COLONIZING WOMEN'S MINDS: FEMINISM, THERAPY AND THE FMS BACKLASH
by
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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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ABSTRACT

During the last three to four decades, the feminism movement has moved from its radical roots towards an increasingly liberalized stance. Nowhere is this more evident than in its relationship with psychology. In 1978, Mary Daly described therapy as “mind rape”, a patriarchal institution of social control whose aim was to reconcile women (and other oppressed groups) to their oppression. Since that time, the feminist movement has moved toward an increasingly entrenched relationship with/in therapy and psychology. Feminist therapy lies at this intersection of feminism and psychology offering women (and men) a reformed vision of mental health and therapeutic practice framed through a feminist political analysis. The question remains, however, whether or not psychology/therapy can ever be compatible with feminist and with the feminist goal of ending women’s violent oppression.

In order to explore this question I critically examine feminist therapy in the context of violence against women and the context of false memory syndrome discourse. FMS discourse provides a specific context within which to explore the ways in which therapy and the embracing of a therapeutic culture within the feminist movement have contributed to, or at least facilitated the current backlash against feminism and the feminist goal of ending violence against women. Using a critical, deconstructive approach I examine the therapeutic language and themes of FMS discourse and the ways in which the anti-feminist agenda within the discourse relates to, and is supported by feminism’s engagement with therapy/psychology.
This text also documents the sometimes overwhelming contradictions in my own journey as a radicalized feminist in a graduate program in Counselling Psychology. It arises not only from the (re)examination of my relationship with psychology and therapy, but also from my struggle to work creatively and politically within a rigid, and unself-reflexive academic context. By juxtaposing alternate readings/writings of the \( FMS \) data I attempt to display not only the complexity of the issues arising from feminism's relationship with psychology/therapy, but also to capture, in some measure, the evocative and provocative potential of stepping outside the traditional research text.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking in Contradiction: A Personal Narrative</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evocative Representations: A Methodology in Process</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Text as Opportunity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism and Resistance Postmodernism</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Personal Narrative</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Critical Deconstructive Tale</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Critical Poetic Drama</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Terms of the Debate: Backlash and FMS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backlash as a Signifier of a Shift in Power Relations</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False memory syndrome</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Binary Logic of FMS</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Now?</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Critical Deconstruction of False Memory Syndrome Discourse</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Backlash Logic of FMS Discourse</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) Diversion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Therapy: A Good Idea As Long As It Keeps ‘Em Quiet</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Good Therapy</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Bad Therapy</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Victim Reversal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) The Villains: Bad Therapists and Vindictive Daughters</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) The Heroes: Good Therapists and Recanting Daughters</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) The Experts and the Charlatans</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) Bad Intentions</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Threats</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMS and Poetic Justix: A Critical, Poetic Drama in Progress</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act One</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act Two</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>Feminist Therapy: What's Feminism Got To Do With It?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consciousness Raising: The Roots of Feminist Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incest: A Problem for Therapy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revisiting Therapy in the Context of Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Politics of Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mediation by An Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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For my guerrilla girlfriends whose anger and commitment to social justice fuel my own; whose tenacity and hard work inspire me to continue, and whose humour and late night imagination keep me sane. And for all my fellow radical feminist bitches who keep the faith and the fight alive. And finally to my family for their unfailing support and encouragement.
INTRODUCTION

In this research I engage in a critical analysis of the intersection of therapy and feminism in the context of the feminist goal of ending male violence against women. I focus on incest as a particular example of violence against women and on the False Memory Syndrome Foundation’s construct of *false memory syndrome*\(^1\) (FMS) as a particular example of the backlash against feminism’s efforts to end socially sanctioned male violence against women. I deconstruct the therapeutic themes within the FMS discourse in order to explore the ways in which therapy and the embracing of a therapeutic culture within the feminist movement has contributed to the current backlash against feminism. This text, in part, documents the sometimes overwhelming contradictions in my own journey as a radicalized feminist in a graduate program in Counselling Psychology. It documents my (re)examination of my relationship with psychology, the meta-theory, and therapy, the practice arising from that theory and my struggle to work creatively and politically within a rigid, and unself-reflexive academic context. By juxtaposing alternate readings/writings of the FMS data I attempt to display not only the complexity of the issues arising from this backlash phenomena, but also

\(^{1}\)I intentionally italicize the term *false memory syndrome* to mark it as a construct to be interrogated, rather than a "legitimate" (i.e., accepted by those professional bodies which define psychological syndromes) psychological phenomenom.
to capture, in some measure, the evocative and provocative potential of stepping outside the traditional research text.

Overview of the Research

I preface this research by documenting my journey with this thesis as a political project in the context of an academic department focused on therapy and counselling, the Counselling Psychology program of the University of British Columbia. In part, this documentation is an effort to expose the underlying logic and sequence of my choices within this research. By including myself in this text I situate myself not only as the "researcher" but as a feminist struggling against my own experiences of backlash and as a therapist attempting to understand more of the complexities of my positioning in the feminist movement and the fight to end violence against women and children. In part, it serves as a preface to the articulation of my methodology or process, which although separated structurally from this personal narrative, is very much connected in spirit with this personal narrative. My methodological choices and reasoning arise in good measure from the process of my radicalization as a feminist and my growing disillusionment with the norms of social science research as they have been presented to me in courses within my department. Finally, this narrative constitutes a personal echo of the research focus, a snapshot of the ways in which heteropatriarchal institutions such as psychology and academia, collude to silence feminists and reinforce the status quo.
In the first chapter I describe my “methodology/process” locating it in the context of a feminist, postmodern analysis of FMS, and of social science research. I discuss my rationale for “writing up” this research in different genres or “tales”, introducing the crystal as a metaphor for validity within postmodern mixed-texts. I work to unsettle the expectation that the ways of storying research are secondary to the story that is told and I work to reveal rather than conceal the ways in which I construct truth. In so doing I ask the reader to approach this material, and that of any other researcher (including those proponents of FMS discourse) as “a” story, rather than “the” story. I also challenge the discipline to open up to the possibility of different voices, different ways of speaking and hearing within research. In effect I challenge the discipline to consider the possibility that a creative alliance across disciplines (art and science) might open up social science research to a wider, more diverse audience and to more challenging theories.

At the same time I unabashedly infuse my tellings with the passion of my own politics; these are feminist stories, relying on a critical awareness of how the FMS discourse is infused with issues of gender, race, and class, and on a political analysis that fundamentally challenges some of the direction of the mainstream feminist movement. By infusing my writing with my own passion, I am inviting an embodied reading of the material and hence, hopefully, a more complicated consideration of the questions raised.
In the second chapter I examine the concept of backlash, its historical location and the logic it incorporates and how this is expressed in the context of the backlash against feminism. I then explore FMS discourse as a specific example of the more general backlash against feminism, detailing some of the overriding structural themes within the discourse.

In chapters three and four I present the two tales, based on my critical, deconstructive analysis of FMS discourse. In the first tale I draw directly from the texts of the first four volumes of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation’s (FMSF) bimonthly newsletters to explore the underlying logic and meaning in the language and arguments they use. I specifically focus on the content themes within their texts which incorporate issues pertaining to psychology/therapy, therapeutic culture, and questions of authority and legitimacy. Some of the questions I ask in this analysis of FMS are as follows: (a) How is the “memory crisis” constructed and whose interests are served by it? (b) How is (feminist) therapy constructed and how does this construction contradict or mirror a feminist construction of therapy? (c) How is feminism’s engagement with psychology/therapy inverted/perverted in this discourse? (d) Who are the “experts/heroes” and who are the villains in this drama? And how do these relate to a feminist scripting of events? (e) How does entering into the debate over memories of abuse affect the feminist goal of ending violence against women and children? (f) How has
feminism's engagement with psychology/therapy facilitated the construction of this discourse?

The second telling of my analysis of FMS discourse works with these themes in a more creative, evocative and, hopefully, dynamic format. The poetic-dramatic genre of this text raises more questions than it answers, and confronts the reader with an embodied portrayal of the complexity of the issues raised by FMS. In this tale I present a more explicitly partial and tentative deconstruction of FMS and the issue of therapy within feminism. This tale encourages the reader to engage with and trouble the parallels between current radical feminist critiques of therapy and those presented by FMS discourse.

In the fifth chapter I present a radical² critique of therapy in general, and more specifically feminist therapy, in the context of the feminist movement and the FMS backlash. I examine the roots of feminist therapy within the 2nd wave feminist movement and explore the shift within mainstream feminism to a liberal or reform strategy. I discuss how the congruence between the liberal tenets of

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²I use the word radical here and throughout this paper referring not as a synonym for extreme, as it is often used now, but drawing on its true definition as that which relates to the root or fundamental aspects of a matter. My radicalization, in this context then, refers to a process that involves my developing a more complete, more rooted analysis of oppressions experienced by women and other groups marginalized on the basis of their race, culture, age, sexual orientation, ability etc. Friere (1970, p.19) describes this process as the development of an “increased commitment to the position one has chosen, and thus ever greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality.”
"reform" feminism and those of psychology are facilitating the infiltration of therapeutic discourse into the anti-violence against women movement and, hence, facilitating the backlash against feminism as it is expressed through FMS discourse.

Walking in Contradiction: A Personal Narrative

As I write this it seems as though I have walked on a winding path ever forward only to discover that I have circled back to where I started albeit with a profoundly different awareness and analysis of where this path leads. I write this as the final component of my qualifying for a Magisterial degree in Counselling Psychology recognizing that from where I stand now I question not only the value and effect of that degree but also question the field of therapy on ethical and moral grounds as being in some ways anti-feminist, anti-woman, and anti-change.

My journey, or this particular part of it, began three years ago when I entered into the Master of Arts program in Counselling Psychology where I was to be schooled in the subjects necessary to achieve a degree that would, I thought at that time, lead me into a career in therapy and counselling. I had returned as an adult student two years earlier to complete my undergraduate degree in psychology and at the time of entering into my graduate program I had already begun to develop a critical analysis of the academy within the context of oppression. I believed then, as now, that universities offered, unlike Friere's (1970) vision of liberating or emancipatory education, a further re-inscribing of oppressions; that universities have been high-jacked by corporatism with the
result that they have failed their wider mission of encouraging thinkers and
questioners of the status quo, producing instead a community of elites whose
work is characterized by a passive acceptance of the status quo and a splitting of
knowledge into ever narrowing fields of specialization (Saul, 1995).

I entered into my own graduate work then, actively questioning the
process of my own education and my goal to get a “higher education.” The
process of being in a department and an institution that is inherently patriarchal,
hierarchical, sexist, racist, and classist became as much or more a process of
radicalization of myself as a feminist as it did a training in becoming a therapist or
an academic. When I entered the department I was confronted with a graphic
example of the kind of backlash against feminists and their agenda of ending
women’s oppression. I walked into a situation in which several feminist students
and professors were being targeted with offensive and violent hate-mail sent by,
according to the anonymous author or authors of the letters, a group of “five male
students or ex-students, and the support of two faculty members.” The letters
were explicitly violent, threatening feminists in general and one woman in
particular with rape and physical assault.

The department and the university administrators’ response was to
minimize the attacks and demonstrate what I and many other feminist and non-
feminist students believed was a complete lack of accountability. In response to
the attacks the R.C.M.P. launched an investigation and then subsequently the
university launched an internal investigation led by two professors from outside the department. Throughout the period of the investigation students were kept in the dark about the letters and the faculty were warned not to discuss the events with students. Through rumors and "off the record" conversations a group of women began to piece together what had happened and began calling for information and accountability from the department and university.

Feminists within the department, including myself, were outraged at the patronizing and irresponsible way the university had responded to these threats and individually took action to demand an appropriate response. A group of women, who had hitherto never met were pulled together as activists in a common struggle. It was a pivotal moment in my own development as a feminist and, I have come to realize, in the development of my analysis of therapy and the very training I was about to receive.

This experience offered a direct contrast between the professional, institutionalized response to violence against women as opposed to the politicized, feminist, activist response. From the latter perspective there was a conscious effort to frame the letters and the subsequent cover-up in ways that addressed the social and political context and that acknowledged a personal and a political experience. We worked collectively, benefiting from the support, insights, and analysis of each other and of women working in rape crisis centers. Together, we worked against the elitism of our location in universities to frame the
misogyny we experienced on campus in the context of misogyny everywhere. We shared our experiences and our analyses and collectively worked to focus our time, energy, thoughts, and emotions in developing strategies of support and resistance.

By contrast the institutional response was to minimize the attacks, initially describing them as an "irresponsible way of airing grievances" (Bolan, 1993); to blame the victims by insisting that feminists were responsible for scaring women by exaggerating the threat and making the issue public; and to depoliticize the attack by ignoring the political context out of which it arose (i.e., a patriarchal institution in which feminists and feminisms are constantly marginalized) and instead focusing on safety issues. A campus security guard appeared in the one course most likely to have feminist content; a security buzzer system was installed for late night entries into the department; and, in some cases classrooms were moved to alternate locations outside the building housing the department. Administrators spoke of their commitment to increase lighting on campus and their support of programs providing women with accompaniment while walking at night on campus. Administrators also initiated a forensic psychological profiling of the author(s) of the hate letters in order to ascertain whether or not the author or authors was/were psychopath(s). In this din of noise around safety and security, administrators were deaf to the voices of feminists whose experience told them that they were much more likely to experience violence from a man within their "home" than from some stranger outside it (Vancouver Rape Relief, 1995).
The letter writer(s) explicitly directed their attack at feminists in the department and claimed they had support for their ideas (if not the attack itself) from male faculty members in the department. This was no surprise to many women, faculty and students, in the department who had for years experienced the more covert and constant expressions of the sentiments expressed in this overt attack. It was not the sentiments behind the attack that were unusual, but rather the method, which was more direct and explicit than the institutionally sanctioned and ubiquitous marginalization of feminists and feminist scholarship within academia. What made the response to this overt threat even more preposterous then, was the way in which the explicit threat to feminist women was almost immediately erased and generalized as being a threat to all members of the department regardless of their gender or their politics. In the discussions which ensued, various members of the department, students and faculty, began talking of the “trauma” experienced equally by both men and women in the department without any acknowledgment of the fact that the attack was specifically aimed at feminist women and the “traumatic” experiences of men and women, and more specifically feminist women, were shaped dramatically by the differences in their locations within the department and the institution. The material consequences of the threatening letters were erased by talk which obscured the differences in power and privilege (which includes safety and access) between men and women,
and between those who speak as part of the dominant discourse and those who
voice radical critiques of the dominant discourse.

Equally as problematic, was the way in which the use of the term
“trauma” was redefining the events into a mental health issue as opposed to a
political one. Talk within the department quickly began to incorporate the
therapeutic lingo so often used to translate the problem of male violence into a
woman’s psychological problem. Individuals referred to the “hysterical” or
“paranoid” response of a small number of women (the women who were speaking
out against what had happened and demanding accountability) and to the need to
focus on “healing” the department and working together as a “family system.”

Further, as the department moved into this therapizing response, various men
began engaging in a victim one-upmanship; that is, they began defining themselves
as victims of this attack and entered into a competition as to who was most
victimied by this attack, the men or the women, the professors or the students.
Within a therapeutic framing of the violence, victim-hood automatically became
the central issue, not justice, not social or institutional change and hence the
inevitable diversion into the competition as to who would occupy the role of
biggest victim. Not surprisingly, perhaps, was the fact that this therapization of
violence against women was being provided and promoted by (counselling)
psychologists, individuals with a clear investment in viewing the world through a
therapeutic lens. As I watched this unfold, it was clear to me that I needed to
begin examining more critically the practice of therapy and the role of the academy within therapy. How was therapeutic discourse being used in this political fight to decenter the problem of male violence from men to women? How did it work to depoliticize a very political fight? And how did it serve to reinstitutionalize power and privilege? It was the beginning of my realization that reconciling my feminism with my therapeutic training was not necessarily going to be an easy accomplishment. (These questions did not preclude my recognizing the irony of being in a department that espoused a client-centered approach to counselling and therapy and yet in practice was acting in the least person-centered way imaginable. Honesty, compassion, and respect are the hallmarks of the person-centered therapeutic approach and yet these attributes were almost entirely missing from the department’s official approach to the women most directly affected by this attack).

These questions about how therapy might be complicit in perpetuating violence against women, radically altered my expectation of my curriculum of studies. As I moved through the courses and became more familiar with the department I realized (ironically given my supposition that there must have been some feminist content in order to illicit such a vitriolic attack) that feminism and feminist therapy were virtually invisible and, at best, existed only as addendum areas of focus, extended bibliographies and, more typically, as the focus of scornful attacks by students and professors alike. I moved from expecting my
training in feminist therapy from the department to acknowledging that any understanding of the subject would be developed on my own and, if I was lucky, in the company of other like-minded students. As I have moved through the program my connection with other feminists, my involvement in resisting and challenging the sexism and racism on campus and my exploration of the literature surrounding feminist therapy has become my education - my learning in spite of my schooling. Ironically perhaps, this process of my radicalization as a feminist has led me from pushing for more information and training in feminist therapy to questioning the entire project of therapy in the context of feminism and thus, to this paper.

By the time I approached my thesis, and began to consider topics and decide might engage me in the process of writing a seemingly overwhelming and ominous project, there was no question in my mind that I would need to do a thesis that not only challenged me and hopefully others in terms of my intellectual/political analysis but one that in its very form challenged me to push against the constraints of the rigid, patriarchal structure of the university itself. Around that time I attended a conference on the so called false memory syndrome, a conference that was biased almost without exception in favor of the proponents of this so-called syndrome and against the therapeutic community and the survivors of childhood sexual abuse who were and are being indicted in the debate over retrieved memories of childhood sexual abuse. I was enraged by the one-sided
slant of the conference (pro-false memory syndrome) and very conscious of the lack of information I had about what I, as a therapist, might do to protect both my clients and myself in the face of such a backlash. How should I keep my clinical notes? How should I work with a client to allow for the possibility of “repressed” memories while not leading my client toward such a possibility? The FMS attack was so clearly a backlash against women as clients and therapists by men who were now threatened with having to be accountable for their abuse. It called into question the middle-class values that were being espoused to argue against delayed recall, and it highlighted the contradictory and contentious intersection of therapy and the law in women’s lives.

I worked for four months on this theme, reading about incest and about the various theories of what happened to memories of abuse in those women and men who seemed to have forgotten and then later remembered their childhood abuse. I talked to therapists who worked in the field and I took workshops on how to work with “survivors” and how to court proof myself as a therapist. As I worked I began to develop a sense of how my thesis might document the ways in which therapists conceptualized the debate and how they understood and experienced the impact of the debate on their practice as therapists. I began to work towards a double-voiced text that would juxtapose two seemingly disparate voices of the backlash against feminists and their challenging of the dominant, patriarchal structured discourse. The text would explore the experiences of therapists who
self-described themselves as feminists and were working with incest survivors in the context of the backlash of the FMS debate. The alternate, or sub-text\(^3\) would document my own process and contain any additional comments or information about the backlash theme in a way designed to interrupt the traditional single voiced, authorial text by creating an ongoing conversation with the text itself. At that time I saw this conversational format as vivifying the contradictions that are so often flattened out by the single-authorial voice. It would be a dialogic juxtaposition wherein the voice of therapists and the voice of a student studying therapy and "doing research" would serve as harmony and counterpoint to each other.

The further into this subject I delved, however, the more problematic the focus became. Through my reading and my work within a community of feminists both on and off campus, I began to question the project of therapy, particularly in the context of violence against women and the FMS debate. Therapy's roots as, what Foucault (1965) terms a penal discourse, its expression as a middle-class, 

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\(^3\) I hesitate to use the word sub-text which implies a less important or subservient text to the main text. That is not what I wished to create. The idea of this alternate text was an attempt to make explicit my process as a researcher in a way which articulated my contention that the backlash I experienced as a feminist within the university was tied to the backlash therapists are experiencing as a result of working with survivors of abuse. As a researcher, a therapist in training, and a feminist I see myself as multiply-positioned in my research and my writing. I wanted my text to reflect this polyvocality and to work towards demystifying the research process while I deconstructed an aspect of the backlash. I see working in written text as often clumsy and
and predominantly white endeavor, and its grounding in the dominant ideology made it suspect. As a feminist it became clear to me that the question I needed to ask, and that other radical feminists within psychology and therapy were already asking, was not how therapy and therapists could protect themselves and their clients from the backlash called FMS but how therapy as a focus was contributing to or facilitating the continuation of violence against women. From this perspective my questioning or analysis of FMS took on a more specific focus that involved examining the ways in which the therapizing of violence against women was reflected in this movement and this construction of childhood sexual abuse survivors. My research became a project about the need for feminists to resist the co-optation of our fight to end violence against women and the incursion of the de-politicizing effects of therapeutic discourse. My thesis, like my analysis, had shifted.

I remained committed, however, to my impetus to use textual strategies that interrupted the need for a linear, rationale “academic” text. In my journey through academia I have been co-opted into a style of writing that continues to create and perpetuate inaccessibility. I have struggled through and sometimes mastered⁴ obtuse language, with references to and quotes from a seemingly endless constricting and this was part of my attempt to work against the need for an orderly, linear, academic text.

⁴ I consciously use the term “mastery” acknowledging all its inherent patriarchal connotations. The term “mastery” reflects a process that is very male defined, and about power and control
list of philosophers and academics. I have begun to question the ways in which these texts perpetuate an inaccessibility to research and maintain a layer of privilege that supports a hierarchy of knowers and known. Ebert (1993) speaks of the gap between academic feminist discourse and postmodern feminist discourse in particular, and feminism's constituency; that is, those who would use that theorizing to challenge privilege and inequity and exploitation. I acknowledge my own participation and collusion in this elitism and hope in some way and in some aspects of my text to work against it. My intent is for this text to be in both content and format a document of resistance.

over a subject, a thing, a person. This approach to learning is inherent in the socialization process of graduate (and undergraduate) work at university. I apply the verb to my own work as it is clear from reading that work as it has progressed over the years of school, that my own style has increasingly incorporated the obtuse language and inaccessibility implied in this process of mastering a subject.
1

EVOCATIVE REPRESENTATIONS: A METHODOLOGY IN PROCESS

In the course of this thesis I have talked to various potential supervisors, one of whom clearly told me that what I was doing was sociology, not psychology. I had to ponder this one, given that I have never had anyone in Counselling Psychology clearly articulate to me what constitutes “psychological research” as opposed to any other research including sociological research. I believe this comment revealed a clear investment in the maintenance of distinct disciplinary boundaries that was unique to this professor. On another occasion I had been told that “footnotes are not done” according to the research text format of the American Psychological Association, even though they may provide greater clarity and an opportunity to include some important points or counterpoints that might provide for a more comprehensive or enriched analysis of the subject.

When I reflected on these comments, the rigidity they implied was not surprising. In my experience, there is a need within Psychology and Counselling Psychology to convince the academic world that these disciplines are scientifically legitimate because these disciplines are, in reality, based in conjecture about the workings of human mind and in mathematical generalizations (statistics); psychology is not a “hard” (provable) science. An adherence to a more “scientific” format, such as that outlined by the American Psychological Association (1994) for research in psychology, infers a credibility and legitimacy that might otherwise
be elusive in these disciplines. This inferred validity rests in part in a positivist understanding of science-as-objective-truth and is expressed through a very strictly enforced set of rules defining acceptable structure and language. While these conventions are more rigidly adhered to in examples of empirical research within psychology, they also cross over into much of the qualitative research as well.

Within this format, language is treated as “an unimportant container for information about phenomena, data and theories” (Madigan, Johnson, & Linton, 1996: p. 433); it is, in other words, viewed as a passive “medium” rather than a constitutive force. Additionally, structural conventions such as the use of citations and the overall organization of such research texts (introduction, method, results and discussion) shape not only the ways in which these research “stories” are told, but how they are understood as well. The way in which the methodology is presented, for instance (the articulation of how data has been defined, collected and analyzed in congruence with an established methodological theory) serves as a signifier of the validity of the research. The various grammatical and structural conventions of this rhetorical style in effect create the illusion of objectivity that defines empirical research. The effect often is that such research is delivered in a disembodied voice and requires a disembodied reading which seems incongruous with the kind of learning that I find to be most compelling. The times when I have
been engaged both intellectually and emotionally by a text are the times when I have found my most profound learning.

The Research Text as Opportunity

Coming from a feminist analysis, grounded to some degree in postmodern theories, I have struggled with how to write this text in a way that works against this notion of objectivity, this hard/soft dichotomy, and the rigid textual conventions of my discipline. How a text is written shapes not only what can be written, but also how a text will be recreated in the reading process (Trinh, 1989). Like Laurel Richardson (1994), I do not see my writing of this text as merely the “mopping up activity at the end of the research” (p. 516). The scientific authority of social science research texts is constructed through a variety of rhetorical strategies (i.e., referencing, hypothesis centered knowledge production, linear texts, standardized authorial voice), strategies that are themselves rarely foregrounded as shaping the nature of the text. The research is “safely staged within the language of the fathers” (Richardson, 1993, p. 704), contained and controlled through the methodological tenets of phallocentric social science. Such research texts objectify both the product and the process of the research, creating a disembodied, disaffective, and deadened text (p. 705).

In working against this kind of numbing disembodiment, therefore, and against the arbitrary compartmentalization of methodology as that which happens to the data, I have chosen to include my process as part of my “methodology.”
By including a "personal narrative" I have worked to make explicit the evolution of my research; here, in this section, I work to explain my decisions regarding the various rhetorical strategies I employ in the rest of this text.

I have chosen to "write up" my research using a mixed genre of texts. In so doing, I enthusiastically transgress some of the normative rhetorical conventions of social science (i.e., the unified authorial voice and seamless narrative construction) by combining various textual constructions: a personal narrative in which I situate myself as researcher and explain some of the choices I have made and why; a critical realist tale (Van Maanen, 1988) in which I apply a feminist critique and analysis to the problem of how feminism and therapy intersect; what I call, a critical deconstructive tale in which I apply a feminist critique to FMS discourse in order to expose the ways in which feminism's engagement with therapy is being turned to use in the backlash against feminism; and, finally, a deconstructive drama that blends realistic, poetic, and deconstructive techniques to explore these same issues of FMS and therapy, and does so in a style which blurs the lines between oral and written text.

In part I have chosen to employ these various textual strategies in the hopes of creating a text that is vital, and readable, and that engages the reader with some passion. As well, I hope to open up the text to examination as a way of knowing, not only a means of recording. Shaping the text in this manner has demanded that I, and hopefully anyone who reads it, relate to my material
differently, in a way that attends not only to the intellect but also to the feelings that the text and to the emergent uncertainties that arise from the questioning of feminism's current relationship with psychology. The text is no longer a seamless construction of authority and truth (Richardson, 1993). Additionally, the text itself now serves as a feminist-postmodern rewriting of "validity."

In traditional social science research, triangulation, the use of multiple methods, is widely used as a measure of the validity of the research. As Richardson (1994) discusses, the assumption of triangulation is that there is a fixed point that can be triangulated. Richardson posits a crystal instead of a triangle as the central metaphor for "validity" within postmodern texts.

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallization. In postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles. Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of "validity (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (1994, p. 522)

By incorporating multiple textual styles throughout the research, and specifically by using two very different styles to "tell" the data (the critical analyses of FMS discourse), I work to foreground the constitutive nature of the text. The way in which I "tell" the data shapes the data, by providing multiple-tellings I work to provide different angles of entry into the data, "what we see
depends upon our angle of repose" (see above). This crystal is still, however, a feminist crystal, that is my various angles of entry, my refractions of the data, are all coloured by the overarching critical theory that is feminism.

**Feminism and Resistance Postmodernism**

While my approach to this research incorporates a postmodern perspective, my methodology is not simply a postmodern dance with discursive differences, or what Theresa Ebert (1991) would call, a “ludic” postmodernist project. My methodology is firmly grounded in feminist inquiry and in my lived experience: of backlash inside and outside this department; of my work as a counsellor with women victimized by poverty and other forms of socially sanctioned violence; and of my conversations with feminist friends and colleagues as we have struggled to develop our political analyses through our activism. It is not simply an exercise in deconstructing for the sake of deconstructing, nor does it adopt the dominant postmodern thesis of the dissolution of the subject/self and of meta-narratives. It is feminist and as such arises from a very determined subject/self position to challenge the meta-narrative of patriarchy as it is expressed in the relationship of feminism to psychology/therapy.

My alliance with postmodernism is, in other words, an uneasy one. While both of these critical discourses\(^5\) challenge the meta-narratives of western

\(^5\)Discourse is a key concept in feminist poststructuralist theory. It refers to the ways in which we construct and story our
enlightenment and modernity, much of what is proposed within the postmodern theorizing is antithetical to feminism's political goals. In the aforementioned "ludic" (Ebert, 1991) postmodern understanding of the world, the subject, woman, is reduced to a position in language, and the politics, feminism, to a series of rhetorical strategies aimed at changing/challenging the cultural representations of woman (i.e., gender, race, sexuality) (Benhabib, 1992; Ebert, 1993). It is as though the material world disappears, and with it any understanding of or resistance to the material consequences of oppression.

For these very problematic reasons, my borrowing from postmodern theorizing is limited to the kind of theorizing proposed by Ebert (1991, 1993) who argues for an alternative framework for feminist postmodernism. She describes a "resistance postmodernism" that is grounded not in this "ludic" or discursive world metaphor, but in the material world where systems of difference are organized into patterns of domination and subordination (p.295). Resistance postmodernism, then, argues against the tendency of "ludic" postmodernism to construct difference as simply a language effect and to view politics as an abstract, "the disruption of ready-made meanings of culture" (p.291). Instead it posits experiences. Discourses are partial and contextual; that is the meaning of any particular discourse depends on the material, temporal and cultural location of both speakers and listeners in relation to one another. The discursive practices of a particular discourse serve to define and maintain a particular construction of experience. A dominant or hegemonic discourse, for example, reflects the values and social attributes (gender, race, class,
difference as "difference in relation", difference as the site of material world
political conflicts and struggles over equal access to social, cultural, and economic
resources. While "ludic" postmodernism focuses on the liberation of the individual
through the elimination of totalities, resistance postmodernism focuses on a
collective liberation from exploitation, an emancipation that relies on an
understanding of totalities as historically specific structures or systems of
difference (Ebert, 1993: p. 18). This latter understanding of difference and
liberation is much more congruent with feminism as a political philosophy given
that feminist thought is organized around the concept of a totality, that of
patriarchy, and a transformative possibility, emancipation from the oppressions
of patriarchy.

By foregrounding feminism in my methodology, over postmodernism, I am
also making a strategic choice. As much as it more accurately reflects my
methodological stance, this description also challenges the more typical framing of
this alliance in which the feminist contribution is diminished or hidden altogether.
It seems to me that postmodern theorists have often been credited for theorizing
that draws from, but does not acknowledge, the theorizing of feminists,
particularly Black feminists and other feminists of colour (Bannerji et al., 1991;
hooks, 1990). Ideas that are more commonly referred to as arising from

sexual orientation) of those in power and serves to maintain the
ideological appartatus of heirarchical social order (Webb, 1996).
postmodernism—deconstruction, questioning difference and location and voice; exploring the constitutive aspect of language—have been a cornerstone of feminist research. It is no mistake that the theorists being credited with developing these analyses are dead, white, French men not feminists like Daly, Haraway, hooks, and Bannerji.

Working from a feminist analysis informed by resistance offers the possibility of opening and embracing the complexities of textual/knowing possibilities in the FMS material in an explicitly political way. This is important because much of what I have read or heard of popular critiques of FMS to date, have offered analyses which, while critical, do not reflect the complexity of the issues arising from that discourse. It has been too easy for these critiques of FMS discourse and the FMSF to slip into the very simplistic kinds of binary arguments--good/bad therapy; trained/untrained therapists; false/true memories--proposed within the discourse. By agreeing, in effect, to enter into the debate on such limited terms feminists have avoided exploring some of the crucial questions which arise from that discourse regarding the movement's involvement with therapy and its potential complicity in maintaining oppressive structures because of that relationship. The debate is thus foreshortened and discussion diverted from the issue of feminism's own therapeutizing of male violence against women (Shuman & Galvez, 1996). Ironically, and not necessarily incidentally, this challenging of therapy is, potentially, the most subversive of the debate over
recovered memories. No wonder then that there has been little energy focused on such an interrogation of the institution of therapy/psychology. As feminists we need to rise to the challenge of presenting a strong feminist critique of FMS as an expression of backlash in a way that does not dismiss or limit our ability to critique therapy.

Had I the resources (personal, financial, institutional), I would have chosen to work my research questions using an interactive, multi-media computer program; in effect, stepping out of the 2-dimensional, linear bounds of written text and moving towards a richer post-modern analytical rendering of the issues. Given my choice to remain textually bound, however, I have, as I outlined previously, attempted to gesture to the complexities, to complicate the text, by working with different textual strategies and styles. The goal for me has been to proliferate, juxtapose, and create disjunction among different ways of telling and reading: to work toward a multilayered data analysis that is emotionally complex, improvisational in spirit and radical in its intent.

The Personal Narrative

In this text, I have incorporated a personal narrative as a means of situating myself as an embodied voice in the text. I have located myself in this way not only as the "researcher" but as a feminist struggling against my own experiences of backlash and as a practitioner of therapy attempting to understand the complexities of the contradictory spaces I occupy as feminist, therapist, and
academic. This is also where I attempt to demystify the research process by making my process within this research as transparent as possible.

Certainly it has been my experience that my research is directly related to, and has been profoundly shaped by the experiences which would normally be left out of the “writing up” of that research. As a feminist studying in an academic environment in a conservative university I have been working in an inherently hostile learning environment, a patriarchal institution which despite rhetoric around supporting diversity continues to marginalize feminists and feminist scholarship. As I have already articulated, my journey through the department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia has directly and indirectly shaped my research question, my analysis of the issues raised by that question, and the way in which I have chosen to “write up” this research. By including this personal journey, or a part of it, I am actively resisting the silencing of feminist voices on multiple levels: I give voice to a particular story of the backlash against feminism within academia; I challenge the masking of the politics of research by foregrounding my very subjective position within my research; and I resist the silencing-by-format of the rigid protocols for research texts which determine not only what can be said but what can be read by rendering texts passionless and disembodied.
The Critical Deconstructive Tale

The critical, deconstructive tale follows more closely the positivist expectations of a research text in that it incorporates a truth-telling, authorial voice presenting the "facts" based on an analysis of the data, which although not objective is systematic. In this representation I focus on a clearly delineated set of data, that is the first four volumes of the FSMF bimonthly newsletters. I have selected these for analysis because they provide a comprehensive articulation of the arguments and ideologies in FMS discourse, the FMSF being the progenitors of this discourse. These newsletters include editorials, reprints of popular articles on FMS, book reviews, legal decisions and analyses, personal anecdotes, meeting and conference announcements, etc. In short, they represent a thorough sampling of FMS discourse in a relatively concise and accessible format. In keeping with the focus of this research, that of the intersection of therapy and feminism within the contemporary backlash against feminism, I have chosen to limit my analysis to material within the newsletters that incorporates a focus on psychology, (feminist) therapy, and therapeutic culture. Furthermore, I have selected as most salient those themes or arguments which recur frequently throughout the FMSF texts.

In telling the data in this representation, I draw on a critical theory, that is feminism, and a method of analysis that is deconstruction. Critical theories ask questions of power, economy, history, and exploitation, and in the case of
feminism, gender. Critical theories, whether feminist, postmodernist, or neo-Marxist, are informed by identification with and interest in oppositional social movements. Deconstruction attempts to disrupt the assumption of innocence in any discourse by foregrounding the textual staging of knowledge (Lather, 1994). Deconstruction is a resistance move, a textual strategy that unpacks the binary arguments within a discourse:

While impossible to freeze conceptually, deconstruction can be broken down into three steps: 1) identify the binaries, the oppositions that structure an argument; 2) reverse/displace the dependent term from its negative position to a place that locates it as the very condition of the positive term; 3) create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organization of terms which transcends a binary logic by simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms (Lather, 1994).

Feminist deconstruction combats the tendency for deconstruction to produce an apolitical, or ludic understanding of the material, and, instead offers a pulling-apart of the text that is grounded in a counter-hegemonic ideology. In this way the conjunction of feminism and deconstruction works against the tendency of the postmodern to collapse into a framework of reflexivity which excludes political action by constantly situating the deconstruction in the context of the material and political consequences of the arguments.

In many ways this is a version of the “realist” tale, which assumes an “interpretive omnipotence” and uses accepted rhetorical strategies to articulate this version of “truth”. In this tale, I am situated as the intervenor/interpreter and advocate/emancipator of self and/or others; I assume myself to be able to read the
deeper structures within a text because of my grounding in feminist critical theory, and likewise position myself as participating in an emancipatory agenda because I use the specifics of my analysis of FMS to illuminate larger social, political, and economic issues.

Textually, this storying involves the development of codes or emergent themes around which the data are clumped. A direct quote is used as an example of these codes/themes and then the binary logic of the theme is unpacked and analyzed from a feminist critical perspective. Then it is back into the data for another example and another theme. The generalizability of any quote is assumed warranted in this case because of the frequency of similar or even identical examples.

The Critical Poetic Drama

This story is intended to be more transgressive than the critical, deconstructive tale. It represents an attempt to present knowledge in a fragmented, rather than an exhaustive way, and works against the arbitrary distinction between fact and fiction by developing characters with names, faces, motives, voices who tell the data; in some way this also provides a rhetorical echo of the analytical deconstruction of the fact/fiction binary in the FMS discourse. It is intended to require a more involved reading by providing more questions than
answers. In this version I use data as vivification instead of “proof”\textsuperscript{6}. By framing my analysis in a form that is more associated with art than science, I work against the received view of what science is (i.e., that it is not art), thereby intensifying the competing discourses that exist even within science (i.e., hard/soft science/exact/inexact methods).

\textsuperscript{6} Thanks to Patti Lather for this concept which she articulated during a feminist, post-structural methodology course she taught at U.B.C. during the summer of 1994.
THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE: BACKLASH AND FMS

In order to present my analysis of FMS discourse as a backlash discourse, it is necessary first, to examine the notion of backlash, locating it as a term not specific to the backlash against feminism, but rather as a term that refers more broadly to the backlash against all social justice movements. I do this in order to encourage a broader understanding of backlash as not simply a response to feminism and the fight for women’s rights, but as a socio-political signifier of a systemic shift in power relations.

Backlash as a Signifier of a Shift in Power-Relations

The term “backlash” is probably most widely associated with the book by that name, written by Susan Faludi (1991). Faludi used the term to refer to the counter assault on the feminist movement and women’s rights. In this usage, the term backlash refers specifically to the anti-feminist attacks against the predominantly white, middle-class, feminist movement and its goals of equity for women. Linda Wayne (1995a) offers a more radical understanding of the term, however, locating it historically as a term originally used to describe the violent response to Black American’s demands for political and socio-economic equality during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

By making this historical connection, Wayne complexifies the term “backlash” to include a more trans-historic perspective. It can be seen to be a
signifier of a particular historical moment when people in power (by virtue of their gender or their race or class) respond to a threat to their power, through various strategies that include violence and the threat of violence. Wayne (1995b) describes this response as “a product and a symptom of legitimation crisis,” an indicator of the historical moment when hegemony begins to fail. She thus expands the understanding of backlash not “to be organized solely around gender discrimination” but “more generally around issues of human rights and hegemonic struggle” (p.33). In this way, Wayne makes the connections between the attacks on feminism and the attacks on other radical social movements organized around race, sexual orientation, etc.

“Backlash” then, refers not to the ongoing oppression of women, or of Blacks, or of the poor, but rather, points directly to the historical moment when the legitimacy of that oppression is threatened; the moment at which the dominant group perceives its position of privilege and power to be endangered, and, in order to justify the continuance of its privilege, responds violently to those who embody the threat. The appearance of the term and the response it describes, is a signifier of a shift in power-relations; retaliation is unnecessary unless there have been real threats to the power of the dominant group both in material terms and also in ideological terms. This does not mean, however, that the precipitating shift in power need be large. It is, rather, the perception of a shift in legitimation or sanctioning of the prevailing system of privileges that causes backlash to emerge
(or in the case of the "backlash" against feminism, re-emerge). The backlash against feminism and the gains made for women is not, then, a signal that there has been a massive erosion of men's dominance. Rather the backlash points to a crisis in the legitimation of that domination.

The Logic of Backlash

Social liberatory movements threaten the legitimacy of the prevailing system of power and privileges. In response to that threat, those invested in the maintenance of the status quo (i.e., those who benefit) resist and attempt to (re)assert their power and enforce compliance with the dominant norms of their privileges. Wayne (1996) posits that the logic of backlash offers a way in which to rationalize and maintain coercive domination of a marginalized group; it is a strategy that enables the continued public sanction of oppressive violence to continue within a liberal democracy. Backlash occurs in a society that is invested in an ideal of liberal democracy (as opposed to an overtly repressive regime); backlash provides the rationale for a continued sanctioning of inequality and human rights violations against certain groups of people (blacks, natives, women) within a democracy that espouses equality and liberty for all. Wayne summarizes the logic of backlash this way:

...the logic which underlies the anti-civil rights reaction maps out in the following way, where backlash operates to:
(a) divert attention from the reality of equitable advances and focus instead on the resistance to them. This legitimates the backløsher’s right to voice opposition;

(b) position the oppressed as victims of the violence they bring upon themselves when they turn to strategies, analyses and models for social change. Backlash claims that the oppressed cause and are responsible for the aggression that is inflicted upon them thus dressing power in “innocent garb;

(c) represent the call for social equality as anti-progressive, anti-democratic, and fundamentally anti-equitable. Social values are manipulated in backlash to misrepresent a subordinated group’s current intentions and future goals;

(d) punish the group seeking equality through (1) social, political and economic disenfranchisement, and (2) threatened and actual violence. This process has emotionally and psychologically disempowering effects (p. 38).

The broad based backlash against feminism, that Faludi (1992) describes and analyzes in her book of the same name, Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, fits this profile of backlash logic. Faludi presents numerous examples of how the malestream media and advertising industries either exaggerate gains made by feminists or divert attention away from these gains and toward the resistance they inspire. In this way, consumers (of western, capitalist, democracy) are presented either with a picture of a fictitious shift—the complete, successful, liberation of women—that is based on the significant inroads made by predominantly middle-class, educated women into traditionally male dominated
professions\(^7\), or our attention is redirected to the resistance to these gains—the political correctness debate; the protestations of the “real” women’s movement; the men’s movement demand for “equality” as though men did not enjoy a power position in society. This is the first move in the logic of backlash: the legitimation of the voices of resistance to further gains because feminism has accomplished its goal, or to continued gains because the goals of feminism are excessive.

The second move is that of the reversal of blame, in which violence against women is blamed on women in general (i.e., women are too aggressive, too seductive, too passive, too ambitious, too frigid, in the wrong place, wearing the wrong clothes), and feminists in particular. Women are blamed for their media-defined discontent because the real problems women face, such as inequity in pay-scales and in the courts and continued and increasing violence, are, as Faludi points out, hidden, dismissed or misrepresented and replaced by constructions of discontent due to conflicting ambitions (motherhood and career) and unfulfilled love lives. Women, in this construction, are unhappy because of their embracing of

\(^7\)During the writing of this thesis, I listened to Peter Gzowski interview Kim Campbell about her just released political biography. Campbell was moved to counter Gzowski’s description of her decision to gain the leadership of the conservative party as potentially premature in that she was relatively inexperienced politically. She began to offer an analysis of the “women as perpetual rookie” syndrome which framed her as inexperienced even though her credentials were weightier than many men who had aspired to the position. Gzowski immediately countered this move by saying “Oh, don’t give me the woman thing...” as though the issue of her gender had played no significant role in not only the media fueled opposition to her occupying the role of Prime
feminist values and goals (i.e., women are unhappy because they have over-focused on career, or because they are too masculinized to attract a man, or because they are unrealistically ambitious).

In a third move of this backlash logic, feminism is portrayed as extreme, anti-democratic, and anti-progressive. It is, in other words, portrayed not as a liberatory social movement, but as an extreme political movement bent on the destruction of family and dominant morals and values and on the subjugation of men. The liberatory goals of feminism are redefined as oppressive; feminism's aim in this light, is to turn all women against men and to further emasculate, maybe even castrate men as a group and as individuals.

Finally, in the fourth move of backlash logic, women continue to be punished through their economic, social, and political disenfranchisement and through their continued subjugation through violence, actual and threatened. This punishment is further extended to feminists for not only stepping out of line, but announcing publicly their challenge of "the line" and those who keep it. The more radical their analysis and the more vocal they are, the more they are socially castigated and forced back into hiding, or forced to suffer the adverse consequences (the story of my department at U.B.C. is but one example of this phenomenon).

Minister, but also in his minimizing the very real expertise she brought to the job.
The current backlash against feminism can be seen, then, as pointing to a shift in the legitimation of white, male dominance. It does not announce violence against women and feminists as a new phenomenon, rather it points to a renewed fervor in the various coercive strategies used to oppress women as a result of a perceived shift in the power relations between men and women. As both Wayne (1995a) and Faludi (1992) argue, while this campaign of violence and threatened violence is not the result of an organized conspiracy, it is also not simply an accumulation of isolated incidents. It is, rather, a systemic response to a systemic threat; a sign of a system attempting, through various coercive strategies, "to legitimate itself as a democracy that is based on ideals of equality, freedom and human rights" while denying that "equality" and "rights" are extended in unequal proportions to groups within that democracy based on their gender, their race, their class, etc. (Wayne, 1995a). This framework for understanding backlash includes a more complex understanding of women's domination as being not solely based in gender but rather in the intersections of gender with race, social and economic class, ability and sexual orientation. It also ties the backlash against feminism into the broader context of the conservative backlash against all radical social reform movements. Against this backdrop, the FMS discourse may be contextualized as a specific example of the backlash against feminism within contemporary western culture.
False Memory Syndrome

The term, FMS, has arisen in the past 5 years as a signifier of the debate over recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse in legal, therapeutic, popular, and academic domains. It is my contention, and that of other researchers (Armstrong, 1994; Schuman & Galvez, 1996; Webb, 1996) that FMS is a signifier of a much broader, more complex issue, that is the anti-feminist backlash of the 1980s and 90s.

The actual term “false memory syndrome” was coined in 1992 (FMSF Newsletter, 1994) by the founders of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF), Pamela and Peter Freyd, after their adult daughter, Dr. Jennifer Freyd, privately confronted them with her memories of her own childhood sexual abuse at the hands of her father. In response to their daughter’s allegations, Jennifer Freyd’s parents joined with other accused parents and medical health

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According to the False Memory Syndrome Foundation the term FMS describes:

[A] condition in which a person’s identity and interpersonal relationships are centered around a memory of traumatic experience which is objectively false but in which the person strongly believes. Note that the syndrome is not characterized by false memories as such. We all have memories that are inaccurate. Rather, the syndrome may be diagnosed when the memory is so deeply ingrained that it orients the individual’s entire personality and lifestyle, in turn, disrupting all sorts of other adaptive behaviors. The analogy to personality disorder is intentional. (Kihlstrom, FMSF Pamphlet, 1994).

professionals who supported the notion of "false memories of childhood sexual abuse" to form what they described as a parent's support and advocacy group.9

The basic premise of the FMSF's argument is that memories of childhood sexual abuse recovered in adulthood, are, like all memories, inaccurate and/or confabulated. They do not deny the existence of incest as such, but, rather, profess their own innocence on the basis of "scientific evidence" about the unreliability of memory and the dominant perception of the superior morality of middle-class parents. They locate the fault for these false accusations not with the accusers themselves, but rather with their therapists, arguing that these therapists implant or induce "false memories", and coerce already vulnerable women as a result of poor training and their own political (read: feminist) agendas.

The use of the term syndrome is a creative attempt to lend a scientific and medical legitimacy to the claims of innocence by those who are accused (primarily fathers) by their children (primarily daughters) of being the perpetrators of childhood sexual abuse. There is no recognition of the existence of such a syndrome in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV

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9Although the FMSF describes itself as a support group, the fact is that it is a highly organized and well-funded lobby group - their operating budget in 1993 exceeded $750-thousand. They produce volumes of articles and newsletters detailing "scientific" evidence supporting their contentions regarding recovered memories of abuse and they have been involved directly and indirectly in organizing high profile conferences throughout the United States and Canada (i.e., Memory and Reality: Reconciliation: Scientific, Clinical and Legal Issues of False Memory Syndrome - a 1994
(American Psychiatric Association, 1995) or in any other professional diagnostic manual, or in any peer review journals. The FMSF’s rhetorical strategy in using the term “syndrome” is to discredit women by presenting them as suffering from a medical condition if they accuse men/fathers of sexual abuse on the basis of recovered memories; in effect, it is an attempt to build in an unwarranted scientific and medical legitimacy to their claims of innocence.10

Annabel Webb (1996), in her critical deconstruction of FMS, argues that the agenda and tactics of the FMSF are based in neo-conservative politics and right wing ideology and the contemporary backlash against feminism and other social justice movements. In a comprehensive analysis of FMSF literature, she identifies some of the specific rhetorical strategies this organization has adopted to promote the concept of FMS and examines the ways in which these strategies and the group’s organizing tactics are used to attack feminist gains in psychotherapeutic and legal domains.

conference in Baltimore, Maryland sponsored by the FMSF in conjunction with Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions). 10 The term syndrome is applied to a recognized set of characteristics or symptoms indicating a disease or disorder. In the case of FMS the term implies that there is a medically recognizable disorder which in fact does not exist. Simply by using the term and by using language such as “diagnose” “condition” etc., the FMSF complies with familiar mental health nomenclature, thus inferring a scientific legitimacy which does not exist. Additionally, if it is accepted that those that accuse members of the FMSF are suffering from a syndrome, then they are already positioned as unreliable or “mentally ill” thereby conferring innocence on the accused.
One such tactic is to frame the debate in a series of oppositional binaries, “good/bad therapist”, “true/false memories”, “scientific or apolitical psychology/unscientific or feminist (political) psychology, etc. Because most mental health professionals (and legislators) are willing to engage with FMS discourse at this level of oppositional binaries, the scope of the debate around childhood sexual abuse is limited and most often focused not on the question of how to stop incest, but rather on the “truth” of whether it has happened in any particular case, and on the “best” means of dealing with its aftermath. It is my contention that, within the feminist movement, feminist therapy fulfills a similar function, in that it focuses energy predominantly on women’s “healing” from male violence rather than, or at least as a precursor to, women (and men) working to end male violence against women, including incest. In this way, I believe feminism’s over-focus on therapy is unwittingly facilitating the backlash against the movement to end patriarchy and the violence against women which arises from/within patriarchy.

The Binary Logic of FMS

The oppositional binaries that characterize FMS discourse also serve another purpose, which in some important way has little to do with the issue of violence against women, and everything to do with (re)securing male power and privilege within psychology. In the past two to three decades, the feminist movement has pushed for women to have greater access to previously male
dominated fields. The influx of women into academic and clinical psychology has generated a concomitant threat to the power, privilege, and status of men within those disciplines. What has been historically true in other professions (banking, teaching, nursing, secretarial) is also true within psychology; as women have entered into the mental health field in increasing numbers, the status positions within that field have shifted (Nicholson, 1992). This influx of women has generated a new division within psychology along gender lines: women dominate the various therapeutic subfields of psychology such as Counselling Psychology, and related mental health fields (Social Work, lay-counselling, and a host of mental-health service occupations) while men dominate the higher status positions within research/academic psychology & psychiatry (Brown, 1994).

*FMS* discourse specifically targets these lower status areas of psychology, privileging psychiatry and research based fields within psychology (cognitive psychology) over those that are less “scientific” because of their clinical/practical base and less legitimate because they require “inferior” academic credentials and produce “unobjective” theories. The “good/bad” therapy/therapist rhetoric of *FMS* reflects this gender division within psychology in that it targets predominantly women: women clients, women therapists practicing women-centered (feminist) therapy, and, secondarily, women authors and researchers. The willingness of feminist psychologists, academics, and mental health professionals to enter into the debate over recovered memories by engaging with these good/bad,
true/false binaries, works against a feminist agenda at one level by reinscribing the class distinctions between disciplinary areas within psychology which are, themselves, characterized by gender groupings.

As non-research mental health fields multiply and more and more women (including self-defined feminists with explicit political agendas) enter such fields, it becomes increasingly imperative for the boys to find alternative means of dis/simulating that 'psychology = science'. A particularly operative means of doing so is to dissociate 'real' psychology from the emerging professions -- especially from those new unscientifically-trained and/or biased 'non-professionals' (Schuman & Galvez, 1996: p. 22)(italics in original).

As Schuman and Galvez also point out, buying into this good/bad dichotomy reinforces the positivist vision of “objective science” while further isolating women in fields which are viewed as “less than” and therefore accrue lower status, lower pay, and less credibility or legitimacy. Moreover, by engaging in this pointless debate over “truth”, feminists are diverted into a controlled and ultimately non-threatening debate, skirting the broader debate over the ultimate value and/or costs of psychology/therapy to women in the context of patriarchy.

What makes the FMS backlash an even more complex issue, is that it occurs precisely at a time when a small group of feminist academics and practitioners are also questioning the value of feminist therapy (or therapy in general) in the context of the issue of violence against women. FMS works to pathologize women who claim they have been sexually assaulted as children by alluding to them as suffering from acute depressions which distort memories
(Dawes, 1991) or by describing them as suffering from a “characterological disorder” (Schuman & Galvez, 1996) which, by the FMSF’s own definitions is analogous to a personality disorder (see earlier footnote regarding the FMSF’s definition of FMS).

Interesting enough, the mainstream feminist response within psychology to this pathologizing, and indeed to the issue of incest, has utilized equally pathologizing and apolitical rhetoric. Feminist (and other) therapists have spent considerable energy building up the case for a different label, that of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which, while certainly aimed at validating the trauma of incest, does nothing to redirect the gaze away from the “illness” and towards the act “rape” and the socio-political and economic conditions which facilitate the act (Shuman & Galvez, 1996). Feminism has provided other alternate labels for women, such as “survivor” instead of “victim”, and to some degree has co-opted others such as “in recovery” (a term arising from the male-centered addictions discourse), both of which again focus the attention on the illness of the individual woman as opposed to the oppression of the collective women, and on healing as opposed to political action (Armstrong, 1994). In essence, the mainstream feminist response to violence against women has been, in large part, to focus on developing and maintaining a therapeutic framing and response to this violence which overshadows the political framing and response. Services have been (and are still being) created to provide crisis and long term services to women survivors of
male violence that are not centered in the political activism and which, unintentionally perhaps, effectively ensure the perpetuation of that violence as the center and raison d'etre of a burgeoning industry.

Why Now?

It is no accident that such an organization professing such a “syndrome” has arisen at this historical juncture. Not only is this happening during a reactive resurgence of conservative values and ideology in general, it is occurring in the specific historical context of the past 20 plus years of the feminist movement speaking out about violence against women, and more recently about incest in particular. It is also occurring specifically at a time when more and more women are entering into the judicial system to seek redress for damages resulting from male violence including childhood sexual abuse. In the case of childhood sexual abuse, hard won feminist legal reforms have extended the statute of limitation periods thereby allowing women access to civil legal redress as adults. The backlash against this movement by women into the judicial system is, of course, neither new nor limited to cases of incest. It is, rather, representative of a growing trend for the New Right to use the courts as a key site of political struggle (Webb, 1996).

The breaking of the silence around incest represented a direct challenging of patriarchal hegemony (Butler, 1978; Burstow, 1992; Schuman & Galvez, 1996). From a feminist perspective incest is understood to be an enacting of power,
domination, and male privilege, and a logical extension of the way in which male
power and privilege is embodied in the patriarchal family structure. While both
girls and boys are victimized by childhood sexual abuse and rape, girls continue to
be the most common victims and fathers, and father surrogates, the most common
perpetrators of childhood sexual violence (Courtois, 1988; Finkelhor, 1984;
Herman, 1988; Russell, 1984). By speaking out publicly about incest, then,
women initiated a crisis in the legitimation of men’s domination as it is
institutionalized through the patriarchal family structure. The move into the
courts compounded this crisis in male hegemony by, in effect, making one
patriarchal institution, the judicial system, complicit in the potential de-
legitimizing of another such institution, the hetero-patriarchal family.

*FMS* is a constructed response to a shift in social consciousness; the
feminist movement has created a heightened awareness and public censure of
violence against women. It is no longer socially acceptable or legal to assault a
woman with whom you are in a relationship or to rape them as adults or children.
This shift in attitude has not been accompanied by a shift in actual incidence of
these examples of violence against women, but, however chimerical these gains
have been they signal a perceptual shift within society; overtly violent forms of
domination aimed at women - rape, battering and incest - while ubiquitous in
actuality, are no longer socially acceptable. This is the perceptual shift Wayne
(1995b) alludes to in her thesis on the neo-conservative backlash on campuses.
This shift in social conscience regarding violence against women has its price; because it includes a greater awareness of the threat of violence to women within their families, it seriously undermines the socially accepted and valorized "truths" of the patriarchal family structure (i.e., that the family is a haven of safety, the cradle of democracy, the moral fabric of our society). In this way, FMS is the crux of a debate with much larger implications than that of whether memories of childhood sexual abuse are true or false. It ties in multiple contemporary polemics: the postmodern challenging of "truth", "objectivity", "fact" versus "fiction"; the contemporary cultural debates over legislated equity measures and "political correctness", the push/pull between the anti-psychiatry and critical psychology movements and the cultural embracing of therapy and therapeutic discourse, and the questioning from inside and outside the movement of the legitimacy and value of feminism in the 90s.
A CRITICAL DECONSTRUCTION OF FALSE MEMORY SYNDROME DISCOURSE

The so-called FMS crisis, then, is really a smoke screen for a very well organized, sophisticated, and focused assault on women who are confronting male violence against women (in this case confronting the men who raped them and/or otherwise sexually violated them as children). Webb (1996) argues that FMS is a construction of a conservative campaign to discredit and de-legitimize feminism, and to re-enshrine the unsulliable character of the white, middle class male and the ultimate superiority of white, male defined, middle-class values. She examines the roots of the FMSF in the Right, using the organization's own documentation to expose the highly organized, well-funded, and strategically sophisticated nature of their campaign; an analysis which belies the foundation's rhetoric about it being a grassroots, support group with no political intentions. This "conservative think tank" (p. 27), Webb argues, operates with the institutional support of media and academia as a part of a larger political project of the New Right to re-establish the status quo of white, male supremacy in the face of feminist challenges to that dominant positioning.

In this way, FMS discourse is a distinct and discreet example of the more generalized backlash against feminism. What makes an examination of this discourse particularly salient to an examination of feminism and therapy is that it


is a discourse that capitalizes on feminism's own investment (or at least mainstream feminism's) in a therapeutic culture. In order to argue that FMS is indeed an example of backlash, in the following sections I draw on Wayne's (1995) articulation of the logic of backlash to examine some of the emergent themes within FMS discourse. These themes show FMS discourse to be constructed in ways that are very congruent with Wayne's model. They also draw a picture of how the backlash against feminism and feminist goals is drawing directly from and feeding into feminism's own therapiizing and professionalizing of male-violence. By examining FMS discourse in this manner my intention, again, is not to be drawn into the binary arguments of the FMS debate over so called "false memories" but, rather, to illustrate the ways in which the feminist movement's own over-focus on therapy and the creation of a service industry dedicated to the outface of violence against women is facilitating the continuance of this violence.

The Backlash Logic of FMS Discourse

Wayne (1995) argues for a recognizable pattern in the logic of backlash: (a) to divert attention from the reality of equitable advances; (b) to position the oppressed as victims of violence they themselves create and to reposition the perpetrators as victims of that violence; (c) to misrepresent a subordinated group's intentions as anti-democratic and anti-progressive; (d) to punish the group
seeking equality with disenfranchisement and threatened or actual violence. How then does FMS discourse fit this pattern of operation.

**A. Diversion**

FMS discourse focuses on and feeds into society's investment in a therapeutic response to male violence. It does so by constructing a crisis that centers on this therapeutic response to a particular form of male violence that is incest. More specifically, it constructs a crisis that centers on feminism's therapeutic response to incest. FMS discourse constructs a crisis—the crisis of bad therapy—that diverts attention from the real, more sustained and more volatile crisis—the crisis of a society confronted by the contradictions inherent in women's existence within patriarchal democracy.

As a result of the work done by feminists, western societies have been forced to acknowledge (at some level anyway) the existence of male violence against women, its prevalence, its roots in male privilege and power (patriarchy) and its impact on women and society in general. Male violence against women is endemic and although the feminist movement has had little impact directly on ending male violence (i.e., male violence is as prevalent or growing depending on the statistics you read), there has been an important perceptual shift in the public understanding of male violence. This, then, is the real crisis: the gap between the perceptual shift in acknowledging the existence of male violence against women in its various forms (rape, childhood rape, violence against women in relationships,
etc.) and acknowledging the "reality" that is implied by this violence—that male power is institutionally, structurally entrenched in every aspect of our society and that this power of men over women is expressed in/through violence. We "know" as a society about male violence against women and according to the democratic values and principles in which we, as a society, are invested, we abhor this violence. At the same time, in order to truly believe this reality we must then act on those principles and values to change it. Herein lies the dilemma, because in order to end male violence against women, society is faced with the necessity of ending the power imbalance from which this violence erupts and through which it is sustained; in other words society is confronted with putting an end to patriarchy. This is the true crisis, because those in power never willingly give up that power, whatever the rhetoric or platitudes that are delivered to that effect. 

*FMS* discourse inserts itself at this point, as a discourse designed to redirect society's gaze to an imagined/constructed crisis, that of the epidemic of false memories and dangerous therapy. Within this imaginary crisis, male violence (incest in this case) is acknowledged but is no longer located at the center of the storm, rather it is incidental to the crisis evoked by a "wrongful" response to the violence, that is feminism and feminist therapy.

The binary themes of "good" versus "bad" therapy that abound in the FMSF literature, then, are examples of these diversion tactics.
(i) Therapy: A good idea as long as it keeps ‘em quiet.

In FMS discourse, therapy or psychotherapy as a general principle is presented as a good thing, “an essential service” for women (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, May, p.1) which needs to meet publicly set safety standards in much the same way as “medicine...our water supply or...any needed services “ (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, July/August, p.1). This support for therapy may at first seem incongruent with the very apparent and focused attack on therapy and therapists within FMS discourse, but it is clear throughout the FMSF newsletters that psychotherapy’s merit depends upon it meeting a strict set of expectations which, by definition, exclude feminist therapy and therapeutic aims. The psychologizing and professionalizing of violence against women is not itself critiqued within FMS discourse. This framing of violence against women as a therapeutic issue rather than a legal/criminal one is congruent with the guiding principle of keeping families together and the status quo (i.e., men in power over women) intact. Therapy (the result of psychologizing and professionalizing) is seen as a necessary response not to male violence but rather to women’s difficulties finding happiness; women are constructed as the problem and therapy as the appropriate means of helping them work within the existing system. In order to present therapy in this way, however, therapy must be divided into specific categories which allow for the dismissal of the feminist approaches which have led to (or at least encouraged) women’s entering into legal challenges to male violence.
Therapy then, in the context of FMSF discourse, is divided into “good therapy” and “bad therapy”. The parameters of what constitutes “good therapy” or “bad therapy” are spelled out in FMSF discourse both directly and indirectly, through articles discussing the merits or dangers of certain courses of therapy and certain therapists; through letters written by contributors who either describe their own experiences of therapy or describe the emotional and practical outfall of the therapy that their daughter/granddaughter/sister has engaged in; and through reviews of academic articles and books which examine specific techniques or modes of therapy from a “scientific” perspective.

(ii) Good Therapy

Several writers make what I consider a good case for a brief (emphasis in original) course of professional counseling at the time of reentry to the family. It hardly seems necessary to say—but I will—that the chosen therapist should not be one who will practice what one commentator called “hokum therapy”: no alters, no rooting around for buried abuse. The goal of the counseling should be simply to help the family and the child rejoin. (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.9)

In FMS discourse, then, “good” therapy is seen as having very specific goals that are congruent with the maintenance of a patriarchal social structure that is founded on the continuance of the nuclear, heterosexual, patriarchal family as the inviolate foundation of all that is good and right. The definition of “good” is very much predicated on the basic tenets of modern day liberal ideology; that is, “good” is defined as that which supports the status quo in a rational, objective, apolitical way. This is the modern understanding of science and indeed, science is
seen as the primary means of separating what is good therapy from what is bad therapy.

How is belief in repression (the kind of repression theory that allows for memories of space alien abduction, past lives and intergenerational satanic conspiracies) different from belief in astrology? It will be different only if scientific reasoning and empirical testing apply. (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, November, p.2)

Therapy that qualifies under the rubric "scientific" is therapy that is grounded in the rules of scientific inquiry and the established hierarchies of the social sciences. Psychiatry, therefore, is privileged above all other forms of therapy because it is based in a medical/scientific model of mental health. When psychiatrists go wrong it is because they have wandered too far from this medical model -- "The trouble with too many psychiatrists is that they forget they're physicians..." (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.12) -- but on the whole psychiatry is a safer model of therapy because it entails diagnosis and labeling that adheres to strictly monitored guidelines (in the form of the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual) and that arises from 'objective' scientific inquiry. Next on the hierarchy is psychology/psychotherapy, a field that is hierarchically ordered with experimental, behavioral and cognitive psychological theories (the traditionally valorized areas of psychology) privilege because, again, of their grounding in empirical scientific research and a mechanistic/medical understanding of human behavior. Bottoming out the list within psychology are clinical and applied psychology, based as they are, in clinical observation (as opposed to controlled
lab experimentation) which, in this discourse is equated with a valorizing of
intuition over fact, belief over science. Further, the downfall of clinical and applied
psychology, and those mental health professions that lie even further down the
hierarchy of what is good (i.e., social work, counselling), is attributed to a recent
decline in standards that not uncoincidentally corresponds with the influx of
women into mental health professions and academic psychology and the
development of women-centered and feminist psychological theories and
practices.

The whole field of clinical psychology and applied psychology, social
work and the related disciplines has gone downhill in the last 10-20 years.
Social work was never there. These people have no business being in that
endeavor...You get all these weak people gathering together, talking to each
other, promoting folklore and mythology, never having understood science.
They are the people, unfortunately, who are doing this. There are more and
more of them. They are doing extreme destruction to families, to children,
to their relatives, to their parents, to society. (Morris, 1992, cited in
FMSF Newsletter, 1992)

By identifying the post 70’s time period (beginning of 2nd wave feminism), and
by using adjectives most typically used to describe women, “weak people” who
gather together to “talk” and who never understood science, the author identifies
women, and more specifically feminists, as the reason for this decline in standards
without ever having to name them.

(iii) Bad Therapy

Bad therapy, by definition within this discourse then, is unscientific and
political (premised on the modern notion that science is objective and apolitical, as
opposed to the feminist understanding of science as based in the unexamined and unquestioned biases and assumptions of the dominant ideology). Again, feminist therapy is automatically suspect based as it is in an explicit political ideology and in clinical observation and experience, in the storying of women’s lives, in a questioning of science and male-based psychological theories, and a challenging of the traditional hierarchies of legitimation that the FMS discourse supports.

When this belief that the “narrative truth” is sufficient gets mixed with the politics of feminism, however, we get a cauldron in which false memories of incest and false accusations may bubble to the surface. (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, June, p. 2)

...there is an abundance of appropriate research studies, and these studies should be the foundation of psychotherapy and should override intuition, clinical experience, political posturing and personal bias. (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.10)

Although in early newsletters, feminist therapy was directly identified as the example of “bad therapy” (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, July, p.2; 1993, January), it is rarely identified directly in later examples of FMS discourse, but rather is identified by inference either through tying a therapeutic approach to an identified feminist academic such as Judith Herman (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, February & June, p.1) or by referring to the use of specific feminist therapeutic texts such as The Courage to Heal (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.12; 1994, May, p. 3), or through referring to the general connection between the feminist movement and the incest survivor movement (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, October, p.13; 1994, September, p.3-4).
Feminist therapy, then, is dismissed as a therapeutic approach and rather identified as a political movement with a common dogma and a unifying set of therapeutic techniques. As with the label FMS, itself a construction of the FMSF, feminist therapy is generally referred to by a label that is again a construction of the FMSF. The *Recovered Memory Movement* and *Recovered Memory Therapy* are catchall phrases that the FMSF use to lump all therapy with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse together. More importantly though, they are a way of referring to the “women’s movement” and other social justice movements (what they and others call the political correctness movement) without actually doing so.

Pendergrast thoughtfully addresses the question of why the Recovered Memory Movement should be occurring right now. He delineates its relation to the Women’s Movement, to the current enthusiasm for identifying oneself as a victim, and to the present day notions of “Political Correctness.” (book review in FMSF Newsletter, 1994, October, p.13)

Like the term, *FMS*, then, the term *RMT* is a construction of the FMSF and does not exist outside of *FMS* discourse; it is an oblique way of referring to the work done by feminist and other therapists working with and believing women who have memories of childhood sexual abuse that arise either before or during therapy. In this way, the FMSF is able to critique feminist therapy and the feminist movement without appearing to be anti-feminist [they also quote women who claim to be feminists and who support the FMSF position (see for example, FMSF Newsletter, 1994, June, p.1)]. Therapy that includes a belief in the possibility of women remembering childhood sexual abuse is repeatedly vilified as
“unscientific” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, November, p. 2); or “pseudoscience” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.1); as relying on a “closed system of logic” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, July, p.1); and as “hokum” (FMSF Newsletter, 1992). Survivor checklists presented in such books as The Courage to Heal are equated with the checklists used to identify witches in the Inquisitions Malleus Malleficarum. Therapists who work with adult survivors of incest are referred to as “acolytes of the Movement (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, October, p.13) and as “a new kind of sexual predator” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.10).

“Recovered Memory Therapy”, the FMSF code word for feminist therapy, is presented as a religious cult with a ball-busting, man-hating feminist agenda:

...no conventionally oriented religion, nor any standard psychotherapy, isolates the bulk of its adherents from the outside world, or urges general severance of family contacts. (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.9).

There is one prominent psychiatrist who recommends The Courage to Heal not only to patients but to the world. Judith Herman, M.D. (emphasis in original)...Are we to believe that the Bass and Davis advice: making menacing gestures, visualize revenge, see them suffer, beaten him to a pulp, demolished him, dream of murder or castration, be glad he is dead, spit on his grave is Dr. Herman's recommended feminist alternative? (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.3-4)

[the] Courage to Heal (Bass and Davis, Harper and Row, 1988) has been referred to as the Bible of the Incest-Memory Recovery Movement. We feel that this book is a political statement that preaches anger and revenge. (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, April)

More conventional, or acceptable, psychological theories and practices are likewise dismissed when they are applied to therapeutic work with incest
survivors. Trauma theory, which enjoys a certain legitimacy as a theory applicable to incest survivors (as a result of feminist theorizing and lobbying) and which is related to issues arising from incest in the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual IV (otherwise positively referred to in FMS discourse as a scientific and therefore legitimate tool) is dismissed in FMS discourse as voguish (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, November, p.1). It is also suggested that the appeal of trauma theory within the mental health field (as it relates to incest) arises from a set of beliefs that they premise as faulty: a belief that childhood sexual abuse is common; a belief in the client and her story; the need to establish a therapeutic relationship; contextual thinking which includes an analysis of power in relationships; and a belief in the recovery movement. While the text does not identify these as components of a feminist approach to therapy, they quite clearly are and they once again define, in an oblique way, feminist therapy as "bad therapy".

In this discourse, feminist therapy is further judged to be guilty by association of being unscientific because it constructs women as clients of a service rather than patients within a medical system. Within FMS discourse, bad therapy is that therapy which has drifted from the medical model. Describing clients as "patients", referring to therapy as a medical procedure or product, and emphasizing the need for a bio-psychological understanding of the brain and memory sets up a model for "good therapy," which automatically frames a
feminist approach as “bad therapy” because it does not medicalize women and the issues women bring into therapy.

(B) Victim reversal

Within FMS discourse, women are framed as victims not of male violence, but of feminist violence in the form of feminist therapy. Feminist therapists are constructed as the source of the problem and, hence, the focus of the attack. This collateral attack allows FMS proponents to avoid being seen to attack victims of incest, and instead position themselves alongside those women, as consanguine victims of a common enemy, the feminist therapist and, more generally the feminist movement. Proponents of FMS discourse can simultaneously stake the moral high-ground of decrying incest while excusing themselves from any possibility of culpability by virtue of their class and race positioning (how could anyone believe that a fine, upstanding, white, middle class man would violate his daughter) and by making the victims the perpetrators. Women who step out of line, whether they are therapists or the women who accuse their fathers/stepfathers, etc., women who blow the whistle on male violence, are causing the violence they experience. Women in this discourse (those that step out of line, because those that do not are valorized in this discourse as courageous mothers, suffering sisters, ethical feminists) are either virgins—that is the unwitting and naive victims of feminism, without the insight or constitution to withstand the brainwashing of feminist therapy; or they are whores—the unprofessional,
unscientific man-hating, feminist therapists building their financial empires through the victimization of men. Furthermore, men are constructed as the true victims of this violence (the violence arising from feminism) --the innocent victims of their daughter's assaults (and through their daughters, the assault of a political movement unfairly, undemocratically out to get them).

(i) The Villains: Bad Therapists and Vindictive Daughters

In as much as FMS discourse presents a critique of feminist therapy, it also willingly appropriates feminist critiques of therapy/psychology, in particular to construct the "bad therapist". Radical feminist critiques construct therapy as oppressive and exploitive of women. Within the FMS discourse the feminist analysis of the power imbalance within the therapeutic relationship is appropriated (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, October, p.3) and used to construct therapists as being "powerfully influential" especially when working with women who are constructed as "vulnerable" clients (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.10).

"Bad therapists" are presented as those therapists (primarily women) whose belief in the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse and in their clients and their stories/memories results in any kind of private, public, legal challenging of the innocence of their parents. They are compared to advertisers and politicians (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.2) who, through their belief in the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse, trivialize child abuse (FMSF Newsletter, 1994,
September, p.1). They are constructed alternatively as “well-meaning therapists using inappropriate techniques” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.11); as “completely lacking in critical faculties” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, October, p.12); as “true believers”, “acolytes of the Movement” (FMSF 1994, October, p.13); and even as the “new kind of sexual predator” (FMSF 1994, September, p.10). Because they rely on clinical experience to guide them, they are equated with “lobotomists”, “[w]itch doctors” and “astrologers” (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, p.2). They are blamed for inserting ideas/memories of childhood sexual abuse in their clients’ heads (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.12) by using an apparently uniform set of questionable, and unethical techniques that are responsible for the destruction of families, weight loss and high blood pressure (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, December, p.6), insomnia (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, March, p.9), heart attacks (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.12) cancer (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, April, p.13) and even death (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.11):

She was hypnotized and put on antidepressants. Everything fell apart for Brennan. She was unable to take care of her children, hired a nanny, almost lost her business, drove her husband to the verge of leaving home. At her therapist’s insistence, she wrote a letter to her parents laying out the charges and saying they couldn’t see her or the grandkids again. Her father had a stroke after reading the letter. “My therapist said, ‘That’s a ploy. That’s what they all do.’” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.7) The memories were false but they were real to her. She was the victim of the cruelest form of malpractice—an incompetent therapist. (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, March, p.9)
Bad therapists, in this discourse, are presented as less likely to have professional qualifications (i.e., academic degrees) or even when they do, they are more likely to be referred to as "a therapist", or by name than by title, for example "Mignon Lawless of Norwalk, who is Ursula's therapist" (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, March, p.2). According to an FMSF survey, qualifications are structured in a descending hierarchy with those most likely to be associated with "implanting false memories" described as "counselors/therapists - religious, alcohol, family", and those least likely to do so, described as "psychiatrists/doctors". The hierarchy of qualifications is gendered, in that, although unstated in the discourse, women comprise a much larger component of the less legitimate categories of counsellors and social workers. Additionally, therapists are most often identified as women (within letters and news items that are printed in the FMSF newsletters) who are either vindictive man-haters (read: feminists) or potential victims themselves, of the feminist movement, of a poorly regulated profession, and of an educational system promoting misguided assumptions and practices in a variety of versions of insight-oriented psychotherapies (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, May, p.1; 1994, October, p.7). This credential hierarchy also incorporates a strong class bias: "What are credentials? Chuck Noah, also of Seattle is a retired construction worker who recently applied for and received an RMHC [Registered Mental Health Counselor] credential" (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, February, p.6).
Just as therapists are divided into good and bad, so too are the accusing daughters. The “bad daughter/granddaughter/sister”, as with one version of the bad therapist, is the whore, the money-grubbing, ungrateful product of hardworking, God fearing, middle-class folk. These are the women who can no longer be constructed as the unwitting dupes of bad therapists. These women, often in their 30s, educated and the product of middle-class homes, are described as ungrateful narcissists (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, August/September, p.11), hostile feminists (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, June, p.7), cruel and obsessive (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, May, p.11) and vindictive (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.15).

(ii) The Heroes: Good Therapists and Recanting Daughters

So who are the good therapists in this discourse? Good ones obviously adhere to a vision of therapy that fits the “good therapy” definitions of FMS discourse already discussed. Good therapists are more likely to be men (according to a report cited in FMSF Newsletter, 1992, October, p.3, the majority of women therapists see themselves as survivors of abuse and their clinical work is therefore suspect as being biased and unreliable) or at least women who are not feminists, who base their practice in a medical or scientific model, who rely on research evidence and the provable facts of a client/patient’s history, and whose work functions to maintain/sustain families and the status quo. Furthermore, good therapists are those who support the FMSF and the notion of FMS and bad therapists are those whose work with sexual abuse survivors results in divided
families. "We do, however, expect an accounting from those therapists who have cruelly alienated children and grandchildren from their families and who have ruthlessly ruined the reputation and lives of thousands of people" (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, October, p.3).

To qualify as a good therapist it is also a necessary but not sufficient requirement to have academic credentials and, as stated earlier, the higher up the academic ladder those credentials lie, the more likely a practitioner is to qualify as good. Despite credentials however, clinical psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists are always suspect in this discourse because those who work clinically are always constructed as less informed, less capable of objective expertise, than those who remain removed from the fray (and the influence of emotions) within academic research.

More specifically, a good therapist/practitioner is one who supports FMS discourse and, more specifically, the FMSF. While bad therapists are most often referred to as "her therapist", good therapists are referred to in general terms as those who investigate and interrogate the information a client brings, searching for corroboration in order to pursue the "truth" in therapy (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.7).

In amongst the heroes of the FMS tales are the recanting daughter and the ever-hopeful, ever-patient, ever-concerned family. The recanters or retractors are "troubled women" who through their relationship with a therapist, have "seized
upon sexual abuse as an explanation for everything that was wrong with [their] life” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, February, p. 12). Within FMS discourse, retractors enjoy a special status which separates them from those daughters and granddaughters who resume family contact but remain suspect because they do not retract, do not “mention that they were really duped” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, March, p. 8). Their retractions, while not really heroic, are valorized because they so clearly undermine the credibility of other women who accuse their fathers of abuse and underscore the FMSF’s contention that “false memories” of abuse are common and are induced through therapy. There is even a Retractor Group and quarterly publication. Retractors tend to either speak in the first person of their experiences before, during, and after therapy, or they are referred to by, most typically, their mothers. Their tales are victim tales, characterized by their sense of anger at the therapists who involved them in “toxic therapy” (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, January, p. 14) and “ripped away” years of their and their families’ lives (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p. 12).

The accused Dads and the women that support them are the central figures in FMS discourse. Theirs is the victim/hero role, at once the saddened, beleaguered, victims of a hateful smear campaign, and the courageous champion of his class, fighting for justice, truth, the family, and all the institutions of white, middle-class patriarchy: the family, the law, science, medicine, and the Christian church. Webb (1996) provides a comprehensive overview of how accused fathers are constructed
as hero/victims in *FMS* discourse. She identifies their multiple roles as “Big Daddy, the patriarchal hero of conservative ideology” speaking either as “an accused father or elite professional” (p. 76); “Dear Old Dad” or “grandpa….the elderly man that sits in stark contrast to the stereotype of the rapist” (p. 80), the “Devastated Dad” and “Death Bed Dad” whose health deteriorates sometimes to an untimely death because of his desperate suffering as a result of the accusations (p. 81); and “Sensitive New Age Dad” who is sensitive and affectionate and “knows how it feels to be raped because he feels ‘violated’ by his daughter’s accusations (p. 83).

(iii) The Experts and the Charlatans

Throughout *FMS* discourse authority and expertise are granted in very specific and strategic ways. At one level emerges a cast of players whose names appear and reappear frequently throughout the discourse. These names are granted credibility by virtue of their connection with science, and, of course, because of their outspoken support of the concept of *FMS* and of the FMSF. Members of the FMSF “Scientific and Professional Advisory Board” present an impressive array of academic credentials and associations, and their names are frequently invoked in the discourse as scholars, experts, concerned citizens, and caring individuals, but above all, scientists.

“Good” scholars include psychologists and psychiatrists who support the *FMS* discourse, in particular, cognitive psychologists whose work is focused on
memory. Although those who challenge FMS discourse have their qualifications dissected and contextualized, the qualifications of those who support FMS discourse are used strategically as a measure of unquestionable esteem. They are referred to both by their academic titles, "Roland Salafiea, a psychology professor...specializing in memory"; Thomas Guthiel, M.D. Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical and School and Co-Director, Program in Psychiatry and the Law...." (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, March, p.11), and by the litany of superlatives that are used to describe their work as in, "Read and Lindsay’s responses to the critics is masterly and strong..."(FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.1), and, referring to a book by Richard Gardner (a FMSF Advisory Board member) the work is described alternately as "a comprehensive piece of elegant, readable scholarship..." or “an intellectual tour de force” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, October, p.12) [emphasis in original].

Although books critical of FMS discourse are described as “pop-psychology” and as “best sellers”, books that are pro-FMSF are described as being valuable scholarship (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, June, p.3), or as being “brilliantly reported” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, January, p.8). Books used in therapy with survivors are referred to as “bibles of repressed memory” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, May, p.2) and are likened to the lists used to identify witches in the 15th Century (p. 3). Although supporters of the FMSF are encouraged to keep current with the scholarship about memory, therapy, and FMS, and to be
open to “all perspectives”; they are simultaneously discouraged from bothering to read the articles critical of FMS and FMSF, which are dismissed as pejorative, and divisive (FMSF, Newsletter, 1994, May, p.3).

In this way, the pro-FMS position and the anti-FMS positions are juxtaposed around the axis of science, pro-FMS being framed as grounded in a male framework of science and therefore objectivity, truth, and, ultimately (and somewhat ironically given the reliance on a distinction between religion and science) God. The disembodied voice of reason is invoked throughout FMS discourse as a rhetorical strategy (grounded in science) that invests ultimate, God-like authority (without accountability) in the text and leads the uncritical reader of FMSF newsletters to accept the “reason” and “logic” of the pro-FMS position. Those who challenge FMS discourse, women, are dismissed as unscientific, “romantics...infatuated with their own thought” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, January, p.2) or as believers and uncritical thinkers, invested in an unscientific or ideological position. This position is likened to a religious belief, but a religious belief that is cult-like, and, therefore not at all synonymous with the religious beliefs of FMSF supporters who are frequently identified by their investment in Christianity. The survivor literature, as stated previously, is referred to as “bibles”, which unlike the “god-narrative” of the pro-FMS position, relies directly on the modern investment in the distinction between state and church wherein the
state is equated with science and authority, and the church with belief and, therefore, no authority.

(C) Bad intentions

The science/religion dichotomy that is used to distinguish the experts from the charlatans, is further extended within FMS discourse to support their contention that the feminist agenda is anti-democratic and totalitarian. This is particularly evident in the numerous references within the FMSF literature to witches and witch hunts.

Witch hunts can and do happen and the definition of “witch” is culturally determined. In times past, many treatises were published on the signs and symptoms of witches. Now we have books on the signs and symptoms of “abusers.” Do many books about a topic make it so? (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, August/September, p.8)

To accuse people and then to deny them reasonable means of defending themselves is a “witch hunt.” We believe that under the conditions that have been described, it is prudent to believe that the accused are innocent unless proven guilty (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, June, p.1)

Sex abuse hysteria is real. It really is a witch-hunt,” said a reporter. We agreed with each of them. (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, August/September, p.7)

Webb (1996) explores the use of the witch hunt metaphor as a “power-inversion” strategy designed to frame women as both witches and witch-hunters:

...the witch hunts of the 16th and 17th century were an attempt to secure a white male monopoly on psychomedical expertise by demonizing centuries of women’s knowledge in the name of science...In the counter-victim flip of FMS discourse, witch hunts no longer signify the murder of women in the service of men’s desire to monopolize and professionalize medicine. Instead it is the middle class professional men who are witch
hunted for wanting to maintain their medical and psychotherapeutic monopoly over women. (Webb, 1996, p. 63)

Although men "falsely" accused of childhood sexual abuse are constructed as the victims of this witch hunt, denied fair trial and condemned on superstition, they are never constructed as witches but rather as the Christian martyrs sacrificed for upholding their faith in patriarchy. It is therapists who are simultaneously constructed as witches and inquisitors; they are referred to as "secular priests" (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, August/September, p. 7), stirring a cauldron of false memories and accusations (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, June, p. 2) and invested with witch-like powers of persuasion within therapy, while at the same time being constructed as witch-hunters, invested with the omnipotence of the Inquisitors of the 16th Century, like them acting as judge and jury of the men their clients accuse.

The notion that feminism is an anti-democratic movement is furthered in the FMS discourse through the analogy to McCarthyism, a strategy similar to the use of the witch-hunt metaphor. FMSF and its supporters are framed as fighters for social justice in the face of a McCarthy-like attack on men which employs, "guilt by association" (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, June, p.3). Interestingly enough again, there is a similar inversion of the analogy: the McCarthy hearings attacked people and portrayed them as threat to democracy because of their allegiance to (or assumed allegiance to) a minority party, the communist party. In FMS
discourse, feminists are charged with being anti-democratic, but it is men who are
painted as being the victims of a McCarthy-like attack (FMSF Newsletter, 1995,
October, p.1).

Feminism, as with therapy in this discourse, is represented both as a good
thing, having managed to raise society’s awareness of the problem of violence
against women, and a bad thing, having gone overboard by attacking the middle-
class male and the family. Feminism is represented, not as a social justice
movement, but rather as an anti-justice, anti-equity movement espousing a
“politics of hysteria” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.6). Feminist therapists
are accused of being man-haters (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.4)
encouraging women to “blame everything on fathers, husbands, or men in general--
whoever failed to love them enough” (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.5) and of
being bullies advancing feminist objectives (FMSF Newsletters, 1995, April, p.9).
FMS is described as a “hate disease spread by toxic [feminist] therapists and now
ravaging and laying waste to the love that once bound our families” (FMSF
Newsletter, 1994, February, p.10).

The feminist movement is framed as a totalitarian movement with a
“totalistic view of child sex abuse” (FMSF Newsletter, 1993, October, p.2) whose
aim is not only to pervert democracy but to destroy the very fabric of democracy,
the family. Feminism and its agents, feminist therapists, are engaging in
“familiscide” (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, March, p.9)--the ultimate destruction of
the family (a term applied in this discourse only to the Christian, heterosexual, middle-class, patriarchal family).

They [feminist therapists] are doing extreme destruction to families, to children, to their relatives, to their parents, to society. It's frightening. (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, April, p.3)

By contrast, FMSF supporters are presented as reasonable, cooperative, liberal thinkers (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, January, p.3), highly educated, stable, and financially successful professionals (FMSF Newsletter, 1992, May, p.2). This kind of construction plays on the classist and racist stereotypes of "the rapist" to set up the innocence of the accused on the basis of their class positioning and race. It also sets up an opposition between FMSF supporters, as the ultimate, middle-class, upholders of family values and morals, in contrast to the women and their supporters (feminist therapists) who accuse them and who are clearly anti-family, class-traitors.

(D) The Threats

The fourth move of backlash logic is to "punish the group seeking equality" through disenfranchisement and actual and threatened violence. Obviously, as women living in patriarchy feminists already live with this reality, doubly so perhaps because they do speak out publicly and act against their oppression. FMS discourse, as a specific backlash discourse, contains its own specific threats to women which build on these already existing themes. Therapists, specifically feminist therapists (be they men or women) are
threatened with further economic and social disenfranchisement through the courts. In each FMSF newsletter there are discussions of legal cases. As Webb (1996) points out, the Legal Decisions section of the newsletters has grown over the past 4 years of these newsletters, primarily because of the coverage of civil and criminal litigation employing FMS arguments in support of accused men, and supporting civil suits against therapists.

The FMSF reports that more than 200 lawsuits have been filed against therapists on the basis of FMS arguments with damages sought ranging from $80,000 to $5 million. Therapists are being sued for failing to obtain a “proper history” (corroboration of sexual abuse) prior to treatment, using memory enhancement techniques without seeking independent corroboration, and failing to obtain informed consent by not warning women about the potential for false memories (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, July/August, p.3, as cited in Webb, 1996). [emphasis and quotations in original].

In addition to this economic (and social) threat (the suits and the career damage arising from a suit) therapists, again by implication feminist therapists, are framed as the legitimate targets of anger, presumably however that anger is expressed (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, April, p.12). Additionally, women, and society in general, are threatened with the spectre of “real” child abuse going unpunished because of the focus on these “false” accusations of child abuse— that “false accusations deter efforts to help children by deflecting scarce resources and undermining credibility” (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, October, p.1). In this way feminist therapists and their clients are framed as contributing to the continuance of abuse; this can be seen to be an implicit threat of additional social
disenfranchisement because of the potential public approbation of such women (either therapists or their clients). Finally, in a society that espouses therapy as a necessary avenue of healing/happiness, and that proposes that women are most in need of such help, FMS discourse, threatens women with the loss of this avenue to "health" by encouraging them to believe that therapy is potentially dangerous to them and their way of life because of an epidemic of charlatans with a political agenda.

In addition to these specific threats, the general threat to society is intensified through the language used to describe FMS. Throughout this discourse there is a clear intention to create a sense that there is a widespread crisis, a "world health problem" spreading from continent to continent and threatening the moral and legal fabric of democracy (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, July/August, p.2): emotional language and evocative descriptors such as "epidemic", "cult" and "hysteria" are used to generate the notion that FMS as a fearful plague. FMS is described as a "run away phenomenon" resulting in "disaster" (FMSF Newsletter, 1994, September, p.1). Pictures are evoked of child abuse perpetrated in the name of false accusations by the very people society has set in place to protect children:

Horror stories of young children held hostage by over-zealous child protective workers emerged...Not only was Nikko at one time kept for hours with only naked 'anatomically correct' dolls for play, in another segment he could be heard begging to go to sleep as an interviewer kept badgering him (FMSF Newsletter, 1995, July/August, p.2).
Feminist therapy is described by the problematized phrase “social movement” as a condemnation of its political agenda and as a means of implying that great numbers of people are involved, hence, intensifying the threat. The overall purpose of this crisis construction is to fear-monger and to target, not men as the threat, but women: believe these women who accuse us at your own risk and at the peril of society as we know it.
**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOMAN</td>
<td>In her 30s. Successful, middle-class, educated, white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMAN #2</td>
<td>In her 30s. Successful, middle-class, educated, white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTHER</td>
<td>In her late 50s. Middle-class, white, conservatively dressed. A successful professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATHER</td>
<td>In his early sixties. Middle-class, white, conservatively dressed. A successful professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRANDMOTHER</td>
<td>In her 70s. Middle-class, white, conservatively-dressed. A real ‘grandma’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRANDFATHER</td>
<td>In his 70s. Middle-class, white, conservatively-dressed. A real ‘grandpa’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHORUS OF EXPERTS</td>
<td>Group of 3-5 men and women. All dressed in ways that clearly identify them as professionals (suits). Theirs is the voice of science, reason and logic. They are interchangeable throughout the play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOICE OF AUTHORITY</td>
<td>Disembodied male voice. Authoritative, calm, rational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILD THERAPIST</td>
<td>Young girl, perhaps 5-8 years old. Never speaks. Woman, in her 30s. Middle-class, educated, white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JURY</td>
<td>Eleven women and men: a mix of ages. Includes media, academics, “regular Josephine’s and Joes”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTIONER</td>
<td>Woman, in her 30s. Middle class, educated, white.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACT ONE

The action all takes place on a raked stage. The scenery gestures towards a mix between a courtroom and a living room - a stylized representation. The judges chair, stands empty, upstage center. The jury is down stage. The therapist sits in the witness stand throughout the play. The jury is in place before the audience enters and they remain there for the entire play. The child, once she enters, sits, cross-legged, in the middle of the room. The action takes place around her but she is never acknowledged.

The stage, at first, is dimly lit.

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:

Freud discovered the Source of the Nile of Neuropathology...and then he dammed/dammed it.

The Unconscious...seat of the libido, site of repression, home to Oedipus and Electra. Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.

EXPERT:

The connection between a history of childhood sexual trauma and psychological disturbance later in life was first proposed by Sigmond Freud almost a century ago. He theorized that what was then called women’s hysteria, was caused by father perpetrated rape during childhood. He later disavowed the theory because he found it impossible to believe the degree of sexual abuse of girls by their fathers could be so prevalent as the theory implied. In its place he proposed that such symptoms arose from repressed sexual desires for the opposite sex parent - the Oedipal complex. These desires were stronger in girls, he proposed, and hence the preponderance of adult women presenting symptoms in therapy.

(During this speech, the young girl enters the stage. She looks around the room and then silently sits in the middle of the stage, where she will remain for the rest of the play.)
REST OF THE EXPERTS:
(The experts chant this in unison underneath the individual Expert as he/she presents his/her speech)


EXPERT:
Adults who were sexually abused as children are increasingly entering therapy in order to resolve long-standing issues related to their abuse.

Members of this treatment population may manifest emotional and psychological symptoms that are indicative of post-traumatic stress syndrome. Women are over-represented in this population. Research indicates that the risk of sexual victimization is highest for girls, and that fathers and father surrogates are the most frequent perpetrators.

REST OF THE EXPERTS:
(The experts chant this in unison underneath the individual Expert as he/she presents his/her speech)

Repressed sexual fantasies expressing themselves in an etiology of hysterical symptoms: Anorexia, Bulimia Nervosa, Self-defeating personality disorder, Dependent personality disorder, Depersonalization disorder, Histrionic personality disorder, Borderline personality disorder, Post-traumatic stress disorder, Depression, Anxiety, Sexual Dysfunction, addictions.

(The lights come up all the way. The Experts move to the side of the stage. The Questioner enters. Throughout the play, she moves around the stage to question the individual players. Only she responds to the Voice of Authority.

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
It's been happening for at least five-thousand years. Researchers have documented evidence of practices within the early Christian communities, in Biblical times, during the Greek and Roman eras and right on down through the ages. The fact is, there are strict taboos and prohibitions against incest in most cultures.
QUESTIONER:
Why did Freud change his mind? Why isn't it called rape? Why are we still talking about how to prove it instead of how to stop it?

EXPERT:
A good deal of the current hysteria about child abuse is propagated by people with a vested interest in denigrating the family.

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
They call it the collective hysteria of child abuse.

QUESTIONER:
Collective hysteria of child abuse?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
Collective: as in, acting in cooperation. Jung spoke of the collective unconscious - a part of the unconscious mind incorporating patterns of memories, instincts and experiences common to all humans.

Hysteria: as in a mental disorder associated with women and characterized by emotional outbursts. It is derived from early Greek, meaning “the rising of the womb”. Early Greek physicians believed the womb rose up and wandered in the body causing medical and psychological problems.

Child: as in a boy or a girl between birth and puberty - a person or thing regarded as the product of an environment.

Abuse: as in to use incorrectly or improperly. To maltreat or misuse.

QUESTIONER:
(Turns to face the audience. Her tone through the next part is more conversational.)

I have this picture in my mind. A Heronimus Bosch like picture of waves of, shock waves of women, being chased by, chasing their wombs, their fanatical wombs, wandering wombs, collectively disordered wombs, products of their environment wombs, misused and maltreated wombs, rising up against them. A mass of migrating women, cooperating...to what end?
Why this sudden migration? (Pause) Why is this idea so disconcerting, so frightening?

(Her tone changes again as she poses her next question to the Voice)

Why the resurrection of a term applied almost exclusively to women, by men, to explain behavior deemed to be unacceptable for women, by men?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
They're hysterical.

QUESTIONER:
(Directing her questions to the audience)
What does it mean to see these women, middle-class women, women in their 30s women, cooperating women, collectively acting women as scary women? mad women? To whom is this scary? Why? Why now?

I have this other picture in my mind. It’s a poster on my refrigerator of women marching... “women are everywhere” it says, marching women, angry women, women taking-back-the-night women, women rising up with their wombs, with each other.

How are these two pictures connected? More importantly, I guess, who gets to say? Who decides what is true and what is false? And who decides that that is the question we should be asking?

EXPERT:
There is a great deal of discrepancy in the statistics on childhood sexual abuse. Research indicates the rate of occurrence of childhood sexual abuse may be as low as 6% or as high as 20% of the female population.

EXPERT:
Memory is a tenuous thing, without corroboration who can say what is true?

EXPERT:
The False Memory Syndrome Foundation was established in 1992 by Dr. Pamela Freyd, after their adult daughter, Dr. Jennifer Freyd, privately confronted them with her memories of having been sexually abused as a child by her father, Peter Freyd. In response to their daughter’s allegations, the Freyd’s joined with other accused parents and medical
health professionals who supported the notion of “false memories of sexual abuse” to form what they describe as a parent’s support and advocacy group.

QUESTIONER:
So what is this foundation, what is this “syndrome”?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
False Memory Syndrome.
False: As in not in accordance with the truth or the facts. Deceptive. Based on mistaken or irrelevant ideas or facts.

QUESTIONER:
True/False.
Binary opposites in a circle. What you say is either true or it is false. It either happened, or it didn’t. Where’s the beginning and the end of this circle of absolutes. And what exactly are we circling?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
Memory: A simulacra of our past experiences. How we construct our selves, our herstory. The function involved in living past experiences.

QUESTIONER:
Who gets to say how we construct ourselves? I mean, does my construction have to be the same as yours? Who’s gets to be real? And what would it mean to live in someone else’s construction?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
Syndrome: A collection of related symptoms. From the Greek ‘Sundrome’: to run together.

QUESTIONER:
Ah yes, the migration. I hadn’t forgotten. All those running women. Women as sick, women. Needing to change women. Women running from what I wonder? Or to what? And those marching women are still marching, aren’t they? It can’t be a coincidence.

What about the Foundation?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
Foundation: As in the base on which something stands.
QUESTIONER:
So this syndrome is based on the foundation? What does it mean to build on a foundation in a post-foundational era?

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it a regime of truth.  

QUESTIONER:
What does it mean to wonder about true and false instead of wondering about one of every five women, one of every ten men.

We all make up our claims to truth, then we forget we made them up, then we forget that we forgot. Whose credentials, whose terminology? Who then decides?

CHORUS OF EXPERTS:
(The experts speak individually and over-top of each other, slowly moving away from each other on the stage.)
The weight.
The hurry up and wait it out weight.
The heavy weight of science.
Wait and you shall be rewarded.
We’re tired of waiting.
Just be patient and wait.

EXPERT:
The best method is to find corroborating evidence.

EXPERT:
We should have the courage to demand legitimate, non-political clinical investigation and intervention.

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EXPERT:
Memory is a complicated physiological phenomenon that is only slowly being deciphered.

EXPERT:
Memory is a construction of the past and of the present.

EXPERT:
This is a debate about memory, it’s not about ideology.

(All the cast except the experts, the questioner and the Voice, quietly chant underneath this exchange).

Accused/Abused Accusers/Abusers Victims/Perpetrators True/False Good/Bad Fact/Fiction Science says, Simon says.

CHORUS OF EXPERTS:
We do not deny the existence of child abuse, but only question whether or not the memories of abuse recovered in therapy are of real events. We simply want the truth. It’s the difference between science and belief, fact and fiction.

VOICE OF AUTHORITY:
One fictions history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one fictions a politics not yet in existence on the basis of an historical truth.

The problem is not changing people’s consciousness—or what’s in their heads—but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.
But, I digress....

FATHER:
Greying hair, greying, as I stand accused of the most horrendous accusations, false accusations.

To be guilty until proven innocent of the most horrendous crime.
FATHER and MOTHER (together):
Reviled, defamed, humiliated.
My reputation is ruined.
I stand, guilty until proven innocent, accused yet abused,
by the innocent,
my daughter.

FATHER:
I did not beat my daughter
I did not molest my daughter.
I did not rape my daughter.
I did not sodomize my daughter.
I did not, could not.

If I were accused of murder, I would be innocent until proven guilty.
But because she says I did these appalling things to her when she was a child,
there is no presumption of innocence.

I contend that my conscience is clear before God.

MOTHER:
She was leading a normal life,
A fulfilling well paid job,
Until she consulted her therapist about a minor problem unrelated to sexual abuse.

(All the cast except the Mother, Father, Questioner and the Voice chant quietly underneath)
Accused/Abused Accusers/Abusers Victims/Perpetrators True/False Good/Bad Fact/Fiction Science says, Simon says.

WOMAN 1:
There is no silence or reprieve
and sleep, merging demons with dreams,
is no solace.
Do I remember?
Did I forget in order
not to remember?

WOMAN 2:
How can I know?
In a world such as this, there
is no solace.
Do I remember?
Did I forget in order
not to remember?
WOMAN 1:
Exiled, my gatekeeping girl, waits,
to be allowed to resuscitate, defrost,
the memories she keeps,
to reach out
in the warm and novel
sunlight of a safe place.
There’s a difference between
forgetting
not remembering.

WOMAN 2:
Crushed by the confusion.
Reaching out, I know my
my pain is real, but where
in the numbing grey of
this cold and familiar
darkness is a safe place?
Have I forgotten?
Was there something to
forget?

QUESTIONER:
Growing up in a patriarchal world, the forms of hegemony in which we all
live, are all women survivors of sexual abuse?

The continuum of abuse, sexualized terms of endearment, sexual jokes,
objectification, touching, groping, probing, penetration, rape, sodomy.
Where’s the beginning? Where’s the end?

Truth is a chimera and yet claiming truth they have all been...

(The following monologues interrupt the Questioner, and are spoken
simultaneously.)

WOMAN 1 and 2:
Trying to forget
and
trying not to
Who forgot me
vacillating between
disclosure and
distance.
I need to trust
professionals.
Penetrated
Fabricated
Alienated
Isolated
Medicated

CHORUS OF EXPERTS:
Persuaded by a friend
by a therapist
by a book
by the TV
by being suggestible
because she is ill
by trusting
misguided
professionals.
Over zealous
Politically driven
Poorly trained
Cult-like
Hysterical

PARENTS:
Reviled
Humiliated
Hurt
Torn Apart
Turned upside
down.
Our family
is trusting
professionals
God-fearing
Reasonable
Sympathetic
Moral
Innocent
CHORUS OF EXPERTS, WOMAN 1 and 2, MOTHER, FATHER:

We should have the courage
to heal
to demand legitimate, non-political, scientific investigation
to forget
to remember
to be a victim
to be a survivor
to tear apart families
to be torn apart
to not be intimidated by these

WOMAN 1 and 2:
Retributions
One in three women.
Fanatics.

CHORUS OF EXPERTS:
Sex abuse is everywhere
and explains all
psychopathology.

PARENTS:
False
accusations.
False
memories.

Fanatics.

QUESTIONER:
(Turning to the therapist)
So why are you here?

(The therapist turns to the questioner, but remains silent)

You see my dilemma, don’t you? How do I talk about the complexities
without losing sight of the fact that this is all happening just as women
begin to be heard...in the media, in their communities, in the courts? How
do I acknowledge the blurred lines without blurring the politics? Where is
there a place to stand? Where is my foundation in a post-foundational era?
ACT TWO

(Opens with most of the cast members sitting in a circle around the little girl. It’s story time. The Mother and the Father, both Women and the Questioner, stand separate from the circle)

GRANDPARENTS (They share the telling of this tale)

Once upon a time
a close friend of mine, a man I’ve known for many years...
an elderly couple,
professionals,
middle-class,
neighbours,
intelligent, articulate, successful
gentle, greying,
comfortable in their roomy house,
Middle Americans.
Both are hurt and angry,
both are confused, dispirited,
both wonder how this could be happening to them.

Their belief in God will carry them through.

Elderly people
accused of heinous crimes
against their own children.
Alleged molesters, can you believe it?
Pedophiles.
Child abusers.
Satan worshippers.
Martians.

His daughter, in her 30s.
Her daughter, in her 30s.
Their daughter, 33.
A parade of women,
professionally successful,
nice,
normal,
attractive in every way.
Unusually suggestible, emotional problems in the past, psychological problems in the past, a victim, not of her parents, but of greedy, misguided, mistaken, mental-health professionals.

Her therapist, a woman in her 30s. A true believer, moral crusader, activist, feminist, jumping on the bandwagon, just wouldn’t take no for an answer, you-seem-to-be-in-denial-therapist. If you think you were abused then you probably were therapist. Over committed, overzealous, instead of detached, objective therapist.

MOTHER and FATHER:
How could this be happening to us?

VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE CAST:
Vaginal penetration/false accusation
Intercourse/discourse
Truth/lies

MOTHER and FATHER:
Torn apart, turned upside down, presumed guilty there are no innocent places to stand.

WOMAN 1 and 2:
How could this be happening to me?

WOMAN 1 and 2:
Torn apart, turned upside down, presumed guilty there are no innocent places to stand.
QUESTIONER:
Is there a difference between forgetting and not remembering?

What would it mean to be falsely accused?
What would it mean to be abused and disbelieved?
What would it mean to have to decide?

MEMBERS OF THE JURY:
(Members of the jury stand and return to their seats)
How did this happen?
..to this woman in her 30s
..to this family in middle-America
..to this society
..to these victim/survivors?

VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE CAST:
(Speaking as they stand up and leave the stage. The Questioner stands
where she is.)
Her answer was that
her therapist,
a woman in her 30s,
had helped her remember.

We should blame it
on the growth of psychotherapy and
the politically correct movement
which provides immunity from criticism.

She believes her daughter
grabbed hold of the therapist’s
suggestion of childhood sexual abuse
as an attempt to deny
failure in her own life.

He says they’re finding it
because that’s what they’re
looking for,
and their patients are eager to
grasp a diagnosis
that offers closure.
This sexual abuse theory is
the psychologists' placebo
for the 90s.

They're calling it the new sex
abuse industry.

They liken the wave of
such cases to
the hysteria and false accusations
of the Salem witch trials.

**QUESTIONER:**
Ah, the irony of such a metaphor.
(pause)
And so now I have another picture to add,
With hoods and cowls, this one is not as clear.
There are Inquisitors and Witches, but are they all women?
Where are the men in this picture?
...in the Heronimus migration of women and their wombs,
...and the marching women-are-everywhere,
Out of the camera's lens they stand.

Who decides what questions to ask? and when to ask them?
and of whom?

There's at least one more picture, isn't there.
FEMINIST THERAPY: WHAT'S FEMINISM GOT TO DO WITH IT?

So how and why did feminist therapy become the center of such a storm? Of all the questions that arise from the debate over recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse, these are, perhaps, the most provocative questions for feminists to consider. Certainly, one easy answer to these questions is that feminist therapy has been targeted precisely because it is so fundamentally associated with the issue of sexual abuse; feminist therapy is credited with helping women give voice to their experiences of childhood sexual abuse and, more recently, of giving support to women as they have pursued redress for this abuse in the courts (as the FSMF is fond of saying, the damages awarded to women in these court cases are often directed at paying the costs of therapy). So, in some way, these questions must be refined to reflect the fact that it is feminist therapy and not the feminist political movement that is credited with this un-silencing of incest. The question then, is how did feminist therapy gain ascendancy within the mainstream feminist movement as an, if not the, acceptable response to male violence against women? And what is the efficacy of this particular response in regards to violence against women. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to track the evolution of the relationship between feminists and psychology/therapy and the development of feminist therapy.
Consciousness Raising: The Roots of Feminist Therapy

As Marxist method is dialectical materialism, feminist method is consciousness raising: the collective critical reconstitution of the meaning of women’s social experience, as women live through it (McKinnon, 1989, p. 83).

Consciousness raising has often been referred to as the precursor to feminist therapy. Its origin, however, was as a political strategy borrowed from the Left, borrowed by feminists and developed within the feminist movement during the 60s and early 70s. Consciousness raising was used as a tool in building a collective political consciousness and analysis of women’s oppression within patriarchy. Although it began within radical feminist groups, it was popularized in the mainstream women’s liberation movement and there, disassociated from its radical connection, it became depoliticized and, in effect, became a precursor of feminist therapy. The translation of this political tool into a therapeutic tool provides some insight not only into the roots of feminist therapy, but into some of the ways in which feminism’s engagement with psychology/therapy and the development of feminist therapy may be maintaining oppressive systems rather than dismantling them.

The depoliticizing of consciousness raising as a practice marks a crucial shift in the women’s liberation movement, from a revolutionary agenda to a reform agenda. In the context of the anti-violence against women campaign it illustrates the split in the feminist political agendas between radical and reform
feminism and it points to how therapy and therapeutic ideology have derailed feminism's focus on ending violence against women and children.

In the late 1960s radical women, frustrated with the left's unwillingness to engage with the issue of sexism, broke away from the male left and began articulating a radical form of feminism, which none-the-less drew heavily from the language, strategies, and ideological framework of the Civil Rights and Black power movements (Kitzinger, 1992; Rosenthal, 1984). One of the strategies this radical wing of the women's liberation movement adopted and adapted was called consciousness raising:

When the cell group format of the Old Left was combined with the 'speak bitterness, recall pains' meetings of the Chinese Communists and the small group analysis sessions of the Civil Rights Movement, the particular ethos of consciousness raising emerged (Rosenthal, 1984, p. 313).

Radical feminists were committed to grassroots organizing and action, and to the belief that critical consciousness was crucial in social change. They saw consciousness raising as a vehicle for developing women's "collective understanding of the political meaning of women's collective situation" (Rosenthal, 1984, p. 313), a critical step in the development of a women's revolution. The Redstockings Collective, a militant, radical feminist collective, advocated consciousness raising as a tool for radicalizing women and developing a "female class consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundations of all our institutions" (Redstockings, 1970). They argued
against the artificial separation of the personal and political and very explicitly
maintained that the goal of consciousness raising was not therapy and that to
view it as such was sexist and a strategy of depoliticizing an overtly political act
(Redstockings, 1970).

In 1970, the malestream media discovered the women’s liberation
movement, and, as is common in malestream coverage of social justice movements
(hooks, 1995) the media filtered out the calls for a social revolution to focus
instead on the messages of “equity” arising within the liberal or reform feminist
movement. Radical feminism was eclipsed by reform feminism and the ideas and
goals of what was essentially a white, middle-class feminism became synonymous
with feminism in the eyes of the public. The interests of this feminism focused
almost exclusively on women gaining equity with men of their class. As hooks
(1995) argues, the “contemporary white women’s liberation movement was easily
co-opted to serve the interests of white patriarchy” (p. 98), sharing as it did the
basic tenets of the foundational discourse of western culture (universal humanism,
equity, progress, and laissez faire capitalism). The movement for women’s
liberation became synonymous with the movement for white women’s equality.
In this context, consciousness raising was likewise co-opted inside and outside the
feminist movement and became, as Rosenthal (1984) described it, “a reevaluative
rather than a revolutionary process” (p. 323). Radical grassroots feminist
organizations, particularly those organized in resistance to male violence against
women, did continue to use a form of radical consciousness raising in their political practice but they also began challenging its use "as therapy" within mainstream feminism (Bonnie Agnew, personal communication, October, 1994; Rosenthal, 1984).

Radical or revolutionary feminists saw liberal feminism's call for a sex-role revolution as a retreat to an analysis of oppression as psychologically based rather than materially and culturally based (Redstockings, 1979). They viewed the movement's new enthusiasm for consciousness raising, therefore, as suspect. Within the liberal feminist movement, or "women's movement", the practice of consciousness raising was therapeutized: "consciousness raising groups were vehicles for anticipatory socialization...emphas[izing] personal analysis of personal life adjustments" (p. 324). Where radical feminists had envisioned consciousness raising as a practical tool in helping women to radical consciousness, reform/liberal feminism's engagement with the concept was its use as a support group in which women connected with each other in their development of personal insights and personal change (Enns, 1993; Greenspan, 1983; Kravetz, 1980). A retrospective study of consciousness raising groups showed that of the women surveyed, most had used consciousness raising groups as a venue for re-examining women's roles and solving personal problems - only 9% stated that they had become more political as a result of their participation (Kravetz, Maracek, & Finn, 1983).
The shift to a more psychological or therapeutic understanding and use of consciousness raising within mainstream feminism occurred at the same time as psychology was being popularized through the self-help movement and the boom in pop-psychology literature. During the 70s self-help and personal development groups abounded and much of the literature of this movement adopted the language and ideas of the various radical social movements, translating them into theories and strategies for personal development and intra-psychic reform (Gestalt, EST, Transpersonal psychology). The feminist movement was far from immune to this infiltration of psychology and psychological discourse.

When feminists had first engaged with psychology it was to voice a radical critique. Early feminist critics viewed the discipline of psychology and its practical extension in psychotherapy as an institutional tool of women’s oppression. Like Foucault (1965), they believed that psychology was never intended as a liberatory discourse, but rather, had been designed as an institution of social coercion and control. Feminists viewed psychology as a wolf in sheep’s clothing, an oppressive, penal discourse shrouded in the pseudo-liberatory discourse of liberal democracy (Foucault, 1965; Hanisch, 1971; Leon, 1970; Webb, 1996). Weisstein (1970) described the discipline of psychology as a “pseudo-scientific buttress for patriarchal ideology and patriarchal social organization”; Hanisch (1971), as “a myth to keep women in their place” (Hanisch, 1971); and Leon (1970) as a means of “disguis[ing] real material oppressions as emotional
disturbance”. Radical feminists argued that in effect, and potentially as its intention, psychology worked to depoliticize and individualize social problems.

Many of these early critiques focused on psychology’s foundation in exclusively male paradigms and called for a radical re-evaluation of the role of psychology in maintaining and enforcing women’s oppression. Feminists such as Chesler (1972) attacked the discipline’s pathologizing of women and the medicalizing of social issues. Leon (1970) challenged psychology’s adjustment model and its proclivity to “disguise real material oppression as emotional disturbance.” Weisstein (1968) challenged psychology’s scientific cloak, describing the discipline as a “pseudo-scientific buttress...for patriarchal ideology and patriarchal social organization.”

As with consciousness raising, however, the radical analysis of psychology and the questioning of its relevance to women, gave way in mainstream and academic feminist discourses to a revisioning of psychology in feminist terms. Feminist academics and practitioners within psychology, not surprisingly, began calling not for the dismantling of psychology as an institution, but rather for the reform of psychology; they called for the development of psychological theories and practices that would arise from and reflect women’s experience and the social context of heteropatriarchy. Academic feminists engaged critically with psychology by challenging its phallocentric theorizing and developing or adapting theories grounded in an analysis of gender (most often
gender differences) and less frequently race, class, and sexual orientation (Lerman, 1976; Miller, 1976; Marecek & Kravetz, 1977; Sturdivant, 1980)\(^\text{12}\). During the 1980s, feminists expanded on these foundations to further define and develop feminist theories of personality and relationship (Chodorow, 1978, 1989; Enns, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Lerman, 1976) and develop expressly feminist therapeutic principles and practices (Brown, 1988, 1990; Caplan, 1992; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1982; Greenspan, 1983). As Kitzinger (1991) argues, rather than radicalizing the discipline or subverting it, feminists within psychology have extended the discipline to include feminist therapy/psychology as another option or perspective in a multiperspective discipline. The question of whether therapy was useful to women in the context of a feminist agenda gave way to the question of what therapy was most useful to women in the context of a feminist agenda.

This, then, was a critical shift in feminism's relationship with psychology/therapy and its actions against and reactions to violence against women. The mainstream feminist response to male violence against women, while still political (i.e., it still involves lobbying for legislative and legal reform) had dramatically shifted to a more “therapeutic” stance (Bonnie Agnew, personal communication, May 1995; Armstrong, 1994; Kitzinger, 1992) and to a stance that further legitimized the very institution of psychology. A large number of

\(^{12}\text{For a comprehensive overview of the developments in feminist counselling and therapy see Carolyn Zerbe Enns (1993)}}
feminists and feminist organizations (the majority, I would argue) were distracted from the feminist agenda of dismantling patriarchy to engage instead with an institution of patriarchy on its terms and to engage in a debate that legitimizes and fuels the very constructs of women's oppression.

The main achievement of this type of research, which aims to undermine, with superior science, the 'pseudo science' of its opponents, is not that it has replaced one set of ideas about women with another...but that it has raised the costs for men who make claims about female inadequacy. They now have to contend with counter-claims from social-scientists using their own empiricist artillery against them, so that defending their position requires greater investment in terms of better data, more carefully matched samples, controlled variables and statistical sophistication. The main problem, I think, with this approach is that it forces us constantly to address an agenda which is not of our own making and which we can never undermine (Kitzinger, 1991, p. 51).

The debate over recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse is a case in point. As I have previously argued in my deconstruction of FMS discourse, by engaging in the truth debate of the FMSF, feminism’s critical gaze is diverted away from questioning the effect of therapy/psychology on feminist goals and community. Within FMS discourse there lies an assumption that therapy and the revolution within is what is needed in response to childhood sexual abuse; a more radical voice within feminism challenges the movement to refocus its gaze and challenge this assumption that “self-disclosure becomes liberation” (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993), and to reexamine psychology’s fundamental tenets (i.e., its focus on the individual; on the primacy of internal rather external solutions to
oppression, and its emphasis on producing experts and professionalizing
responses to social issues).

**Incest: A Problem for Therapy?**

During the resurgence of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 70s, the
energy was focused on addressing violence against women. Feminists called for
legislative changes to protect women and a network of rape crisis centers and
shelters for battered women were created to respond to women's needs. These
shelters combined support with political education and an exchange of skills in
typically non-hierarchical, collective structures. Not only were women in crisis
offered support, they, and the women who worked in the crisis centers and
shelters, were offered access to and training in, lay advocacy, self-defense, rape
prevention, and the skills needed to provide practical and emotional support to
women victims of violence.

For the most part, incest remained a much quieter topic within the feminist
still prevalent silence around childhood sexual abuse and women began speaking
out in ever larger numbers of their experiences of incest. Over the next decade,
feminist activists, writers, and researchers began challenging not only the silence
surrounding incest, but also the dominant psychological theories explaining incest
and its impact on children (Butler, 1980; DeSalvo, Finklehor, 1979, 1988, 1980;
Miller, 1984). Women began speaking out in larger and larger numbers of their
experiences of childhood rape, and statistics about the incidence and prevalence of incest arose, which contradicted the dominant perception that incest was an uncommon aberration.

By the same time incest was emerging from the closet and becoming a public issue, the therapy and recovery movements were in full swing, and were offering a much more palatable solution to the “incest problem.” During the late 70s and early 80s, statistics varied wildly as to the incidence and prevalence of incest, ranging from estimates that 1% to 25% of women had experienced some form of sexual abuse at the hands of a relative by the age of 18 (Armstrong, 1994). Even at conservative estimates, this translated into hundreds of thousands of women who had experienced childhood sexual abuse, and, as a corollary, thousands of men who had molested their daughters or the daughters of their partners. To treat this issue as a criminal issue would have meant locking up potentially one tenth of all men; to treat this as a mental health issue was not only less threatening to the status quo of male privilege and power, particularly in the context of the hetero-patriarchal family, but turned a potential social disaster into an economic possibility. Instead of incarcerating “otherwise productive men” (Armstrong, 1994), and thereby removing them as active participants in the economy, incest as a mental health issue became an industry, supporting academics, psychologists and psychiatrists, counsellors and therapists, social-service agencies, writers, and a myriad of self-help and support organizations.
Even more critically, perhaps, viewing incest as a criminal matter would have required a social consensus that incest was wrong, and that consensus had never fully existed; as with other forms of male violence against women, society's approbation of incest came only after a concerted fight by feminists and even then, has remained conditional (Armstrong, 1994).

*FMS* highlights the conditionality of society's approbation of incest, and, as an example of the backlash against feminism, offers a way into critically examining this intersection between therapy and feminism. The success of this backlash is tied to its ability to frame women's experiences of the attacks against them (physical, economical, social, psychological) as individual, private experiences.

It is most powerful when it goes private, when it lodges inside a woman's mind and turns her vision inward, until she imagines the pressure is all in her head, until she begins to enforce the backlash, too, on herself. (Faludi, 1992, p. xxii).

In this way, therapy and therapeutic ideology, given its ubiquity as a response to violence against women in general, and, incest in particular, facilitates or becomes part of the backlash. Therapy individualizes and privatizes women's experience of incest, separating it as a phenomenon different from other experiences of male violence such as adult rape, battering, etc. By separating it out, it works against a global understanding of the extent of male violence and women's victimization by that violence. The political implications of such a macro-view are immense; the
existence of the foundational structure of hetero-patriarchy, the family, is directly at risk once women collectively understand and accept the larger picture painted by the statistics on rape, "wife"-battering and child-rape (not to mention women's continued economic oppression). We are more likely to be at risk of direct physical/sexual violence within the heteropatriarchal family as we are outside it, and our economic oppression works as a direct incentive for us to stay within the family unit.

Even as feminist therapy recognizes the social context of women's oppression and male violence within the content of the therapeutic dialogue, it offers women an individual framework for exploring this experience, and offers an individual solution, the inward journey or healing process as the necessary precursor to women's involvement in creating social change.\(^\text{13}\) Within the therapeutic framework, incest becomes something separate from other forms of violence against women. Instead of developing the political analysis necessary if women are to resist internalizing the pain, guilt, shame, etc., of incest, feminist

\(^{13}\) I see this constantly in my work with street youth and with single mothers. These men and women are consistently referred to counselling by their social workers, to address issues of historical abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, violence etc.. The many more urgent issues these clients must face including the completely appalling economics of living and often parenting on welfare, the safety issues involved in living in the kind of accomodation available for $325 a month, or of working in the sex trade, or of surviving on the streets are rarely acknowledged and even when acknowledged, rarely addressed in any material way. These "clients" are further victimized by a system that keeps them in poverty while suggesting that their escape from this oppression
therapy redirects women’s gaze away from the social issue of incest to focus on their fragility, and their “wounded identities” (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993, p. 138). The focus on therapy works to obscure incest as a political issue, instead framing it as an illness and, hence, an area of specialization for mental health professionals. Whereas “speaking out” about incest was initially a political act, a way of resisting the silence surrounding incest, within the therapeutic culture, speaking out lost its political intent and became instead a kind of confessional (Armstrong, 1994, p. 211), a way of letting go of and transforming the internalized shame of incest into personal power (Davis & Bass, 1988). In other words, it became an act of the individual engaged in her own healing process, not an act of collective resistance or a collective demand for change; speaking out about incest became a therapeutic tool, a stage “in recovery”.  

The therapizing of incest has “raise[d] the personal to the paramount” (Armstrong, 1994, p. 209), and by appropriating the political language of the feminist movement, therapy presents itself as congruent with the feminist goal of ending violence against women, while, in some very significant ways facilitating reliance on their addressing their issues in therapy, as opposed to their collectively organizing to demand social change.  

14As Armstrong (1994:209) points out, even the use of the term “recovery” implies the opposite of change as it is a term derived from the medical or disease model of alcoholism. In this model, alcoholism, the disease, is seen as a permanent condition; one is never recovered but always “in recovery”. The implication for incest survivors is that the problem is located inside them and that their identification with the “disease” of incest is, at some level, immutable.
the continuation of violence against women. Armstrong speaks eloquently of the loss of direction that therapy has generated around the issue of incest and, more generally, violence against women:

What we had hoped was that feminism would adopt and strengthen the issue of incest by insistently putting it forward within the larger issue of licensed male violence and working toward change. Instead, feminists, following not their own logic, but their own purloined language, followed - almost trance like - as that language was snatched from them and dangled before them by psychology and therapy: words like liberation and power and choice. Instead of survivors being drawn to feminist-designed solutions, feminists were drawn to solutions designed for the defined pathologies of survivors. Feminists, survivors or not, began enjoying lengthy ill health and even lengthier recovery, and calling it confrontation. (Armstrong, 1994: 213).

The struggle to end violence against women had been sidetracked.

Revisiting Therapy in the Context of Violence Against Women

The reframing of the mainstream feminist movement through therapeutic discourse reflects in good measure the fact that both discourses rest on a foundation of liberal humanism (Holloway, 1991). Although feminist psychology has done much to challenge traditional psychology's blindness to social /political context and introduces a more collective rhetoric, it is still grounded in a focus on the individual and intra-personal changes; a valorizing of the expert/professional; and on a medicalized framing and languaging of issues.

By focusing on the individual as the unit of change, feminist psychology/therapy detracts significantly from the collective force of women and hence diminishes the chances of profound changes within society. In 1968
Weisstein voiced one of the earliest feminist critiques of psychology, speaking of the urgent need to analyze power and collective resistance. Over two decades later, she is still indicting feminist psychology for its lack of a clear analysis of power and power relations, and for its individual focus.

The status quo is a social conspiracy against the powerless, and nothing is more feeble against a social conspiracy than individual defiance. We have to oppose power with power...we need collective resistance (Weisstein, 1993, p. 242).

The focus in therapy, including feminist therapy, is on the healing of the individual suffering from psychological conditions created through patriarchy, as opposed to the dismantling of patriarchy. The notion here is that we have to heal as individuals before we can heal as a society or work toward that healing (Brown, 1992). By buying into a therapeutic ideology of individual solutions to social problems, mainstream feminism has chosen to address oppression in the naturally self-limiting terms provided to us by patriarchy. To illustrate this point, Perkins (1991) uses the example of working with the psychological concept of “homophobia.” “Homophobia” implies an irrational fear of gays and lesbians. In feminist therapy this term is likely to be deconstructed and contextualized within society’s heterosexual bias, however as a term it is still utilized primarily with lesbians in a discussion of “internalized homophobia”. This language, argues Perkins, is paradoxical given that to be a lesbian is to be a woman who has rejected the patriarchal norm of defining one’s role as in the service of, or attached to a man
and instead to identify oneself publicly with women as a class. This obviously poses a very real threat within patriarchy. By describing this threat as a phobia, the social threat is diminished and the “problem” is located in individual suffering from a psychological dysfunction. Likewise, lesbians’ very rational fears and concerns about exposing themselves as lesbians, are labeled as an internalized version of this phobia, once again locating the dysfunction within the individual as opposed to the society, and performing a parallel distraction from the real threat posed to lesbians within patriarchy (Kitzinger, 1987, 1989; Perkins, 1991).

The fact that therapy functions in this way is, no doubt, why within a backlash discourse such as that advanced by the FMSF, therapy itself is encouraged as a response to male violence. Most therapy does not, in any significant way, challenge the status quo or the foundational suppositions upon which that status quo perches. At some level, feminist therapy is the exception to this and this is, in part, why it is the focus of the FMSF attack. By supporting women who choose to enter into the court system for redress, in effect raising the stakes for accused men (and patriarchy in general) feminist therapy does pose some threat. However, as I have argued before, this threat is, in reality, nominal as it still operates within and reinforces the legitimacy of the various patriarchal institutions involved—law, psychology, and the hetero-patriarchal family. A legal challenge may cost perpetrators more, but it is still an individual and not a systemic challenge, and it does little to challenge the overriding structures and
systems that maintain hetero-patriarchy. Additionally, the attack on feminist therapy serves as a diversion tactic, wherein feminists (academics, therapists, activists) become entangled in the process of defending feminist therapy instead of questioning both the practices of therapy and the broader issues of male violence against women. Women are drawn away from a radical revisioning of their place in society and their place within a collective resistance movement towards a further investment in an institution that reinforces their lack of power (Eisenstein, 1981; Kitzinger, 1987).

The Politics of Language

In addition to its focus on introspection and the individual, psychology/therapy has also delimited feminism’s radical critique through language. This infiltration of psychological language into mainstream culture is endemic: we talk of maintaining our boundaries, and dealing with our issues; we “process” and we “heal” and we’re “blocked” or “centered” or “in touch.” Women languaging their experience has been an important part of the feminist movement (Daly, 1978). Feminism’s interaction with psychology, however, has resulted in the increasing use of psychological language and concepts both inside and outside the therapist’s office.¹⁵

¹⁵Celia Kitzinger & Rachel Perkins (1993), Mary Daly (1984) and Janice Raymond (1986) have all provided compelling analyses of the effects of psychological language in both shaping what we say and how we say it.
Kitzinger and Perkins (1993) for example, argue that the meaning of power, within therapy, is a reformulation of the meaning of power that denudes it of any radical potential. The shift away from materially, structurally located power (associated primarily with men) to the notion of internal power, or empowerment provides women with the illusion that they have some power without threatening the status quo of power structures. Likewise, choice becomes decontextualized and separated from the real material limitations to choice and the real material and differential consequences of choice.

In FMS discourse, this illusion of power and choice is encouraged even while it is critiqued. Therapy and the mental health industry, although critiqued for lax standards are promoted as providing women with a necessary service, a means of accessing power--personal power. It is not that this conceptualization of power/empowerment is seen as wrong within this discourse, rather that the identification of oneself as a victim of abuse is not the means of achieving this empowering (FMSF Newsletter, October 1993, p.2.). (A fact, interesting enough, that most feminist therapists would agree with, hence the promotion of the term "survivor"). Additionally, as I have pointed out before, the challenge to feminist therapy by the FMSF has only arisen in the context of women using this power/empowerment to move into the court system to access a more materially-based power in the form of money or the criminalization of a perpetrator.
The appropriation of psychological language within feminism leaves unquestioned the value or harm of that language. A term such as “survivor” is posited as a positive alternative to “victim” without any recognition that “victim” is only used as a pejorative within psychology (we do not challenge the idea of a victim of crime) and, in particular, where psychology intersects with women (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). Although feminists have effectively challenged the misogyny inherent in many of the psychological labels used to describe women and their “disorders” (victim, codependent, addicted, self-defeating) it has often resulted simply in alternative, more “empowering” labels such as “healing”, “survivor” and, in the case of childhood sexual abuse, “post-traumatic stress disorder”. While these terms are seen as countering the backlash against women (i.e., FMS discourse) the analysis they embody has, in effect, stopped short of a fundamental questioning of how all psychological language (feminist and non-feminist) constructs our concept of self, and our political and social understanding (Ebert, 1991; Lather, 1991).

Another key effect of psychological language is its limiting of moral judgments. In therapy, individuals make choices and those choices are effective or ineffective in helping them to accomplish their goals. Right and wrong, should and should not are banished from the lexicon of therapy, and as Perkins (1992) rightly points out, the rules of therapy are spilling out into the general feminist community, limiting debate and undermining the very real evaluative foundations
of feminist debate (oppression *is* wrong; violence against women *is* wrong; we
*should not* limit an individual’s rights on the basis of skin colour or sexual
orientation). *FMS* discourse is fundamentally invested in this notion of objectivity
(the investment in science, in "good"/objective therapy, in ideology free inquiry)
and in maintaining the illusion that it is an objective discourse (*FMSF* Newsletter,
1994, May, p.3). It attacks feminist therapy and therapists on this basis precisely
because feminist therapy incorporates an explicitly political perspective and
debunks the notion that there is an objective/neutral stance. Ironically enough,
given the attack, the threat that feminist therapy represents is inflated. It is,
after all, still therapy and it is still based in psychology, albeit a reformed version
of psychology. No matter how it contextualizes a woman’s experience or brings a
feminist analysis to her oppression, it is still constructing the examination of that
oppression in the terms, language, and conditions of therapeutic ideology, not
political activism.

**Mediation by an expert**

In a radical examination of feminist therapy the role of therapist must also
come under scrutiny, particularly given the therapist’s critical role in *FMS*
discourse. Within feminist therapy there is an acknowledgment of the power
imbalance between the client and therapist and a commitment to working against
the hierarchy within the relationship (*Brown*, 1992; *Burstow*, 1992). *FMS*
discourse appropriates this feminist discourse to argue that feminist therapists
might be unduly influencing their clients through this power imbalance. And the fact is, that despite feminists' commitment to work against the power imbalance, the hierarchy does remain; therapy, as Shuman and Galvez (1996) explain, sets up the therapist as "expert/interpreter, and the client as the "pupil/text." While the therapist's power might be mitigated through a feminist approach, feminist therapy continues to set up one woman as the professional mediator of another women's experience within/of patriarchy.

Dorothy Smith talks of professionalism as "an organization of relations separating us from those we seek to serve," a "preservation of the authority of theory over the working knowledge of an actual everyday world" (Smith, 1979, p. 21). Herein lies the troublesome circularity of psychology, feminist or otherwise, in which the discipline defines the "disorder" and then sets itself up as the solution to that disorder. We teach women to understand their oppression in psychological terms, even as those terms incorporate an acknowledgment and analysis of social context, and we set women up to believe that they need the help of an expert, even as we decry that need. FMS has inserted itself into this professionalizing trajectory at the point at which it has incorporated a new wave of interpreters, a new level of professionals: lawyers and judges.

As with psychological language, this professionalizing and psychologizing further diminishes the potential for debate within feminism. Debate and disagreement are an expected/accepted part of political discussion; it is how a
political analysis is articulated and deepened collectively. Early consciousness raising groups were a clear example of this premise. But therapy is not set up as an arena for debate. Therapy is a project of one woman, the expert/interpreter, working with another woman, the client, towards a congruent understanding of the client's experience. In this scenario the therapist holds the power and, through her role as expert, frames the discussion (which is often not as bi-directional as "discussion" would imply). Feminist therapy co-opts feminist politics - the collective examination and debate of moral issues and values, consciousness raising, and collective political action - into a discussion of the internal effects of this oppression (as defined by psychology). This discussion is devoid of rational political debate, and instead focused on a negotiation of experience/truth as mediated by an expert (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993; Perkins, 1991) in service of a goal which is not necessarily or even likely to be collective political action.

By reforming psychology and creating alternative experts within the discipline, that is, feminist experts, feminism contributes to the further consolidation of the institution of psychology and the industry of mental health. Prior to this embracing of psychology, radical feminists voiced their skepticism of experts and the role they played in creating and maintaining oppressive structures within patriarchy. With feminist psychology and therapy, mainstream feminism has not only abandoned that critique, but has generated a class of experts, feminist experts, that may enjoy even more credibility within the feminist movement and
community by virtue of their being (or claiming to be) feminists (Brown, 1989; Perkins, 1991).

The ultimate irony in this is that even as feminists participate in this professionalizing of women's oppression, and set themselves up as experts, their so-called 'expertise' is continually challenged by those in power who maintain their power by defining the quality and credibility of that expertise, hence the attack by the FMSF. The influx of women into the mental health professions such as has contributed to the hierarchical valuing of subfields of psychology along gender lines (Schuman & Galvez, 1996). So from this perspective, the creation of a class of women-as-expert/interpreters (therapists) undermines the goals of feminism on two fronts while constantly giving the illusion that feminist psychology/therapy is challenging the status quo.
CONCLUSION

In largely adopting this reframing of the issue of violence against women the feminist movement has in some crucial ways become sidetracked. It has participated in the building of a burgeoning mental health/service industry that relies on the continuation of violence against women. And it has situated itself as a central part of this service industry. The dilemma for feminists is complex; as with most issues there is no simple answer to the question of whether therapy is a good thing or a bad thing for women in the context of male violence. Many women, feminists and non-feminists alike, will attest to the need for, and usefulness of, a therapeutic response to the violence women experience on a daily basis. For many women, therapy provides a safe place, a refuge not found elsewhere in their lives, a place in which to recognize, analyze, understand and contextualize their experience, and from this process build a firmer, more life-affirming foundation from which to operate in the world. In a world as disconnected as ours is, it also may offer a much needed way of connecting.

This is no small thing, and yet it begs the question: at what cost? If we clearly identify these, or other aspects of the therapeutic relationship as beneficial,

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16I say "largely" because I believe many radical feminist groups, particularly rape crisis centers, have not adopted therapy in the way that mainstream feminism has. In my experience, they continue to offer a radical critique of therapy and see themselves as
it is equally important that we define what the deficits are that result from therapy and the therapizing of violence against women. And then, we need to ask what alternative approaches to working with each other might accrue the benefits without the losses: are there ways other than therapy of helping women to connect with themselves, with each other and to create the changes that they need, want, hope for?

Both at an individual level and a societal level, therapy will always be a more acceptable response to male violence than social revolution. For individual women it offers the hope of finding more positive, successful, perhaps even enlightened means of surviving within patriarchy, and, for some, of then working toward ending patriarchy's oppressions. Feminist organizations who frame their work as providing a service that incorporates this therapizing of violence gain legitimacy and the financial backing that comes with that legitimacy but they also participate in building an infrastructure, an industry, around this violence. We do not, as individuals or as a society build industries in the hope they will become obsolete; just as the pharmaceutical industry is built around the allopathic medical definition of and response to illness, therapy and the related services that respond to male violence against women and children rely on the fact of that violence for their existence.

offering women support in the form of a community and in the form of direct action and education.
Feminist therapy has arisen as an attempt to reform an oppressive institution and to harness its energy and expertise in the service of women. While a great deal of attention has been paid to the question of how to engage with psychology/therapy in a feminist, women-centered manner, less attention has been paid to the question of whether that engagement is fundamentally compatible with feminist politics and feminist goals. Because it represents a current, external challenge to feminist therapy, *false memory syndrome* discourse is a natural point of entry for examining the costs of feminist therapy to women, to feminism. By examining this backlash against feminist therapy and feminism in general, I have attempted to explore some of the political costs of feminist therapy, some of the ways in which feminist therapy works against a feminist agenda of ending women’s violent oppression. While the benefits of therapy may accrue individually, the FMSF’s orchestrated backlash highlights the ways in which a therapeutic framing of violence against women is assuring the continuation of that violence; while women are focused on themselves as individuals in need of psychological healing they are not focused on building political communities; while women continue to define their oppression in psychological terms they are less likely to focus their energy (and anger) on their material oppression; and as long as women and men continue to buy into the notion that violence is the result of individual illness, society will not be forced to recognize and address the underlying systemic structures on which women’s violent oppression is
predicated. In the meantime, right wing organizations like the FMSF are organizing, lobbying, working the media, academia, and the law to ensure that women remain silenced, pathologized, oppressed.

Feminist therapy is not the cause of the Right wing backlash against feminism, nor is it to blame for violence against women, but it is, in some very profound ways complicit in the maintenance of that violence. Feminist therapy will always be in some ways an oxymoron; it implies that it is possible to imbue the therapeutic process, the praxis of a patriarchal institution (psychology) that focuses on disease and individual solutions to that disease, and that is historically associated with women’s oppression, with a feminist political analysis and direction. It implies that such a reform is the most viable option available to women and provides women with the potential for inner changes while their external realities remain unchanged.

Feminists continue to challenge the backlash arguments of the FMSF and to speak out about childhood sexual abuse. The institution of feminist therapy has been/is central to this struggle as the villain or the hero depending upon the perspective. The challenge to feminism now, however, is to step out of this binary--feminist therapy is good or bad--to examine the broader implications both “positive” and “negative” of this “alternative” version of therapy, this radically different approach with a less than radical agenda. While feminism’s embracing of therapeutic culture has opened a window for the FMS backlash, this backlash has,
in turn, provided the feminist movement with an opportunity to reexamine its relationship with psychology and rethink its reform strategy. As a social justice movement, it is vital that feminism examine the costs to its communities of expecting radical change to evolve from a reliance on professionals and an ever-growing involvement with a patriarchal institution. What would it mean for more women to turn their energy away from psychology and towards building feminist community where support and safety are not separated from education, activism, advocacy, and a commitment to radical social change.

The implications of this research are, however, by no means limited to feminist therapy. I begin there simply because I believe that feminism is built on a foundation of self-reflection and analysis and a willingness, albeit sometimes only theoretical, to challenge itself as a movement to turn its critical gaze inwards. This same self-reflexivity has been, in my experience, sorely lacking in the Counselling Psychology field. The aim of my research has been to generate and further the debate over the merit of feminism's engagement with psychology. The questioning need not stop there, however, as I believe there is a obligation within Counselling Psychology as a field to question its role within society and the continuance of oppressive practices and structures. What are the costs of building a society where individuals turn to professionals instead of each other for support, connection, and safety, where community is built on the basis of a shared pathology; where the violent oppression of women becomes the
cornerstone of a burgeoning industry? These are questions that might move the counselling field beyond its microscopic introspection regarding practices and outcomes and its reluctance to examine itself within a socio-political, historical context. Feminist therapy, then, can be seen as simply a more likely place for this questioning to start, in much the same way as it was feminism's engagement with psychology/therapy that forced counselling/psychology to begin to examine issues of racism, sexism, classism, and ethnocentricism.

This research, has also been about pushing the limits of what is legitimized as research within Counselling Psychology, an attempt to transgress some of the conservatism that seems to be a trademark of this field at least as it has been expressed within the University of British Columbia. Feminist research has often been characterized by a willingness to push boundaries and to ask questions not only of the passengers but also of the vehicle. By using different textual strategies and by foregrounding this intentionality in my writing, I have attempted to challenge both myself and anyone reading this work to consider not only the questions raised within the text, but also those by the text.

One of the critical obstacles to this process has been the fact that this research has been documented in text as opposed to some more three-dimensional environment (hypertext or some other multi-media environment). This has been most striking for me in the context of the drama, which needed to be worked as a performance piece and which loses much of its resonating potential by virtue of
the fact that it was not. The linear format and the non-interactive creative work (until perhaps it is read) of writing a text has limited not only how I have said what I have said, but what I could say. I envision a day when social science research is more organic, utilizing the input and insights of interested individuals along the way, rather than as an afterthought or addendum review.

I have examined the FMS discourse from a feminist perspective in part to provide feminists and other social activists more ammunition to fight that (and other similar) backlash discourses. The more complex the analysis and understanding of these backlash discourses the more sophisticated, and hopefully effective, our response. Additionally, I have worked from my perspective as a student of Counselling Psychology, and as a feminist practitioner within the mental health field to engage with FMS discourse in order to provoke a critical examination of the relationship between feminism and psychology/therapy. It has been important for me throughout this process to recognize the conflicting agendas of my own position. I am critiquing from within the discipline, working with my own conflicted feelings about therapy and psychology even while I am clearly invested in the field, I have, afterall, spent the past five years working to consolidate my position as a counsellor. This inner conflict has been in good measure what has drawn me to this subject, of course, but I feel it is important to recognize that this conflict may also limit my analysis. I am heavily invested in this field by virtue of my investment in my training and in my career potential.
Had I chosen to work this research in interaction with other feminists, especially radical feminists operating intentionally outside the culture of therapy/psychology, my analysis (our analysis) might have produced more radical insights.

I also recognize that I have offered a critique of feminist therapy in the context of male violence without offering or exploring the alternatives. I see that as the challenge before me and before all feminists. We must redefine the terms of the debate over childhood sexual abuse and all male violence against women and children. We need to reexamine the question of how change occurs. Therapy clearly meets some needs, offering women ways of reducing their anxiety and distress, clarifying and solidifying their personal values and offering the potential of growth. At the same time it directs our energies individually and collectively away from a political understanding and response to our oppressions to a psychological one. We can not afford to continue to engage with these issues in terms defined by those who perpetrate and support this violence, and we can not afford to participate in systems which offer the illusion of change without change, or safety where there is none, while children continue to be raped, beaten, and killed spiritually, emotionally and physically. As a feminist I believe we must reclaim our radical roots and challenge ourselves to question the foundation upon which we are building our movement and our future.
REFERENCES


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