

*Serving Up Revolution: Feminist Restaurants, Cafés, and Coffeehouses in
the United States and Canada from 1972 to 1989*

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Abstract

“Serving Up Revolution: Feminist Restaurants, Cafés, and Coffeehouses from 1972-1989 in the United States and Canada, ” is the first history of more than 250 feminist and lesbian restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses that existed in Canada and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. Utilizing business records, advertisements, feminist and lesbian periodicals, and a dozen original interviews, I examine the ways feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses promoted women-owned and women-centered businesses and fostered non-capitalist and non-hierarchical business practices and models. The existence of these restaurants challenged the assumption of a fraught relationship between feminism and cooking and showed that the kitchen could be a space of empowerment for women rather than an oppressive sphere. I argue that feminist restaurant history reveals the importance of physical space for socializing, activism, economics, and community building. I also make a methodological contribution by utilizing a large database of lesbian and women’s travel guides, from which I created maps using GIS mapping technology. By including a study of feminist coffeehouses, this dissertation is able to spotlight feminist activism and community building additionally in smaller towns as these commonly temporary women’s spaces could happen anywhere from a church basement in Iowa to the corner of a bookstore in Washington state. I ultimately argue that feminist restaurants produced fertile environments for political organizing and activism. The history of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in the United States and Canada is a history of business practices, political activism, and food politics.

Résumé

«Servir la révolution: l'histoire des restaurants, cafés et coffeehouses féministes de 1972 à 1989 aux États-Unis et au Canada» est la première histoire de plus de 250 restaurants, cafés et cafés féministes et lesbiennes qui ont existé au Canada et aux États-Unis pendant les années 1970 et 1980. En utilisant des documents commerciaux, des publicités, des périodiques féministes et lesbiennes et une douzaine d'entrevues originales, je passe en revue les façons dont les restaurants, cafés et cafés féministes ont parrainé des entreprises dirigées par des femmes et des femmes et ont favorisé des pratiques et des modèles non-capitalistes. L'existence de ces restaurants était un défi aux suppositions par rapport à la relation entre le féminisme et la cuisine et a démontré que ces restaurants pourraient être un espace d'autonomisation pour les femmes plutôt qu'une sphère oppressive. Je soutiens que l'histoire du restaurant féministe révèle l'importance de l'espace physique pour la socialisation, l'activisme, l'économie et la construction de la communauté. J'ai également apporté une contribution méthodologique en utilisant une grande base de données de guides de voyage pour les lesbiennes et les femmes, à partir de laquelle j'ai créé des cartes en utilisant la technologie de cartographie SIG. En fin de compte, je prétends que les restaurants féministes ont créé des environnements fertiles pour l'organisation politique et l'activisme. L'histoire des restaurants, des cafés et des cafés féministes aux États-Unis et au Canada est une histoire de pratiques commerciales, d'activisme politique et de politique alimentaire.

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Former co-owner of Berkeley, California's Brick Hut Café, Joan Antonuccio once told me, "the Brick Hut was the one place in my life where I had a strong sense of belonging. And that is what has helped me develop a much stronger sense of myself. And I am not the only one." Feminist restaurants have also changed my life.

I went to a feminist restaurant for the first time in 2011 on the recommendation of my friend Zaac Chaves. My housemate Daniel Schniedewind drove us forty minutes to the Blackrock neighborhood of Bridgeport, Connecticut to visit Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant and Bookstore. Over the years I returned to Bloodroot multiple times, conducting interviews and indulging in their Chocolate Devastation cake. Selma Miriam and Noel Furie provided me with copies of their cookbooks, entrusted me with their personal papers they had yet to donate to Yale University's Archives, and spoke

with me repeatedly. This project would not have been possible without the cooperation of the feminist restaurant, café, and coffeehouse owners and workers that shared their time and resources with me. Thank you to Joan Antonuccio, Mary Bahneman, Mary Bunch, Noel Furie, Bryher Herak, Patricia Hynes, Selma Miriam, Flavia Rando, Sarah Schulman, and Lagusta Yearwood for letting me interview them. Furthermore, I could not have completed this dissertation without the time donated by every archivist that helped me track down documents and ephemera.

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The most important lesson I have taken away from my research on feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses is that the owners demonstrated radical hope. With a dream and a supportive community, you can create the kind of world you would like to see. Thank you to my community for every kindness you have bestowed upon me. Your support has allowed me to pursue my dreams.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: A Recipe for Success

*Karen's Kitchen, 729 West Brompton, tel 525 7785. Wed nights only at 7 p.m.- it really is Karen's own kitchen so be sure to ring up first. Feminist.*¹

- *Gaia's Guides* (1976)

The women's and lesbian travel guidebook, *Gaia's Guides*, listed Karen's Kitchen in the restaurant section for the Chicago area in the 1976 through 1984 annual editions. This short entry speaks to the larger themes and central analytical questions of this dissertation. In these few, short phrases, the reader was told that Karen's Kitchen was "feminist," that it existed in a non-traditional space of trade that blurred the public and private spheres, that the business was run by a woman named Karen, and that customer practices would differ from those in a typical mainstream restaurant. This entry in *Gaia's Guide* also raises a number of important questions. Why would Karen call her restaurant "feminist?" What was a feminist restaurant? Other than through guidebooks, how did potential clients find out about the space? Was this space unique? The fact that Karen's Kitchen was listed in a travel guide shows the need that women had for finding these sorts of spaces. An entire feminist network existed, dependent particularly on literary culture to unofficially connect feminists — especially lesbian feminists — through feminist and lesbian periodicals, travel guides, event paraphernalia, bulletin boards, and word of mouth.

Karen's decision to manage a food business out of her home demonstrates that some feminists during the 1970s and the 1980s used food as a way to support themselves financially, socially, and politically. As will be explored in greater detail in chapter 3, the entry likewise shows that, despite facing a political and economic system that was hostile

¹ Sandy Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (San Francisco: Women's Up Press, 1976).

to women's business ownership (particularly for women of color and lesbians), the owners of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses crafted creative solutions to create the kinds of spaces they wanted. The owners founded these establishments even if it meant having to bend the laws, such as skirting health codes or manipulating tax statuses to their own advantage. A history of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in the United States and Canada in the 1970s and 1980s provides a history of feminist, food, and environmental movements, while also being relevant to today's debates around the need, or lack thereof, of single gender spaces, feminist consumption, and the relationship between feminist movements and other social justice movements.

“Serving Up Revolution: Feminist Restaurants, Cafés, and Coffeehouses in the United States and Canada from 1972-1989,” is the first history of the more than 250 feminist and lesbian restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses that existed in Canada and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. Utilizing business records, advertisements, feminist and lesbian periodicals, and a dozen original interviews, I examine the ways in which all feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses promoted women-owned and women-centered businesses and fostered non-capitalist and non-hierarchical business practices and models. These restaurants challenged the common contemporary view of cooking as antithetical to women's liberation and, instead, showed that the kitchen could in fact be a space for women's empowerment rather than an oppressive sphere. I argue that feminist restaurant history reveals the importance of physical space for socializing, activism, economics, and community building. This project also makes a methodological contribution to the field through my development of large databases of such spaces comprised from lesbian and women's travel guides from which I then created maps using

GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping technology. Bolstered by the creation of mapping interfaces, this project re-centers feminist entrepreneurialism and challenges narratives of post-war feminism.

Examining feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses provides a new way to understand feminist activism during the second half of the twentieth century by prioritizing the role of space. Women studies scholar, Bonnie J. Morris, in *The Disappearing L: Erasure of Lesbian Spaces and Culture*, expressed her “concern that as we advance further into the twenty-first century, we are witnessing the almost flippant dismissal of recent, late twentieth-century lesbian culture, particularly the loss of physical sites such as women’s bookstores and women’s music festivals and their material legacies (books, journals, albums, tapes, magazine interviews with artists).”² Likewise, scholar and lesbian activist, Maxine Wolfe, argues that one of the most persistent political struggles for lesbians has been their societal, historical, and spatial “invisibility.”³ Geographers such as Julie Podmore and Line Chamberland, however, have challenged this lack of visibility for the lesbian community.⁴ Yielding to Wolfe, Podmore, Chamberland, and Morris’s calls to re-center lesbian and feminist culture, this dissertation takes seriously the contributions of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses, as well as the literary culture that supported them, and the feminist nexus of the businesses that they were able to create. By including restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses — businesses that required different initial capital investment — this

² Bonnie J. Morris, *The Disappearing L: Erasure of Lesbian Spaces and Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016).

³ Maxine Wolfe, *Invisible Women in Invisible Places: The Production of Social Space in Lesbian Bars* in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Spaces, Sites of Resistance* (Seattle: Bay Press), 301-24.

⁴ Julie A. Podmore and Line Chamberland, “Entering the Urban Frame: Early Lesbian Activism and Public Space in Montréal,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 192-211.

dissertation looks at feminist community spaces both created and frequented by women across lines of class, race, age, and sexual orientations.

Feminist restaurants raise plenty of questions. One query looks at the relationship between the creation of feminist restaurants and the feminist discourse that searched for a solution to the “cooking problem”: the societal expectations that burdened women with the responsibility of domestic food production. Other solutions proposed by feminist authors during the era included buying pre-made foods rather than cooking, sharing housework responsibilities with male partners, requesting wages for housework, joining communes including but not limited to separatist lesbian farming communities, and founding food co-operatives to share cooking responsibilities amongst groups of families. At the start of this project, I assumed that feminists during the 1970s and 1980s had founded these restaurants when they saw that, like previous women liberationists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the early twentieth century, communal cooking could lift them from the drudgery of the kitchen.⁵

Consciousness raising (CR) groups from the early 1970s did in fact discuss issues of housework and, specifically, cooking. Entire sections of CR pamphlets, such as Harriet Perl and Gay Abarbanell’s *Guidelines to Feminist Consciousness Raising*, were devoted to gendered divisions of household labor.⁶ Feminist periodicals from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s published numerous pieces about the burden of cooking. Despite this, the motivation for creating these restaurants was far less about drudgery. Though

⁵ Mary Drake McFeely, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?: American Women and the Kitchen in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) and Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (Boston: Basic Books, 1983).

⁶ Harriet Perl and Gay Abarbanell, *Guidelines to Feminist Consciousness Raising* (Los Angeles: National Task Force on Consciousness Raising of the National Organization for Women Press, 1979).

their formation was not entirely divorced from the kinds of dialogue happening in CR groups, it was instead focused on creating a new model, rather than just altering a broken one. Unsurprisingly, radical feminists who were invested in overturning the system found this approach appealing. In addition, these restaurants played an important role in incubating, shaping, and disseminating ideas within the feminist activist community. Feminist restaurant, café, and coffeehouse history thus demonstrates the necessity of access to spaces for socializing, activism, economics, and community building.

Terms

Feminist Restaurants and Cafés

Feminist restaurants and cafés in the 1970s and 1980s were unique spaces that have received little academic attention. Indeed, few texts mention feminist restaurants specifically. Historian A. Finn Enke in *Finding the Movement* wrote about feminist restaurants as part of a larger study about feminist businesses in the Midwestern United States.⁷ William Belasco's *Appetite for Change* chronicles the 1960s counterculture food movement in the United States.⁸ Although he is mostly interested in the ways that corporations co-opted the movement, he highlights the way that the food movement intersected with ideas of the New Left, the sexual revolution, and women's liberation. His book has two paragraphs about Mother Courage, the feminist restaurant founded in New York City in 1972. Neither text is specifically about feminist restaurants.

⁷ A. Finn Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁸ Warren James Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

More historiographical emphasis, however, has been put on the history of gay and lesbian bar culture. While histories of bars and restaurants both deal with the role of consumption in public spaces and in creating community, histories of bar culture differ from restaurant and café history due to their emphasis on crime.⁹ Still, studies of bar culture provide important models for how to understand the impact of feminist restaurants. Researchers have investigated the way that lesbian and gay restaurants were important for activism. George Chauncey's work on gay male culture in New York from 1890-1940 looks at restaurants, cafés, and bars.¹⁰ His book is especially pertinent as he situates the creation of bars as central to the creation of a larger gay male world. Women's studies scholar, Trisha Franzen's writings about lesbians in Albuquerque, New Mexico show the important role played by restaurants and bars in the formation of the lesbian community. Most importantly, the places where Albuquerque lesbians chose to congregate from 1965 to 1980 said much about their social position, emphasizing class differences.¹¹ Historian Nan Alamilla Boyd has looked at gay, lesbian, and queer bar culture in San Francisco until 1965.¹² Alamilla Boyd emphasizes the importance of spaces that centered on food and drink for simultaneously prompting political organization and forging a sense of community. The canonical work *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, which traces the evolution of the working-class lesbian community in Buffalo, New York from the mid-1930s to the early 1960s, provides a model for how to

⁹ Elise Chenier, "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living 'The Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955-1965," *Left History* 9, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁰ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (Boston: Basic Books, 1994).

¹¹ Trisha Franzen, "Differences and Identities: Feminism and the Albuquerque Lesbian Community," *Signs* 18, no. 4 (1993): 891-906.

¹² Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: a History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003).

utilize oral histories when dealing with lesbian spaces, specifically bars.¹³ Although these studies evoke space as a methodological tool, this dissertation differs due to the larger scale of my focus.

Part of the paucity of research on feminist restaurants arises from the difficulty of defining these spaces. The feminist restaurants of the 1970s and 1980s were not a continuation of the women's restaurants from the start of the twentieth century. While there were some similarities between them, as restaurant historian Jan Whitaker notes, the women's restaurants of these two periods were quite different even though "they shared a dedication to furthering women's causes and giving women spaces of their own in which to eat meals, hold meetings, and in the 1970s, to enjoy music and poetry by women."¹⁴ However, the women's restaurants of the 1910s were, in fact, suffrage restaurants, tearooms, or lunchrooms sponsored by organizations such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). NAWSA established these restaurants with the intent to lure men in with a cheap lunch, which would then provide them the opportunity to lobby these men and give them literature about women's suffrage. While feminist restaurants of the second half of the twentieth century also were involved in politics, the goals tended to focus on creating a space for those already allied to the cause rather than recruitment and conversion.

For the purposes of this dissertation, in order to not be in a position of policing who can call themselves feminist and to make the project the most manageable, I decided that a restaurant must be identified as feminist in either its title, in flyers, in interviews, or

¹³ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁴ Jan Whitaker, "Women's Restaurants," *Restauranting through History*, last modified June 18, 2013, <https://restaurant-ingthroughhistory.com/2013/06/18/womens-restaurants/>.

in descriptions in restaurant reviews, magazines, or periodicals. Within these parameters, a central tenet of the restaurant owners' philosophy was a focus on the needs of women and feminists above all other goals. This dissertation examines intentional feminist spaces and is interested in why owners would choose to call their restaurant "feminist."

Self-identified feminist restaurants and cafés acted as spaces that challenged the status quo of cooking and consumption. These businesses fulfilled the desire for geographies separate from men in order to escape the oppressive formal restraints that regulated female socializing in male-dominated establishments. Feminist restaurants and cafés also provided a space for political organizing, recreational activity, and commerce. While the owners of restaurants such as Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant of Bridgeport, Connecticut self-identified their business as feminist in their title, others were not so overt. Feminist restaurants such as Gaia's Garden Café (Toronto, Ontario), Artemis (San Francisco, California), or Moonrise Café (Santa Rosa, California) relied on nature imagery. These restaurants spoke to a connection between women and the earth, nature, mythology, and empowerment. The word "moon" was particularly common, with five restaurants in the United States and Canada using it in their title. Another common trend in naming was to use the word "women" as well as its alternative spellings of "womyn" and "wimmin." When including the coffeehouses, twenty-three of the restaurants used "woman" in the title, eighty-seven used "women," four used "womyn," and one used "wimmin." In a similar vein, six restaurants were named "mother," four used the variant "mama," and fifteen "sister." In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Sister Moon used both the nature imagery of "moon" and the familial "sister" for both of its locations. Forty of these businesses explicitly used the word "feminist" in their title.

Feminist restaurant owners produced advertisements, business cards, flyers for special events like concerts, poetry presentations, lectures and guest talks by feminists, as well as other forms of entertainment. In addition, restaurant owners wrote menus and cookbooks. In these documents owners would also identify their space as feminist, which could be important if the title was not explicit, such as Ms. Purdy's Social Club Coffeehouse and Restaurant of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Apart from self-definition, it can be more difficult to categorize these businesses. Many, but not all of them, were either women-only spaces or had women-only hours at some point during their operation. Collectives ran many of the spaces and radical lesbian separatist, socialist feminist, or ecofeminist ideologies influenced many of the owners. Most restaurants held events with feminist and lesbian poets, musicians, artists, and political speakers because creating a community space was important to many of the owners. However, the most important factor for this study was whether or not the restaurant was intentional feminist space.

For the purposes of this study, restaurants and cafés are grouped together. The word "café" can denote a kind of diner, coffee shop, or bistro space with a full breakfast, lunch, or dinner menu; it can refer to a business that exclusively serves a breakfast menu; or it can just describe a space that served coffee. Furthermore, if a feminist bookstore sold coffee, tea, or snacks, it was included in this category, as having refreshments created a space to linger. Coffeehouses, however, were different from cafés and coffee shops.

Feminist Coffeehouses

Coffeehouses in this dissertation will primarily refer to temporary public spaces that served refreshments and whose emphasis was on providing entertainment. Coffeehouses could be one-time benefit shows, such as the benefit for *Hera's Journal* hosted by Judy's Café of Philadelphia in 1975.¹⁵ Other coffeehouses, such as Moving Mountain Coffeehouse of the Chicago area, existed from 1974 until 2005, changing venues throughout its history but usually renting out local church basements for Saturday night lesbian feminist music entertainment. Coffeehouses could also be special events or recurring events in typically non-explicitly feminist spaces, such as church basements, thus creating a temporary feminist space. In part three of this dissertation, which focuses on these temporary spaces, I primarily discuss the recurring coffeehouses. Confusion arises due to the fact that some cafés called themselves coffeehouses despite being permanent spaces. Also, feminist cafés and restaurants would hold events that they would call coffeehouse hours, such as when Chez Nous of Ottawa, Ontario hosted a women's coffeehouse to bring new women into the space. To add even further confusion, feminist coffeehouses typically were not too original in their titles. Sixteen establishments within my research were entitled "The Women's Coffeehouse." Three were called "Everywoman's Coffeehouse"(sic) and one, "Anywoman"(sic). In order to avoid confusion, I will specify locations of the coffeehouse even when the location was not part of their formal title such as the Denver, Colorado Women's Coffeehouse; the Iowa City, Iowa Women's Coffeehouse, and the Victoria, British Columbia Women's Coffeehouse.

Women's Space

¹⁵ *Hera: A Philadelphia Feminist Publication* 1, no. 2 (April/May 1975), Back Cover.

A consistent trend within feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada was the constant questioning and renegotiation of the meaning of women-only and women-centered spaces, and whether such goals remained important. Throughout this period, women's space provided social, cultural, and political geographies for women. By the late 1970s, however, the term "women's space" generally became, in most circumstances, code for lesbian separatist space.¹⁶ For the purpose of this dissertation, when referring to a particular feminist restaurant, café, or coffeehouse, the terms the owners used will be the ones I will employ, when available. However, when I speak about the spaces more broadly, I have created a set of terms to help make the distinction between women-only and women-friendly spaces.

Woman-space/women's space and women-centered space was woman-owned and operated space, whether at a permanent location or run by a group at multiple venues. Women's space sought to create a community for social, economic, and political organization. These spaces were inherently political as they came out of discussions in the consciousness raising groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the need for geographies apart from men. When, at the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, the word "woman" in woman space began to be code for lesbian in many establishments, lesbian spaces entitled "woman-space" still upheld the tenants of woman-space. Although these businesses targeted lesbian participation, they were not the same thing as an exclusively lesbian space. Woman-centered spaces were places whose mission statement was about women, but most allowed men to visit as long as they were respectful of the

¹⁶ Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider, *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 366-7.

space. Finally, a woman-friendly space did not have to be owned or operated by women nor did it have to even have any political activist principles, although it could. Woman friendly spaces would be restaurants and cafés that did not specifically cater to women but fostered an environment that was welcoming and safe for them. To clarify, if a business described itself as a woman's space, feminist space, lesbian space, or some other term, I used that term to speak about the place. The labels of woman-centered and woman-friendly are categories that I have created as useful organizational concepts.

Women/ Womyn/ Wimmin/ Womban/ Lesbian/ Feminist

Another definitional problem comes from the use of the terms “women,” “lesbian,” and “feminist” and how these words do not allow for all the multiplicity of identities within those categories. Intersecting factors like race, class, age, religion, and geographic region impacted whether women chose to identify themselves and their business establishments as “women,” “lesbian,” “feminist,” “womyn,” “wimmen,” “womin,” “womban,” “women-loving-women,” “wom*n,” and other terms such as “real woman,” and later “cis-women,” and “transwomen.” The creation of alternative spellings of the word “woman/women” was a political project of redefinition: to state that women were spiritually, socially, and physically defined by their own terms and did not exist only in relation to men. To remove the “e” and thus the word “men” meant that these alternative spellings were an expression of female independence and a refutation of traditions that defined women in reference to the male norm.¹⁷ The term “real woman” became important when feminist and lesbian spaces were deciding who was allowed to use the space and whether transsexual or transgender women could participate in the

¹⁷ Neeru Tandon, *Feminism: a Paradigm Shift* (New Delhi, India: Atlantic Publishers, 2008).

women's community. Cisgender refers to individuals who identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth whereas transgender individuals identify with a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth. The politics of trans-exclusion and trans-inclusion was especially pertinent for women-only spaces and women-only hours.¹⁸ "Women-loving-women" and "lesbian" referred to similar individuals but "women-loving-women" placed more emphasis on the emotional connection between women whereas as the term "lesbian" emphasized sexual orientation. During the 1970s and 1980s, the word "queer" was primarily used as a slur and the political project of reclaiming the term for self-identification and empowerment did not happen until the late 1980s.¹⁹ Calling the feminist restaurants during the 1970s through mid-1980s "queer spaces" would therefore be anachronistic.

The problem of terminology is not unique to this dissertation. Historian Alice Echols, author of *Daring to Be Bad*, argues that these terminological changes have to do

¹⁸ This divide over trans-inclusion and trans-exclusion most famously came to the fore during the organizing of the Michigan Women's Music Festival and eventually led to its closure. Ann Cvetkovich and Selena Wahng, "Don't Stop the Music: Roundtable Discussion with Workers from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 1 (2001): 131-51.

¹⁹ The word "queer" was reclaimed during the late 1980s in the United States during the midst of the AIDs epidemic. The activist organization Queer Nation, which sought to eradicate hate crime, explained its reasons for reclaiming the term in the pamphlet "Queers Read This," which the organization distributed during the 1990 New York Pride Parade. The pamphlet stated, "We've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using 'queer' is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized; we use queer as gay men loving lesbians and lesbians loving being queer. Queer, unlike GAY, doesn't mean MALE." However, the use of the word "queer" is still greatly contested within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, and transgender communities. The word "queer" is taken up more commonly by younger, white, college-educated individuals, but not exclusively so. Linguist Robin Brontsema traces the linguistic history of the word "queer" in the United States and delves deeply into the controversial employment of the term. Scholars Catherine Jean Nash and Alison Bain show how the debates over reclaiming the word "queer" continue to divide the lesbian community of Toronto. In order to respect the self-identification of the owners of feminist restaurants, I have used the words that these owners used to self describe. Robin Brontsema, "A Queer Revolution: Reconceptualizing the Debate Over Linguistic Reclamation," *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 17, no. 1 (2004): 1-17; Catherine Jean Nash and Alison Bain, "'Reclaiming Raunch?' Spatializing Queer Identities at Toronto Women's Bathhouse Events," *Social & Cultural Geography* 8, no. 1 (2007): 47-62; Queer Nation, "Queers Read This," 1990, <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/misc/text/queers.read.this>.

with shifts from radical feminism to cultural feminism.²⁰ Likewise, historian Benita Roth, in *Separate Roads to Feminism*, notes that charting these changes is not so simple due to the ways in which feminism developed in various regions, within different identity groups, and on different timelines.²¹ Some scholars, however, have tried to reconcile this problem by ignoring it. Social scientist, Nancy Stoller's article on lesbian activism confirms this trend, when she noted that,

In many cases, the language of the movement itself conflated women and lesbians. For example, during the mid-1970s, as lesbian culture went public, it was labeled "women's culture" by its promoters; for example, "women's music", which was really lesbian music, of course, and music for a predominately white, college-educated audience at that. That this conflation still exists is shown by the fact that Olivia Records, the primary vector for lesbian/women's music, now sells "women's cruises" (no pun acknowledged), which are designed for lesbians, not for "feminists" or women in general. The feminist movement and the lesbian movement were parallel and interconnecting; they were also linked to other movements and had considerable diversity within them.²²

But Stoller, like many other scholars, generally just accepts this confusion. Professor of Women's Studies, Janet Jakobson, also points to this conflation and challenges its essentialism, but ultimately does not provide much of a pragmatic scheme of how to deal with it.²³

As this dissertation likewise covers the broad geographic range of two countries over two decades, these differences are complicated; activists invested themselves in the liberatory potential of language and term reclamation. During the 1970s and 1980s, activists particularly conflated the terms "lesbian" and "feminist" and would sometimes employ a simultaneous meaning by using "woman/women" as coded terms. Especially in

²⁰ Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

²¹ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²² Nardi and Schneider, *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, 366-7.

²³ Janet R. Jakobsen, *Working Alliances and the Politics of Difference: Diversity and Feminist Ethics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 116.

literature and cultural artifacts that the public might have been exposed to and potentially hostile towards — such as musical records, periodicals, and books — authors and artists would employ the term “woman” so that the intended audience would know the material was for lesbians, but the general public would not see the materials as a threat to heteronormative culture.²⁴ Furthermore, in certain radical feminist communities, such as those inhabited by the owners of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the idea of lesbianism was integral to being a feminist.²⁵ This perspective was reflected in the motto, “Feminism is the theory and lesbianism is the practice.”²⁶

While current cultural discussions of gay, lesbian, and queer identities center on debates of self-identification and the idea of a genetic rationale for sexual preference, during the early 1970s a serious debate occurred within feminist literature and communities of whether one could have sexual relationships with men and still self-identify as a feminist.²⁷ As a result of these debates, some women spoke of “choosing to be lesbian,” such as Selma Miriam, co-founder of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian

²⁴ Charlotte Bunch, “Learning from Lesbian Separatism,” in *Lavender Culture* (New York: Jove Books, 1978), 433-44; Radicalesbians, “The Woman-Identified Woman,” in *Notes from the Third Year: Women's Liberation*. (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), 240-5; Kathy Rudy, “Radical Feminism, Lesbian Separatism, and Queer Theory,” *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 193; Dana R. Shugar, *Separatism and Women's Community* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Lucia Valeska, “The Future of Female Separatism,” *Quest* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1975): 2-16.

²⁵ Maria McGrath, “Living Feminist: the Liberation and Limits of Countercultural Business and Radical Lesbian Ethics at Bloodroot Restaurant,” *The Sixties* 9, no. 2 (2016): 189-217.

²⁶ Verta Taylor, Nancy Whittier, A. D. Morris, and C. M. Mueller, “Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization,” in *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 349-65.

²⁷ S. Mo Jang and Hoon Lee, “When Pop Music Meets a Political Issue: Examining How “Born This Way” Influences Attitudes toward Gays and Gay Rights Policies,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 58, no. 1 (2014): 114-30; Gregory B. Lewis, “Does Believing Homosexuality is Innate Increase Support for Gay Rights?,” *Policy Studies Journal* 37, no. 4 (2009): 669-93.

Restaurant.²⁸ Other feminists, however, wrote about how they found living out their politics by only having sexual and emotional relationships with women as incredibly difficult because they missed having relationships with men, thus making political lesbianism untenable.²⁹ Flavia Rando, who cooked at The Women's Coffeehouse in New York City, said the coffeehouse's clientele consisted of mostly lesbians and youth.³⁰ However, the management used the word "women" so it would be flexible and open for women who were questioning.³¹ Julie Podmore, a feminist queer geographer who studies lesbian spaces in Montreal, also believes that term "women" allowed for openness.³² On the other hand, homophobic activists, scared of what Betty Friedan termed in 1969 "the lavender menace" which referred to the public's perception of lesbian feminists, saw lesbians as a threat to the politics of respectability that was being advocated for by straight feminist activists.³³ The fear of the "lavender menace" became associated with liberal branches of feminism that sought women's empowerment through legislative change and women reaching positions of power rather than an overhauling of society and all power models, which was key to radical feminist politics. These homophobic feminists obviously did not use "women" as code for lesbian. Depending on what terms businesses used, different groups of people would either be included or excluded from

²⁸ Selma Miriam and Noel Furie, "Bloodroot Interview 1," interview by Alex Ketchum, December 13, 2011.

²⁹ Rebecca Jennings, "Practices of Intimacy in Australian Rural Lesbian-Separatist Communities in the 1970s and 1980s," Conference Presentation, Transnational Histories of Lesbian Migration, Rurality, and Politics in Australia and North America from the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. May 24, 2014.

³⁰ This assertion was echoed in Penny House, "The New York Women's Coffee House," *DYKE: A Quarterly* 1, September 1975, <http://seesaw.typepad.com/dykequarterly/venue-ny-womens-coffee-house/>.

³¹ Flavia Rando, "New York Feminist Food," interview by Alex Ketchum, March 7, 2015.

³² Julie Podmore, "Feminist Geographies," interview by Alex Ketchum, February 26, 2016.

³³ Stephanie Gilmore and Elizabeth Kaminski, "A Part and Apart: Lesbian and Straight Feminist Activists Negotiate Identity in a Second-Wave Organization," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 1 (2007): 95-113.

feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses. For the purposes of this dissertation, when known, I use the terms that people used for themselves.

Though I do not conflate feminists and lesbians within my project, lesbian feminists owned and operated the majority of feminist restaurants. As a result, my project also speaks to the history of lesbians within the United States and Canada. Sociologist Becki Ross's work, focused on Toronto, has likewise shown the way that spaces have been influential in forming lesbian cultural identity.³⁴ Stewart Van Cleve's *Land of 10,000 Loves* also pays attention to the importance of space.³⁵ Van Cleve showcases the ways in which geographies and places have influenced activism, education, and community building by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer peoples in the American Midwest. This project follows suit. Depending on the terms the owners of the spaces used, the communities within the feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses, in turn, looked different.

The term "feminist" is likewise complicated, as there are numerous kinds of feminism, including, but not limited to: socialist, liberal, Marxist, radical, separatist, radical lesbian separatist, and ecofeminist, as well as groups that challenged racist histories in feminist movements, such as "womanist." Due to the variety of feminist ideologies, within the historiography authors often treat the work done by liberal feminists, socialist feminists, and radical feminists separately and do not focus on the ways in which feminists with varying ideologies also worked together. Feminist restaurants were not the only spaces to draw feminists of different political leanings

³⁴ Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

³⁵ Stewart Van Cleve, *Land of 10,000 Loves: A History of Queer Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

together. In fact, feminist bookstores and brick and mortar businesses, like feminist gift shops, had to appeal to a broader understanding of feminism in order to maintain a large enough clientele to stay in business. So, while I note particular branches of feminism when these distinctions are necessary, by keeping the term “feminism” somewhat open, as the restaurants and coffeehouses did, this dissertation is able to discuss broader groups.

Likewise, this dissertation employs an expanded understanding of what feminist activism is. Historian Benita Roth’s book *Separate Roads to Feminism* challenges other historians’ definitions of activism by claiming that work done by women of different races, whether labeled as feminist or not, contributed to the women’s liberation movement. She is particularly attentive to the different pressures that women faced within their smaller, more local communities, as well as their larger regional and racial communities.³⁶ This expanded understanding of activism is particularly useful for us to understand the political and social contributions feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses made.

The issue of terminology has no easy solution. While at points in this dissertation “women” may appear too broad, I have been as specific as possible. The “sisterhood” may have been powerful, but it was always diverse and meant different things to different groups.

Feminist/ Women’s Movements vs. Wave Metaphor

According to the authors of “Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor,” the waves metaphor “highlights periods when middle-class white women were most active in the public sphere.” They argue that “the multi-dimensional

³⁶ Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*.

aspects of feminism are too often excluded.” In this interpretation, “women of color, working-class women, women with disabilities, lesbians, and older women who engaged in activism that responded to overlapping forms of oppression, including sexism, have rarely been incorporated into waves narratives in their own right.”³⁷ Likewise, the edited volume *Not June Cleaver* shows that wave theory erases the feminist activism that was happening throughout the twentieth century.³⁸ In fact, understanding feminist activism as a history of women’s movements — emphasis on the plural — represents the historical conditions better than a monolithic singular movement.

Individual activists were often involved with more than one movement, and communicated or transferred organizational strategies and epistemologies between groups, which often resulted in allied community organizations. Single-issue causes are, in fact, not truly about a single issue. Sara Evans’s *Personal Politics* explores the roots of the women’s liberation movement in both the Civil Rights and New Left movements.³⁹ Evans weaves together the experiences of white women and women of color as they tried to navigate different social justice movements and their own sexual exploration. In her book the stories of the individuals are not sacrificed to the whole. As a result, readers can relate to how individuals were driven to particular politics due to their own relationships with friends, lovers, and fellow activists. Evans does not just state that the sexual revolution drove women to activism, but also recounts stories of male activists disregarding a woman’s political contributions and treating her as if her only attribute

³⁷ Kathleen A. Laughlin, Julie Gallagher, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Eileen Boris, Premilla Nadasen, Stephanie Gilmore, and Leandra Zarnow, “Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor,” *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (2010): 76-135.

³⁸ Joanne Jay Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

³⁹ Sara Margaret Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979).

was her body for his use, angering that particular woman, and ultimately motivating her to build her own political theory.

A growing body of literature has developed regarding how actors in social movements could be involved in multiple, overlapping, and intersecting movements. In *Peace as a Women's Issue*, Harriet Alonso looks at the ways that activists in the peace movement made the connection between institutionalized violence and violence against women, whether the institution was slavery, the military, or governmental oppression.⁴⁰ She is particularly interested in exploring the stories of women who were activists for both women's rights and for peace and anti-nuclear campaigns. Similarly, Barbara Epstein makes the connection between the environmentalist, anti-nuclear, and feminist movements in *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Non-violent Direct Action in the 1970s*.⁴¹ These books demonstrate the way that feminism was so greatly influenced by other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They place feminism within the historical context of a politically charged time and portray activists as complex individuals who were engaged in multiple, often changing, political causes. Still, there is a gap in the literature on feminism during this period. While historians have shown the relationship between feminism and the Sexual Liberation movement, Gay Liberation, Civil Rights, Black Power, Chicano Liberation, the anti-nuclear, the peace movements, the food movements, and the environmental movements, no one has yet to speak of the intersections between all of these movements. A spatial approach to feminist restaurants allows for an analysis that incorporates all of them. This technique thus enables a history

⁴⁰ Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

⁴¹ Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1993).

of women's liberation that treats these activists as full humans with multiple commitments, inspirations, and the ability to change.

Methodology and Sources

Sources

This dissertation relies on archival sources, literature from the period, and oral history. To complete this project I assembled materials from nineteen archives around the United States and Canada, including The Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University, The Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America of the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, the Quebec Gay Archives (Les Archives gaies du Québec), the Canadian Women's Movement Archives at the University of Ottawa, the University of Iowa Archives, the University of Minnesota Archives, the San Francisco GLBT Archives, the San Francisco Public Library Archives, Northeastern University Archives, Smith College Archives, New York University Fales Archives, New York University Archives of the Tamiment Libraries, John J. Wilcox Jr. Gay Archives at the William Way Center in Philadelphia, the San Diego LAMBDA Archives, the Lesbian Herstory Digital Archives, and Yale University Archives. I worked with English, French, and Spanish sources.

At these archives I sourced textual sources such as periodicals, diaries, day planners, notebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, as well as posters, event promotional flyers, surveys, audiotapes, buttons, t-shirts, menus, photographs, napkins, travel guides, advertisements, ephemera, and other paraphernalia. The Bloodroot records at Yale University, the Bread and Roses records at the Schlesinger Library on the History of

Women in America of the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, A Woman's Coffeehouse records at the University of Minnesota Archives, and the Las Hermanas Coffeehouse records at the San Diego LAMBDA Archives were quite comprehensive. They housed an assortment of business records, meeting minutes, newspaper and magazine clippings with publicity, legal documents, menus, and personal papers of the owners. However, such complete records were rare. For most of the feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses presented in this dissertation, scant traces remained in the archives. A business card, an event poster, or a mention in a musician's liner notes was sometimes the only remaining trace of a feminist restaurant's existence. This project would therefore not have been possible if archival materials were the only available source. I also relied on feminist literary materials such as feminist and lesbian periodicals, magazines, and travel guides.

Oral histories, however, were what truly made this project possible. The difficulty of writing a social history of marginalized peoples is that their records are less likely to be preserved in archives.⁴² I conducted a series of oral interviews with the founders, staff, and customers of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in the United States and Canada. While being able to conduct interviews with people who worked for or visited feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses could not have replaced the physical documents from the archives, these oral testimonies often answered the questions that business records and event flyers could not. Inspired by Ann Cvetkovich's drive to document oral histories in *An Archive of Feelings*, "In forging a collective knowledge built on memory, I hope to produce not only a version of history but also an archive of

⁴² Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 1-19.

the emotions.”⁴³ Even if gender historian Joan Scott rejects the notion that historians can capture experience in the sense of “lived reality” or “raw events,” she concedes, “experience is not a word we can do without.”⁴⁴ The women I interviewed spoke about their individual experiences in a particular space. That level of personal reflection is missing in a box of receipts, diagrams of floor plans, and even photographs documenting events that happened at these feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses.

The process of locating interviewees grew organically. This entire project, in fact, stemmed from a first, informal interview. While completing my undergraduate studies at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, a friend suggested I visit Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant, located forty minutes away in Bridgeport, Connecticut. An initial five-minute chat with the owners Selma Miriam and Noel Furie in 2011 led to more than a dozen formal interviews with feminist restaurant, café, and coffeehouse founders, staff, and customers around the United States and Canada. Locating the interviewees was made possible in two ways. The first method consisted of finding the name of a feminist business owner in a feminist periodical, advertisement, or in an archive. I would then conduct internet searches, scour old phone books, and use my connections to feminist *Facebook* groups directed at lesbian feminists in their sixties and seventies to post asking for help to connect with the women I wanted to interview. Occasionally, people would find me. After presenting my work in academic and non-academic settings and through sharing information about this research on the website “The Feminist Restaurant Project,” people would offer to be interviewed or connect me

⁴³ Ann Cvetkovitch, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 167.

⁴⁴ Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 797.

with their personal network of friends and former co-workers who had worked in these establishments.

The next step was to send the interviewees an initial set of questions as well as the McGill University Research Ethics Board documents, which described the methodology and central research goals of the project. Each interviewee was informed that she was able to anonymize her interviews, choose whether or not she wanted the interview recorded, and know she would see the writings that related to her stories before publication. The initial set of questions was provided to the interviewees in advance, but follow-up questions also occurred. The interviews happened in person or through Skype. In two cases, interviewees preferred to provide written responses to the questions. During all but three interviews, the discussion was recorded on Garageband software and converted to MP3s to make data storage easier by creating smaller files. I also took notes simultaneously.

Quantitative Methods: Maps and Digital Display

While the combined archival work, literary analysis, and interviews yielded useful case studies, additionally I have incorporated a quantitative aspect to my research. I built original databases, which showcase the locations and years of these feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses' operation. From these databases, it was then possible to create a series of maps that are useful for both visualization and for analytical purposes. To build my databases, I had to identify which restaurants in the United States and Canada were feminist and where they were specifically located. I located the restaurants through a

variety of means. The first method is by locating the spaces from lesbian and feminist travel guides from the period.

In building my databases of restaurants, every mention of a feminist restaurant, café, or coffeehouse was useful; however, for the sake of consistency, I tracked every annual edition of the *Gaia's Guides* from 1975 to 1991, with the exception of the 1980, 1986, and 1987 editions as I could not locate a copy through any libraries, archives, booksellers, or private collections. Focusing on *Gaia's Guides* was useful for a variety of reasons. Of the various guides from the period, I could access the most complete collection of *Gaia's Guides*. While the meaning of its star-rating system changed subtly over the years, from the earliest version, *Gaia's Guide* noted if a space was feminist or not—a label that I took at its word because, as stated earlier, this dissertation does not seek to define feminism but rather is interested in spaces that were marked intentionally as feminist. And although the star system was imperfect because it depended on feedback from users that were not evaluating every space relative to all of the others, but only speaking of their own experiences at one spot, having notes marking whether or not editors and researchers for the guide thought a space was feminist was particularly useful for my project. Furthermore, there was a clear distinction between what kind of business the guide was discussing, as under a location there were subheadings for “restaurants,” “bars,” “bookstores,” and more. No guidebook could ever have been perfect. As literature scholar and author of *The Lesbian Index: Pragmatism and Lesbian Subjectivity in the Twentieth Century*, Kim Emery notes:

Everyone knows that a club's clientele can change faster than any publication could hope to keep up with; that queer bars close, move and change ownership like some girls change hairstyles; that there's always some chance of meeting up with the stray lesbian-feminist at a men's leather bar. The sites of queer culture

are neither homogenous nor stable. Like signs more generally, they are approximate; their meanings are shifting, always under negotiation. Hence the reliable market for updated editions. Hence, too, the big problem with this metaphor: *Gaia's Guide* and others like it are organized around a structuralist conceit- they attend to neither the material specificity nor the temporal dimension of the reality that they purport to describe. The representation of queer cultures that they offer – useful as it is – is an atemporal abstraction, a system of understanding unattached to actual time and actual space.⁴⁵

This conceit does not render the methodology of using guidebooks useless. However, it is important to recognize the fluidity of the conditions that guidebooks sought to represent.

To supplement *Gaia's Guide*, I also looked at available copies of other lesbian and women's travel guides, *Gay Yellow Pages* and *Damron's Gay Guides*, various regional gay yellow pages/directories, as well as counterculture and alternative culture guidebooks and directories. According to their competitor, Gina Gatta, publisher of *Gaia's Guides*' main competitor beginning in 1989, *Damron's Women's Traveller*, *Gaia's Guide* was the most popular travel guide in the 1970s and 1980s, but it was not the only guide on the market. Although exact publication numbers are unknown, Gatta thinks it is doubtful that *Gaia's Guides* published more than twenty thousand copies a year, a similar circulation to her own publication.⁴⁶ To put that number in perspective, *Damron's Men's Guide* (formerly called *Damron's Address Book*) peaked with the 1999 edition at sixty thousand copies that year, competing against *Spartacus*. The third major publisher of women's guides was Ferrari Publications, which released four women's guide series that mostly contained American listings: *Places for Women* (1984), *Places of Interest for Women* (1985, 1986) and later expanding to the international market, from the mid-1990s until Ferrari went out of business in the early 2000s, *Women's Travel in*

⁴⁵ Kim Emery, *The Lesbian Index: Pragmatism and Lesbian Subjectivity in the Twentieth Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 1.

⁴⁶ "I think my largest run of the *Damron's Women's Traveller* was twenty thousand in the late 90s." Gina Gatta, "On Travel Guides," private email to Alex Ketchum, August 18, 2014.

Your Pocket and *Ferrari for Women: Worldwide Women's Guide* (1995). *Gaia's Guides*, from its inception, included international listings.⁴⁷ Unlike *Gaia's Guides*, which just focused on women's guides, both Ferrari and Damron began as publishers of gay male guides and expanded into the women's and lesbian travel market. Other independent national guides included the *Canada Women's Guide*, *The Guide to Women's Resources*, and *The New Woman's Survival Catalogue* (1973).

Often with low production quality, made on cheap paper with weak bindings, lesbians also created guides about their local areas. These smaller guides focused on regions like *The Women's Yellow Pages of New England: The Original Source Book for Women* (1978), *The Women's List for Greater Boston: the What and Where of Women's Action Groups* (1976); a smaller region like the Twin Cities, or just a particular city, such as *The Women's Resource Guide to Ithaca, New York* (1976), *Montreal Women's Directory* (c.1985); *San Francisco- East Bay Women's Yellow Pages* (1976), *The Women's Yellow Pages (New York)* (1978), and *Betty and Pansy's Severe Queer Review of San Francisco* (1994). For the more local guides, lesbian and gay men oftentimes collaborated to create texts such as *A Gay Person's Guide to New England* (1976) and *New England Gay Community Guide* (1989). It is important to keep in mind the varying resources available to each community. As the focus became more local, there was more collaboration between the gay male and lesbian communities. For example, even in the women-focused guidebooks, gay male spaces were listed from time to time if women were invited to enter. This tradition of creating guidebooks has continued with the 1990

⁴⁷ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Lesbian Heresy: A Feminist Perspective on the Lesbian Sexual Revolution* (North Geelong, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1993), Dedication.

publication of *Shewolf's Directory of Wimmin's Lands and Lesbian Communities*; in 2012 they released a sixth edition.⁴⁸

Other travel guides and resource guides from the 1970s and 1980s also listed feminist and lesbian restaurants, cafés, bookstores, and similar establishments. Alternative lifestyle telephone books such as *The People's Yellow Pages* (1971) and *The Philadelphia Whole City Catalogue* (1973) listed some of these spaces. However, I do not focus on these books, as women did not control them. As outsiders to the community produced those books, the political and social motivation was different for producing them than the guides by and for women; one type of guide was for the “alternative community” and the other for the women’s community. Nonetheless, they do still provide researchers with a useful resource through which to study spaces in which feminists and lesbians gathered, collaborated, socialized, and did activism.

Feminist and lesbian periodicals functioned as guides. National feminist periodicals with a larger distribution occasionally published special issues focused on smaller regions, and in these publications, such as *Off Our Backs*, an American feminist periodical published between 1970 and 2008, there would be a section on some of the feminist businesses in that area. Regional feminist and lesbian journals published written guides to the local communities within their pages, such as *Las Hermanas Newsletter* (1975) in San Diego, California and *Hera's Journal* (1978) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In a similar manner, books focused on the needs of the lesbian community and/or women within a region often published lists of available resources in a directory

⁴⁸ Wimminland Collective, *Shewolf's Directory of Wimmin's Lands and Lesbian Communities* (Womonworld: Shewolf Self Published, 2012).

format, including community spaces, such as in the final pages of *Our Right to Love* (1978).⁴⁹

In addition, I identified feminist restaurants in both the article section and in the advertisement sections in a variety of feminist and lesbian periodicals. The utility of periodicals for the purpose of this dissertation is how they could function like micro – guides, with information about specific areas as well as national advertisements.⁵⁰ Unlike my methodological approach to guidebooks, compiling a database of each edition of *Gaia's Guides* and supplementing it with additional guidebooks, for feminist and lesbian periodicals I did not seek out a dominant source. I utilized every available feminist and lesbian periodical housed at the archives I visited in order to see if there were any articles

⁴⁹ Ginny Vida, ed., *Our Right to Love: A Lesbian Resource Book* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1978).

⁵⁰ Periodicals worked like micro-guidebooks in three ways. First, periodicals occasionally printed explicit area guides to highlight either businesses in the area that the guidebook was printed in or to encourage out of town feminist readers to visit those spaces. For example, the writers of the *Amazon Quarterly* (1972-1975) published a guide for women and listed locations where lesbians and feminist could gather. It is important to remember that periodicals had a specific readership in mind for these guides. *Amazon Quarterly's* guide did not focus on spaces that sold alcohol. As historian Martin Meeker wrote, “in distancing themselves and their work from the culture of lesbian bars, however, they also were removing those sites from a communication network that was designed to map a lesbian geography and from the list of options where lesbians might be able to meet other lesbians.” In doing so, the authors of *Amazon Quarterly* denoted their own class biases, distancing themselves from working-class lesbian bar culture. Furthermore, this bias reminds us that the women with access to the presses came out of specific class and racial groups. I am not arguing that all feminist presses were controlled by middle-class, white women. Publications such as Iowa City's radical feminist *Ain't I A Woman* put racial and class issues at the forefront of most editions. The editors took their title from an 1851 speech by Sojourner Truth, African-American abolitionist, former slave, and women's rights activist. Apart from the literal guides feminist and lesbian periodicals published, their articles on local feminist businesses, such as the article “In the Soup in New York City: Restauranters (sic) Compare Recipes for Success” in a 1975 issue of *Artemis: The Newsletter for Enterprising Women's* on Mother Courage Feminist Restaurant in New York City, provided locations and other details about feminist restaurants, cafés, or coffeehouses.⁵⁰ Furthermore, advertisement sections in periodicals, such as the Twin Cities' *Goldflower*, also provided addresses and descriptions of feminist restaurants. Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 248; “In the Soup in New York City: Restauranters (sic) Compare Recipes for Success,” *Artemis: The Newsletter for Enterprising Women's* 3 (1975), 3-4.

and/or advertisements about feminist restaurants, cafés, or coffeehouses. This required physically flipping through hundreds of periodicals and magazines.⁵¹

Flyers and business cards have survived in the archives and were useful in both the building of directories and in my case studies. These objects sometimes provided the only remaining piece of evidence of a feminist restaurant, café, or coffeehouse: a title and

⁵¹ I went through every edition of Iowa City's *Ain't I A Woman* by Iowa City Women's Liberation Front Publications Collective (1970); *Amazon of Milwaukee: a Midwest Journal for Women* (1971); *Ca s'attrape* of Montreal (1982); *Country Women* (1973-1980); *Feminist Communications: Las Hermanas Coffeehouse Newsletter* (1975) in San Diego, California; *Goldflower: A Twin Cities Guide for Women* (1972-1975); *Hera's Journal: A Philadelphia Feminist Publication* (1978); *It Ain't Me Babe: Women's Liberation* of Berkeley, California (1970); and *Les Sourcieres* of Quebec (1980s). However, for some periodicals I could not locate every single edition. I still utilized all of the copies that I could find of the following periodicals: *Amazon Quarterly* (1972-1975); *Artemis* (1977); *Canadian Feminist Periodicals/ Periodiques Feministes du Canada* (1989); *Communique'Elles* (Quebec, 1980s); *Diversity*; *Dyke: A Quarterly* of New York City (1975-1978); *L'Evidente Lesbienne* of Quebec; *The Feminist Voice*; *The Fourth World*; *Furies* of Washington D.C. (1972-1973); *Herizons* of Winnipeg, Manitoba (1979-1992); *Hysteria* (1971); *Lavender Woman* of Chicago (1971-1976); *Lavender Woman: a Lesbian Newspaper* (1971); *The Lesbian Calendar* (1988); *Lesbian Connection of Michigan* (1974-); *Lesbian Ethics* (1984); *Lesbian Newspaper* of Ann Arbor, Michigan (1975); *Lesbian News* of Los Angeles (1975-); *The Lesbian Rag* (1988); *Ms. Magazine* (1971-2018); *New York Woman Tribune*; *Northern Women's Journal* (1979); *Off Our Backs: A Women's Liberation Biweekly* (1970-2008, looked every edition until 1990); *Open Road* (1976); *RAT* (1970); *Rites* (1987); *Sapphire* of San Francisco (1973); *Sinister Wisdom: A Multicultural Journal by and for Lesbians* published in Charlotte, North Carolina, Berkeley and Oakland, California, at various points, (1972- 2012); *Small Arms of Springfield Massachusetts* (date unlisted); *Through the Looking Glass* (1971); *Valley Women's Voice* (1979); *Wicce* of Philadelphia (1973-1974); *Women's Collective Press*; the *Whole Woman Catalogue* (1971); *Women's Newspaper* (1971); *Women and Revolution*; *WomaNews* (1985); *Woman's World* (1971); *Women's Undercurrents*; *Women United*; *Women's Way*; and the *Wree View* (1977). In addition to *Feminist Communications*, by the feminist coffeehouse Las Hermanas of San Diego, I also looked through three other publications, *Malapropo's Feminist Bookstore and Café Newsletter*; *Mama Bears News and Notes* of Oakland, California (1983-1986); *New Words' Bookstore's News and Notes* (1979), were linked to a feminist café that sold books. Although the majority of the editions I read through were published between 1970 and 1989, I also read copies of the editions that were also published in the early 1990s. I found them useful to search because feminist restaurants such as Bloodroot and the Brick Hut were founded during the period of study still appeared in feminist periodicals in the early 1990s. There were useful collections of periodicals at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University, the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America of the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, the Gay Archives of Quebec (Les Archives gaies du Québec), the Canadian Women's Movement Archives at the University of Ottawa, the San Francisco GLBT Archives, the San Francisco Public Library Archives, Northeastern University Archives, John J. Wilcox Jr. Gay Archives at the William Way Center in Philadelphia, the San Diego LAMBDA Archives, and the Yale University Archives. However, the Smith College Archives and the New York University (NYU) Archives housed extensive collections. NYU's Tamiment Library's collection of feminist periodicals, in particular, provided access to more than half of the above listed periodicals. Although collections such as *Ms. Magazine* have been digitized, the majority of these feminist and lesbian periodicals are only accessible in physical form, scattered around the United States and Canada in incomplete collections.

an address.⁵² For this research project, I combed through thousands of flyers, the majority of which were photocopied, handwritten posters listing addresses, dates, and costs to see a performance or attend a special dinner. Knowing that a restaurant or café existed in a particular location encouraged me to contact archivists at the local lesbian, gay, queer, or social movement archives to seek further information about spaces that I would not have known existed otherwise. Additionally, I contacted every lesbian, gay, queer, and social movement archive in the United States and Canada listed on the Lavender Legacies of North America Directory produced by the Society of American Archivists: Diverse Sexuality and Gender Section asking if they had any information about feminist and lesbian restaurants, as these spaces would often not appear in finding aids but scant traces would exist in the fonds.⁵³

My interviews with owners of restaurants that I had already identified led me to other restaurants that they knew about. Likewise, corresponding with archivists at some of the smaller lesbian and feminist archives yielded information beyond the archives' holdings. There were five occasions when librarians and archivists mentioned other regional businesses that did not house their records at the archive but had operated during the years of this study. With this information, I created databases that tracked the location of each restaurant and its years of existence, as well as any other available information. For more information on creating the database, see the appendix.

⁵² The GLBT Historical Society San Francisco Archives, in particular, has an extensive ephemera collection with the San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (#BUS EPH) holding twelve and a half linear feet and the San Francisco LGBT General Subjects Ephemera Collection (#SUB EPH) holding fifteen and a half linear feet, both from 1960 to 2010.

⁵³ "Lavender Legacies Guide," Society of American Archivists: Diverse Sexuality and Gender Section, 2012, <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/diverse-sexuality-and-gender-section/lavender-legacies-guide>.

With a commitment to open access and public dissemination, in 2013 I created thefeministrestaurantproject.com to showcase my findings and gather new data. On this website there was a simplified version of my database, which is also available in the appendix. “The Feminist Restaurant Project” website also served as a useful interface with the public, where former patrons and owners of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses could contact me and suggest other locations for research.⁵⁴ From the collated information from the guide books, periodicals, advertisements, interviews, and the website interface, I was able to update my database and create color-coded maps that showed confirmed feminist restaurants in magenta and possible, but not confirmed, feminist restaurants in teal. For the larger, international map showcasing the locations of all of the restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses, Google Maps was the most pragmatic application. In addition to being able to email about their own experiences, visitors to the site had the opportunity to add to their own contribution to a public map made with Story Map Crowdsourcing (beta), an ArcGIS web application designed to collect photos and captions from anyone and displayed them on a map until 2016.⁵⁵ As the editors of *Queers in Space*, Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter noted, temporary geographies were important to queer activist organizing and community building.⁵⁶ Digital representations like maps and user forums have thus helped to maintain and create new digitally based communities.

The first step of finding feminists, especially an expanded group of women that could be categorized as feminists, is to find where they gathered. The technique of

⁵⁴ The digital database is a living document. It can be updated at anytime.

⁵⁵ The option of contributing to the map proved unpopular with site users. People preferred to email instead. As a result, I removed the map from the site in 2016.

⁵⁶ Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997).

analyzing spaces to find a broadened definition of historical actors is not unique to my research. A. Enke, in *Finding the Movement*, was interested in locating feminists in the Midwest and looked at a variety of places: bookstores, cafés, parks, health clinics, and credit unions to find them.⁵⁷ Social theorist Michael Warner developed the idea of publics and counter-publics, building on Nancy Fraser's work. Warner challenges Jürgen Habermas's notion of publics as utopic space for democratic representation and argues, rather, that the public is not a cohesive entity, but is actually comprised of multiple, reflexive counter publics which are "formed by their conflict with the norms and contexts of their cultural environment."⁵⁸ Furthermore, feminist geographers, such as Lise Nelson, Joni Seager, and Madge Clare, have greatly developed their ideas on how women use space. In the most basic sense, feminist geographers have unsettled assumptions about what are women and men's spaces by crafting nuanced descriptions of the public and private spheres.⁵⁹ They have shown how space is gendered and that there is spatial variation between communities.⁶⁰ Most importantly, feminist geographers have raised important questions about how spaces change the ways that people relate with ideas, their surroundings, and each other.⁶¹ My own employment of the spatial approach is somewhat different.

⁵⁷ Enke, *Finding the Movement*.

⁵⁸ Michael Warner, "Publics and Counter Publics," *Public Culture* 14, no.1 (2002): 63.

⁵⁹ Lise Nelson and Joni Seager, eds., *A Companion to Feminist Geography* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 15.

⁶⁰ Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG and Explorations in Feminism Collective of Great Britain, *Geography and Gender: an Introduction to Feminist Geography* (Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 1984), 20 and 43.

⁶¹ Clare Madge, "Methods and Methodologies in Feminist Geographies: Politics, Practice and Power," in *Feminist Geographies: Explorations in Diversity and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 6.

Qualitative Methods: Case Studies

Mapping enabled me to more readily notice patterns and analyze differences between the various feminist restaurants. Of course, the maps do not stand on their own. To supplement this quantitative methodology, the rest of the dissertation focuses on qualitative research methods. Each chapter relies on a few sample restaurants as case studies in order to explore feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses' contributions to the debates around cooking and feminist businesses in greater detail. The case studies were chosen based on a number of factors. I wanted to represent geographical diversity, focus on longevity and impact, showcase the histories of founders from diverse identity backgrounds, and illustrate the major themes in the dissertation.

Prioritizing geographic diversity was important as this project challenges the historiographical concentration of feminist movements during the 1970s and 1980s on New York City and the Eastern Seaboard, San Francisco, or Toronto. Indeed these cities contributed to the history of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses and are not overlooked in this dissertation. However, Iowa City, Portland, and Tampa had thriving feminist business communities (as can be seen in the maps of their feminist business nexus in 1981 in the appendix). In fact, as is apparent on the major map, feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses were spread all over the United States and Canada. Every American state and Canadian province and territory at some point during the 1970s and 1980s had a feminist restaurant, café, or coffeehouse, with the exception of Alaska, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, North Dakota, the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, West Virginia, and Wyoming.⁶² The common

⁶² The 1984 edition of *Gaia's Guide* lists the Red Herring Co-op Books in Halifax, Nova Scotia because it sold coffee and according to the listing, "the second floor specialized in feminist, lesbian, and gay

factor of these regions was that with the exception of West Virginia, most had small or sparsely distributed populations that made supporting a feminist restaurant more difficult. However by 1989, Fargo, North Dakota had a lesbian bar and Anchorage, Alaska had a women's center beginning in 1979.⁶³ Women's studies scholar Barbara Ryan's work on feminism in the Midwest shows that by looking at feminist activism outside of these few urban centers, we can see the ways in which certain ideas of the women's movements came to different regions at different times, sometimes after more than one or two years of circulating in an urban center.⁶⁴ As is evident from both the timeline and directory in the appendix, it was not so much that feminist restaurants started on the coasts and spread outwards, but rather that feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses began earlier in larger cities and then were founded in smaller cities. This happened because those regions had large enough populations of women who identified as feminists to support a specifically feminist business earlier on. In smaller cities and towns that did not have large enough populations to support numerous feminist businesses, the feminist bookstore served as a meeting point and space of congregation, eating, and socializing, as was the case of Mrs. Dalloway's Feminist Bookstore in Kingston, Ontario in 1972 and Community Café and Women's Bookstore in Bethesda, Maryland in 1983.⁶⁵ In even

literature." However, in reality the bookstore was focused primarily on leftist literature that included feminist and lesbian literature in its stock from 1977-1996 but was not a feminist bookstore. The editor of *Gaia's Guides* never purported to know everything about the listings and could make mistakes. In the 1977 edition, for the entry for Rising Woman Coffeehouse the listing states, "Saturday nights only. Music, readings, games or some type of program. If you find out where it is please let Gaia know"(69). The listing for Red Herring Co-op similarly lacks information and implies that the business had a greater relationship with feminism literary culture than it did in reality. Lynn Murphy, "Red Herring Bookstore," *GayHalifax*, April 17, 2017, <http://gay.hfxns.org/RedHerringBookstore>.

⁶³ Horn, *Gaia's Guide*. While these locations did not have a feminist restaurant, they were able to support some kind of women's, feminist, or lesbian centre.

⁶⁴ Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁵ By serving coffee, the bookstore was creating a space to linger. Often explicitly feminist cafés and restaurants were dual businesses as was the case with Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant and

smaller towns, a single business would serve as a multi-functioning space for various marginalized communities, such as Alan Gold's of Chatanooga, Tennessee, which was frequented both by gay men and lesbians. As the comment about Alan Gold's from the 1984 edition of *Gaia's Guide* stated, "we basically all stick together as a group."⁶⁶ In the directory, italics mark these women-friendly spaces like Alan Gold's. These spaces were women-owned (but not identified as feminist) or advertised as being spaces where women and lesbians were welcome to eat alone or as a couple. The italic list is incomplete but provides a sample of the kinds of spaces women would use for socializing and that were advertised to women to socialize in that were not explicitly women's spaces/ feminist spaces/ lesbian spaces.

I was initially interested in regional, national, or linguistic differences and the role that feminist spaces had in shaping and being shaped by those differences. However, what I found was that while federal, provincial/state, and municipal laws created conditions feminist restaurant founders had to contend with (such as how to file their taxes, deal with zoning laws, food safety laws, and alcohol licensing), the geographic

Bookstore (1977-present) and Montreal's Café at La Librarie des Femmes (1982) or the feminist bookstore was in the same neighborhood as the feminist restaurant or café, as was the case with Artemis Café and Women's Society (1977-1984) which was on Valencia Street in the Mission District of San Francisco, just down the road from Old Wives Tales Bookstore (1976-1995). Throughout this dissertation it is clear that feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses were deeply interconnected with literary culture. Written materials promoted their existence, be they guidebooks, periodicals, flyers, or business cards. Feminist restaurants sold and distributed texts, hosted authors, and produced their own newsletters, advertisements, and ephemera. As much as feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses were about food, these spaces also were places where attendees would eat their words. This ability to access print culture is key to understanding how women found these feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses. As queer studies scholar Cait McKinney shows, "Using a library or other information source for the first time is a trope in LGBTQ biography and represents a common developmental narrative through which youth is retrospectively described by adults ... By theorizing the bibliographic encounter as an often-reproduced narrative device, I do not wish to speculate as to whether stories about these encounters are "authentic" or merely reproductions of readerly expectation; rather, by pointing to the ways this story about information is shared or sometimes fails to be shared, I signal how the information interface is a broad discursive formation shaped by users, makers, and movement-based identity politics." Cait McKinney, "'Finding the Lines to My People': Media History and Queer Bibliographic Encounter," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 24, no.1, (2018): 58.

⁶⁶ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1984).

difference between the United States and Canada was not as significant as linguistic, racial, and class differences. Canadian and American feminist restaurants were generally founded due to the same motivational drive. The owners sought to create space where they could socialize, work as out lesbians, and make money in a manner that reflected their political values. This is not to say that there were not differences in Canadian and American feminist histories; there were.⁶⁷

Despite geographical differences, feminist restaurant owners were primarily white, lesbian, working and middle-class with some external way to access capital or utilize intense sweat equity. They were also between the ages of twenty five to forty at time of starting the business, English-speaking, and a disproportionately large percentage, relative to the general population, were Jewish.⁶⁸ There were a few notable exceptions to

⁶⁷ There are differences between the Canadian and American feminist movements. Both nations have unique legal systems which impacted the kinds of laws that constrained and organized feminist activism (for example: Canada's 1977 Human Rights Act and the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (never formally approved by the province of Quebec) created a different legal environment than the United States Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX (1972), the ECOA (1974), and the Fair Housing Act (1968)). Both nations have different population demographics. There are unique intellectual histories of how the movements developed. Edited anthologies such as *Challenging Times* have sought to map out similarities and differences between the feminist movements in both nations, as well as the interplay between them. Quebec's particular history of feminism is important to consider when comparing activism in the United States and Canada, as discussed by scholars including historians Micheline Dumont, Amanda Ricci, and Camille Robert. The question of nationalism fractured the feminist movement in Quebec making it more difficult to support a feminist restaurant. Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, eds. *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Micheline Dumont-Johnson, *Quebec Women: A History* (Toronto: Women's Press Literary, 1987); Micheline Dumont, "The Origins of the Women's Movement in Quebec" in *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Amanda Ricci, "There's No Place Like Home: Feminist Communities, Social Citizenship and (Un)Belonging in Montreal's Long Women's Movement, 1952- 1992," (dissertation, McGill University, 2015); Camille Robert, *Toutes les femmes sont d'abord ménagères: Histoire d'un combat féministe pour la reconnaissance du travail du travail ménager* (Montreal: Somme Toute, 2017).

⁶⁸ Depending on the study and depending on how "Jewish identity" is defined (whether the study includes being culturally Jewish but not practicing the religion), Jewish Americans comprised between 1.5 to 2 percent of the population of the United States and Jewish Canadians were around 1 percent of the population of Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. US Census (1980) and Stats Canada (1976 Census) U.S. Census Bureau, "1980 U.S. Census," <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1980/compendia/statab/101ed.html> and Statistics Canada "1976 Census," <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.836486/publication.html>.

this description, for example, the owners of the Black women's restaurant, the Philadelphia Mahogany Black Women's Club (1984).⁶⁹ Chez Nous café of Ottawa, Ontario's owners produced written materials in French but all business meeting minutes and records were in English, indicating a priority given to English on the administrative side.⁷⁰ Montreal had feminist businesses such as La Librairie des Femmes (1982) that served coffee and which was managed by francophones, yet for a city its size it was unique in not having a specifically feminist restaurant during the 1970s and 1980s. The linguistic difference exemplifies the privilege held by North American English-speaking business owners in most American states and Canadian provinces and also the importance of a shared feminist anglophone literary culture that promoted the creation of these feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses.⁷¹ Coffeehouses had greater diversity of founders, especially regarding race and class. Minneapolis, Minnesota's A Women's Coffeehouse was frequented by primarily white working-class lesbians and San Diego's Las Hermanas coffeehouse was founded by working-class Latina women. Chapters 2 and

⁶⁹ Horn, *Gaia's Guides* (1984).

⁷⁰ Meeting minutes, May 8, 1978, Chez Nous Box 509, folder 18, Canadian Women's Movement Archives.

⁷¹ Feminist restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafés' connection to feminist literary culture in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada was vital for the dissemination of their ideas and the creation of feelings of community. This literary culture made this dissertation project possible by preserving records of the businesses during the period. As discussed in my article for *Feminist Studies*, there were women friendly and women centered restaurants where feminists met and socialized in Montreal, but there were not explicitly feminist restaurants in the way that feminist restaurants are defined in this dissertation. Furthermore, as Genevieve Page argues, "the specific ways in which Quebec nationalism has foregrounded power and politics around language has had a major impact on how Quebec feminists have negotiated relations with their southern feminist neighbors. In this sense, Quebec feminism presents an excellent case study of language [and culture] operating as an axis of power." A full discussion of these complexities is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Alex Ketchum, "'The Place We've Always Wanted to Go But Never Could Find': Finding Woman Space in Feminist Restaurants and Cafés in Ontario 1974–1982," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 1 (2018); Genevieve Page, "Gender at the Crossing: Ideological Travelings of American and French Thought in Montreal Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 575–603. For further reading, see Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2010).

6 delve deeper into the identities of the founders of feminist restaurants and coffeehouses and chapters 3 and 7 explicitly deal with class issues and financing.

As this study covers both the United States and Canada, a level of precision regarding laws and regulations that impacted feminist restaurant owners' decisions regarding business operations is impossible in the way that a micro-study of a singular region could attend to. Similarly, a scaling up of this project to the level of a global history of feminist restaurants would require too vast a literature and would make claims about laws even more difficult than dealing with municipal, state/provincial and national differences. To analyze restaurants, cafés, bookstores, health centers, women's shelters, and galleries throughout the United States and Canada would be impossible. Thus, I have decided to narrow my research to feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses. Chapters 4 and 7 show the relationships between feminist restaurants and other feminist businesses in a particular town or city. I have utilized the term "feminist nexus" after the 1976, *Boston Herald* exposé which called the conglomeration of feminist businesses in Cambridge, Massachusetts a "nexus."⁷² The maps of Portland, Oregon, Tampa, Florida, and Madison, Wisconsin from 1981 illustrate some of these dynamics.

There is a greater focus on the United States in this dissertation than Canada. However, proportional to the number of businesses, Canada is actually overrepresented. In 1972, the year Mother Courage of New York City, the first North American feminist restaurant was founded, the population of the United States was around 210 million and Canada was twenty-two million.⁷³ Although Canada did have feminist restaurants in the large urban centers such as Winnipeg, Manitoba's Ms. Purdy's Social Club in 1981 and

⁷² "Feminist Businesses," *Boston Herald: Special Women's Issue*, November 28, 1976, 8.

⁷³ "World Bank Population Data," World Bank, September 18, 2017, https://www.google.ca/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_&met_y=sp_pop_totl&hl=en&dl=en.

Vancouver, British Columbia's Sister's Restaurant in 1983, the case studies for Canada that receive the most attention were located in Ontario. The focus on Ontario's feminist restaurants was in part because the population of Canada was concentrated in Ontario with that province housing almost eight million of the estimated twenty-two million Canadian residents in 1972 and also due to the existing archival materials, which impacted much of this study.⁷⁴

Case studies were also based on the availability of source materials. As previously mentioned, for restaurants such as Womonspace in Lawrence, Kansas (1977), The Sunshine Inn in St. Louis, Missouri (1983-1984), A Place of One's Own in South River, New Jersey (1979-1981), and Rendez-vous coffeehouse in Whitehorse, Yukon (1983), all I had was a listing in *Gaia's Guides*.⁷⁵ For other restaurants I only had a single business card or a single event flyer, such as Toronto's Gaia's Garden Café's (1988) leaflet that informed readers that it was "a new womyn's space" that was "feminist owned and operated" with "natural foods, womyn's entertainment, and art."⁷⁶ As Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant's owners continue to operate the business and were interested in participating in the research, I was able to interview them on multiple occasions. These women also produced six cookbooks as of 2018, donated their personal papers to Yale University Archives, and have been the subject of dozens of newspaper and magazine articles since 1977. Patricia Hynes of Bread and Roses Feminist Restaurant of Cambridge, Massachusetts donated her personal papers to the Schlesinger Library of Harvard University and was willing to be interviewed. Businesses that have operated for

⁷⁴ "Annual Estimates of Population for Canada, Provinces and Territories, from July 1, 1971 to July 1, 2017," Newfoundland & Labrador Statistics Agency, Department of Finance, http://www.stats.gov.nl.ca/statistics/population/PDF/Annual_Pop_Prov.PDF.

⁷⁵ Horn, *Gaia's Guides*.

⁷⁶ Gaia flyer, Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Box 31.

a longer period generated a greater paper trail. Restaurants that went out of business after a few months of operation were less likely to retain their files and the owners were less likely to donate their files to an archive. Quick closure was not always a cause of historical erasure as demonstrated by Clementyne's of Toronto, which never officially opened. However, in that case, the founders had spent years planning, generated a large number of flyers for their fundraising events, and the Three of Cups coffeehouse that followed in its wake carried on with the project of creating a feminist space and utilized Clementyne's remaining bank account.⁷⁷ The preservation of Clementyne's and the Three of Cups' history also speaks to the role of archives and the privilege of who is able to have their materials deemed valuable by archivists.⁷⁸ Furthermore, despite having gathered materials from nineteen archives and collections I was still very dependent on just a few women's recollections. For most of my case studies, even if the information came from flyers, meeting minutes, and interviews, oftentimes the narrative of a restaurant's history was coming from a single perspective without corroboration. Just as there are challenges in piecing together a restaurant's history from a few scraps of text, it is also challenging to reconstruct a restaurant's entire history from the recollections of a single individual.

⁷⁷ Interview excerpt about Three of Cups, Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Clementine's (sic) Box 20.

⁷⁸ Michelle Caswell, "Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (2014): 26-37; Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce, and Helen Partridge, "Archivist as Activist: Lessons from Three Queer Community Archives in California," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (2013): 293-316.

Combined Methods

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods broadens the scales of analysis that are possible. The time has come to take space seriously, not just intellectually but methodologically, in researching the past. Giving more attention to lesbian and women's travel guides enables this pursuit. Utilizing these geographic methodologies presents a new perspective through which to view activism of the past. By analyzing spaces in this way we can locate a broadened definition of historical actors. Building databases and creating maps with GIS software complicates our understandings of the developments of social movements and challenges our assumptions about where activism actually happened.

In order to navigate these issues of scale, the methodological choice to bring together case studies and maps of international business history was made in order to try and capture both intimate histories as well as larger trends in feminist business and social movement history in the United States and Canada. Although the differences between the two countries involves two separate historiographies, my findings show that, while national differences shaped feminist activism differently, regional differences *within* the countries rather than *between* the countries are equally — or more — significant. As a quick aside— as Canadian and American English spellings vary, I have used the American spellings in all cases unless the establishment specifically used the Canadian spelling. An example is that I discuss the role of women's centers such as the Ottawa Women's Centre.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods enabled me to identify some major trends. Most of the restaurants and cafés were begun by white, lesbian,

English-speaking, radical or socialist feminists, who were working-class or middle-class that had some way to access capital outside of bank loans. Cooking was not the primary drive, but creating a woman-centered, feminist space where staff could live as “out” lesbians and financially support themselves in an environment that reflected their values. The general trends in the restaurants was that most were built with sweat equity and even for restaurants that lasted past the first two years when the majority of restaurants (feminist and not-feminist) fail, finances were always tight. The longer lasting restaurants were either initially, or adapted quickly to become, highly organized, had a set idea of how the work would be structured, did not over-extend their programming, and had a plan to deal with emotional conflict, especially if a collective operated the restaurant. Having a liquor license provided greater economic stability but alcohol was not always desired as creating substance-free alcohol space was a factor that motivated some of the restaurant and coffeehouse founders (as is explored in greater detail in chapter 7). Restaurants that employed accountants and professional legal counsel saved themselves from costly mistakes.⁷⁹ While feminist restaurants were founded starting in the early 1970s and some exceptional cases lasted until the 1990s and even two until today, as is evident by looking at the timeline and directory in the appendix, the highpoint of feminist

⁷⁹ As Jill Ward, cofounder of Mother Courage explained, “When we started, we were financially timid.” She continued, “If I had it to do over again, I would have bought out an existing operation with all the fixtures, fixes, and all conveniences close at hand.” Her other recommendations for women interested in starting a feminist restaurant were that they should know how to buy and produce food efficiently and in accordance with current economic conditions; that they should obtain adequate financing from the start; that they should get a liquor license early; that they should get an accountant; and that they should have trustworthy, reliable, and professional legal counsel. Ward also advised that, “as in any form of enterprise, careful planning is essential. Going into business does not mean leaping in. Developing good management and acquiring adequate resources (both personal and financial) takes time at the beginning but they save money and heartache later on.” Mother Courage Restaurant: Mother Courage,” title of periodical cut off, 176, Smith College Archives, Unprocessed Dolores Alexander Papers, Box 21, Folder 180, 39.

restaurants in the United States and Canada was from around 1976-1985, with Canadian restaurants beginning later.

Organization

While “Serving Up Revolution” touches upon the decades of the 1960s to the present, in order to add historical context and framing, this dissertation primarily focuses on the period of 1972 until 1989. As a result of the short period of study, this dissertation is organized thematically. Part 1 situates this manuscript within the existing literature, outlines the progression of the project, and provides definitions for the terms that appear throughout the rest of the work. Importantly, the impact of scale is emphasized.

Part 2 focuses on how feminist restaurants and cafés challenged existing power structures and constructed new communities. Self-identified feminist restaurants and cafés were part of a larger movement in which feminist activists created women only and women-centered spaces for political organizing, recreational activity, and commerce. While each restaurant and café embodied its feminist ideals uniquely, these businesses challenged the status quo of the food service industry, cooking, and consumption. Owning their own businesses also afforded the feminists, lesbians, and feminist lesbians who created these establishments the opportunity to financially support themselves while being out as lesbian or feminist and also while contributing to their vision of the kind of world that they wanted to see. Rather, they used these restaurants and spaces to challenge oppressive patriarchal capitalism. Feminist restaurants and cafés functioned as spaces to build community, but they also were themselves businesses and the fact that they were businesses created a tension that was felt by certain feminists who were engaged with

Marxism and socialism. Even radical lesbian feminists felt uncomfortable with the links to business. Capitalism was the economic model of the United States and Canada during the 1970s and 1980s and thus the restaurant creators were confined by the boundaries of capitalism to a degree. However, they used these spaces as ways to challenge some of these economic models. The goal was not so much commercial, but rather to create spaces for their communities. Feminist restaurants thus challenged capitalism.

Rampant sexism plagued typical restaurants and cafés in the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter 3 examines how feminist restaurants challenged management hierarchies, serving practices, and typical restaurant structure. While feminist restaurants and cafés challenged capitalism, they still had to be part of the economy. Balancing economic needs with philosophy, meant compromises. The fourth chapter, “Cooking the Books,” shows that these feminist restaurants and cafés were not isolated, but part of a larger economy and society that was not always amenable to their desires. The creation of woman-space required innovative financial maneuverings.

In chapter 5, feminist restaurants and cafés were part of a larger nexus of feminist businesses. In addition to providing direct economic opportunities for the women employed at the restaurants, feminist restaurants and cafés promoted women owned businesses, women artists, and women craftspeople. As a result, the economic impact of these restaurants expanded beyond the single brick and mortar location. These changes furthermore occurred in the dishes themselves. Feminist restaurants and cafés of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada acted as spaces that challenged the status quo around cooking and consumption through their creation of feminist food. Each restaurant and café defined “feminist food” differently based on the particular feminist

ethics of the restaurant owners. Depending on the restaurant, making their food feminist revolved around vegetarian ethics, labor issues, cost, and sourcing of products. By looking at what was included and banned on these restaurant menus, this chapter shows the ways in which food could be labeled as feminist. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates how one could assert feminism within a business dedicated to food—one in which complex relationships with the kitchen can also be analyzed (the kitchen being often labeled a “traditional” place for women).

Part 3 looks at the temporary spaces of coffeehouses. While there is a hint of irony as some coffeehouses lasted longer than restaurants, their space itself was borrowed space/ temporary space. As theorized by philosopher Michel de Certeau, marginalized individuals and communities rely on tactics to claim space for themselves. De Certeau writes: “The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety . . . It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to its circumstances . . . Whatever it wins it does not keep.”⁸⁰ Professor of women’s studies, Agatha Beins continues that people, “without a proper place—without a place that is secured in some way—are thus relegated to a position in which they temporarily take a space (e.g., a street, a living room, a place owned by someone else) and use it as best they can to meet their needs.”⁸¹ Coffeehouses expanded participation. Owning a feminist restaurant or café required significant capital. As most

⁸⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall, (Oakland: University of California, 1984), xix.

⁸¹ Agatha Beins, “Feminist Periodicals and the Locations of Feminism,” Unpublished Conference Presentation used with permission, “A Revolutionary Moment: Women’s Liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s,” a conference organized by the Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program at Boston University, March 27-29, 2014.

coffeehouses operated without the high fixed costs of monthly rents and utilities, coffeehouses thus enabled women with less privilege within feminist communities, regarding class, race, and sexual orientation, the ability to create women's spaces. They were constantly self-reflective and always soliciting advice. These temporary spaces also allowed for other forms of women's space. The first chapter in this section focuses on who managed and who used feminist coffeehouses. The next chapter discusses the challenges that coffeehouses faced and the contributions they made to the larger feminist community. In addition to wrapping up arguments expressed throughout the project, the conclusion meditates on potential further research, including a deeper look into the political efficacy of separatism and further employment of digital humanities methodologies utilized in this dissertation.

Ultimately, this project is not just the history of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses. This dissertation is, rather, the story of different groups of women, men, and gender non-conforming people, straight, lesbian, and queer, all trying to live a life that truly represented their values.

Chapter 2. Against the Current and Counter to Capitalism

*As feminists, we are naturally opposed to capitalism. Though we cannot work outside the realities of American economic life, we hope as far as possible to operate as an alternative to business institutions as we have known them. Our main goal is not commercial; structurally we see the enterprise as a co-operative venture and one responsive to the needs of our community.*⁸²

-Bread and Roses Restaurant Business Proposal

Rampant sexism plagued typical restaurants and cafés in the 1970s and 1980s.

Feminist restaurants challenged capitalism and mainstream restaurant management hierarchies, serving practices, and tipping. The women who founded these restaurants and cafés felt that they needed spaces separate from male-dominated establishments in order to escape oppressive formal restraints that regulated both female socializing and female economic activities. While each restaurant and café embodied its feminist ideals uniquely, feminist restaurants and cafés challenged the status quo of the food service industry, cooking, and consumption. Feminist restaurants and cafés simultaneously functioned as spaces in which to build community and were businesses, which could create tension. As the above quote from the business proposal of Bread and Roses feminist restaurant of Cambridge, Massachusetts suggests, while the restaurant creators were partially confined to the boundaries of the greater economy, the owners were not powerless. Founders of feminist restaurants and cafés used their spaces to challenge oppressive patriarchal capitalism both within the food industry and within American and Canadian society at large. Feminist restaurants provided new kinds of economic opportunities for women. This chapter will explain how feminist restaurants and cafés functioned as businesses: they ran counter to capitalism while operating within a

⁸² Patricia Hynes, "Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses," October, 1974. Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University: Papers of Patricia Hynes, Box 1, Folder 3, 5-6.

capitalist system. Feminist restaurants and cafés changed the meanings of the kitchen for women from domesticity to productivity.

This chapter begins by contextualizing concurrent 1970s and 1980s social movements against capitalism, particularly feminist responses to capitalism. The first part focuses on the kinds of models that feminist restaurants and cafés were combating: the first was capitalism and the second was the dominant sexism of the restaurant and café business in the United States and Canada. This chapter explains why women thought that they could change the system with their feminist restaurants and cafés. Even if the restaurants and cafés did not change the society at large, they still created micro-alternative communities that were meaningful for the women who participated in them.⁸³ These micro-alternative communities supported members of their community financially and fed their political aspirations. The second part of this chapter looks at how these restaurants differed from mainstream eateries in terms of their operations. They did not just look different -- although that was important to creating the kind of atmosphere the founders wanted. The relationship between feminist restaurants, capitalism, and mainstream restaurant bureaucracy has yet to be examined.⁸⁴

⁸³ Micro-alternative communities were small-scale alternative communities.

⁸⁴ Myriad feminists in the U.S. and Canada have written sociological, anthropological, economic, and theoretical studies regarding women and labor across the world, spanning the centuries. Research especially has focused on issues like the wage gap and social and political barriers to women's engagement to paid labor. Most works dealing with feminism and businesses focus on the relationship of the women's liberation movements and capitalism. In a broad sense, Heather Maroney and Meg Luxton's work on Canadian feminist political economy looks at the way that feminist understandings of business and the workplace, the economy, and the household have provided a greater understanding of the lives of both white and First Nations Canadians. Their work speaks to the complexity of defining success for feminist endeavors, especially businesses. Another aspect of the scholarly work on feminism and business focuses on what a feminist business would actually look like. These theoretical pieces typically try to define what makes something feminist and they question how those principles could work in a business model. Often these articles argue that for a business to be feminist, it needs to employ an ethics of care. Jeanne Liedtka, writing for the *Business Ethics Quarterly*, argues that businesses seeking to focus on relationship building need to look at the work done by feminists writing about the ethics of care in the workplace. She hopes to understand the balance between feminist morality and the competitive conditions of businesses. Robin

Cooking Up Alternatives: New Economic Models

*What is work? Is it scheduled physical labor; is it producing a product; is it creative activity; is it spiritual development of the self? Is childcare work? Is practicing an instrument work? Rarely have we felt so perplexed as we did this time about the meaning of the words that will adorn our cover: "Women Working"... We realized that once you stop equating work with jobs, trying to define it is like trying to define love. No definition is inclusive. In talking about work, we discovered how much emotion, how much guilt, pride, anger, resentment, anxiety, and attraction we feel towards it. We found that our own options and choices affected what we felt qualified as work, and we never transcended the fragmented perspectives on work that had arisen from our individual experiences. But we did come to understand each others' work choices more than we had two months ago, so we wanted to share here some of the learnings (sic) from our discussions... On the whole, our feelings towards the work we've done for money were pretty bleak... With jobs being as unappealing as they are, many women have opted to find a way to work around them. But we've become aware that many of our alternatives to holding a job still keep us basically dependent on men.*⁸⁵

In June 1975, when trying to organize its forthcoming issue on "Women Working," the editorial collective of the Mendocino, California-based, *Country Women Magazine* (1973-1980), realized that the idea of "work" was not as simple as it had first thought. The editorial board, which also functioned as a women's agricultural collective, struggled to decide if by "work" the members meant solely "remunerated" tasks or whether work included reproductive labors such as cooking, cleaning, and childbearing. These debates focused on the significant questioning of feminist values. American and

Derry, too, tries to reconcile the issues between feminist theory and business ethics. Like Liedtka, she believes that feminist ethics can extend the scope of business ethics.⁸⁴ Valerie Miner wonders if in fact the idea of "competition" is taboo within feminist ethics, as many feminist writers have positioned it and business as part of the patriarchy. Janet L. Borgerson argues that the two forms of ethics can work in harmony. All of these pieces seek to resolve the differences in what they observe to be a feminist set of values and a masculine workplace with different values and labor relations. Unlike these works, this dissertation does not employ a prescriptive definition of feminism, yet allows for the historical subjects to self-define it. For more information see: Nicole M. Fortin and Michael Huberman, "Occupational Gender Segregation and Women's Wages in Canada: an Historical Perspective," *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* (2002): 11-39; Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton, "Gender at Work: Canadian Feminist Political Economy Since 1988," *Understanding Canada: Building on the New Canadian Political Economy* (1997): 85-117; Jeanne Liedtka, "Feminist Morality and Competitive Reality: A Role for an Ethic of Care," *Business Ethics Quarterly* (1996): 179-200; Robin Derry, "Feminist Theory and Business Ethics," *A Companion to Business Ethics* (2002): 81-7; Valerie Miner, *Competition: A Feminist Taboo?* (New York: Feminist Press, 1987); Janet L. Borgerson, "On the Harmony of Feminist Ethics and Business Ethics," *Business and Society Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 477-509.

⁸⁵ "Women Working," *Country Women Magazine*, June 16 1975, 4.

Canadian feminists during the 1970s and 1980s, especially Marxist and socialist feminists, returned to questions over what work “was” and what work “should be.” Feminist discussions around the meaning of work were embedded within greater conversations about economics. The New Left countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s were deeply invested in a critique of capitalism. Within American and Canadian countercultural movements such as the Back to the Land Movements, Marxist critiques of capitalism’s oppression of working-class people dominated discussions. However, this class analysis was lacking an understanding of the role of gender and race, especially the ways that class was gendered and racialized.

By 1972, when America’s first feminist restaurant, Mother Courage of New York had opened, these discussions over the meaning of work were alive and well. Feminists had been questioning the idea of what work was throughout their periodicals such as *Country Women* and *Ms. Magazine*. Much of the discussion centered on trying to make sense of the way that work was valued. Consciousness raising pamphlets encouraged discussions over the implications of women doing the majority of domestic labor.⁸⁶ Scholars such as Michelle Barrett in *Women’s Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist-Feminist Analysis* and Heidi Hartmann in “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union” have detailed the manner in which feminists proposed changes during the 1970s and 1980s to the existing issues in the

⁸⁶ Gay Abarbanell and Harriet Perl, *Guidelines to Feminist Consciousness Raising* (Los Angeles: National Task Force on Consciousness Raising of the National Organization for Women Press, 1979), 3. According to the CR pamphlet, these sessions had “one basic purpose: it raises the woman’s consciousness, increases her complete awareness, of her oppression in a sexist society. To do so, it helps her break through the conditioning all women have received, so that she can see and fully comprehend how society has deliberately trained and prepared her to play certain roles, accept certain situations, feel certain emotions, within the fabric of the culture; above all, how she is trained not to question, not to challenge, not to upset the way things are.”

American and Canadian workplaces.⁸⁷ A full analysis of all of these changes is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, this dissertation is interested in the ways that feminists challenged ideas of work related to food preparation.

Change within the System- Making Feminist Businesses

When moving “back to the land” was an undesirable option for combating capitalism and patriarchy, other feminists explored the option of creating feminist businesses.⁸⁸ Reporter Karen Lindsey of the *Boston Phoenix* newspaper, explored questions about what it meant to be a feminist business and work within capitalism as a feminist in her 1974 article, “Feminist Capitalism- Bank and Eateries.” Lindsey worried that feminist capitalism was a contradiction, particularly regarding feminist banking, stating,

⁸⁷ Michelle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist-Feminist Analysis* (New York: Verso, 1981); Heidi I. Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” *Capital & Class* 3, no. 2 (1979): 1-33.

⁸⁸ One of the proposed solutions to issues of work and critiques of capitalism centered on creating separate living communities. These alternative communities sought to create a kind of lifestyle outside of the violence of capitalism and patriarchy. The idea of moving to the land was to separate from greater society. Ideologically, communes meant a communal life; all members of a community were supposed to share the work required to maintain the commune and their labor was meant to reflect their ideological values. Communes also took many forms: rural and urban, woman-only and all genders. However much of the dominant discourse of these movements, both within counterculture periodicals such as *Country Women* and more mainstream publications, such as the *New York Times* exposés, focused on white people. While the push for the Back to the Land movement originated from a leftist critique of capitalism and the imperial hegemonic context of the United States and Canada, other women decided to create women only communes to additionally escape sexism. Despite the positive intent behind creating communes, there was disillusionment with these models. In the male inclusive communes, feminists found that the sexist gender roles of the outside society were replicated in the communes. Women did not always tolerate gender inequalities that were perpetuated within the commune. Women who were unsatisfied with men not fulfilling their duties to the commune would sometimes leave and form their own communes or make their current communes solely for women and children. While lesbian separatist and women-only communes eradicated unequal gender divisions of labor, infighting, lack of shared values, and unmet needs and desires created feelings of disenchantment. Both straight and lesbian separatist communes did not solve all of the problems with capitalism and patriarchy, especially related to food labors, that the founders had wanted. Participants never fully freed themselves from the restraints of capitalism and increased their burdens around food and cooking. Mark Perlmutnov, “Communal Living: Adventure in Relating to Others,” *New York Times*, November 28, 1971, <http://www.nytimes.com/1971/11/28/archives/communal-living-adventure-in-relating-to-others.html?r=0>; Jeanne Tetrault, “The Making of a Feminist Farm,” *Country Women* 1, no. 5 (March 1973): 30.

The whole idea of a women's bank is an immediate source of political confusion to me. Feminist capitalism? Isn't that like feminist racism- a contradiction in terms? After several hours talking with Alice Heyman, one of the founders and a member of the advisory committee of the The First Women's Bank and Trust Co., I decided that it isn't such a contradiction after all.⁸⁹

As Lindsey realized, these businesses supported women. The feminist banks and credit unions served to fulfill financial needs unmet by mainstream financial institutions for women interested in beginning businesses. Not until 1974 did the United States Congress pass the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), which enabled a woman to get a line of credit in her own name and prohibited lending discrimination on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, national origin, marital status, and age.⁹⁰ Prior to the passage of the act, the inability to establish individual credit proved especially difficult for single heterosexual women and lesbians trying to start women centric spaces.⁹¹ Canada does not have equal credit opportunity legislation, per se, but human rights legislation passed in

⁸⁹ Karen Lindsey, "Feminist Capitalism—Banks and Eateries," *Boston Phoenix*, May 7, 1974. The article was placed in the sexist named, "For and About Women" section of the paper, implying that men would not be interested in news about women.

⁹⁰ The Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) of 1974, one of the federal fair lending laws, prohibits discrimination in lending based on an applicant's personal characteristics, such as race, gender, color, religion, national origin, marital status, or age. *United States Consumer Financial Protection Bureau 6500*, 1974, <https://www.fdic.gov/regulations/laws/rules/6500-1200.html>.

⁹¹ As legal scholar Laura Eckert argues, "In the early 1970s Congress investigated allegations of discriminatory credit practices. Congress focused on married women because financial institutions consistently required women to obtain their spouses' signatures in order to obtain credit. Congress sought to protect these women from discriminatory credit practices and to provide them with the opportunity to establish individual credit. To prohibit this type of credit discrimination, Congress passed the ECOA in 1974 and expanded the Act to its present scope in 1976... Certain lending practices can pass this effects test, even though a creditor's practice results in a greater rejection of women and minorities. Creditors can use such criteria as "income in excess of a certain amount" as long as there is a "demonstrable relationship" between the criteria and creditworthiness for the level of credit involved. For example, requiring that applicants have a minimum income to qualify for an overdraft line of credit might negatively impact women and minority applicants at a higher rate than men and non-minority applicants. However, creditors may use this income standard if they can show a nexus between the income requirement and creditworthiness for the requested credit level." So even with the passage of the ECOA, lenders could still indirectly discriminate against women and people of color. Furthermore, courts are not consistent in applying the ECOA to case of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and as a result the ECOA does not protect lesbians from discriminatory loan practices. Laura Eckert, "Inclusion of Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Equal Credit Opportunity Act," *Commercial Law Journal* 103, no. 3 (1998): 311.

1977 in Canada made it illegal to discriminate against persons in a contractual relationship on the basis of several protected grounds.⁹² The creation of businesses in a capitalist system, which Marxist feminists and socialist feminists, in particular, viewed as inherently anti-feminist, led to ideological debates that feminist business owners navigated.

The women, who saw benefit in being actively involved in the capitalist system rather than moving away from it, wrote materials instructing other women in methods to build these kinds of businesses. However, not all of the founders of feminist restaurants and cafés had previous business experience. As a result of limited educational opportunities due to barriers of race, class, gender, and sexual identity statuses, quite a few women were barred from entering into business realms prior to the feminist business movement. Difficulties in procuring loans to start businesses were particularly

⁹² The Canadian Human Rights Act, passed by the Parliament in 1977, had the expressed goal of extending the law to ensure equal opportunity to individuals who may be victims of discriminatory practices based on a set of prohibited grounds such as sex, sexual orientation, race, marital status, gender identity or expression, creed, age, color, disability, political or religious belief. In theory the act should protect against discriminatory lending practices, but that is not always the case. Furthermore, consumer protection laws in Canada are not entirely harmonized: the federal, provincial and territorial governments share responsibility. The Consumer Measures Committee (CMC), formed pursuant to the Agreement on Internal Trade (1994), is a multi-jurisdictional organization coordinating consumer protection in Canada. Similar to the literature on discriminatory lending practices in the United States, more data is available on mortgage discrimination over non-mortgage lending. As the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Report states, "Findings from quantitative studies conducted from 1957 to 1996 show that racial discrimination is a continuing problem. More recent studies have documented discrimination against women. Other legally prohibited grounds for discrimination, e.g., family status, receipt of social assistance, age, disabilities, and sexual orientation, have not been part of any systematic research." However, while there is a dearth of quantitative data, the women who founded feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses speak to experiencing discrimination. Furthermore, according to legal scholars Mary Jane Mossman and Julie Ramona Jai, "the Canadian Human Rights Act is designed to affect women's roles in the workforce both by means of changing attitudes and also by compelling non-discriminatory behavior on the part of employers." Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and Sylvia Novac, *Housing Discrimination in Canada: The State of Knowledge* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2002); Mary Jane Mossman and Julie Ramona Jai, "Women and Work in the Canadian Human Rights Act" (Osgoode Hall Law School Paper, 1979).

significant.⁹³ Feminists who had managed to overcome these barriers tried to create services to foster other women to be involved in business.

Part of increasing women's participation in business required doing research on the statistics of how many women were actually in business and this meant collaborating with governmental bodies. The committee to form an association of women entrepreneurs had launched an extensive research program aimed at developing an American national organization for self-employed women in 1974 and 1975. This committee also requested that the American Senate and House Committees on Small Business determine discriminatory practices in the programs and expenditures of federal tax monies for small business purposes. Calling women business owners "invisible," committee chairperson,

⁹³ Getting a loan was particularly difficult for marginalized, racialized communities in the 1970s and 1980s. As economists George Benston, Curt Hunter, and George Kaufman have demonstrated, "equal treatment in access to credit has long been a fundamental social goal in the United States. However, despite the passage of several laws in the U.S. prohibiting discrimination in the provision of financial services on the basis of race, gender, and marital status, among other factors, questions concerning the existence of racial discrimination in such areas as home mortgage loans and small business credit continues, and confounds public policy makers." Professor of Urban Studies, Daniel Immergluck, further demonstrates the history of discrimination in financial services in the United States, particularly related to lending discrimination on the basis of race. George J. Benston, W. Curt Hunter, and George G. Kaufman, *Discrimination in Financial Services: a Special Issue of the Journal of Financial Services Research* (Boston: Springer US, 1997); Daniel Immergluck, *Credit to the Community: Community Reinvestment and Fair Lending Policy in the United States* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004). Most research that centers on loan discrimination in the United States focuses on home mortgages. See: United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Mortgage Money, Who Gets It?: a Case Study in Mortgage Lending Discrimination in Hartford, Connecticut* (Washington: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974); Stephen L. Ross and John Yinger, *The Color of Credit: Mortgage Discrimination, Research Methodology, and Fair-Lending Enforcement* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002). As the United States Government Accountability Office shows, "Most studies suggest that discrimination may play a role in certain types of nonmortgage lending, but data limitations complicate efforts by researchers and regulators to better understand this issue. For example, available studies indicate that African-American-owned small businesses are denied loans more often or pay higher interest rates than white-owned businesses with similar risk characteristics." *Fair Lending: Race and Gender Data Are Limited for Nonmortgage Lending: Report to Congressional Requesters* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Accountability Office, 2008), <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08698.pdf>. Based on collating information from the studies on lending policy history in the United States, it appears that racial discrimination is more significant than gender discrimination in procuring loans in the United States. Marital status plays a role as single women are less likely to get loans than single men. Judith K. Robinson, "Race, Gender, and Familial Status: Discrimination in One US Mortgage Lending Market," *Feminist Economics* 8, no. 2 (2002): 63-85. There is not enough data available to speak to discriminatory lending policies related to lesbian and queer individuals. However, there was no ban on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) of 1974. For Canadian examples of discrimination, see footnote 11.

H. Jeanne Wertz, noted that in its on-going statistical studies of private enterprise, the group, which alone had access to the necessary data, had not yet done the basic statistical and qualitative studies about women business owners.⁹⁴ This call for statistical data and analysis was necessary in order to develop more effective strategies to encourage women to start small businesses.⁹⁵

Besides gathering statistics, feminists created how-to-guides, which encouraged women to begin their own businesses. As business laws were specific, localized to the city or county level, as well as affected by state, provincial, or federal legislation, women would create guides for how to open local businesses with information specific to their regions. For example, the Women's Action Alliance in New York City created comprehensive guidebooks such as "How to Make the Media Work for You" and "How to Organize a Multiservice Women's Center."⁹⁶ These pamphlets had advice as specific as incorporation and tax structure as well as broader business and organizational advice.

⁹⁴ H. Jeanne Wertz, "Women Business Owners to Organize," *The Spokeswoman*, September 15, 1974, 3.

⁹⁵ In Canada there was not an exact parallel committee, however in 1967, the government of Canada created the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. The commission had the mandate to "inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society." On December 7, 1970, as a result of the work of the committee, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada was tabled in Parliament. This report included recommendations on updating the legislative system and addressing such critical issues for women as poverty, family law, the Indian Act, and the need for a federal representative for women. In the report, Table 1, "Income From Employment and Other Non-Investment Income Reported by all Individuals Stating Age, 1967," does not speak to the issue of entrepreneurs per se, but it does detail the income of women relative to the income of men from self employment. Women held 4.2 percent of the total income in Canada derived from self-employment in 1967. This collection of data on women's economic status did not end after the report: in 1976 the Status of Women Canada became a federal departmental agency and continued this research. While there are not exact parallels between the United States and Canada, governmental agencies were conducting research to understand the disparities between men and women in business. Status of Women Canada, "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada," June 1, 2016, <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/rc-cr/roycom/index-en.html>; Canadian Parliament, The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, *The Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Canada*, [Ottawa] September 28, 1970, <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/bird1970-eng/bird1970-part1-eng.pdf>, 22.

⁹⁶ Women's Action Alliance, "How to Make the Media Work for You" (New York) and "How to Organize a Multiservice Women's Center" (New York).

Similar guides, but with more general advice directed towards national audiences, were published in feminist periodicals, after feminists had been engaged in trying to start businesses for a few years since the early 1970s. In April 1976, *Ms. Magazine*, a feminist periodical founded by renowned feminists Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pittman Hughes, released a special edition of *Ms. Handbook*, which consisted of a sixteen-page insert about “How to Start Your Own Business.” As the journalists Heidi Fiske and Karen Zehring described,

More and more women are starting their own businesses- to find work in a tight job market, to find freer expression of their creative and management abilities, and to put into practice their own ideas of how the business world should operate. Whatever the motives, or combination of them, the self-employed woman is an idea whose time has come. According to the Census Bureau, in 1972 there were 402,025 women-owned businesses generating \$8.1 million in receipts, that’s only 3.1 percent of all businesses, but that number is growing.⁹⁷

The purpose of this guide was to inspire women readers to create businesses. The sections they included were, “Making a Businesses Plan;” “Professional Services: Who You Need and What to Expect;” “Inexpensive Business Advice and Where to Get It;” “How to Raise Money;” “Cash Flow- the Make or Break Item;” “How to Sell Yourself: Graphics and Publicity;” “The First Year in Numbers;” “How Not to Blow It;” and “Another View: Toward a Feminist Business Ethic.”⁹⁸ While the guide had the purpose of encouraging women to create all kinds of businesses, the final section on feminist business ethics particularly expressed why feminist businesses were different than mainstream businesses.

The section on feminist business ethics in the April 1976 *Ms. Magazine*, *Ms. Handbook*, both highlighted the tension feminists encountered when they wanted to start

⁹⁷ Heidi Fiske and Karen Zehring, “How to Start Your Own Business,” *Ms. Handbook of Ms. Magazine*, April 1976.

⁹⁸ Fiske and Zehring, “How to Start Your Own Business.”

businesses but also offered advice on navigating these conflicts. As women were trying to challenge structures from within, they faced guilt and conflict. For example, the section included advice like “the product or service should fulfill a feminist need, advance a feminist cause, or improve the quality of feminist life;” “the product of service should not be overpriced by market standards and the highest possible quality should be delivered for the money;” and “the margin of profit should be large enough to ensure the survival of the enterprise but not so large that one becomes a guilt-ridden profiteer.”⁹⁹ That final line is especially poignant. According to the *Ms. Handbook*, part of the ethics of a feminist business was not to get rich but rather to be able to support itself. Within this view of feminist businesses, founders were not trying to create multi-national corporate empires but rather to find a way to live ethically and support their feminist values. The authors of this particular section, feminist jewelers Toni Carabillo and Judith Meuli, went on to state, “If something costs us \$0.70 to make we charge about \$1.50 wholesale or \$3.00 retail.”¹⁰⁰ They explained that commercial jewelers in their area work on double their profit margin. Carabillo and Meuli emphasized, that “[m]aking a reasonable profit isn’t inherently a corrupt act. It can be ploughed back into the business or used for expansion or donated to other Movement projects.”¹⁰¹ For them, the profit was not to be used just to increase one’s personal wealth. They continued to state that, “Co-workers’ wages and benefits and working conditions and profits shared with a collective should be as generous as the enterprise can afford” and advised,

All transactions with employees, customers, and suppliers should be performed in good faith. This is supposedly the controlling ethic in American business, but we think that employees seem more willing to give a fair day’s work for a fair day’s

⁹⁹ Fiske and Zehring, “How to Start Your Own Business.”

¹⁰⁰ Fiske and Zehring, “How to Start Your Own Business.”

¹⁰¹ Fiske and Zehring, “How to Start Your Own Business.”

pay when you work as associates, not boss and hired hand. We've found, though, that a true collective spells doom for a business. When we ran "women's heritage series" as a seventeen member collective, it turned out that three people did all the work but we had to divide the profits among seventeen. It's better to keep the business ownership small and limited to those with a real interest in it... We don't hesitate to extend credit within the feminist community... we extend credit and give wholesale discounts to feminist groups that use our products for fund-raising... offering professional services to other feminists may create a special problem: the client may feel she's entitled to a break on the fee simply because feminists should help feminists. Unfortunately this attitude suggests to the worker that her services are not worth the full market price commanded by men in the same field.¹⁰²

This entire section spoke to the dilemma of what fees to charge and greater questions about the value of one's work. These queries about value were embedded within larger discussions about how labor was given value through payment within a masculine capitalist model and whether or not money was equated with value within the feminist model.¹⁰³ As if these tensions were not enough to balance for the feminist businesswoman, the authors continued, "The entrepreneurs should in some way be involved in the Movement beyond the contact provided by the business."¹⁰⁴ An important tenant of these feminist businesses, at least in the opinion of the authors, was that their business was not just about the owners, but also about supporting an entire community of

¹⁰² Fiske and Zehring, "How to Start Your Own Business."

¹⁰³ Many theoretical works trying to understand feminist business ethics settle on the idea of an ethics of care. Eva Feder Kittay's work on feminist ethics centers care as the solution. Rather than avoid ideas of dependency, an ethics of care acknowledges that all humans are interdependent and this understanding should influence how one conducts business. An ethics of care theoretically should permeate all aspects of a business such as the treatment of employees and customers, the kinds of products one sells and the source of their materials, and their relationship with other businesses. She positions this discussion within a reimagining of public policies like welfare reform, healthcare, and the changing of institutions to support the young, sick, and old. Other studies instead try to imagine what feminist ethics and feminist business practice could look like in a specific industry. For example, Aura Brown has written about how these ethics would work in therapy. While historians have done less research on feminist businesses, researchers from other fields have looked at feminist businesses, organizations, and collectives. Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Laura S. Brown, "Ethics and Business Practice in Feminist Therapy," *Handbook of Feminist Therapy: Women's Issues in Psychotherapy* (1985): 297-304.

¹⁰⁴ Fiske and Zehring, "How to Start Your Own Business."

other businesses and the people that lived within their cities and towns. They may have been independent businesses but they were embedded within a larger community nexus. Despite these businesses being part of a feminist nexus, this feminist capitalism was in part field specific. It took on specific forms within the restaurant industry.

How Different Than Other Restaurants

The modern restaurant form developed in late eighteenth century France. Boulanger is credited as being the first restaurant founder in 1765, although food historian Rebecca Spang has challenged this claim.¹⁰⁵ Since then, restaurant management has changed dramatically, most notably through the development of traditions regarding expected service and the creation of a wider variety of named positions. The role of restaurant manager gained a new level of professionalization with the introduction of educational programs, beginning in the twentieth century. While the stratification of roles, division of tasks, and the expected level of service differs between, for example, colonial taverns, family-owned pizza palaces, and upscale French bistros in downtown Manhattan, all restaurants over the past two and a half centuries require the management of finances, staff, food and beverage ordering, and food preparation. Restaurants in the 1970s and 1980s were predominately male owned with male chefs receiving praise for their skills. Like other industries, when tasks previously performed by women moved outside of the home and were remunerated they became dominated by men. As feminist food historian Sherrie Inness argues, the professional kitchen was viewed as a male

¹⁰⁵ No first name exists in the historical records for Boulanger. Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Julian Coman, "Origins of First Restaurant Challenged," *Telegraph*, September 3, 2000, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1353970/Origins-of-first-restaurant-challenged-after-200-years.html>.

space.¹⁰⁶ However, popular culture, during the 1970s and 1980s, portrayed the act of cooking and the space of the home kitchen within the domestic and feminine realm.¹⁰⁷ As a result, changing cooking from an unpaid to a paid task was described as a feminist act, although even this decision was debated by various feminists of the period.

Most restaurants were managed hierarchically in the 1970s and 1980s; feminist restaurants, however, challenged this structure. The restaurant management profession consists of administration responsibilities, front-of-the-house management, and back-of-the-house management. Although a form of restaurant management has existed since the creation of the first restaurants, the practices and responsibilities of restaurant management has become increasingly standardized over the past two and a half centuries. Despite the disparities between restaurants in their expectations of restaurant management, most restaurants retain a hierarchical relationship between the management and the staff. Feminists and anarchists have questioned this power relationship and have opened restaurants with a collective form of restaurant management. Depending on the size of the restaurant, the responsibilities of restaurant management may be performed by

¹⁰⁶ “There’s a long tradition that goes back for centuries of assuming that the best chefs must be male, that men are the only ones who can operate on that very highest of culinary levels. Obviously, it makes a difference that they’re getting paid large salaries, too. It also makes a difference that they’re allowed to be creative [whereas] the woman who has to feed her four kids seven days of the week doesn’t always have that opportunity.” These discrepancies continue in present day. Sherrie Inness, “Interview with Dr. Sherrie A. Inness: New Research, Unexpected Sources,” interview by Ashar Foley and Michelle Yost, *Aegis: The Otterbein Humanities Journal* (Spring 2005), https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=sheri+inness+male+kitchen&btnG=&httpsredir=1&article=1009&context=aegis_humanity#page=6; Deborah A. Harris, and Patti Giuffre, *Taking the Heat: Women Chefs and Gender Inequality in the Professional Kitchen* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ See: Barbara Haber, *From Hardtack to Home Fries: An Uncommon History of American Cooks and Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2003); Sherrie A. Inness, *Secret Ingredients: Race, Gender, and Class at the Dinner Table* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Mary Drake McFeely, *Can She Bake A Cherry Pie? American Women and the Kitchen in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom’s Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over A Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: W. Norton & Co., 2003); Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Food at the Turn of the Century* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001).

one manager or by a team of managers. Larger restaurants or chains typically have a greater level of stratification between management roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the operating hours of a restaurant may determine if the restaurant has a day manager and a night manager, or some other configuration. For the smallest businesses, one person may do all of these duties. The golden rule of traditional restaurant management focuses on customer satisfaction: “The customer is always right.” Remarkable service is deemed within the industry to be courteous, friendly, and welcoming.¹⁰⁸

In the 1970s, feminists began to critique gender inequity in a variety of workplaces, including restaurants. Particularly they believed that the relationships between restaurant managers and waitresses and between waitresses and customers systematically disempowered women.¹⁰⁹ In urbanized America in the 1970s, restaurants, including both inexpensive fast-food establishments and high-priced restaurants, were mostly owned and operated by men. In the 1970s and 1980s, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), far fewer women managed restaurants than in 2017 (ownership was not studied). In 1972, only 32.4 percent of restaurant, cafeteria, and bar managers were women and 8.9 percent were Black men and women.¹¹⁰ In 2017, 46.3 percent of

¹⁰⁸ For more information on restaurant management, see: Alex Ketchum “Restaurant Management” in Ken Albala, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Food Issues* 1 (SAGE, 2015).

¹⁰⁹ Historian Dorothy Sue Cobble has traced the evolution of waitresses’ attitudes towards feminist proposals such as the Equal Rights Amendment and shown the way that waitresses have been engaged in activism over works rights throughout the twentieth century. Dorothy Sue Cobble, ““Practical Women”: Waitress Unionists and the Controversies Over Gender Roles in the Food Service Industry, 1900–1980,” *Labor History* 29, no.1 (1988): 5-31.

¹¹⁰ According to economist Lisa Williamson at the U.S. Bureau of Labor, detailed occupational employment estimates were first made available in 1972. There were considerably fewer detailed occupations in the classification system used for 1972-1982 than those used for more recent data (only about 150 occupations versus 535 in the 2010 Census classification). Many of the detailed occupations were of a miscellaneous or “all other” type. Lisa Williamson, “Data on Restaurant Employment by Sex/Gender,” email correspondence with Alex Ketchum, February 26, 2018; U.S. Bureau of Labor

food service managers, the category that has replaced “restaurant, cafeteria, and bar managers,” were women, 9.5 percent were Black, 11.7 percent were Asian, and 16.9 percent were Latino or Hispanic.¹¹¹ The gender imbalance of who owns restaurants, who are the head chefs, and who gets the praise continues to present times.¹¹² Traditionally, although women were cooks and waitresses, they have been noticeably absent from places at the decision- making level.

Feminist restaurants challenged the patriarchal capitalism of the typical business structure. Feminist critiques highlighted the demeaning aspects of waiting on tables,

Statistics, “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation by Sex and Race 1972-1982;” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation by Sex and Race 1983-2002.”

¹¹¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity,” 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>.

¹¹² As a recent piece on the current sexism in restaurants noted, in September of 2016 a Canadian conference, “Kitchen Bitches: Smashing the Patriarchy One Plate at a Time,” addressed the concern, partly in response to a high-profile sexual harassment case in a Toronto restaurant. In the fall of 2017, in response to the preponderance of claims of sexual harassment within the restaurant industry, a flurry of articles were written about this gender imbalance such as Toronto-based chef, Jen Agg’s *New Yorker* piece “A Harvey Weinstein Moment for the Restaurant Industry,” and New York City-based chef Amanda Cohen’s article for *Esquire*, “I’ve Worked in Food for 20 Years. Now You Finally Care About Female Chefs?: We Deserved Your Attention Long Before Sexual Harassment Made Headlines.” There have been some improvements in recent years. More women are running their own restaurants than in the 1970s; in 2007, the Culinary Institute of America’s Diversity Council recorded that female chefs and head cooks made up just 21 percent of professional kitchens, citing data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and National Restaurant Association (NRA). In a December 2014 letter to Congressional leaders, NRA president and CEO Dawn Sweeney stated that over half of American restaurants were owned or co-owned by women. According to this industry group, in the past decade the number of women-owned restaurants has increased by 50 percent. Despite women owning more restaurants, women have continued to face barriers to success. Men owned and male chefs worked at the majority of the highest-ranking restaurants; most Michelin star holders in the United States and Canada are male. All male committees typically decide the rankings. Founder of the women’s chef network Les Femmes Chefs de Montréal, Dominique Dufour pointed out on Twitter during the 2017 San Pellegrino chef awards, only one woman was part of judging for the entire contest. While there is debate about the elitism behind the rankings, especially with cooking being judged against the French standard of fine cuisine, pushing other cooking traditions to the peripheries, the rankings and awards do have real ramifications. Those rankings affect not only the elite status of restaurants but also the opportunities for the female chefs themselves. Jen Agg, “A Harvey Weinstein Moment for the Restaurant Industry,” *The New Yorker*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-gastronomy/a-harvey-weinstein-moment-for-the-restaurant-industry>; Amanda Cohen, “I’ve Worked in Food for 20 Years. Now You Finally Care About Female Chefs?: We Deserved Your Attention Long Before Sexual Harassment Made Headlines,” *Esquire*, November 6, 2017; Sarah Henry, “Girl Talk: Top Chefs on Why Women Don’t Get the Respect They Deserve in the Kitchen,” *Edible San Francisco*, January 26, 2016, <http://ediblesanfrancisco.ediblecommunities.com/girl-talk-why-women-dont-get-respect-in-kitchens#.VqqHSsXXN9Q.twitter>; Cara Water, “Where Are The Women Chefs?” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 13, 2017, <http://www.smh.com.au/small-business/trends/where-are-the-women-chefs-san-pellegrino-competitions-gender-problem-20170912-gyfiy.html>.

servicing the patron, the low salaries, the heavy reliance on tips and demonstrated how there was little place for advancement in this arrangement. The owners of Bread and Roses feminist restaurant of Cambridge, Massachusetts thought seriously about these ideas. Writing in 1976 about how the restaurant was different than others, interviewer Gale Goldberg remarked, “The women at Bread and Roses and the physical space help create an easy, supportive atmosphere for women and their women friends. In urbanized America, other types of restaurants, including both inexpensive fast-food establishments and high-priced restaurants, are mostly owned and operated by men.”¹¹³ In the 1974 Bread and Roses Business prospectus the owners spoke about how,

in contrast, the male tone of a restaurant business venture is aimed more directly at profit making, commercialism, and a hierarchical structure of organization. Traditionally, women have been noticeably absent from places at the decision-making level. The harried long hours on foot are more familiar to women. The often demeaning and thankless job of waiting on tables, servicing the patron, has fallen to women who receive low salaries and rely heavily on tips. There is little place for advancement in this arrangement. Rewards perhaps come in getting better hours-peak times- when the turnover is greater and the pace is quicker. Currently, the waitress must work harder for her gratuity...The ideas of feminism encourage recirculation of profits into the women’s community by supporting other women’s energies.¹¹⁴

These feminists were challenging the ideas of what it meant to run a restaurant in the process. Feminist restaurants upended mainstream restaurant management by making changes to the organizational structure, spatial arrangement and décor, layout and design, menus, atmosphere, community service, and sex role behavior. Bread and Roses “expanded the concept of restauranting from the feminist perspective” by building upon the typical three factors for customer satisfaction: “1. Good food that is well-prepared and

¹¹³ Handwritten note on Gale Goldberg, “Feminism and Food: An Alternative to Restauranting” (thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1976), 1. Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University: Papers of Patricia Hynes, Box 1, Folder 3.

¹¹⁴ Patricia Hynes, “Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses,” October, 1974. Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University: Papers of Patricia Hynes, Box 1, Folder 3, 5-6.

attractively served, 2. Good service that is courteous, skillful, and prompt, and 3. An attractive environment.”¹¹⁵ Feminist restaurant owners wanted to redefine who could own and operate restaurants and who could enjoy them.

Feminist restaurants and cafés were not alone in promoting more women into the food industry. After feminist restaurants had begun to change conversations around women, gender, feminism, and restaurants, organizations such as the Women’s Culinary Alliance, founded in New York City in 1981, encouraged women to enter the restaurant industry.¹¹⁶ The organization fostered networking, education, and cooperation for women in the culinary and beverage fields in the New York metro area. The alliance also provided members with continuing education opportunities by sponsoring ongoing food and wine tastings, hands-on workshops, field trips, and business-related seminars. It also supported the preservation and sharing of culinary information through member-generated programs. According to its records, the alliance organized outreach programs and fund-raising for women's health and nutrition issues. It acted as a forum for dozens of women whose careers centered upon food and beverages, encouraging them to meet, share expertise, and drive new directions in the food world. Early founders included chefs Sara Moulton and Maria Reuge, and right from the start its members included well-known authors, caterers, chefs, cooking schoolteachers, editors, food writers, marketers, photographers, and stylists. Members of the alliance produced dozens of best-selling

¹¹⁵ Hynes, "Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses," 3.

¹¹⁶ Also in New York City, in 1973, the food editor of the *New York Daily*, Carol Brock, founded Les Dames d’Escoffier, an organization for women in the food, beverage, and hospitality industries, inspired by the Boston Les Dames des Amis d’Escoffier, a dining and philanthropic society formed in 1959 in response to the all-male Les Amis d’Escoffier. Memberships were available only by invitation. Since that time, the organization has spread throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Mexico and has over forty regional chapters and 2,300 members. The mandate of the organization is that members mentor other women in the food industry. In 2018, membership continues to be offered only on an invitational basis. Les Dames d’Escoffier, “Our Complete History,” 2016, <http://www.ldei.org/index.php?com=pages&action=showpage&id=93>.

cookbooks, hosted nationally televised cooking shows, and produced or edited content for the country's leading magazines and newspapers.¹¹⁷ This organization tracked women's involvement in restaurants in New York City. Rather than encourage women to create their own kind of businesses, this organization took a more liberal approach; their idea was to integrate more women in the already existing system and eventually become chefs, restaurant owners, or managers.

While the solution of changing the system from within was popular amongst such organizations as the Women's Culinary Alliance, feminist restaurants sought to break away from the mainstream restaurant industry and do something different. Feminist restaurants still had to function within the economic system but functioned in a periphery set apart. The owners' goal was not just to challenge the restaurant industry itself but capitalism and male run spaces more generally. Feminist restaurants and cafés were founded out of desires to create different kinds of spaces. To be clear, there were differences even between the feminist restaurants themselves. Even within a single restaurant, employees and collectives could have different goals. As Marjorie Parsons, reflected on the Common Woman Club of Northampton, Massachusetts: "For some women this was a political project, for others this was a livelihood."¹¹⁸ Despite these differences, there were similarities between the spaces that set them apart. What did they actually look like though?

Different Aesthetic

¹¹⁷ "Fales Library and Special Collections Guide to the New York Women's Culinary Alliance Archive 1982-2010," Fales Library of New York University, MSS.279

¹¹⁸ Marjorie Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting," recorded presentation, 1979," Northeastern University Archives, AV2316, M120.

Feminist restaurants embodied an aesthetic, which emulated their founders' politics. Grace and Rubies of Iowa City (1976 -1978) was located in an older, two-story house. University of Iowa journalism student Lynne Cherry described the restaurant for her college paper:

Plants are located throughout the building and any wall can be used to display members' artwork. Downstairs are a kitchen, two dining rooms connected by a small chamber lined with bulletin boards. On the boards hang handwritten notices for such things as a club meeting, a costume party, inter-mural flag football, and a women's clinic. The dining rooms are crowded with tables, dimly lit and rather drafty, yet they are made cozy by the feeling of comradeship among the members and the cheerful wisecracks issuing from the kitchen. Another dining room, a bathroom, and a reading room housing a small library are upstairs. The library consists of two bookcases of donated books, mostly by and-or about women, and some feminist newspapers.¹¹⁹

This cozy and eclectic home aesthetic was not unique to Grace and Rubies. When Selma Miriam, along with the rest of the Bloodroot Collective, decided to begin Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1977 she was expanding upon a previous project. Miriam had been serving meals at her home and decided to commit fully to the endeavor and found a restaurant. When Miriam began to design Bloodroot, the restaurant retained the cozy, home feeling. Restaurant reviewers described the décor as featuring “photographs of women offering, as [Miriam] puts it, “another concept of beauty,” women’s art and the background music [was] women’s music.”¹²⁰ Another reviewer, this time from the *Hartford Advocate*, focused on how when “patrons sit they can see through a wide window into the Julia Child-like kitchen where...Selma,

¹¹⁹ Lynne Cherry, “Grace and Rubies,” *The Daily Iowan*, 1977, quoted within “Grace and Rubies Restaurant,” *Lost Womyn’s Space*, December 16, 2011, <http://lostwomynsspace.blogspot.ca/2011/12/grace-and-rubies-restaurant.html>. It was located at 309 North Linn Street.

¹²⁰ Gloria Cole, “Bloodroots: A Dream on a Shoestring,” *Fairpress*, March 16, 1977. Interestingly the reviewer notes that, “the food, the surroundings, and the ambiance will appeal to men as well.” Such a comment reflects how Bloodroot is not a separatist woman-only space but rather a woman-centered space.

Betsy, Sam, and the additional help they've recently hired ... are busy at work."¹²¹ Rather than have printed menus, a chalkboard proclaimed the dishes of the day, which changed with the seasons. The walls of the dining area were covered with photographs of women found at tag sales and donated by customers and the bookstore was adorned with women's art. A large quilt made by Miriam hung overhead. Through the exterior windows, it was possible to see the Long Island Sound and swans swimming by. The space was filled with feelings of warmth and comfort. Miriam and the Bloodroot collective founded this restaurant for more than just excellent food, but in order to be a feminist community space. Unlike most kitchens, which are secluded from the dining area, a large pass-through window and doorway passage enabled the customer to actually see working women preparing the meals in Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The same open kitchen concept existed at Bread and Roses of Cambridge, Massachusetts.¹²² This arrangement minimized the difference between the customer and those working in the establishment. Breaking down these literal walls encouraged feelings of familiarity between customers and staff. By having open kitchen models, these restaurants not only challenged the power dynamics inherent between the two groups in mainstream restaurants, but also added to the home aesthetic. These restaurants, containing feminist books, women's art and music (as will be discussed in detail in chapter 4), and open kitchen designs, promoted an image that marked their difference from the moment the customer entered, signaling feminist space.

While this eclectic home aesthetic could create warm and welcoming environments for socializing, feminist restaurants looked different from other restaurants

¹²¹ Patricia Roth Schwartz, "'Bloodroot: Not by Food Alone,'" *Hartford Advocate*, November 23, 1977, 27.

¹²² Goldberg, "Feminism and Food: An Alternative to Restauranting."

in part due to financial circumstances. In the next chapter, *Cooking the Books*, I will discuss the financial situations of most of these restaurants and cafés. However, suffice it to say, most of the restaurants owners did not have a large budget for decorating their spaces. Many of the women did the construction themselves, relying on either collective effort, the effort of their community, or in some cases, family members. However, these were mostly do-it-yourself jobs. For example, the creators of Mother Courage of New York City took five months of tedious labor to renovate their low-rent location, an old, squalid luncheonette, called Benny's (Bennie's)*, in Greenwich Village.¹²³ In founder, Dolores Alexander's own words, "the renovation, impressive job when you see the "before" photographs, was done entirely by women: Jill, myself, and friends who were mostly volunteers. We literally gutted the place, tore down the ceiling, ripped up the floor, stripped plaster and paneling from the brick walls then totally rebuilt it."¹²⁴ After the initial repairs, little money was invested into the décor. Two thousand of the \$10,000 that Mother Courage founders raised went into buying used kitchen equipment and little money was spared for furnishings.¹²⁵ In fact, décor at Mother Courage was a last minute thought. As Dolores Alexander's day planner suggests in the entry on September 3, 1973, a year after Mother Courage had opened, she still needed to "decorate the walls."¹²⁶ As one restaurant reviewer stated:

¹²³ "Mother Courage," *Artemis* 3, November 1975, 3. In articles and documents, sometimes the former restaurant is spelled "Benny's" and sometimes "Bennie's."

¹²⁴ "Mother Courage Restaurant: Mother Courage," title of periodical cut off, 176, Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 21, Folder 180, 39. However, there are contradictions in her narrative as in other papers she describes that her father also helped them out. In interviews with magazine and newspaper reporters, there was a trend for the feminist restaurant owners to emphasize the women's labor, which was impressive, but erase either the physical help of some male family members or financial support (and inheritance from fathers) which allowed them to buy these spaces.

¹²⁵ Mother Courage," *Artemis*, 3.

¹²⁶ "September 3," Day Planner, 1973, Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 13.

The décor is determinedly un-affected. One medium sized room with tables relatively close together make it easy for feminists to meet, greet, and gossip during courses. The unclothed, plainly varnished tables, lit overhead by New Jersey surplus street lamps, are an interesting contrast to the profusion of lush plants in the windows and the original art displayed on the brick walls.¹²⁷

While this aesthetic originated primarily from a lack of budget, the décor did not subtract from the ambiance.

Mother Courage of New York City's owners were not the only feminist restaurateurs who rebuilt their space. The original group of women who began Wildrose in Seattle, Washington did its own remodeling. Previously the space had a similar aesthetic as a false wooden cabin. The women got rid of the logs on the wall and dry-walled. Everything had to be redone and owner Bryher Herak regretted that she never could afford to do floors.¹²⁸ The group was able to cover the walls with women's art with the pieces switching every two months and when people bought art off of the walls. In the back room there were two pool tables and folding chairs for the performances, which would draw crowds of three or four hundred people on the weekends.¹²⁹ At the Common Womon Club of Northampton, Marjorie Parsons, built the tables of the restaurant in somebody's basement. She reflected: "That kind of energy to put into one project was incredible." They were saving money on the front-end but using their energy to subsidize it. It was a lot of unpaid labor. The owners had little liquid capital, but in Marjorie Parsons' words, they had immense "woman power."

In addition to amateur repairs, part of the eclectic aesthetic originated from that fact that most of the supplies were second hand and mismatched. In the newly

¹²⁷ Syd Beiner, "The Feminist Gourment Bill of Fare," Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 8.

¹²⁸ Bryher Herak, "Wildrose," interview with Alex Ketchum, June 26, 2016.

¹²⁹ Herak, "Wildrose."

refurbished space, the Bloodroot collective filled the room with a hodgepodge of furniture. Selma Miriam and her partners, Betsey Beaven and Sam Stickwell, outfitted the former machine shop and office building with finds from tag and garage sales, picking up high-end china and lamps. Describing their decisions to *Fairpress* paper in 1977: “We decided never to pay more than \$10.00 for a table or \$5 for a chair. You can get some very nice chairs for two dollars and some lovely dishes for \$0.15 and \$0.25.”¹³⁰ Miriam’s Westport garage overflowed with furniture. The refinishing began when some of Miriam’s carpenter friends began “turning the office building into the warm, atmospheric and charming restaurant.”¹³¹ A 1975 review in the *New England Business Journal* mentioned that the plates and glasses at Bread and Roses of Cambridge, Massachusetts did not match.¹³² Although a mixture of need and desire drove these choices, the different aesthetic of feminist restaurants signaled to the customer that these spaces reflected a different set of values.

Location

A contributing factor to feminist restaurants’ unique aesthetic was that these restaurants were often located in unusual locations due to financial constraints. Clementyne’s of Toronto, Ontario, which later became the headquarters of the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT), was located within a large former fraternity house, which had been originally painted orange and pink.¹³³ Bloodroot of Bridgeport,

¹³⁰ Gloria Cole, “Bloodroot: a dream on a shoestring,” *Fairpress*, March 16, 1977. Selma Miriam was referred to as “Ms. Bunks,” her married name, in this interview.

¹³¹ Cole, “Bloodroot.”

¹³² Jo Ann Passariello, “Feminist Movement Creates Small Business,” *New England Business Journal*, February 1975, 9.

¹³³ “Women’s Café,” *Newsflash*, 1, Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Clementine’s (sic) Café (Toronto, ON) 1974-1976, Box 20; Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation*

Connecticut was located in a repurposed machine shop.¹³⁴ The Common Woman Club's founding collective members of Northampton first considered buying the rundown, former food stand, Kenny's. However, Marjorie Parsons noted, "It was an ugly spit that would have taken two years to clean."¹³⁵ Their intentionally- chosen, female real estate agent also showed the women in the collective a small house, near the fire station in Northampton, which had seven rooms. Adjacent was a storefront, similar to a garage but with a glass front. At the time, the United States' Navy had been renting the storefront and the State of Massachusetts used the house as a living facility for men with mental disabilities. Neither part of the property had been maintained and Parsons remarked that the stench of the building was "terrible."¹³⁶ The property cost them \$38,000. The collective members viewed the two rooms upstairs as potential income as rentals: for the valley women's union, the karate club, a bookstore, therapists, and masseuses. They also used the garage in the back of the storefront to have tag sales. The Common Woman Club members creatively used their space to raise income.

Many of the restaurants were located in run-down buildings or the poorer neighborhoods in town. When Bryher Herak and a collective of four other women decided to open the the Wildrose in 1984, the women knew that they wanted to find a space with windows, "a place with light."¹³⁷ In Seattle, Washington in 1984, most gay and lesbian hangouts were secretive, dark places out of necessity for safety and financial concerns. Herak wanted the Wildrose to be a place where lesbians could bring their

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). The house at 342 Jarvis Street was eventually shared between LOOT, the Three of Cups Women's Coffeehouse, and the headquarters of Toronto's feminist periodical *The Other Woman*. These groups shared the building from 1977-1984.

¹³⁴ Cole, "Bloodroot: a dream on a shoestring," *Fairpress*, March 16, 1977.

¹³⁵ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

¹³⁶ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

¹³⁷ She continued, "So we made a conscious decision, we would buy a place with windows, we were going to buy a place with light and we were going to buy a place that has a kitchen." Herak, "Wildrose."

friends and families without feelings of shame. As Herak said of Wildrose, “At that time it was very closeted ... it was mostly going into alleys, knowing about it word-of-mouth, because of the culture.”¹³⁸ Feminist restaurant owners wanted to create beauty and promote community building in their spaces.

Leasing or buying property in lower income neighborhoods was in part due to the limited capital that women had to invest in making a restaurant as well as the ghettoization of the lesbian community. While gay male communities are known for their gentrifying effect, lesbians and especially lesbian mothers in the 1970s and 1980s tended to be poorer.¹³⁹ Women faced lower wages and lesbian and single mothers also were saddled with childcare costs. Fewer educational and work opportunities, matched with hiring practices that discriminated against women and lesbians meant that the women and lesbians who opened these restaurants were opening them in areas with lower rent. The Brick Hut Café of Berkeley, California switched locations three times over its fifteen years in business. The first location was small and only had nine counter seats, three booths, a menu on a board attached to the hood. Here, as owner Joan Antonuccio remembered, the weekend crowds spilled out into the street even after the owners built a backyard patio where they served a limited menu of blueberry muffins, coffee, and tea.¹⁴⁰ The second Brick Hut had fifty seats, including the three booths, and an open kitchen. Finally, the third version had seventy-five seats inside; twenty-five on the patio; an open kitchen; in the front, an espresso, beer, and wine counter; and banquet room for meetings and events. The moves were not made by choice. The first move was due to an eviction.

¹³⁸ Herak, “Wildrose.”

¹³⁹ Sue Levin, *In the Pink: The Making of Successful Gay and Lesbian Owned Businesses* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1999); Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁰ Joan Antonuccio, “Brick Hut,” email correspondence with Alex Ketchum, June 9, 2015.

The owners had thirty days to find a new place and fortunately a neighbor had a restaurant space he wanted to sell. The restaurant staff rolled its equipment down the street on flatbed carts, made a few improvements, and opened for business. On the first day, there was a line down the block, in part due to the owners' philosophy. Antonuccio said that, "We welcomed everyone who was an ally in our common cause of social justice and inclusion."¹⁴¹ However, on the second day, the windows were smashed. The Brick Hut was not the only feminist restaurant that dealt with crime.

Crime of the outside neighborhoods was a problem for the restaurants, but not a restrictive problem.¹⁴² Berkeley's Brick Hut remained at its second location until the neighborhood fell to the crack epidemic and staying became untenable.¹⁴³ At that location the staff was robbed and held at gunpoint and the building was burgled and vandalized seventeen times over the years. At the Brick Hut, "We were targeted by vandals many times: broken windows, anti-gay graffiti, threatening letters. [However,] mostly, we were appreciated and everybody ate there because our food was really good."¹⁴⁴ At Wildrose of Seattle, the patrons faced occasional threats from drunken men on their way home from straight bars. Around midnight these drunken men would come in and harass the women. The Wildrose staff had to call the police a few times, but usually these incidents consisted of people shouting "you fucking queers or fucking dykes" and running.¹⁴⁵ Across the country in Connecticut, Selma Miriam's mother tried to discourage her from

¹⁴¹ Antonuccio, "Brick Hut," email correspondence with Ketchum.

¹⁴² Crime was not restricted to interactions with community outsiders. In a 1975 article on the New York Women's Coffeehouse, it was revealed that occasionally women would sneak into shows without paying and once someone stole cash out of the cash box during an event. Penny House, "The New York Women's Coffee House," *DYKE: A Quarterly* 1, September 1975, <http://seesaw.typepad.com/dykequarterly/venue-ny-womens-coffee-house/>.

¹⁴³ Antonuccio, "Brick Hut," email correspondence with Ketchum.

¹⁴⁴ Antonuccio, "Brick Hut," email correspondence with Ketchum.

¹⁴⁵ Herak, "Wildrose."

putting the word “feminist” in the title of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant because she assumed there would be a brick through its window on the first day, but there was not.¹⁴⁶

When the owners and collectives of these restaurants and cafés scouted potential locations they were at risk of gentrifying neighborhoods; but rather than be anonymous storefronts, feminist restaurant owners often worked with members of the neighborhood to create open community events centered on food and socializing. These restaurants played important roles in their communities. While at Bloodroot customers would drive from miles around to eat there and appreciated the camaraderie of like-minded women, anyone who was willing to be respectful in the environment was welcome.¹⁴⁷ Even though the space was intentionally woman-centered, Bloodroot never sought to ban men. The owners “wanted this to be a feminist community, but [they] didn’t want to exclude men. After [they] opened up Bloodroot [Selma] was really surprised at the number of men who came in and did not find the word feminist threatening or disparaging.”¹⁴⁸ They also sought to have good relations with their greater community. One example of community building that they did in their Blackrock neighborhood of Bridgeport, Connecticut was holding block parties because “it is important to get to know each other

¹⁴⁶ Selma Miriam and Noel Furie, “Bloodroot Interview 1,” interview by Alex Ketchum, December 13, 2011. Selma Miriam’s mother’s warning speaks to the cost that could come with identifying one’s business as feminist. While there were advantages such as drawing in a like-minded clientele, there was the financial risk of serving too niche of a market. The word “feminist” drew ire from critics and sometimes violence. Furthermore labeling a business as “feminist” opened its owners up for critique from within feminist communities as feminist business practices were debated.

¹⁴⁷ “Letters to Bloodroot,” personal papers of Noel Furie and Selma Miriam shared with Alex Ketchum.

¹⁴⁸ Richard Weitzel, “Review of the Second Seasonal Political Palate,” *The Boston Sunday Globe*, September 13, 1998, 27. “I probably should have been worried about scaring away men, and it probably wasn’t very practical. Everyone, even my mother, was saying, you mustn’t do this. She said, go ahead and open up a restaurant if you like, but you must not put up the word feminist, you will scare away customers.”

and respect our differences. Food is one delicious vehicle for that.”¹⁴⁹ They wanted to use their restaurant as a community space to make alliances and build coalitions. In an interview with the *Connecticut Post*, the owners expressed that “we want to be available to the Spanish speaking community and to Black women in Fairfield County. We want to make those political connections where we can.”¹⁵⁰ Likewise, the Brick Hut Café was an important resource in its community. Sharon Davenport remembered that the Berkeley city council, mayors, community figures, political counterculture figures were regulars at the Hut. In addition to the above response, she added that,

The customers changed as the times changed. We stopped seeming alien to the mainstream, so more mainstream people visited us. More articles about us appeared in more print media. We catered backstage at the Bank of the West Tennis classic for three years, so there were programs and banners at the matches. We were a haven for lesbians and gay men, an information center for LGBT activists, an anchor for a diverse community that included working girls, bad-boys, suburban queens, transmen and transwomen. We maintained our welcome mat for the queer community and all their allies. We served all genders, races, classes, and sexual identities. The only ones we didn’t serve were those who showed disrespect or hostility to others—they had to go.¹⁵¹

Food connected diverse groups of people living in the nearby neighborhoods and visitors alike. Both Bloodroot’s and the Brick Hut’s owners worked on being integrally involved in their neighborhood communities on opposite sides of the United States, aiming to not be a gentrifying force that would displace the original habitants of the neighborhood in which they located their restaurants. They were not alone in these efforts.

Judy Forman of The Big Kitchen in the Golden Hill neighborhood of San Diego, California used her restaurant as a resource to serve the community beginning 1980 and customers noticed. In speaking to the *San Diego Free Press*, when Forman bought the

¹⁴⁹ “Womanwise,” *Connecticut Post*, July 21, 1998.

¹⁵⁰ “Womanwise,” *Connecticut Post*.

¹⁵¹ Sharon Davenport, “LGBT Pride: Remembering the Brick Hut Café – Part 1,” *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <http://ww2.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-1/>.

restaurant The Big Kitchen in 1979/80, she described Golden Hill as being “a neighborhood in transition. It was the first “suburb” of downtown San Diego at the turn of the last century. The white population had fled to the suburbs leaving multiethnic families and all of the most talented people of San Diego living in Golden Hill for the same reason—the rent was reasonable.”¹⁵² She wanted her restaurant to employ people from the neighborhood and thus she hired “all the gang members” to come and work at the restaurant.¹⁵³ She also helped organize the Golden Hill Community Development Corporation, a non-profit group that worked on obtaining grants to improve the neighborhood. The GHCDC secured a grant that resulted in an after-school program at Brooklyn Elementary run by Forman, a new playground at Brooklyn, and a leash-free dog park. Forman stated that her “focus was on making a nourishing, multi-ethnic community of different economic levels,” continuing that,

There was a faction in the community that didn’t want to be identified as multi-ethnic because it brought down their property values. I’m sorry I ruffle feathers when I tell this story, but you know, we rode the backs of poor people to improve this community and we didn’t do it so people in real estate could make more money on their houses. That wasn’t the function of those grants!¹⁵⁴

Forman was aware of the gentrifying effects of community improvement projects. She wanted her restaurant to be beneficial to the community of people who already lived there, not to change the neighborhood so that the original inhabitants would be priced out of the housing market.

¹⁵² Miller and Mayhew, “The Self Appointed Mayor of Golden Hill Holds Court in Big Kitchen,” *San Diego Free Press*, May 20, 2013, <https://sandiegofreepress.org/2013/05/the-self-appointed-mayor-of-golden-hill-holds-court-in-the-big-kitchen/>.

¹⁵³ Miller and Mayhew, “The Self Appointed Mayor of Golden Hill Holds Court in Big Kitchen.”

¹⁵⁴ Lambda Archives, “Big Kitchen: Food for Thought,” http://www.lambdaarchives.us/2010_honorees/food_for_thought.htm.

Forman's goal with her restaurant was to be part of the community. In an interview with *The San Diego Free Press*, she remarked that

We were all poor together: the artists, the musicians, the theater people, the activists, the healers, the thinkers. I used to refer to them as the "colorful" characters of Golden Hill. We live in a culture that honors the military industrial complex, based on destruction, instead of the healing world of creativity and peace. The Big Kitchen was a space where the latter could thrive.

As the *San Diego Troubadour* noted, Forman had been at the vanguard of civil rights, women's rights, and gay rights and involved in after-school programs, rehab programs for drug abusers, shelters for homeless folks, and care for those who are HIV positive. In appreciation of Foreman's work, a San Diego local wrote, "Big Kitchen: A Counter Cultural Musical," a production with twenty-two original songs based on interviews with thirty people: employees, people who used to work here, regulars and neighbors. The musical, as described by the writer, focused on "Forman's work in building a truly equitable world, all the while serving some hash browns on the side."¹⁵⁵

This emphasis on community building is not part of the mandate of traditional restaurant management, however for feminist restaurant owners such as Forman, these actions were pivotal to their work. The Big Kitchen had meaningful effects in peoples' lives beyond serving food.¹⁵⁶ In 2005, the California State Legislature honored Judy

¹⁵⁵ Paul Hormick, "Someone's in the Kitchen with Judy: 35 Years of the Big Kitchen," *San Diego Troubadour*, November 2015, <https://sandiegotroubadour.com/2015/11/someones-in-the-kitchen-with-judy-35-years-of-the-big-kitchen/>.

¹⁵⁶ Anonymous, "Remembering Big Kitchen," *Big Kitchen Facebook Page*, July 2013. This appreciation of The Big Kitchen's contribution to the neighborhood was echoed on a July 2013 Facebook post to the Big Kitchen's page, when a poster published a family photo with the caption that "Judy the Beauty and the Big Kitchen were an integral part to raising my kids in Golden Hill. She opened up the kitchen for Spaghetti nights for our Mom's group so we could build a better community. She held an initial fundraiser for the tot lot on Cedar and 28th because we needed a nice place for our toddlers to play. And she started a little art program at Brooklyn elementary to make sure the kids in the community had a little art and beauty for the start. Well...years later my little toddler just graduated from UCLA School of Design and Media Arts. Thank you Judy for celebrating with us and being part of our community experience!"

Foreman as Woman of the Year.¹⁵⁷ Forman was actively involved in supporting the LGBTQ community and San Diego Pride since 1981, leading the parade twice, once as its marshal and the other as "Friend of the Community." She also offered space, support and fundraisers for numerous LGBT organizations including the Frontrunners, the Women's Chorus and the Gay Youth Alliance.¹⁵⁸ Forman's past education as a social worker is oft cited in the articles about her and The Big Kitchen, as a way to explain how she knew how to listen, care, and help everyone she came into contact with – customer or employee. Forman used her restaurant not as a space apart but as space: a part of the community.

Feminist restaurants and cafés' relationships with their local communities would change over time. At Ruby's, owner Mary Bahneman explained in an interview that she tried to make the restaurant a place where if you came in by yourself it would be okay. A person would not be harassed, regardless of gender, race, or sexual orientation. Rather, she wanted the restaurant to be a place where people could meet new friends. In both locations, Bahneman recounts that she had regulars and customers would work on a crossword puzzle together. At other moments, the whole place would be singing Edelweiss from the *Sound of Music*.¹⁵⁹ They noted that local politicians would come to Ruby's to eat, never as a campaign picture stop, but rather just there to talk strategy.

Despite an earlier reviewer homophobically noting that "he liked his breakfast

¹⁵⁷ The award cites her role in creating after school programs and her good influence on the neighborhood. The award noted how The Big Kitchen helped with benefits and spaghetti/spinach lasagna dinners for baseball teams and also catered for hospital meetings, church events, funerals, Balboa Park Museums, and political events. The award goes on to state, "While managing her restaurant, Judy has been extremely active in her community, participating in events such as the Grass Roots Cultural Center, which was next door to the Big Kitchen; and she is a major contributor to the Woman's History Museum" and "The Big Kitchen has been a community center for so many people, and the lively community spirit is exemplified by the art work and pictures throughout the restaurant, featuring customers, friends, and family." California Legislature Assembly, "Woman of the Year," 2005, <http://bigkitchencafe.com/wp/awards/woman-of-the-year/>.

¹⁵⁸ Esther Rubio-Sheffrey, "Heroes, Pioneers and Trailblazers 2010 Honoree: Judy Forman," *San Diego Gay Lesbian News*, February 15, 2010, <http://sdgln.com/news/2010/02/25/heroes-pioneers-and-trailblazers-2010-honoree-judy-forman>.

¹⁵⁹ Mary Bahneman, "Ruby's," interview by Alex Ketchum, October 15, 2015.

“straighter,”” according to Bahneman, Ruby’s had the reputation of good food, good people.¹⁶⁰ The relationship between Wildrose of Seattle and the community changed over time. Initially no one from the outside community would enter and there was zero street traffic. Bryher Herak, the owner, later found out that apparently there was a rumor that they did not serve men and if a man wanted a burger it would be served raw. Herak found these stories, motivated by fear, as sad when the intent of the founders was to create a welcoming place. It took four to five years to get the neighborhood to come in, but eventually the eleven to three lunch crowd took off.¹⁶¹ By 1989, Ruby’s began to serve espresso and that made a difference because it had wide appeal in the community. Then Herak hired Lori Potter, a great cook, and her cuisine attracted a broader clientele. Even at Mother Courage, the customer base widened. As recounted by reporters,

The originally heavily feminist clientele has been somewhat diluted, particularly after a very favorable notice in *New York Magazine* brought in more men dining out with their wives and women friends. Jill and Dolores point out that the publicity has also brought in more Movement women from suburbs outside of the city, from New Jersey, Westchester, Long Island the balance is still very much on the side of the feminists who constitute a good 60 percent of the diners on any given evening.¹⁶²

These restaurants’ locations affected their customer base and reputations.

While feminist restaurants could be welcoming to members of the entire neighborhood, the focus was still primarily on women. The owners of Bloodroot focused on promoting women and women’s community, stating to the other journalist that “although men are welcome, and, indeed, do come, Bloodroot is clearly out to support

¹⁶⁰ Bahneman, “Ruby’s,” interview by Ketchum.

¹⁶¹ Herak, “Wildrose,” interview by Ketchum.

¹⁶² “Mother Courage Restaurant: Mother Courage,” 176.

and promote women.”¹⁶³ If businesses were for-profit, by law they had to allow people of all genders to attend and as explained above, there was a genuine interest in doing so by promoting social justice principles in their neighborhoods. However, the next chapter will explain how the restaurant owners of establishments such as the Common Woman of Northampton, Massachusetts and Grace and Rubies of Iowa City that wanted to create completely woman-only separatist spaces had to structure the business as non-profit corporations. Even non-separatist restaurants, such as Bloodroot, had women-only nights. Making women-only hours did not preclude the desire to also positively connect with their larger community. Precisely what “community” meant and who was included was subject to the discretion of the owners.

Different Owners and Operators

Feminist restaurants were owned and operated by a different kind of person than the ones who ran mainstream restaurants. As previously discussed, in the 1970s, men, particularly cisgender heterosexual white men, owned the majority of restaurants in the United States and Canada due to their ability to secure credit and educational opportunities. The women who began feminist restaurants were not a uniform group. Working and middle-class lesbians who identified as radical feminists, radical lesbian separatist feminists, or socialist feminists owned most of the restaurants, although there were exceptions.¹⁶⁴ Of the restaurants where details about the owners are known, the

¹⁶³ Irene Backalenik, “Feminist Food for Thought,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1977, http://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/26/archives/long-island-opinion-feminist-food-for-thought-this-must-be-a-place.html?_r=0.

¹⁶⁴ A former employee of Toronto's Woman's Common (1988-1994) noted that the board of directors and clientele were primarily white lesbians who were middle and upper middle-class professionals. The board of directors hired young women from working-class backgrounds to work the restaurant and bar. In 1988,

majority of the owners were white. At the Brick Hut Café of Berkeley, the entire collective of lesbians were white except for Sharon Davenport who was the only woman of color, identifying as half-Philippina though often passing as white.¹⁶⁵ Joan Antonuccio of the Brick Hut in email correspondence also added that a few of the collective were middle-class and a few members were working-class and that “race and class were regular discussions among ourselves and in the broader community.”¹⁶⁶ Bryher Herak of Wildrose of Seattle was a white, working-class lesbian. Patricia Hynes was a white, radical lesbian. Marjorie Parsons and her colleagues of Northampton’s the Common Woman were white working and middle-class lesbians, many of them still students.¹⁶⁷ The women who started these restaurants were typically between twenty-five to forty years old.

Jewish owners were prominent. Selma Miriam of Bloodroot has spoken about how she has brought together her knowledge of Jewish cooking from her culture with different cooking methods.¹⁶⁸ Mary Bahneman after selling Ruby’s Café worked with Jewish Children’s Services for eight years.¹⁶⁹ Sarah Lewinstein, founder of San Francisco’s Artemis Society Women’s Café (1977-1984), had a Jewish last name. Big Kitchen of San Diego’s owner Judy Forman has talked about how her Jewish roots influenced her desire to open a restaurant. As *The San Diego Troubador* noted, Forman has made a career out of “serving great nosh with a side of tikkun olam” (a Jewish concept defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world). Since she

90 percent of the employees were out-lesbians. Anonymized Interview, “Working at Toronto’s Woman’s Common,” interview with Alex Ketchum on January 13, 2017.

¹⁶⁵ Antonuccio, “Brick Hut.”

¹⁶⁶ Antonuccio, “Brick Hut.”

¹⁶⁷ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

¹⁶⁸ Miriam and Furie, “Bloodroot Interview 1.”

¹⁶⁹ Bahneman, “Ruby’s.”

began running the restaurant in 1980, Forman's activist philosophy has extended far beyond the walls of her eatery, which she attributes to her Jewish roots. She proclaimed that, "as a Jew and a minority, I don't feel safe unless everyone is safe,"¹⁷⁰ continuing,

I came to San Diego in October 1979 after working for the state of Michigan as a social worker for ten years. I had graduated from Michigan State University but found that my real education took place on the streets of Detroit, working with gangs. Politically speaking I have been a civil rights activist since the sixth grade when I realized the plight of migrant workers in my county. But what really activated me early on was the realization that I could be discriminated against merely because of my religious beliefs and/or ethnicity. My grandparents left Russia because of the pogroms of Stalin and my grandmother was the only survivor of her large family after the Holocaust in Germany. After reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* I realized the only way I could be safe was to ensure that everyone was safe. To me that meant being a civil rights activist. I marched in the streets for racial equality, for ending the Vietnam War, for Gay Rights, and for Women's Rights. There is an incredible adrenaline rush that occurs for me when I am in the street screaming against injustice. I feel empowered linking arms with brave activists and watching the police aim their guns and rifles at us from the rooftops because we believe in changing the culture to include everyone, not just rich white men.¹⁷¹

Judaism was not the exclusive religion held by feminist restaurant owners, but in interviews and articles, Jewish restaurant founders cited their Jewish roots as being integral to their motivation of creating feminist restaurants, using food to bring people together and create positive change.

As will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 3 and 6, feminist restaurant owners were less privileged than middle, upper middle-class, and rich white men who dominated the restaurant industry during the 1970s and 1980s. However, the ability to access capital, and particularly loans meant that the women who started feminist restaurants were often white, not facing the double bind of racial and gender oppression. White, working-class and middle-class lesbians founded the majority of feminist

¹⁷⁰ Hormick, "Someone's in the Kitchen with Judy: 35 Years of the Big Kitchen."

¹⁷¹ Hormick, "Someone's in the Kitchen with Judy."

restaurants and cafés. Coffeehouses with lower overhead costs had a greater diversity at the level of management.

One aspect that allowed the owners to think creatively about how they would organize their restaurants was that few had previous experience in the restaurant business. While restaurant managers of typical restaurants do not need to have a degree in restaurant management, food industry experience is typical; some restaurant managers begin their careers as waiters or hostesses and work their way up within the hierarchy of a particular restaurant. However, colleges and universities in the United States and Canada offered training programs at the associate, bachelor, and graduate level in restaurant management.¹⁷² Since most of the owners had never started a restaurant, they had to learn everything by trial and error. Selma Miriam recounted her initial naivety when she described Bloodroot's origins to a reporter, stating that, "this piece of property was for sale and my parents said they'd give us the down payment for it, but nobody would lend

¹⁷² These programs often are part of Departments of Hospitality Studies. They offer business courses, leadership instruction, information about food safety, and teach students the fundamentals to managing a restaurant. Most programs require hundreds of hours of internships. The first undergraduate program began in 1922 at Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, focusing mostly on hotel management but it included restaurant management. To this day, most restaurant management programs cover all aspects of hospitality management, and students can specialize in restaurant management. Programs are also offered at Michigan State University's School of Hospitality Business, University of Nevada at Las Vegas' William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, Farleigh Dickinson University's International School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business, Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, The Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at University of Massachusetts-Amherst's Isenberg School of Management, Penn State's School of Hospitality Management, Washington State's School of Hospitality Business Management University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality and Iowa State's The College of Human Sciences. In Canada, programs are offered at University of Prince Edward Island, University of Guelph, Ryerson University, and more. To learn more, the National Restaurant Association's Educational Foundation provides educational resources, materials and programs used in attracting, developing and retaining the industry's workforce. Specific restaurant chains mandate their employees to attend chain specific programs. For example, the McDonald's Corporation created Hamburger University, a training facility in Oak Brook, Illinois that instructs personnel employed by McDonald's in the various aspects of restaurant management. Over eighty thousand restaurant managers, mid-managers, and owner operators have graduated from this program. Other chains have new management apprentice under managers of another branch before managing their own.

us money for the mortgage because we had no history.”¹⁷³ They finally acquired the property but they had to get a building permit. “I went to city hall” and said “tell me what you want me to do and I’ll do it. I didn’t know how.”¹⁷⁴ Marjorie Parsons of Northampton’s Common Woman Club repeatedly said “we were doing it by the seat of our pants.”¹⁷⁵ Likewise, Joan Antonuccio remarked that Berkeley’s Brick Hut was done “totally seat of the pants. Sometimes that worked to our advantage—we weren’t aware that much of what we did was considered impossible. We just did it.”¹⁷⁶ Bryher Herak wrote of getting her start in the food industry by working with the lesbian bread collective in Seattle. Despite having no prior experience to working in the restaurant business, she had known bars her whole life so she built up the skills within the lesbian feminist community and felt okay about opening Wildrose.¹⁷⁷

People with former restaurant experience did begin some of the feminist restaurants. Ruby’s owner Mary Banheman had worked in quite a few restaurants previously and had a home economics degree. Even though Berkeley’s Brick Hut collective felt like they were operating “totally seat of the pants,” some of their collective members had worked in the restaurant business, such as Joan Antonuccio who had been working in the food industry since age fourteen.¹⁷⁸ Wania of La Fronde was a trained chef. What is important to note is that women who already had worked in the restaurant industry founded the restaurants that functioned most similarly to mainstream restaurants. But many of the owners had little food experience. Marjorie Parsons was working as a

¹⁷³ Whiting, “Bloodroot, a Feminist Outpost on the Sound,” April 27, 1996.

¹⁷⁴ Whiting, “Bloodroot, a Feminist Outpost on the Sound.”

¹⁷⁵ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

¹⁷⁶ Antonuccio, “Brick Hut.”

¹⁷⁷ Herak, “Wildrose.”

¹⁷⁸ Antonuccio, “LGBT Pride: Remembering the Brick Hut Café – Part 2.”

head resident at university of Massachusetts. Mother Courage of New York City's owners had no previous restaurant experience: Jill Ward was in management and Dolores Alexander was a newspaperwoman.¹⁷⁹ Most of the founders were motivated by the desire to create community spaces and food served as the vehicle to realize their goals. The owners' lack of industry experience led to problems, as will be discussed below. More importantly, however, it also encouraged creativity, which enabled feminist restaurants to challenge work structures and relationships with customers.

Changing Work Structures and Relationships

Many feminists have talked about changing their workplace but few have done so, explained Miss McKay. By eliminating the hierarchy implicit in most businesses and by giving women employees the opportunity to be themselves, we think we have gone a long way toward making it possible for them to be feminists on the job."¹⁸⁰

- McKay, Los Angeles Women's Saloon

Feminist restaurants transformed the relationship between staff and customer. Changing the relationship between the customer, their money, and the establishment was also important. For instance, most feminist restaurants did not allow tipping. Bread and Roses had a jar on the counter, which was used to raise money for local feminist causes instead of tipping the staff.¹⁸¹ Unlike other low wage restaurants in 1976, which encouraged their waitresses to smile, flirt, and ingratiate themselves with customers in hopes of getting larger tips, the *Lakeland Ledger* noted, the Los Angeles Women's Saloon

¹⁷⁹ Dolores Alexander and Jill Ward, "Mother Courage History," Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 13.

¹⁸⁰ Sharon Johnson, "In Los Angeles Saloon Women Get The Red Carpet," *Lakeland Ledger*, June 16, 1976, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=d4ksAAAAIBAJ&sjid=2PoDAAAAIBAJ&pg=7132%2C4566266>.

¹⁸¹ Gale Goldberg, "Feminism and Food: An Alternative to Restauranting."

and Parlor paid all its employees a high wage of \$3 an hour.¹⁸² As in 1976, the minimum wage in California was \$2 an hour for non-tipping jobs (jobs with tips have a lower minimum wage), the \$3 an hour wages were far above the norm.¹⁸³ Poly Molina who had worked as a waitress at other restaurants in Los Angeles before taking a job at the Women's Saloon remarked to the journalist, "I don't feel like I'm an automaton here." She continued: "Other restaurants make you wear ridiculous costumes or walk with a silly grin on your face. Male managers permit and sometimes even encourage customers to insult or mistreat waitresses. Here no matter what job we do we are treated with respect."¹⁸⁴ At the Common Womon Club of Northampton, Massachusetts there was also no tipping. Eliminating tipping practices was an important factor in changing the relationship between staff and customers and thus was common in feminist restaurant business dynamics.

In another example of changing the work structure, the restaurants would often request that each table of people clear their soiled dishes. In fact, there were no waitresses at Bread and Roses of Cambridge or Bloodroot of Bridgeport. When the food was ready, customers were called upon to serve themselves.¹⁸⁵ Clients were to pick up their own food from the counter and clear their plates at the end. Patricia Hynes of Bread and Roses explained to an interviewer that, "We don't feel comfortable with women waiting on other people."¹⁸⁶ Although self-service was a concept that more traditional restaurants have employed with buffet tables, salad bars, and cafeterias in order to save money by

¹⁸² Johnson, "In Los Angeles Saloon Women Get The Red Carpet."

¹⁸³ In addition to a federal minimum wage, states set their own minimum wage. State of California Department of Industrial Relations, "History of the Minimum Wage," *CA.Gov*, <https://www.dir.ca.gov/iwc/minimumwagehistory.htm>.

¹⁸⁴ Johnson, "In Los Angeles Saloon Women Get The Red Carpet."

¹⁸⁵ Goldberg, "Feminism and Food: An Alternative to Restauranting," 9.

¹⁸⁶ Schwartz. "'Bloodroot: Not by Food Alone.'"

requiring a smaller staff, these feminist restaurants used this technique additionally for political reasons to challenge the hierarchical patriarchal standards of the regular service industry. According to the *Lakeland Ledger*, at the Los Angeles Women's Saloon and Parlor, most customers were sympathetic to the needs of the staff. If the waitresses were busy, the customers were encouraged to get their own silverware or help themselves to a second cup of coffee. One night a group of regular customers did all the cooking and cleaning so that the staff could have a night off.¹⁸⁷ For the most part, customers seemed to be okay with this arrangement.

Not everyone was amenable to this different kind of service, however. As Marjorie Parsons noted, when the original collective ran the Common Woman Club, women self-served. Customers went to a counter to order and pick up their food. This allowed the restaurant to have a smaller staff of about two people working per shift, which facilitated its being open six days a week.¹⁸⁸ In a later version of the Common Woman Club, when a second collective took over operations, it moved to having a wait staff. Parsons noticed that richer customers preferred this change as the women with more money actually preferred to be waited on.¹⁸⁹ She saw that even within this purported egalitarian space, class differences mattered. Parsons reflected, "One of the saddest things was that the restaurant ... was like creating a monster that perpetuated keeping women down instead of giving them a place to raise them up."¹⁹⁰ Certain customers felt emboldened when there was class stratification. The second collective realized that richer customers were willing to spend more if they were waited upon. This discrepancy indicates that power

¹⁸⁷ Johnson, "In Los Angeles Saloon Women Get The Red Carpet."

¹⁸⁸ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

¹⁸⁹ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

¹⁹⁰ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

structures from the outside world, despite the staff's efforts to challenge them, were replicated within the restaurant. Race, class, and gender did not disappear at the door just because the space was called feminist. Customers' desire to keep purchasing cheap food despite the Common Woman Club not having the purchasing power of a chain like McDonald's meant lower wages for the women working there.

Feminist restaurants often had different staff procedures than mainstream restaurants. In the case of the Los Angeles Women's Saloon and the Common Woman of Northampton, each woman working at the restaurant shared the different management roles by taking turns planning the meals, doing the cooking, organizing the finances, washing the dishes, and doing maintenance. By rotating positions, these feminist restaurants subverted traditional restaurant management hierarchy. At the Los Angeles Women's Saloon and Parlor, all of the fourteen employees participated in the major decisions, although those who were experts in cooking or marketing made day-to-day decisions in those areas. For instance, the "dirty work" was divided so nobody was stuck scrubbing the floor everyday.¹⁹¹ Collective structures tended to encourage people to share the work. The Common Woman Club began during a February 1976 meeting for women who wanted to get into business. The initial meeting brought in fourteen women, seven or eight women wanted a restaurant, four or five wanted a bookstore, and a few just wanted to be involved. At the second meeting, they closed the group to the nine that showed up and called themselves the "Women's Restaurant Project."¹⁹² From the first day, the fundraising began and never stopped. The group's money issues, which will be discussed further in the next chapter, caused a lot of the problems. All nine members worked in the

¹⁹¹ Johnson, "In Los Angeles Saloon Women Get The Red Carpet."

¹⁹² Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

kitchen, cooked, and cleaned. The collective also changed sizes – lowering to seven.

Interest in being involved in the collective though actually impeded its efficiency. There was a limit to how many people could make a living wage. Marjorie Parsons, reflected:

Theoretically if we had three or four people working forty hours a week with the food service – we could have given them a living wage. Then we had lots of women working twenty hours. Then we had people doing fundraising which wasn't paid. This was all collective people. We did not open the collective up because we couldn't possibly afford it- we needed a stable body of people – if we were going to move or something we needed a stable group to stay with it. It's interesting because in some ways that commitment level was very high...One of our important issues was that especially doing shift-work, women should be paid.¹⁹³

Different ideas about work and expectations led to problems.

Despite having a vision of challenging the hierarchy, collective models were not the easiest to maintain. When asked if there were tensions within the collective, Berkeley's Brick Hut owner Joan Antonnucio replied, "Hahaha. Always. It was a collective. With people."¹⁹⁴ Then more seriously she added, "We usually tried for consensus, later a two-thirds quorum, then just majority rule." By creating a procedure to deal with conflicts, the Brick Hut Café was able to mitigate tensions. Personal conflicts and different expectations tore other restaurant collectives apart. Although, Marjorie Parsons of the Common Woman Club emphasized repeatedly how committed the collective was to the project, the downside to that level of emotional investment meant that "also the anger and the resentment built up because some people did more work."¹⁹⁵ In order to compensate for this problem, the collective held processing meetings in addition to their organizational meetings. Business meetings were to work out scheduling, fundraising,

¹⁹³ Striving to make a living wage was highlighted in interviews with the press. Ruth Bayard Smith, "Feminists Operate Club," *The Sumter Daily*, September 11, 1978.

¹⁹⁴ Antonnucio, "Brick Hut."

¹⁹⁵ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

event planning, discuss money matters, and write the tasks lists for jobs ranging from cleaning the bathrooms to writing the menu. These business meetings showed why the process meetings, when the group would take time to discuss emotions, were important. Parsons remarked, “There were times in the group when people didn’t get along- had a really hard time with each other.”¹⁹⁶ Over time tensions built within the collective; sometimes the conflict would be over former lovers and co-collective members fighting and sometimes it would be over something as simple as a debate about whether or not to use butter or margarine.¹⁹⁷ Poor communication skills could result in businesses imploding over something as simple as butter.

Part of the tension at Northampton’s Common Womon Club resulted from frustrations regarding the menu and workload. Even if the collective had planned to share all of the tasks, there was a “natural division of labor. Certain people had to do certain things. Certain people had certain interests or hobbies” and these “obvious power dynamics [existed] between the person who knew how to cook and who didn’t and if someone needs more eggs because [she] felt like making custard that wasn’t on the menu plan and now it’s brunch day and we have no eggs.”¹⁹⁸ These power discrepancies led to further conflicts. There was a collective member who loved making desserts and was very talented at it, but she would not follow the menu plan. The other collective members wanted to follow a menu plan that made sense and that was balanced because they

¹⁹⁶ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

¹⁹⁷ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

¹⁹⁸ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

worked with co-ops that only delivered once a week.¹⁹⁹ Women were also quite territorial over the kitchen, but the real source of conflict was poor communication.

Apart from the menu and food ordering, a lack of open communication was a constant source of tension. Marjorie Parsons had taken over the books, “and there was an issue around that because people would harass me about the money and people wouldn’t listen to me about the money issue and I wasn’t feeling supported- and people doing the menu planning weren’t feeling supported- undermined.”²⁰⁰ Furthermore, there was little communication about setting up cultural events. One time a miscommunication resulted in printing wrong information on the publicity flyers. Parsons even admits that,

I remember dealing with an issue that wasn’t in my area at all- basically I laid her out-- was letting my mouth go- and was sarcastic. And the whole collective- there had to be a collective response. Fuck her and the woman who was dealing with the leasing and rental stuff felt so undermined that I had mouthed up. So these are all process things- you can imagine what comes out of valuing the different kinds of politics and goals and different amounts of time you could put in. There were times in the collective when there were women who couldn’t work- who couldn’t cook in the kitchen together.

Lots of anger built up. Growing frustrations impacted by working under constant stress meant that collective members ceased to be empathetic to one another. Rather than expressing their frustrations in a constructive manner, the collective members would tear each other apart. To put it simply, Parsons said it best when she stated, “It was a big failing as a collective – our process.”²⁰¹

Parsons was able to learn from her collective’s mistakes, and while her collective was unable to resolve these issues, she passed on these lessons to other feminist

¹⁹⁹ Bayard Smith, “Feminists Operate Club.” As Bayard Smith explained, “From the outset, the women have been committed to what they call “alternative economies.” As often as possible, they buy from food cooperatives.”

²⁰⁰ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁰¹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

collectives. Part of challenging mainstream restaurant hierarchy meant experimentation and experiments sometimes failed. The women would compartmentalize their emotional needs in order to deal with business issues initially, but these tensions simmered under the surface and would be released in explosions. Collectives were dependent members being able to trust that the other women would follow through on their tasks and commitments to the restaurant.²⁰² At the Common Woman Club, the constant infighting resulted in burnout. Marjorie Parsons recommend that future collectives “get a good facilitator to come in once a month to come in and talk with the group.”²⁰³ With a group therapy session once a month the anger could get released and people could move on. She also advised against overextending oneself. These businesses, especially in smaller towns, often served as the community center/ women’s center or LGB center. As a result, the business owners were often trying to organize so many events and they became spread too thin. The restaurant aimed to do care work for the entire women’s community of Northampton but the collective members forgot to care for themselves in the process. While Parsons’ collective was unable to implement these techniques in time to save it, she wanted to share this advice with other women interested in beginning feminist businesses.

Collectives rarely lasted: for the restaurants that lasted for more than three years, even if the businesses began with collective management, they would usually transition to private ownership. Initially, Wildrose of Seattle was collectively managed. Two of the women were management and the other three would work two to three nights a week as bartenders and waitresses and sous chefs. Additionally the collective hired three or four

²⁰² Elizabeth Kent, “A Journey Through “Lesbian Mecca:” Northampton LGBTQ History Walking Tour,” September 14, 2014. Script provided by Elizabeth Kent to Alex Ketchum on request.

²⁰³ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

other part time staff.²⁰⁴ At the Wildrose's start, Bryher Herak kept her day job and the capital from her other job was often used to support the restaurant. Eventually she took over managing the entire restaurant herself. She only hired women, but in an interview stressed that it was not that she would not have hired men but at the time she had so many women that wanted to work for her and politically she liked the idea of women working there.²⁰⁵ Bloodroot of Bridgeport also began as a collective that over its forty years of operation dwindled to Selma Miriam and Noel Furie. However, the restaurant was able to function because it also employed staff. The Brick Hut of Berkeley also began as a collective where all collective members did all the jobs. After eight years the business grew and the collective dissolved. After the Brick Hut collective was evicted and moved to a new location, it incorporated and operated as a core group of five owners, with eight to thirteen employees that it hired on short-term or on a revolving door basis. Antonuccio explained that if "someone was short of money (often a musician!), she would come in and work with us for a few days or weeks."²⁰⁶ As partners left to pursue other interests, Davenport and Antonuccio stayed, operating the café for the last twelve years as co-owners. As the Brick Hut expanded, and no longer operated as a collective, Antonuccio notes that she and Davenport hired more and more people to work with them and at their apex in the late 1980s, they had around thirty-two employees. Collectives fulfilled a philosophical and political desire to disrupt hierarchies but in practice the full collective model created problems that became untenable for long term operations.

²⁰⁴ The restaurant opened at 11:00 a.m. and served lunch. The atmosphere included a quiet afternoon shift and a dinner shift and bar scene at night.

²⁰⁵ Herak, "Wildrose."

²⁰⁶ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

Not every feminist restaurant radically changed work structures. Bryher Herak described the Wildrose's structure as "very traditional in terms of service. The kitchen was partly hidden in the back. The bartenders and waitresses were often the same people and each table numbered and customers were waited on. She called it a "pretty straight by the book business model" that proved successful.²⁰⁷ Although a collective board of directors managed Toronto's Woman's Common (1988-1994), the business employed a wait and bar staff that were not part of the collective.²⁰⁸ Likewise, Ruby's owner had a business partner arrangement in the first location.

Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, there was a noticeable difference in how professional the restaurants became. Amateurs without previous food industry experience and with scant bookkeeping skills most often began the earliest feminist restaurants. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the feminist restaurants functioned more professionally. In an article, "Why Women Leave the Full Moon," staff discussed how it was upset over the way the management tried to organize the space and resolve problems. Spaces like the Baybrick Inn, which housed a restaurant, were far more regimented with a formalized staff guidebook/ rulebook.²⁰⁹ The Women's Center of Ottawa, Ontario, which created Chez Nous in 1978 was likewise highly regimented.²¹⁰ Part of the change in professionalism had to do with mentorship and expanded educational opportunities for women in business. The pioneers of feminist restaurants identified some of these problems and created resolutions for them.

²⁰⁷ Herak, "Wildrose."

²⁰⁸ Anonymized Interview, "Working at Toronto's Woman's Common," interview with Alex Ketchum on January 13, 2017.

²⁰⁹ "Employee Manual," San Francisco Public Library Archives, Bay Brick Inn Records 1982-1987, Collection 194-23, Box 1, Folder 3.

²¹⁰ Chez Nous, "Proposal," Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Chez Nous, Box 512, Folder 16.

This chapter does not argue that feminist restaurants were the only type of restaurant to challenge restaurant hierarchy. Other restaurants also tried to change the role of restaurant management. Feminists were also not the only people to attempt collective restaurant management. Moosewood Restaurant, in Ithaca, New York (1973-present), is one of the most famous restaurants that utilized collective management. However, it is not alone, as a variety of restaurants, though still in the minority of the general restaurant population, had attempted non-hierarchical collective management. Many of the participating restaurants have political reasons for doing so, whether they identify as anarchist, feminist, or rooted in some idea of social justice. What made the feminist restaurants different was that they emphasized their feminism. For them it was important to create decidedly feminist spaces.

Reconciling Capitalist Tensions

Ultimately despite these tensions and uncertainties over whether one could have a business within capitalism and be feminist, women proceeded to open these spaces. As Wania of La Fronde, feminist restaurant in New York City in 1974 remarked, “I don’t know how far one can carry feminism,”²¹¹ Wania had been working as a translator for the state department, at the time known as the foreign office, and was a member of Redstockings, the radical feminist group. She noted in an interview with *The International Herald Tribune* that “Like Mother Courage, her restaurant was founded for ideological, not culinary reasons.”²¹² In the foreign office, she “worked with girls, that’s what they called us and that’s what we were” but at her restaurant, she “was fascinated to

²¹¹ Mary Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong,” *International Herald Tribune*, (exact date unknown), 1974, 18-9.

²¹² Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong.”

work with women.”²¹³ She acknowledged that there might be limitations for feminist businesses but these restaurants were important due to their ability to empower and humanize workers. Not every woman saw a conflict between running a feminist business and her anti-capitalist ethics.

There were feminist restaurant owners who did not see these restaurants as part of capitalism, or at least as part of the problematic aspects of capitalism. In replying to remarks about Bloodroot of Bridgeport’s relationship to capitalism, Selma Miriam elaborated:

The notion of capitalism is very oversimplified in terms of lefty circles and always was. My father had a fabric store. He was a business owner. He was also a socialist. There was no [conflict]. Yea, that’s no conflict. All you have to do is think about the 99 percent right now. It’s the people, and I’m not blaming them, but whenever you hear talk about capitalism and they are talking about workers, they are talking about the people who are in the thousands working for GE or Google. They aren’t talking about a Mom and Pop store where the people are selling burritos. So you want to call that capitalism? I don’t think so. That’s ridiculous... In the 70s this was not capitalism. Of course people had businesses. You had to have some way to make a living. So either you worked for the man in a very stultifying, miserable way or you’re some kind of secretary or you work for the school system or you work for the government. But all of those things are great big miserable sorts of jobs. You might get off on working with kids but in terms of the people that we have things in common with are like I said, the guy who sells the burritos or the Vietnamese restaurant or you know what I mean. People who are selling food to their friends and they are people from their countries and make them feel at home and nourished. That’s not capitalism. Never mind we’re not making money and we’re really in trouble with this economy. This is not capitalism. Capitalism is exploitation.²¹⁴

For Selma Miriam and Noel Furie of Bloodroot there was no ethical conflict. In Miriam’s interpretation, the socialist and Marxist critique of capitalism did not mean that people could not operate restaurants. For her, the value of Marxist rhetoric was the critique of exploitation. Feminist restaurants encouraged recirculation of profits into the women’s

²¹³ Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong.”

²¹⁴ Miriam and Furie, “Bloodroot Interview 1.”

community by supporting other women's energies. Similarly other women viewed their work as an alternative to capitalism. As the editors of *Country Women Magazine* stated, "We are still part of a capitalist economy. But we're also beginning to build alternatives. We only work with women we really care about, who are our friends, so there is respect and love in our business."²¹⁵ These women hoped to make enough money to support themselves and their dreams. Money enabled these feminists to build the kinds of alternative communities they hoped; as they stated, "we want to make lots of money so we can buy land."²¹⁶ When these activists made money they did not keep it for individual use but for the community; sharing the profits made their money-making ventures justifiable to themselves.

Lessons Learned and Conclusion

Feminist restaurants worked and looked differently from mainstream restaurants during the 1970s and 1980s. Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant began as a woman-centered space that reflected the owners' values. As Selma Miriam explained to the *Fairfield County Advocate*, "We wanted to start a woman's center, but we needed a way to support it. So we decided on a restaurant and bookstore; mental food because feminist writings are so important to us."²¹⁷ This creation of a women's center in the Bridgeport area, for a bookstore, and for a healthy place to eat allowed for them to "make a living for themselves without selling out."²¹⁸ Selma Miriam stated that the values she wanted to reflect "through much soul-searching, and with the support of her Bloodroot

²¹⁵ Women Working," *Country Women Magazine*.

²¹⁶ Women Working," *Country Women Magazine*.

²¹⁷ "More than Just a Restaurant." *Fairfield Count Advocate*, September 8, 197-.

²¹⁸ Emily Ferrar, "Following Someone Else's Pattern is Anathema: A Portrait of Selma Miriam," *Ways of Knowing*, December 5, 1998, 6.

partners, [she] came to believe that her passions for orchid-growing and cooking were consistent with and spring from her relationship to Earth, and should be carried forward into her life as a radical lesbian feminist.”²¹⁹ Noel Furie, of Bloodroot agreed, stating to *The Black Rock News*, starting Bloodroot “was a matter of doing something political... Political in the sense of being able to have full control over our own lives and have our work in concert with our beliefs.”²²⁰ Sam Stickwell of the original Bloodroot collective commented that, “the joy of serving women from all walks of life is its own reward.”²²¹ Women from all over the world have visited Bloodroot, and the restaurant has many regular customers. Even forty years after its founding, some of the original customers from the first year continue to return to this place. Selma “believed strongly in the fact that “you could make a community with food” and she and the collective certainly did.”²²² A similar theme follows from the reflection of the other restaurants. Feminist restaurants had an impact beyond that within just their businesses because they were part of a nexus. They were also part of a larger conversation about how to live and live out one’s values within a capitalist society.

Feminist restaurants allowed women to live openly as feminist and challenge both the system and the restaurant institution. While reflecting on Mother Courage’s first year, Dolores Alexander noted,

Thank God the first year is over. The biggest lesson we learned is that nothing-nothing good- comes easy. But we are very satisfied with the choice we have made. We really see the best chances for personal fulfillment AND revolutionary change in women getting going their own enterprises and institutions. In the man’s world, as far as women are concerned, the trend will be tokenism for years to come. And you can bet that not many feminists are going to be among these

²¹⁹ Ferrar, “Following Someone Else’s Pattern is Anathema.”

²²⁰ “Five Feminist Run Bloodroot Gourmet Vegetarian Eatery,” *Black Rock News*, June 28, 1989.

²²¹ “Five Feminist Run Bloodroot Gourmet Vegetarian Eatery.”

²²² Ferrar, “Following Someone Else’s Pattern is Anathema.”

tokens. Of course, we still have to live in and deal with that world. You know, Mother Courage is a character in a Brecht play who endures and survives the Thirty Years' War by dealing with both sides. Obviously to survive we all have to compromise to some degree. The trick is to retain one's values with minimum compromise. That's what we are trying to do.²²³

Mother Courage's founders realized that they could not fulfill every aspiration, as they were solely two women constrained by the physical limitations of their bodies and time, in addition to economic and social systems. However Dolores Alexander explained on a sign that she placed in Mother Courage, she and Jill Ward had "been working in the movement and we wanted to find a way to continue contributing to the movement and still make enough to support ourselves."²²⁴ She stated, "neither of us wanted to compete in a man's world, a world created by men – which excludes us and yet which has taught us that it is because of our inadequacies that we don't make it."²²⁵ A feminist restaurant was a way to have feminist-oriented work connect with their daily lives.

While feminist restaurants and cafés embodied their feminist ideals uniquely, these businesses challenged the status quo of the food service industry, cooking, capitalism, and consumption. These spaces had different aesthetics and work structures due to a mixture of need, from lack of financial resources, and from feminist values that sought to overturn the sexism experienced by women in mainstream restaurant culture. Feminist restaurants experimented with challenging restaurant hierarchies. Choices to eliminate tipping, having customers serve themselves, and working in collective structures all changed the relationships between owners, staff, and clientele. The restaurants were political projects. The owners extended the meaning of restaurant management beyond

²²³ "Mother Courage Restaurant: Mother Courage," 176.

²²⁴ Dolores Alexander and Jill Ward, "Food," Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 21.

²²⁵ Alexander and Ward, "Food."

orchestrating front and back of the house functions. While questions about how to manage a business within a capitalist society continued to be a matter debated by feminists, feminist restaurant owners sought to balance their values with practical needs. Feminist restaurants did more than serve food; the owners worked on serving the greater community, both of feminists and that of the neighborhood.

The next chapter explores how while feminist restaurants and cafés challenged capitalism, they still had to be part of the economy. Balancing economic needs with philosophy, meant compromises. These feminist restaurants and cafés were not isolated, but part of a larger economy and society that was not always amenable to their desires. The creation of women's space required innovative financial maneuverings.

Chapter 3. Cooking the Books: Banks, Loans and Taxes

*The money question was central. We were working under the tension of money ... And money is a very hard issue. And women get very uptight about that. And it's really painful. It's almost as bad as looking for a job. Pushing.*²²⁶

- Marjorie Parsons, *Common Woman Club*

Although feminist restaurants and cafés challenged capitalism, they still were part of the system. Balancing economic needs with ideology meant compromises. These feminist restaurants and cafés were not isolated but part of a larger economy and society that was not always amenable to their aspirations. The creation of woman-space required innovative financial strategies. Founders of feminist restaurants and cafés had to secure funding creatively when banks were unwilling to provide loans. Actual financial laws constrained feminist restaurant owners and as a result, the owners sometimes faced pushback from the legal system. Navigating these constraints meant that the restaurants did not necessarily look how the founders originally intended; however, the restaurants' impact in individuals' lives remained meaningful. Feminist restaurants expanded economic opportunities for women. They ran counter to capitalism while operating within a capitalist system. Sometimes this process involved "cooking the books." While other chapters discuss the cultural meanings of these restaurants, this chapter will explain how they functioned as a business.

Feminist restaurants, once operational, would provide economic opportunities for the women involved in them; however, securing the necessary start up capital could be prohibitive. Running a restaurant or café required significant funding to pay for rent, equipment, decoration, and supplies. Obtaining this amount of money was difficult for most of the women interested in opening these spaces. Choices made over location,

²²⁶ Marjorie Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting," recorded presentation, 1979," Northeastern University Archives, AV2316, M120.

management organization, staff, and menu options could lower costs. However, as discussed in the last chapter, because most of these women had never run a food business before, the learning curve for these new business owners impacted profits. As Selma Miriam noted, the seeds of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant were planted in 1977 when Miriam began hosting women's meetings in her home in Westport, Connecticut just after her divorce. She explained, "I did it for nine months and decided it was the only good thing I was doing in my life, short of picking up my mixer and hitching to San Francisco."²²⁷ Betsey Beaven met Miriam at a lesbian rap group and Selma invited her to be part of the business. Reflecting on her initial desire to create the restaurant, Beaven remarked, "We had this vision which is still grounded in feminism being a resistance movement. But in resisting you also have to create something. So that's what we did."²²⁸ Noel Furie, who separated from her husband around the same time as Bloodroot was founded, knew Miriam through the National Organization for Women (NOW) Chapter in Westport. Furie, who started working at Bloodroot shortly after it opened, commented, "I didn't know what I was going to do for a living but I thought it would be incredible to plan a lifetime of work around doing what I really liked with women I respected and loved."²²⁹ The women of Bloodroot, similar to the other feminist restaurants discussed in this dissertation, wanted to use their businesses to create positive change in the world. But the enthusiasm to start a feminist restaurant did not necessarily come with knowledge of the business world or the capital needed to create these spaces. As a result, the women who started feminist restaurants, such as Bloodroot, needed to turn to other sources of funding.

²²⁷ Robin Nicole Whiting, "Bloodroot, a Feminist Outpost on the Sound," April 27, 1996.

²²⁸ Whiting, "Bloodroot, a Feminist Outpost on the Sound."

²²⁹ Whiting, "Bloodroot, a Feminist Outpost on the Sound."

Overcoming Funding Difficulties and “Hipping Yourself to the Government”

When women who wanted to start feminist restaurants attempted to access traditional funding sources, they were usually denied repeatedly, citing sexism as the cause.

Restaurant owner after restaurant owner recounted stories in their interviews and in publications about being denied loans from banks and often of facing scorn and ridicule.

Sarah Lewinstein, founder of San Francisco’s Artemis Society Women’s Café (1977-1984), speaking on the relationship between women and finances stated in 1981,

I think women are struggling. There's a long way to go. There always will be as long as women are trying to have businesses. I see it as a long struggle. Women don't have the money and the backing that men do. There is such a difference. You go to Castro Street and you see all these gay men's places. Every place you go to is a gay men's bar. On the weekend it is so packed that you can't get in. You don't have that same thing. You don't see so many women's bars.²³⁰

The women’s community of San Francisco had less capital than gay men to invest in founding restaurants, bars, and other businesses. It was not that no women had money.

The women who started feminist restaurants and cafés tended to have some form of available capital through an inheritance, extended family, or from savings from a previous “non-movement” job.²³¹ The owners’ ability to secure traditional funding sources like bank loans depended on being able to pass as straight, white, middle-class, and not politically radical, even if they were not. One’s marital status, or more specifically the lack of having a husband, still created difficulties due to legal discrimination in lending practices.²³² However, whether or not the owners were able to secure traditional funding sources, these restaurants depended primarily on sweat equity.

²³⁰ " Lesbians: The Invisible Minority," KGO-TV, 1981, <https://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000400201>.

²³¹ A “non-movement job” referred to work not related to feminist activism.

²³² Prior to 1974 in the United States and 1977 in Canada, it was especially difficult for single women to procure loans as lenders were legally allowed to consider marital status (The Equal Credit Opportunity Act

Relying on hard work and facing sexism as women business owners was not unique to feminist restaurants; however, the historical conditions in which the feminist restaurant owners operated, the founders' political motivations, and the important role that self-identifying as feminist played in their business models is what made feminist restaurants different. Feminist restaurants were not the only restaurants to exist as a result of sweat equity.²³³ As the historiography of ethnic restaurants in the United States and Canada shows, new immigrants created restaurants as a way to establish an economic foothold in their new homeland and improve the family's economic status for future generations.²³⁴ Feminist restaurant owners were not the only women to own restaurants.²³⁵ Women owning and managing a restaurant were still less common than men; the percentage of owners and managers of women in the United States hovered around 33 percent in the

in the United States came into effect in 1974 and the Canadian Human Rights Act passed in 1977). For a long discussion of these issues, see chapter 2.

²³³ The term "sweat equity" refers to the increased value in property earned from labor toward upkeep or restoration.

²³⁴ The historiography emphasizes the hard work and compromises necessary to create these businesses. See: Netta Davis, "To Serve the 'Other': Chinese-American Immigrants in the Restaurant Business," *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 6, no. 1 (2002): 70-81; Daphne Halkias and Christian Adendorff, *Governance in Immigrant Family Businesses: Enterprise, Ethnicity and Family Dynamics* (London: Routledge, 2016); Andrew Coe, *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ivan Hubert Light, *Ethnic Enterprise in America: Business and Welfare Among Chinese, Japanese, and Blacks* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1972); Susan C. Pearce, "Today's Immigrant Woman Entrepreneur," *The Diversity Factor* 13, no. 3 (2005): 23-9; Okori Uneke, "Ethnicity and Small Business Ownership: Contrasts Between Blacks and Chinese in Toronto," *Work, Employment and Society* 10, no. 3 (1996): 529-48; John Anthony George Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (Islington, United Kingdom: Reaktion Books, 2004); Josephine Smart, "Ethnic Entrepreneurship, Transmigration, and Social Integration: An Ethnographic Study Of Chinese Restaurant Owners In Rural Western Canada," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 32, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2003): 311-42.

²³⁵ As founder of New York City's Mother Courage Dolores Alexander remarked when she was asked, what did a "feminist" restaurant mean to her, "Well, a woman's space. There was no such thing... There was Schrafft's, the Tea Rooms... that kind of thing. But we didn't want to be a tea room. We wanted to be a space for strong, independent women who would be hopefully involved in the women's movement, and that did happen." Kelly Anderson, "Dolores Alexander Interview," *Voices of Feminism Oral History Project of Smith College*, March 20, 2004 and October 22, 2005, <https://www.smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Alexander.pdf>.

United States between 1972 to 1989 and people of color were underrepresented.²³⁶

However, feminist restaurant owners did not necessarily see themselves represented in the women restaurant owners due to different political leanings and that not all women restaurant owners were interested in assisting out lesbians and aspiring founders of feminist businesses.²³⁷ Despite the relative privileges of feminist restaurant founders, as they were able to access some form of capital to begin their businesses, it is also important to note how often feminist restaurant owners represented their own stories as a narrative of struggle. This is not to say that the owners of feminist restaurants did not struggle. They were operating with small starting budgets, having to buy everything second hand or build it themselves, and with a small available margin of error, all while facing sexism and homophobia. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, they were able to access unique sources of funding made available through their employment of the term “feminist” and by being embedded in an already established feminist community. As chapters 6 and 7 discuss, for the women who were rich in enthusiasm but poor in capital, feminist coffeehouses were another option.

Some owners persisted and eventually found a banker to finance their enterprise, but most of the women interviewed for this project deserted the idea of creating their restaurants solely through traditional funding avenues and utilized alternative sources.

²³⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation by Sex and Race 1972-1982;” U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation by Sex and Race 1983-2002.” Statistics Canada was unable to provide relevant data.

²³⁷ This matter is complicated. On the one hand, there were situations like when Bloodroot’s owners contacted the only woman in Connecticut that they knew of who owned a restaurant and that woman was not interested in mentoring them. At the same time, women’s travel guides such as *Gaia’s Gudies* noted if restaurants were women-owned-and-operated, even if the owners did not identify the space as feminist. These guides promoted women’s businesses, reflecting the philosophy of the subset of lesbian feminists that believed it was important to support women’s endeavors. Historian Heather Murray discusses the impact that this philosophy had on women-owned businesses in more detail. Heather Murray, “Free for All Lesbians: Lesbian Cultural Production and Consumption in the United States During the 1970s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (2008): 251-75.

When she was trying to raise the initial capital for Bloodroot, Selma Miriam recounted in an interview with *Fairpress* that, “We had the down payment and money for renovations and a few commitments from investors, but it was still a hassle because banks don’t want to give money to restaurants and some banks gave me a hard time because I’m a woman.”²³⁸ Nevertheless, she persisted. Miriam believed that Bloodroot was an especially hard pitch because “whether it was because it was women or a restaurant, nobody wanted anything to do with it. One day in great desperation, I called Harvey Koizim, the president of County General Savings and Loan. When I told him I wanted to start a women’s center [the restaurant and bookstore], he started laughing, but he came to see it two hours later and gave us the mortgage.”²³⁹ Selma Miriam was able to secure a traditional loan after multiple rejections. Also, unlike the other restaurants in the chapter, as she revealed in an interview with *Gay City News*, she had recently secured an inheritance that she decided to fully invest into the restaurant because she had just received a medical diagnosis suggesting she would not live for longer than three years.²⁴⁰ Knowing of her breast cancer, she had the incentive to devote all of her resources into creating her dream, unlike other feminist restaurant founders.

Time played an important role. Although the social and cultural historical conditions in which these restaurants were operating changed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the differences between when the feminist restaurants were founded during this period seem most stark when it came to financing. As discussed in chapter 2, the passage of legislation such as the Equal Credit Opportunity Act in the United States in 1974 and

²³⁸ Gloria Cole, “Bloodroots: A Dream on a Shoestring,” *Fairpress*, March 16, 1977.

²³⁹ Cole, “Bloodroots: A Dream on a Shoestring.”

²⁴⁰ Deborah Emin, “For the Love of Food and Women: Two Bridgeport, Connecticut, Lesbians Reflect on Nearly Three Decades of a Feminist Space” *Gay City News* 4, no. 22, June 2-8, 2005, http://gaycitynews.nyc/gcn_422/fortheLoveoffood.html.

the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 helped women get credit in their own names, which was not a guaranteed right previously. This is not to say that unlawful discrimination on non-mortgage loans did not later occur but the passage of these acts on paper gave single, heterosexual women and lesbians trying to begin women-centered spaces legal protection.²⁴¹ The changes between 1972 and the late 1980s are evident in Ruby's Café owner Mary Bahneman's account. When Bahneman opened her first café at the end of the 1980s and the second in the early 1990s she claims that she did not face the same extremely overt sexism as the restaurant founders did in the early 1970s. However, as Bahneman remarked in an interview, while a woman owning a café did not seem odd to lenders, her being a lesbian still created difficulties.²⁴² For her first café she did not require a loan because she rented a fully equipped and furnished space. However, for the second café she had to write a business plan and sought external funding. The first bank "wouldn't give [her] a loan since their clientele would be mostly gay."²⁴³ Even though these restaurants were founded less than fifteen years apart, the owners still faced discrimination; however, the issues shifted over time, and women who founded their restaurants later in the period benefitted from the earlier battles fought by their foremothers.

The feminist restaurant owners that were able to secure bank loans found success when they could pass as white, straight, femme, and middle or upper middle-class, even when those attributes did not describe their actual identities. Members of the Common Woman Club of Northampton, Massachusetts collective went to a few banks before

²⁴¹ *United States Consumer Financial Protection Bureau 6500*, 1974, <https://www.fdic.gov/regulations/laws/rules/6500-1200.html>.

²⁴² Mary Bahneman, "Ruby's," interview by Alex Ketchum, October 15, 2015.

²⁴³ Bahneman, "Ruby's."

finally finding a bank that would support them. Marjorie Parsons of the collective attributes part of the collective's success to the fact that it had finally found a woman banker who was more amenable to its pitch. However, securing the loan still required a degree of performance. The collective needed to appear to be a culturally legible group worthy of investing in rather than appearing too radical and presenting themselves as what they actually were: a countercultural radical lesbian separatist feminist collective that wanted to start a women's only restaurant. Parsons took pleasure in explaining how her collective had "played the system."²⁴⁴ According to her, the oldest member of the collective was forty years old and used her age and clothing to perform respectability. This elder member dressed in her most formal clothing and "acted grown up" when she went into the bank. In addition, the oldest member of the collective also got her mother to co-sign the loan in order to guarantee financial stability. The only other woman in the group that had a full time job was the second co-signer, so in Parson's words, "they looked relatively clean."²⁴⁵ Although most of the collective members were students or former students in their early twenties, lesbian, with little personal wealth, they could lean on their whiteness and education to perform in a way that visible women of color and non-femme women could not.

Despite its success in securing a loan, the Common Woman collective still had to contend with a sexist society and deal with bank managers undermining its abilities. The bank that finally supported the collective charged a higher interest rate than the other banks that it had approached. Furthermore, the bank also lied to the women, saying that they had to use the bank's lawyer for the closing and title search, which was not legally

²⁴⁴ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

²⁴⁵ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

true, so they “got taken for several hundred dollars by the lawyer at the bank.”²⁴⁶

Marjorie Parsons remarked that the collective’s mistake was embarrassing but that such incidents were a result of being naïve and new to business. The collective’s lack of experience, matched with what Parsons perceived to be the bank’s sexism, meant that the bank required a large down payment. The members put down \$10,000 on the \$38,000, which included real estate tax.²⁴⁷

Even if the restaurants and cafés aimed to serve as alternative, countercultural spaces, they still were embedded within the culture at large and were still held to the same laws as the rest of society. However, rules could be bent.²⁴⁸ The Common Woman Club collective demonstrated how knowledge of the law, particularly corporate status and tax structure, could benefit countercultural activities. The nine charter members of the collective incorporated as a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, Ceres Incorporated, under status of 501(c)(3) and later shifted to 501(c)(7) status.²⁴⁹ The collective created two sets of books: one for the corporation, Ceres, and one for the club itself. The

²⁴⁶ This type of law was not the specialty of the collective’s lawyer.

²⁴⁷ The benefit of their large down payment was that it brought their monthly payments on the building down to \$350 per month.

²⁴⁸ Finding two co-signers and providing a large down payment was not all that the Common Woman Club had to do to get a bank loan. For the Common Woman Club collective to acquire a bank loan, the members not only played into sexist tropes but also played with the rules. The Common Woman Club approached the bank not as just a group of women wanting to start a restaurant but as the corporation: Ceres Incorporated. This corporation was allegedly created for women interested in exploring women in business. Even though the collective had the goal of operating a restaurant, they wrote the corporation plans about “women in business” more generally so that the members had flexibility. The collective discussed the ideas it had with the bank, but tried to keep the particulars about the restaurant among itself. The members sold their project as an educational research center with some kind of food service. They assumed that approaching the bank to start a feminist restaurant would appear less stable. Also, by becoming a corporation the collective members protected themselves as individuals. To retain its nonprofit status, the collective of the Common Woman Club could not allow it to appear that corporate members had bought in, and thus the collective needed to delineate their corporation from the business by only including some members’ names on the corporate papers. Ceres Incorporated owned the company. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁴⁹ Elizabeth Kent, “A Journey Through “Lesbian Mecca:” Northampton LGBTQ History Walking Tour,” September 14, 2014. Elizabeth Kent provided the script to Alex Ketchum, on request. This is the non-profit American tax status for social and fraternal organizations.

corporation would pay the mortgage, and the club collected dues and money from the restaurant and would use that to pay the corporation for the space and use of the dishes and silverware.²⁵⁰ The corporation protected individuals from personal bankruptcy that could ruin their futures.

The philosophy behind this set up was that by having a mother corporation, the Common Womon established itself as a private club and could control who could enter the space, thus allowing the establishment to prevent men from being clients. If the establishment had been solely a restaurant, the collective would not have had the same control over its clientele. However, private clubs had to be non-profit. The Common Womon Club was always in debt to Ceres Incorporated, so Ceres “appeared philanthropic” by paying off the mortgage every month.²⁵¹ Although the gross annual income of the club was between \$20,000 and \$30,000, after expenses the restaurant was always at a loss. Ceres Incorporated would forgive this loss and would also host fundraisers to help cover other costs. By organizing its structure and finances in this manner, the Common Womon Club collective always declared a loss, which protected its non-profit status. Marjorie Parsons believed there was a tremendous advantage to running the business in this manner. Learning how to use the law to their advantage helped the members of the collective achieve their dreams of a women-only restaurant.

To maintain their tax status and ability to run a club, the collective members had to have a firm understanding of tax and corporate law. The collective members received

²⁵⁰ Ceres Incorporated owned the building that it rented out to the Common Womon Club collective. In total, the restaurant was paying Ceres Incorporated \$325 per month. Seventy-five dollars of that figure was for the rented equipment (to compensate for the equipment’s depreciation over time) and the rent helped cover the mortgage. Ceres Incorporated charged the Common Womon Club a “low rent” of \$275 per month. The rental fee covered the large glass front porch, a large dining room, two small dining areas, a bathroom, and a large kitchen. In addition, the Common Womon Club had an office upstairs and use of the basement. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁵¹ Kent, “A Journey Through “Lesbian Mecca.”

legal advice to do all of this from their friend and lawyer, Nancy Brockwell, who wrote the initial incorporation papers. The collective paid her a “couple hundred dollars of legal fees but she also drank a lot of coffee and ate a lot of soup and got a lot of love and support.”²⁵² Part of the provision of this club status necessitated having a mailing list and newsletter.²⁵³ The government also required that clubs had a formal way of defining club membership, but the organizers were able to decide upon dues. The collective made it as easy as possible for any woman to become a member of the club. All a woman needed for membership was to provide her name and address to get the newsletter. In speaking to a group of women interested in beginning their own feminist restaurant or coffeehouse in the Boston area, Parsons explained that “501(c)(7) the tax status the club is under is incredibly easy to get”—much easier than having to deal with the costs of being a for-profit business.²⁵⁴

One of the most fortunate aspects of this tactic was that when the original collective members were burnt out and left the restaurant, the new management was able to easily take over. Ceres Incorporated remained the corporation through which everything ran and Marjorie Parsons took a day to teach the newcomers the books.²⁵⁵ However, it appeared that the new managers in 1979 were better businesswomen than the former managers.

²⁵² Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁵³ To continue to argue that its non-profit was about education, the members also rented the storefront to the women’s karate dojo, which was a non-profit, and the space was later taken over by a bookstore. The papers of Ceres Incorporated were written such that they supported women in business, so any women’s business they allowed to use that building was under their corporation papers, and through this method they could declare their tax-exempt status. As the collective presented itself to the government, the Common Woman in legal terms was a club for exploring vegetarianism and feminism and the food service component was secondary. Ruth Bayard Smith, “Feminists Operate Club,” *The Sumter Daily*, September 11, 1978.

²⁵⁴ Legally, there was a fairly complicated requirement of monthly meetings and cultural meetings, but as the collective already hosted cultural events once a month, the members put that on the application for the club. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁵⁵ Reflecting on the transition, Parsons wished she could have taken the time to write an actual guide to make the switch smoother, but she did not have the time. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

The four women of the second collective made over \$90 each per week. As Parsons noted, “No one is going to the Bahamas there, but the fact that there are four women right now making a livelihood from a lesbian owned, lesbian business brings tears to my eyes. It’s all I ever wanted. It’s all I ever wanted.”²⁵⁶ Strategic planning enabled the collective members to protect themselves as individuals and safeguard their dreams of a feminist restaurant. As Parsons explained, “hipping yourself to the government” is strategic.²⁵⁷ Without knowledge of these strategies, obtaining financing from the bank would have been far less likely and the financial liability of running the business would have been greater.

Alternative Funding Sources

Due to the difficulties of accessing both traditional funding sources and knowledge about corporate strategies, most restaurant owners had to secure funding outside of the banking system, primarily by relying on women in the greater feminist community. Opening a restaurant in New York City was not an inexpensive venture. In 1972, Jill Ward and Dolores Alexander of Mother Courage estimated that it would take a minimum of \$10,000 to begin their restaurant, which they probably would not recover for two or three years. They already had \$5,500 in personal savings and were faced with the problem of raising the rest of the money.²⁵⁸ Every single restaurant case study examined in this dissertation began with at least a portion of their initial start up costs coming from the founders of the restaurants and cafés. As Selma Miriam told the *Boston Sunday*

²⁵⁶ The next group running the space was able to learn from the mistakes of the first collective. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁵⁷ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁵⁸ Dolores Alexander and Jill Ward, “Mother Courage History,” Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 13.

Globe, she used her entire life savings of \$19,000.²⁵⁹ At Wildrose in Seattle, Bryher Herak invested her own money and continued to hold a second job to help with finances.²⁶⁰ Initially at the Common Woman Club, before approaching the bank, the collective of nine women assembled \$10,000 between them. At the time of its initial formation, Marjorie Parsons was a head resident for the housing residences at the local university and made \$6,000 a year. She remarked that she “was young and naïve” and invested all that she could into the restaurant.²⁶¹ In exchange, she retained a promissory note that stated if the building were ever sold, she would get paid after the bank. Not everyone in the collective gave the same amounts of money.²⁶² The collective members wrote the promissory notes so that they could call the notes at any time, but due to their commitment to the collective and “their honor as women,” they made an agreement that they would never call their notes.²⁶³ Parsons went on to further explain that she no longer considered that money as hers but as a “brick in the fireplace.”²⁶⁴ However it took about \$30,000 to get the whole project going, and like other restaurants discussed in this dissertation, the remaining money was raised through alternative methods such as fundraising and donation efforts.

As the 1974 American Senate and House Committees on Small Business and the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada reported, banks were notoriously discriminative toward women in their credit policies, especially without

²⁵⁹ Richard Weitzel, “Review of the Second Seasonal Political Palate,” *The Boston Sunday Globe*, September 13, 1998, 27. She added “and my mother helped too.”

²⁶⁰ Bryher Herak, “Wildrose,” interview with Alex Ketchum, June 26, 2016.

²⁶¹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁶² One woman gave \$500, while another provided a few thousand dollars. Some women in the collective did not put in any money. The promissory notes differed from ownership in that they were six-year notes with the highest interest possible. Parsons would then donate her interest back into the process of supporting the restaurant, so her note in 1979 was worth \$1500. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁶³ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁶⁴ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

collateral; so in addition to their own \$5,000 investment into Mother Courage, Jill Ward and Dolores Alexander decided to look for funding from women in their community. Because they believed in the project so wholly, they decided to share their idea of creating their restaurant with the larger feminist community of New York City. Ward and Alexander crafted a five page business prospectus describing their concept, the reasons they felt a women's restaurant was needed, and their confidence in the financial prospects of the project. They circulated 125 copies to friends in the Women's Movement asking for loans of any amount on which they would pay 15 percent interest. Within the space of a month, 37 people had given \$6500 in amounts ranging from \$25 to \$1000.²⁶⁵ As they explained to journalists for a spread on women in business, "women responded so well we were actually turning money away by the time we hit our number. This is an incredibly good way for women to raise capital for their own ventures. We are surprised more women in the Movement haven't tried it."²⁶⁶ In fact, other feminists interested in beginning feminist restaurants implemented a similar model. Raising money by directly borrowing money from friends was, not unique to Mother Courage. According to *The Daily Iowan: Iowa's Alternative Newspaper*, the founders of feminist restaurant Grace and Rubies of Iowa City gathered "loans ranging from \$10 to \$1500 from local women."²⁶⁷ These individual loans allowed for restaurant owners to circumvent the barriers they encountered with banks. Other restaurant founders secured money from friends. The founding members of Toronto's Woman's Common (1988-1994), Caroline

²⁶⁵ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History," Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 13.

²⁶⁶ "Mother Courage Restaurant: Mother Courage," title of periodical cut off, 176, Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 21, Folder 180, 39.

²⁶⁷ Mark Mittlestadt, "Grace and Rubies 'Not Private,'" *The Daily Iowan: Iowa's Alternative Newspaper* 108, no. 158, February 27, 1977, <http://dailyiowan.lib.uiowa.edu/DI/1976/di1976-02-27.pdf>.

Duetz, Val Edwards, and Kye Marshall, developed a fund-raising strategy using a video of women in various unusual work environments. They made a marketing booklet, which contained the goals of the club, and financial projections. Then a team of women went to individual women's houses where the hostess would invite her friends to listen to the presentation and encouraged them to sign up and invest in the creation of the Woman's Common.²⁶⁸ This strategy raised enough money to buy a building in downtown Toronto.²⁶⁹ The Wildrose of Seattle's owner Bryher Herak said that the collective faced inward and raised the money within its collective and community members.²⁷⁰ The members of the collective gave what they could and continued to work second jobs. On reflection, Herak wondered why they did not do any more formal fundraising. At the time she remembers thinking that "if we do this, we need to have the money."²⁷¹ They went to the people that they knew that had jobs and wanted a space like Wildrose. Eventually they were able to pay back every cent.²⁷² In each interview, recording, and magazine article, the feminists who began these restaurants emphasized that they always repaid their debts to the women in their community.

For these alternative fundraising methods to work, there had to be trust in the community. As Marjorie Parsons of the Common Womon remarked, "There were a lot of honor systems back then. Loan us five bill [\$500] now – ok but you have to pay it back in

²⁶⁸ Caroline Duetz, Val Edwards, and Kye Marshall, "The Woman's Common," Rise Up!: A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism, 2016, <http://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/the-womans-common/>.

²⁶⁹ According to a former employee who worked at the restaurant in 1988, the members of the Woman's Common were primarily white lesbians who were middle and upper middle-class professionals. Most of the lesbians who went to the restaurant bought \$100 memberships, two hundred women invested \$1000, and there was also one anonymous donor who donated even more money. These members were able to help provide necessary start-up capital. Anonymized Interview, "Working at Toronto's Woman's Common," interview with Alex Ketchum on January 13, 2017.

²⁷⁰ Herak, "Wildrose."

²⁷¹ Herak, "Wildrose."

²⁷² Herak, "Wildrose."

six months when I pay my tuition- ok.”²⁷³ However, if the financing was done without contracts, additional problems could occur. Parsons continued that “again it was cash flow [problem] and we were always this short of falling off the edge. So, there was constant continuous low level anxiety.”²⁷⁴ The women who began these restaurants already needed to be part of an established community to have the kind of trust to have these exchanges. Such exchanges built upon emotions and personal connection, implicated people even more emotionally in the business. Emotions do not disappear when dealing with banks; a human aspect remains despite the motto of “it’s not personal, it’s business.” The formality of banking transactions, however, obfuscates the human element of the exchange. In addition, what could seem like a neutral space for some people with privilege would be a dangerous space for others. When the feminist restaurant owners were unable to trust banks, they needed to rely on their larger network of feminists to support their ventures.

Some restaurants relied indirectly on friends by organizing community events to raise capital. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to recurring coffeehouses. However, when organizers wanted to raise money to begin feminist restaurants and caf  s, one technique was to host coffeehouse nights and other events centered on music and dancing. The group of women attempting to start feminist restaurant Clementyne’s of Toronto, Ontario hosted women’s social events at local clubs, such as the Fly By Night, and in church basements in 1974.²⁷⁵ The Common Woman Club of Northampton, Massachusetts fundraised by organizing dances and selling food. Before opening the restaurant, they

²⁷³ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁷⁴ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁷⁵ “November 23 Clementyne’s Party Flyer,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Clementine’s (sic) Caf   (Toronto, ON) 1974-1976, Box 20.

held fundraising events every two weeks. The Common Womon Club was involved in many different side fundraisers. Marjorie Parsons advised, “I think when you are entering into a project where you need a good deal of capital and are trying to go about that is to connect with your sources within the community.”²⁷⁶ For dances, the Common Womon Club collective would get a women’s band to donate its time, the collective would get a women’s group on the college campuses to acquire the space, and the publicity would take a minimum of fifteen hours, but the collective might get two hundred hours worth of wages out of it.²⁷⁷ They would only charge \$1 for entrance to the dance, but the event ticket also served the dual purpose of promoting the forthcoming restaurant.

At special events, restaurant founders had the opportunity to speak with potential donors. While at the dance, Parsons, a self-described “hustler,” would walk around the event getting people to donate money to the project. She usually would also use that as a time to assuage women’s fears, because women were worried about “being taken.”²⁷⁸ Parsons perceived Northampton women as skeptical and worried about what would happen with their money and what the club would do with it. Her self-described “hustler” status was most apparent when she admitted that sometimes she would convince someone to donate money for a particular project, like painting, and then the collective would use the money for its salaries. She admitted that “on some levels it was not the truth,” but the members had to prioritize where the money went and they would eventually paint the

²⁷⁶ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁷⁷ The Valley Women’s History Collective published a timeline that included the Common Womon Club’s fundraising efforts and events. Valley Women’s History Collective, “The Valley Women’s Movement: A Herstorical Chronology 1968-1988,” 2016, <http://www.vwhc.org/timeline3.html>.

²⁷⁸ Parsons believed that potential funders’ trust was harder to earn because the Common Womon Club refused to sell stock as the collective wanted to retain all of the decision making ability. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

space as they had claimed.²⁷⁹ Constantly asking for money became emotionally tiresome.

In addition to its initial funding, the Common Woman Club continuously asked for money in its monthly newsletter. As Parsons reflected:

I'll tell you one thing—our newsletter started to read like a begging sheet: *The Common Woman Newsletter* for Brunch. Please help us! – We need help on Tuesday cleaning the attic- and pay your dues this week and oh by the way there's a cultural event next week. ... It was too much asking—too much asking all the time. And it became a drain on people and it sets up an image that you aren't making it you know- why are you asking... it's a fine balance about the image you give people- an attitude.²⁸⁰

And the collective knew that its restaurant was an important resource to the community and that the community did not want to lose it, but making ends meet was difficult.

More aboveboard fundraising techniques included throwing private parties and hosting special events. As the restaurant was located in a university town (part of the Five College Consortium of Western Massachusetts, which included Smith, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Amherst, and the University of Massachusetts), the Common Woman was a hangout spot for female academics. One woman scientist greatly appreciated the space and would host specialized women in science dinners at the restaurant, and each woman would pay \$6 or \$7 for her meal, a fee greater than typical dinner fare at the Common Woman.²⁸¹ Another benefit of being located within a university town from 1976-1982 was that the club could host dinners and cultural events like poetry meetings with prominent feminist figures. Special poets and activists who would come into town getting \$5000 as a special guest at one of the universities would then make an appearance for free at their restaurant. Lesbian theorist and poet Adrienne Rich, for example, came to brunch, and Parsons remarked that star-struck customers would want to just sit around

²⁷⁹ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

²⁸⁰ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

²⁸¹ Smith, "Feminists Operate Club."

her.²⁸² Patricia Hynes, who had founded Bread and Roses feminist restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1974, came to the Common Woman and spoke on feminism and vegetarianism. These events served to promote and finance both the restaurant and intellectuals within the feminist community.

Membership fees also provided money to help finance feminist restaurants. The Common Woman Club, Tuxedo Junction of San Francisco, Chez Nous of Ottawa, and Grace and Rubies of Iowa City sold memberships. At Grace and Rubies, any female over the age of ten could become a lifetime member by reading and understanding the club's bylaws and paying \$0.50.²⁸³ The founders of Chez Nous Café (1978-1980) created the café with the intention of it becoming a money generating body for the Ottawa Women's Centre. In order to fundraise, they sold memberships. As the organizers explained in an interview with *Upstream*, they created a sliding scale to make the club accessible to women despite their class backgrounds and still be able to financially support the business.²⁸⁴ On their bilingual promotional flyer they explained to potential members that "a sliding fee structure has been established that will allow all women to become members while encouraging the women's community to support its centre. Although the figures in the scale indicate[d] the kind of breakdown we would like to see in membership sales, it is not the intention of the Ottawa Women's Centre to stipulate what anyone will pay."²⁸⁵ The organizers reassured the investors that "in the event that Chez

²⁸² Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

²⁸³ Mittlestadt, "Grace and Rubies 'Not Private.'"

²⁸⁴ Louise Leclair and Sheila Gilhooly, "Canada's Oldest Women's Centre Plans Change," *Upstream* 2, May 1978.

²⁸⁵ The devised scale was as follows based on an objective of five-hundred members: one hundred members paying \$1, two hundred at \$5, one hundred at \$10, fifty at \$25, twenty-five at \$50, fifteen at \$100, and ten at \$200. "Chez Nous Flyer," Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Chez Nous, Box 509, Folder 18.

Nous does not open, all membership fees and donations will be returned.”²⁸⁶ The organizers encouraged local women to make a membership part of their annual donation to the Ottawa Women’s Centre. The Common Woman Club also utilized a sliding scale to accommodate every woman. The first paying dues member of the club was a seven-year-old girl who put down \$0.25, while in the same night someone put down \$1,000.²⁸⁷ While the dues were a fundraising technique, they also allowed the club to meet specific requirements of their 501(c)(7) status. As Marjorie Parson remarked, “it is interesting that there is a certain number of women in the world who have money and needless to say because of varying politics they tend to keep it pretty quiet.”²⁸⁸ But when they were able to donate and support a cause they could care about discreetly, some would. Tuxedo Junction was a restaurant conceived as an alternative to the bar scene and was marketed as an “elegant speakeasy” restaurant with an “exclusive atmosphere.” Reservations were required except for members and their guests.²⁸⁹ The restaurant club had 350 members by 1979. The club featured women musicians in a variety of formats from swing trios playing for “close-dancing couples,” to quartets appealing to those with the “urge to rock.” The club advertised “candlelight dinners” and “romance” for its patrons. Membership dues were initially set at \$120.²⁹⁰ Such high fees affected the class of the patrons that would attend. Memberships helped with fundraising but also affected who could and would use the space, serving as a form of gate keeping.

²⁸⁶ “Chez Nous Flyer.”

²⁸⁷ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁸⁸ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

²⁸⁹ Georgina Hickey, “Tuxedo Junction and Calico Club,” email correspondence with Alex Ketchum, May 14, 2015.

²⁹⁰ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide* (1981), 62.

As mentioned earlier, the year of founding of these restaurants greatly influenced their financial options. Later-founded feminist restaurants and cafés had the benefit of having the potential to receive funding from feminist credit unions, which began in reaction to institutionalized sexism of mainstream banks. Feminist credit unions, credit unions oriented towards more social justice projects, and feminist moneylenders allowed feminists to obtain funding outside of banks. In California's Bay Area, the Cheese Board Collective served as an informal moneylender.²⁹¹ In 1983, with the financial help of the Cheese Board Collective, in addition the efforts of customers and friends, the Brick Hut Café of Berkeley, California moved to a new location.²⁹² Ever the adaptable group, the Common Woman Club also got \$1000 loan from the Massachusetts Credit Union. Parsons claimed that the union was very supportive of the collective and the members never missed a payment.²⁹³ The collective bought supplies from Western Massachusetts food cooperatives, some of which were as small of an operation as the Common Woman Club. The members also needed more capital to establish credit with people and organizations such as Flagstaff, a big restaurant supplier and a sub-core service organization. Only for a month or two was the restaurant able to operate "in the black," but it tended to run at a loss.²⁹⁴ However, with little start up capital the collective was beholden to lenders and alternative fundraising.

²⁹¹ The Cheese Board opened as a small cheese store in 1967. In 1971, the two original owners sold their business to their employees and created a 100 percent worker-owned business. The new owners shared a belief that the collective process would organically create a truly democratic society. Cheese Board, "About Us," December 2017, <http://cheeseboardcollective.coop/about-us/about-main>.

²⁹² Joan Antonuccio, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part II," *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <https://www.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-2>. It was located at 3222 Adeline Street.

²⁹³ Despite being ambitious the collective had to bring its rates down. The collective initially thought that it could pay off \$150 a month between sales and rents, but it had to lower it to \$75 a month due to the initial operating expenses. Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

²⁹⁴ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

The stories Parsons tells reminds present readers that feminist restaurants were embedded in networks of people in alternative communities helping one another out; even in the case of the Common Woman Club, a woman-only separatist space, these restaurants were never isolated from men entirely, be it in their business dealings, their location, or their operation. Men still came in to do handy work occasionally when a tradeswoman was unavailable, men worked at food distribution companies and for the electrical companies, men were farmers of their food, and so forth. Men also played a role in fundraising. One of the Common Woman Club's big fundraisers was apart from the lesbian community. The collective would run booths at events like the Tricounty fairs. As Parsons explained, "let me tell you how popular you can be if you are veggie at" the alternative energy fairs. They cooked soups and sandwiches, and the collective made \$1000 per fair.²⁹⁵ The Common Woman collective did not have to worry about food licensing and the health code, as it operated a restaurant that already met most of the requirements, so participating required minimal effort. However, these events could be hit or miss. At one Tri-county fair, "no one came near us and it rained the whole time and we all sat with each other and were hysterical with each other but we did one of the solar ones with UMass [University of Massachusetts] and we were throwing soups over peoples' heads. We were the only coffee maker-- so some years it was really good and some years it was hopeless."²⁹⁶ Feminist restaurant owners used their imaginations to find funding and were dependent on larger networks within the countercultural community.

²⁹⁵ One might wonder why the collective did not just work the fair circuit, as it was more financially lucrative than the restaurant. However, financial success was not the motivation for creating the Common Woman Club. Creating a women-only space for socializing and political organizing was the goal. Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

²⁹⁶ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

Women did more than donate money. Community members donated time, which lowered operating costs for the restaurants to function. Family members and friends of the founders of Mother Courage contributed significant personal time. According to a history of Mother Courage written by Jill Ward and Dolores Alexander, between December 1971 and May 1972, Ward's father and six feminists did the demolition work and installed the new ceiling, floor, and pipes.²⁹⁷ Two days before opening, her mother loaned her \$600 to buy food, and the day before opening her mother, father, and sister-in-law helped make 640 meatballs.²⁹⁸ The Common Woman Club, as Marjorie Parsons commented, "got lots of volunteer time and energy which was as valuable as money and then that made a difference."²⁹⁹ For example, when the collective declared that the attic needed to be cleaned, local women gathered and cleaned it in an hour. The collective would make a big pot of soup to share and cleaning became a social event. After months of operating, one collective member learned about restaurant auctions: when a restaurant goes bankrupt, the bank holds an auction. It was possible to buy refrigeration units for \$5 if no one else wanted them at the time. One time, a woman who was a fan of the restaurant mentioned that she was going to a big auction at the St. Regis and the collective went to get new glasses. Apparently this unnamed woman was particularly excited about a stove at the auction. The woman donated \$200 towards its purchase with an additional \$400 coming from the collective. The only problem was that the group now had a stove and no way to transport it. According to Parsons, fifteen lesbians lined up and carried the stove on their backs seven blocks through downtown Northampton, stopping

²⁹⁷ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History."

²⁹⁸ Anderson, "Dolores Alexander Interview."

²⁹⁹ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

traffic because no one had the money to rent the truck to get it there.³⁰⁰ Parsons' story illustrates how there were the women who would donate their money and others who would donate their time.

Parsons' story is also a reminder that the lack of initial capital created more work. Women had to carry the oven on their backs. Since the collective initially could not afford a new oven, which could have cut its bread making labor in half for the first six months, the staff had to spend more time baking bread. Having more seed money makes it easier to make money. The process of producing newsletters and asking for donations was time intensive. Establishing a stable restaurant would have been simpler with more initial funding. Parsons admitted that the entire project would have been much easier if the collective had had more capital at the start, as the constant letter campaigns, cultural events, and membership sales became a drain on the members' emotions and energy.³⁰¹ Mother Courage's owners echoed this same sentiment and wished they could have bought an already established operation so that they would not have had to do so much hard labor.³⁰² The lower initial capital meant that the restaurants had a harder time making ends meet. After a feminist restaurant or café gathered enough capital to start the restaurant either from banks or elsewhere, funding needs continued.

Making Ends Meet

The Common Woman Club was unable to secure enough money to pay its mortgage. At that point, the collective was generating less than \$50 of income per person weekly.

³⁰⁰ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

³⁰¹ Valley Women's History Collective, "The Valley Women's Movement: A Herstorical Chronology 1968-1988."

³⁰² "Mother Courage," *Artemis*, November 1975, 3.

The other collective members would be frustrated with Marjorie Parsons as she was doing the books at the time. She remarked that people would get anxious and angry and scream at her, and she reflected, “And I would say “I’m sorry””and then I would get enraged because I would think “what did I do?”-- I would go home with the same \$50 in my pocket.” In the end, she was staving off not just her co-workers but also the moneylenders. She remarked that she “would write these letters where I would compromise my English and my intelligence and my pride to say to a person we were in debt and that “we have screwed up this, this and this” and they would hold off another two weeks.”³⁰³ For Parsons, the constant stress about finances led to immense burnout and strongly contributed to her desire to sell the restaurant.

Regardless of the ways that the feminist restaurants raised the money, many of the owners still had a difficult time making ends meet—not an uncommon issue within the restaurant business as a whole. In 1996, the Brick Hut Café of Berkeley, California fell into serious financial difficulties and filed for Chapter 11 status.³⁰⁴ In 1997, it filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and closed its doors for the last time at 2:00 p.m. on March 24, 1997.³⁰⁵ However, as owner Antonnuccio remembered, “Rather than tucking their tail between their legs, they ended things with a big, crowded, raucous party.”³⁰⁶ Bloodroot’s founders did not do any direct fundraising, as they were able to borrow money. However, as they wrote in a letter, “at this point in time [1981] we have repaid those loans and have been able to raise our draw to \$700/month for each of the four of us. Since we are working over twelve hours a day, five and a half days a week we still make less than

³⁰³ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁰⁴ Chapter 11 status is a form of bankruptcy in which the owners propose a plan of reorganization to keep the business alive and pay creditors over time.

³⁰⁵ Under Chapter 7 bankruptcy, the debtor liquidates her assets to pay back the creditors.

³⁰⁶ Antonuccio, “Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part II.”

minimum wage.”³⁰⁷ Even forty-one years after the restaurant’s founding, Selma Miriam and Noel Furie are not making significant money. Regardless, in 2017 Selma Miriam and Noel Furie continued to repeat to reporters at the *New York Times* they had no intention of stopping.³⁰⁸

Feminist restaurant and café owners occasionally ran businesses on the side to try to support the restaurant itself. According to early issues of *Gaia’s Guides*, Bloodroot was an inn at one point.³⁰⁹ The Bloodroot collective also published a series of cookbooks, selling over five thousand copies of its first book, and it also sold calendars.³¹⁰ Bloodroot also functioned simultaneously as a bookstore. Other feminist restaurants and cafes that were bookstores included: Wild Seeds Feminist Bookstore and Café of Rochester, New York (1989), Sisterspirit Café and Bookstore of San Jose California, Reader’s Fest Feminist Bookstore and Café of Hartford, Connecticut (1985), Three Birds Feminist Bookstore and Coffeeshop of Tampa, Florida (1989), Jane Addams Bookstore and Coffeeshop of Chicago, Illinois (1981), and Community Café and Bookstore of Bethesda, Maryland (1983).³¹¹

Some restaurants tried to ease financial burdens by selling alcohol. Financially supporting a restaurant could be difficult, and alcohol is a fairly reliable source of income. Grace and Rubies of Iowa City served a variety of alcoholic beverages.³¹²

³⁰⁷ Bloodroot collective, “Letter to Marge,” personal papers lent to author.

³⁰⁸ Tejal Rao, “Mixing Food and Feminism, Bloodroot Is 40 and Still Cooking,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/14/dining/bloodroot-feminist-restaurant.html?_r=0.

³⁰⁹ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide*, various editions.

³¹⁰ Bloodroot collective, *Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing: 1980); Bloodroot collective, *The Second Seasonal Political Palate* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing: 1984); Bloodroot collective, *The Perennial Palate* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing: 1993).

³¹¹ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide*, various editions.

³¹² Lynne Cherry, “Grace and Rubies,” *The Daily Iowan*, 1977, quoted within “Grace and Rubies Restaurant,” *Lost Womyn’s Space*, December 16, 2011, <http://lostwomynspace.blogspot.ca/2011/12/grace-and-rubies-restaurant.html>.

Mother Courage of New York City decided to start selling alcohol when food prices soured.³¹³ In New York State in 1975, when the owners made the decision to sell alcohol, a liquor license cost around \$1,600, a beer and wine license was about half that.³¹⁴ Despite the devastating effect of inflation from the food crisis, Mother Courage's adaptability by selling booze and loyal clientele helped it survive. However, some feminist restaurants did not serve alcohol, as founders sought to be an alternative to bar culture.³¹⁵ Alcoholism in the lesbian community was rampant when so much socializing happened in the bars.³¹⁶

The choice many of these spaces made to be dry made it even harder to fundraise. For the Common Woman restaurant, having a non-alcoholic space was a priority, although that did not mean that people did not bring in their own alcohol.³¹⁷ As Marjorie Parsons remarked, "We could have done a lot better if we had alcohol."³¹⁸ In fact, at one point she was willing to go through the process of securing an alcohol permit. The collective members asked its community six times in its monthly newsletter, and no one in the collective was interested either. The only feedback that the restaurant "ever got was an

³¹³ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History."

³¹⁴ "Mother Courage," *Artemis*, 3.

³¹⁵ Even when restaurants did serve alcohol, the restaurant owners often tried to market their business as an alternative to bar culture. Sara Lewinstein, owner of San Francisco's Artemis Women's Café (1977-1984) stated that, "the reason that I had started the Artemis was for women having an alternative space to go to rather than just going to the bars. We're a women's community. It doesn't matter whether you are gay or whether you are straight. This is a women's community. And there needs to be alternative spaces where you can feel free enough to come in and not be hassled by men-- to have a glass of wine and not be picked up-- and believe me I've been in that scene a long time and I know it happens." There is also a class dynamic to this discrepancy. Feminist and lesbian periodicals during the 1970s and 1980s often portrayed bar culture as the domain of working-class, "bar dykes," as opposed to the middle-class lesbians and feminists. As historian Heather Murray argues, "lesbian bar cultures, to be sure, were not central to lesbian feminist politics. For example, they tended to be associated with a more working-class expression of lesbianism than seen in most lesbian feminist organizations in the 1970s." *Lesbians: The Invisible Minority*, KGO-TV, 1981, <https://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000400201>; Murray, "Free for All Lesbians."

³¹⁶ Madeline D. Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³¹⁷ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

³¹⁸ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

alcoholic who was sober saying don't do it.”³¹⁹ Parsons knew that she “could have filled out the papers” and she continued that she was “sure women would have come in and bought and I'm sure it would have made us stable,” but doing so would have undermined the Common Woman Club's mission to remain open to women of all ages.³²⁰ While there was a divide between lesbian bars and feminist restaurants, sometimes in conducting this research distinguishing the difference could be difficult if the business was listed as a restaurant bar or a lounge. The main differences were the focus on alcohol, cruising, and the role of straight women in the space. The choice for restaurants and cafés to serve alcohol occasionally incurred resistance from government officials.

Interference Impacted Financial Stability

Restaurants already operated on a slim profit margin, and outside interference made the financial status of feminist restaurants even more precarious. Conflict over obtaining liquor licenses, zoning, funding, and taxes, affected financial stability. Bureaucracy could provide frustrating barriers for any business owner. For example, despite the Common Woman Club collective gaining a comprehensive understanding of how to structure its business model, the collective still initially applied for the incorrect type of restaurant license. Only after submitting its application did the collective learn that there was a license specially for serving passersby and one for customers who were seated.³²¹ These kinds of mistakes were understandable, but sexism and heterosexism created additional problems for the women running these restaurants. While the restaurant owners' lack of experience sometimes meant that they did not know how to fill out the proper forms, the

³¹⁹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³²⁰ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.” For more on this issue, see footnote 50 of chapter 1.

³²¹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

owners also faced sexist regulatory officials that made matters more complicated. Despite doing everything by the books, Wildrose of Seattle was audited four times while Bryher Herak managed the establishment. She always assumed homophobia was the motivating factor. Over four audits, the Internal Revenue Agency only once found a discrepancy of \$126.³²² When Mother Courage's owners applied for a wine and beer license in September 1973, they were worried they would have difficulty because when they hand delivered the forms they were asked, "No men involved in the corporation? You may need the signature of a male relative."³²³ They were worried that it would be another hassle like the one with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

To raise money for Mother Courage, as explained earlier, Jill Ward and Dolores Alexander sent out a four-page business prospectus to feminists and other friends where they asked for the small loans, totaling \$5,000 at 15 percent interest. The financial editor at *Newsday*, where Dolores Alexander once worked, telephoned, asking to do a story. Despite their own apprehension about media attention so early into their venture, the owners agreed.³²⁴ The feature piece on the "money" page, entitled "Women's Lib Takes the Plunge--- Into Business," peaked the interest of a complaint officer of the New York office of SEC.³²⁵ The SEC officer called to tell Ward and Alexander that their fundraising methods may have broken the law by making a public offering with their prospectus, as "any piece of paper, any form of IOU, which has no intrinsic value of its own, which is essentially worthless, is a security."³²⁶ The SEC lawyers insisted that according to Regulation A of the 1963 Securities Act, the restaurant would need to be registered as a

³²² Herak, "Wildrose."

³²³ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History."

³²⁴ Anderson, "Dolores Alexander Interview."

³²⁵ "Women's Lib Takes the Plunge---Into Business," *Newsday*, 1972.

³²⁶ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History."

public offering and that it would cost them \$50,000 to do so.³²⁷ In recounting this stressful experience, Alexander and Ward remembered the roomful of men suddenly opening booklets and quoting legal passages to them and insisting that they get a copy of No. 4552, which they later learned was a short statement issued in November 1962, which covered certain exemptions to Regulation A.³²⁸ After reading that section, Alexander and Ward knew that they had not broken the law. The lawyers and complaint officer then began to accost the restaurant owners asking them why they did not know about such regulations and also asking if they could even cook. When asked about the location of the money from the loans, Ward replied that it was in a separate checking account.³²⁹ Alexander pushed back at the officer's comment that she looked depressed, responding that she was confused as to why they insisted on using jargon and buzzwords that only the four men understood. She further questioned why they needed four people to discuss \$5,000. Alexander felt that the men did not respond to the question; they did however explain what the women could do to avoid penalty. One of the SEC lawyers said that Alexander and Ward could return the money or SEC could freeze the money. In addition they could be jailed and fined up to \$25,000.³³⁰ He suggested that they close the account and put out a letter saying that they have returned the money or have their lawyer

³²⁷ "Securities Act," Securities and Exchange Commission, August 5, 1963, <https://www.sec.gov/news/digest/1963/dig080563.pdf>.

³²⁸ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History."

³²⁹ Alexander explained that it was not in a business account because the bank would not let them open a business account without an EA form and that you cannot get one until you are incorporated, which they could not do as they were still at the initial stage of the process of creating their business. This explanation does not entirely make sense. EA forms are filled in by the employer for filing annual income tax returns of the employees from private sector companies. EC Forms are the equivalent for public sector companies. The EA or EC Form is generated at the end of the year and contains information on the personal details of the employee, his or her earnings for the year, and the amount deducted and remitted under the Scholar Tax Deduction (STD) scheme. Perhaps she misspoke and meant that she needed an Employment Identification Number (EIN) or her Articles of Incorporation, as both would have been necessary to open a business account.

³³⁰ Anderson, "Dolores Alexander Interview."

do so. Alexander responded that they would go and consult with their lawyer. She later remarked on the irony that the meeting probably cost the government more than \$5,000 in salaries.

The clash with the government officials became a personal attack. After Alexander's lawyer called SEC, one of the SEC lawyers called Ward and said that their lawyer was acting like "some militant or something" and that they "had better straighten her out."³³¹ He then continued to threaten her. Ward responded that she had read release 33-4552 multiple times and she believed that she had complied with the requirements for a nonpublic offering under the private exemption clause of section 4-2.³³² Despite having raised money from thirty-seven people and the expected number of investors being twenty, that numerical test was only to be applied under 4552 if people have the requisite association with and knowledge of the owners. As their investors were friends, Ward pointed out that they were still acting in accordance with the law. Even under the *Ralston-Purina* case that the SEC lawyer used to intimidate her, the decision was "based on whether a particular class of persons needed the protection of the act."³³³ She continued by saying "you mean to tell me that our friends who loaned us money, because they are mostly women, need protection-- that women don't have the intellect or ability to determine whether or not" to loan their own money.³³⁴ She also refuted his claims that they broke the law by advertising in the paper because the article in the paper was not about fundraising and the piece clearly stated that they "were only raising money from

³³¹ Alexander and Ward, "Mother Courage History."

³³² "Final Rule: Non-public Offering Exemption: Release 33-4552," U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, November 6, 1962, <https://www.sec.gov/rules/final/33-4552.htm>.

³³³ Anderson, "Dolores Alexander Interview."

³³⁴ Anderson, "Dolores Alexander Interview."

sisters and friends.”³³⁵ The founders remained confident in their own abilities to understand the law and did not bend to the threats of SEC, which led SEC to eventually back down.

According to Alexander, eventually the government officials admitted that the entire incident resulted from sexist attitudes. She claimed that after all of these incidents the SEC lawyer confessed:

Let me tell you what happened. Word got out that two freaks in women's liberation were coming into the office and everyone in the office wanted to see them. I was happy to find out that you two weren't freaks at all. Incidentally I think you ought to know that most of the lawyers down here are under twenty-eight [like him] and more liberal [than the other officials.] And I wouldn't want you to get a bad impression of SEC.³³⁶

The lawyer then said that all he wanted was a letter from their lawyer saying that they had returned the money so he could stick the letter into their file. Otherwise, he claimed that he would have no choice but to hand the case over to the law enforcement, and despite it only being \$5000, the federal government still could press charges. When Ward asked him to clarify if he meant that they should return the money, he responded,

That's your business. If you don't, don't tell anybody, especially your lawyer. Then I don't care how you raise the money again. But next time be more discreet. As far as I'm concerned, for this particular case, I just want the letter so I can close the case so it doesn't have to be turned over to enforcement.³³⁷

Ward responded, “well that doesn't seem to comply with the spirit of the law. You're telling us to comply with the letter of the law. [But actually] you don't care about how we raise the money, as long as it doesn't come to your attention,” to which he allegedly responded, “Look I don't want to get into a philosophical discussion. I'm working here

³³⁵ Alexander and Ward, “Mother Courage History.”

³³⁶ Alexander and Ward, “Mother Courage History.”

³³⁷ Alexander and Ward, “Mother Courage History.”

for a few years, to make some money, get a good resume so I can go on from here.”³³⁸

Ward retorted, “I know what you mean. We’re trying to survive too.” The situation ended with their lawyer sending them a letter advising them to return the money and send a carbon copy to SEC as proof that they had done so. They never heard from the SEC again. Mother Courage owners also followed through on their promise by returning the money and the fifteen percent interest promised one year later when the loans were due.³³⁹ This entire situation illustrates how personal relationships changed the ways that the law was applied: the law was never about justice but about upholding specific power structures. Mother Courage demonstrated that feminist alternatives to traditional fundraising were possible but also that the owners could face threats.

While Mother Courage was able to overcome the bureaucratic resistance, regulations meant the demise for other feminist restaurants. Clementyne’s of Toronto was unable to officially open due to the zoning laws, which essentially killed the project. The owners were told that their space was not properly zoned but only after the owners had acquired the house and invested money into improving the structure. Repeated attempts to meet with city officials yielded no positive results and eventually the founders gave up on their dream.³⁴⁰ Paperwork did not prevent Chez Nous of Ottawa from opening, but it ultimately closed due to its issues with securing a liquor license. The organizers believed that serving alcohol was the only way to keep the café financially viable. This is ironic, as the only reason the women’s centre even had to open a café in the first place was because

³³⁸ Alexander and Ward, “Mother Courage History.”

³³⁹ Alexander and Ward, “Mother Courage History.”

³⁴⁰ “It’s sad but true. The original café collective is officially defunct. Its members living out their days in a villa in South America reminiscing about what a great place 342 Jarvis street would have been!” Three of Cups, “Announcement about Three of Cups,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Clementine’s (sic) Café (Toronto, ON) 1974-1976, Box 20.

of government policies. The women's centre originally was dependent on government funding, but the staff decided to no longer "accept government granting ... Since government granting [had] directly or indirectly meant government interference, a decision was made to continue pursuing a position of financial self sustenance."³⁴¹ At a January 1978 meeting, a group of thirty women actively involved in managing the women's centre "decided that if this was to happen, the Ottawa Women's Centre would have to examine the possibility of starting a business that would encourage women to direct some of their spending money back into the community."³⁴² As *Upstream* reported on the meeting, the group discussed bookstores, pool halls, seminars, and coffeehouses as possible business ventures. The evening closed with the policy committee being asked to consider proposals for such a business, and the eventual result after months of organizing was Chez Nous café.

However, documentation was not the only barrier that led to closure for feminist restaurants. The owners of Grace and Rubies wanted to implement a simple, non-elitist, woman-only membership policy, but the Iowa City Council responded by trying to determine whether the membership policy was "discriminatory." The argument was that Grace and Rubies did not charge enough to be a real private club and that the owners' goal to be accessible for all women—but still meet the requirements as private club that charged memberships (and thus could exclude men)—led to problems. In the spring of 1976, *Dyke: A Quarterly* published this response to the issue:

Meanwhile, back in Iowa City, Grace & Rubies Restaurant is still alive, kicking and struggling to get out from under while the City's new mayor, a woman, instructs the human relations commission to investigate the legality of the

³⁴¹ Leclair and Gilhooly, "Canada's Oldest Women's Centre Plans Change."

³⁴² Chez Nous, "May 8, 1978 General Meeting Minutes," Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Chez Nous Box 509, Folder 18.

restaurant's policy of refusing membership (and admittance) to men. The outcome of the investigation is unknown, but if it takes the commission as long to investigate Grace & Rubies as it does to investigate sex discrimination in employment claims, the restaurant will be around for a number of years, no matter what the outcome.³⁴³

Apart from the pushback Grace and Rubies' owners faced from the local city council, they also dealt with the backlash from story about their restaurant in *Penthouse*, the pornographic men's magazine. Novelist T.C. Boyle, while still a student at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, became obsessed with *womyn's* spaces and his perceived "exclusion" from them. So in May 1977, he published a short story called "The Women's Restaurant." The story explored his fixation on Grace and Rubies and his unrelenting desire to invade that space.³⁴⁴ The harassment of owners by private citizens and government officials led to their eventual closure.

This is not to say that some restaurants did not skirt the law, sometimes in part as a result of wanting to make a political statement. Marjorie Parson's entire presentation the Common Woman Club demonstrated that when people were empowered with the knowledge of what loopholes existed within the system, they could save a lot of money. Parsons also admitted to having few qualms crossing into illegal territory, citing her disappointment with the ways that the United States government used taxpayer money for exploitation of individuals and to fund wars overseas. As Marjorie Parsons explained, "See I'm pretty hip about staying out of the government's eye as much as possible."³⁴⁵ She believed that if the restaurant's nonprofit status did not hold under an audit, the

³⁴³ "Correspondents and Ads," *Dyke: A Quarterly* 2, 86, <http://seesaw.typepad.com/dykequarterly/issue-2/>. Additionally, the Iowa City Public Library maintains a vertical file of materials documenting the legal struggles of Grace and Rubies. Eventually, the commission ruled in the favor of Grace and Rubies.

³⁴⁴ T.C. Boyle, "The Women's Restaurant," *Penthouse Magazine*, May 1977.

³⁴⁵ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

Common Womon might have been liable for a state corporation fine, which according to her was only \$250 and worth the risk. She argued that “the legal liabilities aren’t tremendous- no one has done anything significantly illegal.”³⁴⁶ Her comfort level with lying to the government extended beyond how the collective structured its taxes. In order to survive on a \$50 salary each week, the members of the Common Womon Club had various sources of income. Parsons admits that she “was on unemployment and lived fairly illegally for awhile. Other women had savings. Other women had jobs. Other women had independent sources of income.”³⁴⁷ With the Common Womon Club, the only restaurant in this dissertation that admitted on record to committing a crime, legality was not the reason for the closure; the restaurant could not financially support itself.

In addition to conflict with government agencies, there was also resistance from private sources. The restaurants, even when they intended to operate as separatist spaces, still had to interact with the rest of society. For the Common Womon Club, the collective faced the “all boys network” and the idea “that [only] men go into business.”³⁴⁸ While the other restaurants operated by men in the area would be able to get credit, one of the food distributors for the Common Womon Club, Flagstaff, never extended credit to the restaurant even though Parsons argued that the collective never missed its payments. It also took two years before the oil company would put them on an automatic fill.³⁴⁹ These barriers made it even more difficult to be a successful business, as every step required more work. However, if it seemed as if lenders might be wary of the Common Womon based on its admittedly less-than-legal dealings, it was not the only feminist restaurant to

³⁴⁶ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁴⁷ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁴⁸ Smith, “Feminists Operate Club” and Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁴⁹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

face difficulties with the private sector. The founders of Mother Courage remarked that it was difficult to get credit and to get wholesalers to make deliveries. Even when wholesalers did deliver, the men would make sexist comments or look for a man to sign the receipts and order forms, not believing that women owned the restaurant.³⁵⁰ Facing the “boys club” mentality added additional strain to the regular ups and downs of restaurant management.

A Fitting Place for Feminists?

The women who ran feminist restaurants made their money from cooking. When feminist rhetoric drew attention to issues surrounding the post-war image of the housewife relegated to the kitchen, the idea of investing one’s time into creating a restaurant where feminists would be cooking food seemed counterintuitive for some. Indeed, the founders of Mother Courage of New York City were asked about this frequently. A reporter for *The Capital Times* in 1975 asked one of the waitresses and cooks at Mother Courage, who self identified as an aspiring songwriter, “How can a liberated woman be so enthusiastic about cooking?”³⁵¹ “I get paid well,” said Ms. Gaffney, while arranging a pie. She added that, “And the minute you get paid, it’s not woman’s work any more.”³⁵² Furthermore, Gaffney remarked that “she found her job challenging—“almost a mystical experience.”³⁵³ For Gaffney, the issues feminists had with women cooking were not actually about cooking but unremunerated domestic labor. In another article, a reporter from the *International Herald Tribune* commented, “Not

³⁵⁰ This issue was mentioned during most interviews conducted with feminist restaurant owners.

³⁵¹ Jurate Kazickas, “Doing Very Well, Thank You, Says First Women’s Restaurant,” *The Capital Times*, May 21, 1975.

³⁵² Kazickas, “Doing Very Well, Thank You, Says First Women’s Restaurant.”

³⁵³ Kazickas, “Doing Very Well, Thank You, Says First Women’s Restaurant.”

all feminist groups, however, are supportive of feminist restaurants, arguing that women should get out from in front of the stove and become doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs.”³⁵⁴

This was a recurring theme, as another reporter commented:

It is possible that the dearth of feminist restaurants result from women avoiding work associated with one of the more oppressive roles into which they have been traditionally locked. Even for Jilly Ward, a management consultant, and Dolores Alexander, a journalist, it was not so much food and cooking which lured them into starting MOTHER COURAGE in April 1972, as the idea of creating a social milieu where women could get together over good food, where THEY would set the tone, not the male waiters, owners, customers-- a place badly needed by the New York feminist community. Both women were also looking for ways of making a living outside the male-dominated business world, which, as committed feminists, they were finding increasingly intolerable and oppressive. They have succeeded in both respects.³⁵⁵

Most notably, the concern about what running a feminist restaurant meant in terms of the relationship women had with food seemed to be coming from outsiders opinions rather than from within the feminist movements. Even if there were debates in the feminist movement, as seen in feminist publications from the period, the 1970s was an era of great exploration and feminist questioning and debate; there was never consensus on anything, as everyone had a different approach to enacting their feminist principles.³⁵⁶ Feminist

³⁵⁴ Mary Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong,” *International Herald Tribune*, (exact date unknown) 1974, 18-9.

³⁵⁵ “Mother Courage Restaurant: Mother Courage,” title of periodical cut off, 176, Smith College Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Box 21, Folder 180, 39.

³⁵⁶ These debates about women making money by cooking raged overseas as well. While this study is primarily engaged with restaurants in the United States and Canada, there were some parallels abroad. Pulse was a feminist restaurant located at Elmer House, Sussex University, Brighton (1978). The owners argued that they were able to create a feminist community built around food. It was a way to bring new businesses opportunities for women in the community and also challenge ideas of unremunerated labor. The owners explained, “Our policy of being a woman-only cooperative is important both personally and politically. The four women who started Pulse decide to exclude men for several reasons. All four are involved in the Women’s Liberation Movement and felt that in view of the scarcity of all-women work situations it would be constructive to create one. We feel it is important to pay ourselves reasonable living wages, living as we are in a society where the majority of women are financially dependent on men. Being in a society where women are rarely in positions of responsibility at work, we wanted to create a situation where we would have control over what we do, make decisions and take responsibility. We also saw this as a political statement to the general public. People expect to find a man running the show, doing the buying,

restaurants provided one avenue for feminists to make money and live by their values.

Owners were able to create a feminist community built around food. It was a way to bring new businesses opportunities for women in the community and also challenge ideas of unremunerated labor.

Collective Issues

The structure of collective created its own problems.³⁵⁷ Collectives required much more trust, and she acknowledged that despite their goals of opening an alternative space,

keeping the accounts. It's good for the municipal market workers to see women buying for their own business. It's good for people asking to see our male manager to be told that we are all women and work collectively. It is good for people to see us carrying our own heavy loads of vegetables. If we had men working with us, however non-hierarchical we tried to be, people would assume men were the organizers. Some of us who later joined Pulse, came because we were tired of the sexism hassles associated with working with men, we feel that the emotional and practical support we give each other, a direct result of being all women, is more valuable. Most of us are very much involved with feminist politics and so work with each other on other projects outside work. We spend time with each other socially as individuals and as Pulse. While we are aware that what we are doing is traditionally held to be women's work, i.e. cooking, we hope that the way in which we organize and present ourselves is a practical demonstration of how women working together can create for themselves a really alternative working situation." Their recipe book "How Many Beans Make Pulse" was available from the same address. "Pulse," *Undercurrents* 29, August to September 1978, 12-3.

³⁵⁷ Sociologists Patricia Yancey Martin and Myra Marx Ferree have looked at the impact of feminist organizations on society. In their study, they discuss the inner workings of these organizations and the way that the activists, organizers, and participants interacted. While their study is not on businesses per se, and it concentrates on the United States, the focus on feminist models of organizing and of collectively is useful to understand that many feminist restaurants and cafés organized themselves as collectives of small working groups comprised of typically three to ten women. Researcher Lynette Eastland, too, has looked at the organization of feminist collectives and the way that they dealt with power. By examining at the Chicago Women's Liberation Union and the Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women, sociologist Suzanne Staggenborg argues that feminist organizations faltered when they focused on collectivity and thrived with more structure in their organizations. Her article reveals the tension between ideal ethics and pragmatic realities. Other titles bridge the gap between studies of collectivity and focusing on businesses themselves. Sociologist Lynne Wochole argues that while research on groups that use consensus have argued that this alternative decision making process was the defining attribute of the collective's structure, she tries to expand the understanding of collective process by interrogating the relationship between the democratic participation of the members and the nature of the organization itself. Her paper reconsiders how collectivities are not merely just critical alternatives to capitalist bureaucratic hierarchies. To prove her point, she looks specifically at the business Basic Kneads in Ireland. Regardless of the divide between profit and nonprofit feminist businesses, the general trend of reconciling the meaning of feminist business ethics threads all of the works together. Labor history and the field of feminist economics influence these kinds of studies and thus tangentially are important to my own research. *Counting for Nothing* by economist Marilyn Waring outlines the difficulties of the evaluation of women's work both inside and outside of the home. Sociologist, Arlie Hochschild's *Second Shift* speaks to these

“we are used to working within hierarchies and there is more of an inclination to divide it up, because in the collective the work roles were not defined as clearly.”³⁵⁸ She found that without distinct roles, people latched onto a position even more strongly in order to make themselves experts in that area. For Parsons, challenging patriarchal capitalism was possible without the added stresses of being in a collective, although she still understood the appeal of the collective.

When the initial collective members burnt out, another collective of four lesbians took over the space. The second collective had the benefit of learning from the former collective’s mistakes. This new collective ran the Common Woman more like a business. Before the re-launch, the new collective members made repairs on the building and redecorated the restaurant with new paint and curtains. Parsons reflected that, “the community response has been terrific—absolutely terrific.”³⁵⁹ She saw that new collective could thrive because “they [weren’t] trying to run a social service agency with bulletin boards with referrals and selling tickets to all of the concerts or answering the phone every three minutes.”³⁶⁰ When Parsons worked at the Common Woman, there was no women’s center in town, so the restaurant became the hub for event coordination. Parsons seemed proud and envious because “what they are doing now is running food

same economic conditions, but more specifically within a North American context. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, “Doing the Work of the Movement: Feminist Organizations,” *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement* (1995): 4; Lynette J. Eastland, *Communication, Organization, and Change within a Feminist Context: A Participant Observation of a Feminist Collective*, vol. 3 (1991); Suzanne Staggenborg, “The Survival of the Women’s Movement: Turnover and Continuity in Bloomington, Indiana,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1996): 143-58; Lynne M. Woehrl, “Claims-Making and Consensus in Collective Group Processes,” *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 24 (2002): 3-30; Marilyn Waring, *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

³⁵⁸ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁵⁹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁶⁰ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

service. They are running a restaurant and now they are waiting tables.”³⁶¹ Even though Parsons admitted that she benefitted from learning book keeping, setting up a basic cash flow system, and the laws of corporate tax structure from the collective’s woman lawyer and female accountant, she and the rest of the Common Woman Club’s first collective members were unable to adapt to all of the changes they needed to make in order to continue operating their restaurant.³⁶² This new collective was not overextending its energy. The women who began feminist restaurants could not escape the power dynamics

³⁶¹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁶² The restaurant owners learned many lessons from this process, and as a researcher I have benefitted immensely by their desire to share those lessons. Much of this chapter, in particular, was made possible by Marjorie Parsons’ willingness to speak to a group of women in Boston in 1979 who wanted to start either a feminist restaurant or a coffeehouse. Her frank honesty about how she and her collective negotiated the difficulties that they faced and the lessons that they learned helped later groups of women interested in beginning feminist restaurants. Furthermore, her agreeing to have her presentation recorded and the donation of these tapes to Northeastern University by the Somerville Women’s Coffeehouse Collective, which eventually emerged after these meetings, provided important insights into the topic. Other feminist restaurant owners shared their own insights as well in their discussions with journalists. Lessons focused on being braver, spending more time during the planning stage, having a set idea of how the work would be structured, not allowing workers to over-extend themselves, and having a plan to deal with emotional conflict. As Jill Ward said about Mother Courage, “When we started, we were financially timid.” She continued, “If I had it to do over again, I would have bought out an existing operation with all the fixtures, fixes, and all conveniences close at hand.” Her other recommendations for women interested in starting a feminist restaurant were that they should know how to buy and produce food efficiently and in accordance with current economic conditions; that they should obtain adequate financing from the start; that they should get a liquor license early; that they should get an accountant; and that they should have trustworthy, reliable, and professional legal counsel. Ward also advised that, “as in any form of enterprise, careful planning is essential. Going into business does not mean leaping in. Developing good management and acquiring adequate resources (both personal and financial) take time at the beginning but they save money and heartache later on.” Passing on these lessons could help women trying to begin their own restaurants. While starting a feminist restaurant was an emotional experience, Parsons viewed her time at the Common Woman as a really valuable and important time in her life. Apart from hiring a lawyer and an accountant, having more initial funding, and scheduling group therapy sessions for the collective to air their grievances, she also recommended that restaurants keep copious records of everyone who donated money, noting how much, when, and what the money went towards. She further advised that workers keep track of the number of hours that they put into the restaurant with the hope that at some point they would be able to reimburse themselves for their time. Parsons further remarked that if she were ever to have a second restaurant, she would run her own restaurant differently than the Common Woman. She said that her next restaurant would be for profit and she would potentially work with one or two other people with a clear division of work, such that either someone else would run the kitchen and the floor while she managed the business, or she would run the floor and manage the business while someone else would run the kitchen. She would not run the next one with a collective because, “I think I just have different needs... I still know every brick—I cleaned it all at least once. It’s that kind of emotion. And I left it because I needed to get back to myself. I think it’s a very, very good commitment. Something you should think really serious about because it takes a lot of your life energy. Especially if you do it collectively. [However] if you are boss man you can go any direction that you want.” Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting;” Alexander and Ward, “Mother Courage History.”

of North America. These dynamics would often be replicated in the spaces themselves. Even when inequity was challenged inside their businesses, restaurant owners would still have to deal with the outside world. For these owners to make their feminist restaurants successful, they had to learn a lot about business quite quickly.

Conclusion

Despite frequent discussions on creating alternatives to capitalism, the realities of the structural violence of greater society would often seep in to these women's spaces. Parsons discussed how she and the collective attempted "consciousness raising and [discussed] what it means to be a white person waiting tables and the race, class, and gender aspects of that positionality."³⁶³ However, as shown in the last two chapters, guests of the restaurant also brought in their own expectations. She admitted, "this might sound a little rough to you but I think there's a certain level of violence that happens in the community in terms of lots of women are tight about money and lots of women are affected by politics outside of them."³⁶⁴ Parsons was frustrated that women in their own community, as products of the sexist environments in which they had been raised, also undermined the workers at the Common Woman. She remarked that customers would have unfair expectations when they entered a feminist restaurant because "women are supposed to be different."³⁶⁵ Most frustrating were customers' comments about money, like when a woman would say that they could buy cheaper food at a place like McDonald's. However, unlike McDonald's, "we were small time," and basic products would cost them more because they were not able to buy at bulk rates. Parsons would

³⁶³ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting;"

³⁶⁴ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting;"

³⁶⁵ Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting."

grow particularly frustrated because “women would come in with their own attitudes about money but they did not have a business sense and they would come in expecting a product better than theirs at less money and then they would get angry and I used to do the same thing until I started doing books and saw the money and saw...*exasperated sigh*.”³⁶⁶ In her frustration just describing the past difficulties around money, she spoke quickly and her sentences broke into half thoughts, describing the various pressures that she faced from different directions. In sum, capitalism is powerful. While these restaurants and cafés owners challenged capitalist structures and traditional financing practices, in part due to their politics and in part due to the fact that it was the only way they could make these spaces exist, they still were forced to reconcile with the greater world and capitalism more generally.

On top of all of these economic difficulties and hurdles and the need to be creative and resilient, there was little direct economic benefit to being a woman-only or woman-centered space. As Wania, founder of La Fronde feminist restaurant in New York City, put it bluntly, “women don’t have the money to spend in restaurants.”³⁶⁷ When La Fronde opened, Wania only had \$4.68 left in the bank.³⁶⁸ Women did not open feminist restaurants to get rich, and the restaurants were definitely not about individualistic capitalism. The founders of feminist restaurants faced a number of barriers: capitalist values, sexism, homophobia, and the general difficulties in learning how to manage of restaurant. Of course, these businesses wanted to survive and as mentioned before, they were trying to support women working, but ultimately they were about supporting a

³⁶⁶ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁶⁷ Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong.”

³⁶⁸ Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong.”

larger feminist network. This larger network included other feminist and women-owned and operated businesses, independent workers, artists, and teams.

Some people never really understood why feminist restaurants and cafés were so valuable. The greatest irony was a man who wanted to start a chain of feminist cafés due to the success of Mother Courage. Allegedly, “the success of Mother Courage has inspired feminist restaurants in other cities and a man is rumored to be thinking of a feminist restaurant chain.”³⁶⁹ Talk about missing the point! The reason for the success of Mother Courage and other feminist restaurants was the support for women-run and supported businesses. Not everyone would be able to raise the financial capital to support a woman-run restaurant or café due to various economic, racial, and class factors. However, feminist restaurants did provide a larger network of economic support for other feminist businesses, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

³⁶⁹ Blume, “The Food’s Bad But the Ideology is Strong.”

Chapter 4. More than Selling Food: Feminist Restaurants Nourished Communities

The more than 250 self-identified American and Canadian feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses founded in the 1970s and 1980s, made an economic impact that expanded beyond their single brick and mortar locations. They were part of a larger movement in which feminist activists created women-only and women-centered spaces for political organizing, recreational activity, and commerce. Together these businesses challenged the status quo of the food service industry, cooking, and consumption. Owning their own businesses also allowed the feminists, lesbians, and feminist lesbians who created these establishments the opportunity to financially support themselves while being out as lesbian or feminist. Controlling their workspaces also allowed the founders to contribute to their vision of the kind of world that they wanted to see. Feminist restaurants and cafés functioned as spaces in which to build community and foster a larger nexus of feminist businesses.³⁷⁰ In addition to providing direct economic opportunities for the women employed at the eatery, feminist restaurants and cafés promoted and enabled other feminist and women-owned and operated businesses, independent workers, artists, and teams.

The role of feminist restaurants and cafés within feminist business networks is largely absent in the existing literature. Additionally, while historians have done less research on feminist business networks in the late twentieth century, researchers from

³⁷⁰ The idea of space as being important for community building is not new. In 1989, sociologist Ray Oldenburg argued that third spaces such as cafés, churches, and public parks were important for civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and establishing feelings of a sense of place. By his definition, home is the “first place,” and the workplace is the “second place.” Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Café, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day* (St. Paul: Paragon House Publishers, 1989).

other fields have looked at how feminist businesses, organizations, and collectives connected to their communities. Although most of the research focuses on non-profit organizations, some work does focus on for-profit feminist organizations and businesses. Author Susanna Sturgis wrote about Ladyslipper, the company devoted to the distribution of women's music and women's culture based in North Carolina in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁷¹ Her piece looks at the success of Ladyslipper and how it embodied feminist principles and was also attractive to the lesbian community. In particular, Ladyslipper connected women across the United States through shared art. Another case study is sociologist Meika Loe's article about a woman-owned-and-operated sexual products business, Toy Box, established in 1977. This study reveals the complexities of running an alternative business during the late 1970s through 1990s and of balancing political ideals with profit needs.³⁷² Meika Loe reveals that when feminist businesses could navigate the moral and ethical difficulties of creating a business, their own success could not only be measured by profits but in their ability to influence patrons and their communities. Gender studies scholar Kristen Amber Hogan has looked at the way that feminist bookstores built communities around literature, the influence of feminist bookstores in the publishing world, and the importance of these spaces for the feminist community.³⁷³ Geographer Linda McDowell, on the other hand, has emphasized that geography is very important to feminism.³⁷⁴ In her argument, the actual interior space of the feminist business was very important, as was its location. As evidenced above, much of the work

³⁷¹ Susanna J. Sturgis, "Ladyslipper: Meeting the Challenges of Feminist Business," *Hot Wire: Journal of Women's Music and Culture* (May 1985): 38.

³⁷² Meika Loe, "Feminism for Sale: a Case Study of a Pro-Sex Feminist Business," *Gender & Society* 13, no. 6 (1999): 705-32.

³⁷³ Kristen Amber Hogan, "Reading at Feminist Bookstores: Women's Literature, Women's Studies, and the Feminist Bookstore Network" (dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2006).

³⁷⁴ Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

on feminist business networks looks at the United States. There is a gap in the literature regarding the connections formed between American and Canadian feminist businesses. Furthermore, while attention has been given to the women's bookstore, feminist restaurant history has fallen into obscurity. This means that the ways in which different kinds of feminist businesses interacted with one another has largely gone unacknowledged.

Larger Business Networks

Feminist restaurants were part of a larger network of feminist businesses in their local, national, and international communities; the owners were aware of these connections. In 1976, the *Boston Herald* ran an exposé on Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts' feminist businesses.³⁷⁵ The article declared that Bread and Roses feminist restaurant was part of a nexus of nearby feminist institutions, including the Feminist Health Center, New Words Bookstore, and the Women's Credit Union. The author of the article detailed how the restaurant worked in conjunction with these other feminist institutions in order to sponsor women-focused events. Furthermore, the businesses were all economically linked as the credit union supplied funding, the bookstore provided intellectual stimulation and community events, the health center kept the customers healthy, and Bread and Roses provided food, space for socializing, and hosted art shows, musical performers, and guest speakers. The article failed to mention how the feminist business network extended beyond the storefronts. Bread and Roses employed feminist women to work in the restaurant, craftswomen and women technicians for plumbing,

³⁷⁵ "Feminist Businesses," *Boston Herald: Special Women's Issue*, November 28, 1976, 8.

lighting, and carpentry. Bread and Roses was not alone in its promotion of other women-owned businesses and independent women contractors.

The practice of being linked to the other feminist businesses in the community and promoting women owned businesses happened at feminist restaurants founded across the United States and Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Ruby's Café of Minneapolis was located next door to Amazon Bookstore.³⁷⁶ Occasionally there would be over an hour wait to get in the door to the café for brunch so customers would browse in Amazon while they were waiting. As Mary Bahneman, founder of Ruby's, remarked in an interview, it was a kind of nexus of women-owned businesses on that part of the street. The businesses all supported each other and brought other feminists to the area and even though at the time she did not think of that support network as being inherently feminist, Bahneman later remarked that she thought it was.³⁷⁷ There was not a single interview conducted for this research in which a former feminist café, restaurant, or coffeehouse founder did not mention her relationship to the other feminist businesses in her local areas. Most of the founders deliberately thought about how they were part of a feminist nexus. In an interview, owners of the Brick Hut Café of Berkeley, California remarked that they were part of a greater community network. Located nearby were A Woman's Place Bookstore and the Women's Press Collective. These businesses served as access points for books, publishing, and networking with artists and writers like Judy Grahn, Wendy Cadden, Willyce Kim, and Pat Parker. These figures then frequented the café. There were also local bars that functioned as part of the network: Ollie's Bar, the

³⁷⁶ Ruby's had two locations. The first Ruby's was on major thoroughfare, 28th and Hennepin, and the second one was near Lorne Park. Ruby's owner remarked that Lorne was a very gay park, where Gay Pride would happen. Mary Bahneman, "Ruby's," interview by Alex Ketchum, October 15, 2015.

³⁷⁷ Bahneman, "Ruby's."

Bacchanal, and the Jubilee and across the street from Mama Bear's Bookstore, Thursday nights at the White Horse.³⁷⁸ Marjorie Parsons, a member of the lesbian collective that founded the Common Woman Café of Northampton, Massachusetts, recalled during a taped appearance that the collective saw its suppliers as part of its feminist network as well. The collective intentionally bought supplies from women-operated, lefty cooperatives. For their food, Parsons remarked that, "it's good healthy vegetarian food that's bought through cooperatives and it's an alternative economy that is an example to a whole lot of [what] we were trying to do."³⁷⁹ Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant of Bridgeport, Connecticut, founded in 1977, also functioned as a bookstore. Within the restaurant and bookstore, the owners supported the feminist writers who penned the theories that inspired the creation of the business. Additionally, Bloodroot has consistently supported women business ventures. Like Bread and Roses' founder Patricia Hynes, the managing Bloodroot collective adorned its walls with the work of women artists and played women's music. The collective also hired and sponsored women performers, lesbian feminist poets, academics, authors, and musicians.³⁸⁰ These restaurants intentionally used their positions in the community to support other feminist businesses in both their local areas and beyond.

³⁷⁸ Sharon Davenport, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I," *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <https://www.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-1/>.

³⁷⁹ Marjorie Parsons, "Coffeehouse Meeting," recorded interview, 1979, Northeastern University Archives, AV2316, M120.

³⁸⁰ In 2018, Bloodroot sells the chocolate of feminist vegan chocolate maker, Lagusta Yearwood, in their store. This principle of supporting other feminist businesses and women-focused small businesses has continued from the 1970s.

Chefs and Restaurant Workers

Feminist restaurants and cafés created a space where women could be paid to cook and live openly as a feminist and oftentimes, as a lesbian. It may seem obvious but these feminist restaurants could provide welcome support for women chefs. This was in particular due to the challenges women chefs faced in the male dominated cooking environment, particularly at the level of fine dining. Although women in the 1970s and 1980s, as today, in the United States and Canada, were the primary cooks in the domestic realm, the restaurant industry was and is dominated by men.³⁸¹ A guest spot highlighting their cooking at a feminist restaurant provided needed resources for women chefs. At the Brick Hut Café, there was a brief appearance of the Night Hut, with Chef Amy Shaw making her culinary debut cooking and serving dinner.³⁸² The Brick Hut was not the only space that led to others during the period developing their cooking talents. After the Brick Hut closed in 1997, owner Joan Antonuccio worked in two restaurants. She moved on to work as executive chef at Bon Appétit and worked as a personal chef.³⁸³ Despite the reality that the majority of these restaurants had kitchens that were operated by women without professional training, they were a useful resource for women with professional chef training.

³⁸¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity," 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>. In 2017, 19.7 percent of head chefs were women. Prior to the 1976, the bureau did not distinguish between cooks and executive chefs. In 1976, the American Culinary Federation lobbied to elevate the position of the executive chef from service status to the professional category in the U.S. Department of Labor's Dictionary of Official Titles. "History of the ACF," American Culinary Federation: San Diego, <http://www.cdcefsandiego.org/american-culinary-foundation.html>; For more qualitative information regarding the gender disparity in the kitchen, see: Amanda Cohen, "I've Worked in Restaurants for 20 Years. Now You Finally Care about Female Chefs," *Esquire*, November 6, 2017, <http://www.esquire.com/food-drink/restaurants/a13134079/sexual-harassment-sexism-food-industry/>.

³⁸² Davenport, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I."

³⁸³ Joan Antonuccio, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part II," *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <https://ww2.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-2/>.

Feminist restaurants acted as important financial resources to the women in their communities. And ultimately these restaurants and cafés provided women with a form of income where they could be out and feminist and lesbian and that was powerful. At the Common Woman of Northampton, Marjorie Parsons asserted that, “I would say that there were a lot of women we hired that wouldn’t have an income without the [restaurant].”³⁸⁴ While they were in business, it was a way to make money in a way that supported their ideals. In a letter reflecting on their intentions, a member of the Bloodroot collective wrote that, “when we opened Bloodroot, three and a half years ago, we needed a way to make a living consistent with our politics. We hoped that by making a women's space, playing feminist music and having a bookstore, we would be a connecting point for many different kinds of women, and possibly an example of a successful women's business as well.”³⁸⁵ For Wildrose, “all the women were happy to have found each other and have community – very cooperative – magical” and as a result “people were very generous.”³⁸⁶ Reflecting on Mother Courage, Lucy Komisar, author of *Down and Out in the USA*, a study of welfare, reflected that it was “more than a restaurant, this is part of a social movement.”³⁸⁷ Novelist Alix Kates Shulman remarked, “This is the one place I can walk into and feel I don't have to be someone else's appendage. Just knowing the restaurant is here makes me feel that we can prevail.”³⁸⁸ Women usually join the crew at Grace and Rubies because they “feel at home” there and have a “sense of belonging, of having something in common,” Blair said. When asked what Marjorie Parsons meant

³⁸⁴ At the time the restaurant opened, some of the collective members were on government assistance. Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁸⁵ “Letter to Marge,” Bloodroot Personal Papers privately loaned to Alex Ketchum.

³⁸⁶ Bryher Herak, “Wildrose,” interview with Alex Ketchum, June 26, 2016.

³⁸⁷ Jim Jerome, “Feminists Hail a Restaurant Where the Piece De Resistance Is An Attitude, Not a Dish.” *People Magazine*, June 2, 1975.

³⁸⁸ Jerome, “Feminists Hail a Restaurant Where the Piece De Resistance Is An Attitude, Not a Dish.”

when she said that the Common Woman Club was reaching out to “all women,” Parsons replied, that they in fact did mean all women, remarking her

fantasy was to always make the place handicap accessible. I wanted to add a ramp to the backdoor so bad I also ripped up the whole backyard myself because somehow at that time there was something symbolic for me. I wanted a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and a much wider range in terms of ages. I wanted to see my mother comfortable there and you know and I wanted to see her mother there and the seven-year-old come in and feel like a person instead of a child. And that was my vision.³⁸⁹

However she said she never fully succeeded, as outreach was very tiring. Some “third world women wouldn’t come near us for a time,” fearing discrimination and others were mad that it wasn’t a wholly lesbian separatist space.³⁹⁰ All of the goals were hampered by the realities of life in that the collective “had limited energy and so much energy went into running the food service and the kinds of outreach and work we wanted to do were very hard.”³⁹¹ She continued that “it was hard for the women in the collective that were trying to do something political and it was hard for the women trying to make a living wage.”³⁹² Likewise, Bread and Roses of Cambridge was about providing more than bread. The roses symbolized that the restaurant would nourish women beyond their material needs but fulfill their souls.³⁹³

The women involved with these ventures also encouraged other women to create their own restaurants. Jill Ward of New York’s Mother Courage gave an interview for the *Ms. Magazine Handbook* called “How to Start Your Own Business: A Restaurant.”³⁹⁴ In the interview she encouraged women to follow their dreams and gave tips for running a

³⁸⁹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁹⁰ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁹¹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁹² Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

³⁹³ Jo Ann Passariello, “Feminist Movement Creates Small Business,” *New England Business Journal*, February, 1975, 9.

³⁹⁴ Susan Schoch, Heidi Fiske, and Karen Zehring, “How to Start Your Own Business: Ms. Handbook,” *Ms. Magazine*, April 1976, 106-9.

restaurant. However, she was also realistic about the difficulties of such work, citing the long hours and low pay. Mother Courage, in the article, was also attributed to inspiring at least three other feminist restaurants.³⁹⁵ The Brick Hut's owners mentioned in an interview that they knew about Mother Courage.³⁹⁶ Bloodroot's owners also remarked that knew about Mother Courage and Beetle's Lunch in Allston, Massachusetts.³⁹⁷ Bryher Herak of Wildrose remarked that she knew of Maude's in San Francisco and had visited the space, but it "wasn't like "let's be Maude's." Instead it was "we need our own place." We wanted to have a place where we could be out."³⁹⁸ Many of the restaurants opened due to an independent need of their local communities rather than modeling themselves upon others. These restaurants inspired other women and acted as spaces of support. Joan Antonuccio of the Brick Hut remarked that, "A couple other places tried but failed; I actually mentored a proprietor of one of them. Some thought that was crazy. I was asked if I felt nervous or threatened by new women-owned businesses. Really? I said there is always more room for them."³⁹⁹ Feminist restaurants and cafés were part of building up other women in their community and supporting others.

Independent workers

Feminist restaurants and cafés did more than support just other feminist established businesses; they also provided business opportunities for independent contractors. Feminist restaurant and café owners made the intentional effort to hire

³⁹⁵ Schoch, Fiske, and Zehring, "How to Start Your Own Business: Ms. Handbook."

³⁹⁶ Joan Antonuccio, email correspondence with Alex Ketchum, June 9, 2015.

³⁹⁷ Patricia Hynes, "Bread and Roses," interview by Alex Ketchum, May 9, 2012.

³⁹⁸ Selma Miriam and Noel Furie, "Bloodroot Interview 1," interview by Alex Ketchum, December 13, 2011.

³⁹⁹ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

women to help with the business. In an interview, Wildrose owner Bryher Herak noted how important independent women contractors were to making her business a reality. Herak had worked in an official capacity with the tradeswomen community in Seattle, Washington before opening Wildrose and knew the women involved well. These connections allowed her to then support women in her community, while establishing informal trade networks. Furthermore, these connections gave her the economic flexibility to create Wildrose at a time she had very little financial flexibility. Herak would offer women carpenters cards for free food and free beer.⁴⁰⁰ Owners remarked in interviews that the ability to barter made creating these restaurants possible. Since the craftswomen appreciated the intention behind creating these restaurants and cafés and wanted these businesses to exist, tradeswomen would discount, donate, or trade their skills both to enable the creation of the business and to be able to enjoy the fare of the restaurant once it was established.

This sort of intentionality pervaded the daily conduct of business at restaurants like Wildrose. For example, Herak also hired a female plumber who was grateful for a job in which her employer would not sexually and verbally harass her.⁴⁰¹ Female tradeswomen during the period in feminist periodicals lamented their working conditions and the biases they faced.⁴⁰² As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, women faced systematic barriers that prevented women, particularly unmarried women, working-class women, lesbians, women of color, and those at the intersection of these identities from accessing the capital necessary to start a restaurant. As a result they sought alternative routes to

⁴⁰⁰ Bryher Herak, “Wildrose,” interview with Alex Ketchum, June 26, 2016.

⁴⁰¹ Herak, “Wildrose,” interview with Ketchum.

⁴⁰² Sue Levin, *In the Pink: The Making of Successful Gay and Lesbian Owned Businesses* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1999).

accomplish their aims. This process often involved mutual support systems of like-minded crafts and tradeswomen, who might in-turn accept lower pay because of their belief in the cause. They could also get paid in publicity and get established as the plumber, electrician, or carpenter to hire in the feminist community.⁴⁰³ Being paid in “exposure,” however, furthered the issue of women getting paid less than their male peers and the continual undervaluing of female labor. However, the ability to support the creation of women’s spaces made the sacrifice worthwhile for women laborers who did provide discounts.

The choice to hire women as independent contractors was commonplace amongst feminist restaurants. Wildrose had a female accountant “set up the books.”⁴⁰⁴ The Brick Hut was able to get carpentry help from Seven Sisters Construction. This feminist construction collective would help with carpentry projects — sometimes in exchange for breakfast.⁴⁰⁵ The Brick Hut also hired an outside bookkeeper.⁴⁰⁶ The Common Woman Club of Northampton decided to hire as many women as they possibly could. It was one of the first decisions that they made as a collective.⁴⁰⁷ However, they found this decision quite difficult to actually enact as locating local tradeswomen in Northampton, Massachusetts in the early 1970s could be difficult. Men dominated the trades in the 1970s and this occupational segregation has continued to this day.⁴⁰⁸ The Common

⁴⁰³ Working on a feminist restaurant could aid craftswomen in the long run as they could expect to find more employment through lesbians and feminists who also frequented the venue, as was the case for the craftswomen who helped repair the Wildrose. Herak, “Wildrose.”

⁴⁰⁴ Herak, “Wildrose.”

⁴⁰⁵ Davenport, “Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I.”

⁴⁰⁶ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

⁴⁰⁷ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁴⁰⁸ Sexist social values and educational practices dissuaded women from working in the trades. Beginning as early as divisions in high school with boys taking shop class and women funneled into home economics, the trades remained dominated by men during the 1970s and 1980s. Francine D. Blau, Patricia Simpson, and Deborah Anderson, “Continuing Progress? Trends in Occupational Segregation in the United States

Womon collective eventually was able to hire two women carpenters who did major renovations on the side of the building. The collective members found that oftentimes they were significantly undercharged because the carpenters were also trying to support the restaurant. These women wanted to help without the pressure of making a formal commitment of financially supporting the club, but would offer a donation by lowering their prices. The Common Womon Club also found a female real estate agent who showed them multiple properties. Eventually they also hired a female accountant. The owners of Bloodroot likewise discussed how difficult it could sometimes be to hire tradeswomen and at times they would have to hire men but only after looking for a woman to fill the role first. As Selma Miriam told the *Bridgeport Sunday Post* in 1977, “We try to use women wherever we can: we have a woman attorney, a woman accountant, and a woman carpenter. I understand that there are women plumbers and electricians, but not in this area because we really looked for them. I know how hard it is for a woman to get a job in a field where women are unusual. We plan to have a bulletin board at Bloodroot for this purpose especially.”⁴⁰⁹ These testimonies make evident the concerted effort made to prioritize investing and circulating commerce within the women’s community. This was done out of a conviction to the importance of supporting those women - particularly the out lesbians – to find work, facing gender and sexual orientation discrimination.

Regional factors influenced the ease feminist restaurants encountered in finding tradeswomen and women professionals to do necessary services. In places like San

over the 1970s and 1980s." *Feminist Economics* 4, no. 3 (1998): 29-71; Garry Cruickshank "The Participation of Women Employed in Traditionally Male Dominated Occupations including Plumbing: 1975–2013" (thesis, Auckland, New Zealand Unitec Institute of Technology, 2015).

⁴⁰⁹ Bonnie Carr, “New Feminist Eatery Aims to “Warm Belly and Mind.”” *Bridgeport Sunday Post* 27, March 1977.

Francisco, in the gay publications, women would advertise themselves as lesbian carpenters. Because they lived in an area with a substantial out lesbian population, they could advertise to that smaller community.⁴¹⁰ However, in other regions within the United States and Canada in the 1970s and 1980s it would be more pragmatic for independent contractors to not advertise either their sexual orientation or their feminist identity. The founders of Mother Courage feminist restaurant in New York City responded to the question “What advice would the owners of Mother Courage give other women who are thinking of starting a restaurant?” with, “Count on at least three years before you can make a profit. Don’t start undercapitalized. Before going into business get as much advice as possible: talk to other women who have restaurants; go to city agencies like the Small Business Association. Get a feminist lawyer, accountant, and insurance agent. But, above all, DO IT!”⁴¹¹ Feminists who started restaurants and cafés in the later period of this study were able to learn from the feminist entrepreneurs who had come before. These informal women-centered business networks were instrumental to supporting feminist businesses. Being able to depend on other women in the community allowed them to create community that also financially supported itself. Sometimes they thus were not paying in money but in subcultural capital.

Artists and Musicians

In addition to feminist tradeswomen and professionals, feminist restaurants and cafés engaged independent artists and musicians, which encouraged customers to frequent their establishments. This decision brought money to both the space and to the

⁴¹⁰ Sue Levin, *In the Pink*.

⁴¹¹ Dolores Alexander, Smith College Special Collections and Archives, Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Tracy Young Howard Smith Scenes. Box 180, Folder 39, 176.

artists themselves, as well as adding value to the businesses by endowing subcultural capital. Sociologist Sarah Thornton, whose text *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* highlights the way that cultural values such as authenticity and hipness within subcultures create a kind of cultural capital in the way that Pierre Bourdieu understood cultural capital. However, this cultural capital does not hinge on approval from the dominant or “mainstream” culture, but rather “subculture capital” gains its worth from its juxtaposition against and disparagement of the “mainstream” against which the subgroup measures its alternative cultural worth.⁴¹² I argue that the decision to support feminist artists and musicians was a necessary decision for the economic wellbeing of the restaurants and cafés as well as the artists and musicians. Both business and artist were able to get their literal capital from this exchange but also the choice to perform at these spaces and the decision made in bringing lesbian and feminist performers and artists within them marked both the restaurant and the performer as part of the feminist culture and community. The attainment of subcultural capital does not undermine the intention of artists and musicians and feminist restaurants and cafés to support one another, it rather highlights the integral nature of this relationship. By analyzing this phenomenon, it is evident that feminist and lesbian restaurants both constructed and were constructed by their interactions with feminist and lesbian artists and musicians.

The network of support branched beyond the formalized businesses and the construction of the space but occurred in the creation of the atmosphere as well. These spaces fostered and held together a feminist artistic community that linked these

⁴¹² Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

restaurants across the continent, especially as touring musicians and artists would hop between them. It was similarly common for feminist restaurants and cafés to feature the work of local female artists. The Brick Hut featured community artists' work, such as Amana Johnson, Grace Harwood, Barbara Sandidge, Kyos Featherdancing, Cathy Cade, and Wendy Cadden. Once a year, the Brick Hut featured the artwork of the children of Berkwood-Hedge School.⁴¹³ Furthermore, the Brick Hut was located around the corner from Olivia Records, the feminist record company that was responsible for producing most of the "women's music" during the 1970s and 1980s.⁴¹⁴ The Brick Hut was so closely linked to the Bay Area's lesbian and feminist women's music scene that Pat Parker and Mary Watkins wrote "The Brick Hut Song" as part of Mary Watkins first album with Olivia Records, *Something Moving*.⁴¹⁵ Stars Vicki Randle and Linda Tillery also featured on this album and frequented the café. Other musicians and cultural activists would eat at the café, which would sometimes be repaid with a song. As Joan Antonnucio remembers, "customers still remember the day Linda T. spontaneously sang a cappella for the masses. The women of BeBe K'Roche, an all woman electric rock band worked at the Brick Hut from time to time."⁴¹⁶ They held a Third Thursday Open Mike started by popular lesbian musician, Alix Dobkin, to encourage women to perform. Furthermore, one of the owners, Sharon Davenport was a published poet and she organized salons and hosted readings. At the Brick Hut, performances and author readings were free, or pay-

⁴¹³ Davenport, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I."

⁴¹⁴ Karen E. Petersen, "An Investigation into Women-Identified Music in the United States," in Ellen Koskoff, ed., *Women and Music in Cross-cultural Perspective* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987): 208.

⁴¹⁵ Antonnucio, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part 2."

⁴¹⁶ Antonnucio, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part 2."

by-donation. No tickets were ever sold with the exception of their tenth anniversary party celebration that had music and comedy, hosted at another local venue.

In 1982, Wild Sisters Café, located on the Southside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania featured feminist artistic performances and exhibitions.⁴¹⁷ Wild Sisters had a space where women could display artwork or perform talent on an open stage. That year, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* remarked that “Wild Sisters is in a shambles now as the erstwhile Wobblie Joe’s undergoes remodeling, but soon it will be the first feminist restaurant, bar and cabaret in Pittsburgh. When it opens, women artists will perform and exhibit, and freshly baked breads, soups, quiche and sandwiches will be served.”⁴¹⁸ In 1983, the similarly named Sister’s Restaurant in Vancouver, BC advertised that it sold women’s arts and crafts and played live and taped women’s music. According to the 1983 *Gaia’s Guide* entry, there was a dance floor downstairs with a superb atmosphere.⁴¹⁹ This kind of entertainment was commonplace at feminist restaurants and cafés.

Feminist restaurants would often be gathering spaces for local artists. Alison Bechdel, renowned feminist- lesbian cartoonist, most famous for her *Dykes to Watch Out For* comics and *Fun Home* graphic novel, got her start in Minneapolis and often frequented Ruby’s Café.⁴²⁰ Ruby’s also had one staff member who was a curator and would put on different shows. Mary Bahneman, the owner of Ruby’s, only requested that one picture was ever taken down as it was gory and would have been unappetizing to have in a restaurant. Local gay and lesbian artists created most of the art at Ruby’s.⁴²¹ Wildrose Restaurant and Bar of Seattle, Washington supported and brought jazz

⁴¹⁷ “Feminist Restaurant,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 27, 1982. It was located at 27th and Jane streets.

⁴¹⁸ “Feminist Restaurant,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

⁴¹⁹ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide* (1983). It was located at 612 Davis Street.

⁴²⁰ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide* (1983).

⁴²¹ Bahneman, “Ruby’s.”

musicians to the area. Its owner, Bryher Herak fondly remembers how much joy she had in bringing international jazz performers to the Wildrose, commenting that those performances were “some of the most exciting times of [her] life.”⁴²² She tried to keep the cover between \$5 and \$10 and the performers received 80 percent of the take after they helped with promoting the event. De Laria, Alix Dobkin, and other women’s music musicians would also play. A regular Thursday night event featured jazz musicians from the local music school. The Wildrose also hosted guitar music, talent shows, comedy shows, open mics, and drag shows.⁴²³

The practice of welcoming feminist artists and musicians was integral to these spaces, giving them a unique platform in a safe environment that bolstered the spaces themselves simultaneously. Mountain Moving Café, the self-declared feminist coffee shop located in Portland, Oregon, was known for its women's nights, “nice atmosphere, live music and assorted types of entertainment.”⁴²⁴ Guests could dine on vegetarian fare while enjoying dancing, films, speakers, and poetry.⁴²⁵ Amaranth, the feminist restaurant that moved into the space that was formerly Bread and Roses in Cambridge, Massachusetts described itself as a women's restaurant that served whole foods only and pizza, with salads and fruit drinks as its specialties. The flyer described, “The atmosphere here is warm and *womonly*-- we encourage women to hang out and socialize. Our large back room also serves as a gallery to show female artists' work. Sporadic entertainment too.”⁴²⁶ Wing Café and Gallery, which was women-owned and managed, serving the

⁴²² Herak, “Wildrose.”

⁴²³ Herak, “Wildrose.”

⁴²⁴ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1976). It was located on 532 Southeast 39th Street.

⁴²⁵ Ginny Vida, ed., *Our Right to Love: A Lesbian Resource Book* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1978).

⁴²⁶ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1979). It was located at 134 Hampshire Street.

feminist and new age community of San Diego, was dedicated to the development and growth of women's culture and community. It hosted art shows, music, and poker games.⁴²⁷ These events encouraged women to patronize the restaurants and cafés.

Each artist brought new people to the space. Artist collectives, as a result, were likely to flock to these spaces that supported them and fostered creative environments. The original clientele of Mother Courage of New York was to a great extent, from Westbeth, the artists' housing project a block away. The Chaikin's of the Open Theatre also came in often.⁴²⁸ Visual artists could display their work on the walls, women in the community could buy art pieces, and artists could network and find collaborators. Noel Furie, co-owner of Bloodroot, was a photographer, and the two-spirit writer and activist, Chrystos, wrote in a letter "Tell Noel I'm looking for a new "publicity photo" to send out and would buy copies."⁴²⁹ This letter was a response to Bloodroot's request that they use some of Chrystos's written materials in their latest cookbook that featured lyrics, poetry, and writings of feminists that they admired. In return Chrystos wanted a copy of the cookbook and to support Noel's photography. Likewise, in response to a material usage request for their Bloodroot cookbook, the musician Aleegra sent a note thanking Bloodroot for wanting to include her lyrics amongst other artists that she admired and looked forward to receiving her copy of the cookbook. She also enclosed a copy of her tape of women's music for the restaurant to play. Furthermore, the owners of Bloodroot and Aleegra made plans to speak more at the East Coast Lesbian Festival.⁴³⁰ Festivals

⁴²⁷ "Wing Café Flyer," LAMBDA San Diego Archives, Folder: Businesses-Cafés.

⁴²⁸ Dolores Alexander, "Letter from Dolores Alexander to New York Magazine Asking for a Review," Smith College Special Collections and Archives, The Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Tracy Young Howard Smith Scenes, Box 180, Folder 39.

⁴²⁹ Chrystos, "Letter to Noel Furie," private letter shared with the author.

⁴³⁰ Aleegra, "Letter to Bloodroot," private letter shared with the author. September 10, 1984.

acted as a temporary intermediary space, able to link some of these artists and businesses. Likewise, other women that were part of the feminist collectives that ran the restaurants or just worked at the restaurants were also using their wages from their work at the restaurant to support their art practice. Lesbian artist, Sheila Pepe, worked at the lesbian owned and operated Beetle's Lunch in Allston, Massachusetts, while earning her BFA.⁴³¹

Feminist restaurants thus served more than food: they fostered an entire feminist music community that also linked them to the bar culture. This micro-culture was extremely significant to those who lived in it. Women were underrepresented in media at large, yet here was a business network that fostered an artistic and music community where music could be played. As Selma Miriam explained in her choice to only play women's music at Bloodroot, "It's not that we don't have men's music at home, that we don't use men's products, that we don't like men, but this must be a place that is for women."⁴³² Here women's production and performance were put at the forefront. Musicians then linked these spaces together connecting the community across the continent. As the musician Joan Biren's old event posters and flyers demonstrated that it was common for lesbian and feminist musicians to travel between feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses, crisscrossing the continent and connecting women across borders.⁴³³ These artists served as a way of transporting ideas across the communities and created greater connections between them all.

⁴³¹ It was located at 120 Harvard Avenue.

⁴³² Irene Backalenik, "Feminist Food for Thought," *New York Times*, June 26, 1977, http://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/26/archives/long-island-opinion-feminist-food-for-thought-this-must-be-a-place.html?_r=0.

⁴³³ Smith College Special Collections and Archives, Joan Biren Papers, MS587.

Intellectual Community: Books and Speakers

Feminist restaurants and cafés supported and were supported by the feminist intellectual community. Feminists across the United States and Canada were reading from similar books and periodicals. While there were more local periodicals like the *Ain't I A Woman* in Iowa City (1970), local event newsletters such as *Feminist Communications: Las Hermanas Coffeehouse Newsletter* of San Diego, California (1976), many of these local periodicals would reprint popular articles, such as Judy Syfer's "I Want a Wife" which appeared in *Ms. Magazine's* December 1971 issue and was republished in numerous feminist periodicals.⁴³⁴ National and international periodicals such as *Off Our Backs* (1970-2008) and *Herizons* of Winnipeg, Manitoba (1979-1992) were popular within feminist communities across North America. These periodicals also featured reviews of feminist books such as Bloodroot's cookbook *The Political Palate*.⁴³⁵ Both books and periodicals were sold at local feminist cafés and restaurants and the feminist bookstores that had cafés such as Berkeley, California's the Old Mole, which served espresso, drip coffee and pastries and offered books by and about women- fiction and non-fiction, cloth and paper.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, in cities that did not have explicitly feminist restaurants, feminist bookstores would serve as de facto cafés that sold coffee and snacks and provided a space to linger. Such was the case at La Librairie des Femmes, a feminist bookstore located in Montreal, Quebec.⁴³⁷ Feminist intellectuals would also hang out and gather at these spaces.

⁴³⁴ Judy Syfers, "I Want a Wife," *Ms. Magazine*, December 1971.

⁴³⁵ Bloodroot Collective, *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1980).

⁴³⁶ I included bookstores that sold coffee in this study because having a couple of chairs and a place to gather created a place to linger and share ideas. Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1984 and 1985).

⁴³⁷ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1982). It was located at 3954 St. Denis.

However, it was not just the poets, musicians, and artists that would travel between the cafés. They also served as venues to welcome authors on speaking tours. For example, Bridgeport's Bloodroot hosted radical anti-porn feminist Andrea Dworkin on multiple occasions. Articles about New York's Mother Courage often highlighted the feminist intellectual community that would gather. As the *New York Post* article about Mother Courage's anniversary party mentioned, "you are as likely to find Movement "heavies" as you are regulars; New York Radical Feminists, as NOW women; Lesbian Feminist Liberation caucusing, as the Modern Language Association's Commission on the Status of Women dining out."⁴³⁸ Under the photos were captioned,

Melinda Schroeder, left, who is starting a feminist credit union in September, raps with overalled Marta Vivas, a founder of Redstockings, one of the oldest and most radical feminist groups. Listening is Minda Bikman, who produces video films for women... The guests, who celebrated with champagne, quiche and chocolate cake, included New York City councilwoman Carol Greitzer, writers Susan Brownmiller, who has an upcoming book about rape, Lucy Komisar, Kate Millett (Flying), Alix Kates Shulman and Phyllis Chester (Women and Madness). (Gloria Steinem was away at a conference).⁴³⁹

Leading feminist figures during the period such as Jaqui Ceballos, Mryna Lamb, Lucy Komisar, and Susan Sontag would also make appearances.⁴⁴⁰ It is important to remember that these were sites where women could gather without interruption and discuss their ideas and socialize. Certain restaurants, such as Mother Courage, cultivated reputations as being the hot spot for the intellectual heavy hitters, but these kinds of events were not confined to New York and the New York intellectual elite. Roberta Achtenberg spoke on

⁴³⁸ Jerome, "Feminists Hail a Restaurant."

⁴³⁹ Jerome, "Feminists Hail a Restaurant."

⁴⁴⁰ Dolores Alexander, "Letter from Dolores Alexander to New York Magazine Asking for a Review," Smith College Special Collections and Archives, The Dolores Alexander Papers (unprocessed), Tracy Young Howard Smith Scenes, Box 180, Folder 39.

lesbian parenthood at the Brick Hut in Berkeley, California.⁴⁴¹ Old Wives' Tales Restaurant of Portland, Oregon, in addition to advertising their live concerts, proudly featured the works of women artists and writers.⁴⁴² In these spaces, ideas grew and thrived. Literary culture and the food culture were greatly linked. Feminist restaurants were for voracious readers and eaters.

Feminist Professional and Personal Organizations

Feminist restaurants and cafés served as meeting spaces for local organizations, which expanded ideas of whom the spaces were for. Bryher Herak believed that at Wildrose the staff did their best to reach out to working-class communities, women of color, and various LGBTQ communities. The invited performers brought crowds from various subcultures, which further diversified the space. At Wildrose, Herak worked frequently with Seattle's Lesbian Resource Center and hosted the African-American lesbian support group meeting. The Wildrose publicized and organized with the local feminist bookstores, feminist health collective, feminist print shops, and the local women centered art galleries. They furthermore hosted Women in the Trades, Association of Lesbian Professionals, the Seattle Women's Commissions, and tried to persuade a female Black church minister to encourage her congregation to dine there. The leather community also would gather there.⁴⁴³ LGBTQ Alcoholics Anonymous meetings were held at the Wildrose and the Brick Hut Café.⁴⁴⁴ On Wednesday nights, Bloodroot of Bridgeport hosted the G. Knapp Historical Society-- a feminist organization named for

⁴⁴¹ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

⁴⁴² Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1982).

⁴⁴³ Herak, "Wildrose."

⁴⁴⁴ Davenport, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I."

Goody Knapp, who was hung for being a witch in 1653, not far from Bloodroot. The group met to commemorate the death of all the women who were tortured before and after its namesake.⁴⁴⁵ As Herak explained, while the Wildrose could always have improved outreach efforts, she and her staff made a concerted effort to support local community groups focused on social justice and community building. Herak made it her mission to make the space a safe sanctuary for LGBTQ people of all races, economic backgrounds, genders, and religions.⁴⁴⁶ Feminist restaurants' grassroots work in their communities supported a diverse array of feminist and lesbian groups and had the effect of expanding business communities.

Activist Spaces

These spaces also served to support activist causes in their communities and offered them spaces to gather, often for free. At Wing Café in San Diego, the San Diego Lesbian Organization met there on Thursday evenings and the Coalition for Take Back the Night, a group focused on making women safe from sexual violence in public spaces, met on Monday evenings.⁴⁴⁷ For Gay Pride, Wildrose of Seattle would serve a big lunch and then the owners and staff would go to the parade with customers and rally. Wildrose was open on most holidays so that the many Seattle lesbians that did not have a home to go to for the holidays could have a spot to socialize and have a nice meal. Also as the restaurant was located in an area with homeless people, every Monday Wildrose served

⁴⁴⁵ Bloodroot Collective, *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook*. "Her death, like nine million others between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, was an act of woman hating...Andrea Dworkin has said in reference of the genocide of witches: "A lot of knowledge disappears with nine million people." The G. Knapp Historical Society is an attempt to remind women that such knowledge must not disappear again."

⁴⁴⁶ Herak, "Wildrose."

⁴⁴⁷ "Wing Café of San Diego Flyer," LAMBDA San Diego Archives, Folder: Businesses-Cafés.

them soup and sandwiches for free.⁴⁴⁸ The Brick Hut of Berkeley supported many causes and issues, from feeding the anti-nuclear proliferation protesters at University of California Berkeley's weapons research facility, Livermore Labs, to the striking students when Mills College threatened to go co-ed. ACT-Up, the AIDs activist organization, held meetings after hours in the space. The Brick Hut closed on what was then called Gay Day in order to attend political demonstrations and rallies. The staff would place a sign on the door, "JOIN US AT..." the parade, rally, or demonstration. The Hut gave most of its support through contributions of food and energy to anti-nuclear demonstrations, anti-war rallies, and the feminist causes of Inez Garcia, Norma Jean Croy, Joan Little, and Yvonne Wanrow.⁴⁴⁹ To mark the importance of the events, the Brick Hut closed and the people who worked there attended the vigil for the assassinations of Harvey Milk and George Moscone. The Hut closed also to protest the verdict of their killer, Dan White. It was important to the Brick Hut owners and staff to be involved by feeding protestors and participating in protests and using their sound system to play every minute of the Iran-Contra hearings each day they aired in 1987. Listening to Anita Hill at the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, every day in 1991, brought people in for breakfast, who then stayed through lunch. Customers had discussions with customers at other tables, playing musical chairs the whole time. According to owner Joan Antonuccio, it was "Pretty amazing. [Customers] came in because they knew we would have the radio tuned in."⁴⁵⁰ The Brick Hut was the first café, at least in the East Bay, to hang posters stating "You can't get AIDS from a glass" and the owners did their best to advocate and care for

⁴⁴⁸ Herak, "Wildrose."

⁴⁴⁹ Davenport, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I."

⁴⁵⁰ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

their ailing and dying brothers, men in the gay community afflicted with the disease.⁴⁵¹

The Brick Hut also continued to support feminist and queer causes and activities like the Lyon-Martin Clinic, Queer Nation, and East Bay Act Up. KPFA Radio broadcasted their International Women's Day program directly from the Brick Hut.⁴⁵² As Joan Antonuccio described about the Brick Hut's staff's activism, "Everything we did was a feminist issue. We were out lesbian feminists every minute of the day. Our work, our interactions with each other and our customers, the way we taught new workers was feminist. The personal really is political. Again, everything we did was activism."⁴⁵³ In their café, they were able to support the kind of world that they wanted to see.

Teams

The feminist restaurants and cafés would also support other efforts of community building, socializing, and women's health through the particular sponsorship of women's sports teams. As an anonymous contributor noted in Iowa City's feminist periodical *Ain't I A Woman* roundup, "A Place for Us," that "going to a women's softball tournament raised my consciousness" and provided female role models.⁴⁵⁴ The Brick Hut sponsored the Grillfriends, a woman-only team.⁴⁵⁵ Restaurant by day, lesbian bar by night, the Hung Jury of Washington D.C. also sponsored a team.⁴⁵⁶ Bread and Roses sponsored the local

⁴⁵¹ "I met a young man who had just gotten off the bus from Salt Lake City. The first place he went was the Brick Hut because a friend had told him he would be safe there. He told me his story. I bought him breakfast to welcome him. A few short years later, wracked by AIDS, his friends carried him into the Hut and sat him in a booth. He quietly ordered a blueberry waffle, was able to eat only one bite, but it made him smile. After a while, his friends carried him back home, where he passed away." Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

⁴⁵² Davenport, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part I."

⁴⁵³ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

⁴⁵⁴ Anonymous, "Softball," *Ain't I A Woman* 1, no 16, June 4, 1971.

⁴⁵⁵ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

⁴⁵⁶ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1990).

softball, basketball, and volleyball teams. Instead of a tip jar, the restaurant had a collection can with a different cause each week. The money for the teams came from the can, as well as funding for thirty-five different causes in their first year of operation.⁴⁵⁷ Historian A. Finn Enke in *Finding the Movement* expressed the important role that these lesbian softball teams played in fostering community, particularly for lesbians in the Midwest. Wildrose sponsored a softball team, a bowling team, and a golf team. Restaurants would give the teams money and buy them t-shirts and then offer them discounts of food and drinks post-game. Bryher Herak explained that the sponsorship would cost more than the restaurant made up but the women would come back on the weekends.⁴⁵⁸ The teams also provided publicity for the restaurants. The teams' uniforms would have their sponsors' names written on them and their posters would publicize their sponsoring restaurants. Although the softball teams were not technically a feminist business, encouraging this kind of social networking led to economic opportunities.

Conclusion

Feminist restaurants and cafés were different than mainstream restaurants and cafés during the period due to their role within the feminist business nexus. These businesses enabled other feminist businesses to exist by providing other business owners and artists with a space to operate, an audience, and cross-promotion. When Selma Miriam spoke of her initial vision of Bloodroot, it was for “a place to warm the belly and warm the mind, a meeting place for people who have a particular point of view.”⁴⁵⁹ This

⁴⁵⁷ “Letter At the One Year Mark: Letter to Stockholders,” October 1975, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University, Patricia Hynes Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁴⁵⁸ Herak, “Wildrose.”

⁴⁵⁹ Carr, “New Feminist Eatery Aims to “Warm Belly and Mind.””

view meant people who shared their ideas of feminism. For the Bloodroot Collective, ““feminist” means we’re interested in Black equality, the problems of Spanish speaking people, and we do feel that the largest number of people who are discriminated against are women.”⁴⁶⁰ Joan Antonuccio of the Brick Hut remarked, that from 1975-1997,

We were completely unique. Not so much for our food, at first, though that came later, but for our openness, our participation in the community, and our obvious respect for ourselves and each other. At the Brick Hut, I believe we celebrated difference. We were visibly different, we forefronted difference, we encouraged difference, we hosted difference. We did not try to assimilate, disappear into conformity, or become mainstream. We did not build the Brick Hut Café so we could have jobs, although that was good. We did not build it to have careers, or support career-moves, although that was a possibility. We did not build it only to make money for ourselves, although we wanted to maintain a viable business that supported our friends, our fellow workers, our causes, and ourselves. We built it to create the possibility of a workplace and a community where no one’s politics or cultural affiliations were left at the front door.⁴⁶¹

The owners allowed women and community members to have a special kind of space in which to connect. Likewise, Wildrose was a safe place where women could gather. In its founding, owner Bryher Herak thought that “we need a place that is a restaurant where we can serve good food to the lesbian feminist community, where we can have windows, and where our families can come and feel good about it.”⁴⁶² While each feminist restaurant and café had its unique qualities, these businesses fostered community. Feminist restaurants not only gave women opportunities in them, but also provided inspiration and a structure for other women to be involved in the paid marketplace. Not everyone within these communities desired separatism; while there were moves towards separatism by some within the movement even these individuals advocated for building

⁴⁶⁰ Carr, “New Feminist Eatery Aims to “Warm Belly and Mind.””

⁴⁶¹ Antonuccio, email correspondence with Ketchum.

⁴⁶² She wanted a space where people could be out but unlike the lesbian bars of the period that were dark and with no food and were just for cruising, people could bring their families and friends of all sexual orientations. Herak, “Wildrose.”

feminist business networks. The proliferation feminist businesses made separatism more possible by expanding the options women had for work and consumption. But these spaces ultimately supported women across the continent and readers of periodicals knew about them internationally, creating the feeling of a community much larger than themselves. To sum it up best, as an article remarking on the anniversary celebration of Mother Courage, “No speeches were necessary. The word “feminist” already implies an attitude.”⁴⁶³

⁴⁶³ Jerome, “Feminists Hail a Restaurant.”

Chapter 5. Feminist Food: Fuel for a Revolution

*We consider ourselves to be a feminist restaurant and I think that we consider feminism to be much broader than simply a place for women to congregate, as desirable as that might be... We think that the food we serve, the way we serve it, and the relationship with our customers are all very, very different from other restaurants or “cafés.” It is all inspired by our feminism.*⁴⁶⁴

- Selma Miriam, co-founder of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant

Sociologists Nicki Lisa Cole and Alison Dahl Crossley argue that “when discourses of consumption and women’s independence intersect, they do so in a manner that equates independent womanhood with consumption.”⁴⁶⁵ Scholars of post-feminism often go one step further in arguing that consumption is the hallmark of post-feminism, in that a woman’s power is completely tied to her conspicuous purchasing as an individual rather than collectivist organizing. In the words of cultural theorist Angela McRobbie, postfeminism “actively draws on and invokes feminisms as that which can be taken into account in order to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed, a spent force.”⁴⁶⁶ However, critical theorist Nancy Fraser argues that “feminism became capitalism’s handmaiden,” stating that while the women’s movements once critiqued capitalist exploitation, the movements’ ideas bolstered neoliberalism.⁴⁶⁷ For Fraser, these questions around money and power are not new to ideas of post-feminism; Fraser argues that feminism and

⁴⁶⁴ Selma Miriam, e-mail message to Alex Ketchum, June 28, 2016.

⁴⁶⁵ Nicki Lisa Cole and Alison Dahl Crossley, “On Feminism in the Age of Consumption,” *Consumers Commodities and Consumption* 11, no. 1 (2009).

⁴⁶⁶ Angela McRobbie, “Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime,” in *All About the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 3-14.

⁴⁶⁷ Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (New York: Verso Books, 2013).

economics have always been connected, whether they are viewed as diametrically opposed or mobilized as two complimentary concepts. North American feminists, living within a consumer society, faced the tensions between capitalism and a multitude of feminisms daily. How did consumption impact feminist identities? Did feminist consumption ever exist? I posit that rather than being a passive activity, feminist consumption in the 1970s and 1980s is interlinked with production; the creation of feminist food in feminist restaurants of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada illustrates this dynamic. Feminist food consumption existed due to the existence of a feminist marketplace where production practices reflected feminist values of social justice and environmentalism.

The idea of consuming as a feminist relies upon a liberal framework that produces and is produced by capitalism. Within the marketplace, the self-made individual is a self-bought individual; one's identity is constituted through purchasing, or not purchasing, specific material goods. The identity of the products shapes the identity of the individual; or, in the words of sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier."⁴⁶⁸ Structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure, who theorized how signs make meaning, demonstrated that while all symbols are laden with meaning, certain material objects carry stronger signifiers.⁴⁶⁹ Scholars of Food Studies, Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik⁴⁷⁰ have repeatedly argued, especially within the field's more anthropological writings influenced by Claude Levi Strauss's structuralist ideas, that

⁴⁶⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

⁴⁶⁹ Ferdinand De Saussure, Wade Baskin, and Perry Meisel, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁴⁷⁰ Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. *Food and Culture: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012) and Massimo Montanari, *Food is Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

food, likewise, has important ties to identity and culture.⁴⁷¹ Even though poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault showed how meanings could change over time, creating power relationships and molding identities, the general premise that identities are constructed through alignment with symbols, purchased in the marketplace, remains a powerful framework.⁴⁷² Whether it is buying or making meals, daily choices over food, which have primarily been in the domain of women in the United States and Canada, make a statement about one's identity. "You are what you eat," whether made or bought. Choosing particular foods to consume is simultaneously a form of identity production. The seemingly simple act of eating an apple constructs one's identity and reproduces and creates new meaning out of this act, in a similar way that philosopher Judith Butler claims gender is performed and constructed through each performance.⁴⁷³ Feminist consumption thus depends on feminist production and through feminist consumption, one reconstitutes and produces both present and future feminist culture.

Discussions surrounding feminist consumption and production are not new. In 1971, essayist Judy Syfers, remarking on how unremunerated domestic labor performed largely by women created a disparity of time available to study and do paid work, wrote, "I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying."⁴⁷⁴ Journalist Pat Mainardi's 1970 piece "The Politics of Housework" and Jane O'Reilly's "The Housewife's Moment of Truth," similarly provided feminist critiques focused on

⁴⁷¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle," in *Food and Culture: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 28-35.

⁴⁷² Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) and Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida, No. 1* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

⁴⁷³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁴⁷⁴ Judy Syfers, "Why I Want a Wife," *Ms. Magazine* 1, 1971.

the physical and emotional labor of cooking.⁴⁷⁵ Coming out of the consciousness-raising groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminists during the so-called Second Wave generated a multitude of articles criticizing the social expectation that women be the primary cooks and cleaners within their households.⁴⁷⁶ Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is one of the most famous examples and her influence has been extensively documented.⁴⁷⁷ There is a large body of texts analyzing women's relationship to consumption. Accounts ranging from Canadian women's preferences of household appliances by historian Joy Parr to Susan Strasser and Katherine Parkin's work on the influence of American advertisers represent the broad range of historical work that argues that consumption habits shaped American and Canadian gender roles.⁴⁷⁸ Historians such as Sherrie Inness, Laura Shapiro, Alice Julier, and Joanne Meyerowitz have looked at the intersections between femininity, domesticity, and women's food purchasing habits with particular attention given to the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁷⁹ However, with the exception of Warren Belasco's *Appetite for Change*, academics have largely ignored how some feminists during the 1960s and 1970s focused on the labor issues surrounding cooking,

⁴⁷⁵ Patricia Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," *Redstockings*, 1970 and Jane O'Reilly, "The Housewife's Moment of Truth," *Ms. Magazine*, 1971, 16-7.

⁴⁷⁶ Nancy A. Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of US Feminism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

⁴⁷⁷ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); Marcia Cohen, *The Sisterhood: The True Story of the Women Who Changed the World*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (Old Saybrook: Tantor, 2013).

⁴⁷⁸ Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: the Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); Katherine J. Parkin, *Food Is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

⁴⁷⁹ Sherrie A. Inness, *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001); Laura Shapiro, *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America* (New York: Viking Press, 2004); Alice P. Julier, "Hiding Gender and Race in the Discourse of Commercial Food Consumption," in *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food*, eds. Arlene Voski Avakian & Barbara Haber (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 163-84; Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

while being fully aware of the importance of cooking for health and the environment.⁴⁸⁰

As chapter 3 also emphasized, rather than resisting cooking, these feminists used women's socially naturalized relationship with the kitchen for empowerment.

Feminist Food

Between 1972 and 1989, the over 250 feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in the United States and Canada, “served up” activism with a side of “feminist food.” Feminist restaurants came into existence during a period when North Americans dined outside the home at record-breaking numbers.⁴⁸¹ As discussed earlier in this dissertation, self-identified feminist restaurants and cafés acted as spaces that challenged the status quo around cooking and consumption. “Feminist food” was usually vegetarian and represented the feminist and environmentalist values of its makers. Each restaurant and café defined feminist food slightly differently depending on the particular feminist ethics of the restaurant owners. While it may seem evident that the women's music these restaurants played, the women's art they displayed, and the visiting performers all promoted feminist principles, what is less obvious is how the *food itself* that these restaurants served was also a manifestation of their politics. Feminist bookstores sold feminist books, but it is less apparent how feminist restaurants sold

⁴⁸⁰ Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁴⁸¹ The National Restaurant Association of the United States defines the restaurant industry as “that which encompasses all meals and snacks prepared away from home, including all takeout meals and beverages.” According to this association, over the past forty-eight years, when taking inflation into account, Americans spent the most amount of money on exterior dining from 1972-1978. Statistics Canada measured a growth in Canadian spending on exterior eating until the early 1990s and they posit the main change had to do with an economic recession and the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on restaurant's products. Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA), “Chapter 9. Consumer Spending,” Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada, May 4, 2011, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/eng/ca02117.html#a95>; “Restaurant Industry Forecast,” National Restaurant Association, 2014, <http://www.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/News-Research/research/RestaurantIndustryForecast2014.pdf>.

feminist food. In fact, the types of foods offered on the menus of these restaurants were indeed integral to the restaurants' feminism. The kinds of dishes and drinks sold, the ingredients used, and the prices all reflected the different feminist ethics of the restaurant owners to an extent. By looking at what was included and banned on these restaurant menus, this chapter shows the ways that food could be labeled as feminist. Similarly, other feminists during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada used cookbooks to share not only a recipe for a dish but for a new world order. Thus, within the feminist restaurants and cafés in the United States and Canada that were established in the 1970s and 1980s, food was feminist.

In 1972, when two women's movement organizers, Dolores Alexander and Jill Ward, created Mother Courage, many of the activist groups within the 1960s and 1970s countercultural movements already had incorporated food as part of their political outreach. For instance, in 1969 the Black Panther Party began the Free Breakfast for School Children Program in Oakland, California, which aimed to improve students' academic success by making sure that they were properly nourished before a day of learning.⁴⁸² The Back to the Land movement, in which thousands of North Americans left cities to begin farming or start communes, was in full force.⁴⁸³ Although exact numbers are unknown, there were over two thousand communes during the 1960s and early 1970s

⁴⁸² The program was so successful that by the end of the year, the Black Panther Party developed kitchens in cities across the United States, feeding over ten thousand children every day before they went to school. Geographer Nik Heynen argues that the breakfast program was significant because it "was imperative for the social reproduction of many inner-city communities and that it was both the model for, and impetus behind, all federally funded school breakfast programs currently in existence within the United States." Nik Heynen, "Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: the Black Panther Party's Radical Antihunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 2 (2009): 406-22.

⁴⁸³ Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2010).

in the United States.⁴⁸⁴ Alice Waters, the renowned founder and chef of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, had made the connection between the anti-war and anti-Vietnam movement and food, which inspired her to create her farm-to-table restaurant. The companies Monsanto and Dow Chemical that had manufactured Agent Orange, the defoliant used by the United States military during the Vietnam War that was linked to widespread birth defects, also produced the chemicals utilized in North American industrial agriculture. As a result, peace and environmental activists sought food from organic producers.⁴⁸⁵ While not everyone in each movement was interested in the ways that food intersected with their activism, these kinds of connections were made in the feminist, anti-racist, anti-classist, and anti-war movements. Thus, the idea that food would be tied to activism is not new. But what was unique for these feminist restaurants was the discourse around why the food was feminist and vital to the feminism of the owners. As will be demonstrated below, for establishments such as Bloodroot, choosing dishes was a primary concern. For the restaurants that prioritized community building above concerns over the menu, the decisions the owners made around the food further upheld their political convictions.

As there were numerous types of feminism in the 1970s—such as liberal, socialist, Marxist, radical, radical lesbian, and radical lesbian separatist—that had a diversity of ideas of how to implement their specific worldview, there were similarly

⁴⁸⁴ Scholar of intentional communities, Timothy Miller, states that this number is highly disputed. He claims that in 1970, the *New York Times* published an article which stated two thousand communes existed without clear evidence and after that piece came out, other sources continued to cite it. In fact, the author of the article, Bill Kovach, states that the methodology used to produce the number could be improved. Bill Kovach, “Communes Spread as the Young Reject Old Values,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1970, <http://www.nytimes.com/1970/12/17/archives/communes-spread-as-the-young-reject-old-values-communes-are-a-way.html> and Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), xviii.

⁴⁸⁵ Alice Waters and Daniel Duane, *Edible Schoolyard* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2008).

diverse ideas about how the owners believed that their food could be feminist. While the feminist restaurant owners stated that their vegetarianism, their decisions about the items on their menus, and their low prices made their food feminist, any owner or manager who did not claim feminist ideological leanings could make the same business choices, such as operating a sandwich shop serving only inexpensive, vegetarian food. A large variety of restaurants have had vegetarian menu items to serve the small, but not insignificant percentage of the population that was vegetarian.⁴⁸⁶ Other restaurants such as Black Cat Café of Seattle, which existed from 1993 to 1998, have charged lower prices to make food more economically accessible as part of an anti-capitalist or anti-poverty stance, prioritizing social justice over profit.⁴⁸⁷ Yet, it is the ideology and symbolism surrounding the food that makes the food feminist. The discourse around the food is as much a part of the preparation of the meal as the actual cooking of the ingredients. Understanding the owners' motivations behind their choices about the dishes to serve is key to understanding what makes feminist food indeed feminist. Making food feminist depends on a grounded ideology. There were practical reasons behind these choices that supported the owners' ideological agendas. The owners reflected thoroughly about the way they would build their menus and the restaurant experience in a way that would support their political and activist goals. These owners of feminist restaurants used food as a way to undermine oppressive sexist structures in the United States and Canada. In a

⁴⁸⁶ While it is difficult to find the exact numbers of how many people were vegetarian in the United States in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, studies tend to estimate between 3 to 7 percent of the population. Thomas Dietz, Ann Stirling Frisch, Linda Kalof, Paul C. Stern, and Gregory A. Guagnano, "Values and Vegetarianism: An Exploratory Analysis," *Rural Sociology* 60, no. 3 (1995): 533-542. This study claims that in the 1990s, 7 percent of the United States population was vegetarian.

⁴⁸⁷ Dylan Clark, "The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine," *Ethnology* 43, no. 1 (2004): 19-31.

more practical sense, food was the fuel of a revolution, nourishing the bodies of the activists.

Feminist food in feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in the 1970s and 1980s was both physical production and discursive production. In one sense a variety of contradictory food philosophies were feminist when there was feminist/s reasoning behind it. But that was different than the physical food production which encompassed ethics, labor conditions, and economics, which feminism could also engage in such as not supporting the dairy industry to protest feminized exploitation or heeding farm workers' rights when purchasing supplies.

Vegetarian food was not particularly tied to feminism. People around the world have adopted vegetarian diets, usually due to respect for sentient life and a code of ethics motivated by various religious and spiritual beliefs, poverty, a prioritization of animal rights, and reasons that are health related, political, cultural, environmental, aesthetic, economic, or personal preference.⁴⁸⁸ In the 1960s and 1970s, as part of the counter cultural movements, vegetarianism experienced resurgence.⁴⁸⁹ As historian James J. Kopp demonstrates, the new attention to vegetarianism in the 1960s and 1970s was the result of anti-war pacifist ideologies being extended beyond protests against the Vietnam War; a circulation of Eastern philosophies and belief systems that endorsed meatless diets within countercultural circles; and concerns over the system of industrial food production that colorful personalities, like California health-food guru Gypsy Boots, decried.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Jennifer Jabs, Carol M. Devine, and Jeffrey Sobal, "Maintaining Vegetarian Diets: Personal Factors, Social Networks and Environmental Resources," *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* 59, no. 4 (1998): 183.

⁴⁸⁹ Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1996), 319-23.

⁴⁹⁰ James J. Kopp, *American Countercultures: an Encyclopedia of Nonconformists, Alternative Lifestyles, and Radical Ideas in US History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 73.

However, for feminist restaurants that decided to have vegetarian menus, the choice to be vegetarian was an integral part of their brand of feminism. The food on the menus was vegetarian for the following reasons: the ecofeminist philosophy of the owners, environmental concerns, the needs of the clientele, and for cost, which spoke to class needs and either a Marxist or socialist discourse.

Owners Selma Miriam and Noel Furie of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant of Bridgeport, Connecticut prioritized cooking vegetarian food when they opened their business in 1977. They stated, “We don’t use meat-- not only because it’s not healthy, but because we equate the oppression of women with that of animals. As women, we do not want to profit from the sale of animal flesh.”⁴⁹¹ Their vegetarian principles and activism were based on ecofeminist ethics. In their first cookbook, the *Political Palate*, they wrote, “Feminism is not a part-time attitude for us; it is how we live all day, everyday. Our choices in furniture, pictures, the music we play, the books we sell, and the food we cook all reflect and express our feminism.”⁴⁹² Noel Furie and Selma Miriam were ecofeminists, connecting the domination of nature and the exploitation of women. Ecofeminism is entangled with anti-nuclear movements, environmentalist activism, and lesbian-feminism. Professor and activist, Greta Gaard, has repeatedly demonstrated the ways that vegetarian ecofeminists connected the kinds of foods women prepared and ate to a larger social activist framework. Furthermore, she has shown “how vegetarian ecofeminists have developed critiques and activist strategies for responding to various situations involving the linked oppression of women, people of color, and

⁴⁹¹ The Bloodroot Collective, *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1980).

⁴⁹² The Bloodroot Collective, *The Political Palate*.

nonhuman animals,"⁴⁹³ which included not eating meat. The Bloodroot collective explicitly put ecofeminism at the forefront of its vision for the restaurant. In the collective's third cookbook, *The Perennial Palate*, the members stated, "eating meat is wrong for its cruelty to creatures who can feel and experience pain, and wrong because it contributes to worldwide starvation, mostly of women and children."⁴⁹⁴ In no way was being vegetarian an accident or by-product of another cultural influence. The Bloodroot Collective members repeatedly insisted that their vegetarianism was integral to their feminism and that the food they served was feminist itself.

The changes in Bloodroot's menu offerings over the course of its existence demonstrated how Selma Miriam and Noel Furie's understanding of what made food feminist also evolved. Bloodroot's owners also prioritized serving primarily local, seasonal, and organic food. In Miriam's words,

I do consider it important that we are much more than a coffeehouse or café. And as you know, I think, the food we serve is what many different peoples do, especially the poorer ones, and that perspective is very different from health food restaurants. We have always cared deeply about others' food possibilities and creativity.⁴⁹⁵

In addition to the creating a vegetarian menu, the Bloodroot collective, the group of women who managed the restaurant, wrote and published five vegetarian cookbooks. Ideas about feminism and vegetarianism had been in flux since the 1970s and Bloodroot adjusted to the changes. In the early 1970s, in North America, a common definition of the vegetarianism that many left-leaning, predominantly white, activists subscribed to usually

⁴⁹³ Greta Claire Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism: A Review Essay," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no. 3 (2002): 117-46.

⁴⁹⁴ Bloodroot Collective, *The Perennial Political Palate: The Third Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1993), 3.

⁴⁹⁵ Selma Miriam, e-mail message to author, June 28, 2016.

included eating fish.⁴⁹⁶ Bloodroot stopped serving fish in 1980 as ideas about vegetarianism began to shift. The restaurant also became increasingly vegan. This transition happened in part to the owners becoming more aware of environmental concerns over the dairy industry and also the needs and desires of their customer base.⁴⁹⁷ The collective had fifty-two vegan recipes out of 303 in its first book (published in 1980), fifty-five of 209 in the second (1984) and 138 of 227 or 85 percent in the third (1993).⁴⁹⁸ Meanings of what made food feminist then varied from restaurant to restaurant and over time, as ideas of feminism evolved.

Bloodroot was not alone in leveraging vegetarianism to promote feminist ideology. There were other feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses that were vegetarian because of their clientele's interest in this sort of diet. Vegetarianism was widespread across politically active communities during the period. Historian Sherrie A. Inness discusses how women who did not decide to open explicitly feminist restaurants during the 1970s often focused on vegetarian or "natural foods" as a way to engage with the politics of the period. Playing on essentialist ideas of "naturalness," these women used the socially naturalized role of the woman 'in the kitchen' but subverted this role by opening small businesses that allowed them to financially support themselves while

⁴⁹⁶ Peter Singer's text, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* from 1975, reflected the belief of other vegetarians in the 1970s that eating some kinds of seafood was permissible. This specific vegetarian belief framework was based around the idea of pain. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: HarperCollins, 1975).

⁴⁹⁷ Selma Miriam and Noel Furie, "Bloodroot Interview 2," interviewed by Alex Ketchum, May 2012.

⁴⁹⁸ Lisa Pierce, "A Vegetarian Spot Where Feminism Is a Main Course," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2002; The Bloodroot Collective, *The Political Palate: a Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook*; The Bloodroot Collective, *The Second Political Palate: a Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1984); The Bloodroot Collective, *The Perennial Palate: a Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook*. To give a sense of the kinds of foods offered, some of these dishes included Shiitake mushroom with soba noodles soup, pappardelle pasta with butternut squash sauce, apple slices, sage, and walnuts, and the chocolate "devastation" cake.

promoting their political views.⁴⁹⁹ In this sense, the woman in the kitchen was not passive, but rather active in her role. Yet, the relationship between vegetarian cooking and health-food ideologies was not in fact seamless. In a 2015 interview with *Vice Magazine's* affiliate *Munchies*, Bloodroot's owners reflected on the countless diet fads that have come and gone since they opened, noting that "their timeless focus on global home cooking and whole foods has kept them relevant, whether people were avoiding fat, carbs, or gluten."⁵⁰⁰ While their vegetarian and vegan menu was the result of their politics, customers' desire for meatless fare has continued to support the restaurant for over forty years.

For the restaurants that were vegetarian due to the interest from the community, even when the owners were not vegetarians themselves, the owners were still enacting their feminist principles. Their feminism relied upon community building and supporting the activism of their fellow feminists. The decision to be vegetarian was not just a marketplace analysis, fulfilling an economic need, but was also filling an emotional or activist need. Opening a feminist restaurant constituted a labor of love more than a profit-driven venture. This is not to say that decisions were never made to support the business, but the driving force behind deciding what items would be served was grounded in political decisions. The Common Woman Club of Northampton, Massachusetts would also occasionally host private dinners as a way to fundraise, relying on the female faculty of the local universities and colleges to plan events there. In the words of the owners, "We offer an imaginative and nutritious vegetarian menu including fish and dairy dishes.

⁴⁹⁹ Sherrie A. Inness, *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 87-91.

⁵⁰⁰ Alice Kennedy, "This Consciousness Raising Café Wants You to Eat like a Feminist," *Munchies: Vice*, July 20, 2015, <http://munchies.vice.com/articles/this-consciousness-raising-café-wants-you-to-eat-like-a-feminist>.

All women are welcome!”⁵⁰¹ The founders knew that many of the women in their town of Northampton, Massachusetts were vegetarian. Northampton was a very liberal community with many lesbian inhabitants who were vegetarian due to their various activist affiliations and politics.⁵⁰² Here the feminist principle enacted in their menu was about being supportive to the intersecting political interests of their customer base.

The decision for feminist restaurants to be vegetarian was not rare. Snake Sister Café of Rochester, New York, founded in 1981, was a women’s collective vegetarian restaurant. The owners encouraged women in the community to come to a Sunday brunch to share great food and the *New York Times* and *New Women's Times* around the woodstove. Snake Sister’s owners focused on building a community with board games, social events, a weekend coffeehouse performance, vegetarian meals, music, films, poetry, and live jazz Thursday through Sunday.⁵⁰³ After it closed, Wild Seeds Feminist Bookstore and Café opened in Rochester in 1991. Like Bloodroot, it was a lesbian owned and operated bookstore and vegetarian café. The café featured meatless meals, snacks, and desserts. For weekend entertainment, the café showed movies, hosted poetry readings, and played acoustic music. Across the country, in Portland, Oregon in 1978 Mountain Moving Café was a feminist café, owned by a collective of lesbians, which promoted its ladies-only nights in the women’s travel guide, *Gaia’s*. Mountain Moving Café had a vegetarian menu, dancing, films, speakers, poetry, live music, kids’ night on Fridays, and was very welcoming to the gay community.⁵⁰⁴ In 1981, Genesis of Cleveland was a vegetarian café and bar that was collectively owned and as its

⁵⁰¹ Marjorie Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting,” recorded interview, 1979, Northeastern University Archives, AV2316, M120.

⁵⁰² Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁵⁰³ Sandy Horn, *Gaia’s Guide* (San Francisco: Women’s Up Press, 1981).

⁵⁰⁴ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide* (1978).

advertisements stressed, inexpensive.⁵⁰⁵ All of these establishments were vegetarian as they were part of left-leaning, activist communities in which a significant portion of the clientele was vegetarian. The note about the expense of the food speaks to another important component of what made the restaurants vegetarian apart from ethics and the desires of their clientele.

Vegetarianism was very popular in many activist communities and as part of the counterculture, not only due to ethical values but economic motivations. As documented by historians of vegetarianism in the United States, Karen and Michel Iacobbo, counterculture, back to the land movement leaders and hippie radio show hosts advocated for vegetarian lifestyles.⁵⁰⁶ Cost impacted feminist restaurants' and cafés' choices to be vegetarian. Food did not have to be vegetarian for the restaurant to be feminist but often, vegetarian food was the cheapest to make and to sell at the cheapest price. Vegetarian foods had fewer associated health risks related to refrigeration and preparation. Furthermore, meat was more expensive to store and possible spoilage was a larger economic liability. Decisions about money were vital to the feminist identities of these establishments.

As I discussed in chapter 4, in January of 1978 the organizing committee of the Ottawa Women's Centre decided to increase participation of women in Ottawa by creating Chez Nous Café.⁵⁰⁷ The managers of Chez Nous, a collective of members from the business committee of the Ottawa Women's Center, discussed the menu, especially the price of the dishes, endlessly at meeting after meeting at which they took detailed

⁵⁰⁵ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1981).

⁵⁰⁶ Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo, *Vegetarian America: a History* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004).

⁵⁰⁷ Chez Nous, "May 8, 1978 General Meeting Minutes," 1978, Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Box 509, Folder 18.

meeting minutes.⁵⁰⁸ Ultimately, Louise Leclair who was part of the group of women who “formulated the idea of the women’s centre as a self-sustaining organization” submitted a formal proposal “to the Policy Committee outlining a café-type business; open to women only and offering light lunches, games and eventually beer and wine.”⁵⁰⁹ The food they decided upon was simple to prepare, which reduced the number of women that would need to work in the space. The light dishes included a “pate de fois (sic) plate ([which] included celery, black olives, four slices of French bread), a cheese plate (Oka and Balderson cheddar cheese, apples, grapes, four slices of French bread), and Greek salad (cucumbers, tomatoes, feta cheese, oil, vinegar, dresses, four slices of French bread, black olives).”⁵¹⁰ Although the café sold meat, the operators of Chez Nous saw their menu as feminist. Within their business meeting notes, the creators of Chez Nous stated that by selling cheap or reasonably priced food, they were enacting their feminist principles. Women made less money than men in both the United States and Canada, especially during the late 1970s when Chez Nous operated.⁵¹¹ Therefore it was important to the owners that the food that they sold would be accessible to as many women as possible; the prices were not to be prohibitive. This choice spoke to the founders’ intersectional awareness of gender and class.

Environmental activist and engineer, Patricia Hynes and writer, Gill Gane, created Bread and Roses Restaurant of Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1974. In their initial business prospectus they wrote that,

⁵⁰⁸ Chez Nous, “February 14, 1978 Meeting Minutes,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Box 509. Folder 18.

⁵⁰⁹ Chez Nous, “Proposal.”

⁵¹⁰ Chez Nous, “Proposal.”

⁵¹¹ Doris Weichselbaumer and Rudolf Winter-Ebmer, “A Meta-analysis of the International Gender Wage Gap,” *Journal of Economic Surveys* 19, no. 3 (2005): 479-511.

We are starting a women's restaurant, a place where women and their friends can get together and eat in a feminist atmosphere. We'll serve mainly good healthy food, much of it vegetarian. At least as important as the food is the atmosphere we hope to create. We want this to be a community centre where there will be a range of entertainments and activities for the women of Boston. We want it to be a place where any women can feel comfortable, whether she comes on her own or with friends.⁵¹²

Thus, Hynes created a simple and nourishing menu. There were soups, breads, and salads, to which she gradually added more selections of soup. Eventually Hynes and her staff offered three entrees each night: two vegetarian dishes, one of which was called the "Poor Women's Special."⁵¹³ Hynes and Gane wanted people in their community to be able to afford the meals. However, unlike their counterpart feminist restaurants, in the Bread and Roses business prospectus Hynes and Gane mentioned that they would be mindful of the needs of the women who wanted to lose weight. Feminist restaurants, such as the Los Angeles Women's Saloon, and feminist and lesbian publications during this period usually spoke of weight loss programs with disdain, as they believed that diets were a way for the patriarchy to further shame women's bodies. The Women's Saloon avoided diet plates and sodas deeming them insulting to large-sized women.⁵¹⁴

Bloodroot had a sign above the counter that said, "Because all women are victims of Fat Oppression and out of respect for women of size, we would appreciate your refraining from agonizing aloud over the calorie count in our food."⁵¹⁵ However, Bread and Roses,

⁵¹² Patricia Hynes, "Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses," October, 1974, 2, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University, Papers of Patricia Hynes, Box 1, Folder 3.

⁵¹³ Hynes, "Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses."

⁵¹⁴ Jan Whitaker, "Women's Restaurants," *Restauranting Through History*, June 18, 2013, <https://restaurant-ingthroughhistory.com/2013/06/18/womens-restaurants/>. The menu reflects feminist positions. There are no diet drinks or low-calorie specials because the restaurant did not want to offend its overweight women clients. Sharon Johnson, "In Los Angeles Saloon Women Get The Red Carpet," *Lakeland Ledger*, June 16, 1976, 4D,

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=rwEhk56xNqMC&dat=19760616&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>.

⁵¹⁵ Maria McGrath, "Living Feminist: the Liberation and Limits of Countercultural Business and Radical Lesbian Ethics at Bloodroot Restaurant," *The Sixties* 9, no. 2 (2016): 189-217.

in its initial incarnation was also trying to cater to its broader female clientele and not make women feel judged for being interested in losing weight.

There was a handful of feminist restaurants whose owners marketed the locations as higher class or gourmet, but these tended to be located in metropolises, such as New York, where resources for working-class lesbians and feminists were readily accessible as there were feminist and lesbian restaurants and cafés already aimed at that community.⁵¹⁶ In the mid-1980s, La Papaya advertised itself as “New York's Newest Women's Restaurant” that served gourmet vegetarian food.⁵¹⁷ However, these restaurants interested in being associated with elite labels were largely the exception. In the case of La Papaya, calling the restaurant “gourmet” may have only been a marketing technique as playwright Sarah Schulman remembers it not as a fancy restaurant, but rather as a lesbian hangout in a working-class, Irish and Latino neighborhood without exorbitant prices.⁵¹⁸ The majority of feminist restaurants were operating on the lowest level and promoting themselves as such. Tactics like Eunice Hundseth’s creation of the soup restaurant, Susan B’s of Chicago in 1973, in which she chose to sell soup because it could be made simply and sold cheaply, were more prevalent. As chronicled by the *Chicago Magazine* in 1975, Hundseth served one meat soup and one vegetarian soup each day, later adding a salad and a dessert fruit cup.⁵¹⁹ Food was the medium through which feminist activism and community were enabled—making cheaper food improved the accessibility to feminism itself.

⁵¹⁶ See the directory in the appendix.

⁵¹⁷ Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1980).

⁵¹⁸ Sarah Schulman, interview by Alex Ketchum, August 11, 2016.

⁵¹⁹ “Susan B’s,” *Chicago Magazine*, July 1975. For more information on Susan B’s, see: A. Finn Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Even when the owners of feminist restaurants and cafés incorporated class-consciousness into their business plans, they would often undermine their own principles while trying to enact them. On the one hand, women were embodying their feminist principles by making food and the space more readily available and accessible. Yet, on the other hand, they were compromising their feminist principles by underpaying themselves and relying on what sociologist Arlie Hochschild in 1979 would later call, “emotional labor.”⁵²⁰ By keeping the restaurant in business through depending on in-kind labor, they found themselves in a complicated situation. At the Common Womon Club in Northampton, all the employees were “super broke,” at times making less than \$70 a month.⁵²¹ One founder of the restaurant, Marjorie Parsons, said that she was paid in part by being able to fulfill her dream of creating a women’s space, but when a woman was trying to operate a space where she was charging the least possible for her product, turning a profit was near impossible.⁵²² The owners of Bloodroot have repeatedly stated that they also did not make money in the endeavor.⁵²³ These feminist principles of making the food financially accessible to the masses usually led to the restaurants’ demise. Paying women to cook was an activist gesture in that it gave economic value to the typically female task of cooking. It gave monetary value by paying for a task traditionally unpaid in non-feminist spaces and kitchens, heightening the respect the task received within a capitalist framework, which awarded value with money. However, even when profits were distributed among the collective staff, most employees remained underpaid, forcing them, in turn, to live in poverty. Therefore, even though the goal was

⁵²⁰ Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure,” *American Journal of Sociology* (1979): 551-75.

⁵²¹ Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁵²² Parsons, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁵²³ Miriam, interview by Ketchum, April 5, 2011.

to undermine sexist traditions, this type of remuneration played directly into the very sexist, capitalist traditions it was seeking to undermine. This kind of contradictory economic dynamic was prevalent. Emotional gratification did not pay the bills. Furthermore, undercharging customers and under paying staff made it difficult to maintain feminist ethics in the purchase of the raw food goods. Often what made the food feminist was what was behind the menu: the sourcing of the products.

The Brick Hut Café of Berkeley, California offers an example of the difficulty of sourcing products in a feminist manner. The Brick Hut's staff served breakfast and lunch food.⁵²⁴ At one point, when former beauty pageant winner and spokesperson for the Florida Citrus Commission, Anita Bryant, developed a media campaign against gay rights in Dade County, the Brick Hut collective discussed boycotting Florida orange juice. The one straight male in the group found this decision absurd, but the rest of the group was in favor. He asked what customers would think of a breakfast café that did not serve juice. The women replied that when their customers would ask, they would explain how they could not promote a product that capitalized on their oppression.⁵²⁵ The man left the collective and the women placed a poster in the window announcing the boycott. This decision came at a cost when their windows were broken. Joan Antonuccio, one of the owners of the Brick Hut, said that while they expanded the menu offerings over time, the restaurant continued to serve mostly standard breakfast and lunch items. However, she wanted to, in her own words, "serve only organic, cruelty-free eggs because the chicken industry is a nightmare, but they were not available. Customers who raised

⁵²⁴ Antonuccio, "Brick Hut," interview by Ketchum.

⁵²⁵ Sharon Davenport. "LGBT Pride: Remembering the Brick Hut Café – Part 1," *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <http://www.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-1/>.

chickens brought us some, but not enough; we used upwards of 3,000 eggs per week.”⁵²⁶ Otherwise, she noted, “We were in Berkeley; we served Berkeley food, which meant a lot of vegetarian options and we made everything from scratch.”⁵²⁷ Berkeley, California, as Antonuccio gestured towards, housed a large progressive and hippie community filled with vegetarians.⁵²⁸ Antonuccio’s story reflects the tension that these establishments faced between dreams and reality. Economic concerns and practical constraints, such as being able to obtain local eggs, curtailed some of their dreams. When practical decisions limited owners’ ability to enact all of their goals, rhetoric and discourse around the food allowed the owners to continue to promote their feminist vision.

Feminist restaurants, besides the Brick Hut, also thought politically about the sourcing of their products. Selma Miriam and Noel Furie of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant continuously tried to serve local and seasonal food. They wanted to buy products from local industries and would act in solidarity with growers and farms that were protesting. As stated in their interviews, these choices were how they showed class and activist solidarity.⁵²⁹ As reported in *The Lakeland Ledger Newspaper* in 1976, the Los Angeles Women’s Saloon likewise supported California farm workers’ protests against unfair wages and they boycotted lettuce and grapes.⁵³⁰ The article emphasized how the restaurant served crab quiche and vegetarian meatloaf instead. Thinking about

⁵²⁶ Antonuccio, “Brick Hut,” interview by Ketchum.

⁵²⁷ Antonuccio, “Brick Hut,” interview by Ketchum.

⁵²⁸ Berkeley, California and the greater Bay Area, which included San Francisco, was a center of countercultural food movements. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

⁵²⁹ Noel Furie and Selma Miriam, “Bloodroot Interview,” in conversation with the author, December 13, 2011.

⁵³⁰ Whitacker, “Women’s Restaurants”; “Los Angeles Women’s Saloon and Parlor,” *Lost Womyn’s Space*, April 22, 2012, <http://lostwomynspace.blogspot.ca/2012/04/los-angeles-womens-saloon-and-parlor.html>; Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay LA: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2009), 188-9 and 206.

the source of the ingredients was not just about supporting local agriculture or acting in solidarity with boycotts. Rather, when Mary Banheman, owner of Ruby's in Minneapolis Minnesota, decided to use fresh rather than frozen potatoes, she was interested in making food taste good, which feminist restaurant owners saw as part of their politics.

Did feminist food taste differently? While the idea of what made food “good” was subjective, the idea that feminist restaurants needed to serve “good” food was both prevalent and political. Flavia Rando, who cooked for the Women's Coffeehouse in New York City, believed that “people deserve good food” and “it was a matter of dignity.”⁵³¹ Rando, when designing the menu for the Women's Coffeehouse, took great pride in offering a delicious menu. She would source fresh ingredients at Hunts Point, the produce market for all New York City food retailers, and at the wholesale warehouses that supplied packaged goods to New York City retailers. She learned this skill set while working with the Lesbian Food Conspiracy, a project of Radicalesbians, in prior years.⁵³² Additionally, she purchased cheese and bread at small traditional Italian stores and artisans. Preparing nourishing, affordable meals was part of an ethics of care that placed human needs above advancing a business agenda. Selma Miriam and Noel Furie echoed the desire to serve “good” food, pushing against stereotypes that vegetarian food was bland.⁵³³ Numerous cultures around the world have rich vegetarian traditions and tasty cuisines and Bloodroot drew upon these traditions. Bloodroot employed women from a wide range of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. In this space, the women in the kitchen had agency and shared their own cultural food knowledge. As a result, Bloodroot

⁵³¹ Flavia Rando, “New York Feminist Food,” interview by Alex Ketchum, March 7, 2015.

⁵³² Rando, “New York Feminist Food.”

⁵³³ Dozens of restaurant reviews of Bloodroot challenged the misconception that vegetarian food was bland and stated that Bloodroot served delicious food. One example is Joan Cook, “Feminists Publish a Cookbook,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1982.

had a menu with offerings as diverse as the women who have worked in the kitchen over the past four decades. Bloodroot's vegetarian fare has received high praise by restaurant reviewers for almost forty-one years for its satisfying flavors.⁵³⁴ Another lauded feminist restaurant was Big Kitchen of San Diego, California, which *Bon Appétit* magazine named "one of the best places for breakfast in America."⁵³⁵ And yet while flavorful food was always a plus, even at the award-winning Big Kitchen, customers came for more than the food. A regular customer remarked that he usually ordered oatmeal for breakfast because he did not come for the food; he came to socialize.⁵³⁶ Not every restaurant was as successful at making good food. Restaurant reviews from the 1970s recall that the food at Mother Courage was inconsistent, with *New York Magazine's* writer Linda Wolfe in 1974 remarking on how while Mother Courage's cooks did not "skimp on feta cheese, ...main dish offerings were chancy, though. Veal parmigiana (\$3.75) [was] tender and well-flavored, but veal marsala (\$3.90) was, on a recent visit, cloyingly sweet, while veal Garibaldi (\$3.75) was too salty."⁵³⁷ However, the desire to create good food, that nourished bodies and feminist communities, remained important.

Food as a raw material has its own discourse: the working conditions of the farmers, the distance it has to travel, and the kinds of inputs into the soil. What cooks, chefs, and feminist restaurant owners decided to then do with those ingredients was also key to their feminism. Feminism, however, did not end at the plate. Sometimes it was not the type of food that was different but the name. The marketing of their products as feminist showed the owners' awareness of the importance of discourse. Mary Bahneman

⁵³⁴ Cook, "Feminists Publish a Cookbook."

⁵³⁵ LAMBDA Archives, "Big Kitchen: Food for Thought," http://www.lambdaarchives.us/2010_honorees/food_for_thought.htm.

⁵³⁶ LAMBDA Archives, "Big Kitchen: Food for Thought."

⁵³⁷ Linda Wolfe, "Among Friends," *New York Magazine*, May 14, 1973.

started Ruby's in the 1980s as a self-styled "breakfast joint." The restaurant had a simple menu of eggs, pancakes, toast, and other common breakfast foods.⁵³⁸ Ruby's was, as described by the owner, a welcoming place for members of the lesbian and gay communities of the Twin Cities.⁵³⁹ On Ruby's Facebook remembrance page, past customers echo this sentiment.⁵⁴⁰ While the menu seemed typical for a breakfast or brunch spot, the main difference was that the omelets were all named after women.⁵⁴¹ At the Brick Hut Café there were also omelets named after women who inspired the owners: Sister Marion Omelet for a marathon-running nun, Ruth Reid for an early twentieth century lesbian poet and activist, Seven Sisters for the Berkeley feminist construction collective, and the Mendocino omelet for the herb blend that the owners ordered from a woman-owned business.⁵⁴² This process of naming might not seem significant in itself; however, this technique of paying homage to women within the community or famous feminists was not exclusive to Ruby's and the Brick Hut Café. It was a common activist technique in women's spaces of the period, especially those that engaged with cultural feminism.⁵⁴³ Naming products after women seems subtle but it was a way of bringing attention to women's contributions, which have long been hidden and undermined. It was a way of countering subtle but insidious sexism that continuously praised and recognized men's efforts and often erased important female figures in history.

⁵³⁸ Bahneman, in conversation with Ketchum.

⁵³⁹ Bahneman, in conversation with Ketchum.

⁵⁴⁰ Anonymus, "Comment on *Ruby's Café Minneapolis History's* Facebook Page," Facebook, June 29, 2014, www.facebook.com.

⁵⁴¹ Bahneman, in conversation with Ketchum.

⁵⁴² Joan Antonnucio, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part 2" *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <https://ww2.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-2/>.

⁵⁴³ Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

Feminist restaurants challenged the entire process of food production. While women were typically associated with the kitchen, they were not typically paid for this labor, which accounts for, as food scholar, Barbara Haber writes, the understanding that when we typically think of feminism and food we think of the “feminists [who] disdained women's role in the kitchen, seeing it as a symbol of subjugation because of the persistent and repetitious demands made on women throughout history to fill the waiting maws of husbands and children.”⁵⁴⁴ With the unique structural design of feminist restaurants, women were paid for their labor and customers were reminded who was cooking their food. Feminist restaurant owners supported alternative farming practices, they bought raw products from their local communities, they often served vegetarian dishes, and they employed primarily women and thus paid women for a task that was, when confined to domestic spaces, unpaid. They changed the kinds of dishes served, what the items were called, the way the dishes made it to the table, and the way the space was cleaned. Similarly, as chapters 2 and 3 detailed, by disrupting labor practices in the serving of food, feminist restaurant owners altered not only the meaning of the restaurant space to be feminist, but also rendered the food feminist. Such tactics not only upended the problematic gendered hierarchy that existed in dominant restaurant culture but also were part of a strategy that saved money. Self-serve techniques lowered the need for hiring as much staff and could enable restaurants to sell their food at lower prices. Furthermore, they changed the way that customers interacted with the staff, challenging the typical restaurant hierarchy that not only promoted class differences, but gendered and racialized differences as well.

⁵⁴⁴ Barbara Haber, “Cooking with Joy,” *The Women's Review of Books* 21, no. 1 (October 2003), 23.

Depending on the restaurant, making their food feminist revolved around vegetarian ethics, labor issues, cost, and sourcing of products. The reasons that explain why food was framed, viewed, or understood as feminist may seem disparate or jumbled. If “feminist food” meant a different thing in each place, did it really have a meaning?⁵⁴⁵ Such questions were discussed during the 1970s and 1980s as well in feminist and lesbian periodicals, such as the 1978 edition of *Amazon News* “Food as a Feminist Issue” and *Ain’t I A Woman*’s piece on food and feminism.⁵⁴⁶ Even though the meanings of food symbols were as diverse as the feminisms of the restaurant owners themselves, it was still important that they called the food feminist because they wanted to show they had feminist intent behind their cooking. Acknowledging the importance of this discourse was within the feminist framework that politicized the personal. Within these feminist communities then, living one’s politics was intrinsically tied to creating the kind of world that these feminist restaurant owners wanted to see. Furthermore, the rhetoric about the food was grounded in feminist ideologies and the choices made in constructing the menu reflected these ideologies, whether they were about the sourcing of the products, the process of cooking, or the mode of consumption.

⁵⁴⁵ Poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida note that symbols change meaning rapidly but also speak to the deferment of the symbols in that meaning is built on meaning. Jacques Derrida, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

⁵⁴⁶ *Amazon News*, 1978. and *Ain’t I A Woman* 1, no. 7.

Chapter 6. Creating Temporary Space

*The Women's Coffeehouse belongs to us and if it is to survive and thrive, we need to make this all women space a priority in our lives. Working and playing together in a safe space, we'll all get much more than our money's worth.*⁵⁴⁷

- Women's Coffeehouse of Iowa City Community Letter

In the fall of 1981, the pledge committee of the Women's Coffeehouse of Iowa City released a letter to the regular users of the coffeehouse. In addition to announcing that the coffeehouse collective had found a new space for its operation, the committee used the letter as a chance to restate the goals of the coffeehouse, remind users of the history of the space, and speak to the future.⁵⁴⁸ A group of nine women had founded the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective in September 1979. In December, they began operating a women-only coffeehouse that continued for eighteen months. By the summer of 1981, few original collective members remained and this group planned to re-launch the coffeehouse. In its 1981 letter, the pledge committee reminded readers both of the coffeehouse's purpose and goals, stating,

First and foremost [we want] to provide a safe women-only space. All women, regardless of age, creed, sexual preference, political beliefs, race, etc. are welcome here. Our recognition and acceptance of our diversity and differences allows us as a community to share, learn, grow, and become stronger. We want this space available and accessible to all women, both physically and financially. The Women's Coffeehouse is a space for almost any kind of event (except maybe roller-skating).⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ "Women's Coffeehouse: Community Letter," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, The Women's Coffeehouse Histories, Policies, and Finances, 1981-1982 and undated.

⁵⁴⁸ "Women's Coffeehouse: Community Letter." The new address was 529 South Gilbert. Beginning on December 12, the new location would be able to accommodate more women and events than the former space.

⁵⁴⁹ Emphasis in the original document. The note about roller-skating not only placed the coffeehouse within the context of the early 1980s and contemporary popular recreational activities, but the comment speaks to the coffeehouse collective's desire to stay abreast of the current trends and to broaden its appeal.

The Iowa City Women's Coffeehouse held meetings, parties, potlucks, concerts, poetry readings, and brunches.⁵⁵⁰ It was the sole woman-only space in Iowa City, established after the closing of Grace and Rubies feminist restaurant in 1978. Unsurprisingly, the coffeehouse pledge committee's note ended by discussing money.

Coffeehouses retained greater financial flexibility than feminist restaurants and cafés; nonetheless material concerns dominated coffeehouse collective discussions. While the first configuration of the Iowa City Woman's Coffeehouse (1979-1981) had relied solely on donations and voluntary membership dues to cover operating expenses, the pledge committee emphasized that the rent for the new, larger coffeehouse was \$350, nearly double the cost of the past location and as a result, new funding sources were required.⁵⁵¹ Besides rent, operating costs included utilities, the phone bill, and all of the sundry expenses. With the new space the collective also needed to obtain appliances such as a stove, sink, and refrigerator to accommodate cooking community breakfasts, soup dinners, and all of the events listed in its newsletters and calendars.⁵⁵² To ensure the success of the new coffeehouse, the collective launched a massive pledge drive. Operating expenses were between \$450-\$500, so each woman was encouraged to donate \$5-\$10 per month to cover costs.⁵⁵³ However, the letter writers acknowledged class differences between their members. They encouraged wealthier members to contribute more financially, while still emphasizing that pledges were not a requirement for

⁵⁵⁰ "Coffeehouse Calendar," undated, University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, Women's Coffeehouse: Calendar pages, 1981-1983 and "Calendars," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁵⁵¹ "Letter from the Pledge Committee," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Organizational History and Pledge Drives, 1981-1982.

⁵⁵² "Women's Coffeehouse: Community Letter."

⁵⁵³ The \$10 figure was based on a percentage of the past operating expenses.

attending events. Keeping the coffeehouse accessible was a priority for the collective. Additionally, when the organizers realized that pledges would not cover all expenses, they decided to fundraise. These strategies included soliciting donations from individuals and groups that used the coffeehouse, hosting special events, supplementing weekly breakfasts with regular soup dinners, requiring a percentage of the door sales from women that used the space for income-producing events, charging a nominal fee for the rental of kitchen facilities to cover utilities used, and installing a coin operated pool table. The committee finished the note by reminding readers that “the Women’s Coffeehouse belongs to the women who use and support it.”⁵⁵⁴ While the exact conditions of the Women’s Coffeehouse of Iowa City were unique to their location, this letter indicates some of the primary concerns of American and Canadian feminist coffeehouses and speaks to the themes of this chapter.

Owning a feminist restaurant or café required a large capital investment to rent space, buy supplies, and pay workers. While feminist restaurants and cafés raised funds in both traditional and non-traditional ways, as explored in chapter 4, access to permanent space was difficult. Women’s, and especially lesbians’, social positioning due to discriminatory gender, racial, and sexual orientation laws affected whether or not being able to own a restaurant or café was possible.⁵⁵⁵ Feminist coffeehouses expanded participation. Without high fixed costs, coffeehouses enabled women with less money, women from marginalized racial groups, and women with marginalized sexual orientations the ability to create women’s spaces.

⁵⁵⁴ “Women’s Coffeehouse: Community Letter.”

⁵⁵⁵ Chapter 4 delves into the difficulties of financing a restaurant due to discriminatory lending policies in great detail. See also footnote 32.

In chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation, I discuss recurring coffeehouses.⁵⁵⁶ These two coffeehouse chapters will discuss how feminist coffeehouses expanded participation and access to women's space. This chapter explains how coffeehouses operated, particularly how the organizers financed their endeavors, chose the spaces, and who participated. Large sections of this chapter pull from recordings of coffeehouse meetings; the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse (1978-1980) met with consultant Betsy Zelchin to discuss how to establish a non-profit structure and A Women's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis, Minnesota's organizers (1975-1989) recorded the open community meeting they held in order to discuss a series of difficulties that the coffeehouse faced. These recordings are extremely useful as the meetings show a diversity of opinions; debates between attendees are highlighted. The Zelchin tapes detail the actual process for setting up the necessary legal and financial apparatus that enabled a coffeehouse to function: facts that were not available in other archival resources but were only hinted at by looking at business records. A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis's recorded meeting showcased the diverse opinions of more than fifteen participants from inside and outside

⁵⁵⁶ In this dissertation, "coffeehouses" refer to temporary public spaces that served refreshments and whose emphasis was on providing entertainment. Coffeehouses could be one-time benefit shows, such as the benefit for *Hera's Journal* hosted by Judy's Café of Philadelphia on Friday May 9, 1975. Other coffeehouses, such as Moving Mountain Coffeehouse of the Chicago area, existed from 1974 until 2005, changing venues throughout its history but usually renting out local church basements for Saturday lesbian feminist music entertainment nights. Coffeehouses could occur once for special occasions or be recurring events in typically non-explicitly feminist spaces, such as church basements, creating a temporary feminist space. The emphasis on recurring coffeehouses is in part due to the fact that their records were more accessible. An isolated coffeehouse event typically left scant records, either a line mention in a feminist periodical or an event flyer in the archives. Recurring coffeehouses produced business records, published event calendars, and generally generated more documentation of their existence. Confusion arises due to the fact that some cafés that functioned with regular business hours and served coffee in permanent space called themselves coffeehouses despite operating as cafés. To add further confusion, in addition, feminist coffeehouses typically were not too original in their naming. Sixteen establishments within my research were entitled "The Women's Coffeehouse." Three were called "Everywoman's Coffeehouse" and one, "Anywoman." For clarity, I will specify locations of the coffeehouse even when the location was not part of their formal title such as the Denver, Colorado Women's Coffeehouse, the Iowa City, Iowa Women's Coffeehouse, and the Victoria, British Columbia Women's Coffeehouse. *Hera: A Philadelphia Feminist Publication* 1, no. 2 (April/May 1975), Back Cover.

of the organizing collective. The recordings reveal the variety of the struggles the coffeehouse faced and shape the thematic organization of this chapter. Apart from the responses to the questionnaires from A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis's and from the Three of Cups of Toronto (1976-1980), it is rare to find such a rich resource that includes so many perspectives differing from those of the organizing committee.

Coffeehouses began when organizers intended to create permanent feminist spaces such as a restaurant, café, bookstore, or women's center, or to fill a gap after a permanent institution had closed. In 1974, the organizers of Michigan's Ann Arbor Coffeehouse proposed a coffeehouse to provide a space where women could discuss later opening a feminist business or women's center.⁵⁵⁷ Similarly three women began the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse to fill a gap not met by the Boston Women's Center in November 1980.⁵⁵⁸ The Iowa Coffeehouse opened after Grace and Rubies closed.⁵⁵⁹ Coffeehouses were rarely imagined as the end goal but as transitional operations; in practice however, recurring coffeehouses would become community fixtures.

Feminist and lesbian organizers were not the only people to create coffeehouses. As demonstrated by the list in the countercultural publication, *The Peoples' Yellow Pages of Massachusetts*, the Cambridge area had Nameless Coffeehouse (its actual name), which was "open to the community and had performers"; Off the Runway, a military coffeehouse; Rainbow Trout Teahouse, which specialized in music, poetry, and stories; The Sun, which had an arts and crafts center in addition to music five nights a week; and

⁵⁵⁷ Molly Reno, "Women's Coffeehouse," *Herself: Women's Community Journal* 3, no. 4, August 1974.

⁵⁵⁸ Betsy Zelchin, "Coffeehouse Meeting," recorded presentation, 1979," Northeastern University Archives. AV2318, M120.

⁵⁵⁹ "Meeting Minutes October 28, 1978," Northeastern University Archives, Somerville Women's Educational Center 1975-1983 (M26), Box 4 "Projects: Coffeehouse: Fliers and Notes," Folder 65: Philosophy and Notes.

Wit's End, which the publication described as "a new community coffeehouse."⁵⁶⁰

Although the coffeehouse concept was not exclusive to feminists, feminist coffeehouses were unique because of their focus on the women's community.

This chapter draws on the works of spatial theory about temporary women's space and queer space. The editors, Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, in *Queers in Space* argue that queer space is not always a fixed location; rather, queer spaces can be temporary geographies, areas made queer by the temporary users and usages. A public park becomes a queer space when gay men cruise at sunset. These temporary geographies are not bound by fixed boundaries but by temporalities. While the editors argue that certain spaces are more conducive to temporary queer if the location has less formal constraints such as parks compared to private enterprises, queer individuals also transform the space. As a result, queering space is a multidirectional, give and take, relational process.⁵⁶¹ Geographer Julie Podmore applies this theoretical lens when discussing women relationships and lesbian bonding, using the case study of Montreal. Although Montreal had a delineated gay space called "The Village," this region was dominated by gay, and particularly white, male culture. Podmore argues that lesbian spaces in Montreal since the 1960s have been peripheral and existed on the same plane as straight spaces. Lesbians transformed the space through performative actions such as silent exchanges and looks, creating a kind of layering of space.⁵⁶² For straight shoppers, St. Laurent Boulevard is solely a commercial street filled with restaurants and

⁵⁶⁰ *The Peoples' Yellow Pages of Massachusetts*, Sophia Smith College Archives, Women's Liberation Collection, Series II: United States, Catalogues, Directories, Guides, Box 6.

⁵⁶¹ Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997).

⁵⁶² Julie Podmore, "Lesbians in the Crowd: Gender, Sexuality and Visibility Along Montreal's Boul. St-Laurent," *Gender, Place and Culture* 8, no. 4 (2001): 333–55.

stores, whereas lesbians passing one another on the same street view the space as a prime location for cruising, an act unnoticed by community outsiders. Gay villages, such as the one in Montreal, are able to be dominated by gay men who still retain their male privilege and greater access to capital and higher wages than their female and genderqueer and gender non-conforming counterparts. Within the feminist and lesbian feminist communities, only the individuals with relatively more privilege within that group would be able to start feminist restaurants and cafés.

Money Matters

Coffeehouses cost less than feminist restaurants to begin because they required fewer investments in infrastructure. Collectives financed coffeehouses by charging for events, gathering donations, and occasionally selling memberships. In a 1974 flyer, the founders of the soon-to-open Clementyne's restaurant of Toronto advertised the space as a restaurant during the day and a venue for evening events.⁵⁶³ The upstairs offices were designated for use by women's groups such as *Other Woman Newspaper*, Wages Due Collective, and the Women's Information Centre. The second floor would have had a meeting room, smoking lounge, and a barbershop. The restaurant and café were going to be on the main floor and the basement would have a pool table. While Clementyne's never opened, a group of women, frustrated by this failure decided to begin a coffeehouse. In a letter to potential members, the Three of Cups collective said that its coffeehouse would be a space to socialize, listen to music, and enjoy refreshments in

⁵⁶³ "November 23 Clementyne's Party Flyer," Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Clementine's (sic) Café (Toronto, ON) 1974-1976 Archives, Box 20.

church basements around Toronto.⁵⁶⁴ Clementyne's had been the dream. The Three of Cups of Toronto was not the dream; The Three of Cups actually opened and provided a space for socializing and entertainment. Coffeehouses that occurred regularly, such as the Three of Cups, still required significant commitment of time and energy. As the collective that organized Three of Cups stressed to its members, getting a few individuals to make the coffeehouse occur regularly required "immense effort."⁵⁶⁵ Coffeehouses required lower capital investment than feminist restaurants, yet money still mattered.

Coffeehouse collectives began fundraising efforts before opening. The Ann Arbor Women's Coffeehouse collective, sold posters, t-shirts, and pottery at the local art fair.⁵⁶⁶ As documented by its meeting minutes, the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse collective researched the potential to obtain start-up capital from the Haymarket Foundation and the Artists Foundation of Boston. In addition to applying for grant money, the Somerville collective once held a raffle for two tickets to lesbian musician Holly Near's concert, which local women's music production company, Allegra, donated. The collective sold raffle tickets at \$0.75 each, raising approximately \$150.00, which it deposited in its account at the Feminist Credit Union. The collective members considered holding their own benefit concert with local women artists performing. Despite compiling a list of possible venues, performers, and technicians, the collective decided to not hold the concert until after it was more established.⁵⁶⁷ Instead, it considered other fundraising opportunities such as holding additional raffles, seeking out loans, organizing flea

⁵⁶⁴ "Interview about Three of Cups Excerpt," Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Three of Cups, Archives, Box 105, Folder 2.

⁵⁶⁵ "Interview about Three of Cups Excerpt."

⁵⁶⁶ Reno, "Women's Coffeehouse."

⁵⁶⁷ This decision was on the advice of Allegra Productions that a concert could pose a financial risk. "Meeting Minutes October 28, 1978."

markets, hosting a women's dinner and evening event, finding benefactors, and selling memberships or shares.⁵⁶⁸ The members also discussed approaching women they knew for possible donations of supplies and equipment instead of money. Similar financing efforts allowed groups like the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse to begin eventually. In a letter the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective wrote to its community, reminding attendees of its simple beginnings, the members recounted that the women built the coffeehouse by "begging or borrowing chairs, tables, and coffee cups."⁵⁶⁹ Acquiring second-hand furniture reduced operating costs.

Such fundraising efforts did not end after coffeehouses commenced operations. After the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse moved into a larger space, the collective could not pay the new rent with its former fundraising methods, so it established a fundraising committee. In August 1981, the committee released a report suggesting pledges and subsequent monthly periodic contributions; garage sales and yard parties; dances (one member volunteered to coordinate six to eight dances a year); and another member volunteered to organize a dinner open to the community.⁵⁷⁰ These continuous fundraising events typically supported the mission statements of the coffeehouses by creating programming for women or lesbians or feminists in their communities. Constantly asking for money could become a grating task, but when fundraising efforts were incorporated into events integral to the coffeehouse's mission, the effect was less jarring.

Common fundraising techniques included selling memberships, requesting a commitment of a monthly donation, and asking for door donations. When the Iowa City

⁵⁶⁸ "Meeting Minutes October 28, 1978."

⁵⁶⁹ "Women's Coffeehouse: Community Letter."

⁵⁷⁰ "Flyer from August 25, 1981," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

Women's Coffeehouse collective circulated a questionnaire asking how much women were willing to contribute to the coffeehouse financially, the average member felt comfortable donating about \$5 a month (responses ranging from \$2-\$10).⁵⁷¹ Even if women in the community did not have money to donate, women, like one coffeehouse member in the Iowa City community, donated her handy-woman labor and indicated as such when she returned the donation slip.⁵⁷² Other coffeehouses, such as Massachusetts' Somerville Women's Coffeehouse, released a yearly membership donation request. The first year the collective requested \$1. In their second year, it raised the request to \$2 so that the collective could give the other half of the raised money to the performers at their events.⁵⁷³ The remaining money covered the cost of food and publicity.

Generally, the feminist coffeehouse collectives were aware of class issues. Most coffeehouses had sliding scales for participation and did their best to keep costs low. When the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse discussed selling memberships as a fundraising technique during a collective meeting, the members worried that memberships would promote classist attitudes. The collective eventually settled on implementing memberships but made clear that it did not want the coffeehouse to be exclusive, and any woman could attend events whether or not they were a member.⁵⁷⁴ A Women's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis also discussed the possibility of memberships at its open community meeting. As one participant explained, a membership did not mean that "you would have to be a member to come to the club but it would mean [the collective] would

⁵⁷¹ "June 30 Meeting Minutes," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Minutes, 1980-1981.

⁵⁷² "June 30 Meeting Minutes."

⁵⁷³ "Flyer Handwritten on Orange Paper," Northeastern University Archives, Somerville Women's Educational Center 1975-1983 (M26), Box 4 "Projects: Coffeehouse: Fliers and Notes," Folder 65: Philosophy and Notes.

⁵⁷⁴ "Meeting Minutes Journal," Northeastern University Archives, Women's Coffeehouse Records (M120), Box 1, Folder: Meeting Minutes 1978-1980.

have sense of budget,” in advance of the year.⁵⁷⁵ Members could receive decreased ticket prices. Memberships would also encourage repeat attendance.⁵⁷⁶ Instead of implementing such policies, for their New Year’s Eve Party (1985), A Woman’s Coffeehouse collective introduced a sliding fee scale, with cheaper entrance fees after the performance.⁵⁷⁷

Women could also volunteer their time as work exchange to attend the event for free.

Lesbians did not run every feminist coffeehouse, but were actively engaged in most. As a group, lesbians in the 1970s and 1980s had few financial resources and it was common to allow pay-what-you-can or work trade.⁵⁷⁸ As women, they already were paid less and

⁵⁷⁵ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Meeting Cassette Tapes, 1983.

⁵⁷⁶ The goal was to make women feel more invested in the space. A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁵⁷⁷ “New Year’s Eve Party Flyer,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Miscellaneous and AWC Poster, 1984-1985.

⁵⁷⁸ As historian Heather Murray has argued, the relationship that lesbian feminists had with money in the 1970s was fraught. She demonstrates that not only did lesbian feminist businesses have to contend with a poorer clientele, but also the idea of making money was seen as exploitative. For example, Murray says “the lesbian national newsletter *Lesbian Connection* [started in the early 1970s in East Lansing, Michigan] had to recognize that its lesbian readership and in turn the lesbian market could be quite poor as well...As a general stance, the *Lesbian Connection*, which was “free for all lesbians,” characterized its readership as financially pinched. In a letter to the editor called “Lesbianism on a Budget,” a lesbian living in Pittsburgh explained her view that much of “lesbian oppression is directly economic—low wages, etc. . . . We live in a high pressure advertising environment, especially in a city . . . very little in our lives but sheer necessity teaches us to use money wisely. I try to spend what money I have to spare (after rent and food and light and household expenses) in a way that’s good for me and for the lesbians of Pittsburgh.” Accordingly, advertising encouraged lesbians to practice the same kind of monetary exchange that this Pittsburgh lesbian advocated. If lesbians must buy at all, they should buy from other lesbians, a kind of strategy for ethical consumption that had been taken up earlier in the twentieth century by African American communities, for example.” Murray added that “For these lesbian producers, asking for a lot of money and perhaps even making a living from writing, special skills, or art rendered that product less poignant and themselves exploiters rather than supporters of the lesbian community.” Heather Murray, “Free for All Lesbians: Lesbian Cultural Production and Consumption in the United States during the 1970s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (2007): 251-275. In the Canadian context, gender studies scholar Christina Rousseau has demonstrated that Canadian lesbian activist organization Wages Due, based primarily out of Toronto, drew a great amount of attention to the economic difficulties that lesbians and especially lesbian mothers could face. Rousseau notes that “forcing lesbian mothers to either live alone and support themselves or return to their heterosexual relationships was not a viable option for many women when we consider the kinds of jobs available to women in the 1970s: low waged, precarious, and in feminized job ghettos. Lesbian mothers struggled with choosing between raising children alone (on a low income) or remaining in an undesirable marriage until children were older. When lesbian mothers attempted to fight

they likewise would face discrimination based on their sexual orientation. Additionally, the returned questionnaires from A Women's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis indicated many of the participants had children, making entertainment at \$1-\$2 per event sometimes a burden. Coffeehouse collectives also demonstrated some understanding of how class intersected with other identity factors like being a lesbian or a woman of color, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Feminist coffeehouse collective meeting minutes, whether from Iowa or Minneapolis, showed that these collectives constantly discussed financial matters. As noted in the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective meeting minutes from the fall of 1980, the members were interested in re-evaluating their goals, but their main task was "to keep the joint open, to keep responsible to the community, to keep it clean, to do the long range planning."⁵⁷⁹ Throughout meeting minutes their discussions focused on finances, plans for upcoming shows, changing locations, and how to train volunteers. Likewise, A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis collective's meeting minutes reflected a similar focus on money and event planning. The December 1984 meeting notes showed that even when a meeting was supposed to center on preparations for a specific event, in this case its New Year's Eve Party, and on hiring a new collective member, money issues dominated discussions.⁵⁸⁰

for custody in the court system, they would often lose. Their choices were, therefore, constrained. The issue of choice was also important for heterosexual women who, for a variety of reasons, also wanted options outside of relationships with men or poverty." Christina Rousseau, "Wages Due Lesbians: Visibility and Feminist Organizing in 1970s Canada," *Gender, Work & Organization* 22, no. 4 (2015): 364-74.

⁵⁷⁹ "September 4, 1980 Meeting Minutes," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Minutes, 1980-1981.

⁵⁸⁰ "December 5, 1984 Meeting Minutes," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1.

While coffeehouse collectives prioritized fundraising, these coffeehouses were not moneymaking schemes. In order to demonstrate how little coffeehouse events made, Karen Voltz, the organizer of the 1978 Kitty Barber and Mary Pelc concert at Sistermoon in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, published the budget and profits from the show in *Amazon: a Midwest Journal for Women*. Voltz collected \$130 in tickets and \$110 went to pay the performers. With the remaining \$20.00, \$11.25 paid for rental of the sound equipment. Ultimately, Voltz showed a profit of \$8.75, noting that the profit was “obviously not the reason I do things.”⁵⁸¹

Financial inexperience and personal insecurities surrounding money made fundraising awkward. One participant at the open community meeting for A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis raised an important point: perhaps the women running these coffeehouses were afraid of the idea of “big money.” She continued to say that at that meeting,

Lots of people [came to the meeting] with money in their pocket even if they don’t have any. And it is really scary to think about big bucks but big bucks [are] out there and we as women are trained to be terrified of big bucks and I think we need to understand that we have it together to do big moves if we want to. If we believe it, we can do it. I know we can do it.⁵⁸²

While the collective proudly announced that it had just raised \$1700 and was going to be passing around a basket for more donations, this participant wanted to emphasize that as women they had been socialized to be afraid of finances. Undercharging and underestimating the collective’s potential hurt everyone involved.

Even with lower overhead costs, money was the cause of constant stress for coffeehouses. After ten years of operation, A Women’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis

⁵⁸¹ Karen Voltz, “Sistermoon,” *Amazon: a Midwest Journal for Women Produced in Milwaukee, Wisconsin* 7, no. 2, April/May 1978.

⁵⁸² A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

could not pay its quarterly \$300 donation to the church that provided space. Although a fundraising campaign yielded positive results, in the taped open community meeting, one member of the coffeehouse stated that, “the coffeehouse is losing money and that’s the problem.”⁵⁸³ She continued that, “the reason why the coffeehouse is losing money is people don’t come and for me that’s a sign of dissatisfaction and that’s why we have this meeting. I don’t think we wouldn’t do this if we didn’t want the coffeehouse to be here.”⁵⁸⁴ Women wanted the coffeehouse because they recognized the importance of having the space but there was constant turmoil amongst users and this lowered attendance. The following section will show how issues of money, space, and attendance were constantly interlinked.

Space

Where did coffeehouses actually exist? Unlike feminist restaurants and cafés that required a large enough population to support the business, feminist coffeehouses could rely on smaller populations. As evidenced by the map in the appendix, coffeehouses existed in large cities such as Astra Plane Feminist Coffeehouse of Philadelphia, and small towns, especially those with universities, such as the Women’s Coffeehouse of Ithaca, New York.⁵⁸⁵ Whether in a small town or large city, coffeehouses typically existed in temporary spaces and oftentimes happened in already demarcated feminist and women’s spaces like women’s centers or feminist bookstores. In communities where a women’s center did not already exist and feminist coffeehouses were the first kind of

⁵⁸³ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁵⁸⁴ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁵⁸⁵ Horn, *Gaia’s Guide*, various editions.

feminist space in the area, coffeehouses typically took place in church basements. Choices over space greatly affected discussions over finances and also attendance.

Churches charged little for the use of space but being in a church was not always ideal. A Woman's Coffeehouse donated \$100 a month to use Plymouth Church's basement. When the collective wanted to use the room with better acoustics it cost an additional \$65 to rent per night. While the church provided an inexpensive venue, at the open community meeting, woman after woman explained how she wished the coffeehouse happened in another location.⁵⁸⁶ The dance floor was too crowded and women complained about there not being enough space to talk. However, if the coffeehouse moved to a larger space, the collective would be in an even more difficult financial situation than the one that provoked having the meeting in the first place. As A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis collective member responded to the suggestion of leaving, "we'd love to get out of the church... [but] the overhead would be a lot higher."⁵⁸⁷ As the collective members explained, it cost a minimum of \$200 to operate each night to cover rental space, equipment, toilet paper, and coffee.⁵⁸⁸ It would have been near impossible to find a cheaper venue than a church basement. Operating out of the Minneapolis Lesbian Resource Center would not have been possible due to fire codes, which was why the coffeehouse ended up in the church in the first place.⁵⁸⁹ At the open community meeting, one participant suggested that the collective move the coffeehouse events to a local bar. Most coffeehouse members opposed, as doing so would have

⁵⁸⁶ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁵⁸⁷ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁵⁸⁸ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁵⁸⁹ Kay Lara Schoenwetter, "A Women's Coffeehouse History," *Coffee Klatch*, 1, 1976, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1.

undermined the coffeehouse's goal of creating a chemical free space. The coffeehouse never left Plymouth Church and in November 1985, the collective sent a letter to the church saying that lack of funds meant it could not pay its quarterly donation of \$300.⁵⁹⁰ Changing spaces was also risky. When the Iowa Women's Collective moved to a larger space, its doubled rent meant that the coffeehouse was under greater financial pressure and made more vulnerable. While a new space had the potential to draw new participants and motivate past coffeehouse members to return, the higher rent outweighed the benefits.

Where a coffeehouse was located impacted who attended. Churches carried specific connotations, and even though feminist coffeehouses were using church basements outside of the context of Christianity, being associated with a church created a barrier to some women participating.⁵⁹¹ Holding coffeehouses in already designated feminist spaces had drawbacks as well. In 1979, a group of women in the Boston area was interested in starting a coffeehouse with the goal that it would eventually become a feminist restaurant or café. The group invited feminist entrepreneurs who were knowledgeable about the law and financial matters to speak to them; one of its guest speakers was Betsy Zelchin who explained the necessary steps for establishing a non-profit organization. When Zelchin spoke to the group, about holding its events in the Boston Women's Center, the group vehemently opposed the suggestion. The group, which would eventually start the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse, did not want to use the Boston Women's Center as that center was already associated with a certain kind of

⁵⁹⁰ "November 1985 Letter," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, A Women's Coffeehouse Letters.

⁵⁹¹ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

woman. The group wanted to create a new kind of space, “where women who might not have found the women’s center welcoming might find a place to go.”⁵⁹² In its meeting minutes it had noted, “ideally we would like to be located in Central Square but... we have discussed the importance of being in a safe and easily accessible location. We have a lot of women realtors to contact.”⁵⁹³ The Somerville Coffeehouse collective understood that location impacted clientele.

As the coffeehouses were not typically housed in fixed spaces with regular operating hours, people not already involved in the feminist community were less likely to know about them. By not attracting much notice, most coffeehouses were able to avoid conflict with antagonistic individuals, yet this concealment meant that the coffeehouses could be more difficult for interested women to locate. At its July 10, 1980 meeting, the Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse collective discussed “How do we wanna be listed at the WRAC (Women’s Resource and Action Center at the University of Iowa) and bookstore? How much do we protect the address?”⁵⁹⁴ The collective decided to tell campus information that it was not interested in being listed. The balance to make the space accessible to women of its community yet protect themselves from hostile individuals was a difficult one to strike. The coffeehouse collective ultimately did not directly advertise the space. However, once a woman knew of the space, she could access it at any time because the collective hid a key on the back of the soda machine.⁵⁹⁵ The Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse collective was especially paranoid, as it had already had an issue with one neighbor. The collective posted the sign “Attention women: Chuck, the boy who

⁵⁹² Zelchin, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁵⁹³ “Meeting Minutes October 28, 1978.”

⁵⁹⁴ “July 10, 1980 Meeting Minutes,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women’s Coffeehouse: Minutes, 1980-1981.

⁵⁹⁵ “July 10, 1980 Meeting Minutes.”

owns the house across the street, now claims he owns the whole parking lot and will call the cops if any of us park in it.”⁵⁹⁶ Striking a balance between the perception of safety and inclusivity could be difficult. Issues of safety stretched beyond relationships with neighbors, but also financial and legal security, as well as relationships with the government.

Legal Status- Non-Profit

The law affected feminist coffeehouses; collectives had to deal with city ordinances, fire codes, and taxation issues. Legal status affected what kinds of spaces the coffeehouses could use. At the July 10, 1980 meeting when the Iowa City Coffeehouse collective was discussing the possible expansion of the coffeehouse, Christie wanted the organization to take out a loan and buy a house. However, she was unanimously shouted down due to the financial risk that that choice would impose. Tess then suggested that the coffeehouse be in peoples’ own homes. Similarly, she was unanimously shouted down, although as the meeting minutes noted, “with slightly less energy” since the collective had used most of their energy on “shouting down Christie.”⁵⁹⁷ No space to hold the coffeehouse was completely neutral, but peoples’ personal homes were especially charged locations and would impede attracting new membership. Once the collective established that it would continue to rent space, it needed to re-establish its legal status. Vicki noted that “FINE, we’re a club and that’s legitimate. Problems would come if we a) advertised which we don’t, and/or b) if we made money, which we also don’t. Important

⁵⁹⁶ “Attention Women: Chuck,” University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, Women's Coffeehouse: Flyers posted, 1981-1982.

⁵⁹⁷ “July 10, 1980 Meeting Minutes.”

to emphasize that we are organization that provides space and not a [business].”⁵⁹⁸

Similar to the discussion around tax statuses for feminist restaurants discussed in chapter 3, to legally be a woman-only space, coffeehouses had to organize themselves as clubs. Clubs could not be for-profit but had to have non-profit status. Part of being a non-profit meant that the coffeehouse had restrictions on how it advertised. The collective reminded its community of that fact when it sent out its “Guidelines for Using the Coffeehouse” letter.⁵⁹⁹ In fact, the nonprofit model was popular amongst feminist coffeehouses and employed by every case study in this dissertation.⁶⁰⁰

When Betsy Zelchin proffered advice to the future collective of the Somerville Women’s Coffeehouse in 1979, she proposed different fundraising schemes, explained how to arrange capital, discussed how to work with the city for permits, and told the collective about how to establish corporate status and apply for non-profit status. Zelchin, as Marjorie Parsons had earlier told the collective, explained that there were various legal statuses the collective could obtain. She explained that the group either had to organize as nonprofit or profit.⁶⁰¹ Nonprofit organizations could pay employees, but the group could not just be a vehicle for people to be paid; a nonprofit organization’s primary purpose needed to be helping community and people could only be paid if that supported the nonprofits’ work. Non-profit statuses were available in both the United States and Canada during the 1970s and 1980s and though the procedures of obtaining the status

⁵⁹⁸ “July 10, 1980 Meeting Minutes.”

⁵⁹⁹ “Guidelines for Using the Coffeehouse Letter,” University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, The Woman's Coffeehouse Histories, Policies, and Finances, 1981-1982 and undated.

⁶⁰⁰ There are feminist coffeehouses where I only know their name and location. As such, I cannot claim that all feminist coffeehouses operated as on the non-profit model.

⁶⁰¹ Zelchin explained that once they wrote the organizational bylaws, the process would be quite simple and take about two months. Zelchin, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

differed slightly, being a non-profit corporation generally provided the same benefits.⁶⁰²

In Massachusetts in 1979, to incorporate as a nonprofit organization cost less than \$35.

Zelchin suggested the bylaws include language like, “Seven people need to be there to make decisions about money, etc. In a nonprofit corporation someone has to be contact

person, etc.”⁶⁰³ Once the collective organized as nonprofit in Massachusetts it could file under federal tax laws as a 501(c)(3) organization and then people could make

contributions to the collective. The contributions were tax deductible and the collective’s money would not be taxed either. Zelchin highly endorsed the incorporated nonprofit model.

⁶⁰² According to the Corporations Canada’s “History of Non-Profit Status” on the Government of Canada’s website, “The concept of a not-for-profit corporation was first added to the federal general corporate statute in 1917. Prior to the Companies Act Amending Act of 1917, federal non-share capital corporations were only created by Special Acts of Parliament. In 1917, section 7A was added to the Companies Act. Section 7A allowed the Secretary of State of Canada to issue letters patent for the creation of corporations without pecuniary gain and with “objects of a national, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, charitable, scientific, artistic, social, professional or sporting character, or the like.” Subsection 7A(6) included a list of the sections in Part I of the Companies Act that did not apply to such a corporation. This included provisions related to shares (e.g. issuance of shares), liability of shareholders and issuance of a prospectus. The provisions in section 7A have not substantially changed since their enactment in 1917. Section 7A was renumbered section 8 as part of the Revised Statutes of Canada 1927. In 1934, the Companies Act was amended to create a new “Part II – Corporations without share capital” of the Companies Act that divided section 8 into sections 139 to 143. The name of the Companies Act was changed to the CCA by chapter 52 of the Statutes of Canada 1964-1965. Over the years non-substantive changes have been made to the provisions including changing the reference to the Secretary of State to the Registrar General of Canada and then simply to the Minister... Since the early 1970s, the federal government has been working to replace Part II of the CCA with a stand-alone federal not-for-profit corporate statute. Seven bills were introduced in Parliament and died on the Order Paper until the 8th attempt finally made its way through the parliamentary process and came into force on October 17, 2011.” In the United States, The structure of tax exemption granted to the charitable and voluntary sector outlined in the United States the Tax Code was developed through legislation enacted between 1894 and 1969. According to Internal Revenue Services, which regulates American taxes, over that seventy-five year period, Congress established the basic principles and requirements of tax exemption, identified business activities of tax-exempt organizations that were subject to taxation, and defined and regulated private foundations as a subset of tax-exempt organizations. For a timeline and breakdown of the history of tax-exempt status, see: Paul Arnsberger, Melissa Ludlum, Margaret Riley, and Mark Stanton, “A History of the Tax-exempt Sector: An SOI Perspective,” Statistics of Income Bulletin, Winter 2008, 105-35, <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/tehistory.pdf>; Corporations Canada of the Government of Canada, “Background Paper- Canada Not-for Profit Corporations Act,” January 26, 2012, <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs05170.html#brief>.

⁶⁰³ Zelchin, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

Nonprofit status restricted aspects of what feminist coffeehouses could do, especially concerning political lobbying and fundraising. The collective members wanted to make their space available for politically active groups and asked Zelchin if sharing their space would be considered political lobbying.⁶⁰⁴ Zelchin emphasized the flexibility of nonprofit status came from how the group framed its activism.⁶⁰⁵ In this case, “bringing in local artists could be phrased in more community terms or educational terms.”⁶⁰⁶ The same was true if the collective charged money for lectures. By writing the bylaws in a particular way, the collective could be classified as a woman-only club, which provided a space where women in the Boston area could learn about music. Nonprofit organizations were allowed to charge membership dues if they stipulated where the money went in their budget. Zelchin warned that the main difference between the federal 501(c)(3) forms and the state ones was that the federal forms asked for more detail.⁶⁰⁷ Careful planning and framing of its bylaws would enable the women to create the kind of coffeehouse that they wanted and still be in line with the state and federal law.

Feminist coffeehouse collectives experienced tensions as they worked to embody their politics while simultaneously trying to do political and social work and navigate the law. In the article “Lest We Begin to Oink” in *Ain’t I a Woman*, in 1970 the anonymous author, reminded feminist organizations that

As we grow in size—as our movement becomes older—our vision of what we want expands and the projects we commit ourselves to increase. There is so much we must do that we find ourselves looking for efficient and reliable ways to get it all done. It is not surprising that the things we choose as efficient ways of working

⁶⁰⁴ Zelchin, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁶⁰⁵ The coffeehouse could allow lobbying groups into the space, but the collective could not lobby under their own name. The collective could host events and shows and collect money for them. Zelchin further responded that if the collective made their bylaws specific that they were a community service organization that served a valid function, they would be fine.

⁶⁰⁶ Zelchin, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

⁶⁰⁷ Zelchin, “Coffeehouse Meeting.”

too often reflect the bureaucratic individual business- like pigshit we have been brought up in or the male-dominated counter left some of us are refugees from. To learn to work collectively we may have to sacrifice much efficiency and that is a difficult thing to sacrifice when we frantically want to struggle to win. Nonetheless we must struggle in ways that enrich and spur growth in our movement, not ways that bureaucratize and stagnate us. We should be concerned about appearing as a group against the system, not a group that looks like part of it. We cannot afford to not question such actions as incorporating, applying for mailing permits that require a subscription list be supplied to the government, or hiring full-time staff people.⁶⁰⁸

The ways that collectives tried to embody their politics could be fraught with tension.

This author wanted collectives to ask themselves if they were bolstering a patriarchal capitalist system that they purported to exist in opposition towards. Following laws, incorporating, and applying for nonprofit status, granted the coffeehouses legal protection. However, the legal protection came from a state that created sexist legislation and was integral to maintaining capitalism. Likewise, not only did collectives need to question their relationship to the state, they also needed to question how they organized themselves. As the author continued,

For example, hiring full-time staff puts certain women in a position to know more about what's going on in the group than other women—no matter how hard the staff tries to avoid this. The staff can afford to be at the office all the time because they are paid while the other women who may be equally committed have to work full-time at jobs they hate or who have children to take care of. Staff people are generally hired at least partially for their ability to run an office or make public contacts—an ability many women don't have because they have not had the privilege to develop that ability. The staff may be willing to teach others, but those others will not be paid to learn and can often not afford the time if they have to work to earn.⁶⁰⁹

In her group, the women all lived collectively and pooled resources and money. She acknowledged that this solution might not be 100 percent possible. Women who were married to men and/or who worked other jobs could not take advantage of the privilege

⁶⁰⁸ "Lest We Begin to Oink," *Ain't I A Woman?*, September 25, 1970, 4.

⁶⁰⁹ "Lest We Begin to Oink."

of living collectively with other Women's Liberation women. Mixed communes could rarely be expected to give financial or time priority to women's liberation work.⁶¹⁰ However, she suggested that there were some things that could be tried: jobs could be split into shifts done collectively so several women with little time could participate, and by pooling resources so women who badly needed the money they received from employers they hated could work on Women's Liberation activities instead. After listing these options, she reminded readers "THESE ARE NOT SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM- REVOLUTION IS."⁶¹¹ She finished her article by stating, "We must avoid bringing about a revolution like corporate business men (which could probably not be done anyway)."⁶¹² This letter challenged collectives to question their relationship with the government and also the relationship between members.

Who ran coffeehouses?

The typical feminist coffeehouse management arrangement was a collective of women, primarily lesbians, who ran the space as volunteers or for small stipends. A Women's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis paid its collective from 1975-1985. When the collective members were seeking to add a new collective member, they wrote on the job application, "we are a collective of six lesbians who work together to produce A Woman's Coffeehouse, and we are looking for a lesbian to join us. This is not a salaried position, but collective members receive a stipend."⁶¹³ At a later community meeting, they explained how much pay each member received: \$10 a week except Candace, the

⁶¹⁰ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 66.

⁶¹¹ Kanter, *Commitment and Community*. Emphasis in the original text.

⁶¹² Kanter, *Commitment and Community*. "Men" underlined in the original text.

⁶¹³ "Collective Member Application," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1.

main manager, who made \$100 a month. Relative to the time and energy required to organize the coffeehouse, this pay was low. At the Full Moon Coffeehouse of San Francisco, California, the main collective, which called itself the “small collective,” received small stipends and the larger collective worked for free.⁶¹⁴ Most coffeehouses did not pay the people who worked there; this influenced the makeup of collectives as a result.

The organizing collective committee members of the coffeehouses typically embodied the goals of the coffeehouse. On the job application looking for a lesbian to join the organizing collective of A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis, the form stated, “We want to open the collective to women of varied cultures, backgrounds and abilities. IF you are interested and can meet the following requirements, we encourage you to apply.”⁶¹⁵ Applicants had to live chemically free, or were supportive of chemically free space, were able to make a one year commitment, were able to work at least one night on most weekends, and that she could attend collective meetings every other Sunday afternoon.⁶¹⁶ Although the application stated that they were looking for diversity, the collective still wanted collective members to embody the coffeehouse’s mission statement of creating a lesbian, chemical free space. Furthermore, even if the collective said that it sought out diversity, as was pointed out at the open coffeehouse community meeting, the kinds of parameters for the applications meant that only certain kinds of women would be able to devote that kind of time, thus limiting class diversity. Also, as some participants in the meeting mentioned, racial diversity would likewise be limited as

⁶¹⁴ “Full Moon Open Community Letter,” GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, Full Moon Coffee House Reunion records (#1992-13), 1974 –1988.

⁶¹⁵ “Collective Member Application.”

⁶¹⁶ “Collective Member Application.”

lesbian women of color in Minneapolis in 1983 as a group typically were lower class.⁶¹⁷

To deal with these issues and in order to mitigate some of the difficulties of running a coffeehouse other work arrangements were sought.

Managing coffeehouses was time and energy consuming, as evidenced by multiple collectives writing letters about issues of burn out. For example, in June 1982, the collective of the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse sent a letter to the users of the space stating,

This is serious. You have been generous in your contributions and the Women's Coffeehouse has managed to survive financially, but we are all suffering from a crisis—of energy. All but one of the women on the coffeehouse collective have served for over a year. Several have served for over two years. Some of the members are leaving the collective soon. We have lots of ideas for improvement, new programs, a better facility, but our energy is bottoming out.⁶¹⁸

The collective desperately needed more help in addition to financial contributions.

Coffeehouses depended on a few people to make the coffeehouses continually happen.

When one collective member quit, the rest of the collective would face greater burdens.

When collectives sought out additional help in organizing the events, responses were mixed. The Three of Cups Coffeehouse of Toronto sent out a questionnaire asking about users' preferences about the desired frequency of the coffeehouse: weekly, every other week, monthly; questions about the kind of music to play; if it should sell food; and asking if that person ever bought food there. More questions followed about whether or not respondents thought that the Three of Cups was a useful and interesting place for women to gather together. After establishing that the process of running a coffeehouse was work intensive, the questionnaire finished by asking the community members if "they would be prepared to help (by joining the collective, helping with planning,

⁶¹⁷ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶¹⁸ "June 1982 Letter," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Organizational History and Pledge Drives, 1981-1982.

decision making, cleaning up, making food, or DJing)” and the respondents typically responded “no,” stating that they could not help because they either lived too far away or didn’t have the time.⁶¹⁹ While on this survey respondents re-established that they thought the coffeehouse was important in their lives, few women were interested in or able to provide the kinds of support that the coffeehouse needed, and the responsibility to manage the coffeehouse continued to fall on a few members in the organizing collective.

The Three of Cups Coffeehouse was not alone in seeking out additional help for the collective, especially at community meetings and in questionnaires. When Minneapolis’ A Women’s Coffeehouse held its open community meetings to discuss the future of the coffeehouse, in addition to asking questions about the space, music, and atmosphere, it likewise asked for the women at the meeting to sign up to join a set of committees.⁶²⁰ The core collective members intended to retain their positions, but they wanted to delegate tasks. They believed that in addition to personally needing to spread out the work, coffeehouse members who joined committees would then feel more invested in making the space better. As Janice, a participant at the meeting stated, she liked “the idea of committees. People have joined the collective that have poured their life into it and high level of dedication desired. Committees will allow more diversity-- so more diverse types of people [could] join the collective without giving as much time.”⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹ “Three of Cups Questionnaires,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Three of Cups, Box 105, Folder 2.

⁶²⁰ There was the survey committee; the committee of handywomen (to make physical improvements, place lights for artwork, and affix ceiling fans); the stereo committee (to buy a second turntable, update sound equipment to play the songs back to back, and to establish expertise on sound equipment); the task force on race issues; a music committee (tasked with buying records and continually assessing how to adapt the music for the majority’s preferences); making an advisory board for women who wanted to take on some smaller tasks; a mailing committee (to meet once every two months to send out the calendar); and lights and sound women (especially for special events). A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶²¹ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

At that meeting, other participants expressed support towards the idea of committees and also suggested the creation of additional committees such as a greeting committee to deal with the fact that sometimes new women would come to the coffeehouse and feel isolated.⁶²² The collectives that organized coffeehouses faced immense pressures and committees were one way of mitigating that pressure.

Being in a feminist coffeehouse collective could feel overwhelming. At the end of the open meeting for A Women's Coffeehouse a former collective member reacted to all of the complaining that happened during the meeting and stated,

I am not a collective member anymore but I am more willing to listen to suggestions from the people who come here all the time rather than the people who never come because they are too angry at the place or think they are too good for the place and I don't feel any love for the coffeehouse in this room and I am really hurt by that. I wanted to come here because I wanted to hear people say "I want to participate" and "I want to pitch in" not "you did this wrong. You did this wrong. You did this wrong." Maybe I have this wrong but I didn't think we would just complain. We can't even afford to spend more money. We can't even afford what we are doing and it is cheap.⁶²³

Another member of the audience remarked, "I don't think you could pay me enough to be in this collective-- everyone wants a lot of different things... We need to take responsibility." She continued with suggestions that "maybe [we can try having] different nights specializing on different things [or] one way to deal with it the is to not expect things to be always our own way. We won't all come together."⁶²⁴ There was no way to be a perfect feminist, but those who actually participated in the coffeehouses collectives faced particular criticism. Another woman responded to this tension:

I want to address something Amy said. It seems like things tend to be really polarized tonight- but the idea of losing the coffeehouse scares me ... I wonder if this tendency towards hostility and to hit against each other is because it is really

⁶²² A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶²³ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶²⁴ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

scary for us and I think something about this meeting was that the agenda didn't fit what I came for and that's ok but what my responsibility is towards the collective and I see that built in terms of the committees and I came here with money in my pocket and I love this place a whole lot and not everything is on the collective and I feel ok with the collective asking for suggestions but there has been a tendency for people to choose this time for people to say what they don't like about the collective and I've been thinking this for the last half hour that these people are going to go away feeling really shitty you know and so I just want to say that --that I am really glad this place is here and I wish there was a meeting with space in the agenda to talk about what we can do to help the committee.⁶²⁵

She wanted to thank the committee members for their work and believed that the criticism of their work originated from their fear about losing the space that had been so important to the feminist and lesbian community of the Twin Cities. Spreading work amongst committees could provide the necessary time and energy to keeping it going. Another participant remarked, "I'd [also] like to respond to what Amy said ... and I'd like to validate what you said... We haven't had committees. We haven't had enough people invested-- we've had a small nucleus and unfortunately we have workshops and we process but we don't honor our own, but I think we need to honor those people right here."⁶²⁶ This led to a chorus of other women chanting, "I think she's right!" and "You go!"⁶²⁷ The women at the meeting then gave a round of applause to the collective members. Regardless of this cheer at the end of the open community meeting, having listened to tapes, which recorded the two-hour meeting, this rally of positivity was short lived. The collective members were critiqued for over two hours with only a two-minute break when the above statements occurred.

⁶²⁵ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶²⁶ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶²⁷ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

This constant criticism that coffeehouse collectives faced also likely led to burnout. After the community meeting for A Women's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis, the collective closed the meeting by stating that due to the responses, it would hold a future community meeting about how

the community can get involved and I think we personally should take that away and I think that's what the next meeting should be about the thing about the committees is not to create more unwieldy things but to get things done. And some of you threw out suggestions for other committees that I think are good-- but the committees are to address things we identified in the collective that we don't get done because we can't take on any more work and those are some things we identified are important. We don't know what the structures of the committees will be. We just haven't addressed them because our meetings are too long and we are too tired and too burnt out or it's something that we need more input on. So we would like your input.⁶²⁸

Collectives had to be realistic about what they could take on and sought help elsewhere.

The methods for soliciting help could lead to other criticisms.

Disagreements over the proper division of work, music, performances, and substance use plagued coffeehouse collectives. As evidenced in the public letter distributed to the Full Moon Coffeehouse community in 1975, ten women, half of the volunteer staff, and one of the owners of the Full Moon Women's Coffeehouse/Bookstore in San Francisco, decided they could no longer be a part of the existing structure.⁶²⁹ They stated that

We, as women, acknowledge our lack of experience in handling and confronting issues of power with other women. We also admit to our lack of experience in creating alternative structures in which we could deal with those issues. We recognize our perceptions of this particular struggle may reflect some of our feelings of hurt and anger. Yet, we have attempted to state clearly the issues involved. We hope this statement will raise vital questions for women to consider and will clear up misrepresentations and rumors that have been spreading in our community.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁸ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶²⁹ The letter was circulated on April 10, 1975. "Full Moon Open Community Letter."

⁶³⁰ "Full Moon Open Community Letter."

Trying to create alternative work structures required experimentation and could lead to problems. Even before opening, early in 1974, the five women of the smaller collective that ran the Full Moon Coffeehouse appealed for volunteers to run the coffeehouse and its affiliated bookstore by agreeing to work shifts. They gave the following reasons to justify volunteerism, reasons which seemed sufficient and for a time remained unquestioned: that women could get satisfaction from this kind of involvement; that women would thus be donating energy to the women's community; that when profits were made there would be profit-sharing; that as time went on and volunteers proved reliable, there would be greater sharing of all responsibilities; and that this would take place by opening up and enlarging the small collective.⁶³¹ The volunteer groups came to be known as "the large collective." As the letter stated, the owners, were for the most part unwilling or unable to devote their full time energies to the coffeehouse and bookstore, needed the work of the volunteers in order for the Full Moon to function. The rest of the letter then describes in detail how the owners were exploiting the volunteers by not paying wages, not sharing responsibilities, and just giving the volunteers drudgework. In addition to not paying attention to the needs of the workers, the food and sound quality of the coffeehouse had gone down, and four members of the small collective were unresponsive to requests for changes. As a result, ten women who had participated, left. The disagreements that happened illustrate tensions in trying to embody politics and issues over wages. When groups within a collective were paid and others were not, resentment built.

Not all disagreements were quite as dramatic as what occurred at Full Moon Coffeehouse, but typical of collectives, interpersonal relationship issues led to conflict.

⁶³¹ "Full Moon Open Community Letter."

As evident in the minutes of the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective meeting, the group bickered. Teasing and small disagreements over matters like whether or not to go to dinner and how to make signs proved meaningless.⁶³² However, some comments in the notes hinted at interpersonal conflict and love triangles that could lead to a collective's demise.⁶³³ Group dynamics could be more difficult to manage when love, friendship, and sexuality would clash over a business meeting. Unlike the Full Moon letter of resignation, the women who wanted a break from the Iowa Coffeehouse repeated that they wanted to leave due to fatigue. In all of these cases, the women participating dedicated a great deal of their time and energy towards these coffeehouses, which could also be trying.

Coffeehouse collectives were not all bad experiences. In 1974, journalist Molly Reno described the process behind the creation of the Ann Arbor, Michigan coffeehouse. In her article "Women's Coffeehouse," Reno described a group of approximately fifteen women who were meeting on Wednesday evenings to plan this type of coffeehouse which they hoped would be open by September. As Reno noted, the

unique aspect of their planning process is that the needed organizing skills, such as publicity, writing proposals and fund raising, are taught to everyone as an integral part of the planning process. In this way the result of the group's energy will produce more experienced, skillful women organizers as well as a woman's coffeehouse.⁶³⁴

⁶³² In Iowa Women's Coffeehouse's collective's member Laura Kate Rotifer's notes from the meetings, she described "lots of bickering" over how to word a sign, yet most collective members just would "chuckle into their beer." On August 21, 1980, "Vicki suggests we all go out to dinner. Christie says in three months" when they would not be as busy organizing. "August 21, 1980 Meeting Minutes," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Minutes, 1980-1981.

⁶³³ "Maybe Christie will make out with Pat instead of VickiChristie tells Mary to drop dead. Mary says she loves it." "August 21, 1980 Meeting Minutes."

⁶³⁴ Reno, "Women's Coffeehouse."

Likewise, in these early stages, the coffeehouse collective functioned as a consciousness raising group where the women would also discuss other common problems experienced by many women in the Ann Arbor area such as child care, health education, the lack of emergency housing, and the need for a women's school to share skills. The group saw the meetings not as a step to forming a change-creating establishment, but rather saw the process as political itself. Reno described the women as "optimistic that the coffeehouse will generate additional energy to meet more of the needs experienced by women in this area. Perhaps, a women's community center will be the eventual form in which these needs are met."⁶³⁵ Thus, the coffeehouse and the collective was not an end in itself. The collective continued to invite others to join these meetings at the Michigan Union. However, this piece was also written when the coffeehouse collective was in its initial stages and full of optimism and yet to be burdened by financial woes.

Coffeehouse collectives typically were comprised of dedicated groups of women who took their duties extremely seriously. Being part of these collectives meant facing criticism, hard work, and little or no pay, but occasional appreciation. On December 12, 1981 the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective received a letter that stated that

many of us in the community wanted a C.H. [coffeehouse]. Quite a few of us did things to help make it happen. You all, the collective, hung up in there every week, shouldered most of the burden, will end up taking most of The Flack and will no doubt get little verbal or physical appreciation. This dyke is giving you this little expression of my personal appreciation... You are beautiful!!⁶³⁶

⁶³⁵ Reno, "Women's Coffeehouse."

⁶³⁶ "Thank You!," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982. December 12, 1981 was the date the coffeehouse re-opened at the new location.

Collectives made coffeehouses possible. These feminist coffeehouses provided a valuable resource to their local communities, becoming centers for socializing, entertainment, resource sharing, and activism.

Who wanted to use the spaces?

Who were the coffeehouses for? Coffeehouse collectives constantly questioned and renegotiated issues over race, sexuality, gender, age, class, and substance use. With lower capital inputs and flexibility in location choice, unlike feminist restaurants that had to appeal to a broader clientele, coffeehouses could cater to more specific groups, either more specific in types of feminism (i.e. socialist, radical, liberal) or identity factors.

Discussions over a coffeehouse's goals typically became discussions about the kinds of people coffeehouses aimed to serve. At the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse collective meeting in 1979, the minutes indicate that the members resolved to exclude men. The organizers stated, "we want to reach all women, not just the feminist community" and "provide an atmosphere conducive both to being by yourself as well as sharing a time with friends."⁶³⁷ They sought to act as information network for the women's community and make the space available for other community groups. Regarding child-care, the collective members discussed the possibility of providing it for mothers and admitted that "We decided that if there is a need for this, the mothers might organize a child-care network among themselves."⁶³⁸ It would be drug and alcohol free, but the collective would attempt to provide for the needs of both smokers and non-

⁶³⁷ "Meeting Minutes 1979," Northeastern University Archives, Somerville Women's Educational Center 1975-1983 (M26), Box 4 "Projects: Coffeehouse: Fliers and Notes," Folder 65: Philosophy and Notes.

⁶³⁸ "Meeting Minutes 1979."

smokers and suggested dividing sections of the room. Instead of alcohol, it would serve fresh fruit, juices, healthy snacks, and hot drinks. Space and time would be made available for local performers, artists, and other events. In its initial meetings no notes recorded how the collective would react if transsexual women wanted to join the collective.⁶³⁹ These kinds of lists were not unique to the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse collective. In fact discussions over the gender, the age, the race, sexual orientation, and ablebodiedness of the desired participants were common at feminist coffeehouses.

Gender (children and trans) and sexuality

*I just want to say that one issue that we have not addressed tonight is that I have a lot of straight women friends that would like to come here but would not feel comfortable here. If we are going to be a lesbian coffeehouse let's call ourselves a lesbian coffeehouse. If we are going to be a women's coffeehouse we need to be receptive to other women who aren't lesbians.*⁶⁴⁰

-A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis, Open Meeting

At A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis' open meeting, one participant wanted to know if it was a space for all women or just for lesbians. Questions over what "woman" meant was not restricted to this Minnesota coffeehouse. The question of gender for women's coffeehouses at first would seem readily apparent, but what was really meant by "a women's coffeehouse?" As discussed in chapter 1, the word "woman" could be code for lesbian, either intentionally or unintentionally. The finance committee of the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse sent the collective a letter asking for clarification, stating that it "would like the collective to let them know if the coffeehouse is considered a women's

⁶³⁹ "Transsexual" was the more commonly used word during the 1970s and 1980s. "Transgender" has become more popular since the late 1980s.

⁶⁴⁰ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

space or a lesbian space.”⁶⁴¹ The collective was evidently interested in exploring these questions because in the Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse archives, an article appeared multiple times about lesbian baiting and the tensions between lesbian and straight women within feminist movements.⁶⁴² To add more confusion, the language around lesbian coffeehouses focused on “women loving women.” Where then, did bisexual women fit? *Hera: a Philadelphia Feminist Publication* in December 1975 ran an article entitled “My Boyfriend Dropped Me Off at the Lesbian Coffeehouse” which explained the trouble that bisexual women faced in feminist women’s spaces.⁶⁴³ Part of the reluctance to call lesbian spaces, “lesbian,” stemmed from the fear of the “lavender menace” and the fraught role of lesbians within some fractions of the feminist movements. Furthermore, labeling themselves as “women’s” instead of “lesbian” allowed coffeehouses to be a space for questioning women, as Flavia Rando explained when discussing the Women’s Coffeehouse of New York City.⁶⁴⁴ In 1974, the announcement for the opening of the Ann Arbor Women’s Center and Coffeehouse said that it would be a “resource for women just coming out,” meaning that women who attended might not yet have begun identifying as “lesbian,” and calling it a “lesbian coffeehouse” could turn questioning women away.⁶⁴⁵ Feminist coffeehouses struggled to define what they meant by “women” because how they defined the word could expand or restrict their community and impact.

⁶⁴¹ “Letter from the Finance Committee,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women’s Coffeehouse: Organizational History and Pledge Drives, 1981-1982.

⁶⁴² “Lesbian Baiting,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, in multiple files.

⁶⁴³ “My Boyfriend Dropped Me Off at the Lesbian Coffeehouse,” *Hera: A Philadelphia Feminist Publication* 1, no. 5, December 1975, 17.

⁶⁴⁴ Flavia Rando, “New York Feminist Food,” interview by Alex Ketchum, March 7, 2015.

⁶⁴⁵ Judy Gibson, “Ann Arbor Women’s Center and Coffeehouse,” *Ain’t I A Woman* 3, no. 7, December 1974.

After the fundraising committee of the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse asked if the space was a women's space or a lesbian space, the committee's next question in the letter to the collective asked "IF it is considered a women's space what about boy children?"⁶⁴⁶ While the feminist coffeehouses that called themselves "women's coffeehouses" were clear about banning men, boy children posed a difficult dilemma and the question over boy children was not unique to the Iowa coffeehouse. When A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis sent its questionnaire to coffeehouse participants, the responses about boy children varied. As a result of the broad range of responses, the coffeehouse collective sent out a second questionnaire specifically focused on the role of children in the coffeehouse. This second questionnaire had twelve questions, which ranged from whether or not the individual filling out the survey was a mother herself, until what age should boys be allowed if at all, and if women were interested in paying extra for childcare.⁶⁴⁷

These anonymous surveys elicited strong emotional responses. One woman remarked,

I feel very strongly about being able to bring my son to the coffeehouse. I would feel very UN-supported as a lesbian mother if I couldn't bring my son. I understand putting an age limit on male children-- possibly twelve years old. It is very important that my son meet other children with lesbian mothers-- so meeting other lesbian moms would be great. I can envision potluck lunches or suppers for lesbians and their children or some planned outings-- sliding and hot chocolate, roller-skating and treats. In California, a group of lesbians rent a roller skating rink once a week for all lesbians and their children.⁶⁴⁸

Many women wrote such long responses that they drew arrows directing readers to continue for the rest of their response on the back of the survey. The women who indicated that they had children wrote particularly long responses, indicating how

⁶⁴⁶ "Letter from the Finance Committee."

⁶⁴⁷ "Second Questionnaire," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Questionnaires.

⁶⁴⁸ "Anonymous Questionnaire Responses," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Questionnaires.

important it was that they be able to bring their children. Banning children would mean that lesbian mothers would be restricted from attending the coffeehouse as finding a babysitter could be financially prohibitive. Another mother responded that she would drive one hundred miles to go to the coffeehouse and how much they needed that as a space to bring their kids. She continued to write: "Motherhood does not mean heterosexuality."⁶⁴⁹ Furthermore, the mothers argued that their children benefited from the experience of meeting other children of lesbians. They would face bullying at school for being the child of a lesbian mother. Meeting other children in a similar position helped these children feel less isolated.

Lesbian mothers with sons felt that they faced additional hardships, both from society at large and within the lesbian community. In their responses to the questionnaires, lesbian mothers with sons expressed how other lesbians would refrain from socializing with them because they had boy children.⁶⁵⁰ The divide seemed particularly apparent between the mothers and non-mothers. While some women who did not have children themselves wrote on their questionnaires that they recognized the importance of women being able to bring their children in order to participate, some women were less amenable. One respondent said that she was resentful of the attention given to mothers.⁶⁵¹ Another respondent went as far to say that the idea of children "makes me shudder," that "children should be given up for adoption," and finishing with the comment that she didn't care about the age of boy children allowed at the coffeehouse because "children are children. Awake they are all disgusting."⁶⁵² This respondent was an

⁶⁴⁹ "Anonymous Questionnaire Responses."

⁶⁵⁰ "Anonymous Questionnaire Responses."

⁶⁵¹ "Anonymous Questionnaire Responses."

⁶⁵² "Anonymous Questionnaire Responses."

outlier as even the majority of women who expressed that they wanted the coffeehouse to be for adult women only made clear that they were sympathetic to mothers. The antagonism between mothers and non-mothers was likely provoked due to a lack of communication about coffeehouse policies. During the open community meeting for A Woman's Coffeehouse, one participant asked why kids were running around on the dance floor, because she thought the coffeehouse provided childcare, only to then be informed that the childcare was only provided during the pre-dance performance.⁶⁵³

The question about boy children became more specific when coffeehouse members weighed in on how old the children could be if they were allowed to attend. Responding to the question about age, responses to the questionnaire typically stated that if children were allowed boy children were only welcome until they reached puberty or became more "like men." The collective asked for suggestions for a specific age cutoff and bans were suggested on boys over the age of five, eight, ten, eleven, and twelve, as written in by respondents.⁶⁵⁴ By the tenth annual New Year's Eve party, which occurred shortly after this questionnaire was circulated, the collective announced that "all women, girls, and boys under ten welcome."⁶⁵⁵ This debate about the age of boy children was not unique to A Woman's Coffeehouse. While the Minneapolis coffeehouse's archives provide a comprehensive record of these debates in their questionnaires, taped community meeting, and in the collective's meeting minutes, it is evident that these kinds of discussions about boy children happened in feminist coffeehouse meetings across the

⁶⁵³ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶⁵⁴ "Anonymous Questionnaire Responses."

⁶⁵⁵ "New Year's Eve Party Flyer."

United States and Canada. Event flyers would note “boy children allowed under twelve” and similar statements.⁶⁵⁶

A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis purported to want to encourage diversity, however, the collective integrated transphobic and gender identity discrimination within its policies. On an index card, which was taped to the wall of the coffeehouse, the collective posted a notice to the community “To be re-evaluated Oct/ Nov ’84 Temporary Policy on Transsexuals-- close vote, a decision was made that transsexuals will not welcome at the coffeehouse and will be asked to leave by a collective members. NOTE: not all members are willing to enforce this policy and are not required to do so.”⁶⁵⁷ While there were issues of lesbians being excluded by feminist organizations, lesbian and women’s coffeehouses would also exclude other marginalized groups, particularly transsexual individuals, by using the language “women-born-women.” Lesbian feminist activists founded the Mountain Moving Coffeehouse for Womyn and Children of Chicago (1974-2005) as a “safe-space for womyn-born womyn and their young children.”⁶⁵⁸ Male children over the age of two and transsexual and transgender women were not allowed to attend. The womyn-born-womyn policy generated controversy beginning during the 1980s when pressure was put on the coffeehouse to allow admittance to men, as well as in the 1990s when transgender women contested the it.⁶⁵⁹ However, the organization staunchly defended the policy and never allowed admittance

⁶⁵⁶ GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (#BUS EPH).

⁶⁵⁷ “Policy on Transsexuals 1984,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Policy on Transsexuals.

⁶⁵⁸ Kathie Bergquist and Robert McDonald, *A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago* (Chicago: Lake Claremont Press, 2006), 183. Their policy of exclusion of transgender women was also challenged in the 1990s by a local gay male journalist.

⁶⁵⁹ Bergquist and McDonald, *A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago*, 183.

to men or to transgender women, preferring to close rather than broaden their membership. This kind of transphobia and idea of women-born-women was prevalent, but not unanimously accepted across feminist coffeehouses. At A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis, the collective was divided.

Age

Age divided coffeehouses: it wasn't that certain ages were banned, with the exception of boy children over a certain age, rather there were divisions between generations. One respondent at A Women's Coffeehouse community meeting mentioned that she sometimes felt that she could not relate to some of the younger lesbians as she had grown up having different experiences. She had become accustomed to understanding lesbian relationship dynamics as butch and femme couples pairing off.⁶⁶⁰ However, to her the younger lesbians were rewriting the rules. She continued to discuss that one thing that could stop people from coming to the coffeehouse was "the power of the coffeehouse to define the structures of who we are as lesbians."⁶⁶¹ She added that some people find the definition of what it means to be a lesbian in the coffeehouse was too narrow for a lot of the ideas of what it means to be a lesbian, and that that had to do with different values of what it meant to be a lesbian in 1983. She also found that by coming out before the founding of the women's community she felt different from the ones who had come out after, especially with the differences in the rules of the relationships. She continued that

⁶⁶⁰ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶⁶¹ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

“it feels lost to her” and that she felt that “ she [had] lost her history.”⁶⁶² What it meant to be lesbian differed between generations due to the different kinds of social conditions they had been raised in and come out into. One way that A Woman’s Coffeehouse attempted to rectify age differences was to create special nights dedicated to specific age groups.

A Women’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis had Old Dykes Nights, but community members also expressed that they thought it was important that socializing happened between the generations. According to a representative at the open meeting, many of the “old dykes” were not at the open meeting because it was the night of their Valentine’s Day dance. However, they had a strong community of women older than thirty-five and their friends that held monthly Old Dyke nights. Another participant mentioned that she knew that the coffeehouse had the Old Dyke group, but she wanted the opportunity to interact more with some of the women that were just coming out. The coffeehouse created a space for younger lesbians or women who were questioning their identities to discover themselves and be mentored by older women in the community, at least in theory. Participants at the meeting mentioned that the issue with the music being played so loudly meant that it was harder to speak with women, besides being trapped in the front room with the smokers or crammed next to the pool table.⁶⁶³ It meant it was harder for women of different generations to interact and to talk about their relationships. The other issue was with its cliques. Younger women who came to the coffeehouse would be “labeled jail bait” rather than welcomed. This desire to speak with each other was echoed when one participant mentioned that she would have come to the coffeehouse more if she

⁶⁶² A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁶³ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

could have talked to people and laughed with people, and that they needed one night of the weekend devoted to that kind of thing, where dancing was not part of it. She suggested that they could have had tables set up and you could talk about your friendships, art, ideas, and you could meet people.⁶⁶⁴ This lack of communication between different groups within the community was especially clear when it came to matters of race.

Race

Unlike feminist restaurants and cafés, which were overwhelmingly run by white women, coffeehouses had greater racial diversity in their collectives, yet race remained a point of tension. On Christmas Day in 1974, the Las Hermanas Women's Cultural Center and Coffeehouse opened its doors in San Diego, California, offering a safe and welcoming space where women, particularly lesbians, could relax, enjoy homemade food, hear live music and poetry, and socialize. The nonprofit coffeehouse was created by a group of mostly Latina women, including literature professor Dolores Valenzuela (a.k.a. "Mal Flora"), Carlota Hernandez, and Teresa Oyos.⁶⁶⁵ Las Hermanas began as a seven room collective house for women who were seeking refuge from abusive spouses. At its peak from 1975 to 1978, women packed the one-room space for "womyn's musical performances" by Meg Christian, Holly Near, Joan Armatrading, or Malvina Reynolds. The coffeehouse's popularity led to problems, especially as middle-class white women began to attend what had once been a primarily working-class, Latina coffeehouse. One

⁶⁶⁴ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶⁶⁵ Pat Sherman, "A Moment in Time: Las Hermanas (The Sisters)," *Gay San Diego*, December 9, 2010, <https://gay-sd.com/moments-in-time-las-hermanas-the-sisters/>. It was located at 4003 Wabash Avenue.

of the volunteers, Diane F. Germain, remarked in a recorded interview with the LAMBDA San Diego archives,

It was mostly working-class Latina women that (formed Las Hermanas). Then, as it started to take off and get bigger and more famous, there was kind of a set of middle-class women that came along and wanted to make it better, but their idea of making it better made working-class women feel not so good.⁶⁶⁶

Working-class white and middle-class white lesbians and straight feminists faced sexism, heterosexism, and classism, but maintained white privilege. In the case of Las Hermanas, white feminists who began to attend the coffeehouse usurped power and changed the dynamics of the coffeehouse, making the environment less friendly and inviting to the community that had formed the coffeehouse originally. This is not to say that coffeehouses with predominantly white membership were all oblivious to racial issues.

A Women's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis had discussions around racial diversity.⁶⁶⁷ During the meeting about the future of the coffeehouse, the organizers devoted twenty minutes to discussing race, stating "we need to make sure women of color are represented...and if not a woman of color on the collective we need outreach ongoing."⁶⁶⁸ The collective knew that the question of race would not be solved in one meeting. One meeting attendant said that a large issue was that women of color did not feel comfortable going there due to the overt racism they experienced.⁶⁶⁹ Another participant restated what one of her friends who was a Black woman had once told her

⁶⁶⁶ Sherman, "A Moment in Time: Las Hermanas (The Sisters)."

⁶⁶⁷ The following section pulls exclusively from a recording of a meeting of A Women's Coffeehouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I found it important to my argument to cite so heavily from this source as the recording demonstrates the tension in discussions over race in coffeehouse communities. This coffeehouse, with primarily white members, sought to address the lack of racial diversity in their space. These tapes show the way that members suggested solutions, those solutions were problematized and debated, and then the group continues to explore the topic in new ways.

⁶⁶⁸ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁶⁶⁹ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

when explaining why she did not want to go to the coffeehouse. When that woman went to the coffeehouse the white women in attendance looked at her like she was a sex object.⁶⁷⁰ Additionally, she did not like the music and felt that the song selection catered to a specific demographic.

Not every participant was amenable to the discussion of race. One meeting attendee said she “won’t like everybody and might not like a woman of color but doesn’t make me racist.”⁶⁷¹ Likewise Paige, a participant, claimed that “when I go to women’s festivals that there are so many committees and rules that I feel like if lesbians ran the world it would be a police state.”⁶⁷² To counter that claim, one woman stated that she felt the opposite to “what Paige said about that police state bullshit” and continued to explain that the reason they were having this discussion about race in the open community meeting was because the collective was not trying to impose a set of rules on the coffeehouse from the top but wanted the community to work together to create a nourishing social environment.⁶⁷³ Furthermore, she was offended by, “all these white women saying that they know what Black women feel.”⁶⁷⁴ She did not want people to guess what offends Black women. Another woman countered, “So they have to tell us all?” and the original speaker replied, “No we just shouldn’t guess and use all of these analogies.”⁶⁷⁵ Another participant had the last word when she responded, “the question should not be about whether or not racism was a problem- it was- as we are all racist.”⁶⁷⁶ The group needed to actively work on creating diversity.

⁶⁷⁰ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷¹ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷² A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷³ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷⁴ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷⁵ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷⁶ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

Barriers to creating diversity, as addressed during the meeting were that the issue of racism was so ingrained in the community itself. The community had a very limited understanding of what it meant to be a lesbian and this could lead to cliques and feelings of exclusion. One respondent mentioned that even as a white woman who did not fit all of the norms of what it meant to be a lesbian in the community, she could feel isolated, and so for women of color it would be even harder to fit those norms. Another woman chimed in that while talking about race made her nervous, she appreciated that this discussion allowed her to finally discuss her concern that the coffeehouse did not represent different cultures. She believed that the coffeehouse had a narrow definition of what it meant to be a lesbian and this limited understanding of lesbian identity made the coffeehouse uncomfortable.⁶⁷⁷ If the collective hoped to diversify membership, it was necessary for its members to examine the barriers that existed to participating. The current requirements required intensive time commitments and a specific lifestyle and schedule. When hiring, the collective needed to advertise beyond the communities it typically contacted. Another participant added that racial issues would not be “solved by space, money, or just committee,” and that the solution was “not just being friendly to a Black woman.” Instead the group needed to address the problem at “the core.”⁶⁷⁸ A Woman’s Coffeehouse still wanted to try.

Even when coffeehouse collectives endeavored to make a space welcoming to all groups, such goals could be unattainable. Although groups purported that their space was welcoming to all women, when women of color were not centrally involved in organizing and creating a vision for the space, mostly white women utilized the spaces. It was not

⁶⁷⁷ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁷⁸ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

about just adding women to the location but that women of color needed to be involved in forming the entire structure.

A Women's Coffeehouse collective of Minneapolis created the following solutions through its discussions: it established a committee to address race and diversity, dedicated funds towards hosting anti-racism workshops, and held new kinds of events. A member had suggested that women of color could host women of color only nights, similar to the over thirty-five, Old Dyke Nights. Although the Old Dyke Nights created an opportunity for a subsection of the coffeehouse community to organize around its specific needs, a racially specific night made some meeting attendees uncomfortable.⁶⁷⁹ Women of color also needed to be actively involved in this process and integrated into leadership roles. Another participant chimed in that the community needed to start doing workshops on racism because racism was not a problem restricted to the collective but to the entire community. The actual result of these discussions was that A Women's Coffeehouse created a committee on racism and race issues that first met that following April. This committee created a report including a series of suggestions, which included that the coffeehouse will develop a policy statement that all programming take into consideration the needs and issues of all women of color, 50 percent of performers would be women of color and 20 percent of Friday and Saturday night programming would be devoted to discussing issues (non-performance presentations) specifically related to women of color. The coffeehouse would try to involve other organizations in events,

⁶⁷⁹ One participant asked if this division was "like apartheid." A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

broaden their publicity tactics, and educate members about subtle racism.⁶⁸⁰ As evidenced by later community calendars, A Woman's Coffeehouse then held a series of workshops about racism in the lesbian community.⁶⁸¹ Race remained a central issue for the last four years of the coffeehouse's existence: in a 1985 flyer, the collective announced "some of our main goals are to bridge the cultural gaps between white women and women of color and break down the walls of alienation that have been built up over the years."⁶⁸² While the solution was not perfect, the coffeehouse made significant efforts to address the racial divides in their community.

Accessibility

Coffeehouses primarily discussed issues of accessibility related to class-consciousness. As the section on finances made clear, feminist coffeehouse collectives prioritized making their spaces economically accessible by offering sliding scales for memberships, making event entrance fees by donation rather than a set fee, and by allowing women to donate time and labor when money was tight. The members of A Woman's Coffeehouse also considered accessibility for people with mobility impairments. At the church where the coffeehouse occurred, the collective wanted to add a ramp. Before the ramp was installed, coffeehouse members would have to carry their friends down the steps. Allegedly the church was interested in making the entire space accessible, but it was a slow moving process.⁶⁸³ As the collective only rented the space, it was limited to the kinds of changes they could make to the church itself, but collective

⁶⁸⁰ "Policy Statement," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Committees (CH).

⁶⁸¹ "Calendars," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Mailing, Undated.

⁶⁸² Shelley Anderson, "Coffeehouse Makes Changes," *Equal Times*, December 18, 1985, 9.

⁶⁸³ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

members advocated for accessible access. This kind of consciousness around accessibility was also present in the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective. On the June calendar for the Women's Coffeehouse of Iowa, a note at the bottom stated, "for wheelchair accessibility contact a member of the coffeehouse collective," followed by a telephone number.⁶⁸⁴ However, for the most part, when accessibility was discussed, coffeehouses typically referred to class, lesbian mothers with children, or substances.

Substance Issues

Especially in cities where a feminist or women's business place like a bookstore, restaurant, or bar already existed, feminist coffeehouses did not just exist as a place for women to gather. Feminist coffeehouses existed as an alternative to the bar scene. Mountain Moving Coffeehouse of Chicago advertised itself as a drug and alcohol free space and an entertainment alternative to lesbian bars.⁶⁸⁵ A flyer advertising upcoming events the collective of the Somerville Women's Coffeehouse reminded readers that it was also a drug and alcohol free.⁶⁸⁶ In a letter sent to the community to describe the financial difficulty they were facing in 1985, the collective of A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis reminded readers that

We feel strong[ly] that A Woman's Coffeehouse is vital to the Twin Cities Lesbian community. We know it is in the hearts of many, many women. We see the coffeehouse as an institution in Minneapolis, crucial for the culture and community it creates and nurtures. It is a place for women to come out, get support for sobriety.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ "June Coffeehouse Calendar," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, Women's Coffeehouse: Calendar Pages, 1981-1983.

⁶⁸⁵ Kathie Bergquist and Robert McDonald, *A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago*, 183.

⁶⁸⁶ "Flyer handwritten on Orange Paper."

⁶⁸⁷ "Community Letter 1985," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

The letter continued to state, “It is the only woman-only and chemically-free space in the [Twin] cities.”⁶⁸⁸ The Iowa City Women’s Coffeehouse was substance free on some nights and would note these nights in their calendars.⁶⁸⁹ However, collective meetings would happen over beers, as noted in the meeting minutes.⁶⁹⁰ The establishment served all lesbians and women in the Iowa City area, not just the sober ones. When the coffeehouse had chemical free days, it would ban drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.⁶⁹¹ On regular days, smokers were asked to consult with the women in the space if they could smoke, or if larger groups were around they were asked to go outside. In existing archival files, an old sign instructed smokers how to proceed.⁶⁹²

While A Women’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis greatly stressed that it was chemical free, the coffeehouse still retained floor-space for smokers. Smoking became a point of debate and a problem for multiple coffeehouses.⁶⁹³ In the 1970s there was a cultural and legal shift around smoking.⁶⁹⁴ At the community meeting for A Women’s Coffeehouse, nonsmokers were very verbal about how much they hated how the front room was used for smoking. Apparently, the smokers did not even like it.⁶⁹⁵ A collective

⁶⁸⁸ “Community Letter 1985.”

⁶⁸⁹ “Assorted Calendars,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, Women’s Coffeehouse: Calendar Pages, 1981-1983 and “Calendars,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women’s Coffeehouse: Women’s Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁶⁹⁰ “Assorted Meeting Minutes,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, The Women’s Coffeehouse Histories, Policies, and Finances, 1981-1982 and undated.

⁶⁹¹ “Guidelines for Using the Coffeehouse Letter.”

⁶⁹² “Smokers,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women’s Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁶⁹³ “Collective Member Application.” The application to become a collective member had multiple questions about substances, including “What does chemically free space mean to you?”

⁶⁹⁴ Hilary Graham, “Smoking, Stigma and Social Class,” *Journal of Social Policy* 41, no. 1 (2012): 83-99 and Kirsten Bell, Amy Salmon, Michele Bowers, Jennifer Bell, and Lucy McCullough, “Smoking, Stigma and Tobacco “Denormalization:” Further Reflections on the Use of Stigma as a Public Health Tool. A Commentary on Social Science & Medicine’s Stigma, Prejudice, Discrimination and Health Special Issue,” *Social Science & Medicine* 70, no. 6 (2010): 795-9.

⁶⁹⁵ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

member responded that one reason they continued to allow smoking was because the collective did not want to define who lesbians were. There was some irony in this statement as the collective had already defined the space as chemical free. She continued that the collective “didn’t want to say this isn’t just a place for people who don’t smoke.”⁶⁹⁶ Nonsmokers were not satisfied with that explanation and they continued the discussion by mentioning their allergies and saying that they were concerned about their health and the venue’s ventilation. Tensions continued around smoking, with some women citing the smoke as the reason they no longer wanted to attend the coffeehouse.

Sustainability and Attendance

*Most of the suggestions are about how we can spend more money but how I feel is how most of the community is not supporting this place.*⁶⁹⁷

Financial concerns were intertwined with dwindling attendance. When A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis circulated a letter asking for donations, the collective noted, “the coffeehouse has steadily lost money all year due to rising costs and declining attendance.”⁶⁹⁸ Dwindling attendance has pushed the coffeehouse to the edge of bankruptcy and the collective emphasized, “IT IS URGENT THAT YOU SUPPORT THE COFFEEHOUSE THROUGH THIS CRISIS IN SPITE OF WHATEVER CHANGES YOU WISH FOR, SO THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE HERE FOR

⁶⁹⁶ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁹⁷ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁶⁹⁸ “Community Letter 1985,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

ALL OF US.”⁶⁹⁹ Changing cultural attitudes around feminism and lesbianism made keeping a sustainable clientele difficult.

Second to money and logistical matters, discussions during coffeehouse meetings focused on how to improve attendance. A Woman’s Coffeehouse was not the only one to struggle. Las Hermanas of San Diego, California closed in 1980 over conflict, lack of interest and an increase in rent. A February 1980 article explained Las Hermanas’ closure, stating that over the past five years conditions changed, “many new groups have formed, providing women with many choices for involving themselves politically, socially and culturally. Las Hermanas slowly and somewhat painfully declined in popularity and the nucleus of women nurturing it over the years have become exhausted.”⁷⁰⁰ One of the major draws of attendance was the cultural aspect of the feminist coffeehouses. In its July 10, 1980 meeting minutes, the Iowa collective member Mary stated, “the problem is that no one comes here. Tess thinks it’s the place. Vicki thinks it’s not.”⁷⁰¹ The collective came to the vague consensus that it needed entertainment every week, maybe twice a week, because changing spaces was not immediately feasible. For similar reasons, the Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse collective decided to add brunch every other Sunday. The group was going to encourage community member Mary Castern to do a film premiere at the coffeehouse.⁷⁰²

Regardless of how innovative collective members were, financial troubles, the burnout of

⁶⁹⁹ Emphasis is in the document. “Community Letter 1985.”

⁷⁰⁰ Pat Sherman, “A Moment in Time: Las Hermanas (The Sisters).”

⁷⁰¹ “July 10, 1980 Meeting Minutes,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, The Woman’s Coffeehouse Histories, Policies, and Finances, 1981-1982 and undated.

⁷⁰² “July 10, 1980 Meeting Minutes.”

collective members, and declining membership caused feminist coffeehouses to eventually close.

While most feminist coffeehouses founded in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada closed by the 1990s, they played a meaningful role in women's lives. Former collective member and manager Candace of A Woman's Coffeehouse in Minneapolis moved to New Haven, Connecticut to attend Yale University. In a letter she sent to her former collective, she noted that without her coffeehouse community she had a hard time. Once she found Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant in nearby Bridgeport, Connecticut, she finally felt at home.⁷⁰³ Feminist coffeehouses, like feminist restaurants, were important fixtures of the feminist community.

Conclusion

Coffeehouses expanded participation. Without high fixed costs, coffeehouses enabled women with less access to capital to create women's spaces. Despite the lower overhead, coffeehouse collective members still worried about financing their endeavors. Coffeehouse collective organizers were constantly self reflective, always soliciting advice. Debates surrounding representation and inclusion/exclusion proved to be ongoing sources of conflict. Tensions were particularly terse regarding issues of race, gender, and age. Coffeehouse members disagreed about the inclusion of mothers and their children, the use of substances like alcohol and tobacco, and how to make the space welcoming to new clientele. Trying to adapt to community needs was difficult but an important task for trying to create the kinds of places that organizers and attendees wanted, whether it was

⁷⁰³ "Letter from Candace on December 6, 1981," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

dancing, poetry, music, or just socializing. Users seemed to want multiple different things, as one participant at A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis open community meeting asked, "Is it possible to be open more to accommodate these differences? Like open another night like a weekday?"⁷⁰⁴ Coffeehouses allowed for more flexibility and experimentation than feminist restaurants and cafés due to their lower overhead costs. Part of that experimentation enabled them to promote lesbian and feminist culture, as discussed in the next chapter.

⁷⁰⁴ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

Chapter 7. Coffeehouse Culture

*Womon-identified culture is not a phase, or a fad, or a step along the path. It is the whole path beginning, middle, and end. It is both the vision and the real life of thousands who are building our existence on the solid foundation of our loyalty to wimmin. Out of this culture comes Sidney Spinster, a new Lesbian musician in a very old tradition. She sings songs of urgency, clarity, and love. IF you miss womon-identified music, don't miss this concert!*⁷⁰⁵

The above passage describing “womon-identified” culture comes from a flyer advertising Sidney Spinster’s A Concert for Wimmin, a “chemical-free” show, hosted by A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis sometime in the 1980s (exact date unknown).⁷⁰⁶ This flyer speaks to the cultural contribution coffeehouses made. Feminist coffeehouses were social and cultural spaces utilized by touring musicians and authors. These coffeehouses served as performance spaces for professionals and fostered amateur artists developing their crafts in front of supportive communities.

Coffeehouses were social spaces. As discussed in the last chapter, most coffeehouses functioned as nonprofit, dry, social environments. However, even for the coffeehouses that served alcohol, the emphasis of these spaces was on producing cultural events over profits.⁷⁰⁷ Coffeehouses would sponsor social coffee hours for women to chat and organize entertainment to enjoy.⁷⁰⁸ This chapter emphasizes the cultural and

⁷⁰⁵ “Sidney Spinster Event Flyer,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

⁷⁰⁶ “Sidney Spinster Event Flyer.”

⁷⁰⁷ As discussed in the collective meeting minutes, when the Iowa City Women’s Coffeehouse moved to a larger location and needed to sponsor more activities in order to pay rental fees, the collective decided to host recurring events, such as Monday soup dinners for \$1.50, Thursday breakfasts where patrons paid by donation, and Fridays would have free rest and relaxation in the early evening before the concerts, poetry readings, film screenings, dances and other events would occur. At the evening events, donations were requested for the coffee and tea provided, but women were welcome to bring their own alcohol. “June Coffeehouse Calendar,” University of Iowa Women’s Archives Collection, Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519), Activism Series 2, Box 1, Women’s Coffeehouse: Calendar pages, 1981-1983.

⁷⁰⁸ By 1985, at A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis, Minnesota, music and dancing grew to eclipse the social conversation hours. However, at an open community meeting, the participants of A Woman’s

artistic contributions made by feminist coffeehouses; the production of these cultural events was also intertwined with the desire to create feminist social space.

Coffeehouses were not the only spaces that supported feminist and lesbian culture. As explored in chapter 3, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, women's centers, feminist restaurants and cafés, bookstores, and shops would host cultural and social events for women.⁷⁰⁹ The community education and counseling center, the Woman's Place of Montreal, Quebec in 1973 coordinated with Montreal's Androgyny Bookstore to host workshops, consciousness raising groups, as well as social hours.⁷¹⁰ Feminist art space, Diana's Place of Northampton, Massachusetts held events such as the Witchy Song Night to celebrate an April full moon.⁷¹¹ The 1982 calendar of Artemis Society Women's Café of San Francisco, California showcased musical performances in its separate flyers for a 1984 ballroom dancing class and in 1986 a benefit concert for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.⁷¹² This chapter does not seek to create a dichotomy between feminist coffeehouses and other women's spaces as doing so would be historically inaccurate, especially as these operations were occasionally combined endeavors. The Full Moon was both a coffeehouse and a bookstore that likewise had a

Coffeehouse expressed that they longed for more social time, especially once the disagreements over the cultural and artistic events threatened to tear apart the community. A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, A Woman's Coffeehouse Meeting Cassette Tapes, 1983.

⁷⁰⁹ Examples include: Southern Wild Feminist Bookstore of Gulfport, Mississippi (1978), Common Woman Books of Omaha, Nebraska (1989), Mama Bears of Oakland, California, Pandora Women's Bookstore of Kalamazoo, Michigan (1985), the Vancouver Women's Bookstore of Vancouver, British Columbia (1975), and Mrs. Dalloway's Feminist Bookstore of Kingston, Ontario (1989). Horn, *Gaia's Guide*, various editions.

⁷¹⁰ "December 1973 newsletter," Sophia Smith College Archives, Women's Liberation Collection, Series I: International, Box 1.

⁷¹¹ "Witchy Song Nights at Diana's Place," Sophia Smith College Archives, Diana Davies Papers (MS 390), 1960s-1996.

⁷¹² "June 21 Benefit Concert," GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (#BUS EPH).

relationship with Old Wives' Tales Bookstore. Both institutes participated in the San Francisco feminist business nexus and advertised on the same flyers.⁷¹³ Sisterspirit Bookstore of San Jose, California hosted coffeehouses.⁷¹⁴ However, coffeehouses prioritized cultural events. Feminist coffeehouses brought women together through music, dancing, art, politics, and socializing. Furthermore, coffeehouses connected to other businesses.

Music

Feminist coffeehouses served as music venues that provided a unique space for women, and especially lesbian performers. When lesbian country musician Willie Tyson was publicizing her blues show at A Women's Coffeehouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota, she wrote on her flyer that, "the feminist concerts are a real high for me, the audience reception and support—you don't get that from many other places." She continued to explain why performing at feminist coffeehouses was so valuable, stating that "my lyrics reach the people there because most of them have heads comparable to mine. The feminist concerts made me more aware of a spirit and support within the feminist community."⁷¹⁵ The coffeehouses were valuable to the entertainers and the community alike. Prominent female musicians, particularly lesbian ones, relied on recurring feminist coffeehouses when touring. In these spaces, lesbian performers particularly were able to

⁷¹³ "Full Moon and Old Wives Tales," San Francisco Public Library Archives, Flyers 1976, Box 2, Old Wives Tales, 95-24.

⁷¹⁴ On Sisterspirit's December 1991 Calendar the owners publicized appearances by writer Pat Califia and folk guitarist, Tret Fure. "Sisterspirit 1991 Calendar," GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (#BUS EPH).

⁷¹⁵ "Willie Tyson Flyer," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

⁷¹⁵ "Sidney Spinster Event Flyer."

present their work without fear of homophobic harassment. Feminist entertainers would find themselves surrounded by like-minded audiences.

Prominent lesbian musicians would tour around the United States and Canada, relying on feminist coffeehouses to provide the venues. Alix Dobkin performed, as her tour posters claimed, primarily for lesbian women.⁷¹⁶ Her music promoted lesbian culture, as evident from a selection of her song titles such as, “Lesbian Code,” “Living with Lesbians,” “A Woman’s Love,” and “The Lesbian Power Authority.” The Three of Cups of Toronto, Ontario hosted Dobkin on April 23, 1975.⁷¹⁷ Dobkin also performed at a coffeehouse sponsored by Ladyslipper Women’s Music distributor in 1981 at the Community Church of Mason Farm in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. In order to increase audience participation, Ladyslipper also sponsored a potluck brunch with Dobkin the following Sunday with the time and location of the meal announced at the concert.⁷¹⁸ Even for recurring feminist coffeehouses, both of these examples demonstrate that feminist coffeehouse collectives would adapt their choice of venue based on the needs of the performer and available resources. Feminist coffeehouses did not inherently rely on a static location; instead, feminist coffeehouses created temporary feminist spaces that promoted touring women musicians.

Coffeehouses did not only showcase traveling entertainers but provided a space for local musicians to perform. On a promotional flyer, the Somerville Coffeehouse of Massachusetts provided,

⁷¹⁶ “Alix Dobkin Flyer for April 23, 1975 Concert,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Three of Cups, Box 105, Folder 2.

⁷¹⁷ While The Three of Cups typically hosted events in the basement of Bathurst Church, for this concert the collective instead rented St. Paul’s Church. The new location of the performance indicated the trend of coffeehouses being flexible on the kinds of spaces that they would utilize, creating temporary lesbian and feminist geographies.

⁷¹⁸ “Alix Dobkin for Ladyslipper,” Sophia Smith College Archives, Women’s Liberation Collection, Joan E. Biren Papers, Box 55, Location 63 E.

space for local women performing artists to share their medium with Somerville women. This gives community women exposure to the performing arts and encourages local women artists to develop their talent. Creating this sense of community breaks down isolation among individual women. The coffeehouse gives women a sense of strength and creativity by drawing them into an atmosphere that brought an awareness of the resources available in their community and within themselves.⁷¹⁹

Local amateur and professional women musicians utilized feminist coffeehouse space.

Depending on the city and time period, coffeehouses were sometimes the only places where local feminists and especially lesbian performers could play or at least play music openly as lesbians.

According to the first issue of A Women's Coffeehouse's 1976 newsletter, *Coffee Klatch*, the coffeehouse began because the Minneapolis Lesbian Resource Center (LRC) was unable to provide a social and performance space for lesbian and non-lesbian women outside of the bars.⁷²⁰ Initially the coffeehouse served as a fundraiser for the LRC. The organizers received a grant for one month's salary for a coordinator and the LRC loaned the coffeehouse collective seed money for supplies to get the coffeehouse started. Originally, the coffeehouse was going to be in the basement of Chrysalis, the Minneapolis Women's Center and the LRC, but that plan was abandoned when it proved to be impossible to meet fire regulations. Arrangements were made to use the Northeast Groveland facilities and the coffeehouse opened in December 1975, with the help of one woman who loaned the collective her stereo for several months. However, according to the collective, after awhile it became clear that specific women were consistently

⁷¹⁹ "Flyer handwritten on Orange Paper," Northeastern University Archives, Somerville Women's Educational Center 1975-1983 (M26), Box 4 "Projects: Coffeehouse: Fliers and Notes," Folder 65: Philosophy and Notes.

⁷²⁰ Kay Lara Schoenwetter, "A Women's Coffeehouse History," *Coffee Klatch*, 1, 1976, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1.

committing themselves to showing up each week and generally being responsible for keeping the coffeehouse going.⁷²¹ The collective members decided to formalize their collective structure and on February 28, 1975 they held their first meeting. The coffeehouse's relationship with the LRC became minimal by 1976. As its newsletter stated, the "LRC was not in touch with how much energy it takes to keep the coffeehouse going," so on July 31, 1976, members of the two collectives signed an agreement which said that the coffeehouse would donate \$475 to the LRC but would otherwise be completely autonomous.⁷²² The need for social and performance space changed the relationship with the previously existing feminist and lesbian spaces in Minneapolis.

While the LRC and A Women's Coffeehouse formed a productive and positive relationship, the coffeehouse did not maintain smooth relationships with all Twin Cities women's organizations. As demonstrated in a letter sent in 1982, A Woman's Coffeehouse collective clashed with Terry of Persimmon's Event Organizing, who began to host concerts during hours that the coffeehouse was open in an adjacent location.⁷²³ The collective members said that they had supported Terry's business by generally not scheduling performances at the coffeehouse on Persimmon's concert nights; publicizing Persimmon's concerts in the coffeehouse calendar; sponsoring annual, successful benefits for Persimmon's; and finally by providing space to Terry to sell tickets at the coffeehouse.⁷²⁴ As the collective noted in the letter,

Put simply that will take away from our business. Also women may not realize that they are in the position of choosing between Persimmon's and supporting A

⁷²¹ Schoenwetter, "Women's Coffeehouse History."

⁷²² Schoenwetter, "Women's Coffeehouse History." The collective, ever the prudent record keepers, made clear that a copy of the agreement was in their public notebook for anyone who wished to read it.

⁷²³ Frederique Delacoste, "Letter to Terry of Persimmons on April 21, 1982," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters. She was just referred to as Terry in the letter.

⁷²⁴ Delacoste, "Letter to Terry of Persimmons on April 21, 1982."

Woman's Coffeehouse and will probably be misled to believe that we are producing your event (we know from experience that many lesbians assume that any woman-identified event at Plymouth Church is a coffeehouse event).⁷²⁵

Previously, Persimmon's programming had sufficiently differed from the coffeehouse's own events. However, when Terry began drawing from the same group of performers as the coffeehouse and hoped to reach basically the same audience, the coffeehouse's organizing collective felt threatened.⁷²⁶ It noted that, "as an aside it is equally possible that by duplicating our work you will lose money."⁷²⁷ Terry's decision to compete with the coffeehouse felt like a betrayal because apparently Terry had recently asked the collective for information about space, sound equipment, and good women sound technicians, "which we (the collective) cooperatively, though perhaps naively, gave [her]."⁷²⁸ Terry then used this information against the interests of the coffeehouse. This conflict demonstrated that while music was important for building community, it could also create rifts in the community. Furthermore, tensions such as the one above affected the performers.

Coffeehouses were oftentimes the only spaces for local women to perform, which could create problems. In the early 1980s, Sidney Spinster wrote an open letter to the women's community of the Twin Cities to address her concerns about the music scene at A Woman's Coffeehouse. In the letter, she remarked on how the coffeehouse being the only outlet for local performers made her feel like she was living in a company town, where the organizers of the coffeehouse had too much power over the entire music scene

⁷²⁵ Delacoste, "Letter to Terry of Persimmons on April 21, 1982."

⁷²⁶ A Woman's Coffeehouse collective continued in the letter by stating, "In addition to threatening our financial stability this sets up a situation where two local lesbian performers have to compete for an audience....we recognize that the lesbians in our community have limited money and deserve a variety of programming." They noted that "this community is big enough to support a wide variety of women's businesses but not two of the same."

⁷²⁷ Delacoste, "Letter to Terry of Persimmons on April 21, 1982."

⁷²⁸ Delacoste, "Letter to Terry of Persimmons on April 21, 1982."

for feminist women. She also remarked that there appeared to be a hierarchy between local stars, non-stars, and stars from out of town, especially regarding pay. Feminist coffeehouses invited both local and touring performers to play, yet maintaining equity between performers was a contested issue.

Tensions over money and business matters related to the music were also prominent complaints. Coffeehouse collectives were caught between filling the needs of the community and the needs of managing a business. Spinster noted that, “as bosses it is in your interests to keep our wages low and treat us in the most convenient and expedient ways for you. As lesbians it is in your interest to nourish and support Lesbian culture and the workers who create it. Sometimes these interests are mutually exclusive.”⁷²⁹ Spinster reminded readers though that, “Creating Lesbian Culture is very serious business. It is one of the most important tools that we have to transform this world into the healthy place for lesbians that we want it to be. I want the Coffeehouse to be more than a wimmin’s space—I want the space to be filled with nourishing, empowering, Lesbian energy.”⁷³⁰ She said that the coffeehouse was not just an alternative to bars, as the collective had noted in its literature, “but something really new and different. It isn’t living up to its potential. This is the responsibility of all of us, not just the collective.”⁷³¹ She finished by remarking that the business model was hurting the performers. Spinster thought that the low entrance fees to the shows devalued women musicians. The irony was that she was also upset that the collective paid themselves, unlike at Moving Mountain Coffeehouse of Chicago, where she was apparently paid \$100 to perform, more

⁷²⁹ Sidney Spinster, “Open Letter to the Community,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

⁷³⁰ Spinster, “Open Letter to the Community.”

⁷³¹ Spinster, “Open Letter to the Community.”

than four times what she would make at her hometown coffeehouse. The issue over paid verses unpaid labor, plagued collectives. Deciding whether or not to pay the collective made that work accessible or inaccessible to different classes of women. The ability to pay organizers and performers stemmed from more than the low entrance fees, which were offered at a sliding scale.

Like the feminist restaurants that had difficulty financially surviving as businesses when they sold their food as inexpensively as possible (see chapter 5 on feminist food), the coffeehouses faced similar difficulties, but with cheap sound equipment. As feminist restaurants tried to keep menu prices low so that women across classes could afford to eat there, coffeehouse collectives aimed to keep ticket prices low to make events accessible. However, low prices would mean that either the product would suffer or the business, and those who sought to maintain it, would suffer. Feminist restaurants' owners typically accepted low profit margins to maintain the goal of their space without compromising on the quality of their food. As coffeehouse collectives usually worked on a volunteer basis or on low stipends, the only product that could be "cut" to keep costs low was usually the quality of the sound equipment. This complaint speaks to a dominant trend in both feminist coffeehouses and feminist restaurants and cafés—how could feminists work ethically? How could women pay and be paid in a way that aligned with their feminist ethics?

Sidney Spinster's open letter about the music situation at A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis was not just a complaint though. She offered concrete suggestions, demanding for better pay, improved lighting, and better sound. The collective took the letter seriously and soon released its own document, outlining its new plans. It created

legal contracts for performers with a set of regulations and schedules before every performance.⁷³² These matters were then put into effect and the women of the collective took measures to improve these events, including learning how to properly work the sound system—a great improvement from when A Woman’s Coffeehouse relied on the borrowed stereo.⁷³³ However, despite the measures the collective took to solve its sound quality problems, as one participant in its open community meeting remarked, the coffeehouse would always be limited by the acoustics of the space, which in its case was a church basement. No matter where the members hung the speakers the sound could never be of professional quality. As one meeting participant groaned, “there was nothing worse than a poor sound system at a loud volume.”⁷³⁴ The sound quality was never perfect but it improved.

A Woman’s Coffeehouse was not the only coffeehouse to have problems with audio quality. Every Woman’s Coffeehouse of Richmond, Virginia likewise faced sound issues. When music reviewer Robert Goldblum attended the Every Woman’s Coffeehouse in 1983 to cover feminist musician Hunter Davis’ blues show at the local Young Women’s Christian Association. Goldblum’s concert review seemed fairly typical in that it described the artist’s performance, vocal range, songs, and past albums.⁷³⁵ The reviewer emphasized that “the coffeehouse is set in a smallish, second floor auditorium surrounded by large windows. As a result, much of the sound seemed to escape. Some kind of stage

⁷³² “Blank Contracts for Musical Performers,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Contracts.

⁷³³ Schoenwetter, “Women’s Coffeehouse History.”

⁷³⁴ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁷³⁵ Robert Goldblum, “Hunter Davis Concert Review,” *Richmond Times Dispatch* 133, no. 231, August 19, 1983.

backdrop would have helped distribute the sound more evenly.”⁷³⁶ The spaces that held coffeehouses were not always ideal for producing a high level of sound quality. Financial pressures facing coffeehouses resulted in less than ideal performance spaces and audio quality. Music issues reached beyond sound quality; within feminist coffeehouses there were debates about what kind of music would be played, especially when it came to DJing the dances.

Dancing and Visual Art

Dancing was a priority for some of the feminist coffeehouses, especially the ones that catered to a primarily lesbian feminist community. Women’s dances could be fundraising events for coffeehouses to meet their overhead costs. Living up to their name, which represented the tarot card for coming together, The Three of Cups of Toronto brought women together for women’s dances at Bathurst Church.⁷³⁷ The Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse likewise advertised a women’s dance.⁷³⁸ Other coffeehouses included dances as a regular feature, especially substance free or “chemical free” coffeehouses that existed to provide a space in which lesbians could dance and cruise outside of the bar scene. A Woman’s Coffeehouse had so many dances that the organizers sent a survey to users of the coffeehouse in 1985 asking if it would be okay to have nights without dancing as it dominated the typical programming. The Three of Cups of Toronto also

⁷³⁶ Goldblum, “Hunter Davis Concert Review.”

⁷³⁷ On its flyers, the collective emphasized that the dances were to help with fundraising efforts. Three of Cups, “Uppity Women Poster: Benefit at Bathurst United Church on January 11,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Three of Cups, Box 105, Folder 2.

⁷³⁸ Three of Cups, “Dance Flyer,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Three of Cups, Box 105, Folder 2.

would follow free concerts with “our usual music for dancing.”⁷³⁹ Holding dances was not controversial, but the choice over what music was played raised ire.

Decisions over the playlist for dances resulted in stress for the collectives. Playing music that met peoples’ tastes could be difficult. At the open community meeting hosted by A Woman’s Coffeehouse in 1985, the organizers devoted twenty-five minutes on the topic of music. Some women were upset that when they made song suggestions, they were ignored. One collective member responded, “I think you have a very valid point we don’t have a policy to play everyone’s request. If I don’t know a song, but if someone requests something and I don’t know it, and you have a lot of pressure and the floor clears,” then everyone would blame the DJ.⁷⁴⁰ The collective member who would DJ continued by stating that, “I’m sympathetic. I like to hear the songs I like to hear, but we don’t make a policy of playing all requests.”⁷⁴¹ DJing an event could be stressful for the collective members that constantly had to deal with complaints. The pressure to play the music that would meet everyone’s expectation could be mitigated as The Old Dyke Nights demonstrated.

An offshoot of A Women’s Coffeehouse, The Old Dyke Nights group of Minneapolis, compromised by deciding to play a range of music, including country; however, the group’s success at mitigating controversy over music was to deemphasize the music itself. At each event members would play two getting-to-know-you games. One of the group’s most popular games was hug tag and then the members would follow the games with a potluck. As the letter from the Old Dyke Nights organizing group, which

⁷³⁹ One example was the event on March 11, 1978, in which the collective organized an international women’s day supper, followed by a series of performers. Three of Cups, “International Women’s Day Supper,” Canadian Women’s Movement Archives, Three of Cups, Box 105, Folder 2.

⁷⁴⁰ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

⁷⁴¹ A Woman’s Coffeehouse Community, “Open Community Meeting Tapes.”

was read aloud at the open community meeting for A Woman's Coffeehouse stated, the "ritual has become vital to our evening together."⁷⁴² By playing the games and socializing, there was less pressure put on playing the right music. Additionally, the organizers would leave the lights up a little while dancing because "we like how we look and like to look at each other."⁷⁴³ The event organizing committee members had a short, two-month term, one-month offset, so everyone could be involved with planning the events. The letter finished that "Simplicity is a key word here. We can't please everyone but we can involve everyone. Change with the seasons. Change slow" but also experiment.⁷⁴⁴ When the emphasis shifted away from dancing, the community relaxed more about the music. A Woman's Coffeehouse was not originally intended to be solely about dancing. However, the shift towards mostly dances led women to attend or not attend based on musical preferences. The collective members responded, "that we are a business and a community service and tried to do programming" and it was hard to please everyone.⁷⁴⁵ In addition to the open community meeting, the organizers had distributed a questionnaire and again the collective received a deluge of contradictory responses regarding the music.⁷⁴⁶ Unlike coffeehouses that had less financial pressure and met less often, A Woman's Coffeehouse collective felt immense stress. As a result of needing to appeal to a broader audience, this issue around music became more important there than at other coffeehouses.

⁷⁴² The letter was also provided in written form. "Old Dyke Night Notes for The Open Community Meeting," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Letters.

⁷⁴³ "Old Dyke Night Notes for The Open Community Meeting."

⁷⁴⁴ "Old Dyke Night Notes for The Open Community Meeting."

⁷⁴⁵ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁷⁴⁶ "Questionnaire," Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Questionnaires.

After hearing suggestions about how some women wanted more top forty music and some wanted less; how some women thought the volume was too loud and others too soft; some wanted more women's music and others just wanted quiet; and about how another wanted waltzes and foxtrots, A Women's Coffeehouse collective relegated the decisions to the new music committee. Utilizing the talent in the community meant that they could get records cheaper from women who worked at record stores and could get music at price and have proper technicians.⁷⁴⁷ Over the ten years of its existence, the services the coffeehouse provided became more and more technical and complicated and the coffeehouse needed to rely on a greater group within its community. One community member ended the discussions about music on a positive note, "Great blessings to the goddess to whip us into frenzy of dancing and wanting to come back again and again!"⁷⁴⁸ Music was not the only form of art coffeehouses showcased and also not the only medium that provoked controversy.

Coffeehouses displayed women's art on the walls. The Iowa Coffeehouse in its June 1980 calendar solicited headshots and portraits from local women for an upcoming art show. In particular, the Iowa City Coffeehouse filed its calendar with feminist film screenings.⁷⁴⁹ Some coffeehouses were more overt in their goal to display women's art. Wing Café Coffeehouse and Gallery of San Diego was a womyn's investment group project. As stated on its promotional materials, Wing Café and Gallery were women-owned-and-managed serving the feminist and new age communities. Wing was especially "dedicated to the development and growth of women's culture and

⁷⁴⁷ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁷⁴⁸ A Woman's Coffeehouse Community, "Open Community Meeting Tapes."

⁷⁴⁹ "June Coffeehouse Calendar."

community.”⁷⁵⁰ Its organizers focused on displaying Southern Californian women’s art. Showcasing art was a common practice of coffeehouses, yet the controversy came over the care of the art. After Sidney Spinstor’s open letter regarding how the coffeehouse treated performers, A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis created a legal form informing artists that while its insurance did not cover art damage, the organizers would “take care of it” as best they could.⁷⁵¹ Informal agreements and casual relationships around displaying art and playing music worked fine until an accident occurred. Conflict resulted when coffeehouses utilized legal forms and protections of the mainstream society. Controversies over payment and damages tested the lauded community of women and women’s culture that this chapter described. Facing these pressures, coffeehouses reverted to the legal protections and similar documents of American and Canadian society at large.

Other Events

Feminist coffeehouses did not restrict their programming to musical and artistic performances. Mama Bears of the Bay Area in California was a bookstore, coffeehouse, and gallery. In September 1985, the organizers announced in their newsletter that they would be hosting an evening picnic and celebrating the autumn equinox.⁷⁵² Las Hermanas of San Diego, California and the Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse were particularly innovative in their scheduling of events. The Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse collective organized pool tournaments and game nights. It held auto maintenance classes

⁷⁵⁰ “Wing Café Flyer,” LAMBDA San Diego Archives, Wing Café, 1980-1982.

⁷⁵¹ “Art Policy,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Policy.

⁷⁵² *Mama Bears Newsletter* 2, no. 4, September 1985.

to teach women to learn about their own cars and become more self-reliant.⁷⁵³ In 1981, it also hosted a mermaid-themed night.⁷⁵⁴ A flyer advertised that in March 1981 the coffeehouse projected a slideshow about Ponape: a Pacific island in Micronesia. These events demonstrated the coffeehouse's desire to provide low cost educational opportunities, with the last event's entrance fee kept to a donation of \$1.⁷⁵⁵ Not every event was successful. A flyer announced relaxation and guided meditation classes every Monday evening at the Iowa City Women's Coffeehouse where women paid \$2 if they made more than \$10,000 a year or under \$1 if they made less. However, it was "cancelled due to low attendance."⁷⁵⁶ Endings did not necessarily equate to failure. All of the coffeehouses likewise eventually ended, but they still made a meaningful contribution in their communities.

Las Hermanas of San Diego, California hosted an event almost every day of the week. The Las Hermanas collective produced a newsletter, beginning in 1975, called *Feminist Communications*, which always included an event calendar. For the month of June 1975 alone it held rap groups on open relationships, "fat women's support" groups, AA meetings, a discussion for battered women, concerts, dances, picnics, and an event around the politics of childcare.⁷⁵⁷ Its newsletter also included notes, event descriptions,

⁷⁵³ "Event Flyer: Cars," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁷⁵⁴ "Event Flyer: Mermaid Night," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁷⁵⁵ "Event Flyer: Ponape," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁷⁵⁶ "Assorted Calendars," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁷⁵⁷ Las Hermanas Coffeehouse, *Feminist Communications*, June 1975, LAMBDA Archives of San Diego, Las Hermanas Box.

and ads for local feminist businesses. Las Hermanas demonstrates how feminist coffeehouses promoted and produced feminist culture.

Similar to the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse, Las Hermanas' emphasis on education came through both in its programming and inadvertently through its hosting of events. The San Diego Lambda Archives volunteer Diane F. Germain who learned about Las Hermanas after moving to San Diego from Los Angeles in 1976, said in a 2010 interview that after a few visits to Las Hermanas for a \$2 Sunday brunch, she began volunteering as a ticket-taker at the door.⁷⁵⁸ She emphasized how the experience of volunteering at Las Hermanas gave many women valuable work skills that they carried into their professional careers, noting that "it's kind of hard to imagine now, but women weren't even carpenters." Germain explained that "women needed to know how to do lighting, and they needed to know how to do sound and put on a performance," she continued, adding that, "sometimes we'd put on a concert and we couldn't find a woman to do the lighting, so we'd hire a guy and we would say, "We'll pay you to do the lighting, but you have to have two women there and teach them while you're doing it.""⁷⁵⁹ As part of their feminist politics to empower the primarily working-class Latina women of their community, the organizers of Las Hermanas wanted to equip women with new skills. Even events that were not intended to be directly educational had an educational component. Las Hermanas was not alone in helping women explore their interests and develop professional skills as part of their operating.

Feminist Coffeehouses acted as spaces in which women could pursue their interests and master new skills. The non-profit Women's Coffeehouse in New York City

⁷⁵⁸ Pat Sherman, "A Moment in Time: Las Hermanas (The Sisters)," *Gay San Diego*, December 9, 2010, <https://gay-sd.com/moments-in-time-las-hermanas-the-sisters/>.

⁷⁵⁹ Sherman, "A Moment in Time: Las Hermanas (The Sisters)."

began in 1973 after June Arnold with her partner donated ground floor space on Abington Square. The idea behind the New York Women's Coffeehouse was to be "a separate women's space-- a political space where women could bring their desires and dreams."⁷⁶⁰ Now Women's Studies and Art History professor, Flavia Rando cooked at the New York Women's Coffeehouse from 1976 to 1977. She first became involved with the Women's Coffeehouse as a member of the Lesbian Art collective. This feminist art collective hosted shows in the coffeehouse, did slideshows, and hosted art discussions. Initially the coffeehouse opened around four in the afternoon everyday and served "nothing too exciting- coffee, tea, and snacks—maybe a cheese sandwich."⁷⁶¹ Rando believed that the women attending the coffeehouse deserved good food. Her plan was to cook one wonderful weekly meal that was offered for \$3. With the exception of the first dinner when her sister helped, Rando, single-handedly, would cook between forty and sixty meals a night on a twenty-four inch stove. As Rando proudly showed in her old journal, her first meal was lasagna, whole wheat bread, and butter. She used real mozzarella and the entire meal cost her \$69.83 in supplies, which included the cost of transportation to pick up the supplies and olive oil.⁷⁶² The following week she hand-shucked fresh peas and also cooked pasta and spinach ricotta pie.⁷⁶³ Rando emphasized that she was cooking "family meals" and that there were not too many adult men in these families but women and children.⁷⁶⁴ She made about \$1.10 per hour, but the main reason she wanted to cook the meals was to provide people with special vegetarian food. The value of "food as

⁷⁶⁰ Flavia Rando emphasized that she wanted that statement directly quoted. Flavia Rando, "New York Feminist Food," interview by Alex Ketchum, March 7, 2015.

⁷⁶¹ Rando, "New York Feminist Food" interview by Ketchum.

⁷⁶² Flavia Rando, "Journal," personal papers shared with Alex Ketchum.

⁷⁶³ Flavia Rando, "Menu," personal papers shared with Alex Ketchum.

⁷⁶⁴ Rando, "New York Feminist Food" interview by Ketchum.

respect” was something Rando wanted to share with the lesbian feminist community.⁷⁶⁵

The Women’s Coffeehouse of New York acted as a space where she could develop these skills of art, cooking, and education and also live her politics.

Politics

While most coffeehouses were involved in fundraising for political events and hosted political rap sessions, feminist coffeehouses were inherently political whether or not they directly hosted political events. The Ann Arbor, Michigan Women’s Coffeehouse collective described the coffeehouse as a space where “the women also discuss other common problems experienced by many women in the Ann Arbor area such as child care, health education, the lack of emergency housing and the need for a women’s school to share skills.”⁷⁶⁶ For the women of the Ann Arbor Women’s Coffeehouse, the act of creating a coffeehouse was political in and of itself. The coffeehouse additionally hosted political discussions.

By hosting political events, feminist coffeehouses made their politics apparent. A Woman’s Coffeehouse of Minneapolis supported Take Back the Night events, as indicated on one of its fundraising flyers.⁷⁶⁷ Las Hermanas of San Diego was particularly politically involved, as its newsletter engaged in both local and national feminist news and printed articles about the utility of separatism and problems with militancy.⁷⁶⁸ The Iowa Women’s Coffeehouse held information sessions about the Equal Rights

⁷⁶⁵ Rando, “New York Feminist Food” interview by Ketchum.

⁷⁶⁶ Molly Reno, “Women’s Coffeehouse,” *Herself: Women’s Community Journal* 3, no. 4, August 1974.

⁷⁶⁷ “Take Back the Night Flyer,” Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, A Woman’s Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985, Box 1, Flyers.

⁷⁶⁸ Las Hermanas Coffeehouse, “Issue with Militant Separatism,” *Feminist Communications* 3, no.12, December 1977, LAMBDA Archives of San Diego, Las Hermanas.

Amendment.⁷⁶⁹ The coffeehouses also sometimes served as spaces for political groups to meet. In the summer of 1980, Lesbian Alliance members Jean and Jo wrote the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse saying that they were planning their fall schedule and wanted to hold their meetings at the coffeehouse. The other program they were thinking about was lesbian rap sessions, stating that "presently what we have in mind is to have a different topic each month, have one or two or more women facilitate the meeting and to open the meetings to any lesbian who cares to participate. Topics would vary as interest shows."⁷⁷⁰ Some of the topics they considered were "fat politics, black Lesbians (sic), lesbians and money, and perhaps lighter topics if that is what women desire."⁷⁷¹ The Lesbian Alliance even offered to pay to use the space. Most of the overt politics involved money, either through fundraisers or renting out spaces to political groups. The majority of the coffeehouses considered themselves as both political and not political: political in the sense that everything they did reflected their politics and not political in the sense that the coffeehouses were social and cultural spaces. Flavia Rando described the New York Women's Coffeehouse house as "basically a political meeting—a space that respected your ideas and who you were."⁷⁷² She remembered that many of the women who attended the coffeehouse were also involved in Radicalesbians and other women's

⁷⁶⁹ "ERA," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Women's Coffeehouse: Signs, Flyers, and Calendars, 1975-1982.

⁷⁷⁰ Jean and Jo of the Lesbian Alliance, "Letter to The Women's Coffeehouse," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse.

⁷⁷¹ Jean and Jo of the Lesbian Alliance, "Letter to The Women's Coffeehouse."

⁷⁷² Rando, "New York Feminist Food," interview.

movement organizations.⁷⁷³ Since so many of the women first entered feminist coffeehouses out of political motivations, the social was intertwined with the political.

Cultural Production: Newsletters

Coffeehouses also produced print culture. In addition to event flyers, feminist coffeehouses often produced newsletters with the events listed. Newsletters served the purpose of promoting events, asking for donations, and notifying the community of news. In the case of newsletters such as Las Hermanas' *Feminist Communications*, they also listed community events. Mama Bears coffeehouse of San Francisco, California produced, *Mama Bear News*, that told readers about upcoming feminist events at both the Mama Bears bookstore and coffeehouse.⁷⁷⁴ Newsletters could share information about coffeehouse events but also encourage community engagement.

Newsletters had the ability to create a sense of community by telling readers about the history of the coffeehouses and to create transparency within the organization. Kay Lara Schoenwetter, editor of A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis' newsletter *Coffee Klatch*, explained, "this newsletter will be put out quarterly (or so) to publicize "behind the scenes" information about how A Woman's Coffeehouse is run."⁷⁷⁵ Announcements were still made from week to week at the coffeehouse; the collective had a public notebook with minutes of collective meetings; and the collective members encouraged patrons talk with them, indicating that they that could be identified as the

⁷⁷³ Radicalesbians was a radical lesbian activist organization based in New York City in 1970. It began in reaction to Betty Friedan calling lesbians "the lavender menace."

⁷⁷⁴ Mama Bear Coffeehouse, *Mama Bear News*, GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (#BUS EPH).

⁷⁷⁵ Schoenwetter, "A Women's Coffeehouse History."

women at the food counter, the door, or the record player.⁷⁷⁶ By making this information public, the coffeehouse collective hoped women would feel a greater connection to the institution and also be empathetic to some of the organizational difficulties that the collective encountered, such as insufficient funding. The Women's Coffeehouse of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in May 1988 began publishing *The Coffeehouse News* stating, "We're delighted to present the very first edition of The Coffeehouse News- hot off the press! We've been looking for a way to keep in touch with new participants and veteran coffeehousers (sic) for updates and invitations."⁷⁷⁷ In the issue, the writers also thanked their readers for their support for the past two years. They saw the newsletter as a way "to present a three month schedule so you'll be sure not to miss any terrific events!"⁷⁷⁸ The writers also emphasized that the coffeehouse was a non-profit, volunteer run women's collective organizing free feminist cultural events on Friday evenings at The Women's Center in Cambridge, MA. For women who had never attended the coffeehouse but may have happened upon the letter they would have also learned that "the coffeehouse is always free, is handicapped accessible and provides ASL [American Sign Language] interpretation at any event with two weeks notice. As an experimental forum for creating and enjoying women's culture, we strive for relevance and community."⁷⁷⁹ This periodical was also used to encourage new members to formally join the collective. Coffeehouses were not the only feminist businesses to have newsletters. Malaprop's feminist bookstore and café also had a newsletter in Asheville, North Carolina,

⁷⁷⁶ Schoenwetter, "A Women's Coffeehouse History."

⁷⁷⁷ The Women's Coffeehouse of Cambridge, Massachusetts, "About," *The Coffeehouse News*, May 1988.

⁷⁷⁸ Women's Coffeehouse of Cambridge, Massachusetts, "About."

⁷⁷⁹ Women's Coffeehouse of Cambridge, Massachusetts, "About."

announcing events.⁷⁸⁰ But as coffeehouses typically sponsored so many events, distributing calendars that also served as newsletters became commonplace.

Feminist coffeehouses were also interconnected through literary culture, by the feminist periodicals that wrote about them and ran advertisements of their businesses. The coffeehouses in turn would support feminist literary culture, by hosting touring authors and poets and by promoting and financially helping feminist periodicals. In 1977, the feminist periodical of the Twin Cities, *Goldflower*, recounted how the Women's Coffeehouse collective "generously made available the Coffeehouse facilities [at The New Riverside Café] for *Goldflower*. Their time and help was much appreciated. As a result of the benefit, *Goldflower* made \$157 in door donations and food sales."⁷⁸¹ These coffeehouses were also connected more directly.

Interconnected

Touring musicians connected feminist coffeehouses; in addition, an informal support network existed between these coffeehouses. In trying to solve their problems, individual coffeehouses were not without guidance. In the Iowa Women's Coffeehouse archives, there was a letter written by Kimela in 1981 describing how A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis collective operated. Previously, Kimela had offered "to answer any questions."⁷⁸² As a result, The Iowa Women's Coffeehouse collective had explained to Kimela how it had managed its finances and sought her guidance in

⁷⁸⁰ Malaprop's, *Malaprop's Newsletter*, GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (#BUS EPH).

⁷⁸¹ "Benefit," *Goldflower* 5, no. 2, January 1977.

⁷⁸² "Kimela's Letter to Iowa's Women's Coffeehouse," University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191), Series 5: Organizations, Box 4, Women's Coffeehouse: Organizational History and Pledge Drives, 1981-1982.

improving their organizational structure. It should be evident from the last two chapters that A Woman's Coffeehouse of Minneapolis was not without its own problems.

However, after six years of operation, the Minneapolis collective members were able to lend support and offer advice about lessons learned through their own trial and error. A Woman's Coffeehouse collective also studied how other coffeehouses functioned. In its archives, there was a flyer from the Mountain Moving Coffeehouse of Chicago.

Furthermore, during collective meetings, as evidenced by members' handwritten meeting minutes, the Minneapolis collective discussed how Moving Mountain operated on a volunteer basis. In the Somerville Coffeehouse archives' collective meeting minutes, the scribe noted that before members of the collective opened their own coffeehouse, they were looking into both currently operating and defunct coffeehouse/restaurants for advice.⁷⁸³ They also decided that if the coffeehouse did not materialize that they would donate whatever money remained to the women's community, as they saw themselves as part of a greater project of feminism and the creation of women's space.⁷⁸⁴ Feminist coffeehouses actively supported each other and built a larger network of feminist cultural space.

Conclusion

After fifteen years of producing events, A Woman's Coffeehouse ceased operations in September 1989. Infighting over matters of representation, inclusion, money, and programming became insurmountable. New feminist and lesbian

⁷⁸³ "Meeting Minutes October 28, 1978," Northeastern University Archives, Somerville Women's Educational Center 1975-1983 (M26), Box 4 "Projects: Coffeehouse: Fliers and Notes," Folder 65: Philosophy and Notes.

⁷⁸⁴ Their contribution of their tapes of Marjorie Parsons' presentation to the Northeastern Archives greatly aided this project.

organizations founded in the mid 1980s in the Twin Cities region began to produce events catered to the same demographic as A Women's Coffeehouse. These new organizations were appealing, as they were not tied to the same contentious history of conflict as A Women's Coffeehouse.⁷⁸⁵ However, from 1975 to 1989 A Woman's Coffeehouse provided a meaningful space that supported lesbian and feminist culture. The unique value of the coffeehouse explained why women fought so hard to maintain it even when financial difficulties started to tear apart the organization in 1984. Ten years after its closure, the coffeehouse's pioneering members held one last event in the basement of the Plymouth Church, to celebrate the friendships, relationships, and programming that had been so significant in their lives and in the history of the Twin Cities.⁷⁸⁶ Similarly when Mountain Moving Coffeehouse of Chicago ended after thirty-one years of operation in 2005, it was the oldest continuously operating womyn-born womyn and girl-only feminist coffeehouse in the United States. The coffeehouse had produced hundreds of concerts and social events for lesbians and feminists. A successor organization called the Kindred Hearts' Coffeehouse began offering a monthly event of women's music in its wake, trying to maintain Moving Mountain's cultural

⁷⁸⁵ Historian and archivist Stewart Van Cleve believes that the contentious environment of the coffeehouse led to its demise. He argues that several lesbian bars and alternative social organizations (such as Out to Brunch) organized and opened in the mid-1980s and actively competed with the coffeehouse's once-unique status as a social venue for women in the Twin Cities as the new spaces, "offered an easygoing alternative to the contention of regular meetings. Thus, the majority of women who just came to dance went elsewhere." As a result, membership dwindled, and the organization closed in September of 1989. Stewart Van Cleve, "From the Archives: A Woman's Coffeehouse," *The Column*, August 31, 2010, <http://thecolu.mn/4505/from-the-archives-a-womans-coffeehouse>; Peg Dryer and Trina Porte, "The Coffeehouse: A Final Accounting," *Equal Time News*, August 1990, 4.

⁷⁸⁶ Plymouth Church's basement was the location of the coffeehouse during its fifteen years of operation. This event was marked with a commemorative coffee cup that was donated to the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota with an explanatory note. Stewart Van Cleve, personal correspondence with Alex Ketchum, February 21, 2018.

contribution.⁷⁸⁷

Feminist coffeehouses played a significant role in promoting feminist and lesbian culture and provided non-profit temporary feminist social and political space. Coffeehouse events brought women together through music, dancing, art, politics, and socializing. These spaces provided a space for women to learn skills like business record keeping, sound and lighting design, and event coordination. In addition to providing women with training they could use in other aspects of their lives, coffeehouse collectives bolstered other existing feminist businesses and women entrepreneurs by creating a space in which these businesses and individuals could advertise and operate. Difficulties over money threatened coffeehouse collectives' abilities to create these cultural contributions. Not only was raising enough capital to find space, provide refreshment, and compensate entertainers difficult, but coffeehouses collectives treaded a precarious balance. The collectives were politically motivated to make events accessible across class lines while the coffeehouses also needed to meet operating costs, attempt to properly compensate artists, and provide economic and/or emotional support for the organizing committees. While these operations were not without conflict, the lower overhead costs of feminist coffeehouses allowed women of varying class and race backgrounds in the United States and Canada to create temporary spaces in which to play women's music, display women's art, and be in the company of other feminists and lesbians. Whether or not they actually served coffee, feminist coffeehouses created a buzz.

⁷⁸⁷ Kathie Bergquist and Robert McDonald, *A Field Guide to Gay and Lesbian Chicago* (Chicago: Lake Claremont Press, 2006), 183.

Conclusion: Endings and Beginnings The Slow Painful Task of Passion

In March 2017, Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant of Bridgeport, Connecticut celebrated its fortieth anniversary. While three nights of dinners from the twenty-first to the twenty-third marked the actual anniversary, Bloodroot also hosted dinners by guest vegetarian chefs from around Connecticut, six different art exhibits, feminist guest speakers, a book fair, and four cooking classes over the course of six weeks.⁷⁸⁸ These anniversary events reflected the same commitment to community building that contributed to Bloodroot's initial success. Commenting on that success, founder Selma Miriam remarked, "We just stuck with what we believe in," adding, "We have scraped and struggled, but we have always had devoted customers."⁷⁸⁹ In the year of its founding, Bloodroot was one among hundreds of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in North America. Now, forty-one years later, however, Bloodroot was the only remaining feminist restaurant founded during the 1970s in the United States and Canada.

The apex of American and Canadian feminist restaurants was from 1976-1985.⁷⁹⁰ Most feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses closed after only a few years of operation; however, this did not mean that they were failures. Feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses allowed for — and indeed fostered — cultural, economic, and social communities that played an important role in the women's movements. Despite acting as

⁷⁸⁸ Bloodroot Collective, "40 Year Anniversary Celebrations," March 2017, <http://www.bloodroot.com/wp-content/uploads/Bloodroots-40th-Anniversary.pdf>; Tejal Rao, "Mixing Food and Feminism, Bloodroot Is 40 and Still Cooking," *New York Times*, March 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/14/dining/bloodroot-feminist-restaurant.html?_r=0.

⁷⁸⁹ Joe Meyers, "Famed Bridgeport Vegetarian Restaurant Approaches 40th Anniversary," November 20, 2016, <https://www.ctpost.com/living/article/Famed-Bridgeport-vegetarian-restaurant-approaches-10624322.php>.

⁷⁹⁰ See the timeline and directory included in the appendix.

alternatives to hegemonic eatery culture, feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses were still liable to mainstream economic patterns and governmental regulations, which ultimately curtailed some of the owners' dreams.

The history of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in the United States and Canada is a history of business practices, political activism, and food politics.

“Serving Up Revolution: Feminist Restaurants, Cafés, and Coffeehouses from 1972-1989 in the United States and Canada,” examines the ways in which feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses promoted women-owned and women-centered businesses and fostered non-capitalist and non-hierarchical business practices and models. Feminist restaurant history reveals the importance of physical space for socializing, activism, economics, and community building. By including a study of feminist coffeehouses, this dissertation also highlights the contributions made by women with less access to capital than the restaurant owners. These feminist businesses were not isolated but, instead, were part of a larger economy and society that was not always amenable to their desires. The creation of women's spaces required innovative financial strategies. Balancing economic needs with philosophy required compromises. This project re-centers feminist entrepreneurialism and challenges narratives of post-war feminism.

Feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses merit our attention because they provide a model for creating businesses that challenge workplace inequity. Studying these spaces combats the erasure of feminist and lesbian feminist culture and underscores the contributions founders of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses made to debates around food politics, community organizing, and labor rights, which continue today. Furthermore, this project contributes methodologically to the literature on the

history of American and Canadian feminist activism through the innovative employment of lesbian and women's travel guides for map building.

Feminist restaurants and cafés employed alternative business practices. These eateries were part of a larger nexus of feminist businesses. In addition to providing direct economic opportunities for the women who were employed by the restaurant, feminist restaurants and cafés promoted women owned businesses, women artists, and craftswomen. As a result, the economic impact of these restaurants expanded beyond their single brick and mortar locations. Feminist restaurants and cafés of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada acted as spaces that challenged the status quo around cooking and consumption through the creation of feminist food. Each restaurant and café defined “feminist food” differently, based on the particular feminist ethics of the restaurant owners. Depending on the restaurant, making food feminist revolved around vegetarian ethics, labor issues, cost, and the sourcing of products. By analyzing what was included and banned on restaurant menus, this dissertation shows the ways that food could have been labeled as feminist in this period.

In addition to including narratives about feminists from differing identity backgrounds, this dissertation historically contextualizes the separatist strategy of certain feminist restaurants and coffeehouses within the larger story of feminist movements of the 1960s through the 1980s. By studying feminist restaurants on both sides of the United States and Canadian border, this dissertation shows that, while federal boundaries are important for understanding how these spaces dealt with various legal barriers, restricting the narrative to either only the United States or Canada would hide the similarities between how the businesses functioned and the similar problems the owners encountered,

regardless of national origin. While there were more feminist restaurants in the United States than in Canada, including Canadian case studies demonstrated that feminist restaurants were not only an American phenomenon. Despite differences in Canadian and American feminist histories, feminist restaurant, café, and coffeehouse founders had similar motivations for beginning their businesses in both countries. Including both countries also shows how the development of feminist restaurants was deeply interconnected with feminist literary culture-- a point I would like to develop in future work.⁷⁹¹

My hope is that other scholars will build upon this project, particularly in regard to my technique of spatial history. While the methodologies I used to create my databases ultimately limited the full capabilities of GIS layering, there are many ways in which future researchers can build upon my methods. As the guidebooks relied on volunteered information, *Gaia's Guides* and other lesbian and women's travel guides were too inconsistent and therefore could not be trusted in regards to a location's existence in a particular year. Sometimes the directories published out of date material or offered few details. As this research becomes more public, I hope that I can confirm the exact operation dates of all spaces, not just those of the case studies included in this dissertation. With more reliable data, using GIS software, it is possible to create and analyze maps by layering publicly available, government collected data about neighborhood demographics and economic conditions under the points marking the locations of the restaurants. This technique allows researchers to draw broader

⁷⁹¹ Feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses were deeply interconnected with feminist literary culture. Written materials promoted their existence through guidebooks, periodicals, flyers, or business cards. Feminist restaurants also sold and distributed texts, hosted authors, and produced their own newsletters, advertisements, and ephemera. As much as feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses were about food, these spaces also were places where attendees could find brain food (literature).

conclusions about the demographic trends of these restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses rather than relying solely on case studies and interviews.

In addition, it is my hope that future researchers will take my databases — which I have made publicly available on thefeministrestaurantproject.com — and continue to enhance the project, perhaps widening it to include a study of all kinds of feminist and lesbian businesses. This kind of research would necessitate the collaboration of a team of researchers in order to best undertake the grueling task of collecting and inputting data. This sort of task would have been impossible for a single scholar, as the creation of the restaurant and café database alone required years of work. In the appendix, I included three sample maps of Tampa, Portland, and Madison in 1981 to demonstrate the enormous potential of this technique. Placing all of these spaces on a map for a single year provides a sense of how the feminist business networks interacted with each other. One day, perhaps a group of keen scholars might assemble to create such databases and maps, expanding the quantitative scope of this project. Likewise, this project could be extended to include feminist businesses outside North America, even by continuing the methodology of using the *Gaia's Guides*, as that series included European locations. For example, the feminist vegetarian restaurant Pulse, in Brighton, England, published its own cookbook and it was not the only European feminist restaurant.⁷⁹² Comparing feminist restaurants across continental boundaries could further enhance our understandings of feminist networks and the intellectual history of feminist ideas, which would in turn allow us to trace how these ideas spread and evolved.

⁷⁹² Pulse Collective, “How Many Beans Make Pulse: Trade Secrets, The Pulse Cookbook” (Brighton, England: Brighton Resource Center Publication, 1970s, exact date unknown).

While each owner of a feminist restaurant and café was unique, for personal, financial, or social reasons, the majority of the original founders moved on with their lives or passed away by the late 1980s or early 1990s, with a few notable exceptions. Collectives formed in the 1970s and 1980s fizzled out as a result of infighting. Restaurant owners sold their businesses off due to financial problems, burn out, or loss of interest. When Jill Ward of Mother Courage could no longer continue with the daily grind of operating her business after six years, she sold the restaurant to Michael Safdia who transformed the location into a French bistro called the Black Sheep.⁷⁹³ Her business partner and former romantic partner, Dolores Alexander, had left the business years earlier, citing disinterest.⁷⁹⁴ The Three of Cups coffeehouse collective of Toronto ended when maintaining the organization became overwhelming.⁷⁹⁵ The Woman's Common of Toronto closed, "owing to economic times and the increasing availability in 1994 of other lesbian-only spaces."⁷⁹⁶ Patricia Hynes of Bread and Roses Restaurant in Cambridge sold her space to the Ducky Haven Café Collective, which renamed the restaurant Amaranth. As its grand-opening posters claimed, Amaranth became an exclusively women's

⁷⁹³ Dolores Alexander, interview by Kelly Anderson, March 20, 2004 and October 22, 2005, <https://www.smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/vof/transcripts/Alexander.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁴ Alexander, interview by Anderson.

⁷⁹⁵ The organizers of Three of Cups noted that the coffeehouses depended on "whether or not we could get it together personally every time the Three of Cups happens. Our survival depends on a few women—five at this point. The pressure is tremendous. If we have personality difficulties or if we are sick, we would just collapse. We didn't like that feeling." Interview with Three of Cups collective, 1976, Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Three of Cups Box 105.

⁷⁹⁶ Caroline Duetz, Val Edwards, and Kye Marshall, "The Woman's Common," *Rise Up!: A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism*, 2016, <http://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/organizations/the-womans-common/>. According to a former employee, the Woman's Common had difficulty attracting younger and non-white clientele. When board members asked their employees why younger lesbians did not want to join the club and eat at the restaurant, the waitress and her friends responded that lesbians her age were more interested in the multi-racial mixed-gender spaces that were available in other Toronto neighborhoods. Anonymized Interview, "Working at Toronto's Woman's Common," interview with Alex Ketchum on January 13, 2017.

vegetarian restaurant with a focus on performances and art shows.⁷⁹⁷ Afterwards, Hynes completed her graduate studies and became a renowned environmental activist, professor, and author.⁷⁹⁸ Berkeley's Brick Hut, in its third iteration and after two moves, finally closed in 1997. Sharon Davenport of the Hut became an archivist-librarian living in Oakland, California. Joan Antonuccio currently works as a professional voice actor.⁷⁹⁹ By the 1990s most of these spaces were gone and feminist restaurants and cafés had largely become a thing of the past. At the completion of this thesis in 2018, feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses founded between 1972 and 1989 are nearly extinct. Feminism had changed and the desire for these sorts of spaces, especially the women only spaces, was largely nostalgic, yet critiqued.

In 1974, when a group of Toronto-based lesbian feminists gathered to create the soon-to-open Clementyne's restaurant, they described the space as "the place we've always wanted to go but never could find."⁸⁰⁰ Feminism has changed since the 1970s and 1980s and the needs of feminist communities have shifted. Yet, restaurants like Bloodroot have been able to adapt with the times. While Bloodroot's over forty-one year success is unique for any restaurant and dependent on factors including their adaptability to the changing nature of feminist communities, the fact remains that they have actively hired and worked with women across racial, class, sexual orientation, national, and ethnic groups. The owners created a community space welcoming to all women, men, and gender non-conforming individuals from more diverse communities and thus embodied

⁷⁹⁷ "Amaranth: The Women's Restaurant Poster," Lesbian Herstory Digital Archives, <http://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p274401coll1/id/781/rec/31>.

⁷⁹⁸ Patricia Hynes, "Bread and Roses," interview by Alex Ketchum, May 9, 2012.

⁷⁹⁹ Joan Antonuccio, "Remembering the Brick Hut Café, Part II," *Bay Area Bites*, June 23, 2011, <https://ww2.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-café-part-2/>.

⁸⁰⁰ "Women's Café. Clementine's (sic) Café," *Newsflash* (Toronto, ON: 1974-1976), 2, Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Box 20.

intersectional feminist politics before Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term in 1989.⁸⁰¹

Like their namesake, the bloodroot flower whose rhizomes grow deep and form a network with their kin in order to help the community thrive, Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant's owners Selma Miriam and Noel Furie's passion for their restaurant and food spread throughout their community. Their efforts to connect and integrate with the larger neighborhood led to their business being supported in return.

Most contemporary restaurants that embody similar principles to feminist restaurants founded between the 1970s and 1980s do not label themselves as such in the same overt manner. It is far more common for restaurants to identify themselves as socially conscious, spaces of social justice, or part of a food politics movement.⁸⁰² Queer politics and postmodern theories of the body have shifted understandings of gender and singular gender spaces of feminist political organizing and, therefore, are less common.⁸⁰³ However, the human need of finding community spaces where one feels accepted and supported continues.

⁸⁰¹ Crenshaw coined the term in 1989 but women of color had been working with intersectional feminism for decades. Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* (1991): 1241-99.

⁸⁰² Dylan Clark, "The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine." *Ethnology* 43, no. 1 (2004): 19-31. There are, however, a handful of new feminist restaurants in the United States and Canada. See: Alex Ketchum, "Memory Has Added Seasoning: The Legacy of Feminist Restaurants in the United States and Canada," *Anthropology of Food* (forthcoming in 2018).

⁸⁰³ Changes in feminist politics with the rise of postmodernism, the development of queer theory, and critiques of radical separatist feminism has shifted how communities operate and how members of queer communities choose to spend time. The rise of postmodernism and poststructuralism has also changed the landscape of what it means to operate lesbian spaces. The rise of queer theory's prominence in the late 1980s and the subsequent move away from identity politics has made it that some of these spaces no longer seem useful. Michel Foucault's poststructuralist writings influenced theorists such as Judith Butler to challenge essentialist ideas about gender and sexuality. Queer theory, furthermore, challenged ideas of fixed identities. These writings influenced the ways in which activists have decided to organize their politics, moving away from a politics built on identity towards one built on affinity. The push for queer space has meant that younger lesbians, in particular, socialize in all gendered spaces, yet gay male bars continue to flourish.

Owners of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouse showed that, despite economic, legal, and social barriers, creating the spaces of their dreams was indeed possible. Good luck to you in your search for that place you have always wanted to go, but could never find! And if it does not exist yet, think back to Selma Miriam's reflective words about the founding of Bloodroot: "I had gone from being my father's daughter to my husband's wife and I had never thought of doing anything on my own."⁸⁰⁴ But, then she did!

⁸⁰⁴ Myriam Fougère, *Lesbiana: A Parallel Revolution*, DVD, directed by Myriam Fougère (2012: Quebec).

Appendix

Methodological Usage: Visual and Spatial History

The physical object of a guidebook displayed the presence of women's communities, yet few books provided a visual representation of what these communities looked like. Women's, lesbian, and gay travel guides did not typically include maps. Further, these guides and directories included comments and hinted at experiences, but did not speak about spatial awareness. *Gaia's Guides* were comprised solely of a collection of listings. A few of the regional guides, such as the lesbian guide to Washington D.C. (1980s, exact date unlisted), did include a local street map, but this was a rare occurrence. However, with the development of GIS mapping technologies, historians are no longer restricted to simply imagining what the landscape of feminist and lesbian socializing looked like across the United States and Canada at a particular time. It is now possible for us to make maps that speak to a kind of physicality, remembering that historical bodies have an actual form and moved through space.

While the spatial turn in history has begun, this subfield remains in its initial stages. One approach to understanding feminists in physical spaces is to mark where they gathered. In this way, it was the initial goal of this project to map out the locations of feminist restaurants and cafés within the United States and Canada from 1972 to 1989, a process, which had never before been completed. Each time a feminist restaurant, café, or coffeehouse was located, I entered the name of the business, address (if it was known), and any other elements of description into an Excel spreadsheet entitled the "Master Database." The information came from the above listed directories, such as *Gaia's Guides*, *Gay Yellow Pages*, *Pink Pages*, and *Lavender Pages*, as well as from feminist periodicals, business cards, and event flyers. Additionally, I created a separate *Gaia's*

Guide specific database to track changes over time within one guidebook. The collated information from the “Gaia’s Guide Database” was also entered into the “Master Database.” I then cleaned the data from the “Master Database” in order to create homogenized data sets, which could be utilized by Geographic Information Systems mapping programs. The rest of this appendix will explain the multiple phases of developing these maps, the programs utilized, and why the chosen strategy was implemented.

An immediate benefit of quantitative mapping techniques is that they show the preponderance of these spaces. Based on my initial estimates I guessed that there were, at most, 40 feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses in North American and Canada. In fact, the number of verified feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses is over 250 and, further, there are over 430 unverified spaces, but it is likely, feminist spaces are included in this set. In 2013, I created *thefeministrestaurantproject.com* to showcase my findings and in commitment to open access and public dissemination of data. A color-coded version of the database used to build the binary maps is publicly available on the website, and anyone is able to email me to suggest updates and edits. The reason behind making this information accessible to the public is manifold: so other scholars can use it, so people who may have attended, owned, or worked in these spaces can provide feedback, and so the information can be spread to the general public, as a number of the women interviewed for this project said that they wanted people to remember their legacy.⁸⁰⁵

Once these databases were completed, I then went about building maps. Not only descriptive, these maps directly enabled my analysis. By importing Keyhole Markup

⁸⁰⁵ Interviews with Alex Ketchum, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016.

Language (KML) data⁸⁰⁶ or a file geodatabase (GDB)⁸⁰⁷ mapping on economic figures and populations as layers within ArGIS programs⁸⁰⁸ can be useful, as researchers can see links between poverty levels and locations of certain kinds of businesses.

However, one issue in the completion this project was a lack of consistency in the sources. *Gaia's Guide* and other travel guides were not always accurate in reporting when a space was still in business. A variance of one or two years would be less significant if this project studied a specific kind of business over a two hundred year period. However, as this study is focused only on a twenty-year period, having a standard deviation of a few years disrupts the utility of importing these figures. After experimenting with different strategies, I realized that the limitation of my data set's reliability on dates meant that layering other statistics, like income and population, would ultimately lead to inaccurate results. Despite this, creating the maps still enabled fruitful analysis.


For basic data plotting, Google's My Maps has proven far better than ArcGIS and QGIS. With a two-tiered, color-coded system, it was possible to create one master map. Magenta bubbles represent verified feminist, lesbian, and women's restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafés. Blue circles mark unverified feminist restaurants and women-friendly establishments mentioned in the various women's travel guides and feminist and lesbian periodicals. These blue circles also marked women owned (but not necessarily

⁸⁰⁶ Keyhole Markup Language (KML) is an XML notation for expressing geographic annotation and visualization within Internet-based, two-dimensional maps and three-dimensional Earth browsers. KML was developed for use with Google Earth, which was originally named Keyhole Earth Viewer.

⁸⁰⁷ A file geodatabase is a collection of files in a folder on disk that can store, query, and manage both spatial and nonspatial data. You create a file geodatabase in ArcGIS. The geodatabase is the native data structure for ArcGIS and is the primary data format used for editing and data management. While ArcGIS works with geographic information in numerous geographic information system (GIS) file formats, it is designed to work with and leverage the capabilities of the geodatabase.

⁸⁰⁸ It is impossible for ArcGIS to use raw KML files. First you must convert the KML file into a personal geodatabase (.gdb) using a tool provided within ArcGIS called KML2Layer. The only way to actually view a KML file natively in ArcGIS without having to convert it is to purchase the ArcGIS Data Interoperability extension, which allows ArcGIS to directly view more than 100 different GIS file formats.

identified as feminist) spaces, establishments targeted at gay men that also welcomed lesbian women, or restaurants that advertised as being spaces where women and lesbians were welcome to eat alone or as a couple. This blue list is, at present, incomplete but provides a sample of the kinds of spaces that women used for socializing but were not explicitly verified as women's, lesbian, or feminist spaces. From this map it is possible to construct a sense of what the feminist and lesbian community in a particular space and time looked like. Maps can change our conceptualizations of the past.



The Feminist Restaurant Project

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Maps

Display Data Map:

Below is the map of all of the feminist restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses that I have found in my research. This map is useful to visualize the locations of these restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses. If you visited the site prior to July 28, 2016 you only had access to the Beta Data Map.

[Remember that if you wish to write about or use my maps or directory you need to cite both Alex Ketchum and this website.](#)

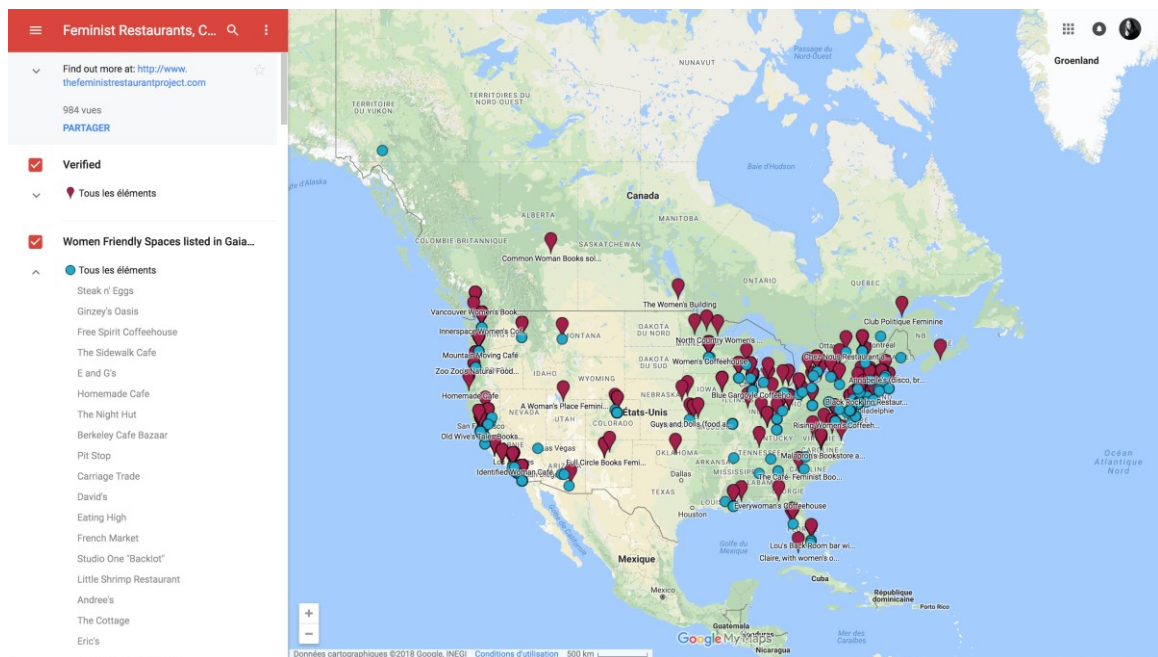
Magenta bubbles represent verified feminist, lesbian, and women's restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafes. Blue circles mark women-friendly establishments mentioned in the various women's travel guides and feminist and lesbian periodicals (these include some establishments targeted towards gay men that also welcomed women). These spaces were women owned (but not identified as feminist) or advertised as being spaces where women and lesbians were welcome to eat alone or as a couple. The blue list is incomplete but provides a sample of the kinds of spaces women would use for socializing and that were advertised to women to socialize in that were not explicitly women's spaces/ feminist spaces/ lesbian spaces.

If the embedded map is glitchy, go to this link:
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/viewer?mid=122aAB-43gjedhS4MBH82AaCsL6s&authuser=1>



Also, please go to the directory page to contribute to the project by informing the researcher about any feminist restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses that you know about.

Below is the map of all of the feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses that were located as of Fall 2017 which is useful in visualizing their locations. This map is accurate only to the level of the cities and towns. Zooming in, therefore, will not reveal the exact address of the establishment, as addresses were not consistently listed in the guides.



Feminist Business Nexus 1981 in *Gaia's Guides*

For the purpose of understanding the potential scope of mapping, below are three maps of the Feminist Nexus of Businesses in 1981 in Tampa, Florida, Madison, Wisconsin, and Portland, Oregon based solely on one edition of *Gaia's Guides*. The three

chosen cities span the United States in the South, the Midwest, and the Pacific Midwest and have received little academic attention in regards to their contributions to the women's movements, which is dominated by studies of San Francisco, New York, Toronto, and Washington, D.C. However, these maps demonstrate that each of these locations indeed had feminist and lesbian business communities in 1981. In each of these cities, most of the lesbian and women-friendly spaces are concentrated in a single area, with the exception, somewhat, of Portland. While I wanted to choose cities with more than four businesses, I had quite a few to choose between. I also wanted to use different examples than those used as case studies in the main body of this dissertation. These maps are accurate down to the exact address whenever possible. However if no address was listed in the guide, I located the site at the city's centre. These maps demonstrate the potential available to create a yearly map of each space and create a scrolling feature to view changes over time.

Based on census data from 1980, Madison Wisconsin had 176,616 people, Tampa, Florida had 271,523, and Portland had a population 366,383 respectively.⁸⁰⁹ By 1981, the populations had not fluctuated significantly. As the larger feminist space map demonstrates, rural regions had some explicitly feminist businesses, but it was still necessary to have a large enough population to support such a business. This is why, in 1984 in places like Chattanooga, Tennessee, there was a bar, named Alan Gold's, where gay men and women congregated together because they did not have enough people to

⁸⁰⁹ City of Madison Planning Documents, <http://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/v1c1.pdf>; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "1980 census of population: Characteristics of the population. General Social and Economic Characteristics of Florida," (1983); Portland, Oregon Demographic Data, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/56507>.

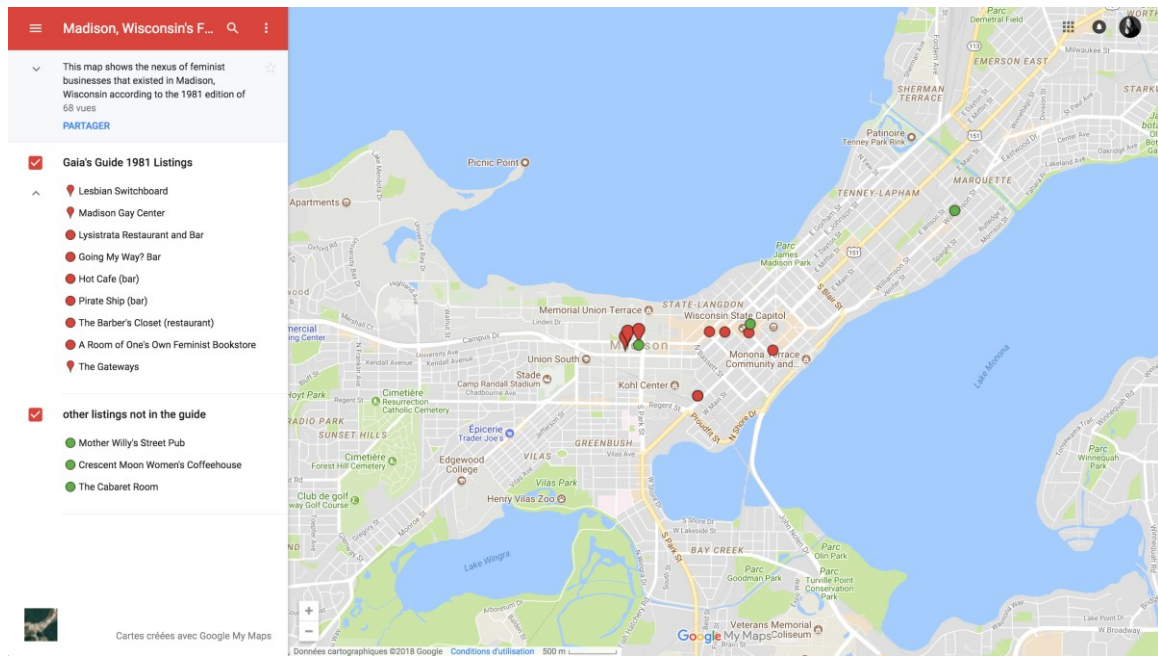
support two separate businesses. According to the entry in *Gaia's Guide*, "Gay women and men "we basically stick together as a group.""⁸¹⁰

It is key to see and to understand that the feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses discussed in this dissertation were not isolated, but embedded in a feminist business nexus. The three maps below emphasize the arguments made in chapters four and seven, which show how feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses promoted women's culture and other feminist businesses. As discussed in chapter one, the choice to write about feminist restaurants throughout the United States and Canada makes this level of specificity impossible for every year of this project in every location. These three maps are presented, then, as a compromise.

⁸¹⁰ Sandy Horn, *Gaia's Guide* (1984).

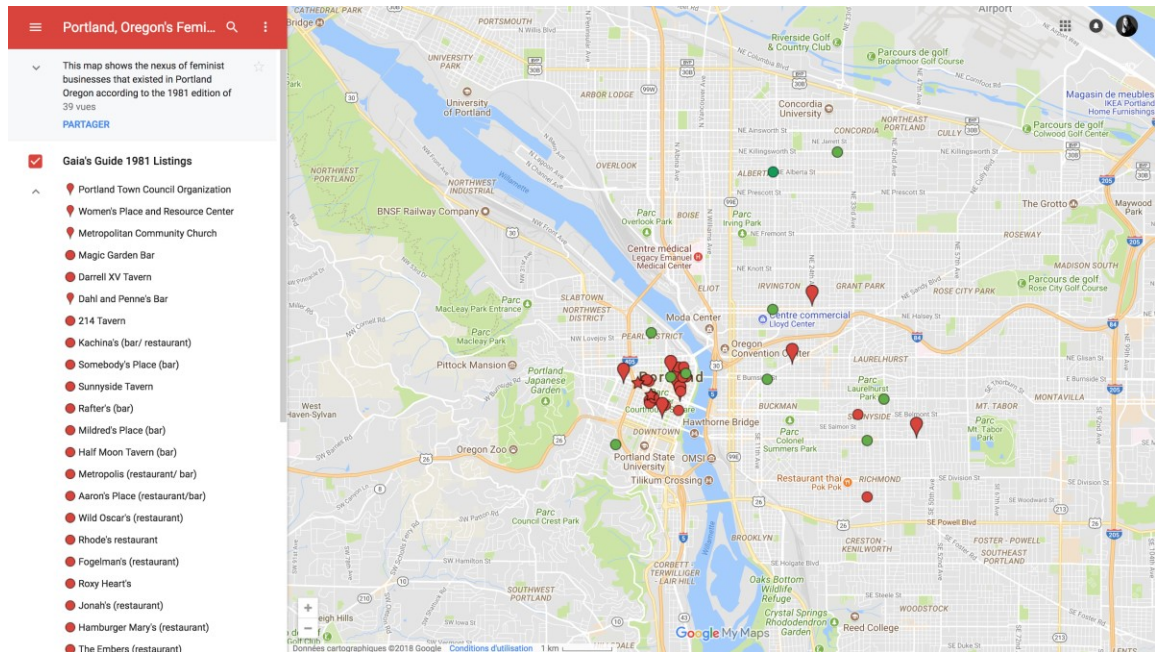
Here is the link for the map in **Madison, Wisconsin**:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_BA1wghSQFeEHQirdtxrSKApL-8&usp=sharing



Here is the link for the map in **Portland, Oregon**:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1xFqPz5UQlXJVtkr8Q-bF9Xb2qA&usp=sharing>



The Public Map

While this dissertation demonstrates the importance of women's spaces and explores the political efficacy of separatism, another important motivation for this sort of research is to bring attention to the fact that these spaces actually existed. The maps for this project therefore serve multiple purposes. Some of the maps simply show the actual, physical location where these businesses existed, some show the variety of feminist businesses present in a single area during a single year based on the information presented in only one guidebook, and some are part of a larger public history project which not only takes information from interviewees, but also provides a virtual space for

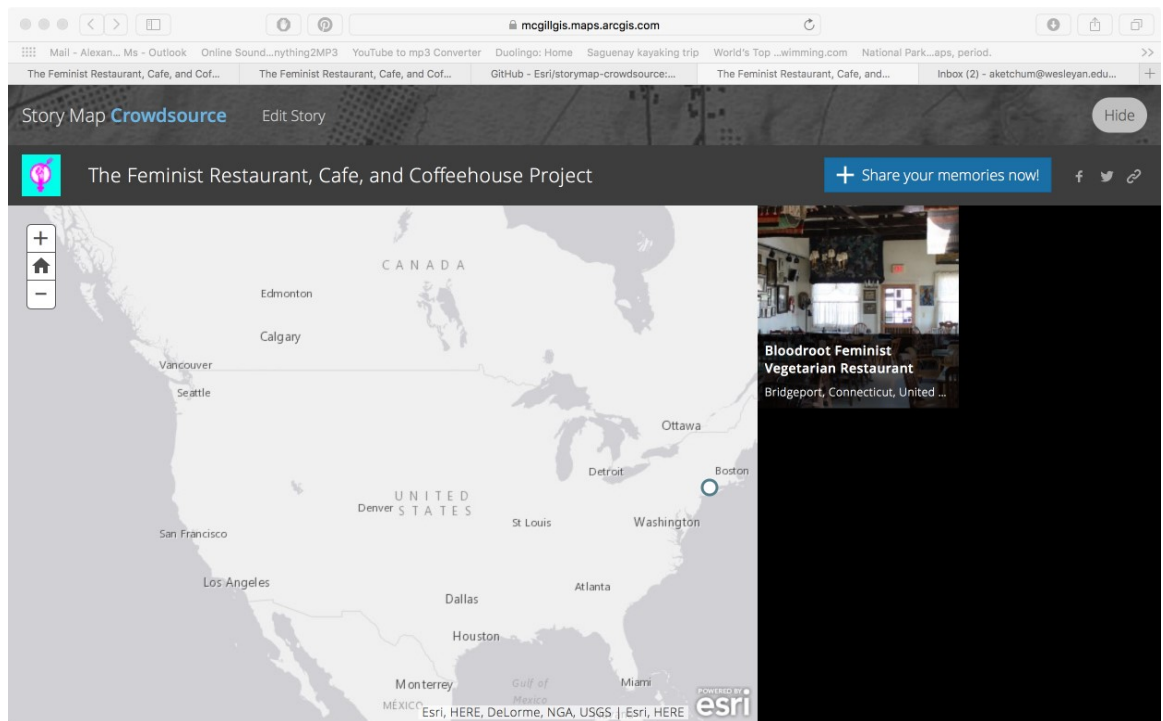
continual community building through memory sharing. A large, public map served the purpose of drawing attention to the legacy of the women founders of feminist restaurants, cafés, and coffeehouses. These women indeed made this project feasible by making this information as publicly accessible as possible and by developing new forums in which former participants in feminist restaurants could expand their community during a time in which many women's spaces are closing or have closed.⁸¹¹

Picking the right kind of software to create a public map that invited user feedback was particularly difficult in 2013. At first, there was no application that directly suited my needs. Initially I considered Nunaliit and Postscrap, both developed by University of Carleton geographers. Neither fit the exact needs of the project because of the frameworks they necessitated. Further, the Google Social Maps Experience did not give the researcher oversight and editing capabilities over the content, leaving the opportunity for the map to be trolled. On that application, if a map was publicly available, anyone could add or delete data and, because of this, users might be less likely to feel safe uploading their content knowing that it could be changed or deleted by anyone. In 2016, Esri launched Story Map, a map builder that allowed anyone to create an account or use their Google profile or Facebook account to post onto the map. Story Map Crowdsourcing (beta) is an ArcGIS web application designed to collect photos and captions from anyone and display them on a map that Esri will keep in beta until 2018. The application was easy to use and configure, and could be used in a web browser on laptop and desktop computers, mobile phones, and tablets. Contributors can sign in with their Facebook, Google, ArcGIS account, or participate as an anonymous guest. Further,

⁸¹¹ Greggor Mattson, "Lesbian Bar Closures," Who Needs Gay Bars, August 5, 2016, <https://greggormattson.com/2016/08/05/lesbian-bar-closures-lost-womyns-space/>.

creators of the map have oversight over the content. The program thus allows for a good balance of permitting users to not have to commit too much personal information in order to participate, but still know that their contribution is relatively safe.

There are some drawbacks however, besides the \$2,500 annual subscription fee, which was thankfully covered by McGill University. It was not possible to upload or create a non-editable basemap without it being at risk of deletion, due to the Beta status of the program. Ideally it would have been possible to just export my master Google Map as a kml file, convert it to an ArcGIS readable file, which is readable by ArcGIS, the software Esri relies upon, and then use those points as a background layer over which users would be able to only edit a top layer. Also, currently, users are supposed to upload a photo and do not have the option to solely upload text. As a workaround, I suggested that users just upload a photo of a square and then write their text, but this situation is less than ideal. A positive aspect of this system is that the Esri program is quite user friendly and requires very little web literacy, relative to other mapping software. However, despite the friendly interface, some of these issues dissuaded some potential users. Another issue is that, unlike QGIS, which uses Python, the Esri site does not allow for the development of plugins in the Beta version. Nonetheless, in September 2016, the Feminist Restaurant Crowdsourcing StoryMap launched and was embedded in “The Feminist Restaurant Project” website.



Controlling space is important to marginalized groups. Though identifying a space as queer may lead to gay bashing and danger, it is still important for community

building.⁸¹² Michel de Certeau has shown how those with little institutional power rely on tactics that allow them to gain advantage and to claim space for themselves and can, as a result, create pockets of power.⁸¹³ The creation of these maps allows not only for the creation of a record of communities, but also for a continuation of those community, furthering a sense of belonging by tying feminists, lesbians, and queer women to a history in particular locations.

⁸¹² Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 35.

⁸¹³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall, (Oakland: University of California: 1984), xix.

Timeline of Case Studies

Wildrose, Seattle, Washington (1984-present)

Big Kitchen, San Diego, California (1980-present)

Las Hermanas Coffeehouse, San Diego, California (1974-1981)

Full Moon Coffeehouse, San Francisco, California (1974-1981)

Artemis Women's Cafe, San Francisco, California (1977-1984)

The Brick Hut, Berkeley, California (1975-1997)

Grace and Rubie's, Iowa City, Iowa (1976-1978)

Iowa City Women's Coffeehouse (1979-1981)

Ruby's 1, Minneapolis, Minnesota (1985-1990)

A Woman's Coffeehouse, Minneapolis, Minnesota (1975-1989)

Mother Courage, NYC (1972-1977)

Common Woman Club (1976-1982)

Bloodroot, Bridgeport, CT (1997-present)

Somerville Women's Coffeehouse, MA (1978-1980)

Bread and Roses, Cambridge, MA (1974-1978)

1970

1975

1980

1985

1990

1995

2000

2005

2010

2015

2020

Three of Cups Coffeehouse, Toronto, Ontario (1979-1981)

Clementyné's, Toronto, Ontario (1979-1981)

Chez Nous (1978-1980)

Ms Purdy's Social Club, Winnipeg, Manitoba (1981-1982)

Woman's Common, Toronto, Ontario (1988-1994)

Canada

United States

Key for United States:
Red= Northeast
Blue= West
Green= Midwest

Key for Canada:
Red= Central Canada
Green= Prairie Provinces

The Directory

Regular font listings are verified feminist, lesbian, and women's restaurants, coffeehouses, and cafés. Italicized listings are possibly feminist restaurants but unverified. They were women-friendly establishments mentioned in the various women's travel guides and feminist and lesbian periodicals (these include some establishments targeted towards gay men that also welcomed women). These spaces were women owned (but not identified as feminist) or advertised as being spaces where women and lesbians were welcome to eat alone or as a couple. The italic list is incomplete but provides a sample of the kinds of spaces women would use for socializing and that were advertised to women to socialize in that were not explicitly women's spaces/ feminist spaces/ lesbian spaces.

The dates refer to the first listed mention of a restaurant and the last listed mention. Occasionally *Gaia's Guides* would mention a business in the 1981 edition, skip it in the next edition, and re-mention the business two editions later. Even if the location was mentioned in *Gaia's*, if the dates listed do not come entirely from *Gaia's Guides* but from other sources such as periodicals, advertisements, or interviews, a * will be listed besides the dates. If the business is still in operation in 2018, \Rightarrow symbol indicates that.

I tracked every annual edition of *Gaia's Guides*, with the exception of the 1980, 1986, and 1987 editions as I could not locate a copy. The editor of *Gaia's Guides*, Sandy Horn, produced the last edition of the series in 1991. As a result, listings found only in the guides end at 1991. Furthermore as Horn solicited information from readers to create listings, her methodology could explain why in Ogunquit, Maine every listing is shown at 1977 and in Staten Island all three listings were in 1982. It is unlikely that all four businesses in Ogunquit or the three spaces in Staten Island began in the same year. Rather, it is more likely that a reader with knowledge about the local scene contacted Horn previous to that edition's publication. Also, as the guides were written in English and circulated amongst English reading feminists, it is more likely that spaces that catered to English speakers would be listed. Integrating references from periodicals, flyers, and ephemera into this directory works to compensate this bias.

UNITED STATES

Alabama

Birmingham

Steak n Eggs (1984-1985)

Alaska

Arizona

Phoenix

Ginzey's Oasis (1984)

Free Spirit Coffeehouse (sometimes held in individuals' homes) (1982)

Tucson

Gay Women's Liberation and Lesbian Coffeehouse/ Desert Dykes Tucson (DDT) (1975)*

The Sidewalk Café (1984)

ArkansasCalifornia

Homemade Café (1977)*

Albany

The Baachanal (1979-1982)

Auburn

E and G's (1984)

Berkeley

Brick Hut Café (1975-1997)*

Cheese and Coffee Center (1979-1985)/ The Cheese Board Collective (1967-2018)*⇒

Kafeneo (restaurant) (1977-1979)

The Old Mole (1984-1985)

Vivoli's Ice Cream Parlor (1982-1985)

Berkeley Café Bazaar (1991)*

Chico

Labrys Books sold coffee (1988-1989)

Gardenia

Pit Stop (1977)

Hayward

The Oracle Bookstore sold coffee (1978)*

Hollywood and West Hollywood

The Ultimate Feminist Restaurant: The Los Angeles Women's Saloon and Parlor (1974-1976)*

Little Frida's Lesbian Café (1991-1999)*

Carriage Trade (1977-1988)*

David's (1977-1982)

Eating High (1979-1981)

French Market (1981)

Studio One 'Backlot' – women only Wednesdays (1979)

Laguna Beach

Little Shrimp Restaurant (1976-1995)*

Andree's (1977-1981)

The Cottage (1977-1981)

Eric's (1982)

Los Angeles

Dolly's Dolphin Grill (1981)

Identified Woman Café (1977-1978) transformed into Vall's Restaurant in the Women's Building (1979-1981)

Jett's Café and Art Haus Coffeehouse (1982)

Bread and Roses Feminist Bookstore sold coffee and snacks (1989-1991)

The Mainsail, closely connected with Woman Space (1982)

Marty's Restaurant (1983)

Woman Space (1978-1982)*

On the Fringe Restaurant (1983)

Yukon Mining Company (1982)

Frog Pond (1984-1985)

New York Company Bar and Grill (1984-1985)

Zoo Bar and Restaurant (1984)

The Go-Between Coffeehouse (1983-1985)

The Blue Mouse Coffeehouse (1984)

Fellini's (1984)

Manhattan (1984)

The Greenery Restaurant and 24 Hr Coffeeshop (1984)

Rose Tattoo (1984-1991)

Wellington's Restaurant (1978)*

Rosalind's: (woman-owned) (1985)

Catch One (1990-1991)

Bla- bla café (1975-1981)

The Last Drop Coffeehouse (1983)

Long Beach

Tee Cee's (1984)

Rusty's (1984)

Monterey

Café Balthazar (1984)

Tillie Gort's (1984)

Nevada City

Friar Tuck's Restaurant and Wine Bar (1984)

North Hollywood

Brian's (1977)

Menlo Park

Everywoman's Coffeehouse (1979)

Oakland

Bishop's Coffeehouse/ Womanspace (1976-1977)

Grandma's House (1977)

Mama Bear's (1984-1991)

Ollie's of Oakland Womyn's Restaurant (1982)

A Woman's Place (1975)

Pasadena

Daily Double (1981-1982)

Redwood City

Cruiser Restaurant (1982)

Sacramento

Earhart's Café Gallery (1979-1985)

Lesbian Complex Private Club (1982)

Whistle Stop Feminist Coffeehouse (1981-1984)

Mini Mouse Gay Coffeehouse (1976)

Santa Cruz

Two Sisters (1977-1978)

Café Domenica (1983-1985)

San Diego

Amazon Sweet Shop (1981-1984)

Boardwalk Café (1977)

Big Kitchen (1979- 2018)*⇒

Las Hermanas Coffeehouse (1974-1981)*

Rose Canyon Café (1985-1989)

Wing Café (1980-1982)*

Feminist Coffeehouse and Gallery

Yogurt Express and Deli Ice Cream Shop (woman owned) (1985)

Something Special Beach Fish and Salad Bar (woman owned) (1985)

King Richard (1977)

Jamie's Restaurant (1977)

The Rendezvous (1982)

San Francisco

1001 Nights Lesbian Bar and Restaurant (1972-1974)*

(Former location of the Tortuga and Evonne's. It became the Royal Palace, Back Street, the Red Eye Saloon, the Deja Vu, and the Black Rose.)

Artemis Society Women's Café (1977-1984)*

The Baybrick Inn (1982-1987)*

Breaking Bread Restaurant (woman owned) (1981-1982)

Café Commons (1981-1988)

Canary Island Restaurant (1982-1983)

Clarion Coffeehouse (1981)

Full Moon Inc, Coffeehouse and Bookstore (1978-1979)*

Klein's Deli and Restaurant (lesbian owned) (1984-1985)*

Mary Midgett's Coffeehouse (1983-1984)*

Maud's Restaurant (1966-1986)*

Nosheria Restaurant (woman owned and operated) (1984)

The Neon Chicken (1979-1985)

Old Wives' Tales Bookstore with tea and coffee (1976-1996)*

Tiffany's Restaurant (1973-1974)*

Two Sisters Restaurant (1977)*

Tuxedo Junction (1979-1981)*

Red Dora's Bearded Lady Café (1994)

Valencia Rose (1984-1985)

The P.S. (1977)

Fanny's Super Club (1982)

Casa de Cristal (1977)

The Fickle Fox (1977)

San Jose

Sisterspirit Café and Bookstore (1984-2010)*

Interlude (1985)

San Louis Obispo

Women's Coffeehouse from the Dandelion Wine Book Company (1981-1982)

Dandelion Wine Book Company (lesbian and feminist bookstore with coffee and tea) (1981-1982)

San Rafael

Rising Women Books Feminist Bookstore (sold coffee and tea) (1982)

Ethel's (1977)

Santa Barbara

Choices Book, Music, and Coffeehouse Feminist Bookstore (1989)

Beaudelaire's Coffeehouse (1983)

Santa Rosa

Moonrise Café (1979-1982)

Gertie's Café (1983)

Sausalito

Two Turtles (1977)

Sausalito Inn (1977)

Zelda's (1977)

Colorado

Boulder

Boulder Lesbian Network Coffeehouse (1982)

Carnival Café: Natural Foods (1977)

Denver

Anywoman's Coffeehouse (1985)

Women's Coffeehouse (1982)

Café du Monde (1983)

The Den (1988)

Bway Café (1988)

Denver Waterworks (1988)

Alicia's Mexican Restaurant (1977)

Global Village (1977)

Maxine's Place (1977)

The Bellevue (1982)

BJ's Carousel (1982-1988)

Garbo's (1984-1988)

Connecticut

Bridgeport

Black Rock Inn Restaurant (1976-1979)

Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant (1977-2018)*⇒

Danbury

The Answer Café (1978)*

Greenwich

Homestead Inn

Hartford

Sonya Weston's Books and Cheese (1982)

Reader's Feast Feminist Café and Bookstore (1985-1991)

New Britain

Edible Art Vegetarian Restaurant (1983-1984)

New Haven

La Machinetta Café/Coffeehouse (1979)

New Haven Women's Liberation Center with a coffee house (1978-1989)*

The Pink Triangle Coffeehouse (1989)*

Delaware

Dewey Beach

The Boat House (1979)

Wilmington

Renaissance Gay Bar and Restaurant (women only room) (1984-1991)

District of Columbia

Kalorama Café (1981-1982)

Rising Women's Coffeehouse (1977)

The Otherside- Restaurant and Showbar (1981-1984)

Suzanne's Wine Bar/Restaurant/Bakery/and Charcuterie (1990-1991)

Washington Area Women's Center's Coffeehouse (1979)

Paramount Steak House (1977)

Town House (1977)

Lucy's Bar and Restaurant (1984)

Two Quail Restaurant (1990-1991)

JR's (1990-1991)

Zeigfield's (1990-1991)

Phase One (1990-1991)

Lil Sister (1990-1991)

Hung Jury (1980-2011)*

Florida

Fort Lauderdale

Clever Bar/Women's Restaurant (1982)

Shangri-La Disco Lounge and Restaurant (1985)

Hallandale

Lou's Back Room, bar with sandwiches, snacks, and dancing (1978)

Sandy's Kitchen (1981)

Key West

Claire, with women's only tea dance (1984-1988)

Miami

The Courtyard Inn (1982)

Pinellas Park

Beaux Arts Coffeehouse and Art Gallery (1984-1991)

Tallahassee

Everywoman's Coffeehouse (1985-1991)

Tampa

Feminist Connection Bookstore with coffee and tea (1978)*

Three Birds Feminist Bookstore and Coffeeshop (1990-1991)

The Women's Center Coffeehouse (1978)*

The Denny's at 102 Parker Street (mostly gay clientele at night) (1977-1981)

Georgia

Atlanta

The Sportspage Restaurant and Bar (1984-1991)

Gallus Restaurant and Bar (1977)

Hawaii

Honolulu

The Breeze Inn (1985)

The Godmother (1983-1989)

Hamburger Mary's (1982-1989)

The Tomato (1978)

Maui

Hamburger Mary's (1983)

Illinois

Champaign

Lavender Prairie Collective (1978)*

Chicago

Blue Gargoyle Coffeehouse (1975-1982)

Jane Addams Bookstore and Coffeehouse (1981-1982)

Karen's Kitchen (It really was her own kitchen) (1976)

Mama Peaches (1975-1978)*

Mountain Moving Coffeehouse (1974-2005)*

Paris Dance Restaurant and Bar (1989-1991)

RSVP and Company Café, Bar, and Restaurant (1988)*

Susan B's Feminist Restaurant (1975-1991)

Somewhere Coffeehouse (1983)

Vittles (1977)

Grandma's (1977)

Up North (1977)

His N Hers (1979-1984)

Gentry (1979-1984)

My Brother's Place (1984)

Evanston

Kinehart Women's Center had food (1989-1991)

Lesbian Coffeehouse at Women at Northwestern University (1978)*

Indiana

Bloomington

Mother Bear's Place (1977)

Fort Wayne

Sisterspace Women's Coffeehouse (1989-1991)

Iowa

Iowa City

Grace and Rubie's Feminist Social Club and Restaurant (1976-1978)*

The Women's Coffeehouse (1979- 1981)*

Kansas

Topeka

Guys and Dolls (food and dancing) (1978)*

Lawrence

Sister Kettle Café (1975-1979)*

Womanspace Coffeehouse as part of the women's center (1977)

Kentucky

Lexington

The Bungalow Restaurant (1983-1984)*Montparnass (sic) Restaurant* (1977)

Louisville

Mother's Brew: a Coffeehouse for Women (1978)

Louisiana

Baton Rouge

The Cock and Bull Restaurant and Bar with separate women's room (1982-1983)

New Orleans

The Other Side Bar and Coffeehouse (1989)

Apple Barrel (1977-1982)

Faubourg Marigny Gay Bookstore with coffee and tea (1982)*Burgundy House* (1977)*Mas Cuiller Gras* (1977)*Tortilla Flats* (1977-1989)Maine

Ogunquit

Annabelle's (disco, brunch, dinner) (1977)

Edelweiss Downtown (1977)*The Fan Club* (1977)*The Trolley Stop* (1977)

Old Town

Fig O My Heart Vegetarian Restaurant (lesbian owned and operated) (1980)

Maryland

Bethesda

Community Café and Women's Bookstore (1983)

Massachusetts

Allston

Beetle's Lunch (1983-1984)*

L'Odeon Macrobiotic Natural Foods (1985)

Boston

Crone's Harvest Radical Lesbian Feminist Coffeehouse

Greystone's Restaurant and Bar (women owned) (1985)

The Iron Hose Coffeehouse (1982)

The Ideal, Women's Restaurant for Gay Women, Men, and their Friends (1982-1984)

Meetinghouse Coffeehouse (1976-1978)*

Modern Times Café (1982-1988)

Oasis Coffeehouse (1983)

Somerville Women's Coffeehouse (1978-1980)*

The Alternative Theater Restaurant (1977)

Cambridge

Amaranth (1978-1979)*

Bread and Roses Feminist Restaurant (1974-1978)*

Indigo Women's Food and Bar (1990-1991)

The Marquee (sponsors women athletes) (1985-1989)

Common Stock Restaurant (1981-1983)

Greenfield

Green River Café (1981-1985)

Northampton

Common Womon Club Restaurant (1976-1982)*

Lesbian Gardens Coffeehouse and Bookstore

Northstar Seafood Restaurant (1989-1991)

The Women's Restaurant (probably referencing the Common Womon Club before it had its name) (1977)

Provincetown

Lesbian Gardens Coffeehouse (1976-1992)*

The Moors (1977)

Pied Piper Restaurant (lesbian owned) (1979)

Alice's (1988)

Hideaway (1977-1982)

Michigan

Ann Arbor

Women's Coffeehouse (1974)*

Detroit

Poor Woman's Paradise Coffeehouse (1974)

The Underground Bar/Restaurant (1983-1989)

Grand Rapids

Gaia Restaurant (1985)

Kalamazoo

Pandora Womyn's Bookstore sold coffee (1985)

Saugatuck

Saugatuck Lodge (1975-1977)

Minnesota

Duluth

North Country Women's Coffeehouse (1988)

Minneapolis

A Women's Coffeehouse (1975-1989)*

Amazon Bookstore sold coffee (1981-1991)

New French Café (1983)

New Riverside Café (1975)*

Prashad Kitchen Feminist Restaurant- International Vegetarian Cuisine (1977)

Ruby's Café 1 (1985-1990)*

Ruby's Café 2 (1990-)*

Women's Coffeehouse (1977-1991)

Park Rapids

Sister Wolf Bookstore and Café (1994-2015)*

St. Paul

Commonplace Restaurant and Vegetarian Cooperative (1975-1977)*

Mississippi

Gulfport

Southern Wild Sisters Feminist Bookstore and Women's Resource Center (1978-1991)

Missouri

Kansas City

Kansas City Women's Liberation Union (had coffee) (1975-1984)

St. Louis

City Cousin (1977-1979)

The Sunshine Inn (women owned and operated vegetarian restaurant) (1976)

Gay Coffeehouse (1976)

Left Bank Books sold coffee (1982)

Montana

Helena

Sweetgrass Bakery (woman owned) (1984-1985)

Northern Lights Café, Women's Collective (1983)

Nebraska

Lincoln

A Place of Our Own Wimmin's Bookstore sold coffee and tea (1982)

Omaha

Common Woman Books sold food and coffee (1989)

Nevada

Las Vegas

Le Café Restaurant (1984)

New Hampshire

Portsmouth

King's Wilde (1977)

New Jersey

Atlantic City

Lyle's Place Coffeeshop (gay meeting place) (1977)

Mama Mott's Restaurant (gay restaurant and gay waitresses) (1977-1983)

Collinswood

Chamomile's Woman Owned and Operated Restaurant (1990-1991)

Gatsby's (1990-1991)

Fort Lee

Tea and Symphony Coffeehouse (1979-1981)

Jersey City

Pathway Lounge (1984)

Landing

Hideaway Pizzeria (woman owned) (1982)

Newton

Italian Kitchen (1977-1979)

Princeton

A Woman's Place (1988)*

South River

A Place of One's Own Restaurant for Feminists and their Friends (1979-1981)

New Mexico

Albuquerque

Double Rainbow Bakery and Café (1985)

Full Circle Books Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1985)

Santa Fe

Nifty Café Lesbian Coffeehouse (1989)

New York

Albany

Lilith Nonalcoholic Space (1981)

Buffalo

Emma Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1983-1988)

East Hampton

Terrace Café (1982)

Yoghurt Heaven (woman owned) (1977)

The Attic Tea Dance (1983)

Elmira

Mary's Grill (1978)*

Ithaca

Women's Coffeehouse at the Feminist Studio (1979-1982)

Strange Paradise Café (1988)

Long Island

Women's Coffeehouse (1981-1984)

Top of The Bay (1984)

New Paltz

Oh Susanah, Inc, Café (1978)*

Lagusta's Luscious Feminist Vegan Chocolate Shop and Commissary (2003-2018)*⇒

New York City

The Black Sheep (in former place as Mother Courage) (1977-1982)*

Bonnie's Restaurant (women's half of Bonnie and Clyde's) (1976-1982)

Brooklyn Women's Coffeehouse (1976-1979)

Dapper Women's Restaurant (1981-1982)

The Duchess Café Women's Restaurant (women-only) (1979-1984)

La Fronde (1975-1982)

Mother Courage Feminist Restaurant (first in North America) (1972-1977)*

Peachstreet Dining Club for Women and their Friends (1981-92) and becomes Peaches and Crème Bar-Restaurant (1984)

Shameira Huss Bookstore sold coffee (1979)

Shescape Bar-Restaurant (1984)

Vegetarian feminist Restaurant (64 Charles street)

Vegetaria (1976-1977)

The Women's Coffee House with sandwiches (1975-1979)*

WOW theatre had WOW café (1988-1990)

La Papaya Women's Restaurant (1982)

Reverse (1982)

Philippine Gardens Restaurant (women's night) (1982)

Company (1977-1979)

Les Pits (1977)

One if By Land, Two if By Sea (1977)

Reno Sweekey's (1977)

One Potato (1977)

Cotton Patch (1977)

The Pelican (1977)

Applause (1977)

Blue Skies (1984)

Pennyfeather (1989)

Uno's Café (1975-1981)

Poughkeepsie

The Congress Restaurant (1984)

Rochester

Snake Sister Café Women's Collective (1981-1984)

Wild Seeds Feminist Bookstore and Café (1990-1991)

Regular Restaurant (1977)

Staten Island

Mother Earth Bar and Restaurant (1982)

Beach Haven Restaurant and Bar (1982)

Brazil Bar and Restaurant (1982)

Woodstock

Sojourner's Women's Coffeehouse (1979-1991)

Maverick Inn and Hotel Gourmet Restaurant (1981)

North Carolina

Ashville

Malapron's Bookstore and Café (1977-1984)*

Charlotte

Josh's Restaurant (1977)

Durham

Francesca's Gelato Café (1989-1991)

Southern Sister's Feminist Bookstore sold tea (1990-1991)

North Dakota

(in 1989 there was a bar in Fargo)

Ohio

Canton

Lesbian Activist Bureau has coffees (1978)*

Cincinnati

Wild Iris Café/ Crazy Ladies Bookstore (1994-1995)* (the bookstore 1979-2005)*

Flander's (1977)

College Hill Coffee Co. (lesbian-feminist owned) (2006-2018)⇒

Greenwich Tavern (1977)

Cleveland

Genesis Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant and Bar (1977-1982)

Peabody's Café and Feminist Coffeehouse (1982)

Gypsy's (1977-1982)

The Mad Greek (1977-1982)

Columbus

Calico's Coffeehouse (1983-1988)

Grapevine Café (women owned and operated) (1989-1991)

Mel's Place- created by and for gay women (1988-1989)

Dayton

Iris Books Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1990-1991)

Painesville

Rider's Tavern (1977)

Springfield

Why Not Café (1978)*

Toledo

Arlington (1977)

Nook N' Cranny (1977)

Yellow Springs

Winds Café feminist run restaurant (1984)

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City

Herland Sister Resources Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1985-1991)

Oregon

Eugene

Gertrude's Café run by a women's collective (1976-1985)

Keystone Café (lesbian and gay counter culture café) (1984)

Wild Iris Restaurant (1981-1982)

Zoo Zoo's Natural Foods Restaurant (1979-1988)

Holding Together Coffeehouse (1976)

Book and Tea Shop (1976-1982)

Myrtle Creek

It's a Natural Foodstore (owned and operated by lesbians) (1988-1991)

Daphne and Judith's Tea Shop at Heritage Food Company

Portland

Bijou's Café (1970s)*

Cup and Saucer Café (now 3 outlets) (2007-2018)* ⇒

Hamburger Mary's (1976-1977)

Incredible Edibles (1977)

Metropolis (under 21 allowed- many lesbians brought their teenage children here) (1982)

Mountain Moving Café (1976-1979)

Old Wive's Tales Restaurant and Women's Center (1978-1989)*

Primary Domain Women's Restaurant (1985-1989)

Wild Oscar's (1979-1982)

Chez What? Lesbian Café (1982-1989)

Black Hawk Tavern (women's entertainment nights) (1982)

Hot Potata Café (gay run) (1984)

Pennsylvania

Erie

Washington Grill (1978)*

Marietta

The Railroad House (gay owned and operated) (1984)

New Hope

The Raven (1984)

The Baron, formerly known as The Old Cartwheel (1982-1984)

Philadelphia

Amazon's Inc Coffeehouse (1978)*

*Astral Plane (1975)**

Chamomile Women's Restaurant (1981-1982)

Dreamer's Café Women's Restaurant (1984)

*Giovanni's Room (1975)**

*Judy's Café (1975)**

Dee's Place (1975-1977)

Mahogany Black Women's Club (1984)

Philadelphia Lesbian Coffeehouse (1982)

Philadelphia Gay Coffeehouse (1982)

The Midway (1975)

The Westbury (oldest gay establishment in Philadelphia) (1984)

The Women's Book Connection Feminist Lesbian Bookstore had coffee (1984)

Women's Space and Sisterhood (1981-1982)

*Judy's Café (1975)**

Pittsburgh

Gay Alternatives Coffeehouse at First Unitarian Church (1977)

Wildsister's Restaurant and Bookstore (1982-1985)*

Home Circle Club (1977)

Court Street Luncheonette (1977)

Jackson's (gay restaurant) (1979-1984)

Norreh Social Club (1982)

State College

The Left Bank (1982)

Seasons (1982)

Puerto Rico

Rhode Island

Providence

Marantha Coffeehouse (1976)

Woonsocket

High Street Café (1978)*

South Carolina

Aiken

The Café- Feminist Bookstore and Café (1990-1991)

Columbia

MC B's Saloon (1981-1982)

South Dakota

Tennessee

Chatanooga

Alan Gold's (gay men and women basically stick together as a group here) (1984-1989)

Memphis

Terri's Townhouse (1982)

Nashville

Womankind Books sold coffee (1981-1989)

Texas

San Antonio

I've been told there were feminist restaurants there but have not found any

Utah

Salt Lake City

A Woman's Place Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1989-1991)

Vermont

Burlington

Pearls Coffeehouse and Women's Restaurant (1984)

The Fresh Ground Coffeehouse (1977)

Brattleboro

Common Ground Coffeehouse (1982-1989)*

Virginia

Charlottesville

Muldowney's Women's Restaurant and Bar (1982)

Norfolk

Shirley's Restaurant and Bar (1983-1984)

Richmond

Everywoman's Coffeehouse (1981)*

Roanoake

The Park Bar Restaurant Private Club (1981-1984)

Washington

Pullman

The Gertrude Stein/ Alice B Tokias Memorial Salon and Tea at the Lesbian Resource Center (1977-1979, in 1979 it is listed as Seattle though)

Women's Coffee Coven (1977)

Charity Corner (1977)

Fran Glors Creole Restaurant (1977)

Seattle

A Special Place Womyn's Restaurant and Coffeehouse (1982-1988)

Innerspace Women's Coffeehouse (1981-1985)

It's About Time Women's Bookcenter Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1981-1985)

Lesbian Separatist Potluck Brunches (1984)

Sappho's (1983)

Mama Dot's (1981)

Off Ramp Café

Wildrose Tavern Women's Restaurant (1984-2018)* ⇒

West Virginia

Wisconsin

Appleton

Doris's Super Bar (1978)

Madison

A Room of One's Own Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1981)

The Cabaret Room (1979)

Mother Willy's Street Pub and Restaurant (1984-1985)

Crescent Moon Women's Coffeehouse (1990-1991)

Lysistrata Feminist Restaurant and Cultural Center (1979-1982)

Milwaukee

The Beer Garden Bar and Restaurant (1984-1989)

Our Way (1977)*

Sister Moon Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1981)

Sister Moon II (1981)

Wyoming

CANADA

Alberta

Edmonton

Common Woman Books sold coffee (1981-1991)

British Columbia

Vancouver

Full Circle Coffeehouse (1979-1981)

Sister's Bar and Restaurant (1983)

Vancouver Women's Bookstore sold coffee (1975-1991)

Victoria

Women's Coffeehouse (1983-1988)

Manitoba

Winnipeg

The Women's Building had Ms. Purdy's Social Club Coffeehouse and Restaurant (1981-1982)

Ontario

Hamilton

Café Aquarius

Kingston

Mrs. Dalloway's Feminist Bookstore sold coffee (1972-1992)

Ottawa

Chez Nous Restaurant at the Ottawa Women's Center (1978-1980)*

The Overdraft (women's entertainment nights) (1984)

Toronto

Clementine's Café, Restaurant, Bar, All-Women's Cultural Center (1976) but never officially opened though worked on beginning in 1974*

Gaia's Garden Café Womyn's Restaurant and Space

Three of Cups Coffeehouse (1976- 1980)*

The Women's Common (1988-1994)*

Together Bar and Restaurant (1982-1991)

Lipstick Café Restaurant and Bar (1984-1985)

Fly By Night (1979-1980)*

Waterloo

The Women's Place (1978)*

Quebec

Montreal

ADGLQ Café (associations pour les droits des gais et lesbiennes du quebec) (1984)

L'Euguélionne, librairie féministe (with food and coffee currently only at special events but plans to have more café offerings soon) (2017-2018)* ⇒

*A Novo Vegetarian Restaurant (1988)**

Café les Entretiens (1983)

Café Haut-Pluriel (1983)

L'Antecdote (both locations) (-2018) ⇒*

Le Café de La Librairie des Femmes (1982)

L'Exit Café (1983-1984)

Chez Jean Pierre (1984)

*La Paryse (1983-1988)**

Montreal Women's Information Center Coffeehouse (1978)*

Rimouski

Club Politique Feminine (1988)*

Quebec City

*Chez Farbo Studio (1988)**

Yukon Territory

Whitehorse

Rendez-vous Coffeehouse (1983)

Archives and Collections

Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Ottawa:

Chez Nous (Box 509-512)

Clementine's Café (Toronto, ON) 1974-1976

Fales Library and Special Collections of New York University, New York:

New York Women's Culinary Alliance Archive 1982-2010 (MSS 279)

GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco Archives, San Francisco:

San Francisco LGBT Business Ephemera Collection (BUS EPH)

Full Moon Coffee House Reunion Records, 1974 –1988 (1992-13)

Women's Press/Up Press (GLC 31)

Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies of the University of Minneapolis Libraries and Archives, Minneapolis:

A Woman's Coffeehouse Collective Records 1976-1985 (162)

John J. Wilcox Jr. Gay Archives at the William Way Center, Philadelphia:

Periodicals Collection

LAMBDA San Diego Archives, San Diego:

Folder: Businesses-Cafés

Las Hermanas

Lesbian Herstory Digital Archives, New York:

<http://lesbianherstoryarchives.org>

Northeastern University Archives, Boston:

"Coffeehouse Meeting," Tapes (AV2316, M120 and AV2318, M120)

Somerville Women's Educational Center 1975-1983 (M26)

Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture of Duke University,

Durham:

Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Archives, 1972-1994 (ALFA)

San Francisco Public Library Archives, San Francisco:

Barbara Grier/Naiad Press collection (GLC 30)

Feminist Bookstore News Records (GLC 105)

Old Wives' Tales Records (GLC 18)

Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University, Cambridge:

Patricia Hynes Papers

Sophia Smith College Archives, Northampton:

Diana Davies Papers (MS 390)
 Dolores Alexander Papers (Unprocessed)
 Joan Biren Papers (MS587)
 Women's Liberation Collection (MS 408)

University of Iowa Women's Archives Collection, Iowa City

Jill Jack Papers (IWA0519)
 Jo Rabenold Papers (IWA0191)

Quebec Gay Archives (Les Archives gaies du Québec), Montreal:

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Periodicals

I utilized every available feminist and lesbian periodical housed at the archives I visited in order to see if there were any articles and/or advertisements about feminist restaurants, cafés, or coffeehouses. This required physically flipping through hundreds of

periodicals and magazines. I went through every edition of Iowa City's *Ain't I a Woman* by Iowa City Women's Liberation Front Publications Collective (1970); *Amazon of Milwaukee: a Midwest Journal for Women* (1971); *Ca s'attrape* of Montreal (1982); *Country Women* (1973-1980); *Feminist Communications: Las Hermanas Coffeehouse Newsletter* (1976-) in San Diego, California; *Goldflower: A Twin Cities Guide for Women* (1972-1975); *Hera's Journal: A Philadelphia Feminist Publication* (1978); *It Ain't Me Babe: Women's Liberation* of Berkeley, California (1970); and *Les Sourcieres* of Quebec (1980s).

However, for some periodicals I could not locate every single edition. I still utilized all of the copies that I could find of the following periodicals: *Amazon Quarterly* (1972-1975); *Artemis* (1977); *Canadian Feminist Periodicals/ Periodiques Feministes du Canada* (1989); *Communique'Elles* (Quebec, 1980s); *Diversity*; *Dyke: A Quarterly* of New York City (1975–1978); *L'Evidente Lesbienne* of Quebec; *The Feminist Voice*; *The Fourth World* (); *Furies* of Washington D.C. (1972-1973); *Herizons* of Winnipeg, Manitoba (1979-1992); *Hysteria* (1971); *Lavender Woman* of Chicago (1971-1976); *Lavender Woman: a Lesbian Newspaper* (1971); *The Lesbian Calendar* (1988-); *Lesbian Connection of Michigan* (1974-); *Lesbian Ethics* (1984); *Lesbian Newspaper* of Ann Arbor, Michigan (1975); *Lesbian News* of Los Angeles (1975-); *The Lesbian Rag* (1988); *Ms. Magazine* (1971-2017-); *New York Woman Tribune*; *Northern Women's Journal* (1979); *Off Our Backs: A Women's Liberation Biweekly* (1970-2008, looked at every edition until 1990); *Open Road* (1976); *RAT* (1970); *Rites* (1987); *Sapphire* of San Francisco (1973); *Sinister Wisdom: A multicultural Journal by and for Lesbians* - published in Charlotte, North Carolina, Berkeley and Oakland, California, at various

points, (1972– 2012); *Small Arms of Springfield Massachusetts* (date unlisted); *Through the Looking Glass* (1971); *Valley Women's Voice* (1979); *Wicce of Philadelphia* (1973–1974); *Women's Collective Press*; the *Whole Woman Catalogue* (1971); *Women's Newspaper* (1971); *Women and Revolution*; *WomaNews* (1985); *Woman's World* (1971); *Women's Undercurrents*; *Women United*; *Women's Way*; and the *Wree View* (1977). In addition to *Feminist Communications*, by the feminist coffeehouse Las Hermanas of San Diego, I also looked through three other publications, *Malapropo's Feminist Bookstore and Café Newsletter* (); *Mama Bears News and Notes* of Oakland, California (1983–1986); *New Words' Bookstore's News and Notes* (1979), were linked to a feminist café that sold books. Although the majority of the editions I read through were published between 1970 and 1989, I also read copies of the editions that were also published in the early 1990s. I found them relevant to search through as feminist restaurants such as Bloodroot and Brick Hut were founded during the period of study continued to be listed in feminist periodicals in the early 1990s.

There were useful collections of periodicals at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University, the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America of the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, the Gay Archives of Quebec (Les Archives gaies du Québec), the Canadian Women's Movement Archives at the University of Ottawa, the San Francisco GLBT Archives, the San Francisco Public Library Archives, Northeastern University Archives, John J. Wilcox Jr. Gay Archives at the William Way Center in Philadelphia, the San Diego LAMBDA Archives, and the Yale University Archives. However, the Smith College Archives and the New York University (NYU) Archives housed extensive collections. NYU's Tamiment Library's

collection of feminist periodicals, in particular, provided access to more than half of the above listed periodicals. Although collections such as *Ms. Magazine* have been digitized, the majority of these feminist and lesbian periodicals are only accessible in physical form, scattered around the United States and Canada in incomplete collections.

