioners of radical feminism, I chose to discuss the ideas of authors Kate Millet, Andrea Dworkin, Catherine Mackinnon, and Mary Daly.

Radical feminism began to develop in the late 1960s and early 1970s in both New York and Boston. Donovan (1985) notes that groups of women, many of whom had been active in the civil rights and the anti-war movements, became unsatisfied with the sexist treatment they were receiving from male members of the New Left movement. This second class treatment by supposedly enlightened thinkers led women to brainstorm on how they could have the legitimacy to speak in society regarding their own personal issues as women. Eventually, a theory was developed based on the central assumption that women's
oppression was the base for all other types of oppression, as all societies existed with patriarchal power relations (Donovan, 1985). Some basic assumptions developed by these earlier writers were that women needed to join as a force, to unify as a subjugated class and combat their oppressors (men). Others wrote of rejecting the institution of marriage, of family, and of the heterosexual relationship, as all were considered to be the most apparent forms of women's oppression. For these early radical feminist theorists, women's oppression comes from psychological and biological factors rather than from the iniquitous social and economic characteristics of a capitalist and patriarchal society, as liberal perspectives maintained.

Contemporary radical feminist writings have followed in the footsteps of these earlier writers in advocating and further developing the perspective that women are socialized into their oppressive roles due to men having control over and defining female sexuality. In 1970, Kate Millet wrote Sexual Politics, in which she discusses how patriarchal ideology, maintained by either ideological conditioning or force, conditions women to exhibit male-serving patterns of behavior and male-defined roles. She writes how these beliefs are reproduced by the social unit of the family, as children are socialized into the patriarchal pattern they witness from the actions of their parents. She views sexuality as being inherently political, and views the male-female relationship as the "...paradigm for all power relationships" (Tong, 1989, p. 95). She also as-
serts the idea that rape should be viewed as a political device used to keep women subordinated, as this type of sexual violence by men against women is culturally condoned (Donovan, 1985).

This radical feminist view is expanded upon in the writings of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon, who discuss how sexuality is central to women’s oppression. As Tong (1989) notes, Dworkin describes the two major models for her that define the roles for women in a patriarchal culture—the brothel model, which is the idea that all women in patriarchal culture are forced to prostitute themselves in a variety of ways, and the farming model, which is her idea of what the placement and role of women as child bearers is in U.S. society. Mackinnon looks at how female sexuality is the locus for male power and that because of this, the role of male dominance and female submission is inherently part of heterosexual relations. She discusses how in rape, incest, pornography and prostitution, women’s sexuality as mediated through the female body and male actions proclaim women’s bodies as essentially existing only for men’s wants and needs (Tong, 1989).

In her major works, radical feminist Mary Daly analyzes how information given to women through their socialization is a lie, because it has been created and is perpetuated by men, who are the group with the most power in society. She discusses how this lie must be uncovered, deconstructed and destroyed, "...in order for the truth of women’s being to emerge" (Donovan, 1985, p. 153). In her writings, she also discusses the possibilities of shaping people
into androgynous individuals in society, in order to end the male consideration of women as the other or second sex. She ultimately rejects this idea of androgyny in her further writings. Instead, she writes about how women need to reject the labels that men have placed on their emotional and physical behaviors and must instead work to develop new and powerful self-understandings which are radically different from male understandings, in order to prevent women’s will from being subsumed or consumed by the male culture (Tong, 1989).

The existence of radical feminist theory, with its constant reflection and focus on female biological functions, has benefitted women by introducing the issues of sexuality, childbearing and child rearing as essential components to the politics governing a society. However, as Jagger notes (as cited in Tong, 1989), this perspective does not acknowledge the idea that not all women are victims, and not all men are victimizers. Plus, all men do not oppress women in the same ways.

Jagger (as cited in Tong, 1989) critiques radical feminism by pointing out that if patriarchy were so completely and all-encompassing in its suppression of women, then radical feminism would have never been allowed to so fully develop. She also notes that since radical feminists believe all men are exploitative to women, that truly consensual heterosexual relations can never occur. Heterosexual sex is therefore conceived of as always involving the exercise of male power over women (Cooper, 1989). Cocks (as noted in
Tong, 1989) critiques this perspective from the opinion that radical feminism is simply reversing patriarchal dualities by existing as a counterculture to patriarchal society, which in essence confirms the assumption that the patriarchal culture is the norm and women's realities are the other. Radical feminists have also historically not focused on issues of race and class. However, within the past few years, black radical feminist writers analyzing race and class factors as being essential to the subjugated status of Black women in society, have been given the legitimacy and validation that their perspectives deserve (for more information on this, see Tong, 1989, and Donovan, 1985). Finally, it should be noted that radical feminists are using a single model of biological determinism to make universal claims explaining issues that are built from many more complex issues. Society is not simple enough to have its characteristics be worked through models based on a single assumption of gender oppression as being biologically determined. The weaknesses described above are also inherently located in radical feminist theorizing on prostitution.

Radical Theorizing on Prostitution

Radical feminist perspectives on prostitution reflect the central tendencies of biological determinism and the consideration of patriarchy as a universal trait in all societies, by analyzing how prostitution supports the underlying belief structure of the patriarchal society. They believe that this patriarchal-defined belief
structure supports the notion that women are to be objectified and that, "...prostitution perpetuates the male definition of women as available for sex, which in turn ensures their continued subjugation for that purpose" (Cooper, 1989, p. 112). Prostitution is therefore defined as representing the most apparent example of women’s oppression and subjugation within society (Cooper, 1989).

Since this perspective assumes that all groups of women are victims of the patriarchy, they assume that all prostitute women are victims, in some sort of trouble, who are forced to enter into prostitution as a survival strategy. This perspective denies legitimacy to the claims of some prostitute women, who state that they have freely chosen to sell sex. Radical feminist perspectives on prostitution assume that both economic and social inequalities, existing as a result of male control over women’s autonomy, can be seen as forms of coercion which force women to prostitute themselves. Therefore, free choice loses its meaning under the reasoning that women are coerced to make certain decisions as a result of their oppressed positioning within the social arrangements of U.S. society. In defending this perspective, Cooper (1989) notes that, "...A structure built on 'male pursuit of control over women's sexuality' is fundamentally unequal and can not achieve the equality and freedom of choice for women..." (p. 114). Radical feminists do not acknowledge the reality that some women do believe that they have freely chosen to enter the practice of prostitution. The voices of prostitutes expressing this, whether or not they exist as a min-
ority of the prostitute population, are categorized as suffering from a false consciousness (Cooper, 1989). In making this distinction, the radical feminist perspective supports the assumption that prostitute women as victims are different than other women they label as victims of patriarchy, and that prostitute women's opinions cannot be trusted if they argue against the radical feminist rhetoric, because of the presence of false consciousness.

Solutions for the violence experienced by prostitutes and represented through prostitution involve notions of using law and the power of the women's movement to promote a view of morality, particularly concerning sexual issues, which is based on certain female values (Cooper, 1989), as male values are what condone sexual violence against women in society. On the one hand, radical feminists would like to see the act of prostitution be eliminated, so this perspective advocates complete suppression of the practice. This perspective assumes that the suppression and extinction of prostitution will help the larger feminist movement towards the goal of eliminating the sexual domination and social control of women. On the other hand, most radical feminists do not approve of the illegality of prostitution because the discretionary nature of implementation of the laws does great harm to prostitute women while customer (male) involvement in the transaction is, for the most part, ignored. Therefore, the radical feminist position on how to reduce the violence of prostitution and in prostitute's lives stems from a focus on moving the feminist movement towards actualizing the
long-term goals of radical feminism in general, rather than looking at the implementation of short-term solutions which would possibly decrease forms of violence that are specific to the activities surrounding prostitution.

A Discussion of Both Perspectives as They Apply to Prostitution

Both the radical and liberal feminist writings on prostitution are plentiful. Writers from both perspectives attempt to further support their claims by writing strong critiques of the other’s perspective and writings. Radical feminists accuse liberal feminists of promoting as a necessity the separation of sex from affection in all circumstances (Cooper, 1989). Women writing from the radical perspective also argue that a liberal perspective on prostitution is an attempt to gain equality by using a male approach, and accuse liberal feminists of attempting to gain quality for women within a system that is based on and insures the suppression and objectification of women (Cooper, 1989). Therefore, they see liberal solutions to elements of prostitution as being ineffective, as the male reality is assumed to be the reality of both genders.

The liberal perspective critiques the radical perspective by questioning whether the focus of radical feminism on prostitution results in part from a sexual puritanism which is an artifact of patriarchy (Meyer, 1993). Liberal feminism challenges the notion that any person has the authority to place a moral opinion on what is viewed as legitimate or true sexuality, and criticizes the closed
conceptual framework from which many radical feminists work. Some liberal feminists ask that if the choice of prostitution is not a free one, due to the social and economic inequities placed on women, how can prostitution be eradicated before these larger issues are addressed and eradicated, without the end result being a morality judgement placed upon prostitute women who engage in prostitution for many different reasons. Therefore, they question the radical feminist perspective which supports the notion that sexual inequality can be eliminated before larger issues of inequality are eradicated. They also argue that radical feminism, with its tendency to advocate suppression of prostitution, will be coopted by moral reformers which will change the focus away from making some structural changes that would improve the working conditions of prostitute women (Meyer, 1993). Meyer (1993) warns certain feminist groups of the dangers inherent with forging false unions through political bonds with "...religious fundamentalists, social purity types, [and] conservative think-tankers" (p. 117), whose aim she believes is to return all sexual activity to the male-dominated bedroom.

This historical analysis of both perspectives reveals the ways in which each perspective shapes their moral assumptions to fit the moral truths held by each perspective. Radical feminists maintain their theoretical assumption that patriarchy will control all of women's reality because men have total control over women's sexuality. Therefore all women are defined as victims, so all prostitutes, as
the ultimate victims of patriarchy, can never be considered to truly want to prostitute themselves. This assumption places a moral judgement onto prostitute women that says prostitute voices cannot be a reliable or valid resource for information if they speak that they freely choose to sell sex. In the radical interpretation of prostitution, women have no free choices because they represent too extreme of an example of the repressive patriarchal system under which all women suffer. In placing this moral judgement onto the lives of prostitute women, they are essentially saying that certain prostitute self definitions are wrong, but that their own definitions for women, and in this instance, specifically prostitute women, which are based upon the radical theoretical assumption of biological determinism are correct. Because radical feminists are not allowing prostitute women to define themselves, they end up denying legitimacy and validation to prostitute voices which discuss ideas of sexuality and aspects of prostitution that the radical position does not support. Therefore, the radical feminist perspective essentially continues to separate women into either reasonable or unreasonable (good or bad) categories depending on their sexual behavior.

Liberal feminists are basically arguing that women have a legal right to sell their sex and be protected from violence while they are working. Their position is based on the assumptions that humans are rational actors, that the structure of society is in itself a fair system, and that inequities experienced by women can be
resolved by implementing legislation which will effectively change women's subjugated status in a variety of contexts. This perspective therefore ignores the reality that laws are not gender neutral, as they have been created within a patriarchal culture. Also, this perspective does not consider that laws cannot change the existing cultural support for the objectification of women which supports the perceived need for prostitution by men. Liberal feminists therefore ignore certain issues such as how gender roles are constructed from a culture that supports patriarchy, that many women who prostitute themselves do suffer from different forms of degradation which cannot be fully eliminated through legislative changes, and that these are women who carry a social stigma with them for the rest of their lives. Factors existing in the lives of prostitute women, which can relate prostitution back to the suppression of women and female sexuality, cannot be totally eliminated by policy changes in legislation.

It does seem that both groups agree on one point: the current system's treatment of prostitutes and prostitution is severely flawed. However, because both groups are so focused on maintaining the theoretical assumptions of the framework each writer wants to represent, their ideas have developed into arguments with both sides using prostitution as a topic to support the agenda of either perspective. Therefore, it seems that the reason feminists from these two camps cannot work together is because they refuse to theorize beyond the moral judgements which are located within their particular per-
It appears the two groups cannot work together because they are caught up in their assumptions about what will happen to prostitution over the long term. Radical feminists would like to see prostitution eventually eliminated in U.S. society, and liberal feminists would like to see the practice considered, by law, a legitimate occupation in which women are free to choose to sell a sexual service while being protected by law from different forms of violence. However, this disagreement over long-term goals places these two groups in the state of political inertia over how to compromise their goals enough to work together towards reducing some of the violent circumstances of prostitution. By analyzing the development of both the radical and liberal perspectives, it can be seen how the assumptions inherent to each and the development and nature of the argument between both prevent these two groups from effectively working towards social change which would reduce the violence in prostitute women's lives.

The Relationship Between Academic Discourse, Prostitute Voices, and Standpoint Theory

Since the efforts of radical and liberal feminists in academia are so focused on arguments over definitions of choice, free will, and the position of women and sexuality in society, do these writings within academia represent another form of violence which affects the lives of prostitute women? If, within the context of standpoint epistemology, working from a theoretical framework en-
courages a disassociation from the contexts of people's lives, it should therefore follow that both radical and liberal feminist academic discourse on prostitution contains an inherent disassociation from the contexts within which prostitution occurs. This disassociation of prostitute activist's voices from non-prostitute feminist writers has been amplified because the liberal and radical feminist groups fully adopted prostitution as an area for feminist concern during the second wave of feminism. It was during the second wave that feminists brought to society's attention a number of types of violence perpetuated against women. This second-wave movement has been a middle-class movement which reflected middle-class concerns, and therefore contains some middle-class prejudices (Roberts, 1992). Both liberal and radical feminist perspectives on prostitution reflect these prejudices. While liberal feminism idealistically believes that the sources of violence against prostitute women will disappear once prostitution is decriminalized, radical feminism concentrates on studying the position of prostitution as the ultimate representation of women's oppression and subjugation by men. However, neither perspective bases their assumptions and position on prostitution mainly from information given to them by prostitutes. Neither perspective has considered that the voices of prostitutes are the most important source of information from which to begin any analysis of prostitution. Not realizing this, and changing the approach that each group has taken in adopting the topic of prostitution to promote their own theoretical agendas, does violence to pro-
stitute voices and severely limits the applicability of each perspective's theorizing.

Perhaps too much feminist writing has revolved around disputing definitions of concepts, so that a certain level of abstractness in the discourse on prostitution has become common for non-prostitute women analyzing the positions of prostitutes in society. As mentioned above, if both groups are too focused on defending their theoretical positions against each other to allow prostitute rights groups the opportunity to speak, then the academic writings on prostitution by these feminist groups silences and invalidates the voices of prostitute women. Therefore, if there are other factors which are significant influences on the amount and types of violence prostitute women experience that are known to prostitute women but do not fit into feminist academic discourse, they are not addressed. For example, important factors such as the effects of race and class on the relationship between violence and prostitution are not given the attention they deserve within the feminist academic discourse on prostitution. The methodology that the feminist groups have chosen, which has shaped the parameters for discussing prostitution, is what hurts prostitute women. This is because the approach to solutions to help prostitute women are created in a way in which the voices of feminists are privileged as the correct approach to resolving the dilemmas of the prostitutes, rather than the approaches that prostitute women are stating need to be taken. Therefore, the methods used for framing the feminist discourse on prostitution, and the
feminist control of the discourse can also be seen as being inherently violent to prostitute women.

I believe that the feminist discourse on prostitution is ignoring a lot of knowledge about prostitution. Only certain, and very limited, prostitute voices are allowed to be heard, as they must be processed through a conceptual framework in order to gain the legitimacy needed to be heard by social scientists. After reading different perspectives of prostitution from the writings of both former and current prostitute women, I firmly believe that it is impossible to simplify prostitution's existence down to one particular perspective. To do so causes some problems. First, it alienates non-prostitute women and prostitute women from unifying into a strong lobbying force which could create radical change in the lives of prostitute women, and all women. Second, it causes the suppression of viewpoints of women of color, of lower socio-economic statuses, and those of prostitute women who may not feel comfortable expressing their beliefs within the academic atmosphere where feminist discourse on prostitution takes place.

In order to aid prostitute organizations in changing the realities of the lives of prostitute women, prostitute organizations should be recognized as an important resource in which to ground analyses of prostitution. More importantly, by not including the standpoint of prostitute women from the current discourse, both radical and liberal feminists continue to support the patriarchally-created distinction made between what are good girls/non-whores and
what are bad girls/whores. By not being able to get past the moral judgements that each group holds on the topic of prostitution, these feminists are supporting the notion that prostitute women are different from all other women. Therefore, prostitutes continue to be a symbol of a female other in society, from which non-prostitute women, fearful that the whore stigma will be attached to themselves, continue to distinguish themselves and distance themselves.

Not including the standpoint that has been developed among prostitute women therefore restricts the types of alternative images of women presented as legitimate for women in society. In other words, because prostitute voices have not been included within the authoritative discussions on prostitution, the image of the whore continues to dominate many aspects of women’s behaviors, and still continues to represent a negative and inappropriate image for women. Because feminist writers continue to support the distinction between what is morally the best way to regard female sexuality and female sexual behavior, they still support this distinction that has been made between women throughout history. Therefore, they continue to be limited theoretically in moving towards solutions that will reduce the violence experienced by prostitute women.

Feminist writers on prostitution need to turn their attention away from worrying about who is right or wrong concerning the different definitions of prostitution in society, and focus on what types of writings will validate the concerns expressed by prostitute women, and help prostitutes achieve some of their expressed goals.
Therefore, these feminist perspectives are important, but only important to a limited extent. What they have opted to exclude from their theorizing, in order to maintain their ideological claims, is the voice of the prostitutes that raise issues of concern that are not in sync with the views of either feminist group. Standpoint epistemology is a perspective which suggests that as feminists, we need to be aware that our research methods may be excluding important sources of knowledge. As the upcoming section will reveal, the work that many prostitute women have done, in an attempt to redefine their experiences from what has historically been attached to their lives by non-feminists and feminists alike, is really amazing.
CHAPTER IV

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROSTITUTE RIGHTS MOVEMENT

A History of the Prostitute Rights Movement

The development of the prostitute’s rights movement is multi-faceted. As this historical account will reveal, the standpoint of prostitute right’s activists has developed as a result of many influences. These are represented in part by radical and liberal explanations for prostitution as well as coming from ideas of prostitutes which break free from these feminist theoretical models. The latter are part of a developing standpoint or consciousness created by prostitute women which attempts to change the moral definitions for female sexuality in a patriarchal society. This history will detail four central ideas. First, it will show how the standpoint of the prostitute began to develop both with and without academic feminist support. Second, it will show how this standpoint gained legitimacy within groups in the United States with minimal help from feminists. Third, it will show what different standpoints have been developed by prostitute women, as a result of the common knowledge about sex work that prostitute women share. Fourth, the historical review will show how prostitute women are attempting to go about resolving the marginality of their existence within U.S. society, and how they, as a stigmatized group of women, are striving to reduce the violence that they experience.
Early Political Activism by Prostitute Women

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the occurrence of both the sexual revolution and the second-wave feminist movement, people's attitudes about female sexuality began to change. The work of feminist activists to frame issues such as marital and acquaintance rape and pornography as social problems drew the attention of the public throughout the nation. This work prepared audiences for the message presented to them by prostitute rights groups, who, as a direct result of the work done by feminist activists during this time period, began to publicly advocate their own issues alongside feminist issues which were gaining public attention. Prostitute activists focused their arguments by framing them within the feminist discourse occurring on violence against women in the United States. Both feminists and prostitutes were unified on the fact that social change for prostitutes needed to occur, but no groups could agree on what types of changes should replace the old system of prostitution (Hobson, 1990).

Feminist activists, civil liberties lawyers and prostitutes all publicly protested the injustice of the way that prostitutes were so discriminated against by law enforcement, and tried to change some of the legislation that created an undeniable gender bias in the way that prostitution was treated by law. Arguments for legislative changes were focused on the unconstitutionality of prostitution laws because they denied free speech (which was a soliciting offense), denied persons a right to privacy, and did not provide
equal protection under the law for women arrested as prostitutes (Hobson, 1990). This led to some changes in the wordings of laws, but really did nothing to change the everyday realities of prostitute women working the streets and facing discriminatory arrests. The courts basically justified the proportion of women being arrested over male customers being arrested, and maintained that gender was a valid classification in prostitution. They argued that prostitutes were the ones doing all the illegal work in prostitution, therefore ignoring the other people involved in the transaction (the pimp, customers and others) (Hobson, 1990).

However, the extent to which prostitutes and others could lift the stigma existing for prostitutes by changing the biases in legislation was limited. This was because the underlying issues needing to be addressed were simply beyond the reach that any change in legislation could make. Changing the position of prostitute women in society meant addressing issues that were beyond the scope of the law's powers (Jenness, 1993). However, what is important to note here is that as prostitutes began to unify and protest their treatment by law and society, they were actively working with feminist organizations, civil liberties organizations and other groups to bring their issues out into public debate. The women's movement had in fact been a major platform upon which prostitute groups could voice their concerns about prostitution alongside a range of feminist concerns addressing issues such as violence perpetrated against women in society, the right to control their bodies, and the
In the 1970s, feminist organizations began to increasingly control both public and academic debates on prostitution as part of their control of the public discourse on all issues concerning violence against women. In 1971, the first feminist conference on prostitution was held by New York feminists. At this meeting, panels discussed different methods for how to eventually eliminate the existence of prostitution. Some prostitutes came to the conference, though none had been invited by the conference organizers. They became angry because all the panels were focusing on how to eventually eliminate their jobs. There were some heated arguments that entailed, because as Hobson (1990) notes, "Hundreds of years of social stigma against women who violated sexual norms were hard for either side to ignore" (p. 214). The feminist participants of the conference were not ready to hear or accept what the prostitutes attending had to say. Therefore they were essentially invalidating the prostitute's voices in two ways. First, they had not even informed prostitute women activists about the conference, and second, they did not respect what the prostitute women who attended the conference had to say. It can be noted that some alliances between prostitute activists and feminists did form, but these coalitions contained a lot of tension because of the separate ideological beliefs of both groups.

However, the prostitute organizations were able to label their concerns as feminist concerns, and weave feminist arguments into
their own. They argued that forced licensing, and regulation of prostitution by police increased the amount of male power over prostitute women's bodies. Though feminists still had control over the discourse on prostitution, the work of prostitute activists to include the concerns of prostitute women within the general feminist agenda caused the women's movement in the United States to place the prostitute's concerns on a reform agenda (Hobson, 1990). Tensions between the groups did not cease, and continued to prevent liberal feminists, radical feminists, and prostitute activists from working together towards their respective goals. Radical feminists were concerned with attacking both the social construction of male and female sexuality, and the idea that the prostitute organizations, labeling themselves as unions, conflicted with the long-term goals of feminism to eliminate the power dynamics existing in sexual relations. Many feminists supporting decriminalization still did not want to see prostitution viewed as a legitimate form of women's work. To do so would suggest that women would always lack economic opportunities and serve men as sex objects (Hobson, 1990). The prostitute organizations were arguing that this power dynamic could be turned around and that women could gain power and self-affirmation by bucking the patriarchal system that attempted to restrict their sexual, social, economic and political power by restricting their behavior through repressive definitions of female sexuality which affected all women. The feminist movement therefore became permanently divided between the liberal argument that prostitution was a
private act of service work between two consenting adults, and the radical stance that prostitutes were all victims of patriarchy and represented women's subjugated position to man in sexual relations (Hobson, 1990).

The Birth of COYOTE and the Further Development of the Prostitute's Rights Movement in the United States

With the feminist movement becoming further divided on the subject of prostitution, a charismatic character, Margo St. James appeared on the California prostitute activist scene. She was labeled by the law as a prostitute, though she had been arrested through an attempt by police at entrapment (see Roberts, 1992). In 1973, with $6,000 and the commitment of fifty influential citizens who were residing in San Francisco, she formed the prostitute rights organization COYOTE, the acronym for Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics. With the founding of this organization, prostitutes had their first formal spokeswoman for what she called an invisible constituency, in reference to the fact that the illegality of the practice of prostitution kept prostitutes from coming out and voicing their concerns in public (Roberts, 1992). COYOTE began as an organization focused on supporting and helping prostitutes with their legal rights, as well as protesting and exposing police corruption, harassment and abuse of prostitutes (Jenness, 1990). This organization advocated for the decriminalization of prostitution as a civil rights issue. They argued that women were being denied the respect
and protection for workers that occurs in legitimate service occupations. They argued that prostitution is a woman's choice, and that by redefining prostitution as a legitimate occupation, the discriminatory treatment and exploitation of these women by men would be greatly reduced. St. James argued that the existence of legal pornography and illegal prostitution promoted disrespect for women on the grounds that men were socialized into a look but don't touch philosophy. She used this as an example of how in the case of pornography and prostitution, laws allowed men, those in control of the pornography business, to sell women's bodies, but, in the case of prostitution, did not allow women to sell their own bodies (Jenness, 1993).

COYOTE began to gain much public recognition as members of the organization held public protests and forums over issues such as police brutality, and the discriminatory arrest rates between female prostitutes and the many more male clients engaging in prostitution. The organization also provided services to prostitutes in order to assist them in dealing with the police and the courts. They offered prostitute women legal assistance, suitable clothing to wear to court, legal advice and also taught prostitute women survival skills to take with them out in the streets. COYOTE's activism centered on protesting the prohibition of prostitution, the legal discrimination that resulted from prostitution's illegality, such as police harassment, the gender and race discrimination that resulted when the laws were enforced, and also protested the expense that occurred to ar-
rest and process prostitutes. This organization specifically targeted the laws as supportive of the victimization of prostitutes, because the laws prevented prostitutes from having any legal recourse that would allow them to take actions against people who had abused them. By 1978, COYOTE had effectively created change in the working conditions of prostitutes in San Francisco. A law that required the quarantine of prostitutes with venereal diseases was discontinued, and public defenders, a group who originally were little inclined to defend any cases involving prostitute women, became more active in defending prostitutes (Jenness, 1993).

Because of her connections with influential, powerful members of the San Francisco community and her charismatic personality, St. James became a media celebrity. She began to appear in all sorts of interviews and organized fundraisers for COYOTE's various projects, services and public awareness campaigns. COYOTE organized events like the annual Hooker's Balls, in which local politicians and leaders, members of the community and tourists mingled together with members of COYOTE and other prostitutes. These fundraisers attracted an incredible amount of national and international public attention to the messages put forth by COYOTE. Through these activities, COYOTE's campaign was legitimized by its public audience and its goals were supported by law and medical students, sheriffs and policemen, women's groups and different religious organizations. This organization and their supporters also began actively debating with feminists over whether prostitution represented a voluntarily chosen
type of service work, or was an example of institutionalized female sexual slavery (Jenness, 1993). In doing this, COYOTE moved the aims of their campaign from being framed totally in legal discourse, into the realm of feminist discourse for discussion.

In the meantime, prostitute organizations in different parts of Europe were organizing themselves into self-proclaimed unions to protest police harassment, their lack of social benefits due to their stigmatized status, and better working conditions. In 1975, prostitutes in France held sit-ins at a number of churches to protest their treatment by the law and to draw public attention to their problems. Their actions aroused public sentiment and prompted alliances between prostitutes and non-prostitutes as women, which helped them gain legitimacy and public support for their position. This move prompted a variety of other prostitute organizations to form in other areas of Europe and the United States (see Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Hobson, 1990; Mcleod, 1982; Scambler & Scambler, 1997). In 1982, the English Collective of Prostitutes occupied a church in an attempt to bring public attention to their struggle with law enforcement over some outright abusive and discriminatory treatment that prostitute women were suffering at the hands of the police. This group reached out for public sympathy by advocating for their rights as service workers, and more importantly, as women with no protection against abuse by police, clients, or other men. In addition, part of their public protest centered around the argument that many of these women were single mothers who did not re-
ceive any aid from social services, and who did not want their illegal status to instigate the removal of their children from their homes (Edwards, 1997).

This right to retain children as single mothers was an important method of linking their concerns with non-prostitute women’s concerns as mothers. As has been repeatedly noted in the literature in which prostitute’s actual opinions and perspectives have been recorded, many prostitute women view their job as the only way to make enough money to support their children (see Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Mcleod, 1982; Roberts, 1992). As Mcleod (1982) notes, many of the women involved in the Street Prostitutes’ Campaign whom she worked with in Britain had entered prostitution, "...against a background of low-paid work, living on Social Security, or faced with the prospect of providing for children as unskilled workers who were also single parents" (p. 27). Also, in a survey of prostitutes performed by the English Collective of Prostitutes, over 70% of those prostitutes surveyed were single mothers (Roberts, 1992).

In the United States, the grass roots campaign of the prostitute’s rights movement began to expand. Organizations consisted of PONY in New York, PUMA of Massachusetts, DOLPHIN in Hawaii, the CUPIDS in Detroit, and PEP of Michigan. Unfortunately, many of these organizations did not survive long, due to the increased police harassment as a result of prostitute women coming forward to protest their treatment, and due to lack of funding (Roberts, 1992). Meanwhile, COYOTE had expanded itself into such a large organiza-
tion, with members including both non-prostitutes and prostitutes, that it evolved into the National Task Force on Prostitution (NTFP). Because so many different organizations recognized COYOTE as their affiliate at the national level, the NTFP decided to retain the name COYOTE for its national affiliations, while using its new title to increase its international affiliations. While originally gaining legitimacy by framing their argument in terms of choice, service work and civil rights, as a national organization with international ties, COYOTE/NTFP set itself fully upon the task of challenging dominant feminist and non-feminist definitions of prostitutes while simultaneously putting forth a new image of the prostitute (Jenness, 1993).

Two Developments Changing the Nature of Prostitute Discourse

In the 1980s, two things occurred which affected the goals of the NTFP. First, an organization was developed which made counter-claims to COYOTE/NTFP statements. This group was called WHISPER, or Women Hurt In Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt. This group was formed of prostitutes, feminists, scholars and clergy, all of whom shared the belief that prostitution was to be decriminalized and then abolished through organizations such as theirs which would save prostitute women from the life. This group affirmed dominant feminist discourse on the idea that prostitution was a situation in which all women prostituting themselves were victims caught up in a trap of institutionalized sexual slavery (Jenness, 1993).
maintains that prostitution is not freely chosen, and cannot be a valid occupation. Rather, this group promotes the opinion that all prostitution is a crime by men against women (Freeman, 1990). They take the stance that feminists are, "...bound to not only criticize and attempt to rectify economic subordination and compulsory sexual submission, but the institution of prostitution which is the commerce of sexual abuse and inequality" (Wynter, 1987, p. 266).

WHISPER's activities are mainly concerned with providing support for women who have been abused in the system of prostitution and are trying to recover from or leave the business. They, as prostitutes speaking for themselves, deny the distinction between voluntary and involuntary prostitution (Hobson, 1990). Organizations that exist which maintain similar beliefs as WHISPER, such as The Council for Prostitution Alternatives, (Edwards, 1997) take the position that,

...prostitution is exploitative and involves overt and covert abuse and that the way forward is to wager a war on the institutions that support prostitution. Part of this war ...demands a degree of criminalization to the activity, even if, regrettably, some women are penalized and some aspects of the law are unjust. (p. 69)

Groups such as WHISPER gain support from radical feminists, because their position on prostitution fits within the conceptual framework of radical feminism. Overall, the effect of this organized opposition to COYOTE's claims basically worked to insure that the controversy over prostitution would always have an audience, both within the women's movement and in front of the public (Jenness, 1993).

Secondly, the goals of the prostitute rights movement were
drastically altered during the 1980s as a result of the AIDS crisis. This crisis, and its attack on prostitutes in the United States, moved the campaign of the prostitute rights movement from feminist discourse to public health discourse. With prostitutes becoming a scapegoat for the spread of the virus (as were homosexuals at the time), COYOTE/NTFP had to change its organizational goals in order to fight the placement of this stigma onto prostitutes (in a similar manner that the spread of syphilis was attached to sexually promiscuous women) and to change its organizational goals to implement AIDS education programs servicing both the public and prostitutes. COYOTE's workers were called upon by public health officials for advice on reducing the spread of the virus among sex workers, and the programs offered through COYOTE/NTFP were awarded grants to support the work on AIDS that was being done (Jenness, 1993). For the first time, prostitutes were being used as a resource of knowledge by public health authorities to dictate how prevention methods would reduce the spread of AIDS. Overall, the AIDS crisis had some negative effects on the public perception of prostitutes but created an arena in which prostitute voices were legitimized as sources for knowledge.

In addition, during this time period the message of prostitute organizations working for prostitute rights was expressed in the discourse created from two World Whores Congress meetings; one occurring in 1985 and one in 1986 (Pheterson, 1989). These meetings, along with other smaller conferences, focused on health issues, AIDS
updates and legal discourse, as well as organizing for further political action that would help increase the rights given to prostitutes and further promote the different prostitute rights movements occurring.

Importantly, these prostitute organizations are essentially forums in which women who have been engaged in the reality of prostitution can speak about the different aspects of their lives and find support, while representing a force which also lobbies for social change. More importantly, it is the works of these prostitute organizations that brought the issues surrounding prostitution into public awareness in the United States. This increased public awareness of their cause further legitimates them as reliable resources of information and represents a mandatory element needed to influence public concern.

The Contemporary Prostitute Rights Movement

Since their actions in the 1980s, the network between different prostitute organizations has grown immensely, and sex workers representing all different forms of the sex industry have come forward with their views. Specifically, prostitute rights activists have banded together and have made their claims legitimate through use of the media and through both national and international support from both prostitute and non-prostitute organizations.

It is interesting to analyze the different methods that prostitute activists have used in order to get their perspectives
known, and to make connections with other activists throughout the world. Traditional resources utilized were mainly interviews of prostitute activists on either the television or the radio. Popular television talk shows like Geraldo and Oprah Winfrey have showcased prostitute women activists in interviews which give prostitute activists the chance to advocate their position to a national audience. As organizations and sex worker activists have obtained increasing legitimacy in the public’s eye, they have also been able to publish collections of their opinions and perspectives on what prostitution means to them, their attitudes on the feminist agenda for prostitution, and their beliefs on what types of political activism will best benefit the prostitute rights campaign (see Delecoste & Alexander, 1987; Keefe, 1993; and Nagle, 1997). Books have also been written which attempt to reconstruct the history of what women’s sexuality represented before patriarchy was implemented throughout the world (see Roberts, 1992).

One example of the network that these organizations have established in order to support each other while spreading the message of their cause is the work that these organizations have done on the Internet. Use of the Internet by these groups has greatly expanded the audience able to be introduced to the beliefs they advocate for, in a setting outside of academia, and outside of the public health arena. Since no one currently has control over the moral content of the information presented on the Internet, prostitute organizations are the legitimate authorities distributing information on
prostitution at an equal level to the feminist and non-feminist discussions still occurring on prostitution. Their voice is not delegitimized by the feminist voice, rather it exists alongside feminist discussions of prostitution on the Web.

I began searching for these organizations on the Internet in order to find out what issues prostitute organizations were currently advocating to the public. The overwhelming majority of organizations of prostitutes on the Web were those advocating for more rights and protection to be applied to prostitute women and urging that methods be taken to decriminalize the practice of prostitution. Specifically, I will discuss only the Web sites of COYOTE's Los Angeles and Seattle chapters, which gives links to their chapter in San Francisco, and the site for PONY (Prostitutes Of New York). The information that you can find about these organizations, their causes, and current activities is amazing. All organizations that I have found expressing their views on the Web advocate for giving prostitutes more power over their social position through decriminalization, defined by one organization as being when, (prostitute)...activities are no longer crimes and participants are not subject to criminal penalties (Prostitutes Collective of Victoria, 1996). Specifically, in their page(s), these organizations give information such as the history of the development of the organization, the services offered to prostitute women, and connections for prostitute women to make who may need the help of the organization. They also provide links to other Web sites that provide information
on prostitution and/or advocacy for prostitute rights. They discuss their advocacy positions by providing information on what types of community education their organization provides, and visions of the effects that decriminalization of prostitution would have on prostitute women. On COYOTE's Los Angeles web site, I found links to educational pages which provided me with information on how diverse prostitute populations are, the most recent events that their organization had been involved in, and their political perspective. This site also provided information on legislation in the United States that is harmful to prostitute women, and provided recent news happenings on news involving prostitute women (COYOTE, 1998). The Seattle page offers methods for readers who want to become politically involved to support their cause, such as giving the readers both state and federal representatives they need to write to, and publicizing the work done by different politicians at the local, state and national level who are working to further conservative goals which have the potential to further stigmatize all women, and specifically prostitute women (COYOTE, 1997). On a lighter note, I also found pictures and a description of the event of the Hooker's Ball, the most recent of which was held in 1995.

On PONY's page, they provide information on the services they provide to sex workers, such as legal and health services referrals. They also discuss their goals to encourage learning about the sex work industry, and to develop and promote professional standards of conduct for women working in the sex industry. Lastly, they call
for activism to end illegal police activity, such as illegal street sweeps performed by the police (PONY, 1994).

Standpoint and Group Consciousness Utilized as an Effective Tool to Legitimate Viewpoints and Implement Social Change for Prostitute Women

From my analysis of the prostitute rights movement, which included reading some published accounts of sex worker activists (see Delocoste & Alexander, 1987; Keefe, 1993; Nagle, 1997), I believe that many prostitute women activists have developed a voice and a consciousness about their positioning in society. Elements of this consciousness are described in the variety of writings by prostitutes, the results of which extend their analysis of prostitution beyond the possibilities of both the liberal and radical feminist frameworks. In doing this, their standpoint has achieved some goals of the prostitute rights movement which help prostitute women in ways that feminists have not. These perspectives would have never been admitted into public discourse if prostitute women had depended on feminist messages to express their positions. However, by representing themselves, and forcing their agenda into the public and academic arena, prostitute organizations have presented their agenda to the public, to law makers and to feminists and other traditionally considered authorities on prostitution.

Prostitute groups, coming from a stance of political activism, have worked specifically to spread their message into their communities, have implemented various support networks for prostitute women
who need to utilize the services offered, have worked closely with public health officials to protect prostitutes against further blame for the spread of the AIDS virus, and have developed an international network of organizations which support their various services and political claims. Simultaneously, these organizations have worked to further legitimate their claims within feminist discourse in two ways. First, by their advocating that prostitution can be rationally chosen by some women as an occupation, due to existing social inequities in the United States. Second, through them offering many alternative images of prostitute women to feminists and others who have traditionally had control over the nature of the discourse on prostitution. The standpoint that has been developed and is being advocated by prostitute activists is one that attempts to take a holistic attitude to the problems prostitutes face. Their solutions to resolve some of the issues they identify in their claims are methods which address the interweaving of the analysis of discriminatory legal policies against women as addressed in the liberal feminist framework, while also including a necessary gender analysis of women’s subjugated positioning to men in many spheres of life, which has traditionally been performed within radical feminist discourse.

The claims of prostitute women activists also address factors such as class and race as they apply to prostitute women’s lives, which has not been mentioned in the majority of either radical or liberal feminist writings. For example, as Roberts (1992) explains, prostitutes discuss the existing class and race hierarchy for women
in the prostitute population. Many prostitutes are members of the working class, are relatively unskilled and uneducated, and roughly 94% of them are white. However, the non-white prostitute population represented more so on the streets or in massage parlors. The higher up the sex service market you go, the less likely you will be to find non-white prostitutes. Therefore, black women are a particularly visible group of prostitute women because they are disproportionately represented on the streets and therefore suffer greater stigma (Roberts, 1992). By including these variables in their analysis of prostitution, sex worker women not only attack current discriminatory legislation and law enforcement policies for prostitution, they also bring elements and ideas into the analysis of prostitution that have historically been ignored in many accounts of prostitution in the Western world.

Two Social Effects Occurring as a Result of the Work Done by Prostitute Organizations

In analyzing the ways in which prostitute voices have framed their concerns and the ways their views have been legitimated from outside the feminist arena of theoretical arguments, two consequences become evident. One consequence is that by representing themselves, prostitute women have developed a perspective which threatens to take control of the discourse away from the groups who have historically had this control. The other is that prostitute activists offer alternative conceptualizations of female sexuality and sexual behavior. These two consequences profoundly change the
nature of the discussion on prostitution from one encased within a theoretical argument to one that takes a pro-active stance towards changing both the lives of prostitute women, and society's power to define female sexuality through its patriarchal world view.

First, and most importantly, prostitutes and their advocates had never before publicly challenged commonly held notions about the lives and beliefs of prostitute women. When their movement was first developing, feminists had initially been very concerned with working towards political change that would grant prostitute women more power and protection. However, because of differences between groups regarding what would happen with prostitution in the future, and because of the limits of legislative change, the feminist movement left prostitutes on their own to defend their beliefs in the semi-legitimacy of their work in a capitalistic society.

As this research demonstrates, prostitute voices were being ignored by authorities whose opinions were affecting prostitute lives in various ways. Their voices and their knowledge were still not regarded as being central resources from which others could begin theorizing. Never before had prostitutes worked as advocates for themselves, offering reform possibilities and strategies, and putting forth a view of prostitutes as women whose behavior could be regarded as reasonable and moral (Jenness, 1993). In attempting to break away from the definitions applied to their existence, and challenge the dominant views in place about prostitution, the movement continues to threaten to take ownership of the problem of
prostitution away from the traditional experts—law enforcers, social workers, contemporary feminists, and public health officials. According to Edwards (1997), it threatens to do so

...by publicly questioning whose morals are worthy of public affirmation and whose lifestyles are deserving of public condemnation and legislative control. In the process, the validity of public and legal designations of prostitutes has been rendered debatable. (1997, p. 121)

What is important here is that prostitute writers are slowly taking the power to define their situation away from authorities that are distanced from their lives. They are turning this power over to sex worker women who, as a heterogenous body of prostitute women, have developed a standpoint on prostitution which recognizes the multiplicity of influences which have shaped their reality.

Second, by offering a new image of prostitutes as women who are targeted by law because they do not follow general patriarchal standards for female conduct, they also attempt to attack the dominant myths existing about prostitute women. It seems as this is also a goal of both radical and liberal feminists, but the prostitutes rights movement takes their feminist positions on sexuality one step further. Many of the published writings, public statements and historical accounts of prostitute or ex-prostitute activists and writers on the history of the whore in society work towards deconstructing the negative image attributed to the whore, to then re-construct a positive image of whores, in order to show how redefining sexual behavior attributes is possible for women.

Prostitute writers and activists have redefined what has ori-
ginally been considered proper sexual conduct for men to engage in, by legitimating alternative types of conduct for women. Many women have experienced sexual promiscuity, sex with different partners, and unemotionally attached sexual encounters in their lives, but these experiences have historically been strongly discouraged for women while being strongly encouraged for men. Therefore, women are left with guilt and bad feelings about themselves for being sexually expressive and active in this manner simply because this activity for a woman has the potential to damage her reputation and therefore her worth in society. In essence, prostitute activists are trying to legitimize their beliefs that this standard for women is both unnecessary and outdated.

Eliminating this standard can only benefit women as a whole. This attack, made by prostitute activist’s claims, on common perceptions of what is considered natural sexual attitudes for women, goes beyond the academic feminist discussions of prostitute women and prostitution in the United States. What this essentially does, is offer a semi-legitimate image of a sexually active woman that defies the traditional definitions that women have been subjected to throughout history. There is a strength in legitimating this image of women that many feminists do not support, because it is an image which upsets morally rigid theoretical frameworks with which they have been trained to shape their feminist analysis of prostitution. However, prostitute writers, have begun to reflect on their situation for the first time as the authorities, and as feminists TO
feminists. As Nagle (1997) notes,

...it is high time to stop excluding the perspectives of sex worker feminists, time to stop assuming that traditional feminist analysis of sexual oppression alone exhausts all possible interpretations of commercial sex, and time to stop reproducing the whore stigma common to the larger culture. (p. 2)

In this way, it can be seen how radical and liberal feminists, in the simplicity mandated by their theoretical frameworks, do more harm than good to prostitute women by excluding alternative prostitute perspectives from their theories. Nagle (1997) further comments on the effects of this absence of perspective from feminist theories in noting that,

...mainstream feminists have yet to make major moves beyond analyzing how sex work oppresses women, to theorizing how feminism reproduces oppression of sex workers, and how incorporating sex worker feminisms results in richer analyses of gender oppression. (p. 1)

Therefore, the methodology used by activists to develop the prostitute rights movement challenges the system that stigmatizes them for conduct deemed as morally inappropriate for women, and also challenges the appropriateness of all definitions placed on prostitute women by non-prostitute authorities. As a result, the standpoints that have been developed by prostitute women directly work towards resolving some of the issues surrounding prostitution which include the resulting discriminatory treatment of prostitution by law enforcement, and the perpetuation of violence against prostitute women as a group in U.S. society. Unlike feminist attention on prostitution, these organizations continue work which addresses currently existing inequities from which prostitute women suffer.
Therefore, prostitute standpoints have challenged the social discourse available on prostitution in the United States. They have gone beyond feminist interpretations and suggestions for resolving the relationship between prostitute women's lives and violence in two major ways. First, since their standpoint was developed out of political activism fighting for more rights and protection for prostitute women, this standpoint has continued to struggle towards effective solutions which will drastically reduce the violence faced by prostitute women. While supporting the belief that decriminalization will reduce some of the most apparent abuses suffered by prostitutes, prostitute activists have created support networks which provide prostitutes with a safe area in which to talk and support each other's feelings and beliefs. The work of prostitute organizations have also provided necessary services to help prostitute women, without any of the stigma that affects their interactions with other members of society. The existence of these organizations not only directly attacks many current inequities that prostitute women face within the U.S., they also work to break down the barriers that have been placed between prostitute and non-prostitute women. They do so by promoting a reconceptualization of how women have historically been divided depending on their sexual behavior, and the belief that this division only perpetuates violence against all women. In doing this, prostitute organizations attack the violence directed at prostitution in an exceptional way. By deconstructing the negative image of the whore in society, they show the effects that whore
stigma has on all women. They demonstrate how the criminal justice system, used to enforce societal norms, reflects societal definitions for women regarding appropriate female sexuality, identifies what types of women who have experienced sexual violence at the hands of men are worthy victims, and identifies a group of women as unrapeable women (Miller & Schwartz, 1995).

The struggle for change by the prostitute rights movement has attempted to include within it as many different prostitute voices as possible. It is the number of these women that bravely step forward to get assistance, support from other prostitutes, or step up to fight for political change as a lobbying force which continues to gain more power for these groups who are attempting to make significant changes in the circumstances surrounding prostitution in the United States. They also work to promote the reality that sex work in the United States is made up of a heterogenous body of workers who are different from the popular stereotypes of either vulgar women or of hopeless women (see Barry, 1984; 1995).

The contention by most prostitute organizations to begin any analysis of prostitution by presuming sex workers to be willful, moral, insightful and as innovators with respect to patriarchal norms is not a denial of the fact that a certain number of women within the sex work industry, especially in terms of street prostitutes, do conform to the popular stereotypes mentioned above (Scambler, 1997). However, what is most important to remember, and what is the central theme of this research, is that the actions of pro-
stitute organizations have, for the past thirty years, been occurring with minimal support from feminist groups and have actually gained a moderate amount of legitimation within different areas of discourse on prostitution within the United States.

I believe that there are some important methods by which academic feminists and sociologists can complement the work that has been done by these prostitute organizations and do a great deal to help the prostitutes rights movement. Most important to helping prostitutes with their activism, is that these prostitute organizations need their voices further legitimated by feminist academics. Even though more feminists are currently supporting the prostitutes rights movement in various ways, I believe more focus needs to be turned towards preventing the further domination of the discourse on prostitution. Feminists must find a way to combine the standpoint of organized prostitutes and feminist academics so that what becomes most apparent in the writing done by feminists on prostitution is the encouragement of political action grounded in reality rather than in a disassociated conceptual framework.

Implications from this research suggest that feminist theorists might reconsider how theorists can get help in developing a theory. This research also suggests that theorists must question what their role should be regarding the development of theory for theory's sake, or the development of theory designed to encourage praxis. As the historical accounts in this thesis reveal, the prostitute voices developing their discourse outside of the socially
legitimate discourse provided by feminists and others, has challenged theorists from a theoretical base, but more importantly, from a perspective immersed in praxis. How then, can feminist theorists move from theorizing within academia, to theorizing in which the logical next step is to initiate praxis?

This can be obtained by using prostitute women as the primary resource for gaining knowledge about prostitution. As Dorothy Smith (1990) explains, it is here that knowledge can be explored as a set of social relations. We must move from focusing on the object (in this instance, prostitution) to the relations and circumstances within which that object arises. Also, our circumstances of how we relate to the object must be considered. As Smith (1990) puts it,

it is the relations coordinating people's actual sequences of action that must be central to our investigation, for it is these actual activities that bind them into the extending sequences coordinating activities among many individuals and across multiple sites. (p. 201)

Therefore, it seems as though two feminist groups, when addressing the subject of prostitution and in defining the types of violence that prostitute women experience, might want to turn their focus away from the conceptual frameworks of their respective perspectives, and learn about prostitution and its relationship to certain types of violence from prostitute women themselves. Feminists might want to develop writing which will take the discourse to a different level—one based upon the necessity of political activity. In this way, feminist theorists and prostitute activists could work together to potentially increase public acknowledgment of the per-
pectives of prostitute women. By creating the social space for voices of prostitute women to be publically acknowledged, the issues that prostitute women raise become part of a larger public agenda. The existence of prostitute perspectives within this public space could influence public perceptions of prostitute women. Public legitimation of prostitute perspectives would potentially lead toward the improvement of living conditions for prostitute women in the United States. A lot of the success of this will depend on how much control of the discourse both radical and liberal feminist groups are willing to give up to prostitute voices.

I would also suggest, from the knowledge attained through this research, that feminist debates must also allow for the voices of prostitutes and the issues they raise as areas of concern to take precedence over the debates different feminist writers thrive on in academia. Feminists might think about turning to the organized prostitutes rights movement for some ideas on how, as feminists, their writing might work to empower prostitutes to further represent themselves in such debates. Radical and liberal feminists must allow prostitute and other sex worker voices more power to speak about the issues they feel need to be addressed and the goals needing to be reached. In order to further legitimate these voices, their voices need to carry more weight within the discourse on prostitution than the two feminist perspectives that have been described in this research. In these ways, perhaps the violence that prostitute women face at the hands of pimps, customers, police, state, and academia
might be drastically reduced.
Performing this research on prostitution led me to discover many things. I learned that there have been many different explanations for prostitution that have historically excluded the voices of prostitute women from their explanations. This was shown in the historical analysis, provided in this thesis, of prostitution in the United States. I also learned that the ways in which feminists have placed prostitution onto their agenda for discussion has drastically limited the nature of this discussion in two ways.

First, the theorizing of liberal and radical feminists seems to be underdeveloped because explanations of prostitution in these theories end up being used only to exemplify the basic assumptions of either theory. My research demonstrates this to be a result of both perspectives containing inherent assumptions about how social scientists do research, which mandates how a component of society under study should be described and analyzed. In the case of prostitution, feminists studying prostitution in U.S. society utilizing traditional methods of analysis, concentrate on finding characteristics supporting the assumptions for their theoretical framework. This causes their theories to be idealistic, and leads to inadequate feminist accounts of the actual heterogeneity of both prostitute women's characteristics and experiences in the United States. This
has created a situation in which the discourse on prostitution in U.S. society is dominated by two feminist perspectives, which are severely limited in the applicability of their theories to the lives of prostitute women. Also, by framing the discourse in this manner, most discussions on prostitution are then held within academic circles, rather than being placed into public discourse, from where the majority of prostitute activists are promoting their terms of the discourse.

Second, these two feminist perspectives further limit themselves in theorizing about prostitute women by excluding the perspectives of prostitute women that fall outside of either liberal or radical assumptions about prostitution. As has been demonstrated in the information presented in this thesis on the prostitute rights movement, prostitute activists present different perspectives on prostitution which could greatly influence feminist interpretations of prostitution in the United States. These perspectives of prostitute women also offer alternative definitions of female sexuality than those offered by the liberal and radical perspectives.

In beginning this research on prostitute women, I expected to find that prostitute activists were performing more work than academic feminists that led to policy changes, such as work to improve the social and legal status of prostitute women and providing services to support prostitute women needing different kinds of help. I found this to be true. What was unexpectedly found were prostitute activists offering their own theories of the role that certain
definitions of female sexuality play in the subordination of women in the United States. Nor did I expect to find prostitute women's ideas attacking the liberal and radical feminist definitions of what these feminist perspectives define healthy representations of female sexuality to be. The existence of this criticism was a very informative surprise.

I learned that both traditional patriarchal notions of prostitution in the United States, and the liberal and radical feminist interpretations of prostitution in the United States are incomplete without including the perspectives and philosophies of prostitute women. My discussion of the relationship between standpoint theory and the existence of a multitude of prostitute voices has shown that prostitute activists move beyond the possible theories of those traditionally in control of the discourse on prostitution. In doing this, these prostitute activists change the nature of the discourse on prostitution from one which assumes the subjects under study cannot be active participants in the discourse, to one which shows the necessity of their inclusion.

Therefore, through this research I learned about some of the limitations of traditional feminist theorizing as it applies to prostitution, while also learning of a perspective which interprets female sexuality in a manner separate from both traditional patriarchal definitions, and from some alternative definitions offered by the liberal and radical feminist perspectives. From the results of this research, the key issue of this paper, an analysis of what per-
spectives have had control over the discourse on prostitution, has therefore shown the effects of feminist dominance of the academic discourse on prostitution and the effects that this domination has had on invalidating alternative perspectives offered by prostitute activists.

From my research, I have also demonstrated how violence faced by prostitute women is encouraged due to factors which support the whore stigma that has been historically attached to certain images of women in U.S. society. To conclude, I think it is important to explain some of the limitations of the research presented in this thesis.

First, I chose to limit my discussion of prostitutes to adult female prostitutes living in the United States. Though other prostitute groups exist (male, transgender, child prostitution and the illegal trafficking of women within and/or between countries), I focused on the adult female prostitute population in order to be able to draw certain parallels between prostitute and non-prostitute women. My research showed these parallels exist, as all women are subject to behavioral standards which are affected by the whore stigma, and all women have been historically subjected to certain other types of social control placed upon female sexual behavior. Parallels also exist between prostitute and non-prostitute women regarding the relationship of these variables to the development of biased legislation, and to the existence of violence which is systematically performed against all women in U.S. society.
Second, though I realize that there are many other feminist perspectives that have discussed prostitution, I chose the liberal and radical arguments because they are the most popular voices arguing about prostitution within academia. Another reason that I chose to discuss these two perspectives is because they do have some commonalities with the perspectives of prostitute activists. I also want to point out that there are many radical and liberal feminists who would not agree entirely with the perspective that I have painted them as having for the purposes of this thesis. Realizing that perspectives are always evolving into new forms, I did my best to keep the descriptions of liberal and radical feminism general. I wanted this thesis to focus on the general assumptions inherent to each theoretical framework and their effect on the nature of feminist researching and theorizing on prostitution.

I chose this approach in order to be fair to the diversities existing within each perspective. I do not mean to imply that liberal and radical feminism have not, inherently in their work done for women, helped prostitute women in certain ways. Without the development of both of these perspectives, prostitution may not have ever been introduced into any discourses as a social circumstance which is surrounded by different types of violence. Feminists helped bring topics like prostitution into public awareness. My concern was more to show that feminists do not need to unify on their long-term solutions for prostitution in order to work together to attempt to reduce the violence experienced by prostitute women.
In other words, my aim was to demonstrate how feminists could help prostitute women by working to legitimate their voices and in doing this, join the political movement of prostitute rights organizations. In this way, the standpoint of prostitutes would become more respected because their voices would be legitimated.

In completing this research, I realize that this research topic has much potential both within and outside of academic circles. Looking at the parameters defined for this research, I realize that including some of these other perspectives within this thesis would have brought even more interesting issues to the discussion table on the feminist dilemma with prostitution. There is so much that women are learning about themselves in this patriarchal world. The development of theoretical ideas which attempt to explain women's social circumstance can only benefit the intellectual growth of women as a whole. However, as this research attempts to demonstrate, feminist theorists must not fall into the trap of discrediting voices that do not necessarily fit into the traditional frameworks that have influenced women's intellectual growth. Looking at the implications of this research on future research about prostitution, my research suggests that feminists need to give prostitute activists the space and the legitimacy to speak, while allowing for the fact that their ideas could very well radically alter traditional notions of liberal or radical feminist interpretations of female sexuality.

In order to strengthen my view that prostitute activists are not getting the attention or respect that they deserve, I might have
organized my thesis in a manner which focused entirely on prostitute voices, and how the absence of their voices within the discourse can be seen as an example of the central ideas of standpoint epistemology. However, I felt I needed to gain more knowledge about the two feminist perspectives that are dominant in the discourse, in order to have enough knowledge to comfortably begin to discuss the problems that exist in the discourse on prostitution in U.S. society.

Though I feel that I accomplished my intentions with this thesis, I am left at the finish of it with even more questions regarding feminism and its connection to the topic of prostitution, and the existence of the whore stigma and its effects on the types of violence which target different groups of women. The results of this research took me beyond the parameters of this thesis to delve into personal issues with which I struggle. These include the attempt to understand the various factors influencing the expression of my own sexuality, which makes up my own perception of self and personhood. In the end, I hope that a primary message that this thesis presents is one of empowerment. How can feminists work on the topic of prostitution in ways that empower and legitimate the subjects they study? From the results of my research, I suggest that it is time for feminists to decide whether or not to relinquish some of their control of the discourse on prostitute women to sex worker feminists. I suggest that in doing this, feminists will increase the potential ability to help reduce types of violence that
affect all women, and in particular, will help prostitute women attain the civil rights and protections they are currently denied. For these reasons, it can be seen how a consideration of prostitution within academia must begin by recognizing and respecting the validity of the prostitutes' standpoint. Moving feminist discussions on prostitution beyond traditional feminist frameworks of analysis could potentially benefit all women. The legitimated voices of prostitute activists could join the efforts of the larger women's movement to deconstruct certain negative images of women supported by the patriarchal nature of U.S. culture.
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