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Exploring Women's Complex Relationship with Political Violence: A Study of the Weathermen, Radical Feminism and the New Left

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Exploring Women's Complex Relationship with Political Violence: A Study of the
Weathermen, Radical Feminism and the New Left

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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gilda zwerman, ti-grace atkinson, bernadine dohrn

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I use the radical, pro-violent organization the Weathermen as a framework to examine women and feminism's complex relationships with violence. My thesis attempts to show the *many* belief systems that second wave feminists possessed concerning the role(s) of women and violence in revolutionary organizations. Hence, by using the Weathermen as a framework, I discuss various feminist essentialist and pacifist critiques of violence. I also include an analysis of feminists who, similar to the Weathermen, embraced political violence. For example, radical feminists Robin Morgan and Jane Alpert criticized the Weathermen's violent tactics while other feminists such as Ti-Grace Atkinson and Valerie Solanas advocated that women "pick up the gun" in order to destroy patriarchal society. In addition, I analyze the stereotypes of the violent female, which have often been supported by feminists and non-feminists alike. Thus, the stereotyped "nature" of the violent female does not allow for the complexities that accompany the many reasons why women commit politically motivated crimes.

Understanding the role women played in the Weathermen is an important task because women's roles and representation in radical, New Left organizations have often been ignored, overlooked and reproduced by revisionist analyses. Though revolutionary

groups from the sixties and seventies were important and progressive in many ways, my thesis will examine the phenomenon of silencing women's voices in these organizations and how this silencing inspired women to find voice in their own movements.

Furthermore, I am also interested in radical second wave feminists' belief systems and histories concerning violence, particularly since they have rarely been delved into by historians or feminist researchers.

In conclusion, by using the Weathermen as a framework for my thesis, I examine sexism in the New Left, radical feminisms' multiplicity of beliefs about violence, and critique the stereotypes about women and political violence.

Introduction

“The system is like a woman, you’ve got to fuck it to make it change,” (from a 1969 SDS pamphlet, in Echols, 120). This example of “revolutionary rhetoric” exemplifies the blatant misogyny that plagued many New Left organizations in America during the 1960’s and 1970’s. In this thesis I critique the sexism of the American New Left and analyze how second wave feminists reacted to their subordinate status within these supposedly “progressive” groups. I focus specifically on the belief systems of the New Left organization the “Weathermen,” a faction of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) who supported sexism *and* exalted violence as the primary means of social change. The Weathermen’s advocacy of violence often encouraged women to embrace aggression and “me-too” politics. Hence, by using the Weathermen as a framework, I also discuss various feminist essentialist and pacifist critiques of violence, as well as an analysis of feminists who, similar to the Weathermen, embraced political violence. For example, radical feminists Robin Morgan and Jane Alpert criticized the Weathermen’s violent tactics while other feminists such as Ti-Grace Atkinson and Valerie Solanas advocated that women “pick up the gun” in order to destroy patriarchal society. In addition, I analyze the stereotypes of the violent female, which have often been supported by feminists and non-feminists alike. Thus, the stereotyped “nature” of the violent female does not allow for the complexities that accompany the many reasons why women commit politically motivated crimes.

As a feminist researcher, I am interested in the role of women in radical organizations and their experiences with sexism, specifically in New Left political groups like the Weathermen. As it is the project of many in Women's Studies to "rediscover" women's history and contributions, I analyze women's role(s) within the Weathermen, which have been largely ignored by historians. Furthermore, by analyzing the belief systems of the Weathermen I have created a framework to explore feminism's complex relationship with violence. More specifically, I analyze radical second wave feminists' belief systems and histories concerning violence, which have also been greatly ignored by feminist historians. Many sources that analyze radical feminism, such as Rose Marie Tong's *Feminist Thought*, may categorize the movements within feminism, but they do not focus specifically on second wave radical feminist's beliefs about women and violence or historically contextualize women's experiences within these groups.

For my research, I first utilized secondary sources as it is important to be aware of what research has already been done. Unfortunately, there were very texts about the Weathermen and none that focused specifically on women's role in the organization. Ron Jacobs' book *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* was an important secondary source that detailed the evolution of the Weathermen, but had very little about women's role(s). Todd Gitlin's book *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* historically contextualized the period. After understanding these historical frameworks of both the New Left and the Weathermen, I studied the history of the second wave radical feminist movement in Alice Echols' *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*. These historical, secondary sources were the frameworks for the next part of my research which included Gilda Zwerman's study in *International Social Movement*

Research. Her interviews with radical women who commit politically motivated crimes illustrate my thesis, which argues that there is no simple way to categorize violent women. In addition, most of the primary sources used in this thesis are from anthologies or periodicals from the 1960's and 70's. The Weathermen's "Honky Tonk Women," Jane Alpert's "Mother Right," Robin Morgan's "Good-bye to All That," Ti-Grace Atkinson's "Declaration of War" and Valerie Solanas' "S.C.U.M. Manifesto" are all original sources that I analyze throughout this thesis. These primary sources have given me the tools to analyze feminists' reactions to sexism in New Left organizations and their relationships to political violence during the 1960's and 1970's. I have utilized primary sources from the 1960's and 70's and secondary analyses of the period to explore the *many* belief systems that second wave feminists possessed concerning the role(s) of women and violence in revolutionary organizations.

I focus specifically on the Weathermen's support of violence to analyze the belief systems of an array of second wave feminists: some of whom supported violence and others whom abhorred it because of their essentialist views or political pacifism. Therefore, I use the Weathermen's pro-violence stance as a framework to explain the diverse belief systems that feminists possess concerning violence.

Furthermore, my thesis follows both a genealogical and interpretive approach to the subjects and belief systems I am writing about (Ferguson 3). The interpretive approach supports the primacy of speaking subjects, while genealogy challenges the authority of the speaking subject. The genealogical and interpretive approach both view gender as a powerful organizing principle of social life, which is, of course, very important for feminist research. By examining many historical accounts and essays from

the period as background for my thesis, I am employing an interpretive approach. I argue for the equal authority of each woman's voice as she speaks of her relationship with violence. Thus, in this thesis, women's experiences are considered important and valid. However, I also am aware of the multiple sources and contradictions that make up the genealogical theoretical base. The genealogical base takes a post-modern approach to speaking subjects and claims that there is no right "answer." It also advocates interrogation of the belief that human experience is unquestionable proof of the "truth." In researching this thesis I understood that women's interpretation of violence and their experiences with violence are subjective and situated. I do not posit that any speaking subject possesses the "correct" feminist belief system about women and violence. Instead, I attempt to illustrate the multiplicity of beliefs about violence within the feminist movement, the intersections and divergences between the Weathermen and the second wave feminist movement and the cultural stereotyping of political female "terrorists."

In Chapter One, "SDS," I focus on the evolving definition of the New Left, what the issues were for the Old Left and what the concerns were for the new, more prominent factions of SDS, particularly by the end of the 1960's. In the section, "The Explosive Convention," I use primary sources from the period to critique SDS's sexism and their refusal to view women's rights as an issue that could exist separately from the fight against imperialism. This section also includes historical accounts of the 1969 SDS convention, where, after an outburst against male chauvinism, the Weathermen took over SDS. The section, "Wannabe Revolutionaries," describes the Weathermen's degradation into insular, isolated politics and their fascination with the Third World and the Black

Panther Party. This section also explores the Weathermen's class and race guilt, along with their inability to view being "male" as a position of privilege.

Chapter Two, "Feminists' Critique," focuses on feminists' criticism of women in the Weathermen who tried to be violent and macho in order to be considered revolutionary. In the section, "Radical-Cultural Feminists," I explain how Jane Alpert and others critiqued women and violence by essentializing women. The next section, "Pacifist Feminists," explains how other feminists objected to violence, not because they thought women were naturally non-violent, but because they wanted men *and* women to resist violence and oppression of all sorts.

Chapter Three titled, "Violent Feminists," features feminists whose belief systems contrast the pacifism and essentialism of the previous sections. I explain the belief systems of pro-self defense feminists as well as pro-violence feminists such as Ti-Grace Atkinson and Valerie Solanas, the misandric author of the S.C.U.M. (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto. The following section, "Female Terrorists," focuses on the work of feminist sociologist Gilda Zwerman. Zwerman's study critiques the stereotypes of violent women and posits that violent revolutionary women's motivations are diverse and individual.

In the concluding chapter I briefly explain some of the influence that feminism had on the Weathermen. Though the Weathermen did not ever fundamentally alter their authoritarian practices, with the aid of feminism's critique they could see that their own members were guilty of oppressive practices. Thus, the Weathermen were forced to recognize that prejudice does not always grow out of malicious intent, but rather systematic entitlement.

In conclusion, by using the Weathermen as a framework for my thesis, I examine sexism in the New Left, radical feminisms' multiplicity of beliefs about violence, and critique the stereotypes about women and political violence.

Chapter One: SDS

During the 1960's and 70's, America was a place where social and political change occurred so rapidly that each month seemed like a different era (Bloom and Breines 10). Social movements reflected this propensity to change; by the end of the 1960's, many movements had grown, radicalized or branched out into other movements against oppression. As people of color were fighting for their civil rights, students were resisting the constraints of the corporate university system, protests against the invasion of Vietnam were raging and women were opposing their second class citizenry. Culturally, the definitions of sex, pleasure, religion and individuality were being re-defined. In this hotbed for social change, there were a plethora of cultural players. All possessed their own methods for contesting what they felt was a suffocating and oppressive society (Bloom and Breines 10).

By the early 1960's, the Old Left, which had played a large part in contesting oppression for decades, was experiencing changes of its own. Though parts of the Old Left remained active during the 1960's—communists, socialists, union activists, etc.—a new vision for what direction the American Left should take was emerging. These “New Leftists” had a new agenda: most of their concern, particularly at first, was for American youth and university students. They viewed the Old Left as stodgy, intellectual, impersonal and not action oriented enough (Echols 28). Longing to reassert the political

as “personal” and “passionate,” young New Leftists created Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962.

In 1962, SDS began its foray into activism by releasing the “Port Huron Statement,” which claimed that many young people were, “looking uncomfortably at the world they inherit” (Bloom and Breines 50). To combat this discomfort, at its inception, SDS organized sit-ins, marches and peacefully protested: predominantly against the university system, which members of SDS perceived as an oppressive institution. The organization was calling for “participatory democracy,” university reform and a more conscientious capitalism. They also wanted to work against all forms of discrimination, particularly racial, and offer support for the struggles of Third World peoples. In order to inspire real change in America and the world, they planned to work ceaselessly within the “democratic” system (Bloom and Breines 49).

Thus, in the early 60’s, even though it was rebelling against the “Old” guard, the New Left still had a reputation for being theoretical and non-violent. It generally utilized pacifism to resist racial injustice, student repression and the war in Vietnam. However, by the late 1960’s, the New Left and SDS had transformed into something very different from what it had been in earlier years. SDS was split between radical and more moderate factions: anti-Marxists against pro-Marxists, the pro-violence “action-faction” against the pacifists, and the women’s liberationists who were fighting against blatant misogyny within and outside the organization (Echols 125). However, despite all the conflict, the aforementioned “action-faction” members of SDS were gaining the most prestige in the organization. This “action-faction,” frustrated by non-violent tactics that seemed to change nothing, called for more radical and violent methods to incite social change. They

critiqued the Old Left, which they perceived as a bastion of arm-chair intellectual passivity, and were disgusted with the New Left's "ineffective mass protest" (Echols 125).

Thus, many in the movement were exhausted with its previous mechanisms of protest and debate. Their frustration was understandable—participants in the movement had attended hundreds of protests and sit-ins, only to be abused by police and not taken seriously by the American government or the majority of its people. The movement was floundering and did not know where to go (Gitlin 285). Protests against the invasion of Vietnam had changed nothing about the government's policies. In fact, by the end of the 1960's, fighting in Vietnam had intensified and the draft remained in full force.

In addition, the movements and individuals that "action-faction" New Leftists were suddenly looking to as "heroes" were often pro-violent and hostile to American culture. Disillusioned that many movement leaders had been killed or were no longer radical enough to articulate their revolutionary goals, more and more, many New Leftists now derived their inspiration from Cuba, China, Vietnam and the Third World guerilla movement leaders. Mao, Frantz Fanon, Che and Debray were "sufficiently furious" to inspire American New Leftists who felt as if their methodologies were accomplishing nothing (Gitlin 263).

The notion that peaceful protest "accomplished nothing" was also inspired by the violent political changes occurring throughout the world at the end of the 1960's. After 1968, a tumultuous year that included the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and the champion of non-violent resistance, Martin Luther King, the police violence at the Chicago Democratic Convention, the student uprisings of France and Columbia

University, the Tet Offensive in Vietnam and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the “action-faction” members of the New Left found an international, radical, political space to fight for change (Jacobs 2). According to historian Todd Gitlin, the explosion of international revolutionary movements inspired many in the New Left who were disgusted with their country (261). In fact, it seemed as if the entire world, not just America, was teetering on the brink of revolution. Many in the New Left believed that there were internally colonized people in the First World, suffering from racism and economic disparity, whose struggles were similar to those in the Third World. Thus, it did not matter if one was in the First or Third World: everywhere the colonized were resisting their colonizers (Gitlin 262). Youth, minorities and working class people were not accepting their second class citizenry and women were beginning their own movements against the patriarchal dominance of society.

This political climate, which seemed to be moving more and more towards extreme action, allowed for a small but influential faction of SDS to gain prominence—a pro-violence group named the Weathermen. Frustration at the results of previous tactics of pacifism and working “within the system” inspired many in SDS to side with the Weathermen, at least for a brief time (Gitlin 381). Thus, without the aforementioned political climate and frustration from members of SDS, the Weathermen may not have been able to influence the New Left or radicalize SDS after its contentious 1969 convention.

The Explosive Convention

In this section, I analyze the sexism in SDS, the influence that the struggle for women's rights had on the SDS convention of 1969 and how, despite resistance, the basic power structures of male domination and sexism in the movement stayed in place.

From its inception, SDS was not admired as a beacon of hope for those committed to women's liberation. In fact, most men in the New Left ridiculed, trivialized and mocked the Women's Liberation Movement. Some were even downright hostile towards women's activists, such as the Berkeley anti-war leader who commented on feminism by saying, "Let them eat cock" (Echols 120). Allegations of misogyny were not only limited to individuals in SDS. The movement itself was structurally misogynistic—almost all positions of leadership were given to men. Also, the "goals" of the organization repeatedly dehumanized women. At SDS meetings "brothers" reported their unique dreams for utopia which included, "Free grass, free food, free women and free clothes..." (Cassell 23). In addition, if and when women tried to criticize male chauvinism within the movement, their actions were mocked. SDS journal, "The Guardian," reported the response of men when allegations of sexism emerged, "The feeling in the room was, well, those women have done their silly little thing again" (Brown and Jones 362).

In addition to men's reactions to allegations of sexism, it is also important to note that many women in SDS did not see women's issues as pertinent to the mission of the New Left. In fact, many women in the movement seemed to have an inability to "identify with their own sex" (Brown and Jones 364). For example, at a 1967 women's meeting about chauvinism in SDS, participants discussed forming committees to "study possible

sexism.” Such unenthusiastic solutions to the problems of sexism were ironic considering that the late 1960’s were a time of “action-faction” politics.

In their 1970 essay on sexism in SDS, former SDS members Beverly Jones and Judith Brown contend that most members of SDS would never merely talk about “forming committees” to study racism within the movement. To many male and female members of SDS, sexism was not considered a real concern or issue that was impeding the movement. Women’s concerns were seen as trivial or even over exaggerated, especially when they involved critiquing the sexism within SDS.

Though both the Weathermen and the Progressive Labor Party (competing factions of SDS) half heartedly supported women’s resistance of the dominant culture, women’s liberation was deemed acceptable only if their activism was *part* of what was seen as the more important anti-imperialist movement. As it had been for years in counter cultural movements, women were needed, but only to fight someone else’s battle. Their concerns were absorbed in the bigger, supposedly more pertinent problems of the world (Gitlin 387).

An illustration of this point can be found in the statement Weatherwoman Bernadine Dohrn released articulating the Weathermen’s position on women’s liberation:

Most of the women’s groups are bourgeois, unconscious or unconcerned with class struggle and the exploitation of working women...Instead of integrating (not submerging the struggle of women into a broader revolutionary movement), these women are flailing in their own middle-class images...their direction leads to a middle class single issue movement—and this at a time when the black liberation movement is polarizing the country, when

national wars of liberation are waging the most advanced assaults on U.S. imperialism, when the growth of the movement is at a critical stage (Echols 120)!

I contend that it should be noted that the Weathermen's stance (mainly supported by men in the organization and Bernadine Dohrn) at least acknowledged that women's rights were part of the revolution. The resolution was problematic, however, because it stressed that women's liberation should never stand apart from the fight against capitalism and imperialism. According to "Honky Tonk Women," another document written by the Weathermen, white women's fight for "equal rights" is inherently racist and imperialist because any material or economic improvement women in America receive inevitably harms Third World people (Bloom and Breines 383).

Also, according to "Honky Tonk Women," if one wants to view truly revolutionary, emancipated women, all one has to do is look to the Third World for examples. "Honky Tonk Women" contends that Vietnamese women earned their "equality" not by creating their own movement, but by "picking up the gun to destroy the U.S." (Bloom and Breines 383). Though the document does half heartedly acknowledge that men must change, it stresses that women should not expect them to do so until a Communist revolution occurs. According to the Weathermen, Communist revolution was what men and women in the Left were supposed to work for. Any other issues were merely selfish, white, middle class concerns (Bloom and Breines 384).

In contrast, many feminists such as Beverly Jones and Judith Brown criticized radical New Left organizations that viewed Third World movements as the great emancipators of women. They also contended that the Weathermen and other American

New Leftists who looked to the Third World for analogies within their own culture were ignoring the many differences between America and the myriad of Third World countries which were embroiled in revolution at the time. Furthermore, Jones and Brown felt that New Left women who invoked the “Third World analogy” often romanticized women’s roles in revolutions, particularly the Cuban, Vietnamese or Algerian revolts.

Many female SDSer’s lauded Cuban women for fighting for their “freedom” and wanted to reenact their resistance throughout America. In their essay, “Towards a Female Liberation Movement,” feminists Beverly Jones and Judith Brown contend that though women *did* fight in the Cuban revolution, their roles were similar to women’s roles in SDS—that of peripheral helper. To romanticize women’s roles in Third World revolutions was merely a manifestation of the Weathermen’s dualistic, unrealistic beliefs about the Third and First World. The Weathermen viewed the First World as the embodiment of capitalist greed and decadence. On the other hand, communist and socialist movements in the Third World were portrayed as the antithesis of the evil First World. According to the Weathermen, countries in the Third World gladly emancipated women and were sites of egalitarian, “classless” societies. Put simply, America and its cohorts were unquestionably bad and the Third World was unquestionably good (Brown and Jones 363).

No matter how accurate feminists such as Beverly Jones and Judith Brown may have been about sexism in Third World movements, the Weathermen could not accept any feminist criticism and continued to discount the women’s movement as middle class and pro-imperialist (Echols 120). Though it is true that the second wave liberal feminist movement has been critiqued for espousing issues that are mainly concerned with the

middle-class, I contend that there were radical middle class feminists committed to solidarity with working class women, as well as working class and Marxist/Socialist feminists. While Marxist/Socialist feminism has been criticized for viewing capitalism and not patriarchy as women's oppressor, some Marxist/Socialist feminists are able to reconcile socialism with feminism and see the interconnectedness and intersections between the two movements (Tong 116).

Thus, I contend that the Weathermen's stereotyping of feminists as bourgeois and pro-imperialist does not take into account the myriad of differences in race, class, sexuality and belief systems that second wave feminists possessed. Furthermore, the Weathermen's model of economic change first and women's issues second was unrealistically linear. The group rigidly compartmentalized movements for change and could not see the multiple intersections between class, race and gender. They gave no recognition to black feminist thought or any other movement that connected the struggles against racism or classism with feminism. The Weathermen's inability to relate sexism to other issues and movements was similar to their misunderstanding of racism. They believed that a Communist revolution would eventually absorb any semblance of racism, and thus they ignored specific oppressions as complex and historically contingent.

The Weathermen, who would eventually "take over" SDS, did not believe that there was any opportunity for reconciliation between socialism and feminism, except perhaps after the revolution. They gladly ignored the feminists who were supporting and fighting for both issues. The Weathermen could only view women as part and parcel of the larger revolution.

By 1969, the Weathermen hoped to articulate their position about women in a resolution at the SDS summer convention, but were blocked by the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). Despite their similarities concerning women's role(s), it was the PLP's refusal to pass the Weathermen's resolution about women that instigated the already sparring groups to finally split up SDS, a division from which the organization never recovered (Echols 122).

The already tense convention exploded into chaos when Rufus "Chaka" Walls of the Black Panther Party declared that the only power for women that the Panthers supported was "pussy power." The audience, particularly members of the Progressive Labor Party, responded to Walls by chanting, "Fight male chauvinism!" This only enraged Walls, who incensed the crowd further by yelling back, "Superman was a punk because he never even tried to fuck Lois Lane" (Echols 123). The crowd of enraged SDS members proved that it was no longer publicly acceptable to demean women in their organization. Many women had experienced enough hypocrisy from the New Left and were sick of male chauvinists leading meetings and conventions. But there was also political strategy in play—the PLP was acting politically, since Walls had been brought in by the Weathermen. The PLP would have done anything to gain power over the Weathermen, even if it meant having its male members act outraged about the very sexism they secretly or not so secretly supported.

After Walls was kicked off stage, the Progressive Labor Party took the microphone and ironically declared that they were truly superior in their stance concerning both women's and black liberation. The Weathermen refused to accept this

statement of superiority and staged a walk-out where they effectively expelled the PLP from the organization and claimed that they were the *real* SDS (Echols 123).

This takeover, I contend, was successful largely in part because of Weatherwoman Bernadine Dohrn. Dohrn was a central figure in the movement who was praised by New Left men and women for her “chorus line figure” and ability to mobilize large groups of people. Many men in SDS desired Dohrn because she, “fused the two premium images of the movement: sex queen and street fighter” (Gitlin 386).

Despite the obvious objectification in how she was perceived by men in the movement, Dohrn possessed a great deal of authority in SDS. Accounts from former Weatherwoman Susan Stern articulate the power she felt Dohrn possessed. Stern adored Dohrn because she was one of the few women who seemed to have any sway and privilege in the young boys club that was SDS. (Stern 144).

It was this mythological charisma that helped Dohrn lead the Weathermen walk out during the convention—bringing seven hundred other SDS members with her chanting, “Power to the people; Ho! Ho! Ho Chi Minh!” Though Dohrn’s “aristocracy” in the organization helped change SDS into a platform for the Weathermen, the three top positions in the new SDS won by the “action faction” clique were given to Mark Rudd, Bill Ayers and Jeffrey Jones, obviously all men. Dohrn’s powerful leadership skills were not rewarded in an organization that still insisted on supporting male supremacy.

Thus, though its focus had changed drastically from the Old Left and even from some of its earlier tactics, most men in the New Left continued to support sexism in the movement. In fact, it was only because of the political strife between the PLP and the Weathermen that women’s issues became important during the 1969 SDS convention.

Furthermore, even after the Weathermen's rise to prominence, women continued to be viewed as pawns in a revolution that was not their own.

Wannabe Revolutionaries

In this section, I discuss the sweeping changes that the Weathermen made after they took over SDS, their idealization of the Black Panther Party and their disintegration into insularity and despair.

After the SDS convention in 1969, an eleven member committee wrote a statement that SDS should be concerned with, "the main struggle going on in the world today, which is the fight between U.S. imperialism and the national liberation struggles against it. The goal is the destruction of U.S. imperialism and the achievement of a classless world" (Braungart 48). This new SDS, which was now controlled by the Weathermen, was very different from the "uncomfortable" SDS of 1962, who wanted to peacefully achieve a more conscientious capitalism and equitable America.

Many of the Weathermen were hot young stars from the Columbia University student uprising of 1968 and had the charisma to woo students and monopolize the media. Much to the chagrin of the expelled members of SDS, the Weathermen's visibility and charisma aided in the media's claim that the group was a "representative" of the entire "out of control" anti-war movement and New Left (Gitlin 385).

The group took their name from a line in the Bob Dylan song Subterranean Homesick Blues, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows" (Gitlin 385). The name was appropriate because the Weathermen, like the rest of the country, was taking notice of the immense changes that were occurring in the world. To

the Weathermen, the quote meant that revolution was happening everywhere and it was just a matter of time before America experienced radical change as well (Jacobs 5).

According to the Weathermen, in this hot bed of revolutionary change, students were no longer integral to the anti-war movement. Instead, it was black people who were implementing true insurrections in America. Black America could and would instigate revolution on their own; it was only the white radical's job to, "support the blacks in moving as fast as they have to and are able to" (Echols 125). Many in the Weathermen agreed that organizing whites around their perceived oppressions, such as women's liberation or student's rights, would inevitably lead to "racist and chauvinistic discourse" (Ono 255). As was discussed in the previous section, this fear was quite ironic since the group was and has been criticized for being both racist and sexist!

Furthermore, class and race guilt was a prevalent theme in the organization as most members of the Weathermen were white and from affluent backgrounds, had attended prestigious universities and were highly educated: some even had law degrees. The youths in the Weathermen felt extreme disgust at their privileged backgrounds. They did not believe that people could examine and interrogate their privilege without falling into the counterproductive spaces of guilt and shame (Braungart 56). In fact, if one was not poor, black, Third World or hungry, the Weathermen believed that one's conscience should suffer. Conveniently, within this buffet of guilt, male was not considered a privileged position. Most middle-class white men who ran the "progressive" New Left refused to admit or recognize that being male automatically afforded them certain powers and privileges.

In her essay, "Goodbye to All That," radical feminist Robin Morgan critiques the white male New Left's inability to see its own hypocrisy. She says, "White men are most responsible for the destruction of human life and environment on the planet today. Yet who is controlling the supposed revolution to change all that? White Males!" (in *Voices from Women's Liberation* 269). Furthermore, Morgan contends that first and foremost the oppressed should be the actual leaders in movements that fight against their specific oppressions. She warns that the white male New Left will destroy itself with its hypocrisy concerning male chauvinism and leadership roles. In addition, the New Left will never be genuine until it stops reinforcing the capitalist economy by allowing men to fight for power at the top while forcing women to work at the bottom (in *Voices from Women's Liberation* 269).

Though feminists like Morgan may have viewed the New Left as hypocritical, the Weathermen did not see their organization as reinforcing bourgeois notions in any way. "Rich bitches", "Spoiled kids" and "Bourgeois liberals" were all identities considered negative and repulsive to the Weathermen.

To counteract their privileged backgrounds, white radicals in the Weathermen found inspiration for new identities within the Black Panther Party. The Weathermen fervently agreed with the Panther's belief that black Americans were a colony living in the United States. They also lauded the Panther's philosophy of armed self-defense against the police or "pigs" as they called them. The Black Panther Party, like the Weathermen, was interested in international solidarity against imperialism, which they felt suppressed people of color around the world (Echols 126). The Weathermen believed that earning the respect of the Black Panther Party would legitimize white

revolutionaries. Also, if the Weathermen could prove that they were not wimpy intellectuals, but rather street fighting warriors, perhaps they would appear to be working class and inspire the “true” working class and people of color to join their struggles.

The Weathermen, seemingly almost desperate at times to establish themselves with the Panthers, developed the slogan, “John Brown—live like him!” Many in the Black Panther Party, however, were not as receptive. The Panther’s own male chauvinism inspired them to liken the Weathermen to sissies, girls and little boys (Echols 126). Hence, the discourse between the two organizations was embroiled in sexism; articulated in the Panther’s belief that the Weathermen were “sissies” and not masculine or tough enough.

Furthermore, since the beginning of their organization in 1968, the Weathermen had tried desperately to make themselves “tough” like the working class people they so often stereotyped. The Weathermen believed that if they were masculine and aggressive it would be easier to fight in the upcoming revolutions they planned to incite.

Furthermore, the Weathermen feared that if other revolutionaries, particularly the Panthers, did not accept them as tough, then their radical aspirations would never have any clout. Much to their chagrin, the Weathermen never did receive approval from the Panthers. In fact, after several harsh statements about the Weathermen’s low grade masculinity from the Black Panthers, the Weathermen figured they needed to seek out new allies, but had trouble finding them within the New or Old Left or within mainstream America.

By late 1969 the Weathermen had lost all hope of reaching the “people.” The only thing they could see as productive was sabotaging the indifferent, corrupt white

American system. The Weathermen viewed themselves and a small handful of other revolutionaries as the only viable citizens remaining in America. As the group intensified its commitment to violence, Bernadine Dohrn announced, “Revolutionary violence is the only way. Now we are adopting the classic guerrilla strategy of [Uruguayan] Tupamaros...in the technically most advanced country in the world” (Braungart 50). Violence, indiscriminate or targeted, was no longer considered morally wrong as it had been in SDS before the Weathermen took over. The Weathermen truly believed (whether they enacted it or not) that violence and insularity would be the only way to make any change occur in American society. In Chicago, SDS leader Mike James told a crowd:

Non-violent marches have their place, but they won't bring about the changes necessary for freedom. Capitalism won't crumble because of moral protest...They've got the guns, we've got the people...The time will come when we'll have to use guns. Don't let that hang you up. Some of you say violence isn't human. Well, taking oppression isn't human; it's stupid. You only live one time, so you better make it good and make it liberating. Violence, when directed at the oppressor is human as well as necessary (Sale 631).

This necessity for violence was enacted by the Weathermen for the first time in 1970. After Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia, Bernadine Dohrn announced that the Weathermen would bomb, “a symbol or institution of ‘Amerikan’ justice” (Braungart 52). Nineteen days later a bomb exploded in the NYPD headquarters, and within the next few years, the Weathermen would take credit for hundreds of additional bombings.

During this time many other organizations felt the intense alienation and anger that the Weathermen were feeling and reacted in similar ways. In fact, during the 1969-1970 school year there were two-hundred and forty four bombings in America attributed to the white Left—one hundred and seventy four on campus and seventy off campus. Between January 1969 and April 1970, there were a total of nearly five thousand bombings by Americans on their own soil (Braungart 52).

Therefore, the Weathermen reflected many violent radicals' beliefs that changing America was hopeless. The only way to make any difference was to be violent and isolated from the majority of "unchangeable" American citizens.

Chapter Two: Feminism's Critique

In this chapter, I explore the rise of the second wave feminist movement and feminism's complex relationship with the Weathermen's rhetoric and practice(s) concerning political violence. To begin, throughout the 1960's and 70's, certain radical feminists harshly critiqued the Weathermen's propensity to equate social change with violence and duress. The Weathermen's "revolutionary nihilism," which required bombings and violence against institutions of power, was in direct opposition to the positive enthusiasm many in the Women's Liberation Movement were feeling at the time (Echols 132). The rise of this multifaceted, second wave feminist movement can be generally defined as the resistance to the "unconscious, taken-for-granted, unchallenged acceptance of the belief that the world as it looks to men, is the only world" (Gornick and Moran xxv). Thus, though the movement fought against many "isms," the primary goal of American second wave feminism was to end sexism in the private and public spheres. Second wave feminism inevitably branched out into many different factions, some more radical than others.

Feminism, in all its variations, had the ability to politicize huge numbers of women who had perhaps not previously considered themselves political. While the Weathermen and other radical Left organizations were becoming more insular and alienated, the Women's Liberation Movement was reaching out to nurses, secretaries, mothers and those who had no affiliation with the university system (Echols 132). The

Women's Liberation Movement also diverged from the Weathermen and vice versa, because of the differing tactics both groups used to resist the mainstream. Women were organizing around their own oppression, while the Weathermen and other members of the New Left were urging white radicals to pick up a gun and serve as soldiers for Third World anti-colonial movements and the Black Panther Party.

It is important to note that women's gravitation towards their own movement had begun years before. During the mid-sixties, women held sporadic, small conferences about sexism within and outside of the New Left. When these women started asking questions about sexism in the movement, their issues were not taken seriously or they were met with outright hostility from the mainstream media and their "brothers" in the New Left (Evans 201). As male resistance to the movement intensified, more and more women joined forces. Through friendship networks built after years of working together, organized events and media coverage, these "women's liberation groups" gained prominence (Evans 201).

In his book *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage*, Todd Gitlin comments on the immense divisions in activism and ideology that occurred between feminists and men in the New Left, particularly during the late sixties and early seventies. As women were exhilarated by their new, more personal activism, men were agonizing over what they thought was the end of their movement. In fact, by the end of the 1960's, no longer were there merely separate movements in the New Left: there were separate calendars and events (Gitlin 374). The Women's movement, thoroughly disgusted with the New Left's sexism, had started planning their *own* women centered events.

Feminist historian Sara Evans contends that, though they were finally pulling away from the young boys club of the New Left, much of the second wave feminist movement had grown out of women's strong commitments to political activism in the civil rights movements and New Left groups during the 1960's. Despite their strong commitments to social justice, while "participating" in these movements, women had experienced a very different political world than their male counterparts. While decision making and leadership was considered a male prerogative, most women in the movement were relegated to food, typing and sex (Evans 201). However, this is not to say that women were not integral to the movement's success. In fact, women's abandonment of SDS and other New Left movements was particularly devastating to men, since the Left has always been supported by women's "bridge" work. In M. Bahati Kuumba's book *Gender and Social Movements*, women are described as the bridges between various organizations because they often do the majority of the recruitment that enables the success of movements. Though often excluded from the elite operations of a movement, women will ensure its success through the networks they form, the "foot work" they do and the many leaflets, food and phone calls that they make every day (Kuumba 80). Thus, with women not around to organize activities for the white New Left, men were struggling to figure out what direction their groups should take.

While many men were floundering in what they perceived as the destruction of their movement, feminists were turning theory into practice. For the first time, many women actually felt comfortable and at home in a movement, *their* movement. In direct contrast to the judgmental rhetoric of groups like the Weathermen, there were many ways to be a feminist. In fact, within a short time, women were participating in

political campaigns for women's reproductive freedom and economic equality. They were picketing, protesting, running consciousness raising groups, engaging in radical feminist debates on what it "means" to be a woman, creating feminist performance art, engaging in lesbianism, sexual experimentation, and running women's health collectives, book stores and domestic violence shelters (Whittier 1). Thus, unlike the Weathermen, the women's movement offered flexibility. There were a plethora of ways to be a feminist and a "woman."

Furthermore, because of women-centered events such as consciousness raising groups, women's relationships with other women were redefined as well. Previously, in SDS and other male dominated groups, many females had to "compete" with other women in order to be taken seriously. Since there were few positions of leadership available, females in power were often used as "tokens" and had to scramble for their "place." But as the popularity of feminist consciousness raising groups grew, women learned, amongst many other things, to be "intimate" with other women (Cassell 57).

Though feminism supported diverse causes, initiatives and redefinitions, one thing that most feminists could agree on was the fervent desire for a more egalitarian society. As feminists' advocated egalitarianism and more equitable roles for both men and women, groups such as the Weathermen were becoming more militant, macho and authoritarian. The Weathermen's support of violent machismo and authoritarian group relations was one of the primary reasons why feminists critiqued the organization (Echols 132). Though not all feminists were opposed to the idea of violence as a means to stimulate revolution, many were disgusted by the Weathermen's blatant macho posturing. Richard Flacks explains this component of the Weathermen, "As the movement became

more militant, many males found it an excellent arena for competitive displays of virility, toughness and physical courage” (Echols 132).

The Weathermen were suddenly the proverbial political jocks—its members bragging that they hadn’t read a book in months, but they could beat up any pig, any time. This anti-intellectualism came from the idea that the Weathermen wanted to be true “working-class” by renouncing any sort of knowledge obtained by reading books or attending universities. This renunciation came from the Weathermen’s obvious stereotyping of the working class and was supported by the fact that the Weathermen wanted to leave their middle-class, university educated lives behind. To do this they also needed to destroy their “honkiness” and “wimpiness:” two words that the Weathermen, with the help of the Black Panther Party, believed were undeniably linked (Echols 132).

There was plenty of posturing with guns and pictures taken of women and men learning hand to hand combat and defense. These staged, violent images permeated through the press and gave others in the Left who were not necessarily in the Weathermen or in agreement with their philosophy, the homogenized reputation of being brutal bullies (Echols 133). This prompted the old guard of SDS and other New Leftists to move farther and farther away from the Weathermen. The common joke in certain New Left movement circles was, “You don’t need a rectal thermometer to know who the assholes are” (Echols 134).

In 1970, the Boston socialist feminist group “Bread and Roses” articulated their disgust at the New Left’s inability to recognize how pro-violence and chauvinism undermines class movements. Bread and Roses, radical in their own right, had seized an unoccupied building owned by Harvard University in 1971. The women stayed in the

building for ten days, and offered free classes and daycare. The publicity Bread and Roses earned because of their radical actions helped garner donations of over five thousand dollars within just a few weeks. With the money they raised, Bread and Roses bought a house in Cambridge and opened the Women's Center in 1972—the longest running women's center in the U.S. (The Woman's Center 1).

In their essay titled, “Bread and Roses,” the group contended that if male workers think of themselves as “male” and not as “workers,” then they will identify with the power and privilege of the world of men, which also includes the realm of the “boss” (Mcafee and Wood 417). In addition, the patriarchal role of men in the home reinforces aggressive authoritarianism, assertion of dominance, individualism and hierarchal social relations—all values that are integral to the capitalist system. Unfortunately, such assessments of how capitalism is reinforced by patriarchy and vice versa had been largely ignored by the Old Left and continued to be ignored by New Left groups like SDS and the Weathermen. Thus, I contend that Bread and Roses had many of the same objectives as the Weathermen, but included a feminist perspective in their radical, socialist activity.

Soon after “Bread and Roses” was published in 1970, Bread and Roses wrote another indictment of the pro-masculine rhetoric and action of the Weathermen. Even though they too had revolutionary tactics and beliefs, Bread and Roses disapproved of the Weathermen's idea of a “woman of steel” or a “street fighting woman.” The group believed that such standards only reinforced the subjugation of women. They contended that ideas in the Weathermen's document “Honky Tonk Women” which claimed that women would not be liberated by feminism, but by being unafraid of blood or guns, was an insufficient plan for feminist revolution. According to the Weathermen, learning to be

a “street fighting woman” would earn women the respect of men and thus would end male chauvinism. Bread and Roses critiqued this notion that women should embrace machismo as the one true method of social change. The idea of the “street fighting woman” reeked of “me-too” politics. It promised women if they acted like the oppressor or impressed him enough, perhaps they could be included. Women needed to jump on the aggressive, authoritarian bandwagon if they wanted to be considered anywhere near equal to men. Bread and Roses found the idea of women having to “earn” their equality through macho behavior offensive and sexist.

Radical-Cultural Feminism

The Weathermen were not the only radical group that politicized the idea of women and masculinity. Radical feminists had also wrestled with the idea of women and masculinity for some time. Not wanting to “choose” masculinity or femininity, many had opted for androgyny, which supposedly equally exalts the socially defined positive traits of both genders. However, after closer analysis of those traits which androgyny usually lauded, radical feminists found that their “feminine” traits were still degraded (Tong 47). In contrast, masculine attributes were accepted and praised within their radical feminist circles and in the greater American culture.

Rosemarie Tong, in her book *Feminist Thought*, explains the evolving classifications within feminism. Starting with Alison Jaggar’s definition of radical feminism, Tong redefines the various directions of radical feminism. Tong explains that after trying to be androgynous, many radical-cultural feminists believed that women should not try to “be like men” (47). On the contrary, women should celebrate “feminine”

attributes such as community, connection, absence of hierarchy, trust, etc. Masculine values such as violence, domination and hierarchy should be avoided and critiqued. Thus women who enact and exalt “masculine” traits are complicit within the patriarchal system.

An example of radical-cultural feminism’s rejection of “masculinity” is apparent in former Weatherwoman Jane Alpert’s article, “Mother Right,” which was published in Ms. Magazine in 1971. “Mother Right” is a scathing report of the male supremacist notions that were destroying the New Left, particularly the Weathermen. In the article, Alpert explains her specific disdain for the sexism of the Weathermen. “Mother Right” is, in fact, an open letter to all of Alpert’s “sister fugitives” in the Weathermen. Alpert made it very clear in her controversial article that she believed that all women in the organization were experiencing intense oppression and sexism. Based on personal experience, Alpert’s opinion was that men in the Weathermen were merely chauvinists who thought of women as unintelligent and useful only for physical pleasure. Though Alpert only had extensive interaction with two of the male members of the Weathermen, this was enough to make her beg her “sister fugitives” to leave the male dominated organization forever.

Alpert also rebelled against Weathermen doctrine by proclaiming that women’s liberation would not be like the Cuban or Chinese revolution. The Cuban and Chinese revolutions had used violence and placed political and economic changes high above human consciousness. In contrast, Alpert predicted sweeping political, social and economic changes for women would occur only after changes in human consciousness took place. The Weathermen believed, of course, that the revolution would happen the

other way around—human consciousness was the last item on their list of radical changes. Feminism, according to Alpert, would function like a ripple effect, each individual woman’s consciousness would change and influence others. The easiest way for this ripple effect to occur would be for women to create their own culture.

By referencing ancient matriarchal cultures, Alpert advocated the ability of all women to be “mothers.” She contended that women are mothers not by birthing children, but by possessing maternal qualities, a “potential which is imprinted in the genes of every woman” (Echols 250). This essential nature of women was the only way that Alpert believed the many differences between women could be resolved. No matter what class, age, race or sexual orientation—there could be no real differences in this intrinsic motherhood. This also meant that if they were following their natural biology, women could never advocate violence. If women were violent then they were merely mimicking men and trying, like Alpert had done herself, to win male approval (*Ms. Magazine* pg. 94).

Thus, radical-cultural feminists contended that any woman who embraced violence as a means of social change was going against her “true” nature. By trying to be like men, she was betraying herself and feminism. Though Alpert was trying in her own way to critique patriarchal dominance, I argue that her essentialism merely reinforced sexist ideas about the “innate” non-violent nature of women. Ideas about women being peaceful and passive supported the mainstream belief that women were too sensitive to participate in a number of activities ranging from sports to police work to running for president. Believing any group is naturally one way does not allow for the complexities

of each individual person. Pigeon-holing women as non-violent, “natural mothers” merely reiterated the sexist discourse of patriarchal American society.

Pacifist Feminists

Essentialist views of women were not the only reason why feminists did not support violence. In nearly every movement within second wave feminism—radical feminism, Marxist-socialist feminism, liberal feminism, etc—there were inevitably feminist pacifists or women who did not support violence. These feminists distinguished between traditionally feminine traits such as “passivism,” which means inactive suffering, and instead opted for “pacifism,” which is defined as peace making or agreement making (Duhan 253). To them, pacifism did not mean tacit acceptance, but rather resistance that refused to use the tools of the oppressor: violence.

Thus, these pacifist, second wave feminists contended that feminism offered the best “comprehensive analysis of America’s political, economic, social, and military systems” (Duke 243). This meant that domination of women by men could be used as a model for other modes of oppression, particularly violent militarism, such as the situation in Vietnam (Duke 243).

Feminism’s struggle for a more egalitarian society inevitably meant, to pacifist feminists, that women *and* men should denounce institutional and individual violence in order to make the world a more livable place. Pacifist feminism also contended that militarism is a form of domination and feminism and peace movements share an important connection—both are committed to ending violent power/privilege systems. There are “empirical connections” to war as well that make pacifism a feminist issue.

Military operations wreck havoc on women, children, people of color, the poor, and the environment (Warren and Cady 7). Resisting destruction and degradation of all of the above is integral to a pacifist and feminist stance.

Furthermore, the symbolic and linguistic connections of the military industrial complex to the patriarchy cannot be ignored. Sexist language in military and nuclear jargon has been used for decades. From “vertical erectile launchers” to “thrust-to-weight ratios” to exploding bombs that are “losing her virginity,” sexist language permeates the nuclear and military discourse (Warren and Cady 13). Thus, I suggest that these multilayered systems of oppression create connections between pacifism and feminism; all of which have nothing to do with essentializing women, but rather a commitment to non-violent resistance.

This chapter has explored the many feminist critiques of the Weathermen and violence. Whether they challenged “me-too” politics, essentialized women or supported pacifism, many feminists objected to violence, even when it was put into a political context.

Chapter Three: Violent Feminists

Demonstrating that violence is a complex phenomenon, in direct contrast to pacifist feminists as well as Alpert and other radical feminist's claims of a loving female culture, there were other feminists and revolutionaries advocating violence as a means of radical change. Some, as we have seen with Bernadine Dohrn, agreed with the Weathermen and did not want to alter its tactics or goals. In fact, these feminists also advocated that women use violence in order to stop male chauvinism, oppression and violence. In this chapter, I examine the ideas of "pro-self defense" feminists and discuss two strong examples of pro-violence feminists—Ti-Grace Atkinson and Valerie Solanas, author of the S.C.U.M (Society for Cutting up Men) Manifesto. I also discuss how the diversity of belief systems within feminism complicates stereotypical notions about female violence.

For most feminists, violence, political or otherwise, was not merely something that could be thoughtlessly supported or viciously despised. For example, though few feminists advocated "random violence" per say, many supported "self defense" training. This training was not just about preparing for the up-coming revolution or for confrontations with police officers as the Weathermen were doing. As Rebecca Moon, Leslie Tanner and Susan Pascale articulate in their essay "Karate as Self Defense for Women," self defense is important because "Women are attacked, beaten and raped! Every day. By men! Women are afraid to walk certain streets after dark and even afraid

to walk into buildings where they live. It's about time we as women get strong in order to defend ourselves" (256).

Moon, Tanner and Pascale advocate that women take karate as a means of self defense and discuss the conflicting feelings they experienced while learning how to protect themselves. They want to look "tough," but view their fists and punches as non-aggressive because they have been taught their entire lives to be passive and feminine. Thus, they do not know how to be "violent." The essay promotes karate as positive, helpful training for women's liberationists because it increases confidence (due to potential physical power). Also, seeing as women had a long political fight ahead of them, the essay advocates that the only way to fight back against overwhelming patriarchal oppression was by force (Moon, Pascale and Tanner 263). Thus, a perceived "physically weak" female will be ten times more effective if she learns the "lessons of violence." I contend that these lessons may have been an emulation of "masculine," aggressive training, but they were also a practical way for women to fight back against violence and subjugation. Therefore, second wave feminists who learned self defense were not merely trying to "be like men" as some radical-cultural feminists claimed. Instead, they were reconditioning their bodies and discovering empowerment through violence.

In contradistinction to fine tuning the "lessons of violence" by self-defense or karate, individual feminists such as Ti-Grace Atkinson admired the violent tactics of groups such as the Weathermen. Atkinson even co-authored a letter denouncing Jane Alpert's "Mother Right," along with Alpert's cooperation with FBI investigators. In her

letter, Atkinson claimed Alpert was disloyal to the revolution and contended that the Weathermen contained, “the seeds of the future” (Echols 258).

In 1971, during a speech on violence in the women’s movement, Atkinson praised the Weathermen and the Italian American Civil Rights League (an organization formed by mafia leader Joseph Columbo). Atkinson also showed a picture of Joseph Columbo, who had recently been murdered, and rebuked the women’s liberation movement for being nothing but a bunch of phonies who talked about violence instead of enacting it. She showed the murdered Columbo as an example of what she believed the feminists were not. According to Atkinson, Columbo was, like a true revolutionary, “hanging out in the streets with people who were fighting for their own asses” (Echols 184). She repeated the refrain from many in the Left—the women’s liberation movement had radical pretensions, but no real revolutionary action. A remedy for this, Atkinson said in her speech as she was booed and jeered by sister feminists, was for women to “pick up the gun.” This was very similar to what the Weathermen were saying to the New Left. It was no coincidence that the Weathermen were the one group Atkinson praised in her speech.

Furthermore, in her essay “Radical Feminism, Declaration of War” Ti-Grace Atkinson critiques the pop-culture notion of a “battle of the sexes” (125). Atkinson contends that because the word “battle” implies some sort of power balance—women have never really been in battle with men. Rather, women have been the ones to suffer all the losses and have been *massacred* in the process. The only way for women to stop being massacred is to band together, recognize their collective and individual oppression and engage in all sorts of psychic and violent battles with men (Atkinson 125). By using

military terminology, Atkinson also advocates that the women's movement accept that "diplomacy" with men does not work. Thus, only by seeing men as the enemy in battle can feminists forge the first step to political change (Atkinson 126).

Thus, it was no coincidence that Atkinson believed that Valerie Solanas' infamous S.C.U.M. (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto, written in 1968, was obligatory reading. Atkinson and a few other radical feminists claimed Solanas' philosophy of violence was the "essence of feminism" (Echols 105). Atkinson even attended Solanas' trial after she had shot and critically injured famous pop artist Andy Warhol. Though Solanas was sent to an insane asylum where she later died of tuberculosis, Atkinson and other radical feminists read and praised her work in their small collectives.

Solanas' S.C.U.M. Manifesto articulated the violent solutions she believed could emancipate women. S.C.U.M. planned to, "Overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex" (514). Solanas begins her misandric manifesto by declaring that life is an utter bore which does not and can not relate to women or give them any form of enjoyment or pleasure. Solanas, who was a psychology major before she became a street hustler and prostitute, believed that she had found the biological secret to men's "inherent" inferiority. Men, she claimed, are a biological accident, the Y gene merely an incomplete X. This genetic inadequacy was the cause of all male oppression and need to control women. Men had stolen female traits—independence, courage, intensity, forcefulness, dynamicism, etc. and claimed them for themselves. Male traits such as weakness, triviality and vanity were projected onto women through brilliant marketing and manipulation. Thus, Solanas claimed,

“Women don’t have penis envy, men have pussy envy” (515). Because of this jealousy and hate, men have been responsible for all the world’s problems.

In her manifesto, Solanas lists over fifty elements of society that men have created in order to destroy women: war, politeness, money, marriage, suburbs, conformity, government, competition, “great art”, sexuality, censorship, disease and death to name a few (516). In order to end the societal plague of men acting out against their inadequacy, Solanas sets out what, seemingly to her, is an easy solution. The ideal first step in Solanas’ idea of women’s revolution was to enlist all the females in America into the S.C.U.M. army. After this, almost all women would drop out of the labor force and the American monetary system would be completely obliterated. If women would stop buying and loot for their possessions, even the U.S. military couldn’t stop them.

It should be noted that Solanas does not feel sisterhood or have faith in all of her female comrades. She did not believe that they would help her and viewed their inability to participate as one of the biggest conflicts concerning S.C.U.M.’s goals. She contends:

The conflict, therefore, is not between males and females, but between S.C.U.M.—dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, violent, selfish, independent, proud, thrill-seeking, free-wheeling arrogant females, who consider themselves fit to rule the universe...and nice, passive, accepting, “cultivated,” polite, dignified, subdued, dependent, scared, mindless, insecure, approval seeking Daddy’s girls, who can’t cope with the unknown, who want to continue to wallow in the sewer that is, at least, familiar, who want to hang back with the apes, who feel secure only with Big Daddy standing by...who are too cowardly to face up to what a man really is, what Daddy is, who have cast their lot with the swine, who have adapted themselves to animalism...who have reduced their minds, thoughts and

imagination to the male level, who lacking sense, wit and imagination can have value only in a male society, who can have a place in the sun or rather the slime only as soothers, ego boosters, relaxers and breeders...(Solanas 516).

Thus, because many women were not willing to be revolutionary, just as the Weathermen had done, S.C.U.M. would take over the country with just a handful of women and systematically destroy the system, property and men in power. S.C.U.M. workers would get jobs and destroy the capitalist system by not charging for merchandise and ruining equipment. S.C.U.M. also planned to ruin cars, store windows, "Great art", etc. Solanas also wanted S.C.U.M. to bust up mixed (male/female) couples, even if violence was necessary to pry them apart (Solanas 517).

In addition, after the obliteration of the system was accomplished (in a very short time of course), S.C.U.M. planned to kill any men who weren't in the Men's Auxiliary Unit. Like the Weathermen, S.C.U.M., "Will not picket, demonstrate, march or strike to achieve its ends. Such tactics are for nice, gentle ladies who scrupulously take only such actions as is guaranteed to be ineffective" (Solanas 517). By acting on a civil disobedience basis, Solanas believed that S.C.U.M. was only reinforcing the system, not working outside of it in order to destroy it. S.C.U.M.'s policy of violence was, once again like the Weathermen, only focused on specific targets. Indiscriminate killing was lacking objective and dangerous to S.C.U.M. soldiers. Once money and powerful politicians were eliminated, Solanas believed that men would no longer have any sway over "psychologically independent females" (518). The few remaining men who hadn't been killed by S.C.U.M. would be allowed to spend their last days on earth high on drugs, dressed up as women, to be used merely as breeders and spectators. If they refused to

accept their fate Solanas gave them another solution, “They can go off to the nearest friendly neighborhood suicide center where they will be quietly, quickly and painlessly gassed to death” (519). While men gassed themselves to death, women would be solving the world’s very few remaining problems. They would revamp education programs, solve scientific problems and redesign cities.

Solanas feared that some women would continue to “dig men.” These women would eventually become so absorbed in their projects that in time they would come to see the “utter uselessness and banality of the male” (519).

I suggest that Solanas’ radical manifesto shocked many people in mainstream America and the New Left. Its unapologetic advocacy of violence was in direct contrast to those feminists who despised macho violence, even if it was for radical means. But Solanas had flipped the association of men with aggression and violence on its head. Solanas rejected women’s essential “motherhood” and claimed that women were naturally independent and tough—men had merely stolen women’s character because of their “pussy envy.” Thus, radical-cultural feminists could not apply “feminine” traits such as compassion and a propensity towards non-violence to women. According to Solanas, women were not naturally maternal, compassionate or non-violent: such a skewed perception was merely part of a mass marketing campaign, a brilliant and insidious social construction. In that sense, Solanas also disrupted Morgan and Alpert’s notion that females who committed violence always did so under male duress. Her unabashed desire to systematically murder men and create a female utopia rebelled against and upset many who participated in mainstream feminism.

In contrast, as was discussed above, S.C.U.M. and the Weathermen had similar objectives and means. Though no one in the Weathermen could imagine life without men (they controlled the group), both organizations wanted to destroy the American money system and develop a counter culture army. Both Solanas and the Weathermen believed that targeted, “discriminate” violence would help overthrow the system and install (what they felt was) a more just society. Neither group’s violent rhetoric seemed to humanize its targets—whether they were the bourgeoisie or men.

After shooting Andy Warhol, Solanas claimed to have no remorse: another action that rebelled against certain feminist claims that women are more compassionate and less violent. Solanas’ unapologetic, aggressive rhetoric prompted a frightened jury to send her to an insane asylum where she stayed for three years. The jury’s rationale for not sending Solanas to prison centered on the belief that no woman could be so unapologetically violent without being crazy. Thus, the jury in Solanas’ case was reinforcing traditional notions that women who commit crimes, particularly political ones, are influenced and controlled by some outside force; usually men or mental illness.

Female Terrorists

While there has been substantial research done examining the general belief systems of radical organizations, there has not been much feminist work looking at females who commit violence for political reasons. In general, the explanations why women are violent often involve an essentialist or stereotyped argument that does not take into account the social construction of women and violence. Meaning, many so-called “terrorist experts” ignore that most women in our society are taught to be non-

aggressive and resistant to violence. On the other hand, the research often treats women's experiences as merely homogenized with men's or there has not been enough work to understand the divergences and convergences of individual accounts. In this section I will explain the stereotypes of the female "terrorist," critique particular second wave feminists essentialism of women and violence, and analyze Gilda Zwerman's work with hundreds of imprisoned American female terrorists who were involved in radical groups during the 60's and 70's.

Psychologically, women who have participated in violence have been considered, "deficient in their socialization process" and "more out of touch with reality than their male counter parts"(Zwerman 136). This argument has often been the mantra of politicians in the United States and the conservative media. Left organizations and the women involved have been sensationalized as "insane fanatics" who oppose freedom. An example of this would be the court system's and mainstream media's view that Solanas' criminal behavior did not have any real political objectives, but was rather the behavior of an "insane" woman. Thus, because of these one-dimensional views, though nearly one-third of the arrests of violent political activists in the 1960's and 70's were women, little is known about their lives and revolutionary goals (Zwerman 134).

Feminist sociologists such as Gilda Zwerman contend that female terrorism is a frightening subject in our culture because it not only inspires fear about terrorism, but also disrupts ideas about femininity and passivity. The female terrorist has not merely crossed the boundaries between legitimacy and criminal behavior. She has become an outlaw to her "female-ness" (Zwerman 135). Female violence is frightening to mainstream culture because the socio-cultural binary of female as feminine and male as masculine

has been blurred. In fact, some criminologists such as Freda Adler go so far as to contend that the rise in female criminality and terrorism since the 1960's can be attributed to the women's liberation movement and its emphasis on critiquing gender. The new female criminal is trying to be like "her sisters in legitimate occupations" and is scrambling for a place in the hierarchy (Zwerman 131). Adler contends that the female terrorist and criminal are the "dark sides" of feminism.

I take Zwerman's critique further and contend that Adler's argument is flawed for many other reasons. One is because it is very Western centric—it looks only at feminist movements and violence in the United States and Western Europe. It does not take into account women's struggles in the many anti-colonial movements throughout the centuries that mobilized communities to fight. Women who have never theoretically heard of feminism may participate in "feminist" actions and in revolutionary violence. Also, though anti-colonial movements undoubtedly almost always prescribe gender roles for women and men, there are a vast variety of roles that women play in these movements and in any movement against oppression. When an entire community is under attack, for example, cultural belief systems about women and violence may change greatly from what they were previously in times of peace.

Furthermore, like Adler, many other writers on terrorism contend that women who participate in political violence are always criminals and that the women's liberation movement's "excessiveness" or push for androgyny is to blame. This is a sexist perspective that fears women's access to the "freedoms" the feminist movement called for. Women's "freedom" must be controlled or chaos will occur. Also, blaming "androgyny" reasserts the socio-cultural gender binary that "women should behave like

women” and “men like men.” When women take on supposedly male traits of aggression and violence this binary is upset and, once again feminism is to blame.

Finally, there is another flawed argument where “experts” such as H.H. Cooper and Gayle Rivers claim that female terrorists are much more threatening and violent than male terrorist are (Zwerman 137). Zwerman suggests that most terrorist “experts” have two main stereotypes about (mostly Leftist) female terrorists. One is that they are, at first sight, a non-threatening “Housekeeper” or they are a power wielding, penis envying “Amazon.” Both types of women are considered deadly, but are alleged to vary in their motivation and the amount of power they possess within their organizations. The “Housekeeper” is easily manipulated, while the “Amazon” holds power over the men in her group.

Analysis of most radical groups, such as the Weathermen, shows that women are seldom in leadership positions, much less controlling the entire group. Nevertheless, the stereotype of the Amazon woman has been used to describe the militant Left women in the United States and Western Europe. These militant Amazons have been described as having, “a cold rage about them that even the most alienated of men seem quite incapable of emulating” (Zwerman 138). Furthermore, many terrorist experts claim that the Amazon woman longs to keep her position of power so much that she will do *anything* to keep command—including “killing children” to maintain status and gain the approval and respect of the men.

Despite their supposed propensity for violence, female terrorists are seen as playing a much more relational role. Though most male *and* female radicals came to revolutionary politics through a romantic, friend or familial affiliation, women,

particularly the “Housekeepers,” are seen as the ones who were manipulated into the group. Viewing women in a more relational role, even in terrorism, has aided in the stereotype of the “Housekeeper.” Everyone thinks this “Housekeeper” is innocently pushing her “baby” in a pram, but she is really hiding a bomb. Zwerman claims that stereotypes say she does not have a central leadership role like the Amazon: she is only a pawn. She secures her “feminine,” peripheral role by stressing her status as mother and wife. Thus, I argue that once again women are seen as easily manipulated and uninterested in political action.

I also argue that the stereotype of violent women—as Amazon or Housekeeper—results in a very simplistic, binary view of female terrorists. This inaccurate view has rarely been challenged. In fact, feminists such as Robin Morgan and Jane Alpert have reiterated the idea that female terrorists are merely pawns of controlling men. Robin Morgan’s comment on the Weathermen reinforced this idea when she labeled the Weather women “Manson Killers” because they were trying to gain male approval by committing violent crimes.

Zwerman critiques Morgan’s more recent essay called the “Sexuality of Terrorism,” published in 1989, which claims that the overwhelming majority of women in the world—no matter where they are situated—reject violence as the primary means of social change. Once again, Morgan is critiquing the idea that class revolution, whether it be on behalf of “the people”, “the masses”, “the proletariat”, “the workers”, “the farmers”, or “the populace” actually means on behalf of men (Zwerman 147). I contend, similar to Alpert’s arguments in “Mother Right,” Morgan is situating women as a different caste, class and community. Morgan believes that women have variant, more

highly evolved political, biological and spiritual interests than men. Furthermore, she argues that the world would be a better, non-violent place if a community of women were able to rule the world. Once again, Morgan's argument, like Alpert's can be construed as essentialist.

In her essay, Morgan allows for no exceptions to her vision of a women centered world. She contends that women who willingly fight for power in male-dominated groups are, "becoming part of the harem of the demon lover," and are, "dancing themselves towards a false liberation of death" (Zwerman 147). Zwerman critiques the fact that, though few interviews with female terrorists from the 60's and 70's exist, some feminists such as Robin Morgan depict fictional and non-fictional female terrorists merely from "self-knowledge." Morgan explains her source of knowledge about token female terrorists, "I know these women...they walk in my nightmares. I missed being one of them by what split second, what series of discontinuous incremental changes?" (Zwerman 148). Thus Morgan's knowledge of what it means to be a radical woman comes from her "dreams." I suggest, from all of Morgan's assertions, that it is obvious she has not done research on the many female terrorists who sought out and sustained connections to organizations that advocated armed struggle. Zwerman's essay on female terrorists states a counterpoint to Morgan's assumptions. She contends that when women revolt against the authority structures of their societies, they may feel as if they are working towards a better world for women (151).

Furthermore, I argue that though feminists like Morgan and Alpert make positive points in their writings—their critiques about sexism in the Weathermen were and are valuable—they are articulating a potentially one dimensional position within feminist

theory and practice. It is a position that denies that violence is ever a useful form of expression, in any context. Given the amount of women who are subjugated to violence, this position is often difficult to argue when one is claiming a feminist standpoint. Much of feminist discourse and political action has revolved around empowering women who have been victims of violent crimes, whether they are rape, assault, childhood sexual abuse or domestic violence. With such emphasis on the empowerment of the “victim,” along with the propensity to identify with her experiences, committing violent crimes or approving of violent actions may be an uncomfortable position for many feminists.

However, since the strong expansion of women’s history in the 1970’s, knowledge about figures such as Joan of Arc, the French *Vesuviennes*, and Third World women in national struggles, to name a few, has become common in feminist studies. Thus, women’s involvement in revolutionary organizations cannot always be placed into stereotyped categories of “Amazon” or “Housekeeper” or in Morgan’s words “Demon lovers” and “Manson Slaves.” Alpert and Morgan’s view of violent females is very limiting and only reinforces traditional notions about women’s passivity in society and politics. Both feminists blatantly ignore the fact that radical women’s associations with violence are very complex.

To further counteract this over simplified argument, I analyze the work of feminist sociologist Gilda Zwerman. Starting in 1985, Zwerman interviewed hundreds of American women who were incarcerated because of their violent political actions. She also interviewed attorneys who were familiar with the women’s cases, attended various trials and hearings and studied the Department of Justice’s procedures for the arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of radicals (Zwerman 142). Her study of women who have

committed crimes because of their involvement in socialist, national liberation, antifascist and resistance movements shows that for many women, participation in revolutionary violence is a source of conflict. Partly there is an affirmation of actual power over oneself, but also a fear and resistance to the use of violence. Furthermore, despite the stereotypes about women being brainwashed to join radical groups (ie: Patty Hearst), most women are not coerced into joining violent organizations. In fact, from her interviews, Zwerman found that the decision to join radical, violent groups was often a long considered process for women and many derived satisfaction from their participation (Zwerman 150).

Despite government and terrorism “experts” propaganda about the “violence prone” women leaders, Zwerman reports that few of the women ever would define themselves as “combatants.” In fact, most women in 60’s and 70’s revolutionary groups describe themselves in a more peripheral role. This role is consistent throughout race, class, age and sexual orientation differences and intersections. Whether the women are from the Weathermen, Black Panther Party or Puerto Rican liberation groups, almost all reported assuming a “supportive” role, mostly because of their internal conflicts concerning the use of violence and rarely because of gender oppression (Zwerman 151).

One anonymous respondent reports her conflict:

Could I kill for the revolution? I used to ask myself that question a lot. But the fact that I had children, I always knew I couldn’t do that. I had not felt the impact of armed struggle that strongly. In one of the political orientations I attended we read this story from Mao about a nine-year-old girl who had to kill her parents. I had to toss with these questions myself. Could I kill children? A member of my

family—or anyone’s family for that matter? These are things that deep down I felt that I could not do (Zwerman 152).

These deep conflicts manifested in a myriad of promises and plans. Some women reported feelings of doom as they realized that another action was planned. Other said they prayed for something to happen so the action would be canceled. Like a victim in an abusive relationship, a few radical women even promised themselves that this was their last time.

In addition, women, because of their often peripheral roles, reported conflict over whether or not they should leave their underground lives. Since members of the underground had to “blend in,” life became incredibly monotonous and merely reaffirmed the “private sphere” that is supposed to be women’s place (Zwerman 155). In fact, many of Zwerman’s interviews revealed that though certain political actions gave women a degree of satisfaction: they were not enough to squelch their desire to have a social network and a productive life that was not from the sidelines or underground or any other marginal space.

While I argue that women’s conflicts over the use of violence are socially constructed, Zwerman contends that though there were some women who enjoyed their participation in politically violent groups, many remain conflicted over the use of violence. She does not say whether this conflict is innate or constructed, or if men express similar feelings of confusion. One thing Zwerman’s findings do support, however, is my argument that women’s roles in revolutionary groups were and are complex. Women’s belief systems and actions should not be homogenized. Just as they

cannot be pigeonholed as blood-thirsty, crazies like the Amazon stereotype suggests they cannot be categorized as “natural” non-violent mothers. There is not a single “gendered” way to explain Bernadine Dohrn’s penchant for violent rhetoric, Solanas’ desire for there to be male concentration camps or Alpert’s claim that women are non-violent. Their experiences and beliefs, of course, were influenced by the gender roles of society, but each was as individual as the men who participated in radical organizations. Women are by no means generally, essentially one way or another: each experience and belief system is situated and subjective. We are not inherently aggressive like Solanas claimed nor “natural mothers” like Morgan and Alpert contended.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In conclusion, in this thesis I have analyzed the sexism and pro-violent rhetoric and actions of the Weathermen as a framework to explore sexism in the New Left, feminism's complex relationship with violence, and the stereotypes of women who commit political violence. In Chapter One I focused on the evolving definition of the New Left, what the issues were for the Old Left and what the concerns were for the new, more prominent factions of SDS, particularly by the end of the 1960's. I critiqued SDS's sexism and their refusal to view women's rights as an issue that could exist separately from the fight against imperialism. Furthermore, I also described the Weathermen's degradation into insular, isolated politics and their fascination with the Third World and the Black Panther Party.

Chapter Two, "Feminists' Critique," focused on feminists' criticism of the way women in the Weathermen wanted to be violent and macho so they would be considered revolutionary. I also explained how radical-cultural feminists such as Jane Alpert advocated essentialist views about women and violence. Other feminists, on the other hand, objected to violence, not because they thought women were naturally non-violent, but because they wanted men *and* women to resist violence and oppression of all sorts.

Chapter Three, "Violent Feminists," featured feminists whose belief systems contrasted the pacifism and essentialism of the previous sections. I explained the belief systems of pro-self defense feminists as well as pro-violence feminists such as Ti-Grace

Atkinson and Valerie Solanas. I also focused on the work of feminist sociologist Gilda Zwerman. Zwerman's study critiques the stereotypes of violent women and supports my argument that violent revolutionary women's motivations are diverse and individual.

Thus, by using the Weathermen as a framework, this thesis has argued that women who commit, advocate or condemn political violence are complex beings that cannot be easily categorized. Furthermore, this thesis has illustrated the myriad of belief systems within feminism concerning women and violence. These differences and intersections reflect the broad range of ideas within feminist discourse.

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