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CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Susan S. Brown

December 1978

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Consciousness Raising participants' constructions of reality during CR sessions and after their completion. Constructions of gender related aspects of the social world are investigated by participant observation.

Constructions of reality that emerged in sixteen sessions include: (1) definitions of discrimination and prejudice, (2) characterizations of men and relationships with men, (3) and characterizations of women. Definitions presented in the sessions are compared to traditional social definitions and to feminist definitions of reality.

Follow up interviews which elicited evaluation accounts are reported. Participants and the facilitator evaluated their experiences in the sessions. Evaluations accounts include: (1) evaluation of the experience, (2) evaluation of the facilitator, (3) evaluation of experience compared to initial expectations.

Constructions of reality created by participants were not always consistent with current feminist ideology. The concept of emergent definitions of reality was questioned and it was suggested that Consciousness Raising may have provided support and reinforcement for ongoing cultural definitions of reality rather than emergent radical constructions of reality. Evaluation accounts by participants tended to support the conclusion that Consciousness Raising was used for self help by participants but not as a feminist forum.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Burger and Luckman's Social Construction of Reality (1967), the concept of reality construction has become a part of the sociological vocabulary. While the concept has enjoyed considerable theoretical acclaim, few sociologists actually have applied the concept to empirical endeavors. Reality construction has largely been ignored in sociological research.

Although many sociologists recognize that their perceptions of reality do not necessarily reflect the reality of those they study, they may not obtain the appropriate information in their research. In order to effectively understand the meaning of social phenomenon for others, researchers must become emersed in the social worlds of those they seek to investigate. Many aspects of the social world can be understood more fully through subjective analysis.

The way actors define their social worlds at any time directs their lines of action and affects the meanings they assign to the actions of others, as well as to past and present events and experiences. Thus, an indepth description and analysis of constructions of reality generated during specific interaction episodes contributes to sociological understanding of definitional processes.

One aspect of social life that lends itself to construction of reality research is the New Feminist Movement. An important and widespread activity of the new feminists has been participation in Consciousness Raising sessions. CR is believed to increase women's awareness of their

common social problems and provide them with assistance in dealing with those problems. Research on the movement often is based on the presumption that all women involved in "feminist activities" perceive the same "problems" or have the same perceptions of the world. A construction of reality framework suggests that there may be multiple realities about the social world.

Consciousness Raising sessions were studied through participant observation in order to discover changes in participants' social constructions of reality during the type of interaction which feminists assume will inevitably alter participants' definitions of reality. The retrospective evaluative constructions of reality (or accounts) the participants gave of their consciousness raising experience were examined through follow-up interviews.

The purpose of this study was two fold. One goal was to ascertain what types of perceptions participants in consciousness raising sessions had about the world around them and how those perceptions related to participation in the sessions. The other was to understand how participants reconstructed the CR experience and evaluated its impact upon themselves.

Chapter I examines the history of Consciousness Raising. The development of consciousness raising and the changing conceptualizations of CR in the feminist literature are explored. The techniques associated with conducting a consciousness raising group are delineated.

Chapter II focuses on the methodological procedures used in the study. The arguments for the use of qualitative research methods are presented.

The characteristics of the subjects of the study are described, as are the processes of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter III consists of a review of the literature on social construction of reality and outlines the theoretical contributions of the symbolic interactionist, ethnomethodological and phenomenological perspectives to reality construction. The conceptualization of interaction as the aligning of actions is reviewed and the significance of these concepts for the study of reality construction is discussed.

In Chapter IV the data are presented and are used to illustrate the types of constructed reality that emerged during the interaction in CR sessions. Several areas of the social world significant to the participants are discussed: definitions of discrimination and sexism, characterizations of men and problems of heterosexual relationships; and characterizations of women. The definitions presented in the sessions in many cases are not ones predicted by the feminist literature.

Chapter V includes a discussion of the concept evaluation accounts. Data are presented on the types of themes that emerged in participants' evaluation accounts. The evaluation accounts are generally positive, although they are not necessarily consistent with the ideology of the feminist movement as presented in various documents.

Chapter VI contains the conclusions of the study. The theoretical implications of the study are reviewed and future research directions proposed.

CHAPTER I

CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

The current women's movement has been chronicled in both popular and social science literature. From its inception, there have been a variety of points of view within the movement concerning the most pressing social and economic problems facing women and the techniques appropriate for dealing with these problems. A distinct and sometimes controversial technique for dealing with women's problems is Consciousness Raising (CR). CR generally focuses upon problems related to women's roles, inequality, and discrimination against women.

History

The seeds of American Consciousness Raising may be found in the dissatisfaction of women with the direction of the radical student movement in the late 1960's. Some young New Left women perceived ". . . dominance for its own sake, competition for positions in the leadership heirarchy and male ego tripping the rule of the day" (Freeman, 1975:105) and wanted change.

Radical Student Movement

Radical women students found that such organizations as the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) refused to hear women's issues or to allow women in the leadership ranks (Evans, 1975). As early as 1964 women were having to

fight to make the male leadership of radical student organizations recognize their opinions. At the October 1964 SNCC meeting, a paper by Ruby Doris Smith Robinson on the "Position of Women in SNCC" was laughed at during the convention (Yates, 1975). In fact, at the 1966 SDS conference, women who tried to draw attention to women's liberation issues were hit with rotten tomatoes and run out of the convention (Deckard, 1975). SNCC and SDS radical males often argued that part of the development of consciousness for poor white males was "screwing women" (Deckard, 1975; Hole and Levine, 1971). SNCC black activist Stokley Carmicheal was quoted as saying "The only position for women in SNCC is prone" (Seese, 1969).

When efforts to change the organizations failed, many women from these organizations began to form their own informal "rap groups" to discuss women's issues. (The rap group as a form of interaction had already been popularized in the New Left). Between 1965 and 1968 such groups appeared in Chicago, New York and Seattle. The groups were exclusively female and were dedicated to revolutionary principles. Their "raps" were primarily about women's roles in the New Left and the special need for women to work together to aide the revolutionary student movement (Freeman, 1975; Hole and Levine, 1971).

An important step toward development of a separate women's liberation movement came during the 1967 national conference of SDS (Ware, 1965). Dissatisfied women in the organization drafted the Women's Manifesto in which they compared their status to that of people in the Third World countries and called for women to fight for their own individuality and

liberation (Yates, 1965). These women also demanded that their "brothers" recognize and confront their own chauvanism and that women be recognized as part of the leadership of SDS (New Left Notes, 1967). The Manifesto met with little success.

It cannot be established when the first women's liberation small groups began to meet, but several important groups grew out of the National Conference on New Politics in 1967 in Chicago (Ware, 1970). When a group of women proposed to present their demands to the convention they were ignored by the program chairperson. Many women refused to attend the convention until their demands were met. They formed their own ad hoc committee and drafted a women's rights resolution (Deckard, 1975). When the convention refused to consider the resolution many women said that they could not remain in the student movement and fight for their own liberation as well. The convention articles provided impetus to the emergence of two radical women's groups. One was called the Women's Radical Action Project (WARP) lead by Jo Freeman, Heather Booth and Naomi Weisstein. One of the group's goals was to involve women in a consciousness raising experience through which they would become more aware of their common problems and the necessity for political action. This group remained basically political in orientation.

New York Radical Women

The other group to grow out of the convention was created when Shulamith Firestone and Pamela Allen decided to organize a women's liberation organization in New York later called New York Radical Women (NYRW) (Yates, 1965). It was this group that served as parent

organization for many consciousness raising groups on the east coast. Their purpose was to make women's problems the concern of radical feminists by raising women's awareness of their own plight. Their first public action in January 1968 was a torchlight parade through Arlington Cemetery to "burn traditional womenhood" during one of the student marches on the capitol (Yates, 1975). This march was intended to dramatize the need for women to deal with women's issues as political issues rather than as personal problems. The NYRW's next major action was the protest of the Miss America Pageant in September 1968 (Hanisch, 1970). Immediately after this activity, women from the organization began to meet in small groups. Women in the groups talked about their personal experiences with discrimination; "In their meetings the women had begun to 'rap' about themselves, recalling their individual experiences relating personal problems, and focusing on their feelings" (Hole and Levine, 1971:125). The groups identified socially defined sex roles as being the origin of many of their problems (Hanisch, 1971; Kirsh, 1974). If their problems had a social cause then they must have a political solution, they reasoned (Freeman, 1975; Micossi, 1972). This belief is represented clearly in the Principles of NYRW—"We regard our feelings as our most important source of political understanding. We see the key to our liberation in our collective wisdom and our collective strength" (Morgan, 1970).

Consciousness raising was the process that the NYRW members used to verbalize their feelings about their situations. In the small group women gave personal testimony about discrimination or exploitation that they had encountered. The technique was similar to the Chinese "speak

bitterness" groups that Mao established during the Revolution (Sidel, 1973; Mitchell, 1971; Yates, 1975). In these groups Chinese women were encouraged to talk about their "oppression" in the "bitter past." Through these conversations they were expected to see the relevance of the revolution for creating social change in their lives. The Chinese women devoted much of their time in sessions to telling stories of their oppression (especially by their mothers in law) and discussing how they could serve the revolution which would create a new social order. The NYRW adopted a similar technique for their meetings.

Some of the feminists in the NYRW, however, were not convinced of the efficacy of small group discussion for social change. A coalition of women opposed to rapping and dedicated to political activism broke away and formed another group (Carden, 1974). This group, WITCH, was later responsible for such activities as hexing the NY Stock Exchange, demonstrating against Bridal Fair, and vocally protesting work conditions for women at AT&T (Hole and Levine, 1971).

The remainder of the NYRW under the direction of Katie Sarachild became involved increasingly in the technique of consciousness raising (Dreifus, 1973). These women wanted to increase their intellectual and ideological involvement in the women's movement discussions of personal experiences in small groups. At the Thanksgiving Day Women's Liberation Conference in Chicago in 1968, Carachild, presented her paper "A Program for Feminist Consciousness Raising" which was a formalized description and defense of the "rap group" technique developed in the NYRW's meetings. She argued that discussing women's issues on a personal level was

political in the sense that women needed to become aware of their common problems in a male dominated society (Notes from the Second Year, 1970). "Our feelings will lead us to ideas and then to actions" (Sarachild, 1970:78).

Redstockings

CR still was considered antithetical to the need for political action by some Marxist elements of the NYRW. CR was discredited by them as no more than "bitching." Early in 1969, another faction of the NYRW lead by Shulamith Firestone and Ellen Willis broke away to form the Redstockings, a group specifically dedicated to the principles of Consciousness Raising (Deckard, 1975). Although the Redstockings gained recognition for their disruption of public abortion hearings (Hole and Levine, 1971), CR was their central activity. Gradually, women from the NYRW who were most interested in CR gravitated to the Redstockings.

The ideology of the Redstockings was based on the assumed need for female class consciousness. Marxist ideology was thought to be inadequate in its analysis on women's issues. Women, it was argued, needed to get their personal problems into the open in order to discover possible common solutions for them (Susan, 1970). The "Redstocking Manifesto" of July 1969 advocated consciousness raising as essential to the resocialization of women to correct class consciousness. The group's slogan "personal is political" was based on the belief that social change could occur only when women understood their common plight (Hanish, 1971; Morgan, 1970). Consciousness raising was designated as the appropriate means for increasing awareness among women.

> We regard our personal experience, and our feelings about that experience as the basis for an analysis of our common situation . . . our chief task is to develop female class consciousness through shared experience . . . Consciousness raising is not "therapy," which implies the existence of individual solutions and falsely assumes that the male-female relationship is purely personal . . . In reality every relationship is a class relationship and the conflicts between individual men and women are political conflicts that can only be solved collectively. (Redstocking Manifesto in Morgan, 1970:534-535)

The heart of the Redstocking ideology was the prowoman line. Previous feminists explanations of female behavior included the idea that women were socialized or "programmed" from childhood into particular roles and values that ultimately served to restrict them. Redstockings rejected the "brainwashing ideology" which seemed to presume that women dumbly accepted male definitions of themselves. Redstockings argued what women did—whatever they did—was acceptable. Women's behavior was simply a rational response to social demands placed on them (Hole and Levine, 1971; Redstocking Sister, 1970). Change needed to occur in men. It was not women's behavior that was unacceptable, but men's (Gardner, 1970). The Manifesto contained the following basic statement of the prowoman line.

> We also reject the idea that women consent to or are to blame for their own oppression. Women's submission is not the result of brainwashing, stupidity or mental illness but of continual daily pressure from men. We do not need to change ourselves, but to change men. (Redstocking Manifesto in Morgan, 1970:534)

The prowoman line and consciousness raising were compatable. The prowoman line implied that women unwillingly but knowingly adhered to gender role stereotyping because of social pressure. Logically then, they should join together and support one another in efforts to break away from role restrictions. The support from other women would be a

means of counteracting the impact of negative sanctions imposed against those who violated gender role stereotypes. Consciousness raising complimented the ideology by allowing women to share their experiences and feelings with one another without fear of contradiction or sanction. All participants' problems and feelings would be considered equally important and all women would receive support from all other women in the sessions.

Some feminists perceived there were dangers in the prowoman line—that the group could become uncritical or lose its action orientation as a result of its concern with "testimony" (Feminists, 1971). Many women feared that the emphasis placed on revealing personal experiences in a totally supportive atmosphere would divert energies of participants from confronting social issues. In fact, the ideology and the exclusive use of consciousness raising lead to meetings where Redstockings simply related "horror stories" of exploitation and oppression (Deckard, 1975). Most of the activity of the Redstockings involved "glorification of the victim" through verbal testimony and support (The Feminists, 1971). Almost none of the group's energies were directed toward social change. Suggestions for personal change (getting divorced, leaving a lover) were scorned as an indication of a lack of understanding of structural factors that restrict women's behavior (Deckard, 1975). Only men needed to be changed. Ultimately the group provided no avenues for affecting change either social or personal. The Redstockings became politically inactive. Eventually politically dissatisfied women began to drop out of the group and join more action oriented organizations. In a short time, the Redstockings were dissolved (Cassell, 1977).

New York Radical Feminists

Several Redstocking dissenters joined with early drop outs of the NYRW and founded a new organization called New York Radical Feminists (Carden, 1974; Hole and Levine, 1971). These women tried to combine consciousness raising with political action. The membership of the group quickly grew to 200 at which time they began to split into smaller consciousness raising groups (Carden, 1974). The CR groups became part of the NYRF three stage program of participation in the organization. The first stage was membership in one of the semi-autonomous CR groups called brigades. During this stage the women interacted in the groups for about three months and were able to increase their awareness of women's condition—get correct consciousness. Then the brigades were expected to educate themselves about the history of the women's movement, which lasted three months also. After completion of these stages, the brigades would vote to accept the Manifesto of the New York Radical Feminists and join the larger organization which was dedicated to political action (Deckard, 1975).

Before the organization really could formalize the three stage program the brigades began to break apart due to internal tension. The Stanton Anthony Brigade, made up of the founders of the Radical Feminists became known as an elitist group which would not accept new members. Other brigades accused the Radical Feminists of operating in a non equalitarian fashion. By 1970 the three stage program had been abandoned (Carden, 1974). Many of the consciousness raising groups continued to meet for as long as a year. New CR groups developed which claimed affiliation with

the New York Radical Feminists, but they never moved past the consciousness raising stage.

Diffusion

The technique of CR caught on and spread all over the country (Yates, 1975; White and Goode, 1969). Within a few years, NOW chapters (which had initially opposed the politically inactive CR technique) sponsored their own versions of CR for the "education" of members, although they maintained their primary interest in action (Carden, 1974). In fact, Cassell (1977) argues that CR became so popular that by the spring of 1972 ". . . every block in Manhattan had at least one active consciousness raising group" (34). For women joining in the Mid-1970's several things about CR groups were appealing: they were readily available; their small size made them easy to organize; groups could meet in people's homes; there was no need for a trained leader; they provided a reason to get out of the house (Carden, 1974). Groups were conducted on college campuses, in apartment buildings and counseling centers, through women's organizations, and even over the radio (WABI FM Radio, 1970).

Consciousness raising changed in the mid-seventies. Much of the radical rhetoric of the early feminists was dropped as suburban women became involved in the sessions and as the radical student movement on campuses disappeared. While the personal value of CR was always recognized by feminists, current trends in CR seem to have resulted in more frequent concentration on the "therapeutic" aspects of CR than the implication of CR for revolutionary goals. CR in the mid-seventies seems

to be valued more for its possible contributions to personal change rather than social change.

The distinction between Consciousness Raising and therapy is an interesting one that is often made in the professional literature (Rush, 1973; Brodsky, 1973). Basically, therapy is viewed as treatment for mental health problems. When women enter therapy it is assumed that they need to change themselves to "fit" into society (Rush, 1973). Therapy has many negative connotations for feminists—oppression, exploitation (sexual and other), and lack of attention to women's special problems (Chesler, 1972). Most of the negative aspects of therapy are attributed to male dominance in the development of psychological theories and in clinical practice. Consciousness raising is seen as an alternative to therapy for women (Brodsky, 1973). Consciousness raising provides an opportunity for a healthy woman ". . . to gain a greater awareness of herself . . . within the social context" (Verny, 1974). The process of interacting in CR groups may have beneficial or "therapeutic" outcomes for women in dealing with life situations, but it is not perceived as therapy per se. CR is not personal therapy because it is a technique designed to identify social problems that influence women's lives.

Increasingly, however, feminist psychologists and "popular psychologists" have adopted consciousness raising as a self help technique for women that avoids the pitfalls of traditional therapy. Annette Brodsky (1973) argues that consciousness raising groups offer women greater attention to their special needs and problems than traditional therapy. She proposes that understanding consciousness raising groups and the

issues behind their inception in the women's movement may lead to more enlightened treatment of women by male and female therapists (1973). Indeed, one chapter in Katz and Bender's The Strength in Us: Self Help Groups in the Modern World (1976) and one chapter in Burtle and Frank's Women in Therapy (1974) deals with the positive value of CR for self help. Therefore, despite the proclaimed differences in CR and therapy, many recent writings point out the parallels of the CR and therapy process or suggest CR as a substitute for therapy.

> Most CR group participants resent established forms of . . . group therapy . . . . Yet CR works so well precisely because they share so many basic concepts and techniques of traditional therapy groups—for instance, size of group, duration, frequency of meeting, stress on open honest communication . . . (Verny, 1974:207)

> The consciousness raising group process . . . is a therapeutic process that facilitates individual growth and change through reliance on many of the same factors that operate in successful group psychotherapy. (Warren, 1976:138-9)

> The move toward therapy as an extention of consciousness raising is a move from definition and analysis of the problem in class terms to action by individual women . . . . Thus, the purpose of therapy is no longer helping women understand, accept, and properly adjust to her "femininity" . . . . Instead such groups are helping women to examine the consequences for them personally of the conditioning of the culture. (Whiteley, 1973:28)

> Although consciousness raising groups and psychotherapy are posed as alternatives in this paper, and their major differences stressed rather than similarities, in reality they often serve as problem solving mechanisms for the same people, sometimes simultaneously. (Kirsh, 1974:353)

The shift in the emphasis in the description of CR probably reflects a similar change in the general perception of Consciousness Raising among women involved in groups. Some the literature suggests that the practice of CR has merged into the Self Help Movement. CR is used more

frequently as a means of fostering personal development and self awareness rather than development of radical political ideology.

> At the same time, there is more to CR than dealing with the oppression of women . . . . People wanting to raise their own consciousness may also be interested simply in fully exploring their roles in order to understand themselves and other better . . . (Sorensen and Cudlipp, 1973:9-10)

> It seems probably that this distinct theme of self help . . . makes the experience of participation in CR especially meaningful and influential for the individual who has become involved. (Cherniss, 1972:110)

The extent to which CR has been appended to the Self Help Movement is demonstrated by the growing interest in CR for men (Verny, 1974). CR was originally intended to raise women's consciousness about their "oppression" by men so that the women might make some social change in power relations. Given this ideology, there would be no need for male CR since males do not need to develop class consciousness against an oppressive group.[1] The development of male CR must be premised on the notion that CR is a means of self help or personal liberation for any person rather than a means for promoting radical change in the gender based power structure.

In review, feminists in the sixties emphasized the necessity of consciousness raising to raise women's awareness of their social condition so that they might fight for social change. CR was viewed by these women primarily as a means to an end. The therapeutic aspects of CR were seen

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[1]Radical feminist Robin Morgan once went to men's "CR groups" in New York and asked them to disband because she felt they were resistent to feminist movement (Dreifus, 1973). Apparently the response to male CR has changed in the last few years.

as byproducts of increased awareness. Increasingly, women in the seventies have depicted CR as an end in itself—a technique for providing support and aid to women dealing with personal problems. Today, the therapeutic benefits of CR are more likely to be considered primary outcomes than political change.[2]

Technique

Consciousness Raising is a particular style of small group interaction characterized by some specific principles of organization and operation. In her paper on Consciousness Raising, Katie Sarachild (1970) noted only two essential procedures for these groups—speak honestly and always test theoretical generalizations against personal experience. She argued the foundations of communication between women would be honesty which would lead to trust, and being personal which would lead women to face their own "exploitation" rather than dealing with abstract "oppression."

These procedural guidelines apparently were too amorphous for many beginning groups which needed an explication of the actual methods of conducting a CR group. Different approaches appeared in the popular women's literature. Several major suggested ground rules which appear in several sources are presented below (primarily from Dreifus, 1973).

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[2]The growth and popularity of self help groups is the US in recent years is shown by Back in Beyond Words (1972) and Schur in Awareness Trap (1976). Of course, anyone who scans bookstore shelves will notice the proliferation of books on Transactional Analysis, EST, TM and others. The social factors which have precipitated these groups probably contributed to the change in definition of CR.

Membership should be about 5-12 women who may be found through friends, in neighborhoods, or through posting signs around town. They may be recruited from other women's groups such as the PTA or League of Women Voters. Homes may be the easiest and most pleasant places to meet. The groups should be closed to men, since they may try to dominate the sessions and inhibit expression of dissatisfaction. Besides, many of the experiences that women want to talk about are more relevant to women—childbearing, sexism, makeup and clothes, etc. Weekly meetings are recommended to keep the continuity of the groups. The meetings should last several hours to allow time for the issues to be covered. Regular attendance is important to build a sense of trust and responsibility among members. Leadership of the group is a primary consideration. The originators of the technique sought to minimize or prevent the development of a power structure in the sessions by refusing to designate a leader. In this way, all the women would be encouraged to participate equally and each woman's opinion would be considered to have equal importance. Some groups need more organization or leadership in directing interaction. Dreifus recommended several alternatives for nonauthoritarian leadership—rotating leaders, having a facilitator or a leader who organizes the early sessions and then "retires."

Many sources suggest methods of conducting consciousness raising sessions. Perhaps the most widely disseminated guidelines for session operation are MS's (1972) "A Guide to Feminist Consciousness Raising."

The MS article stresses several points. First, the MS article makes no provision for any type of leadership in sessions. This article

suggests that women be called on in turn to speak of their personal experiences with exploitation. This is called "giving testimony." No one is supposed to interrupt anyone else's testimony nor give advice or judge another's testimony. After the testimonies are delivered, the article suggests that women discuss openly common elements of their experiences. To prevent any person from dominating the discussion, the article recommends meetings be conducted in the following way. Each session should begin with each member giving 5-10 minutes discussion about what is bothering her, then group questions, debate, and analysis. Each member would have a chance to speak. Other guidelines for interaction are: no one should make antiwoman comments, be forced to speak, dominate the conversation, criticize other women's experiences or feelings, generalize (talk about "The System") or give strictly psychological interpretations of women's problems.

There are numerous other sources for suggestions on how to organize and operate CR groups (Paulsen and Kuhn, 1976; Perl and Abarbanell, 1976; Peterson, 1975; Rush, 1973; Sorensen and Cudlipp, 1973; Levine et al., 1973; Walker, 1974; Kirsh, 1974; Allen, 1970; Sappho Collective, 1971; Katz and Bender, 1976; Pogrebin, 1973). There is strong agreement that groups should have 5-15 members, meet weekly for a few hours, have only female members, develop no leader or at least have a nonauthoritarian leadership, allow no criticism of other women in the sessions, insist on contributions from personal experience.

Review

CR has its roots in the recent radical women's movement. CR was originally intended to be a style of interaction that would provide revolutionary ideology and lead to social change. Soon after the creation of CR different factions within the women's movement began to disagree about the purpose and procedures. As many of the radical groups disagreed and eventually dissolved, the idea of CR was diffused in the popular literature. Most recently CR has been defined as "therapeutic" form of interaction for women that may lead to greater personal development and self awareness. The political rhetoric of early CR largely has been dropped and the rhetoric of self help has been adopted. Indeed, there is some indication from the literature that CR participants in current groups are more likely to be suburban, middle class women rather than radical movement participants. The changes in the use of CR may be a result of the changes in the perceptions of what CR is expected to do as well as a consequence of the types of people that are joining. Many CR groups may resemble self help groups in technique and function more than radical collectives.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Whether or not a researcher employs qualitative or quantitative research methods or a combination of them depends upon the nature of the research problem. Qualitative research tends to focus not only on description and explanation of social phenomena but also on understanding social events and actions. Although some quantitative sociologists equate causal analysis with understanding, other sociologists intend much more when they refer to understanding as part of the research task. The latter tradition in sociological investigation traces its origins to Weber's notion of verstehen. Qualitative sociologists are interested in empathetic understanding, a subjective knowledge of social situations from the actor's perspective.

Weber advocated the study of social action that recognized the cultural meaning of action for the actors. Weber believed the unique nature of the object of investigation in sociology—social action—demanded a particular methodology not found in the natural sciences (Abel, 1948; Truzzi, 1974). This methodology must include a subjective understanding by the researcher of the meanings of action and interaction to those involved. It must also include understanding of the cultural context in which social action occurred (Munch, 1975). Weber believed that sociologists must concern themselves with the subjective knowledge of the social world that could be gained through understanding or verstehen.

The concept of subjective understanding was incorporated into U.S. sociology through the Chicago school. Sociologists conducted ethnographic studies on various groups throughout the city, seeking to adequately understand, from the member's perspective, the different social worlds that existed in the city. Participant observation was one of the major techniques employed in this research (Faris, 1967). Although this school of researchers was frequently criticized for their descriptive excesses, participant observation survived as an accepted technique for qualitative investigation. By experiencing the social milieu of the subjects and interacting with them, the researchers understood the meanings created by the subjects about their social world.

Participant observation research is based on the assumption that people's actions are determined to a large extent by the meanings that they attribute to the objects and events around them. As Blumer (1969) suggests, the idea that meaning and action are interrelated has many theoretical and methodological consequences. Taking the actor's meaning as a significant part of sociological investigation implies that the researcher must: (1) perceive objects as the subject perceives them, (2) be able to take the role of the subject in his/her social world, (3) observe meaningful interaction in face-to-face encounters with the subjects. Traditional research techniques such as surveys or experiments do not yield relevant observations for the researcher who is interested in understanding the social construction of meaning. Participant observation is an appropriate technique because it allows the researcher to become involved in face-to-face interaction in a natural setting where

she/he may directly observe the subjects' behavior and the meanings assigned to that behavior.

Participant observation research is not without its critics. Joan Huber (1973) for instance has argued that no amount of participation in social situations will divest the sociologist of previously held biases which will naturally structure what is "understood" in the research setting. She claims it is impossible for the sociologist to see the world from the perspective of another actor, since the sociologist already has preconceived notions about the social world before entering the research setting. Thus, she believes that any theory that derived from qualitative investigations is tainted with the biases of the researcher and represent his/her own interpretation of social reality, not a subjective understanding of the subject's world. Certainly, there is no way to deny that the biases of the investigator may shape the product of qualitative research. The researcher must simultaneously occupy the role of social scientist and the role of a member of the group, while trying to avoid "going native." Theory that emerges from qualitative research is shaped by the researcher's analysis of events investigated. However, it is naive to assume that quantitative research is any less subject to investigator bias from the construction of the research instrument and hypotheses to the interpretation of the results. Indeed, philosophers of science have argued that all scientific investigation, whether in the natural or social sciences, is nothing more than a way of structuring reality that seems to make sense to the researcher at the time, given the current body of scientific knowledge (Kuhn, 1970). Such

controversies may never be resolved. In general, most sociologists would agree that direct participation in interaction in a natural setting is an informative, thought-provoking, and productive activity.

Selection of the Subjects

There are thousands of CR groups meeting all over the country, some affiliated with the women's movement and some independent of it (Carden, 1974). Time and financial limitations limited the range of groups for this study to a group in the community in which the researcher resided. Since CR groups often are not attached to any official feminist organization, initial inquiries about groups were made through informal feminist networks. The search did not produce a group that could be joined at the beginning—only groups already in progress.

The local Women's Center and a chapter of NOW were contacted next. Neither was planning to conduct a group in the near future but were receptive to the researcher starting one. In both cases this would have meant joining the organizations (and paying membership fees) and that the participants would also have had to join the organizations (and pay fees). This course of action was rejected, first, because the researcher did not want to "run" a group herself since the purpose was to participate and observe. Secondly, it was ethically questionable to charge people money when their conversations would be recorded for research purposes. A more pragmatic consideration was that charging a fee would have eliminated many women from possible participation and would have tended to draw paid members of those organizations. Finally, there was the risk that by

organizing the sessions, the researcher would have affected the behavior under investigation by controlling aspects of the sessions, such as meeting place, time, number of participants, topics, etc. (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955).

A CR group was advertised in the school newspaper at a large southeastern university at the time the researcher was trying to locate a group. The organizer of the group was contacted through a mutual friend and the researcher obtained the organizer's permission to be a participant observer in the group providing none of the participants objected.

This group of women seemed to be appropriate for the proposed research. The sessions were close to the researcher's residence, at the right time, conducted by another person, free, and advertised widely on campus. A limitation was that the sessions would be predominately composed of college associated women since they would be conducted on campus, even though they were open to people outside the university. (However, most CR groups in the U.S. are composed of college educated women.)

Having gained departmental approval for the proposed use of human subjects the researcher began to attend the sessions. The sessions were conducted over the period from February 1976 to August 1976 with breaks in the meetings when there was a college vacation and members were out of town. The sessions were conducted in the counseling center of the university once a week in the afternoons to accommodate school and work schedules. At the first session, about seventeen women were present including the facilitator and the researcher. The researcher participated

in the first session (an organizing session) without disclosing her intentions. Since no one other than the facilitator was aware of the proposed research at this point and had not consented to it, the session was not recorded. After the meeting the proposed research was explained and the participants in the sessions were asked to allow the researcher to tape the sessions. All the women agreed to the proposed research and expressed enthusiasm about the topic. Some even asked if they could help the researcher in other ways.[1] All those who intended to continue with the sessions signed informed consent forms.[2] As new members entered the sessions they were asked to sign consent forms, also (see Appendix A). Some of the women in the first session could not continue to attend because of schedule conflicts. After all the sessions were completed, follow-up interviews were conducted with participants about their experiences in the sessions. The participants who were available after the completion of all the sessions were interviewed individually (some had left town and left no forwarding address). This study consists of 15 audio taped consciousness raising sessions (approximately 22 hours) and 10 audio taped interviews with participants and facilitator (approximately 7 hours).

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[1]One participant offered to introduce the researcher to members of her lesbian group if she wanted to research them. Another woman said she would like to help collect data on NOW chapters if the researcher was interested.

[2]Members were not told that the research was on reality construction in particular but that a study was to be done on consciousness raising.

Data Collection Techniques

This study is concerned with the construction of reality in consciousness raising sessions and with the evaluation of those sessions by the participants in retrospective reconstructions of reality. Data were collected by observation and interviews. Transcribed tapes were relied upon heavily in the analysis.

Arguments outlining the virtues and problems of qualitative research abound (McCall and Simmons, 1970; Douglas, 1970; Phillips, 1971). Rather than review the debates over the "objective" and "subjective" modes of investigation, the factors that made participant observation and interview most applicable to this particular study are presented.

Participant Observation

One of the most important factors in effective consciousness raising is that every woman feel free to express emotion and be able to trust all the other women with her confidences (Allen, 1970; Deckard, 1975; Sorensen and Cudlipp, 1973). One of the ways that confidentiality presumably is insured is through the expectation that if all the members disclose personal information each should be inhibited about repeating another person's revelations. The presence of a nonparticipant would threaten the trust developed by the women. It would be disruptive of interaction to be a nonparticipant observer in a CR session. This is the reason that facilitators are required to be participants in the interaction.

Participant observation involves the researcher in the subject's activities and may create "bonds" between the researcher and the subjects

which minimize the potential disruption of audio taping interaction, since the participants may be more likely to trust the researcher whom they "know" (Gold, 1958).

In addition, the experience of participation should make the investigator more sensitive to and aware of the feelings of the members about revealing intimate details of their lives (Dean et al., 1967). This kind of understanding might not be obtained from direct observation alone, nor from indirect observation of transcripts of the sessions. Development of sensitivity is facilitated by face-to-face interaction. Participant observation has the advantage of allowing the researcher to experience the participants' reality and understand what participation in CR means to them. Potentially, participation allows the researcher to "see" the world as the participants "see" it. Participation is, then, essentially to an investigation of construction of reality.

> The fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being is face-to-face interaction. Face-to-face interaction has the irreplacable character of non-reflexivity and immediantly that furnishes the fullest possibility of truly entering the life, mind, and definitions of other. Through taking the role of another face-to-face, one gains a sense of understanding him. (Lofland, 1971:2)

Several factors were considered significant to the nature of the role of the participant observer in this study. The dilemmas that participant observers face about the appropriate role to take in the field have been reviewed many times (McCall and Simmons, 1969). The researcher resolved not to direct the conversation in the sessions by introducing topics or initiating session discussion. Researcher's comments were limited to giving illustrative examples which supplemented

examples presented by other participants. The researcher asked participants questions when she wanted them to explain remarks that were unclear but she never challenged anyone's construction of reality. Challenging participant's statements might have changed their constructions of reality. The purpose of the study was to investigate their reality not to observe the effect of pointed questions on their behavior.

Since the facilitator was present in the sessions, the problem of researcher having to take a leadership role was obviated. Consequently, the nature of the interaction was generally guided by the facilitator or other session members. There were occasions when the researcher was obligated to introduce a topic (usually by the facilitator). On those occasions, the researcher tried to disclose a personal problem or feeling just as the other participants would have done and let them take over the analysis and further interaction.

The use of the tape recorder was invaluable in obtaining an exact record of the interaction. Taping eliminated the necessity of "sampling" during research since an exact record of all verbal transactions could be made. It also allowed the researcher to interact more freely without trying to commit verbal accounts to memory.[3] Freedom to interact was very important in maintaining relations with participants since the researcher as a participant was expected to be paying attention to the conversations, commenting, and contributing. Finally, since the sessions were an hour and a half long with no breaks, notes on the interaction

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[3]The researcher transcribed all of the tapes herself.

would have been hard to make without the recorder and would have been subject to selective recall and perception.

Additional field notes about nonverbal interaction were typed into transcripts. The significant inflections in verbal actions were recorded in parentheses where appropriate and appeared in the data used in this work. Notes were also made when several participants made verbal agreements (such as "yeah, yeah"). These notes appeared in the transcripts as "other agree" in parentheses.

There were limitations to participant observation. In some cases, information about issues related to the sessions could not be obtained from observing the sessions, e.g., discussions between participants in other settings. If the participant observer had emphasized her research role by directing questions to the participants during the sessions, the role of participant could have been invalidated.

Interviews

In order to obtain information without disrupting the interaction another technique had to be utilized. The researcher supplemented the session tapes with semi-structured interviews. The interviews were not highly structured but specific questions were asked of all subjects (see Appendix B).

> I conclude that no single method will ever meet the requirements of interaction theory. While participant observation, for example, permits careful recording of situations and selves, it does not offer direct data on the wider spheres of influence acting on the self . . . because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observation must be employed. This is termed triangulation and I now offer as a first methodological rule the principle that multiple methods must be used. (Denzin, 1970:26)

One does not have to accept all of Denzin's arguments to agree that a single method—such as participant observation—may leave gaps in information for the concerned researcher. Since participants might not have directly voiced their feelings about what CR experience meant to them during the sessions, interviews provided a means to gather information on "accounts" of the experience by the members. In interviews with all the participants after the sessions were concluded the researcher dropped the "participant" role and asked questions directly of the women. All of the former participants who were accessible were interviewed. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions designed to investigate how women perceived the sessions and evaluated them.

Analysis of Data

Qualitative researchers do not seek to prove hypotheses or to establish causality in their investigations—they seek to understand, analyze and describe social interaction or settings and to develop categories which represent the forms that social behavior may take (Robinson, 1951; Glaser, 1965; Turner, 1953). Theory tends to stimulate research and in turn to emerge from the data analysis process.

Data analysis is necessarily part of the entire data collection process. As the researcher analyzes the data and collects more data, the research problem begins to take shape. The researcher may enter the field with general questions and ideas about the social situations under investigation, although the theoretical design and concepts of the study are flexible. The researcher develops sensitizing concepts and identifies

categories of events and behavior and linkages between categories in order to explicate the concepts.

Many qualitative researchers utilize a system of making theoretical notes to themselves in their field notes as the data collection process progresses. The researcher relates the tentative categories to the data being generated to determine the analytic utility of the categories in the emerging theoretical scheme. This process of referring from theory to data continues throughout the collection of the data, so that analysis and collection occur simultaneously.

A delicate balance between too little analysis and too much structure must be maintained in the process. If the researcher tries to develop categories too quickly, the category selection may bias the rest of the collection since the researcher selectively may attend only particular phenomena. Another potential error, however, is waiting too long to begin analysis since category development may lead the researcher in new and productive directions. Maintaining this balance is only one of the factors that makes qualitative research a demanding and rigorous process.

In this study, category development was a slow and laborious process. When the researcher initially entered the field, she was sensitized to the socialization process in small group interaction. As the data collection proceeded, it became apparent that the concept socialization would not explain the interaction being observed. The data simply did not fit the initial concepts.[4] Several limitations in the original

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[4]For example, the researcher had hoped to develop the concept "desocialization" to refer to unlearning certain characteristics defined as undesirable. The researcher tried to identify categories of

analytic scheme became apparent. First, socialization was not a linear process that could be measured over a period of 16 sessions, for people do not move systematically from lower levels to higher levels of consciousness. Second, the sessions represented only one and one half hours of the women's total interaction in a week. The researcher was unable to observe the numerous possible influences of the participants' behavior. There was no control for these confounding influences or for previous socialization in the women's lives. Finally, the observed interaction often appeared to involve reaffirmation of previously learned values and attitudes rather than a generation and internalization of new values and attitudes.

The researcher also questioned whether or not the participants formed a "small group." The rapid turnover of the participants made it difficult to analyze the interaction using the concept group.

Thus the initial theoretical concepts were discarded and the researcher reexamined the data collected at that time. Reexamination of the transcripts and participation in new sessions helped the researcher to develop a new theoretical orientation. The researcher was guided by the following questions: "What is the meaning of what is being said in

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desocialization in session transcripts. Categories of desocialization included: not behaving like males who exploit women; not being too concerned with appearance to attract men; not changing behavior to please men. As the research continued, it became clear that the data were not sufficient to discover whether session participants had unlearned ways of behaving. To illuminate this concept one would have had to observe outside sessions. A better conceptual frame had to be found to explain what was happening <u>in</u> the session.

the sessions to the participants?" and "What is being accomplished by this interaction?"

By the end of the consciousness raising sessions the researcher recognized the need for more information about what the women themselves thought about the sessions—what the sessions meant to them. Thus follow-up interviews were conducted. The interviews revealed different interpretations of the sessions given by the various participants. During the interview phase, the researcher recognized that the women were involved in a process of constructing reality—that is giving meaning to their participation in sessions. Since they reconstructed reality about the sessions, perhaps they were involved in a similar process during the sessions (giving meaning to the social world they were discussing). Thus, examination of the analytical possibilities of reality construction as a theoretical scheme was begun.

The transcripts were reexamined in order to establish broad categories of behavior related to the sensitizing concept of reality construction. In addition, separate notes were kept about possible categories for analysis. At the same time, the literature on Consciousness Raising and passages from the interaction reported in studies on consciousness raising were reviewed and compared to the categories developed from this data set. Again the transcripts were reviewed several times. More extensive notes were made as the categories were refined. Categories, used to illuminate the concepts, which did not seem to fit

the data were refined, eliminated or combined.[5] Finally, underlined sections of the transcripts were selected to represent the theoretical scheme presented in this work.

The next phase of analysis entailed cutting the transcripts and placing the quotes in file folders.[6] Some of the quotes subsequently were refiled into more specific categories, and as the relationship between categories was examined, some quotes were deleted from the files, or moved to new files.

The process of "sampling" in qualitative research is difficult to discuss. Insofar as it was feasible, all quotes from the transcripts were placed in the category files although they are not all presented in this paper. Representative quotes were chosen on the basis of their descriptive and illustrative value.

Quotes used to illustrate the topic areas were chosen on the basis of the frequency of references to the topic or the depth of discussion on the topic. Neither criteria was considered more important in selection of quotes or topics. The portions of the transcripts that were richest and most clearly exemplified the theoretical categories were selected for inclusion. Since no linear development was posited, the quotes from

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[5]For example, "evaluation account" was developed as a sensitizing concept. Several categories of evaluation accounts were tried including categories of accounts which stressed self awareness and tolerance. These categories were later merged into one category of "personal growth." The category of evaluation accounts called "friendship" was later abandoned and data reworked into the category "support."

[6]Copies were made of all the transcripts so that there were intact copies of the data for later reference and in case the categories had to be refined further.

the earlier sessions were used in the same way as quotes from later sessions. That is, quotes from later sessions were not used to represent a different level of consciousness or different definition of reality than quotes from earlier sessions. The use of quotes as evidence has considerable precedence in sociology (see for instance Becker, 1963; Komarovsky, 1967; Bryan, 1965; Wallace, 1965), and current advocates as well (Segal et al., 1977; Langer, 1977; Reed et al., 1977; Bogdan and Taylor, 1975).

Due to the nature of the qualitative research process, no hypotheses are presented for testing. Instead this study leads to the development of suggestions for further research. A conceptual framework was developed to give meaning and order to the phenomenon under investigation.

Characteristics of Subjects

The following is a brief description of the thirteen CR participants.[7] Each person is identified by an arbitrary abbreviation used in presentation of data.

Fac—(the facilitator), about 30, married, no children, working for the counseling center and completing a degree in counseling at the university.

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[7]One of the women who participated in the session never signed an informed consent form. She attended two sessions. The researcher tried several means to locate her but was unable to do so. Therefore, none of her conversation in the session is included in the paper, and there is no follow-up interview with her.

B— 30 years old, separated from her husband for one year, two young children, who had come back to school to complete her undergraduate degree.

R— age 21, single, no children, an undergraduate nursing major specializing in Public Health.

C— age 21, single with no children and working part-time, an agriculture science major in her senior year.

W— 24 years old, single, art major who had returned to school to obtain a degree in art history and to apply for graduate school (lesbian although she never claimed to be in the sessions).

T— 21 years old, single, undergraduate who had applied to law school and was completing her undergraduate degree.

J— age 21, single, undergraduate who had not settled on a major and was working part-time in a restaurant near the university.

M— 21 years old, single, Social Science major, employed at the same restaurant as J (M and J were acquaintances from the same home town).

L— a 26-year-old temporary clerical worker who had a BA in education and graduate hours in library science, married to a graduate student in chemistry with no children.

A— age 24, public school teacher, with BA in education and graduate hours, a professed lesbian who had a contract relationship with a woman who lived in another state.

X— a senior journalism major, age 23, single with no children who was working part-time in a restaurant.

Q— 38 year old married, mother of five, working as a kindergarden teacher and trying to complete an MA in educational psychology.

D— a 19-year-old divorced woman who left town after attending two sessions to get away from her husband.[8]

Me— 25 years old, single, graduate student in sociology conducting this research project on Consciousness Raising.

There was a great deal of membership turnover during the 16 sessions. Since the sessions ran through parts of winter, spring and summer academic quarters, women dropped out because of schedule changes at school and work, changes in time available, and because they graduated or moved away. Only one participant (T), the facilitator and the researcher were involved in all the sessions. Four women attended four sessions and five attended six or more sessions. The typical session contained 3-6 participants plus the facilitator and the researcher. The participant patterns accounts for the greater likelihood of certain individual's comments appearing in the data presented in this work. Since there was such a steady change in membership, there was little development of "group norms" or social control mechanisms that might have been expected of a more stable social unit.

Most of the session participants identified themselves as "feminists" (as will be indicated in later chapters). Despite this identification,

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[8]Apparently D left town because of the harassment she was receiving from her husband. No one in the sessions was able to contact her after she left. After calling several times her parents were contacted by the researcher but they refused to give her new address to anyone because she did not wish her husband to find her. Therefore, she could not be interviewed.

none of the participants had ever been in a CR group before. Three of the women stated they had been in informal women's groups which they said were "like CR." Some of the women had been in other women's organizations such as NOW or the League of Women Voters, but were no longer active in them. Thus, many women did not have past experiences which provided them with ideas about how CR would be conducted. Many claimed they entered the sessions not knowing what CR was and had joined to meet people, to see what it was like, or to feel better about themselves.

The participants in the sessions resembled women who participated in many other CR groups. According to various sources (Carden, 1974: Payne, 1971), CR participants tend to be between 25 and 35, white, college educated women in the average CR group as there is in the sessions studied. The differences in characteristics of these subjects and those discussed elsewhere were: the women in the sessions were still in college for the most part while other CR groups tended to have suburban married women or women working full-time, and, the women in the sessions were slightly younger than average CR participants.

Characteristics of the Sessions

The sessions observed were very loosely structured and informally run. Women would sit on the floor and talk about such things as school and clothes until the facilitator arrived. The facilitator usually initiated the general conversations. She began by asking if anyone wished to discuss anything in particular or how everyone was doing. She did not introduce topics for discussion neither were topics planned at the end

of the sessions for the next meeting. There was no procedure to establish a sequence in which members spoke. Any woman spoke when she wanted to speak.

There were frequent gaps in the conversation when no one would speak. The gaps were more noticable in the later sessions because the facilitator had decided not to sustain the discussion when it stopped. She felt that the others should be responsible for introducing topics.

The conversations shifted from one topic to another during the sessions. In some sessions as much as a half an hour was spent discussing such things as local politics, local gambling, someone's job, or someone's annoying relative. During these interactions which were not directly related to consciousness raising, no one attempted to steer the interaction to women's issues.

Since there was a large turnover in membership, some topics were discussed several times. For example, bar behavior was discussed by women in the earlier sessions and was brought up by other women in the later sessions. Consequently, there was no "progression" in discussion of topics. For instance, bar behavior was not discussed in one session, analyzed in the next, and resolved in the end of the sessions. Interaction in a particular area was likely to be at the same level of analysis in early sessions as in later sessions.

The sessions were held in the late afternoon and people were frequently late who had schedule conflicts. The sessions were scheduled late so that the women who worked could join. After the sessions some of the women would go out to dinner together at the student center. I

accompanied them once but had a class schedule conflict much of the time, and could not participate more often.

Review

The objectives of this study were to investigate the constructions of reality of the participants in consciousness raising sessions in a large southeastern university, and to illuminate the meanings that they gave to particular parts of the social world and to their participation in the experience of consciousness raising. A participant observation study was conducted and all the sessions audio taped and transcribed. Each of the thirteen participants was interviewed after all the sessions were completed to obtain her perceptions of the sessions. The interviews were transcribed. Both sets of transcripts were used as data in this study.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A fundamental question facing sociologists is how do people make sense of the events, people, objects and space around them. Action and interaction in everyday life would be impossible if every situation were problematic and every individual unpredictable. If each object or person in the environment had to be considered new and strange, people would spend most of their time trying to insulate themselves from potential dangers of the unknown. Social action and interaction, therefore, rest on the ability to define and give meaning to social situations.

Meanings

Language is an important part of the process through which objects and situations are given meaning. Language symbols allow individuals to classify people and objects in their environment (Goldstein, 1940; Strauss, 1969). Individuals share common meanings and interpretations of the social world (Strauss, 1969). Because meanings are shared, people are able to interact with one another. Symbols tend to structure what people perceive and how they interpret what they perceive (Mueller, 1970; Mead, 1934). Actions are determined by perceptions and meanings assigned to those perceptions (Mead, 1934).

> Language frees people from the slavery of simple reactivity, from the bondage of stimulus-response. It enables them to control and direct their actions vis a vis an object (or situation) because it enables them to name it, to confer

> meaning upon it rather than merely to receive stimulus from it. (Lofland, 1973:13)

Meanings are the basis of actors' evaluations of their relationships to objects and others. Actors are constantly evaluating and reevaluating one another in interaction in order to establish their course of action.

> Social actions are meaningful actions, that is, they may be studied and explained in terms of their situations and meanings to the actors themselves. The disputes over the kinds of meanings involved and the way in which they are to be determined are fundamental, but there is little dispute among sociologists over the proposition that social meanings are in some way the fundamental determinants of social actions. (Douglas, 1970:4)

Definition of the Situation

The idea that meanings and action are related inextricably is not new. For instance, W. I. Thomas wrote (1928) people act in situations according to how they define the situations. Therefore, the situation is real in the sense that its perceived reality produces a particular behavior from an actor. Schutz (1962) further argues that people's reactions are based on what they perceive as real about a situation and their definitions of this reality are strongly influenced by their biographies—what is relevant to them at the time in the situation.

Some definitions of the situation become so generally accepted and so firmly imbedded in everyday life that they acquire the character of objectivity (Berger and Kellner, 1970; Goffman, 1974). For instance, men walking on the street in blue uniforms and hats, badges, and guns are defined as police officers without question. People may not even be aware of them, they are such a part of everyday reality on the downtown street. Imagine how a visitor from an island culture, however, would

react to a person carrying a deadly weapon openly on the street.

> The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple facticity. I know it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubt about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life. (Berger and Luckman, 1967:23)

Naturally, problems occur when what is taken for granted as real, and constant across situations, suddenly changes. This predicament is described frequently in literature. Take for example the plight of poor Alice in her dealings with the Mad Hatter when everything that Alice thought was real became something different. None of her behavior seemed appropriate because the definition of the situation kept changing. Mystery novelists often create scenes in which heroines are driven to the point of "madness" by villanous manipulation of objects by another to make everything that is "real" seem "unreal." In less dramatic fashion, everyone has made embarrassing mistakes of identification because the cues received from a person lead us to incorrect definition and treatment of the other (mistaking an aging professor for the janitor). Thus much of what occurs in everyday life is taken for granted as reality and our actions are based on an assumption about reality. Unusual events force individuals to become aware of their definitions and reevaluate situations constructing new "realities" (Emerson, 1970).

Reality Construction

"Reality" is a socially constructed phenomenon. An interesting question for sociologists is how particular meanings and realities or definitions are constructed and shared (Garfinkel, 1967). Obviously,

people do not all perceive or define situations in exactly the same ways. The concept "multiple realities" suggests that different persons have different perceptions about the same events (Schutz, 1962). Conflicts may occur when people engaged in interaction cannot agree on a common definition of the situation.

The meanings that people apply to situations are often derived from their interaction with "significant others" (Sullivan, 1947). People tend to adopt the symbols, meanings and "reality" of others with whom they interact most closely. At first, the family is a major influence on our reality construction—"and of course, our language is not chosen by ourselves but imposed upon us by the particular social group that is in charge of initial socialization. Society predefines for us the fundamental apparatus with which we grasp the world, order our existence and interpret our own existence" (Berger, 1963:117).

Later, an individual's perceptions are influenced by other relatives, playmates, teachers, as well as the mass media. In adulthood, many of one's meanings are derived from association with particular reference others with whom one compares experiences and interacts (Shibutani, 1955). People are likely to associate with or are attracted to others who share or come to share their perceptions of the social world (Byrne, 1961: Newcomb, 1961; Burgess and Wallin, 1953). Attraction occurs because what is relevant to an individual tends to affect what parts of the social world are perceived and how they are interpreted. Thus, a person shares similar relevance structures with reference others who tend to see the same "reality" as the person (Schutz, 1967; Berger and Luckman, 1966).

> The reference group provides us with a model with which we can continually compare ourselves. Specifically, it gives us a particular slant on social reality . . . that will be . . . part and parcel of our allegiance to this particular group. (Berger, 1963:118)

Social reality has a dual nature. On one hand, people create the social world by assigning meanings to objects and others. Conversely, the particular meanings that are given to the social world are strongly influenced by the social world (Mead, 1934).

> Of course, selves presuppose a prior social process which forms, and is reflected by, the individual . . . but selves, in turn, are distinguishable reconstructive centers of society making a truly human . . . society possible. The self does more than merely mirror the social context. The self constitutes and changes society as really as society constitutes and molds the individual. (Pfeutze, 1954:94)

An additional consideration of reality construction involves the political aspects of the definition of the situation. While some definitions of the situation are structured over time (Goffman, 1974), they do not exist in a vacuum and may be challenged. Sociologists are beginning to recognize the importance of the construction of reality in conflicts among groups and individuals. Thomas Szaz (1970) and Erving Goffman (1961) have increased people's awareness of the powerful role the psychiatric profession plays in defining "mental illness" and "sanity." To the extent that patients' definitions of reality are not accepted by significant others (family and psychiatrists), the patients are powerless.

> The committed patient must accept the view that he is "sick" and his captors are "well"; that his own view of himself is false and his captor's is true; and that to effect any change in his social situation he must relinquish his "sick" views and adopt the "healthy" views of those that have power over him. (Szaz, 1970:132)

Sociologists have also demonstrated that the meaning of behavior changes depending upon which professional group is successful in defining it (for example the "medicalization of deviance" described by Conrad, 1975).

Aligning Actions

The literature on social construction of reality suggests that definitions of a situation may be constructed retroactively. People may construct history to suit the way they think things should have happened or to make the past consistent with present attitudes and behavior (Strauss, 1969). Sometimes others will give a new interpretation to an individual's past and create a new biography for the person based on information about them in the present (Kitsuse, 1962; Garfinkel, 1956). So the past, like other forms of social reality, may be defined through interaction (Silverman, 1973; Strauss, 1969). One way retrospective reality may be constructed is through "alignment of actions" during interaction.

Stokes and Hewitt (1976) believe that concepts such as account or disclaimer provide a theoretical link between interactionist and structural perspectives. Socialization has been one of the few concepts used to relate interactionist and structural perspectives. Socialization has been conceived as the process of internalization of culturally prescribed expectations through social interaction. The degree of relative influence of the interaction process and structural constraints, however, has never been established. Some sociologists believe the literature depicts people as unthinking puppets totally molded by social structure (Wrong, 1961).

Other sociologists tend to describe the culture as constantly emerging from interaction (Blumer, 1969). The structural perspective is more useful in explaining social continuance than social change. The interactionist explains social change but does not deal as well with stability of social structures. Stokes and Hewitt believe that the concept of aligning actions may help synthesize these two perspectives.

They argue problematic situations arise when untoward behavior threatens to disrupt ongoing social interaction. Misalignment of action may be caused by deviant, atypical, unexpected or unusual action by the actor in a social setting. In other words, interaction is threatened when an actor fails to adhere to cultural expectations or prescriptions for behavior.

One technique for restoring lines of action is the verbal action known as alignment. An actor attempts to align actions in order to ". . . square what has been done with the conception of what is culturally appropriate. Such an alignment does not always and, perhaps, does not often take the form of a dedicated effort to do what is culturally expected" (Stokes and Hewitt, 1976:844). Alignment of actions serve two purposes: to sustain interaction and to reaffirm the cultural prescriptions for behavior, even in the face of violation of those prescriptions. Thus the concept of aligning actions may be helpful in explaining change in behavior, as well as persistence of cultural prescriptions for behavior.

The alignment of actions through accounts or vocabularies of motives involves a retrospective construction of reality. Verbal actions such

as accounts and vocabularies of motive may be used to reaffirm social expectations for behavior, to recreate history of an actor, to sustain a threatened interaction, and to give meaning to behavior for self and others.

Vocabularies of Motive

Several theoretical developments contributed to the understanding of retrospective reality construction. C. W. Mills (1940) published the seminal work in the area dealing with the concept of "vocabulary of motives." Psychologists have defined motives as predispositions to act. Sociologists are less concerned with the individual's internal impetus to behave in a particular way, but rather focus on how people make sense of what they have already done by assigning motivations to their behavior retrospectively.

As Mills argues, when behavior is called into question during interaction, the actor uses verbalizations, motives, to continue the interaction. Motives then should not be considered part of an act, but rather expressions of them are acts in themselves. Motives cannot be judged as more or less real in a metaphysical sense. They are more or less socially acceptable or convincing as explanations for behavior. Motives serve to align past behavior with present lines of action by redefining reality. Thus vocabularies of motive are an important area of sociological investigation.

Accounts

Lyman and Scott (1968) extended the notion of retrospective construction of reality in their conceptualization of "accounts." Account

is a concept that refers to a retrospective explanation or justification of behavior that has been interpreted by others as not typical of the actor or as "untoward." Accounts serve to align actions that are incongruent with past behaviors or expectations of behavior when those actions threaten to disrupt interaction. Lyman and Scott outline a typology of accounts in their article which they believe are standardized in the culture and are called for in interaction when untoward behavior occurs.

Vocabularies of motive and accounts as well as "disclaimers" (Stokes and Hewitt) may loosely be classified as means of aligning actions. These actions are intended to make behavior meaningful and to sustain interaction that may be threatened by unexpected or unacceptable social behavior. By reconstructing behavior through explanations, justification or motivations actors try to make their actions understandable and acceptable to others.

In review, subjective shared meanings are essential to the maintenance of everyday social life. Language and other symbol systems are important in the process of sharing meanings with others. Since people have different needs and interests, the way that they "see" a situation is not always the same. People are most likely to perceive reality the same as those with whom they associate frequently and with whom they share similar relevance structures. In everyday life, the people who are able to control the definition of the situation are most powerful. Finally, much of reality is constructed in retrospective accounts of certain experiences.

The reality construction literature has a number of implications for the study of the Consciousness Raising experience. First, a discussion of reality construction leads to recognition of the need to study subjective elements of the CR experience. The meaning of Consciousness Raising for its participants has yet to be systematically investigated or reported, leaving a gap in the understanding of an important aspect of the women's movement activities.

Secondly, the reality construction literature suggests that the person's definition of the situation is strongly influenced by association with others. People tend to reinforce one another's definitions and perceptions during continued interaction and to associate with others who have or evolve a relevance structure similar to their own (Schutz, 1962; Silverman, 1973). Such reinforcing relationships can be examined in Consciousness Raising sessions.

Consciousness Raising as Reality Construction

One could hypothesize that if women meet regularly to discuss their common problems, they come to share common definitions of everyday reality. Since women involved in CR are meeting to discuss problems specifically dealing with being female, it seems likely that they would share similar interests and perceptions about particular aspects of their social world—namely factors associated with gender roles and relations between the sexes.

The literature suggests that definitions of the situation are often created retroactively. Sometimes it is not until a person is asked to

evaluate an experience that the person creates the meaning of the event by discussing and evaluating it. If one is interested in the reality construction of participants in Consciousness Raising, then an important dimension of that reality is how the members evaluate their experience after it is completed. Participants in CR may not give, or even develop, a full account of their experience while it is going on. They may not spend time evaluating their experience during sessions; they may construct their reality by giving retrospective accounts of what the experience of CR meant to them by evaluating what they got out of the experience.

By applying these two principles—that people tend to share definitions of reality with those with whom they associate and that people construct reality retrospectively—two aspects of the meaning of consciousness raising can be investigated. Understanding of how participants define the social world around them and how they define the sessions in relation to themselves can be generated.

What, then, are the objectives of this study? The researcher investigated a social phenomenon (Consciousness Raising) which has been designated by many feminists as an experience which is significant in the creation of a new awareness—a raised consciousness—about the social world. In a sense, CR has been conceived as an experience intended to alter the definition of reality of the participants. Given this orientation and the theoretical perspectives presented thus far, several directions for analysis are indicated.

First, the nature of the reality participants constructed during session interaction about significant aspects of the social world is

discussed. The discussion addresses the question—what are the parts of the social world that emerge as important in Consciousness Raising and how are they defined? In addition, retrospective conceptualizations of the sessions are reviewed. The kinds of definitions of CR experience that emerged in the participants' accounts are presented.

A second concern of this work is to develop a greater understanding of the process of reality construction itself. Toward this end, factors that seem to be involved in the emergence of definitions of reality during CR sessions are identified. In addition, a goal of this work is to expand the use of the concept of "account" to facilitate explanation of the process of retrospective reality construction.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Feminists argue one important aspect of men's power over women is their ability to control the definition of many situations. They feel that men redefine, invalidate or trivialize many of women's experiences. For example, men's definition of housework as a nonwork activity has been widely accepted. Men frequently are perceived as controlling the definition of what is "important" in life—what is a legitimate event to fight over, to cry over or to worry over. The person who controls the definition of reality always is structuring to some extent the interaction that is to follow and the action of other.

> . . . If our experience is destroyed, our behavior will be destructive. Jack may act upon Jill in many ways. He may make her feel guilty for keeping on "bringing it up." He may invalidate her experience. This can be done more or less radically. He can indicate merely that it is unimportant or trivial, whereas it is important and significant to her. Going further, he can shift the modality of her experience from memory to imagination: "It's all in your imagination." Further still, he can invalidate the content: "It never happened that way." Finally, he can invalidate not only the significance, modality and content, but her very capacity to remember at all, and make her feel guilty for doing so in the bargain. (Laing, 1971)

An important aim of the current women's movement is for women to obtain equal power in society. Thus, women need to establish control over the definitions of reality in society. Consciousness Raising may be seen as an attempt by women to redefine situations and roles through association with one another (Eastman, 1973). "Accompanying a rise in self awareness, therefore, is a process of redefinition of self,

significant others, and society. All of which compliment and reinforce her [feminist in CR] fresh perceptions of reality" (Micossi, 1972:87). Sharing experiences in CR permits women to view their common feelings as legitimate—as real. The association also allows them to reinterpret things that happen to them in light of a new "reality."

> A raised consciousness, then, refers to something close to a conversion experience. The significant others who introduce a woman to the transformed reality are her movement sisters. Involved in this "conversion" is a view of the individual's earlier life as preparation for the new reality, with the meaning of important people and events radically reinterpreted. (Cassell, 1977)

Consciousness raising is generally interpreted as a means of changing the reality of women in the sessions. Some authors (e.g., Cassell) even consider CR a type of conversion experience in which women create a completely new world, and reality, and are liberated from their past ideas, inhibitions, beliefs and even relationships (Micossi, 1972).

This interpretation of CR argues radical new realities emerge from the process of group interaction. However, this conceptualization of CR fails to consider the impact of previous and current definitions of reality may have on reality constructed in sessions. Women in CR must continue to interact with others outside the sessions who continue to hold traditional definitions of reality. In other words, participation in CR is part of the ongoing process of interaction that shapes the participants' definitions of reality. Some existing definitions of reality are brought to the sessions and are held after the sessions end. In Frame Analysis (1974) Goffman suggests in most interactive situations only parts of the definition of the situation are negotiable or

problematic. Most of interaction is already structured by existing definitions of the situation brought to the interaction by the actors. In many cases, then, radically different definitions of the situation are not created to replace already constructed definitions.

> Presumably, a "definition of the situation" is almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily do not create this definition, even though their society often can be said to do so; ordinarily all they do is assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and act accordingly. (Goffman, 1974:1-2)

CR participants may continue to hold definitions of some situations that reflect traditional definitions of reality held by the larger society.

This investigation focuses upon the social construction of everyday reality of women in CR sessions. These constructions may sometimes include changed perceptions of reality brought about by session interaction. However, they may also include reaffirmations of already held beliefs. The constructions of reality expressed in sessions may also reflect gender stereotypes. Therefore, it is impossible to focus exclusively upon the "new reality" that is a product of "raised consciousness." Whatever social reality women construct through discussion in consciousness raising sessions is the focus, whether or not these constructions indicate new levels of "feminist consciousness."

Obviously, certain parts of the social reality are more relevant to women in consciousness raising than others. Three aspects of everyday reality the participants defined during the sessions were selected for this study: definitions of situations of discrimination, definitions of women's roles, and definitions of men's roles. These topics were selected for several reasons. First, these topics were discussed most frequently

and in greatest depth in sessions. Secondly, these aspects of reality have emerged as significant in other CR groups (see Fish, 1974 and Cassell, 1977). Finally, discrimination and definitions of men's and women's roles have been mentioned frequently as important topics of discussion in CR literature (Abarbanell and Perl, 1976; Mitchel, 1977; Micossi, 1972).

Sex Discrimination and Prejudice

Sex discrimination generally refers to differences in the treatment of men and women which are perceived to be unjustified. Sex discrimination may be identified as institutional practices in which individuals are treated unequally because of their "caste" (male or female) membership. In recent years, discrimination has been used to refer to institutionalized differences in the treatment of a group of people on the basis of their sex (or race). Of course, the kinds of actions thought to constitute differential treatment or discrimination vary from group to group and over time. Court rulings on discrimination over the last few decades clearly demonstrate that definitions of what constitutes discrimination vary.[1] Different women may not agree on what acts are discriminatory. Certainly, members of NOW and anti-feminists would not agree on what is "discrimination" and what is "protection for women."

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[1]For example Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was interpreted at one time to allow the use of quotas to improve the numbers of minorities in certain institutional populations. This definition is now being challenged in several higher court cases (such as the Bakke and Cramer cases).

Prejudice against women refers to negative attitudes: e.g. women are less valuable than men and "their role is complimentary to men; that they should fulfill their natural 'feminine' functions" (Freeman, 1975: 456). Definitions of what is prejudice against women vary widely. Some women may consider the conception of women as persons deserving special attention as chivalrous, while others might perceive this idea of women as prejudice (indicating women are helpless and frail).

Prejudice and discrimination do not refer to a single objective reality. Different people in different associations are likely to hold divergent perceptions about what constitutes discrimination. In this section, the focus will be upon the kinds of events the participants in the CR sessions perceived as discrimination or prejudice. The meanings of discrimination assigned by the participants and how they perceived instances of discrimination and sexism ought to be handled are reviewed.

A great deal of discussion and testimony given in the sessions concerned discrimination and prejudice. Discrimination and prejudice were sometimes discussed at length and were mentioned in all but two sessions. In general, discrimination and prejudice were illustrated in two ways: by using personal experience or by using an experience of someone outside the sessions, e.g., an acquaintance's experience or the experiences of someone portrayed in the media.

Discrimination

There were lengthy discussions in two sessions dealing with discrimination experienced by two of the participants. In both stories of discrimination the participants involved—R and Q—perceived a male

authority figure had treated them unfairly because they were women. Because each event had happened recently, both women expressed confusion and frustration about the incidents. The women seemed upset and hurt that they should be treated in what they believed as a discriminatory manner. The following is an excerpt from one of the sessions in which R related her experiences trying to play on an all-male intramural soccer team at the University. She arrived late to the session and was obviously agitated when she came in. After she sat down another participant said she had seen an article about R in the campus newspaper regarding her participation in soccer. R then began to tell the women present her story. It was evident from her comments that she had spoken privately to the facilitator about her problem. The facilitator and the female ombudsman[2] apparently had gone to see R practice one afternoon because of the problems they understood she was having with the coach. The conversation began when R expressed hurt because very few of the soccer team members had attended a party she had given after the last game.

> R: "There was supposed to be a party at my house on Saturday for all the people on the team and not too many people showed up. And I talked to a lot of people and they said that the coach hadn't called anyone until the night of the party. Well, then I talked to one of the guys on the team, and he said that another member of the team didn't come because of what I had said in the article about the team." [All the others said that she had not said anything about the team, but about the coach. All echoed the Yeah. They quoted from the article.] "I told the

[2]Apparently the facilitator and the ombudsman had gone to the practice to see what the situation was with the woman, R, who was not being allowed to play. They had gone without her knowledge.

reporter to put in there about how good the team was to me. I am really upset about all this because the only person there who was a real ass hole to me was the coach. He wouldn't let me play. That day that you [the facilitator and the ombudsman] came—that was really bad [the facilitator interrupted to tell when she had gone to the practice and why they had gone].

R continues: "Well it was a good thing that you left soon because when you showed up one of the guys said that we had all better play good because the ombudsman was there. Then there was a lot of hasseling going on. Then the news reporter showed up. At the time that the picture was taken I was saying to the reporter would you please not take the picture. Because E [the coach] is in the background, and he told the reporter to get off the field. Then he screamed at me, and I just couldn't handle it. I went 0000000 . . . . Well see after . . . they knew who you were . . . things are tense anyway. The day you showed up is the day that they issued me equipment—the first day. This was before the last game. Someone had called the paper and the reporter showed up and the coach . . . well . . . oh it was just really a bad time. I just didn't want things to go like that at this time. E was so mad, and he just blew up. He told the reporter to get the hell off the field, and the reporter wasn't on the field in the first place. Well it upsets me because it was E's fault whatever happened to me; it was not the teams fault, and I don't want them to think that of me . . . that I would say anything. I told the reporter that the team was good to me, but he didn't put anything in there about that."

Facilitator: "Well the word will get back through the friends that you have on the team that that is not really what you thought."

B: "Yeah but she had the party and no one came and that upset her."

Facilitator: "Well how many people came?"

R: "Well it is hard to tell . . . see E didn't call anyone until the night of the party. I talked to this guy J, and he said that E didn't call until Saturday night. And he had talked to this other guy on the team, and E didn't even call him. This guy that came

was there and told me all the things that he thought about me and then E came and that upset me so much that I just left. And it was my party."

Facilitator: "The hard part is being the first person to do something like this. I wonder that if the ombudsman had not showed up if you would have gotten to play."

R: "Yeah—that is probably right [she sounds depressed]."

Facilitator: "Like the first person that ever filed a sex discrimination case at the University got a whole lot of harassment, but then the other people that come after had an easier time. But it is really sad."

R: "Well I didn't even want the ombudsman to be there except that I wanted other women to know that they can play intramurals, under Title IX. That is the only reason that I wanted her to come. I have been getting all kinds of reports."

W: "Well it sounds like the old basic personality of the coach there."

R: "Well half the people quit because of him. I told him at the last practice that I wanted to play, and he said that I hadn't played before in the practices. I wanted it specified in the article that it was only a problem to the coach."

Facilitator: "Have you thought of writing a letter to the editor of the newspaper and explaining that it was just the coach and that the team was really nice to you?"

R: "Well the ending of the article in the paper said that I was not bitter about the experience."

W: "YELLOW JOURNALISM [very loud]."

R: "It has been a touchy thing from the very beginning. Like in the last quarter of the last game E came up to me and said that the other team was going to kill me, and that I shouldn't go in. He said that I would be a better person if I don't go in the game. I was scared to death anyway. I would never go through it again. I won't go back to the team next year. It is too much of a hassle. Even if the coach is changed; I can't do it again."

Facilitator: "Have you thought about finding another female player so that you won't be alone?"

R: "There is a woman who keeps score, but she wouldn't go out for it. It has been a mess. I wouldn't go through it again. The whole week before the game I was a nervous wreck. That day that you came I was really a wreck. Oh it is so bad." [She is depressed.]

T: "How big is he—we will slug him . . . [R faintly laughs.]"

L: "It is like we were saying you can't win with men. Nothing you do is right."

Facilitator: "Yes you can win if you keep trying and don't give up. Have you told the ombudsman what happened that day?" [R indicates no.]

R: "The point is that the coach is the chauvinist, and he doesn't know what he has done, and he never will. There is no sense in making a big deal about it, and I didn't want the reporter there in the first place. I tried to get them not to print it."

B: But at the same time R, I showed that article to my little girl, and she has been going through the same thing at school. They wouldn't let her play on the boys team, and she insisted that she should. And I showed her the article about you, and she was proud."

Facilitator: "The golf and baseball teams are in the same shape. Someone said that a woman was trying to go out for baseball."

R: "That is the reason I wanted it publicized. But I would never suggest to anyone that they do it. I went through so much hell. The first day they told me to go away. Then he told me that I couldn't have contact. They never issued me equipment until the end. You can't take that but so long. If it had gone on any longer, I would have been a nervous wreck. E rode in my car when we went on trips, and I paid the gas. We didn't eat. I charged some crackers for them on my credit cards."

W: [Screams] "You really took a lot of shit. I would have thrown them out of the car. Let's just not go and play. You all stay here."

R: "I said when we got there that it was a nice place, and I would like to see it. So then E said well why

don't you drive around and see it during the game. It is just real hard. It is not my nature to be very belligerent, and I just know that I won't go back to that again."

T: "What did you tell him when he said that to you?"

R: [Just shrugged.]

T: "After you take Karate this summer you should go back and see that guy."

W: "You just wonder if those people will ever learn."

Facilitator: "I think that in the intramurals it is going to take someone to file a suit. The whole program is not in compliance with Title IX. They have decided that until there is a grievance there will be no action. It is funded through the activities funds of the students."

R: "You have to be a woman superstar to really make out well. They told me to form a girls' league. I just want to play—no big deal. The guy said that even if I was real good, he wouldn't put me in."

Facilitator: suggested that she contact the Commission for Women and that they could take a group action rather than her taking an individual action.

W: "It is too bad that they can do that to your head. They can make you go back and sit in your little cubicle."

R: "Not only did he say to me that I couldn't play and that, but he said that I was no good. And it gets down to the fact that you are."

Facilitator: "The thing that really gets me is that it really shouldn't be your problem to work out; it should be the University's. That guy is using the University's facilities, why should you go through the hassle when some administrator should take care of it." (Session 8, pp. 3-6)

In this case, the members all seemed sympathetic to the plight of R and seemed to accept the definition of this situation as unfair and discriminatory. In fact this case was referred to in another session by

members illustrating another incident of discrimination. Participants in the session interjected comments during the narrative which indicated their mutural definition of the action of the coach as discrimination. Some made sympathetic comments ("Yeah, but she had the party, and no one came, and that upset her"); others made condemnations of the coach ("Well that sounds like the old personality of the coach"); and some supportive statements ("I showed her [my daughter] the article, and she was proud"). The facilitator as well as some of the participants tried to make suggestions about how R might have handled the situation which ranged from joking references to physically threatening the coach to filing suits or replying to the newspaper.

It is interesting to note a competing definition of the situation sometimes arose in the session interaction in which the coach himself was seen as the focus of the problem. In some of their comments the participants were close to defining the situation as the product of a single individual's personality or disagreeable nature rather than defining the situation as an institutional problem. Such comments depicted the actions in a personal rather than political manner—"Well half the people quit because of him . . ."; ". . . It was the coach's fault what happened on the teams"; "How big is he?—We will slug him." The actions of the coach were characterized as unfair, illegal and vindictive. He was described by participants as abusing not only the woman's rights but her feelings as well. The nature of the comments, however, may suggest the difficulty the women had in constructing a resolution to this problem.

On the whole, the incident presented was defined as one of discrimination—that is, being the violation of the right of women to play intramural sports. The women expressed anger that a woman was not allowed to participate in activities to which she is entitled legally. In this session, situations in which women are prevented from participating in activities because of their biological sex (rather than level of skill) were constructed as discrimination.

A second long discussion of discrimination occurred in one of the earlier sessions. The woman, Q, told the participants about the problem she had experienced with her supervisor in a graduate program. She believed he had been asking her inappropriate questions concerning her personal life that did not pertain to her graduate work. During the session, she defined the situation as one of discrimination. She concluded that the supervisor would never have asked such personal questions of a male graduate student. She had just had a confrontation with the supervisor when she came to one of the sessions and initiated discussion about it. The session ended before there was time for the participants to talk about the situation in detail, so she presented the story again at the next session. The following is an excerpt from that session.

> Q: "Well I am taking a practicuum. The person who was advising me in the early session never said much to me. Then one time when I was talking to him he said . . . well he knew something about my family . . . and he said that he wondered what the relationship was of this thing that had happened to my family was and my desire to go into counseling. So I told him that at this point in my knowledge, I didn't think that it had anything to do with it. But he went on asking questions, probing into my motives, asking if I was over-sympathetic. It seemed that he was saying

that I was wishy-washy and not direct enough . . . well all kinds of strange questions that I didn't like. So then later I saw him, and I said I don't know what you were trying to find out the other day, but I really resented the approach that you tried to use. I told him that if there was something particular that he wanted to know that he should have asked it directly, and I would have told him. He said that he was trying to find out thus and so . . . to see if I would be over-sympathetic to a fault. So I said why didn't you just ask me? So then he got mad at me. First he looked real hurt. Then I felt a little bit bad. He had been nice to me until then, and I didn't know him that well. So then I wondered if I had really said something too hard. And by the time the session was over I had apologized. So then I came in here and talked about how it upset me. Then the next time that I saw him he was in this jolly mood, and he never mentioned it again. So then later when I saw him, he asked me if I like challenging authority figures, and I told him that if he meant, 'Do I get a kick out of kicking them in the tail every once in a while—I do.' Then I told him that I wasn't picking on him, I just had something I wanted to say and I reacted instantly. I told him that I felt that there was something between us that needed to be straightened out, and I was glad I did it. He asked me if I did that a lot, and I said I wasn't sure. Anyway I see how he took it, and I didn't see anything I could argue with. I guess I could have said well do you always take it that way when somebody argues with you."

Facilitator: "Did you feel like it was a male-female issue?"

Q: "Yes, I really did."

Facilitator: "Why? Because you were challenging his authority?"

Q: "It was like he was used to being right all the time, and there was no question in his mind that his motives were just and his methods were correct. There was nothing to discuss."

B: "But do you think that he would have used the same approach with a male?"

Q: "No, I don't think that he would have."

Facilitator: "I also picked up on the over-sympathetic part which is a typical thing that male supervisors use against counseling students."

Q: "I have had principals ask me that as a teacher. There would be a student acting up, and the principal would think that he should have his butt busted and that just wasn't the approach that I used. I think that they are struck when you don't do things their way, and then it is a matter of power."

D: "Do you think that if you had been a man that he would have been more direct and honest."

Q: "Yes, if I had been a man and said what I said to him, it would have been okay because it would have been out in the open."

Facilitator: "Well, do you feel that you should have handled it differently?"

Q: "I told it to them better last week because I had just gone through it, and I was really mad. Now I sort of don't want to remember it, and I don't want it to drag on so it is hard for me to talk about it. But even yesterday I thought that he felt—well, here he is a person that is secure in all the roles that he plays, and he was really trying to be nice to me—poor little me—and here I was not appreciating it. Well, there had got to be something the matter with me because I didn't appreciate what he was trying to do." (Session 4, p. 2-3)

The participants supported her definition of the situation as discriminatory—i.e. the supervisor treated her differently because she was female. They also seemed to agree that the supervisor did not believe it was appropriate for a <u>woman</u> to challenge his authority. As the interaction continued several of the participants recalled experiences in the educational system which seemed to reflect a bias against women. For instance, some of the women mentioned that they had been treated differently than men in admissions practices.

A: "You [to C] told us one time that when you were applying for school they asked about hobbies on the application, and you put down ballet and then when you went for the interview they talked all that time about ballet. That is sort of a way of stereotyping women."

C: "I put down a lot of things on that."

A: "But the thing is that if a man had put down something on there that was irrelevant like . . ."

L: "Gardening."

A: "Yeah, they wouldn't have talked the whole time about that."

C: "Actually, I think that it was better when I went than it had been several years before. I understand that a couple of years ago they used to ask women—aren't you going to get married and quit? They try to tell you that you really want to get married."

X: They are sure that you won't make it halfway through and then get married."

C: "They must have stopped that, or else they thought that I was a hopeless case and couldn't get married anyway [laughs]." (Session 4, p. 4)

The women generalized from this case to their perceptions of the inequities in admission practices. They seemed to affirm the existence of biases against women in the educational system. The women mentioned that during interviews, interaction had centered around irrelevant topics, just as Q's supervisor had dwelt on irrelevant topics with her. Both believed that men would have been treated in this manner. The women apparently agreed they were being treated as less professional or serious persons because they were female.

A: "That is interesting that you have said that men talk to you about different things than they do with men. I have noticed that when I talk to the principal at the school where I taught; he always wanted to talk to me about my family or my hobbies or anything in the world besides the kids in the school and the problems of the school—the things I was interested in. He never talked to me about professional things . . . he always talked to me about personal things or places to go out to eat. I started to avoid him when I

discovered that when he waved for me to come to the office all he wanted to talk about was fried chicken . . . ." (Session 4, p. 4)

Later in the session the facilitator commented that she did not believe women in graduate school were given the same opportunities as men. She mentioned in this session and others her frustrations with the "old boy system" in her graduate program. She mentioned important aspects of graduate training from which women are systematically but informally excluded because they are not valued as professional colleagues (contacts, research work, publications). She claimed male graduate students are given preference and greater consideration by faculty than female students.

Facilitator: "One thing that I have found in graduate school is that I don't think that female graduate students get the same kind of feedback as male graduate students. I think that your work is not considered as important to begin with so that the amount of critical feedback that you get to improve your work is less. I am thinking of, say you are doing a research proposal for the class. The male faculty member will spend more time working on a male student's ideas than on a female student's ideas because it is sort of like you don't exist anyway; then all they give you is minimal attention. It is like they think that you are not as committed. It is a frustrating thing . . . it is like an apprentice system . . . like a fraternity system. All the male students have a big brother and then their students get to be junior authors on articles and things like that. That stuff doesn't happen to females and that is what counts and not all the wonderful grades you get in classes. There they are getting all those great publications, and you keep thinking what is wrong with me? It is real frustrating for me when I figured out what was going on. It is all a part of the system.

L: "I think that women graduate students often end up serving in a secretarial capacity whereas males with the minimal amount of work get their name on the paper. The women are going to the library and doing the research and typing things, and then all they get is thanks." (Session 4, p. 4-5)

Q said she though discrimination extended to financial aide and job placement as well. She concurred that males were more likely to receive preference in professional matters.

> Q: "I know that there were two guys in our program that were complaining last year about how they needed extra money with their families and all, and now they both have assistantships. I would love to have that. They came up with money. I went in and talked to people twice about it, and nothing happened. It seems like . . . I know of a job that came up and before that job was advertised, the man that was doing the hiring went and talked to the dean about the man that he wanted to hire for the job and got a committment for that job before the women saw it."
>
> X: "It just all boils down to the fact that men are valued more than women in our society . . . in almost anything." (Session 4, p. 7)

During the session the interaction covered many aspects of discrimination in the educational system. Women gave examples of how women were given less serious consideration in treatment by supervisors, principals, admissions officers, and graduate faculty. The participants seemed to believe women were not given equal attention in terms of research awards, financial aide, authorship of publications and respect. They constructed these kinds of activities as unfair and discriminatory.

The definitions of the situation of the women concerning this form of discrimination are consistent with the perceptions of authors in the literature on women in higher education[3] (Roby, 1972; Bourne and Wikler,

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[3]Roby outlines structural impediments to women's higher education. Included are—admissions, financial aide, campus regulations, degree requirements, role models and work study as areas of discrimination.

1978) and, these constructions are consistent with comments recorded in other CR groups[4] (Dreifus, 1973).

In the cases of personal experience presented in the sessions the women involved were refused equal consideration to the males in their situations. For these women the experience was reconstructed as being upsetting, anxiety-producing and difficult to handle. The women in the sessions expressed sympathy and concern, and provided suggestions about how to cope with discrimination. The other participants supported the constructed definition of the situation by agreeing, drawing on other examples, or being sympathetic. The two forms of discrimination defined in the session were—preventing women from participanting in sports and treating women as lesser individuals. The first form was defined as a violation of civil rights, the latter as part of a system of subtle and informal inequities in an institutional setting (e.g. treating females in a familiar and nonprofessional manner).

These were the only two significant incidents of personal experience of discrimination in an official setting mentioned during the sessions.[5] Both times the definition of the situation seemed to be shared by the participants in the sessions.

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[4]For example, one woman in Dreifus' CR group described her law school experience—". . . it was obvious to me that women lawyers were not considered equal in any way. If you were female, you had to be twice as good as the male students. The professors were vicious to the girls . . . . For me the discrimination was too heavy. I quit law school." (Dreifus, 1973:187).

[5]Other incidents of unfair treatment mentioned involved intimate not institutional contexts. Such cases generally involved problems in interaction with a boyfriend or husband. One interpersonal incident was reported as discrimination. The participant T had gone to a family

In addition, participants related incidents that were defined as discrimination that had happened to acquaintances or figures in the mass media. Similar kinds of actions were again defined as discrimination. For example, W told the women about a friend who was not allowed to play on a baseball team for which she had tried out. T even related this experience to the situation of the woman who was not allowed on the soccer team.

W: "The saddest thing happened to me. I found out about a definite piece of discrimination. I was giving this girl a ride to this party at a friend's, and she turned to me and said, 'I hate being a woman.' I scratched my head, and I said that I didn't hate being a woman—why do you? She had applied for a baseball team and that was the only reason that they wouldn't let her play. I don't know all the details. I would like to know all the details because she could probably do something about it."

Facilitator: "Must have been a farm team or something."

T: "Did they just not pay any attention to her?"

W: "No, they were going to take her except for the fact that she was a woman. It was so sad."

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reunion but was not permitted to go on a camping trip with her brothers and their male friends because she was female.

T: "I got kind of upset because in our family there is usually no difference in the girls and the boys. And I am all the time getting to do things with them. That made me mad that weekend. I just wished that I could be a guy so much. I am the only girl in my family."

Facilitator: "Why wouldn't they let you stay?"

T: "Well, there were some other guys that came over that weren't in the family."

W: "They thought that they would hassle you or something?"

T: "Yeah. I just wanted to be down there. And it made me realize for the first time. Like I come in here and say I have never been discriminated against, and that is the first thing that has really ever happened to me."

Facilitator: "Do you remember the woman who tried to be on the team last year?"

T: "Yeah, I keep trying to find her. She took off, and I never found her again. The last time I saw her, she was talking about going back to Pennsylvania where she is from to get some more money to go to school." (Session 16, p. 3)

A similar definition of discrimination emerged in this interaction as in the discussion of the personal experience R had with the soccer team. It appeared that one form of discrimination defined in the CR sessions was behavior which prevents women from participating in some activity because of their sex not because of their talent or skill. It is interesting that both of these examples of discrimination involved women who were prevented from participating on all-male sports teams. This behavior may be constructed as discrimination because of its relative visibility. Also, as these cases were told, they were clearly incidents in which women believed they were denied membership on a team because of their sex and not their athletic ability.

The second discussion of an incident which occurred to someone outside the participants dealt with the university's Women's Basketball coach. The story was described by several of the participants. The participants argued that women were not accorded the same respect or consideration as their male counterparts. They discussed the unequal news coverage given to male and female Olympians in the local and school newspapers.

T: "Has anybody read anything in the paper about Pat Head. I have been reading in the paper things all about Ernie Grunfield and Matt Vogle. But there is nothing about Pat."

W: "There was an article in the student newspaper, and the heading was about Pat Head at the Olympics, and then there was only one paragraph in the article about her."

T: "She plays just as much as Grunfield does because he doesn't play that much." [He is also at the Olympics from the University.]

Facilitator: "I am going to pass this on because I told this woman I would. This woman called me from Public Relations, and she was trying to put together a press release on the people that went to the Olympics from here. And she was furious because nowhere in the University were there any pictures of Pat Head. They had 20 pictures of Grunfield. Including the women's P.E. did not have a picture of her. They had to go to the local newspaper and pay the paper for a picture of her. That is awful."

J: "I never even heard of her."

Facilitator: "Now, that is it! She is the woman basketball coach for the women's basketball team at the Olympics."

J: "I didn't even know there was a woman's basketball team."

T: "She is really good. She graduated from my high school. She had to really work hard to get herself where she is now, so everybody is real proud of her. That really got to me. Ever since I joined this group I have started to notice things like that. I have read all this stuff about the men; and I tried to read something about her, and there never was anything."

W: "In the paper they said about her, do you know what . . . that she was a REAL COOL KITTEN! Can you imagine!" [There is laughter.)

T: "I am going to write a letter."

Facilitator: "Why don't you do that because if I do they will say, 'Oh, that is just you, and you are always complaining.' You can write even a two-line thing that says, 'In case you haven't noticed Pat Head is at the Olympics too.'"
[Others ask what she looks like, and T tells them.]
(Session 13, p. 3)

During the interaction, the women seemed to agree that women's achievements in sports, for instance, are not given equal consideration to those of men. Although the woman in this case had attained similar prestigious status on the Olympic team, she was not given equal coverage in media accounts. The session participants seemed to perceive that her accomplishments were trivalized, and she was treated with less respect than male athletes ("In the paper they said about her—She is a real cool kitten!"). As with the example of the woman who was patronized by her supervisor and who found that principals refused to take her seriously, this story seemed to indicate members defined discrimination as the treatment of women as less professional and women's activities as less significant than men's.

These two definitions of discrimination seemed to emerge in both the personal accounts and accounts of other's experiences: (1) discrimination occurs when women are prevented from participating in particular activities solely because of their sex and (2) discrimination occurs when women are treated with less respect and regard than men in engaging in similar activities because of their sex.

As a final note on the constructions of definitions of discrimination, there was some discussion in the sessions regarding the phenomenon termed in the media "reverse discrimination." In general, the participants expressed strong belief that laws and regulations intended to give women equal opportunity for employment and promotion were justified even though they were skeptical that the laws were effective.

> D: "What bothers me is complaints about reverse dsicrimination—be it blacks or women. My father is in a hiring position, and he said that his hands are tied. He said

if I have a position, and there are two people of ability, and one of them is female and one is male, I am going to be pressured from higher up to hire that woman. But what are those quotas? They sure aren't 50-50, and there are 50 percent women. The town that I am from has 14 percent blacks, and so when it comes to hiring my father hires 14 percent blacks. But he is always complaining about being forced into hiring someone in a minority. I can't see the validity of those complaints because how long was it when there could be a mediocre white man, and he would get hired over a superior black man or a superior woman. I have heard guys say that if there are 4 or 5 guys competing for a job and one woman, that the woman will get it, and we don't have a chance. It is not true in parctice."

Facilitator: "I wonder how many times there are really when there is a situation where they are equally well qualified, and you have to pick the woman?"

B: "But there are more than 50 percent women."

Facilitator: "It's 51 percent." (Session 4, p. 6)

In this discussion, the women agreed that the quota systems were not "discriminating" against men and that women were not being hired over qualified men. Also, it appeared the women perceived the quota system had the real effect of creating a "token system" in the hiring of women.

Facilitator: "When you think about it there are very few women who are not tokens at the top."

T: "You mean who got there on their own?"

Facilitator: "I think that in any organization . . . like if you look at the University . . . . There aren't many." [She names the women in the University who are in the administrative offices and are heads of departments. She mentioned that the only female head in liberal arts was in Math.]

J: "It is amazing that it is that . . . that it is math."

Facilitator: "It is interesting that the person who is the head of the math department was a half-time instructor until her husband died, and he was head. Her salary almost

tripled the year that he died. In a way it is not all that funny because she is in the age group when all those women were going into math and science. But I think that part of the informal part of the way that people get promoted is just not available to women."

Facilitator: "I was thinking about something on this campus where most of the women are doing women's jobs . . . so that you get all the women so that they compete with one another and cut each other off." (Session 15, p. 5)

The participants also seemed to perceive women were not "taking" jobs from males. In fact, they expressed the ideas that equal employment opportunities had lead to an increase in jobs for males as they moved into areas that had traditionally been dominated by women.

L: "All that Equal Employment has done is open up fields that were traditionally closed to men. Now they are being coddled through library school. Where women who used to be able to get a job as a nurse now have to compete with men. Plus they are not gaining those jobs in other fields. I think that it is all designed to make you take a step backwards." (Session 6, p. 4)

A great deal of resentment was expressed concerning the suggestion that males were being "discriminated against" when men actually still constituted the preferred group in the job market.

A: "Even now in jobs that used to be predominately women's like nursing and teaching, a male teacher has a job like that over a female."

Facilitator: "I resent that. I resent what is happening in Home Economics because they are really encouraging men, and they are paying them more to teach that. The same things happened with social work . . . . The men go into it, and the salaries go up."

A: "Someone in my other group told me that when the new mayor came in here there were several openings that there was no one planned for and that none of the positions in the city government have been filled by females."

L: "Men are crowding into traditionally dominated female fields, but women aren't getting the same breaks in male fields."

A: "Yeah, they play up the few women that do get jobs in male-dominated fields." (Session 4, p. 5)

Session member also rejected the idea that women were being given special treatment in allocation of funds such as money from athletic budgets.

L: "Did anyone see the article in the paper about the women getting the share of the men's athletic money as prejudicial? The way that it was worded was bad. They said that the women got the surplus—and it is not a surplus because the women get so little anyway."

T: "I have this comic of a football coach who is getting mad and saying 'Those women should not get part of the athletic budget' and he storms down the hall to this room which says Janitor and over it there is a sign Women's Athletic Director." [Laughs]

L: "I really hate it when some one says, 'There isn't enough interest in women's athletics.' They condemn you if you show interest and then they say that there isn't enough interest." (Session 9, p. 3-4)

Once again the women clearly indicated they did not believe females were given preferential treatment in budgeting matters.

In review, the women in the CR sessions generally identified two kinds of behavior as unfair or discriminatory—that which prevented women's participation in particular activities and that which devalued women's work or achievements. The women rejected the existence of "reverse discrimination" and defined attempts to equalize women's employment opportunities as justified but ineffective.

Prejudice

In addition to constructions of reality about discrimination in everyday life, the sessions also contained definitions of prejudice.

Prejudice against women may be defined as a belief that women are less valuable than men and that there are only certain roles that women ought to fulfill in society (wife and mother) (Freeman, 1975). A great deal of resentment and anger was expressed about prejudice against women.

There were two facets of prejudice defined by women in the sessions. The first was the perception by participants that many forms of behavior that would be socially acceptable for men would be considered unacceptable for women. They believed a greater variety of behavior was socially approved for men but was considered "unseemly" or "improper" for women. Some of the participants even believed that women were chastized for the same kinds of activities that were defined as meritorious or at least understandable for men. Although the participants themselves did not use the term "prejudice" it represents the attitudes they described.

C: "Like maybe a man comes from a so-called bad family, from the wrong place. So then maybe he goes up and becomes a pillar of the community, and they say, oh that is wonderful. But if the same thing happened to a woman, they would say that she is trying to sweep her family under the rug."

L: "Like he has the strength to overcome it, and she is a social climber." (Session 4, p. 4)

Q: "Well we touched on how if you had been a man, it might have been different. What irritates me is like the stereotypes that people attach to a male or a female's past. If something happened in a man's family, then people will say that going through that has made him stronger. If the same thing happened to a woman, then they would say that she is trying to make up for it in her life now. They would put her down for that—the same thing that might have happened to a man but for him it gave him strength and for her it is supposed to bring her down." (Session 4, p. 3)

Facilitator: "If somebody got picked up. If they saw this whole group of guys and one female. They would have picked

up the female. Because it is worse for a female to get in trouble than it is for guys." (Session 11, p. 10)

L: "You get back into how on earth did so many women become a minority; well, you have to also consider that women are primarily involved in child rearing, and we have been raising our own minority minded women [others say Yeah]. It gets into one small aspect of it. You were saying about women and men's past. Like if a man suffers a nervous breakdown, it is because of the pressures of his work. But a woman involved in child rearing and nursing can have these immense pressures and chores and have a job, and she would be called neurotic if she had a nervous breakdown. Not only that but you get into the fact that most women are hospitalized by men and their mental illness is defined by men. Men can be eccentric, but women are 'mentally ill.'"

B: "Women are more likely to see themselves as mentally ill—that is why they go." (Session 4, p. 7)

It appeared that the participants perceived a great difference in social attitudes of approved behavior for males and females. These attitudes seemed to be related to the socially inferior status of women. Session participants appeared to think greater latitude was allowed males in their appearance. They stated women are expected to maintain higher levels of personal attractiveness because women are defined as "sex objects" rather than intelligent people.

L: "A greater diversity is allowed for men. Like a man can have a tremendously large nose and can still be masculine and attractive. But a woman with a big nose is a dog. There are much fewer possibilities."

B: "It is okay for a man to be extremely thin to the point that he looks emaciated but for a woman . . . thin women are . . ."

L: "There are standards for women."

T: "Women are more sexual objects . . . like Miss America."

L: "Their bodies are not instruments of labor. They are not draftsmen or elevator operators; they are only women, and men are the ones that have the jobs. I don't know." (Session 5, p. 5)

Another expression of this kind of prejudice defined by the participants was the instance of the male's obviously inappropriate behavior being blamed on the female. During one session, some of the women discussed how sex and rape were frequently redefined by many as always being precipitated by the woman.

L: "I was raised in a very fundamentalist church where sex was always a woman's fault. We were taught to dress very conservatively. I was taught that if a woman were ever raped, it was because of the way she was dressed."

B: "I have heard a sermon in church where the preacher told the congregation that if a woman was raped, it was the woman's fault."

L: "I wore long skirts all the time. Luckily my friend that was very large was Jewish, and she grew up being proud of her body. Men are taught to think like that, and that is how they rationalize it. They would say 'well it is her fault' . . . the men in this church." (Session 5, p. 4)

The women strongly supported one another's perception that such ideas were unfair and sexist.

In addition, another definition of prejudice that emerged in the sessions was the belief that women should play only a limited number of roles. Several women related stories of incidents in which others had "put them in their place" by reminding them of their "proper roles"—wife and mother. One of the women told of an interaction with a male in her canoe class. Although she was married, she had gone to the class alone. When she arrived the instructor was pairing people and giving

instructions. She believed they were confused about her because she did not appear to be in a "pair" with a male.

L: "They didn't know if I was married or divorced or what." [People in the session laugh and say that no one expects you to go places alone when you are married.]

L: "The instructor told them that it does not matter which person was in the front of the canoe. He said several times that you did not have to have your wife in front. He said you could distribute the cargo in the boat so that the smallest person did not have to sit in front. So then we got ready to pair up and this guy ED had been talking to me. I don't know—I must look like a freak because they were all trying to reassure me."

W: The reason is because you're a 'single woman'" [Laughs ironically.]

L: "But I think that I am large enough not to look delicate. Well almost all the people came in pairs. I just like to go places by myself. So I said that I was alone so they said I could go with ED and I thought great I can learn something from him. So we get in the canoe and he say 'Spouse in front.' And I wanted to shove the canoe paddle up his nose. Well he didn't realize what he was doing and I didn't want to get into the rhetoric of the Women's Movement and call him a male chauvinist or something—cause it is not the way to win converts anyway. This was so funny especially since the guy had gone on about no one had to be in the front. They ED comes over here with ihs 'Spouse in front.' I am tired of being a 'spouse.' [Other laugh]

Facilitator: "Do you think you handled it the right way?"

L: "I am going to be real nice to ED. I am going to win him over."

W: "Don't count on it." [Laughs] (Session 7, pp. 5-6)

Members of the session seemed to agree that many people do not know how to treat "single" women. L indicated that others were very protective of her because she was alone. During the story, she expressed resentment at always being placed in the category of "spouse." Her narrative

illustrated that even when a woman is perceived as "single" by a group of people she is recast into the role of "spouse" and expected to play out that role to interact with others (her sitting in the front of the boat is evidently traditionally the wife's place). Others in the session seemed to accept her definition of this situation as unfair (and ironic). They supported the definition constructed by L that she was treated as an anomoly (female without a male), and then labeled in a conventional female role (wife). She was frustrated with the situation and others seemed to agree that the other's behavior was a problem that needed to be handled.

A similar incident was reported by another woman. In this case, J told of her experience with an emergency room doctor at a local hospital.

> J: "Oh guess what happened to me the other night. I cut my finger and had to go to the emergency room and have it stitched. I laid down on the table and the doctor was stitching it and asked where I was going to get the stitches out. I said I might come back here and he said not to do that and tie up the emergency room. So I siad I would go to the school clinic. He said 'Oh are you in school? What are you majoring in?' I said Social Services and made some small talk. I was really feeling terrible and was babbling on about social work. Then he said 'Honey I think what you should do is get the degree and stay home and raise a family.' I didn't even know what he said for a while because no one had ever said that to me before. I thought—why are you saying this to me? He said that I would have enough social problems of my own trying to raise a family." [Others make grumbling noises and agree that that takes gall.]
>
> J: "I was so tired and everything—he was stitching up my finger so I couldn't say 'you son of a bitch.'"
>
> W: "Yes you could as soon as you got off the table."
>
> J: [Almost ignores the comment.] "I was so surprised. It was wierd."

W: "I was at a party recently. I have some friends that I can be pretty crazy with so I was going 'What will I do with my life?' Then someone that I didn't even know got up from the other side of the room and came over and sat down and said 'What you need is the right man' [Laughs loudly]. There were three people around me all of them gay and we looked at each other and laughed [Laughs]. It was so strange. You just don't know how to react at all."

Facilitator: "That was such a funny setting." (Session 14, p. 3)

Again, the interaction as it was reported for the session interpreted the action of the doctor as reflecting an attitude that women ought to fulfill only traditional roles of wife and mother. The doctor was defining work outside the home as inappropriate work for women. Others concurred with her definition of the situation as prejudicial and gave another example of the same attitude. The women expressed frustration at being defined in terms of men and their place in the home.

In both the incidents mentioned, the women reported men had insinuated that a woman's place is with a man, in the home. The same definition occurs in a later conversation. This time J referred to an article she noticed in the Sunday newspaper.

J: "Did anyone see the article in Parade on the female race car driver? It kept making these comments about whether she was married and if she went out with guys and then at the end they said she was real great . . . she is the fastest race car driver for a woman in the world. And then at the end it said 'We were walking down the street and she stopped to look in a store window at a wedding dress.'"

Facilitator: "And it was—will she ever win? [e.g., get married]."

J: "I wonder what she thought of it?"

W: "And it is like poor old Princess Anne. She can't even jump her horse without having it written up when

> she falls off. No one writes about how hard she trained to be in the Olympics. It is real strange." (Session 16, p. 10)

This article was construed as an indication that no matter how much a woman achieved in her field, she would be defined in stereotypic roles.

One woman related an experience she had while waiting to take the entrance exam for law school. She was apparently the only female scheduled to take the exam at that time.

> T: "I felt pretty good. Like I said not too many things bother me, cause I don't notice that much. But I was sitting there and I got there early and there were about 15 or 20 guys standing around and there was me. There was this guy and he was about 30 and he was kind of 'hicky' and he was making the rounds to talk to everyone. He was asking what will you do in law and all this stuff. So he walks over to this guy that is next to me and said 'Well what are you doing here?' I looked around [she laughs and looks around]. I said, 'I am going to take the LSAT to get into law school. That made me mad. I didn't say anything but that made me mad. I hope I got a better score than he did." [All agree and are supportive.] (Session 13, p. 1)

She was indicating that the male suggested a woman should not be taking an exam for a professional school.

All of these stories were interpreted by the women as reflecting prejudicial attitudes—attitudes that women should only be involved in traditional activities. All the women expressed frustration and anger at these attitudes. The definition of these attitudes as prejudicial is compatible with the definitions of prejudice against women which exist in the feminist literature (see Freeman's discussion, 1975).

Review

Part of the reality constructed during the CR sessions concerned definitions of discrimination and prejudice. Members believed that discrimination against women took many forms. Certain behaviors were designated as unfair treatment of women solely on the basis of their sex—those actions which prohibited women from participation in particular activities and those actions which devalued women's work or accomplishments. Participants rejected existing social definitions of "reverse discrimination." They said that attempts to equalize women's employment were justifiable but often ineffective. The women also constructed definitions of what might be called "prejudice." Prejudice was defined in this chapter as beliefs that women ought to fulfill only certain roles in society. The participants identified attitudes expressed by others that women should only be involved in traditional roles (wife and mother) as unfair and repressive. Thus, in their reality constructions, the women expressed frustration and resentment at actions and attitudes which inhibited women. These definitions were consistent with existing feminist beliefs about the social world.

Perceptions of Men

A great deal of the feminist literature deals with male and female roles—how they are and how they ought to be. Since most women are or expect to be involved in some close association with men either personally or professionally, the roles that men play naturally are consequential for them. CR discussions reported in the literature generally include

some references to men's roles and men's attitudes about women. Although men, in general, and females' relationships with men are discussed in most CR groups, participants are often cautioned not to spend excessive amounts of time talking about men (Dreifus, 1973). After all, feminists argue, CR is supposed to focus on women. Nevertheless, men were a frequent topic of conversation in the CR sessions studied.

Men have been described in a variety of ways. In much of the sociological and psychological literature, male behavior seems to be used as the standard against which female behavior was compared (Weisstein, 1971). Characteristics of men are defined as socially desirable (Broverman et al., 1972). Feminist writings, however, tend to interpret male stereotypical behavior as undesirable, i.e. aggression and competitiveness are negatively evaluated (Willet, 1971). Others agrue that men are victims of the same oppressive social expectations as women and are disadvantaged because they lack sensitivity and emotionality (Balswick and Peek, 1971). Still others have defined male and female roles as complementary and, therefore, beneficial to both individuals and society (Parsons, 1951).

Obviously, there are many definitions of men which exist in the larger culture. In this section the researcher is interested in the kinds of definitions of men constructed by the women in the CR sessions. The participants' perceptions about how men behave and what relationships with men are like are presented. While definitions of everyday reality are constructed during interaction, one must always be cognizant of the effects of ongoing social definitions on the reality that emerges in the

sessions. Therefore, the definitions in sessions are compared to popular and feminist definitions of men.

Participant's Perceptions

Analysis of transcripts of the sessions revealed that men were an important topic of conversation among the participants. There were lengthy discussions of men in nine sessions. The comments were overwhelmingly critical. Only in rare instances were positive characterizations of men presented in the sessions. Three characterizations of men consistently emerged. In general the women perceived men in the following ways: men exploit and abuse women sexually; men exploit and abuse women socially; men are insensitive and unemotional. There was considerable agreement on these definitions. Since no participant ever challenged these characterizations of men, the women tended to reinforce one another's perceptions of men. Interestingly, these definitions tended to reflect the stereotypic images of men presented in much of the popular and professional literature. For instance, there seems to be a new wave of "female books" in which the female is depicted as fighting against male exploitation and power plays. Erica Jong in Fear of Flying (1973) describes her heroine as a woman trapped by male imposed definitions of female sexuality and Zelda Fitzgerald's biographer, Milford (1970) depicts Fitzgerald's exploitation by both husband and psychiatrist. Men are characterized in such works as manipulators of women who present obstacles to women's fulfillment. Characterizations of men as insensitive manipulators recently have appeared in the social science literatures as well. Perhaps the most notable is the Balswick and Peek article "The

Inexpressive Male" (1971). They identified two types of males, "cowboy" and "playboy." The cowboy is the strong dispassionate silent type that treats women as objects on a pedestal. The manipulative strategy, they suggest, is to get the woman to accept all responsibility for the emotional relationship. The playboy more directly manipulates women as sexual objects through cool and meaningless flattery and attention. The playboy lures women into relationships without becoming emotionally involved himself.

Participants seemed to share a common perception of men from the outset, and these definitions coincided with the negative definitions of men that are prevalent in feminist and social science literature on gender. There were clear differences between the perceptions of these women and cultural definitions of the male role as positive, functional, and socially acceptable. Data are presented which support the contention that participants characterize men as sexual exploiters of women.

Sexual exploitation. One of the most common definitions of men by the CR participants was that they sexually exploit women. The most dramatic example of sexual exploitation of women would be rape; however, there was limited discussion of rape, and it clearly did not constitute a frequent part of their definition of male exploitation. The limited discussion of rape may have been due to several factors. First, rape is an extreme form of behavior and, therefore, not generally associated with average male behavior. Also, the participants usually talked about their own experience or those of people close to them and none of the women in the sessions said they had been raped.

Nevertheless, some participants introduced examples of sexual violence against women as part of the definition of men as sexual exploiters. One woman told the others she had been attacked by a man she had dated at one time. When she refused to have sexual relations with him again, he threatened her with violence. The situation was averted by the precipitant arrival of some friends. She had been very upset by the experience and left the apartment immediately. She believed that she had narrowly escaped being raped.

> W: "That is the thing about rape . . . it is so strange. Like this is a man that I had slept with before. It was the sort of thing . . . . You know that you can define rape as a violent attack against you; but men don't understand that sometimes it is a rape when SOMETIMES, yes, you feel close to this person, and, yes, you may have slept with them before in the past, but you do not want to sleep with them now in the present time." (Session 11, p. 6)

She described men as unable to understand or accept refusal of sex by a woman with whom they had once had sexual relations. She went on to define this behavior as a power play and a form of manipulation of women.

> W: "It is real hard for men to understand that. Especially when you have slept with them before. That is the situation that I was in. It was at my house . . . we were the only people there—I felt like he was very strong. He was saying some very violent things about the other men that lived in the house. That was why I had been crying. And here he was holding me while he was saying that he was going to beat the shit out of these other guys. That is why I was just 'Wiggo.' I felt like some violence was going to come down on me. That was coming from my gut was all I had to go on. There was something going on and I don't know . . . . It sounded like a power play of some sort. And if I did not sleep with him, it was going to be very hard to say that I didn't want to. Therefore, I could even give in. Well, it might not even be that because I had slept with him before. It's not necessarily . . .

> I don't know that I could say that because I could go ahead and do something that I don't want to do very much. And I have done that before [She laughs]. We all have to be honest here." (Session 11, p. 7)

In this instance W perceived that women must sometime succumb to the exploitation of men. Although none of the other women claimed to have been assaulted personally, they agreed that men were capable of being sexually violent against women.

> J: "You can almost bet that you can be forced to. If you are small and don't weigh much . . . ."
>
> W: "Well, I don't think that that has anything to do with it. I weigh 130, and I really think that any man that is 20 years on could force me. Because . . . unless I do something like kick him in the balls . . . which is hard to do too. You don't realize how strong they are. You wrestle with your brother, and they can hurt you without realizing it. They can put bruises on you just by holding your arm." (Session 11, p. 7)

In other words, men were defined as potentially physically threatening. In another session the facilitator recounted an instance of wife beating in which a husband violently assaulted his wife because she refused his sexual advances.

> Facilitator: "Did you hear about the person in one of the departments. He tried to kill his wife because she wouldn't submit to his advances. He beat her and left her on the boat for dead until some other people found her. You know what they say about battered wives—you almost can't do anything about it."
>
> J: "Why?"
>
> Facilitator: "Well."
>
> W: "Financially is a big reason. Also how much power you have over the person."
>
> Facilitator: "Like you can divorce your husband. But for your husband to be arrested he would have to do something

> to you. Like you can't have him arrested for threats. It is like you have to get beat up before you can do anything. I know a family where the husband beat up the wife and two children before the divorce, and the judge still gave the boy visiting time with the father. The only way that anything can happen is if she gets beat up again." (Session 14, p. 5)

The sexual exploitation of women by male violence was related to the powerlessness of women financially and legally. Consequently, men's sexual violence against women was defined as a form of power. Men were perceived as minipulating women through sexual violence (or threats of sexual violence).

The most common example of sexual exploitation given by participants was the treatment of women as sexual objects in everyday interaction. The women frequently discussed at length the familiar way they were treated by men in public places. The women objected to such behaviors as men whistling at women on the streets, touching women, or trying to "pick up" women. In general, they agreed that these behaviors degraded women and implied that women were appropriate objects of male advances or ridicule. The women overwhelmingly perceived that these types of behaviors were typical of men.

One of the ways they believed men treated women as sexual objects was by staring at women's anatomy—as if a woman's body were on display for any male's entertainment. The women believed men commonly make comments about women's bodies in public, or make suggestive gestures.

> L: "You know what kills me is the number of men when they are walking down the street actually have the gall to comment on women's breasts. There was a good article in MS magazine 'My life as a 38D.'"

B: "My husband read that . . . . He did the same thing. We would be riding around in the car, and he would practically wreck the car when he would see a pair of knockers bouncing around. I said, 'Would you please look at the damn road. I thought you were supposed to be a leg man. I hate to see what would have happened if it had been a decent pair of legs. You almost wrecked the car as it is.'"

L: "The article was about the problems that a woman has. People think that she is doing it on purpose. My best friend in high school developed extremely early."

B: "My sister was like that."

L: "I can understand the embarrassment that women go through. You can't walk down the street. They have no choice about their clothing unless they want to wear bags. For one thing we would be walking along the street, and men would just come up and do this." [Makes gesture of grabbing her breasts.] (Session 5, p. 3)

Some women mentioned mechanical methods used by males to "girl watch." The women expressed resentment at men's persistent attempts to ogle women.

B: "I have watched so many men make utter fools out of themselves practically falling down stairs to look at some girl walking up the steps."

L: "My husband's office is over on the hill. There is one nice fellow over there that does—watches girls with his binoculars, but I think that he does it out of appreciation. There was this other guy that had an office, and he would sit on the front steps with his binoculars looking up women's dresses. That is obvious and crude . . . so cheap."

B: "There were two women that I knew that lived in this apartment, and some guy from the hospital across the street told them that there was a patient across the way that was looking at them through binoculars. They told him that they had an idea that someone was watching them. He said that this guy was telling some wierd stories about them at the hospital. I knew these two girls, and they were pure. They got up

> enough nerve, and they went to see him. He didn't know who they were, and he started telling them all this stuff. They said they told him off." (Session 5, p. 5)

In addition to the "staring," women in the sessions argued that men constantly make unsolicited advances toward women. They seemed to perceive this kind of behavior as annoying and as part of the treatment of women as sexual objects by men. The women expressed offense at such actions.

> D: "When I first got divorced I wanted to be alone . . . then all these men kept coming around all the time . . . about ten of them to see me . . . like I was a bitch in heat. They all knew that I was divorced." (Session 2, p. 6)

Several of the women commented that bars were particularly difficult settings for women because of the number of unwanted "passes" made by men. The participants expressed frustration that they could not go to a bar without having to deal with males "on the make." One of the women told of her brother-in-law's unsuccessful attempts to "pick up" women in bars.

> L: "Some men—like my brother-in-law . . . he follows women. They know he is doing it, and I could just kill him. I used to go drinking with friends in bars, and we would talk all the time about middle-aged men with the jowls and the pastel leisure suits that look at women like little pigs with their noses up against the window. So he has a leisure suit and white shoes . . . ."
>
> All: "Awful." [indicate disapproval]
>
> B: "The only thing I hate worse is Budweiser belts."
>
> L: "For one thing it is just a flashy sign. They think they are dressing to appeal to women. But it just flashes like a sign saying HORNEY. [Laughs] We went

to eat, and he ordered a drink, and it was a stage prop that he used to walk around and talk to all the women."

B: "How long has he been divorced?"

L: "A month."

B: "Every man that I have known the first year after they get the divorce they are hog wild crazy."

L: "They are super macho. They feel like they have to prove something to their wives." (Session 5, p. 5)

Bar behavior of many men was defined as distasteful and indicative of men's treatment of women as sexual objects.

Facilitator: "Like I never enjoyed too much going to singles' places and like that because male behavior gets sort of like animals. Some of the females, too, but they make these comments about women's bodies."

B: "It is always the guys with the beer guts that do that." (Session 8, p. 2)

L: "I hate to go someplace by myself and sit by myself."

B: "I do too. Men come up . . . ."

L: "If you sit with someone, they think that you are committed to them. It is like men go to bars to pick up girls, but girls don't go there to pick up guys. They go in groups or they know someone that is there like it is a hangout for some acceptable group." (Session 5, p. 8)

The women in the sessions tend to define men's behavior as indicative of a desire to sexually exploit women. In some cases, the definition of exploitation included sexual violence. In others, the characterization of male behavior referred to male treatment of women as objects. Examples of this kind of behavior included males making comments about women's bodies, staring at women or making unwanted advances to women in public places such as bars. In general, men were viewed as being sexual

exploiters of women which produced feelings of hostility and resentment among the participants. There was little if any defense of men's behavior or argument over the definition of men as exploiters.

Social exploitation. Another perception of men was as manipulators or exploiters of women in social situations. In some sessions, men were described as taking advantage of women's time, work, patience for their own benefit. This kind of behavior was perceived as more subtle but just as frustrating as sexual exploitation.

> A: "There are two sorts of men. There are men who treat you as a sex object out right and blatant. Then I think there are men who are on a more sophisticated level of chauvinism . . . . They talk a good pro-feminist line . . . but if you get deep down into how they really feel like in marriage or in contract situation . . . then if you got a chance to work in Michigan, and he had a chance to work in Georgia . . . it would be assumed that you go to Georgia." (Session 2, p. 1)

In this and other conversations, men were defined as deceptive in dealing with women, often hiding their real intentions. For example, they believed a man might pretend to believe in equality but fail to practice it in his own relationships with women.

> L: "I've never been attracted to anyone who did not stimulate me intellectually . . . in other words . . . a physical come on doesn't do anything for me."
>
> B: "It's not so much physical . . . like a guy stimulates me intellectually but he may be a chauvinist from the word go . . . or maybe you talk to men who profess to be feminist and after a while you discover that they are not."
>
> L: "Or maybe they have a feminist relationship with some women but they still pat their secretaries on the fanny."

B: "Well, I've gotten so disappointed that I have male acquaintances, but I have very little to do with them . . . ." (Session 2, p. 2)

The quotes reveal the bitterness that some women felt about male behavior that assigns the woman to a second class position. These women seemed to believe that men create problems for women in their everyday interaction. For instance, men were thought to manipulate women by shifting the responsibility for problems in the relationship to the woman. The woman would be placed in a position of using her time and energy to resolve the difficulty. The members said that men tend to blame women for difficulties in relationships.

C: "Then too when you are around men they project their neuroses onto you and what's wrong with them you think is wrong with you. In a relationship, when it goes wrong how many people in here go 'What did I do wrong' when it may not be you at all."

D: "But that is hard to decide . . . when both say it is the other's fault."

C: "Men never apologize . . . women assume the responsibility. Women are trying to hold onto their men. If you tell them you don't need them, then they want you."

D: "It takes a lot of courage to leave someone. I wanted to leave my husband for a long time, but I stayed another year and even when I left . . . I still felt guilty. I did it as an act of independence. I had to do it for myself. But, I felt guilty for messing it up . . . he did not want a divorce." (Session 2, p. 6)

B: "I can't find any men that I can really even be friends with . . . because they start laying a bunch of garbage on you." (Session 2, p. 4)

In addition, men were defined as demanding a great deal of a woman's time because men needed attention and affection. The participants believed that men were not a good "investment" because they took so much

attention, but in return they did not feel committed to the woman who had provided this attention.

B: "Really . . . I think men are the biggest babies ever . . . they always want you to take care of them . . . where do you meet these men . . . that's the guy I'm looking for—one who is really self sufficient."

Facilitator: "Look at it this way though . . . alot of men are babies about some things, but they don't need you as a person . . . they could find someone else who could do the same thing for them that you do . . . or else they go home to their mother . . . men are as bad about that as they say women are." (Session 2, p. 4)

In addition to defining men as "pampered," the participants also perceived that men did not understand the amount of work that women put into their families and relationships. They expressed the belief that men were oblivious to women's accomplishments and efforts in the home.

L: "My husband broke my heart last week, and we were going to go out and have a pizza. We had been having a great time last week—he had been coming home by nine o'clock. This is my whole life here—I have around the apartment, and I can't afford to spend any money even to go shopping for little things, or the other little cheap outlets. I've gotten to making bread and these other things. Well, he is in graduate school. And the other night I was developing some pictures that I took. And he had to do them for me, and he said—and I know that he didn't mean it the way that it sounded—he said well I've got to develop these tonight, but please learn to do your own processing because I have just wasted all this time. Well I didn't consider it to be recreation—I considered it to be my work." (Session 6, p. 6)

L: "Most of my married friends, the man assumes that just because he is around he is helping with the kids. And all he does is walk in and swat someone with the newspaper."

B: "He said that while I was gone he really found out what keeping kids was like. He said it never occurred to him how expensive it was and how much time they take." (Session 9, p. 6)

The women seemed to identify one category of men in particular as exploiters of women--obstetrician/gynecologists. A great deal of resentment was expressed about the treatment of women by gynecologists. [Some of the comments seemed to reflect the recent growth of interest in women's control of their reproductive health. The women's health care movement includes such projects as informing women about their bodies through books and pamphlets, creating self help clinics where women are taught to examine themselves, and supporting abortion clinics (especially clinics with female staff).] The participants perceived that male gynecologists deliberately withheld information from females about their bodies thereby strengthening the male control over the female body. The gynecologist was viewed as a powerful man who manipulates women. This definition is consistent with the definitions that are proliferating in the burgeoning women's health literature (Boston Women's Health Collective, 1976; Correa, 1977).

> L: "I never had an OB/GYN man tell me anything about my body. It is like they have a monopoly on learning. Are there any clinics here that are run by women?" (Session 4, p. 9)

Gynecologists that operated abortion clinics were defined as the most unacceptable exploiters of women. These men were perceived as persons who profited from women's misfortune. Some of the discussion of gynecologists and abortion clinic operators was precipitated by a conference of abortion clinic owners that the facilitator had attended at the university. She reported her experience to the session participants this way.

Facilitator: "I had the sickest feeling I have ever had listening to these people. It is a flat . . . money-making business like IBM. Some people said to me but so are doctors . . . but did you not have this [sort of shriek] awful feeling. [Said slowly and deliberately] There was this man there . . . about 50 and rather overweight, and I have never seen so much Indian jewelry in my life. That bothered me because I feel that he is prostituting the Indian movement. I learned later that he owned a lot of clinics around the country. One of his doctors does 50 procedures a day." [Said in a horrified tone of voice.]

A: "All these men exploiting women. I wish that women would know."

Facilitator: "I never had my eyes opened so fast. That guy with the jewelry. I'll tell about that later go ahead." (Session 4, p. 9)

They continued to talk about some of the men at the conference who owned abortion clinics and the apparent lack of interest in women's health care at the conference. One of the women commented on a local doctor who had performed abortions before they were legal and had charged exorbitant amounts of money while doing procedures in a dangerous way. This man was said to currently own an abortion clinic in the town.

Facilitator: "He opens them up and closes them down all the time."

A: "Like I said if you want an abortion, go to Tallahassee and let the women do it."

L: "It is low investment and high profit and has a better return than resort property. People who have money are getting into it. Why don't women invest? I mean even small amounts."

Facilitator: "Did you not feel sick?"

A: "I didn't go to the conference. I heard about it."

Facilitator: "I had this image of all these concerned professional people who were concerned and mostly women. NO WAY."

B: "You know that guy that has the gold Cadillac. That man has been doing illegal abortions for the last I don't know how many years. Five hundred dollars cash on the barrel head. You never knew if he was sober or not when he did them. He would not see you if you had any complication. And then they turn around and as soon as they legalize it he was the man that was doing abortions."

Facilitator: "He owns one of the clinics." (Session 4, p. 9)

Another woman related her experience with abortion and the mistreatment she had received. She also told of the experiences of a friend who had been exploited by an abortion clinic. In both instances the women were charged large sums of money for what they defined as unnecessary treatment. This behavior was defined as financial exploitation of women who were in a vulnerable position and easily could be cheated by the doctor.

X: "I had a real bad experience when I was 17. This is when they were illegal. I didn't know what I was going to do one way or the other, I just wanted to know if I was pregnant. I went to a sleezy doctor . . . very sleezy. He had me going for about four weeks taking these shots. I found out later that they are given to girls who have not started their periods by age 13. It starts your period. They give it to women who are real irregular. He was just exploiting me. He kept saying well one test is positive and the other isn't so we don't know so we will give you these shots to find out. They were $5.00 a piece for four weeks. Finally I decided this is crazy and went to the emergency room at the hospital, and they said they would call tomorrow. And I wasn't. It is a difficult thing too because if the test is taken too early you won't show up pregnant or there are cases where you might be pregnant, and it wouldn't show up." (Session 4, p. 10)

X: "Abortion clinics are exploitative of women. Well a girl that I know, I can't even call her a woman because she is sixteen and really naive, got pregnant. She decided that the best thing to do was get an

> abortion. I really don't think that she was pregnant. She went to that clinic right over here. This was supposed to be after they closed it down [for performing unnecessary operations] and opened it back up. I doubt seriously that she was ever pregnant. It was a quick thing. They told her she was pregnant, and they scheduled it within four days. She was so messed up about her last period that she couldn't really tell. That is the worst thing. They will tell you that you are pregnant." (Session 4, p. 10)

Thus, participants defined men as frequently exploiting women in social interaction. They described men as demanding attention and effort from women, but unwilling to accept responsibility for problems in relationships or for duties in the home. In addition, men were said to have devalued or trivialized women's work and interests. Abortion clinic owners and gynecologists were singled out as a special category of men who professionally exploit women. The women believed that Ob/Gyn's concealed from women information about their bodies, thereby making women excessively dependent on doctors. Further, it was believed that this group of men profited from the misfortune of women. The abortionist was viewed as a man who exploited women psychologically, financially and professionally in quality of health care delivered. Similar definitions of men often appear in feminist literature. Efforts in the women's movement have been directed toward encouraging women to regard their time and energy as valuable and towards interesting women in the quality of their health care. Women also are attempting to take over the control of their bodies through the use of self help and female owned clinics.

Emotional disadvantage. The women in the sessions tended to define men as inexpressive. The conceptualization of males as less expressive

than females is common in popular culture (Broverman et al., 1972) and feminist literature (Firestone, 1972). Traditionally, however, expressiveness has not been a highly valued personal quality. In fact, control of emotions has been considered a quality essential to success in business or government.

Only in recent years with advent of male consciousness raising has male inexpressiveness been defined as a negative characteristic by some segments of the population. One notable advocate of developing male expressiveness has been Warren Farrell (1974). Farrell's position is that males hurt themselves by their inexpressiveness because they are unable to fully enjoy many experiences. Males are described as imprisoned by social expectations that they should never show emotion. Balswick and Peek (1971) take a similar position concerning male inexpressiveness. They argue that males are unable to have truly satisfying relationship with women because of their inability to express their feelings in an intimate companionate relationship.

The participants tended to adhere to the latter construction of male inexpressiveness; that is, they seemed to believe inexpressiveness is an undesirable part of men's gender related behavior. The women espoused the belief that men were inexpressive because they were trying to fulfill the "macho" image or the "power mystic" that is a social expectation of men.

Facilitator: "I think it is sad when you get to be a certain age . . . boys and girls had played together. It is like if you had all been twelve, it would have been okay for you to stay, but after puberty. Have you ever seen that movie "Growing Up Female." It talks about after

12 everybody is out playing in the woods. Then all of a sudden someone is not a part of the group anymore, someone is not fun anymore."

W: "That is all a part of a male sexuality. Somehow, they get raised by their fathers and their grandfathers and who teach them to be THE MEN. I don't know. I am so glad for my father and my brother and the few caring men that I know. It convinces me that there are some good men in the world. The ones with that old . . . chauvinism it just makes you so mad sometimes. They show up too much." (Session 11, p. 9)

W indicated that she believed there were very few sensitive or caring men, her family being the exception.

Some of the women expressed the idea that men built barriers around themselves to protect themselves from threats to their masculinity that could be produced by caring or being sensitive.

A: "Sometimes I think that male authority figures use power by aggressiveness of talk or aggressiveness of action. Women don't use their aggression. They can accomplish what they want more logically I think. Sometimes I think that men want to lower that power too . . . for the mystique . . . it keeps the mystique going."

Q: "Yeah, because it was like he had a wall, and he was safe behind the wall and there was nothing that could get to him." (Session 4, p. 3)

Facilitator: "Well, women are more self disclosing too."

B: "Yeah, men will sit around and not say anything."

L: "Like it is a sign of weakness." (Session 4, p. 8)

Men are perceived as unable or unwilling to communicate their feelings to women.

J: "I notice that men don't bring up their feelings unless they are asked about it. He never says that we ought to talk about it." (Session 15, p. 4)

In particular, men were perceived as unable to express their feelings through crying. The notion of crying as beneficial in dealing with problems appears several times in session interaction. Crying was viewed as an effective release of emotions such as sorrow, frustration, and anger. Most of the women believed that men were not "allowed" to cry because of social conventions that men should be stoic and unemotional. They judged the inability to cry as an unfortunate circumstance for men. Almost all of the participants perceived that women were better off than men because they could cry.

B: "Don't you feel like men would feel better if they would cry?"

L: "Yes . . . that's right . . . but a lot of people are caught in a changing social situation . . . and they just feel that they can't cry with you which is one way to comfort someone." (Session 2, p. 1)

J: "I feel sorry for him [boyfriend] for not crying some. Well we don't argue about it. I just wondered if other people think that it is a weak thing, and you should try not to cry." (Session 11, p. 5)

J: "I cried to KUB one time [laughter]. I was so upset. I couldn't do anything. The man said well we haven't received your check. And here I am, and the lights are out, and I was all alone. And I was trying to deal with these people on the phone, and I started crying—it was terrible. I wasn't too happy about that. But it really had an effect on him."

Facilitator: "I think . . . . It is like we are brought up different, different things are taught to boys. Like crying to KUB . . . if you told that to a man they would say what is your problem. It is so inappropriate . . . it is so female . . . it is so awful." (Session 11, p. 6)

J: "I have a hard time with that. I almost always cry when we get in a fight. Sometimes I do it because I am genuinely upset and helpless and hopeless and very depressed. And sometimes I do it to get attention

> and comfort and other reasons too. But in those times when I feel that I have a motive (even if I don't think it then) I think that those times could be eliminated. But the other times I think I need to cry. And he has said . . . . He never cries. He laughs. He laughs a lot when he is upset and uncomfortable. I have misinterpreted that a lot. But he never cries. He has a hard time . . . as hard as I do and harder. And more to cry about than I do a lot of times. He says he doesn't see any value in it, and it is silly and it's not . . ." (Session 11, p. 5)

With regard to the lack of expressiveness, the participants tended to have a sympathetic attitude towards male behavior. In this case they believed that males were the disadvantaged group and that females were in a superior, albeit unrecognized position. In all the other descriptions of male behavior males were defined as powerful manipulators of females. It is interesting that this same analysis is not applied to male insensitivity. Recent articles in sociology have noted that males use insensitivity as a power ploy forcing females to "guess what is upsetting them" (Sattel, 1976).

In general, the participants expressed negative conceptualizations of male behavior. Men were characterized as manipulators and exploiters of women sexually, socially and financially. Members expressed hostility and resentment of men's behavior towards women. While few of the women actually said they really disliked men, there was an attitude that men were not trustworthy and male behavior was at best annoying and at worst a threat to women. These definitions of men presented in the sessions were feminist despite the pro-male bias that exists in the parts of larger culture. They defined men's behavior as detrimental to women. This perspective is presented in much of the feminist literature and has

emerged in other consciousness raising groups (Micossi, 1972; Fish, 1974). Only in the instance of insensitivity did the women express some sympathy towards men and recognition of the social factors that shape men's behavior, which is more typical of popular psychological literature than feminist writing.

Thus, while many social definitions of men exist in the larger culture, the participants tended to define men as manipulative and their behavior as socially unacceptable. Discussions tended to characterize men as a class of people with uniform behavioral patterns. Although the women cited examples of particular men, they tended to generalize from that individual to men as a category of people. The definition of men as a category of people is indicated by such statements as "It is real hard for men to understand that"; "They [men] look at women as objects"; "There are two sorts of men"; "Men project their neuroses on you"; and "Male behavior is sort of like animals." Similar perceptions of men as an "oppressive class" can be found in feminist sources (Micossi, 1972; Fish, 1974). The constructed reality that emerged about men resembled existing feminist constructions.

The participants' definitions of relationships with men resemble those of participants in other CR groups. Much feminist writing addresses the problems of maintaining long term or permanent relationships with men. The problem involved is that men are simultaneously perceived as an "oppressive class" and as "love objects." This creates a dilemma that no other minority group faces—being closely linked with those who have greater power. As a result, there is no clear construction among

feminists about the proper relationship to have with men. The same uncertainty about definitions of appropriate male-female relationships was expressed in the sessions.

Relationships with Men

The participants' perceptions of men related to their feelings about women's relationships with men. Given their beliefs about men's behavior, their belief that women should not be dependent on men in their relationships, especially emotionally, is not surprising. Since men were characterized as threatening exploiters of women, they concluded that the women need independence from men.

The women expressed ambivalence about how to manage their relationships with men. Most indicated they wanted intimate relationships with men but were afraid of the consequences of becoming too deeply involved. All of the women in the sessions claimed they had been or were currently involved in a heterosexual relationship.[6]

The participants seemed skeptical about the degree of happiness a woman could achieve from a heterosexual relationship. Some believed that being involved with a man could be detrimental to a woman. In particular, T claimed her friends were frequently unhappy because of the way they were treated by men. She said she thought it was better to have a series of relationships without becoming attached to one male. She also was discouraged by the unwillingness of her friends to extricate themselves from unhappy and/or unfulfilling relationships.

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[6]The professed lesbian claimed she had male lovers before she "came out."

T: "I don't know what I am trying to say. I never had a relationship with a guy in the boyfriend-girlfriend type. They bothered me to have them around like that. Everyone I know who is involved is unhappy. I would rather have lovers and kick 'em out. I am serous [L had laughed]. I said to a friend of mine the other day—every girl I know is either living with a guy and putting him through school or keeping him. I spent the whole weekend with the two most depressing people. My old roommate just broke up with her boyfriend, and she just sits in the house and drinks and takes drugs and says, 'I'm so lonely . . . so lonely.' And the other one who lives with her—she had a boyfriend who is constantly putting her down. He tells her that she is fat, and she has lost so much weight that she looks horrible. She is totally dependent on him. And he calls her names in front of people, and I asked why she liked the boy. It is so utterly stupid. She said because I love him. Finally I got up and said that these people were depressing me, and I left, and I hope I never see them again." (Session 5, p. 10)

Frequently the participants stated the belief women who were less dependent on men for emotional gratification were more interesting. They claimed it was refreshing to be around women who were not totally involved in their relationships with men.

B: "This friend of mine—I met her mother during the break, and she is a widow, and she is a fantastic woman. She has her own life complete. This friend said that the things her mother did now, she would never have been able to do when her father was alive."

B: "It is good that she had the ability to do that. She goes fishing."

Facilitator: "Why do so many women wait until their husbands die to enjoy life?"

B: "But they are afraid. Like my husband expects certain things of me, and there are traditions in the family. No one tells them they can't do things, but that is taken for granted."

W: "I think that is what is good about people now who are being married trying to redefine the things that have been taken for granted." (Session 9, pp. 12-13)

B: "I really like T. I just marvel at her. She is really one of the neatest people I know. WOW. She is not full of all of these sob stories about 'Oh my boyfriend has left me.' It is really nice to be around you; I don't have to listen to all that garbage."

T: [Laughed]—"I have to listen to you." (Session 5, p. 12)

Although the women positively evaluated independence from men they conceeded that it was difficult to avoid talking and thinking about permanent relationships and difficult not to define one's self in terms of men.

Facilitator: "I think that it is interesting that we have spent so much time talking about men . . . . I'm not saying that as a criticism, but I think there is something you are saying . . . that relationships with men are unsatisfactory . . . but at the same time there is a search for a satisfactory relationship."

R: [After a pause]—"Well I understand it's hard to break away from the old ideas of marriage."

L: "You're not taught to be intelligent, you are not taught to be independent . . . it's hard after all that brainwahsing."

X: "It would be good to talk about the fact that you can be happy alone . . . because you are conditioned to think that unless you are part of a couple that you won't be happy . . . and it's a hard thing to break out of . . . I started to have boyfriends when I was ten." (Session 2, p. 4)

W: "I was so amazed when I came in and met J and M . . . I don't know whether you realize it or not we were describing ourselves and saying what we were doing and at the end of what we said we had to say whether we were involved with a man. I thought, oh, my God. And, it is important in our lives."

M: "I thought about it later, and then I thought well they are a major part of our lives. I don't know if I said anything right away but sooner or later I did."

J: "That was the main thing on my mind that time. Today it is not on my mind, and I don't think I would have mentioned it. Today I am calm."

W: "It is another thing to define yourself. I wonder if men do that. Now really, no joke. Can you imagine 'Hi, I am John Smith; I am an engineer; I work for TVA; and I am involved with a woman right now.' They wouldn't know what to say. But we do, and it is important." (Session 11, p. 12)

In these sessions the women seemed to be self critical and fault themselves for their preoccupation with men. Although they believed that they should not spend excessive amounts of time discussing their relationships with men, they acknowledged that these relationships were an important part of their lives and difficult not to discuss.

In addition to the idea that relationships with men threated a woman's independence, the participants also indicated relationships could potentially conflict with career goals. The women discussed the dilemma created when there are personal and professional commitments to be met. Most of the participants reported they were attracted to the idea of having both career and family, although they understood there was no easy way to achieve both. The members discussed several possible arrangements but no clear preference emerged in the interaction. Most agreed that there would be no perfect solution to the problem of managing a relationship and career.

Facilitator: "Do you all feel that it is possible to have a permanent relationship with somebody and live in the same place and both be happy professionals."

M and J: "Why isn't it possible? Why wouldn't it be?"

Facilitator: "Do you ever sit around and think how long will this last, and how long will I be happy?"

J: "It depends on the person that you are living with or married to."

M: "Or how big the place is that you are living in."

J: "It depends on how much respect you give each other or something."

Facilitator: "I feel more conflict with my job than I do with my marriage. I feel less flexibility about where I can work than I do within my marriage."

M: "That makes sense."

Facilitator: "Like what am I going to do if I run out of job possibilities here. I think that something has to go when you compromise. How many compromises can you make before you really feel dissatisfied?" (Session 16, p. 8)

W: "I think that you are more realistic than I am because I still think in terms of being settled in one place whereas the career I am thinking of—shoot you can't really do that. That is a hard thing to say, but I think that it is realistic."

Facilitator: "I keep thinking of the alternatives and I am not sure that there is any one that is perfect. You just have to work things out. Someone always gets the short end."

Me: "I don't know if you can just tell someone one day that you have a great job, and you want a divorce."

W: "Some artists feel that marriage and art aren't coexistent. WOOOO. But something suffers everytime."

Me: "Do you all ever anticipate being married?"

M: "I think I do but not for a long time. Not for a long time to come. I think I used to think of it in terms of how am I going to spend 40 years with someone. I used to think of it as a series of relationships, but now I don't really think so."

J: "What do you mean now?"

M: "Now I think that the relationship that I have is more permanent. I can't see it ending. One thing adds to another as you get older. You both take on different roles as you get older so things don't always stay the same as I used to think they would. I am not always going to be living in the same house with the same job and same life. I see it as ever changing." [No one else commented, and there was a pause.]

M: "I don't know who is going to move where . . . the more you talked about it the more that I thought . . . Wow that is a biggy. I guess you have to decide which is more important to you." (Session 16, p. 10)

The participants did not reject the idea of having relationships with men. Some expressed resentment that they might have to choose between a career and a relationship.

W: "I had this brought up to me the other day. I hadn't thought about it for a long time . . . [pause] I was asked whether I could give up part of my life for . . . okay not have part of my life be as important as it used to be if I wanted to get involved with a man. I had to say 'No, I would not.' It worries me that you are supposed to. And also that we let ourselves do that. And what it ends up is, you have a choice that you have your profession or your avocation or you have your man. It really pains me that we make each other put that much commitment in the other person's life. Something suffers somewhere. And it shouldn't. To even see the person you have to give up some of your own time. I guess it has to do with your priorities." (Session 11, p. 12)

In addition to the perception that it is difficult to be an independent woman while in a relationship with a man, the women further considered the difficulties involved in managing a career and a permanent intimate relationship. A final problem concerning heterosexual relationships was the perceived danger of neglecting female friends. Many participants expressed frustration that some of their female friends would ignore them when involved in serious relationships. Some believed that men tended to be given priority in use of time over female acquaintances. This situation was defined as a negative consequence of relations with men.

Facilitator: "Do you all think that relationships with men cut down on a lot of other opportunities for women? Like do you think that we miss a lot?"

T: "Just judging from other people I think that that is so. Like I go to one of my friends, and say lets go do this, and they say I can't because Joe wants me to stay at home. And it makes me mad. He just wants her to stay there. I think that she misses out on a lot just because he wants her to stay home. And I had this friend in high school and when I wanted her to go somewhere her boyfriend would not let her. And that made me mad that he had to know everywhere she went. There are some couples that are very free, and they don't have a lease on each other. But my experience with a lot of my friends, I think not many."

Facilitator: "I get really angry if I invite a female friend to go and have a drink after work and she says I can't because I have to go home. And like it is not the kids, it is her husband. It really makes me angry." (Session 11, p. 12)

J: "That is what I think. That . . . is it all because . . . is it somebody taught me wrong, that I picked up the wrong things along the way. Which is that I have to find men."

M: "I think that we all have that, Prince Charming."

J: "I do too. And I keep trying to get away from it, for periods of time, and I am pretty happy. I am lonely, and I don't have too many friends. But if I make an effort I can get my good friends back. I was so involved that I lost touch with them. But I always come back to it." [Others agree that losing touch with friends is bad.]

Facilitator: "I think part of it is because we didn't develop a good relationship with other people."

W: "Or well, we have plans to go out tonight, but I have a date. Not anymore."

J: "I make a big point of that. I am learning a lot about that."

Facilitator: "I guess so much of my life focused around that—dating and relationships."

M: "I was always real bitter about that. About my girl friends who had boy friends. They decided what was more important to them. I can't say what I would . . . that I would do it . . . but I don't think that

> I could make that one person my 'priority.' In theory I would like to think that it works. But I hated being that one person on the outside. I was a lot in high school, and it was the worst time in my life." (Session 11, p. 11)

Participants expressed concern over the nature of relationships with men during the sessions. Most felt that relationships with men were a difficult but unavoidable part of their lives. Permanent attachments with men were often considered to create dependency, to conflict with career goals, and to interfere with relationships with other women. All of these potential results were defined as negative consequences of intimate permanent relationships with men.

Review

Participants spent a great deal of time constructing definitions of men and relationships with men. In general, men were characterized as exploiters and manipulators of women sexually, socially, financially, and emotionally. Men were also defined as inexpressive. Relationships with men were defined as producing negative consequences of dependency, conflict with career and with other women. The negative constructions of men's roles and relationships with men reflected current feminist beliefs although they tended to contradict cultural definitions of men as superior to women.

Perceptions of Women

As with the socially constructed definitions of discrimination, many constructions of female roles exist in the culture. Perceptions of women in parts of the culture tend to be based on gender role stereotypes

(Lunneborg, 1970; Komarovsky, 1950). Studies have indicated that characteristics generally associated with women, i.e., "feminine" characteristics are less socially approved or valued than "masculine" characteristics (Lynn, 1959; McKee and Sherrifs, 1959). In their recent investigation, Broverman, et al. (1972) present data which suggests that women are perceived in the general and by clinical psychologists as ". . . relatively less competent, less intelligent, less objective, and less logical than men" (75). All of these qualities tend to be socially disapproved. Indeed, in a sample of clinical psychologists, the researchers found that characteristics ascribed to the healthy adult female (submissive, dependent, emotional) were not characteristics ascribed to the healthy adult person. In other words, psychologists seem to believe that a "normal" female was not a "normal adult."

Recently, feminists have tried to make the general public more aware of definitions of women that they perceive as unfair and unflattering. Feminists tend to dismiss the cultural stereotypes of women and depict women more favorably. In many feminist anthologies, women are characterized as responsible, compassionate, hard working, intelligent, creative members of society (e.g., Morgan, 1970; Gornick and Moran, 1971). Undesirable qualities in women are attributed to their subservient roles in society. Thus, feminist literature has addressed the negative characterizations of women by denying them (e.g., women are not passive, or overly emotional) or claiming that, in fact, women are superior to men (e.g., they are not competitive and are nurturant). Either approach presents a positive view of women's characteristics.

Early CR: Prowoman Line

Early CR literature stressed the positive aspects of women's roles. The "prowoman line" encouraged women to view everything that women did as acceptable and understandable, to accept one another uncritically, and to support one another's actions and beliefs. Many feminists proclaimed CR as a haven from negative definitions of women that exist elsewhere in the culture. Negative sentiments about women were discouraged. "Don't make antiwoman statements. There is enough misogynistic plugola in the world already. Make your rap group a pro-woman sanctuary" (Dreifus, 1973: 28).

The extreme prowoman line lead to political inaction among women in early CR groups. When participants approved of everything that women did, there was no impetus for change. The extreme pro-woman position was questioned and later groups tried to develop recognition of the need for personal and social change. Women were admonished to challenge statements that did not reflect appropriate consciousness—such as anti-woman statements, romantic fantasies, feeling sorry for men, etc. (Tanner, 1970). However, the purpose of CR remained to provide a supportive environment in which women could explore positive conceptualizations of themselves and other women and identify the social forces that influenced their lives.

Participants' Views

Participation in consciousness raising sessions necessitates the construction of some definitions of women. Participants in feminist

consciousness raising would be expected to construct positive definitions of females and reject the negative social stereotypes of women.

The participants spent a great deal of time discussing women. Several different constructions of women emerged in their discussions. Participants talked about what they liked and disliked about women they knew and women in general.

Interestingly, in many instances the participants created negative definitions of women (e.g., women as manipulative, passive, or narcissistic). They were frequently critical of women and expressed hostility, frustration and resentment against the actions of some women. Many women apparently violated the participants' expectations of appropriate female behavior. For the most part, only the women outside the sessions were defined as being manipulative, passive, etc. Only rarely were "justifications" for women outside the session offered. These justifications tended to focus on the forces of socialization in shaping women's roles. The "antiwoman" statements of the participants were not challenged by any women in the sessions. None of the participants objected during the sessions when women were defined in negative ways. In addition, only one participant mentioned in follow up interviews that she objected to statements about women made during the sessions.[7]

Manipulation of others. In some of the sessions women were defined as manipulative of women and men in various ways. In one session the

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[7]Some women said they felt the interaction was shallow and that important topics of discussion were ignored. The woman who objected to some of the statements about women was an older married mother of five. She felt that the women were unsympathetic to noncollege women.

participants discussed how women manipulated others by exaggerating their experience in order to gain sympathy. In this conversation the women talked about the pros and cons of having children. During the interaction, they discussed how women use the pain they experience in childbirth as a manipulative tool against members of their families.

L: "I feel extremely fortunate being able to do the things that other people in my group didn't do because they had children right away."

B: "Well, one of the things that you were talking about was labor. It is painful, that is for sure. But, it is one of the most overrated things around. I think that women have used that."

Facilitator: "That is why I think and that is why I want to go through it myself to find out."

B: "It hurts like hell . . . for hours . . . but at the same time I think that women have used that as a weapon."

T: "Against whom?"

B: "Against anybody and everybody—their children, their husbands, and each other."

Facilitator: "They tend to exaggerate it and tell these stories to each other."

B: "You forget about it the next day. You look at the kid and go yeah."

T: "How is it used as a weapon?"

B: "Oh, you know, 'the pain I went through.' Or, they say to men, 'Well, you go have the baby.'"

W: "'I was in labor FOR 7 HOURS,' they say." [Mimics exaggerated talk.]

L: "Of course, people were bringing me orange juice the whole time I was lying on my back" [she refers to other women not herself].

B: "I have had worse pain than that. The pain itself is bad but there is a lot of time between pains and, if you can relax, it is not that bad."

L: "It is recoverable pain. Like one time a car ran over my foot and I had more pain later than I did at the time."

B: "It really tears me down and it takes six months to recover from having a baby. Other kinds of pain are continuous. Maybe for some women it is really painful, but for me it was not." (Session 9, pp. 11-12)

The women in this session seemed to discount the claims of other women that childbirth is a painful experience and question their motives for discussing the pain. There seemed to be general agreement that some women use their childbirth experience as a weapon against others. Women's claims of pain were defined as being inappropriate, manipulative strategies for gaining sympathy from their children and their husbands. Women who exhibited these behaviors were defined negatively. Interestingly, in another session the discussion of menopause seemed to indicate a rejection of the definition of pain or problems often associated with female physiological processes. The women again expressed skepticism that menopause was as traumatic as some women claim.

J: "I just wonder if it, menopause, is such a big deal. I wonder if it is as big a deal as it is made out to be. It is hard to tell I don't know if it will be that way for me."

M: "I can't tell, I mean you can't tell by looking at a woman whether she is going through the menopause. It is only what you hear."

J: "I don't really believe . . . I don't see how it could be psychologically such a turmoil. If you are an aware woman and you have been for a while. I don't feel like it will be a problem for me." (Session 13, p. 11)

Consequently, while constructing their own reality of the social world, the women in the sessions engaged in a denial of the reality of other women. By claiming that childbearing and menopause were not traumatic experiences or painful, they defined other women as exaggerating their experiences and themselves as different from other women.

In other sessions the participants identified additional forms of other women's behavior as manipulative. Crying was sometimes defined as a means of manipulating others. The women in the sessions agreed that they would not use crying as a weapon against others, although, they defined crying as appropriate under some circumstances, for it allowed the release of frustration and sadness. They believed other women used crying as a technique to gain sympathy and attention.

M: "I was thinking that there are times when I am by myself and no one has made me cry and I am tired and I think I am going to make myself cry. And I do. So I just lie down on my bed and think I feel terrible and I cry. I don't do that very often but . . . no one has made me do it so I don't have to feel guilty about it either."

Facilitator: "It does, it does feel really good. I don't think that I myself could use it to manipulate anybody."

T: "I have a cousin who has a girl friend that does that. I can tell when she is going to cry. He is real . . . all male and he plays football here. And she is real feminine and all that stuff. He tells her what to do all the time. He doesn't treat her mean, he treats her nice. Well, I mean some guys would take advantage of her and push her around. And he hates to see women cry. It really does upset him. I think that it is because my grandmother does the same thing. She starts crying in front of all her sons and they go 'Stop. We'll do anything.' And his girl friend is like that. If he says anything rough to her, you can look at her and know that she is going to start crying. She knows that it upsets him and she knows that he will quit

being mad at her. We will be sitting around and that happens. It makes me sick and I want to knock her up beside the head." (Session 11, p. 5)

Although participants apparently believed men manipulated and exploited women, they also believed the reverse was often true. On two occasions, there were specific discussions of how women use and mistreat men. The women discussed were defined unfavorably.

B: "I think that men have a legitimate gripe too. I think that a lot of women . . . I have seen women who would sit there and let men buy them drinks all night."

L: "And drinks are expensive."

B: "And then when it is closing time they say goodbye buddy. I have seen some women do that night after night."

L: "I didn't realize how expensive it was. Men had taken me out and the drinks I had ordered may have cost $15.00 and they didn't try to put anything over. But maybe that is the type of man I went out with didn't expect it. I am sure that it is hard for a man to take someone out in the standard dating situation to know beforehand. I am sure they would be embarrassed to say we can only go here. I have gone double dating with people and the guy would ask the girl what she would like and I guess she wouldn't notice but he would drink one beer all night. It was probably because he couldn't affort it." (Session 5, p. 8)

Women were defined as taking advantage of men when they were inattentive to the cues a man gave about how much money he could spend in a traditional dating situation. In other words, if a man was paying for the evening, the woman was responsible for intuiting his financial limitations so as not to exploit his generosity. There was a further implication in the conversation that women should not accept drinks from men unless they are prepared to "repay" him. Both statements indicated

that women on traditional dates were indebted to men and were wrong if they did not behave accordingly.

One of the most interesting conversations defining females as exploiters or manipulators of males concerned Elizabeth Ray, the secretary to former Congressmember Wayne Hayes. In the session interaction, the participants seemed to define Ms. Ray's behavior as inappropriate and malicious. She was defined as a woman who exploited a male to advance her own career and "ruined his life."

T: "That is the most malicious thing I have heard about. It is mean and bad." [Talking about Elizabeth Ray.]

Facilitator: "I think that she is going to come out of it feeling very guilty."

T: "I think that she went into that situation knowing what she was going to do. I think they both used each other and they deserve what they got. But I think she went in there and used the situation [others agree she was writing the book before she disclosed her relationship to Hayes]. I think she used him as much as he used her. I think it is horrible."

Facilitator: "What a system. Now she is going to be a star in her own movie. I have to admit I thumbed through her book. It was about 40 pages centered in the middle and if you typed it on pages like this it would only be 10 pages, I bet."

T: "W what do you think I meant by malicious?" [W had repeated the word several times under her breath when T used it.]

W: "Nothing. I think that it is a good word. I like that word."

T: "Oh, I thought you said you did not like it. I can't imagine a person doing that to another person. Even though she hates the guy. He tried to commit suicide and all that hurt and pain. Of course, he knew what could happen to him if he got caught so I am not for him. It has absolutely ruined his life. Of course,

he took the chance. But if she had gone in there and taken the money and then afterwards just taken off. It wouldn't have been that bad. But with her book and a movie and traveling all over the world. I can't imagine a person doing that to another person."

Facilitator: "Also, I worry about her mentally. The conflict she must feel and the guilt. Being able to pull off that kind of thing. You must almost have to be able to dissociate your life from our action."

T: "Yeah, it is almost spooky."

Facilitator: "It is spooky and all the movie parts . . . she will probably commit suicide."

T: "I don't know what she will do. I have seen her interviews in the news."

Facilitator: "She looked harried and not together. She was not very coherent." (Session 13, p. 2)

While the women perceived Wayne Hayes' behavior as bad, they believed Ray's behavior to be worse. They seemed to expect she would be "punished" for her violation of socially approved behavior by guilt, mental instability or even suicide. It was Ray who took advantage of a situation which hurt a male and exploited his misfortune. Other women were negatively evaluated by the participants for behavior perceived to range from being ungrateful to destructive to a man.

Women and appearance. The participants negatively defined women who were concerned overtly with their appearance. Participants believed excessive attention to appearance was unacceptable because it symbolized trying to "catch a man." Women perceived to be conscious of their hair and makeup were defined as uninteresting, vain, and less intelligent than the participants. (None of the participants were poorly dressed or unclean, so apparently a certain amount of attention to

appearance was approved.) Efforts to be attractive were generally perceived as undesirable especially if they interfered with some other activity such as sports, which the women seemed to value highly.

B: "I can't understand those women who lay in the sun basting themselves in string bikinis by the pool. I think they must be the most boring people in the world or they have some fantastic fantasies going." [All agree and laugh]

L: "It makes me cringe to see someone that dark. I just worry about them a lot."

B: "They look fine at first but whey you get close they look like a piece of leather."

L: "I don't swim very well at all because I am one of those people that can't get water up their nose but I paddle along. I can't stand for someone to ask me to go to the pool with them and get there and I always have a grubby swimsuit and they look so neat and they won't go in the water because it will get their hair wet."

T: "I like to swim when I go to the pool. I want to swim."

L: "I hate to go with someone who won't even get in the water." (Session 5, p. 2)

Earlier in that session T had given a similar example.

T: "I remember one instance of this woman who works for my father and she had a daughter who was extremely beautiful. This woman used to wear the hair piled up and the makeup on her face. This girl of hers is absolutely uncordinated and utterly stupid and the only thing this woman is pushing for is for her to find a rich husband. She models in Nashville. And my mother would always say 'Now you look at her—you don't need to wear makeup and do all that—you've got smarts and you are outgoing and you don't need that.' And that kinda made me feel good because I was feeling a little bad that I didn't wear makeup and everything. And I am much more happy than this girl. I see her sometimes and she says 'Gosh, I wish I could go to college.'" (Session 5, p. 1)

Again, B mentioned that women should not spend time trying to appeal to men.

> B: "Like I had a friend of mine who was raised to think that she was supposed to be cute and appealing to men. And I told her that it is not worth it . . . who cares if they like you or not. But she can't help it. And she is very friendly and most men assume that she wants to be more than friendly. You have to be harder. Other people have told her this and she says that if she changes she will not be her. She realizes that this all comes from the fact that when she was 18 she wanted to knock'em out. And she hasn't found anything to replace it yet. She keeps falling back on this as the only thing that she knows." (Session 5, p. 2)

In a follow up interview, R, expressed a similar dislike for women more concerned with their appearance than with having a good time or getting involved in sports activities.

> "I went water skiing with this girl. She went in this little bikini and she was the type that didn't want to go in the water skiing because she might mess up her makeup. I couldn't believe that she would waste the opportunity to go water skiing because she didn't want to mess up her makeup. Those kind of women are the women I don't like. They are an insult to women. They go through life on their derrieres. I know where they are coming from. I have felt that way—that is all you are worth—a good chest." (R, 1977:6)

Women in Bars

In some instances, women with men in social situations were defined as behaving inappropriately. Men were perceived as continually making advances towards women in bars. Women were defined as behaving inappropriately if they responded to the advances of men in a bar. While some of the women in the sessions admitted to frequenting bars, they generally interpreted their own behavior as acceptable for several reasons: (1) they would not accept drinks from men, (2) they went with

a group of women, (3) they went alone to bars where they were sure to meet friends, or (4) they went primarily to gay bars (where they defined the interaction between males and females as safe).[8] Evidently, women who did not conform to those standards of bar behavior were defined as behaving inappropriately. For example, W described an incident in which she and several friends were having a drink in a bar when a man next to them made a "pass" at one of the women.

> W: "One of the men at this table said something to one of the women and it was real crude so I told him off. I didn't even think about it. And SHE TOLD ME OFF. She said that he was trying to be nice. I think that she liked him and wanted him to pick her up and I am sitting there thinking what in the world are you talking about and where is your head at. I was really offended by the whole thing myself."
>
> B: "I think that this whole thing goes on because women put up with it. Either they like it or they are . . . a lot of women are afraid to say anything . . . you know . . . to say go to hell, or drop dead, or go away buddy. Women won't do it. I have been with women like that, and some man will come up to them out of the clear air and they sit down. So, I say 'Hey buddy, who invited you? I am sorry we are having a conversation.' And then these women get mad at ME because I am not being nice to some character who sat down and wasn't invited." (Session 8, p. 2)

In another session, participants expressed disapproval of women who accept drinks from men in bars.

> L: "Well one thing I have never been interested in anybody I meet in a bar. I think that a woman has to be desperate before she will go into a bar late at night and have something to do with somebody that she would meet

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[8]There were several discussions about the virtues of gay bars. The women claimed they preferred the atmosphere of gay bars because it was relaxed and nonthreatening. Almost everybody in the sessions had been to a gay bar.

there. Because there aren't any places where a woman can go alone here and not be hasseled except a gay bar."

B: "I will go to S and A sometimes but generally because I know that there would be some people there on certain nights. There were people there that I knew when I went in and would say 'hey.' I refuse to let guys buy me drinks because there is always that implication. I want to establish that right away, that I don't owe you anything."

L: "I think that is a good idea." (Session 5, pp. 8-9)

From this interaction, it seemed that the participants believed that it was inappropriate for women to encourage or allow men to approach them in bars. Women who did permit such advances were criticized and defined as "offensive" or "desperate." So while men were defined as exploiters for making advances toward women in bars, women were defined as "offensive" for responding to those advances.

Clearly the definitions generated about women in the interactions do not conform to the prowoman line of early CR advocates against antiwoman statements in numerous CR guidelines. The participants seemed to make a distinction between themselves and other women. Evidently, they did not believe that they engaged in disapproved behavior attributed to other women (such as accepting advances of men or manipulating others). Little effort was made to explain or understand why women might behave in these ways except for an occasional reference to socialization.

On one occasion participants specifically talked about how they were guilty of placing women in categories and treating other women with less respect than they should. Some of the participants faulted themselves for disattending other women at social functions and for ignoring women's accomplishments. However, they did not disattend all women, for they

seemed to be positively oriented towards women who did not fit the stereotypic roles of females (e.g., career women). When they discussed the need to accept other women's activities, housework was not one of the activities they thought to be appropriate to discuss. Although recognition of women's accomplishments was expressed, they did not accept and understand all of women's activities (including housework), as the guidelines for CR direct.

T: "Well it used to be that the women I knew were wearing hair rollers the sorority type . . . I couldn't relate to that . . . I never got around girls who liked to go camping and just talk until my senior year. There are some women that I can sit around with and just talk to like a guy now. Not just male subjects. I always felt that I should sit straight and wear makeup. When I would walk into a room with girls I would feel left out, bad, like I should be on guard. I hate that and just recently I found girls that I can like."

B: "Women are taught from childhood to compete with each other. Women compete over many things. Women compete in their appearance."

Facilitator: "I heard two things from you—that men are more interesting than women . . . ."

T: "Well all the men that I knew from home were professional men and had more to talk about. When my parent would have parties, I would talk to the men while my mother sat with the women and talked about babies."

L: "I got into that when I was first married. I wanted to be in the living room with the men but when they would come over I would end up in the kitchen with the women. I finally decided that it had to be something to do with my reaction to people—that is I asked the right questions to men but to their wives I would say—'do you want some coffee . . . sit down . . .' I established the tone of the conversation."

T: "Well, maybe the men were professional and the women weren't."

L: "Well I was stereotyping the women as uninteresting."

B: "Why is it that you can have an intelligent conversation with a man or a man and a woman . . . but if it's only a woman, the conversation degenerates to talk of kids and housework. You participate because you don't know how to get out of it."

L: "I put women in a role. There are many people I react to this way."

A: "I would like to get back to what you said about not being able to relate to women because I always used to think that men were more interesting. Until I realized that there are women out there who do more interesting things—leather work—camping."

C: "Well a lot of women don't talk about their accomplishments. But you never know because you always ask about the recipes."

Facilitator: "I feel that women are ghettoized . . . except in college where you have interesting people available. But especially for women, the options start to disappear and you get limited to meeting other women in the same situation and it can be a real effort to come in contact with other people." (Session 2, pp. 4-5)

Review

Several factors may be associated with the negative definitions of women that emerged in the sessions. For instance, Hacker (1951) presented an interesting argument concerning the self-perceptions developed by minority group members and applied it to women. She argued that one common characteristic of minority members was self hatred. Members of minority groups may come to define other members of the group in the same negative or derogatory way the majority does. Often the stereotypes the majority uses to characterize minority members become part of the way that minority members define themselves. In our society, both women and men are socialized to define women as passive, catty, vain, etc.

Women internalize these definitions of reality and, consequently, begin to believe women are passive, catty, vain, etc. Indeed, in studies on college students' perceptions of men and women Boverman, et al. (1972) found

> . . . both men and women incorporate both positive and negative traits of the appropriate stereotype into their self concept. Since more feminine traits are negatively valued than masculine traits, women tend to have more negative self concepts than men do. (75)

The participants were able to maintain a positive definition of self while defining other women as manipulative or overly concerned with appearance. The participants seemed to perceive themselves as being different from other women.

> "I know there are those women that run around and say things like 'If you don't take me to this I am going to cry.' ICK. Those kind really give women a bad name . . . they have done some really bad things to women and men and other people. People try to categorize. I have realized the difference for a while. It is nice to be reinforced and to know that there are more people like you. I think a lot of people in the group came through on that point." (R, 1977:6)

In the interviews, several of the participants noted that they were unable to relate to other women (women not in the sessions) and that other women were unable to relate to them.

> "Well down here you don't run into women who—well most women don't want to associate with me anyway because they think that I am a violent women's libber and they don't want anything to do with me because I am radical." (C, 1977:4)

> "I think that it would be good to have nonacademic women [in the sessions] because I have a problem with women that I meet who are not teaching or in college. There are times I don't like other women and I don't know how to handle it. That makes me very upset. I always feel different from other women." (Q, 1977:2)

> "I have always been the type of person that all my life my friends were male. It really surprised me. I think that I thought of women the way that men do, as being less intelligent and a little spacier and vain and the sorority type." (D, 1976:4)

The participants defined other women in a stereotypic fashion without hurting their own self concepts by claiming that they were different somehow from other women and, therefore, not subject to the same definition.

CR is usually assumed to be a technique for helping women to develop a positive perception of themselves and other women. Indeed, much of the CR literature suggested that is frequently what happened. Obviously, this redefinition of women did not occur to any significant extent in these sessions. The prevailing social definitions of women seemed to be the most likely to emerge in the session interaction. It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that none of the negative definitions of women presented in the sessions was challenged by any of the members.

Review

Participation in CR has been described by feminists as an experience which provided women with a "new reality"—a new way of understanding the world around them. They argue that CR produces radical changes in women's perceptions about themselves and others. Further ". . . an exploration of strictly female reality is a necessary step to correct the warp in sexually biased society . . ." (Firestone, 1970:167).

Participants are supposed to develop a feminist ideology by sharing their personal experiences. Presumably, different women experience the

same problems and injustices. Through interaction the women ultimately come to share the same conclusions about the forces in the social world that affect their lives. a feminist definition of reality. The ideological outcome of CR is assumed to be the same across groups. Indeed, some analysts of CR argue that feminist consciousness is an inevitable outcome of interaction among women in CR sessions. Pamela Allen argues that consciousness develops through four stages (opening up, sharing, analyzing and abstracting). According to Allen (1970) and others (Eastman, 1972), these stages are part of the natural development of consciousness raising and will eventually lead to the development of feminist definitions of reality, regardless of the beliefs of the women when they enter.

This feminist definition of reality did not emerge for all, or even most of the participants in the sessions observed. Some of the definitions shared in the sessions conformed to feminist ideology, while others did not. Participants identified actions they considered discriminatory and prejudical. In general, they defined discrimination as actions which prevented women from participating in activities solely because of their sex. Prejudice against women was perceived by the participants as the attitudes about women, e.g., they are less valuable than men and should be involved only in a limited number of social roles (such as wife and mother). These definitions were consistent with feminist constructions of reality; they paralleled the definitions of social situations that appear in feminist literature. In their conversations, it appeared that session participants were reaffirming the kinds of world views that have been presented by many feminists.

Although the participants were able to identify actions and attitudes they believed were unfair, there was no political analysis of the incidents reported. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that participants did not engage in constructions about why discrimination and prejudice existed. Social structural factors were rarely introduced as part of the construction of definitions of reality. In several instances, discrimination and prejudice were defined as being the result of "individual personality" or "a male's insecurity" (as in the case of the soccer player and the graduate student). As a result of the absence of structural or political analysis, no suggestions were made in the sessions about how to eliminate general discrimination or prejudice. Attempts were made to advise individuals on how to handle personal discrimination problems. Thus, the definitions of particular actions as discrimination conformed to feminist ideology, but the lack of structural analysis did not.

The conversations on male roles resulted in definitions of males as manipulators and exploiters of women sexually and socially. The participants expressed frustration and hostility about men for their behavior toward women and pitied men for their inability to express emotions. The anger and expression of hostility towards men has been frequently defined as a necessary step in developing feminist consciousness. These constructions of male roles conformed to definitions in general feminist literature, as well as in the writing about CR. Men have been defined in other groups as "chauvinistic" and "unresponsive" to women (Micossi, 1972). The characterizations of male behavior tended to reflect the participants' construction of males as a class of people against whom women must fight.

This definition of men has not been uncommon in CR sessions. "Men are judged first as a class of people unaware and generally billigerent opponents and then individually according to the flagrancy of their own chauvinism . . ." (Micossi, 1972). The definition of men as a class of manipulators or exploiters was indicated by the number of statements by participants using the inclusive term "men."

In many instances, the women in the sessions reaffirmed the prevailing feminist views of men. The interaction among women tended to reinforce the definitions of men as exploiters and manipulators. The cultural definitions of men as superior to women, were rejected by the participants, as they are rejected by other feminists.

The women were skeptical about the possibility of enduring equalitarian relationships with men. Again, questioning the desirability of relationships with men is an expected part of CR reality construction (Abarbanell and Perl, 1976; Micossi, 1972). Relationships with men were defined as problematic by participants who feared becoming too dependent on men and neglecting their women friends because of their relationships with men. The women were also concerned that their relationships with men might conflict with their career goals. No conclusions were drawn about the optimal way to handle heterosexual relationships and many of the women clearly were ambivalent about their current relationships with men. This kind of ambivalence is expressed in many CR groups. Women frequently defined relationships with men as "traps" or "problems" while recognizing their desire to sustain and develop such relationships (Cassell, 1977).

Thus, the constructions of the participants about men and problems of relationships with men that emerged in the sessions tended to conform to the feminist beliefs expressed in literature and in reports of other CR sessions. Of the various realities, that exist in the larger culture, the women utilized the feminist definition of reality and reaffirmed it throughout the sessions.

The constructions of reality presented about women, however, diverged radically from the definitions that have been reported from other CR sessions. One of the most important definitions of reality attributed to CR is the redefinition of perceptions of women. Numerous authors suggested that a strong sense of sisterhood would develop among CR participants as they came to define women as commarades and recognized the common plight of women as a social class (Micossi, 1972; Fish, 1974; Dreifus, 1973; Abarabnell and Perl, 1976).

Indeed, one of the most important aims of CR (and the feminist movement in general) has been to develop a sense of commonality among all women so that they might collectively seek solutions to their problems. The concept of sisterhood is, perhaps, the cornerstone of feminist ideology. Despite the importance of the positive definition of women in the feminist literature, these definitions did not emerge in the sessions. The participants defined women as manipulative, marcassisstic and/or exploitative. Participants tended to accept the negative cultural stereotypes of women rather than advocating the feminist perceptions of women. The interaction reinforced already existing negative social definitions of "other" women which the participants brought to the sessions.

The minority group framework provides an explanation for this negative view of women and identification of the other women as unacceptable was sustained, while the participants maintained positive self images as special women. To associate themselves with all women, for instance, would mean admitting to the collective "faults" of women (such as being passive, less well educated, less achievement oriented, etc.). In order to sustain satisfying identities as well educated, liberated women, then class association with women perceived as inferior had to be avoided.

Generally, CR advocates assume that developing an attachment to other women raises the self esteem of individuals in the sessions as they identify with the problems and triumphs of other women. "This increase in esteem for members of one's own sex is a measure of the increase in self esteem . . . and demonstrates how relations with the world effect one's own relation to and image of self" (Micossi, 1972). However, if women already have positive self esteem, and identities based on their perceptions of being better than other women, "sisterhood" may have threatened their identities. Feminist definitions of reality may not emerge in sessions in which there are no women who subscribe to feminist ideology. Women may utilize some of the feminist rhetoric to describe the problems they experience with discrimination or with men; however, they may not subscribe to the critical part of feminist ideology which, in fact, may have to be taught in sessions and not assumed to emerge.

"New realities" were not constructed in these sessions; the definitions that emerged in the sessions conformed to already existing

definitions in society. As Blumer (1969) has argued, people bring many definitions of reality to their interaction. Much of social interaction may reinforce particular realities rather than create new definitions.

CR may reinforce particular definitions of reality that already exist in the culture, but which may not be supported in other interactive settings. The definitions of the situation affirmed during the sessions were not "new" in the sense that they never existed before, although they were "new" to some individuals in the sessions. The feminist definitions participants in CR are expected to develop have been a part of feminist ideology since they were constructed in early CR groups. CR members are not expected to view the world <u>any</u> way they like. For instance, women in CR are not supposed to construct definitions of the world that include the idea that there are demonic sorcerers living in the center of the earth who control electromagnetic waves that effect women's behavior so that women are incapable of becoming business leaders. This, of course, is a <u>new</u> definition of reality but it is an unacceptable definition for CR advocates. Women in CR are supposed to come up with <u>one</u> particular construction of reality, current feminist ideology. Some CR advocates believe that this one reality will emerge regardless of the ideological orientation of the women that enter sessions and irrespective of the presence of feminists in the sessions.

> There is an implicit assumption that the very act of women organizing into small intimate groupings will result in the creation of a similar political perspective, even without reading or contact between groups, via the four stages identified (Eastman, 1972).[9]

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[9]The stages refer to those of Pamela Allen cited earlier.

The emergence of these definitions is believed to be an inherent product of the CR process. However, in the session investigated, the feminist definition of reality did not emerge in totality nor equally for all participants. The definitions of discrimination and men were closer to feminist definitions than the constructions about women.

The participants were involved in a process endorsing some of the definitions of reality brought to the sessions. CR may not create new definitions, but rather "successful" CR groups may reinforce "feminist reality." Participants brought with them different definitions of reality that existed in the culture, so that women who may not have subscribed to feminist beliefs may have been aware of them. During the interaction some definitions were affirmed and others rejected. Blumer (1969) suggested that definitions of reality are not extremely fluid but rather are structured by ongoing definitions internalized through interaction over time. While the CR theorists predict the emergence of new feminist definitions, the ongoing social definitions of gender were reaffirmed in the sessions.

Stereotypical cultural definitions of gender may affect women in other settings as well. Participants may "mouth" feminist definitions during sessions but may be bound by other more powerful social definitions in other settings. CR may not produce any dramatic changes in the way participants conduct their relations outside the group (Cassell, 1977, noted a wide variety of participant responses in the sessions she observed. She further stated that there was very little the married participants could do to change their lives outside the group).

The participants' constructions have implications for other personal and social change groups. While "new" definitions may be agreed upon in such groups, participants must continue to interact in the larger social world. Unless people stay in such groups all of the time, they will be affected by other definitions of reality which may be difficult to reject. Cultural stereotypes may be so deeply internalized that they ultimately are reaffirmed even in interaction in groups intended to dispell them.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION ACCOUNTS

Account, an aligning action, can play a key role in the process of social construction of reality. The concept of account allows the sociologist to understand individuals' retrospective constructions of reality and how cultural definitions of reality are maintained over time.

The account concept frequently has been used in the deviance literature to analyze situations in which individuals are forced to explain away deviant, or untoward, acts they engaged in during interaction. Obviously, plans of action need to be aligned when deviant or unexpected behavior occurs. Stokes and Hewitt (1976) argue that realignment of action occurs when interaction is threatened by some deviant or unacceptable event. Accounts are produced in response to others' questions about the actor's behaviors.

The concept of accounts has been used in other contexts. Ethnomethodologist Garfinkel (1967) has used the concept "account" in a broader sense than it has been used in deviance literature. Accounts are used in phenomenology and ethnomethodology to refer to the ongoing reconstructive interpretations of reality which are used to make sense of actions in everyday life. "Ethnomethodology seeks to ascertain what can definitely be known about the accomplishment of sense in the presentation of accounts in everyday life . . ." (Filmer, et al., 1973:209).

Ethnomethodologists argue that the character of everyday life is so mundane as to make day-to-day activity seem to possess an inherent

reality. Perceptions of reality are based on a very systematic set of shared understandings about social activities that are constantly being reinforced through social interaction.

> Yet these are not so much endemic features of the activities as features which are given to them when they are organized in order that they might be described, explained, or summarized coherently (that is made "visible-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes," i.e., accountable). This process of giving systematic features to interactive behavior in the process of making it accountable is described as its reflexivity since, presumably, the ordered requirements of coherent and articulate linguistic expression reflect upon by organizing and making systematic, the apparently unordered character of everyday activities (Filmer, 1973:207).

Ethnomethodologists are interested in the process of accounting which continuously occurs in everyday life. Accounts describe, explain, or summarize activity to give it order and meaning. Garfinkel postulates that the techniques utilized in ordering reality may best be understood when everyday reality is disrupted and must be reconstructed. Thus, while Garfinkel suggests that accounts are used to systematize everyday occurrences and make them meaningful, he believes they may be studied most easily in situations where social expectations of reality have been violated.

Therefore, while this definition of account is broader than Lyman and Scott's conceptualization, Garfinkel argues that the process can best be investigated in deviant situations, situations in which there is untoward behavior. Lyman and Scott (1968), as well as Mills (1940), argue that accounts are triggered by questions addressed to an actor by other concerning behavior. These authors assume that only deviant or unexpected behavior will stimulate others to question the actor about behavior.

Consequently, although an account may be any reality construction that makes sense of the world for self and others, accounts have been studied in deviant situations, primarily.

While it is undeniable that deviant or untoward behavior precipitates questions which elicit some explanation of motive, justification of behavior, or some reconstruction of reality, there are other interactive situations which may call for accounts. Accounts may be used to classify, clarify, or integrate behaviors for an audience. Accounting for deviant behavior is one way in which an individual offers her/his construction of reality for others. There are other circumstances that may generate accounts—reconstructions of reality that classify or clarify past behavior for someone in the present.

Concept: Evaluation Account

There are certainly instances in which questions are addressed to actors about their behavior when it has not been deviant. While some accounts may justify deviant behavior, others may simply elucidate or evaluate behavior or events. A person's evaluation of an event may be triggered by a question from other. For instance, when a person arrives home from work, her/his spouse may ask, "How was your day?" The person is not only asking for a reconstruction of the events of the day, but is also asking for an evaluative interpretation of the meaning of the day's activities to the actor. In other words, the actor is being asked for an account (a reconstructive interpretation) of her/his day. People are involved constantly in the process of assigning meaning to others' actions

by evaluating the impact of others' actions on them. These evaluations may change over time and different evaluations of the same event may be developed for different audiences. Evaluation accounts, then, are a significant part of the way that people reconstruct their behavior to establish meaning for it, for themselves and others. Thus, evaluation accounts are expressions by individuals which define and evaluate their past actions.

Evaluation accounts were obtained from the participants (including the facilitator) in the CR sessions. During follow-up interviews, the women were questioned about what effects they perceived CR had on them and how they felt about their experiences in terms of what they had expected from sessions. They were asked to evaluate the facilitator and she was asked to evaluate the participants. All participants provided some evaluation of the sessions and of others.

Evaluation Accounts of Session Experience

Personal Growth

Personal growth or development has always been a goal of groups associated with the Self-Help Movement but it only recently has been mentioned as a major consequence of Consciousness Raising. Many of the women in the sessions gave accounts of the sessions which claimed personal growth or improvement in themselves as an effect of their CR participation. Some subjects reported that the sessions had contributed to their increased "self-awareness." These women placed great value on a person's ability to examine herself/himself honestly and critically. They

indicated that self-reflection allowed them to accept themselves and develop more positive self-concepts.

> "I enjoyed the stuff that we talked about. I really liked the openness of everybody. I appreciated that. It could have become pretty stilted but I think that everyone was pretty loose about everything. It kind of got me to open up. I usually don't. I sometimes think I have terrible, horrible opinions and I usually try to keep them to myself [laughs]. With everybody else tlaking it kind of brought me out. And lots of the things that they said made me realize things in myself that I hadn't wanted to admit even to myself . . ." (C, 1977:2)

Participants often seemed to believe that if they could identify their problems and admit their faults to themselves that they could then begin to cope with these problems.

> "During the time that I was in the group, I was going through almost a nonidentity time . . . I was—more . . . down about myself than I had been in a couple of years because I had started school again and I didn't know what was going to come next. I only knew that it was better to be in school than to be out of school. I think what the group did was to remind me that I should get separated from these feelings and think about why they were coming about and . . . and whether or not they were self-imposed—which of course they were." (W, 1976:6)

In many cases, then, evaluation accounts associated increased self-awareness with improved self-concept.

> "I begin to see myself more . . . usually I don't see myself or think about myself. I catch myself and then I think about something else. Especially after we would meet, I would go out and try and put myself in situations where other women are with their problems and try to think how I would react. I began to see myself more clearly and I began to see myself more as an adult. I always see myself as someone who didn't have any responsibilities. Now I see myself—I don't know if it is because I am nearing graduation or whatever but I think that the group had a lot to do with that—thinking I am responsible. I have always had a problem seeing myself in a positive way. Now I am seeing myself more clearly. I guess I am beginning or attempting to begin to see myself in a positive way." (T, 1976:5)

Some of the women's personal growth accounts focused on their perceptions that the sessions had given them direction in their lives. Women who gave these evaluation accounts believed they had been confused about goals for their lives at the time the sessions were conducted. Most said they had been having difficulty establishing priorities for themselves and trouble maintaining a proper focus on their goals. These women gave accounts of the positive effects of the CR experience on their goal direction. They perceived their participation in CR as an aid in establishing, clarifying, or redirecting their goals. Thus, several women declared the sessions had contributed to their personal development by giving them a new perspective on their lives.

> "I think that the group helped me put some goals in my life. It helped me to go ahead and apply to law school. There was a certain level of expectations that my parents wanted me to achieve. I think that the CR group helped me to realize that this was the reason that I was doing some of these things." (T, 1976:6)

> "Well, I think that CR is what really started my . . . I think that if I had never started that group I could never be down here [in a job with all males]. It changed my whole perspective. It didn't really change it—it brought it out. I had been somewhat suppressing myself and trying to conform. I guess everybody does. But I hadn't really thought about it. It changed me noticeably, not overnight, but it got me looking into other things." (C, 1977:3)

For others, the sessions were seen as contributing a reorientation to their relationships with men. Some participants perceived a change in their opinions of what they wanted from their associations with men as a consequence of their participation. They perceived this change as a part of their personal growth. They claimed their expectations of relationships with men were more realistic than before.

> [After CR] "I started to take the women's courses and I wished that I had discovered that sooner. I started talking to people in the women's movement. Then I changed my ideas about what relations with men should be like too. That has helped me more than anything almost. I found out that what I was looking for in men was not what I wanted to live with—it was like the John Wayne image on television. I was expecting them to be as plastic as they were expecting me to be. CR helped me a lot in that area." (C, 1977:3)

Another aspect of evaluation accounts of personal growth through participation in CR was the perception of the development of greater tolerance of others as a positive benefit. Subjects frequently mentioned that they were glad the sessions exposed them to different people with diverse interests. Participants perceived the exposure to women with diverse ideas as contributing to their increased awareness and acceptance of the variety of lifestyles in the world around them. Most of the accounts of increased tolerance centered around their acceptance of the professed lesbian (A) in the sessions. She attended the first session and got to know the participants without revealing that she was lesbian. At the next session she told the members, and later reported to me that she felt the response of the others was warm and receptive. Her revelation seemed to have an impact on almost all the subjects. She was mentioned in the account of each woman in the session. Several subjects thought that getting to know "A" as a person first—not as a lesbian—had been valuable in increasing their responsiveness to her. They believed that learning about lesbians through association with "A" had increased their levels of tolerance of lesbians.

> "I did meet my first lesbian in the group and that was really good, I thought. I also had my first real contact with unmarried women. Both of these things helped me to not stereotype people. I really felt as if I accepted the woman who

> said she was a lesbian, I was not afraid of her. I felt good about myself for accepting these women." (Q, 1977:2)
>
> "It was interesting to me to meet A to find out more about lesbians that were organized in women's groups. That to me was interesting because you learn. There was talking about different view points and that is good." (R, 1977:2)
>
> "I enjoyed meeting different people. Like that woman, what was her name—A—she was a lesbian. That was the first lesbian I had ever met one that I knew of. It was so funny because I have always had these preconceived notions of lesbians as being really butch. And it was so funny when she first came out . . . I had thought that she might be because she talked about lesbian groups . . . but when she finally came out it didn't affect me at all. I liked her and it never did affect me. So that really made me feel that I could relate to her. Of course, I only related to her in the group. I don't know how it would have been somewhere else." (T, 1976:2)

In addition, the women tended to perceive an overall increase in their levels of tolerance for many different lifestyles. Single women thought they had benefited from contact with married women and women with children. Married women felt they had greater understanding of problems of singles. The professed lesbian said that she gained insights from the exposure to nonlesbian women.

> "I would say that it made me more aware perhaps of nonlesbian feminists and maybe helped me be a little more tolerant of women." (A, 1977:4)

The evaluation accounts of the CR experience stressed personal growth. Participants indicated they perceived themsleves as improved people because of their CR experience.

Support

Some of the evaluation accounts stressed "support" as an outgrowth of session participation. Women claimed that they gained strength and conviction about their opinions from association with other women in CR.

Support was defined as the understanding, encouragement, and approval that participants provided one another in sessions with regard to the way that they were handling situations in their lives. The women recalled an atmosphere of openness and willingness to share experiences as important elements of interaction in CR. They perceived that participants had respect for one another's opinions, that they could discuss their experiences without fear of contradiction or harassment.

> "I felt that the women respected each other. I remember one of the women getting upset about the term feminist . . . anyway, I didn't want anyone to get insulted and feel . . . they were less worthy or that they had to be a specific way. I think that we may have had a touch of that but we recovered beautifully." (A, 1977:5)

Evaluation accounts concerning support often included comments that participants had respect for one another's opinions even if they did not agree with them.

> "But one thing that was supportive to me was that even if no one else in the group agreed with me I was still all right. You can't get that anywhere else. You may get it from one friend here or one friend there, but when you have a whole group telling you that you are all right, it helps a lot. (B, 1976:1)

Women seemed to perceive that the supportive, uncritical relations in CR made them feel "normal"—as if their feelings and experiences were valid and meaningful. The women positively evaluated the sense of commonalty they received from interaction. Sharing experiences in the sessions made the participants understand that the difficulties or feelings they faced were ones that all women encountered and were not unique ones that resulted from some peculairity in themselves.

> "As a matter of fact, that CR is one of the best things that ever happened to me. It is not so much what I learned about everybody else that made the difference, it is what I learned

about myself and how I wasn't the only one that thought a lot of this stuff. I really thought for a long time that I was crazy. That was due to a lot of stuff that had happened to me. I talked to these 'Suzy Sunshines' and all they wanted out of life was to get married and have 15 children and a mortgage. I thought that I must be abnormal or something that I didn't want that." (C, 1977:1)

"I am not a very confident person and I think that it [CR] gave me a little more confidence especially at a time when I was hassled by other things. It helps to know that you are not the only one . . . that there are other people out there. To know that there are people, for example, that felt that being alone was fine for them. That was helpful to me, just knowing that there were people out there that were happy being alone." (D, 1976:4)

"Partly it [CR] was a relief in the sense that it was supportive. I felt a lot of relief. Trying to deal with so many people, especially men, it is a relief to know that you are not wrong and not imagining these things. Things really are that way. There are other people there in the group and you can relate to them because it is not a personal crusade anymore—there are a lot of us that feel that way. I hate it when I think I am on a personal crusade. If I can relate it to a lot of people, then I don't feel so wierd anymore or so strange. I feel much better about it." (B, 1976:3)

Many of the women commented that they enjoyed being able to talk to other women in a noncompetitive setting. Participants reported that in many situations they felt they were competitive with other women, especially for the attention of men. Part of the sense of support experienced in the sessions they attributed to the noncompetitive atmosphere created by the absence of males.

"I felt really good about CR. I thought that it was one of the most positive experiences that I had ever had with other other women. It was really unique to be placed in a noncompetitive role with other women because in our society we are caught up in the competition with other women whether you want to or not. You have to play the game because that is the way it is. It is nice for everybody to remove their facades and communicate as human beings with feelings, not as 'Miss Plastic' out of Vogue trying to make an impression on all the

> men around. Which is usually the way you interact with other women. I am sure I am guilty of it too. Everyone wants to be Scarlett O'Hara." (C, 1977:3)

> "I really like too . . . well, it has been one of the few times that I have had a chance to sit down with women and really hear what women are like. There is not so much of that attempt to present an image or a front. You don't have to live up to anyone's expectations." (B, 1977:3)

The women seemed to feel that being open and nonthreatening allowed them to rely on other women for approval, rather than men.

> "I think also CR helped me because as women we are taught to depend on men a lot and I think that part of feminism is unlearning that and learning that you can depend on women. It is learning that women are allies. A lot of women don't think of other women as allies—they think of them as foes. CR dispels that and makes you think of women as friends." (D, 1976: 5)

Some of the women claimed they were supported through direct encouragement from other members. In one particular instance, a woman—R—had decided to play for the all-male intramural lacrosse team. She recounted to the participants her difficulties getting on the team, getting equipment, receiving instruction from the coach and relating to other team members. At one session she reported that she was being treated so badly by the coach that she was thinking of quitting the team. All the women present encouraged her to stay on the team and sympathized with her situation. She acknolwedged this encouragement as part of what made her perceive participation in the sessions to be a positive experience.

> "It was good to have a group of people going. 'Yeah,' 'Yeah,' 'Keep on playing.' Everyone needs someone to back them— to go 'Yeah, yeah'—to push them. It is nice to have people like that, whether it is friends or that group. You have got to have people that will help you through things. That was a nice thing about the group." (R, 1977:2)

In review, women who attended the CR sessions said they were supported because of the noncritical, nonthreatening nature of the interaction. They seemed to be pleased that they had openly discussed themselves with other women with no fear of contradiction. The participants indicated they trusted other women in the sessions to understand and accept them.

Outlet for Expression

Another positive effect of Consciousness Raising identified by participants was that sessions provided them with an opportunity to express their feelings to one another. In a recent article, Metzger (1978) has written about the importance of talk and expression to women.

> This is a very individual need: the need for a woman to open up and talk about her feelings about herself and her life. In the beginning of group experience, opening up is reaching out to find human contact with other women . . . opening up is a personal need to admit and express one's emotions—her joys as well as her sorrows. (Allen, 1970:24-24)

Many participants indicated that they needed someone or some group with whom they could talk about themselves. The women mentioned that expressions of emotion—e.g., sadness, fear, and confusion, were beneficial to them.

Some of the participants said that expressing their feelings to others in the sessions helped them to organize their own thoughts and feelings.

> "A lot of the things that I had been thinking about I had really been having some thoughts and feelings that hadn't been verbalized or that I hadn't defined. I think that the effect that the group had was that I got to talk about these things that were going on and in doing that I became more able to define what was happening for me." (W, 1976:5)

> "We discussed a lot about clothes and stuff. I had run into the problems coming here from the north and people here judge you for what you wear. It was nice to talk about that, I needed it at that time. I needed to have people talk and help me to clear things up . . . because I had a lot of problems understanding why people took what you wore so seriously. The group helped me to deal with that." (R, 1977:9)

The expression of feelings in CR sessions is frequently linked in the feminist literature to positive "mental health." Expression is supposed to allow individuals to confront their feelings. "Our society alienates us from our feelings . . . It is imperative for our understanding of ourselves and our mental health that we maintain and deepen our contact with our feelings." (Allen, 1970:24) The participants judged CR sessions to be appropriate settings in which to express their feelings and opinions. Being able to verbalize these emotions was frequently related in the accounts to obtaining a better "state of mind" or happiness.

> "I would say that it was supportive and gave me a vent for my opinions. It made me happier. I really looked forward to it. I enjoyed it a lot." (A, 1977:3)

> "DEFINITELY. I am subject to fits of depression, or whatever that it is—that disease with no name. The group was like a little panacea for me—like if something was bothering me I would be able to get somebody to listen to me then. That is what it was. If something happened that I didn't like and I didn't have time to talk to my husband about it (he is a student and is busy) and I feel silly talking about it to myself in the mirror—it would help me smooth out little irritations in life. I think that it gave me a feeling of confidence that I express when I was away from the group." (L, 1977:6)

In fact, expression of emotion in CR sessions was sometimes associated with physical well-being, as well. Some women thought that neglecting the emotional needs for expression in life could have negative consequences for physical health. The idea that emotional expressiveness can have a positive effect on physical condition is found in popular

literature (Boston's Women's Health Book Collective, 1976). For some of the participants, the opportunity to talk about their problems was considered "therapeutic" in the sense of both mental and physical health.

> "It is nice to talk. You let a lot of things roll around in your head and if you don't talk about them you are never really sure you have made a decision about anything. A lot of times there are so many things going on that you don't have time to socialize and that has got to be detrimental to your health . . . . It is basically like group therapy too. You can talk things out and say what you think about this. That is therapeutic." (R, 1977:5)

CR was considered to have effected the woman positively by providing a place where they could go to talk about themselves and their feelings. In accounts, several of the women mentioned expression of their inner thoughts as a beneficial outcome of participation in Consciousness Raising.

> "It gave everybody an opportunity to talk about things that might have been bothering them in general. I don't think that people tend to do that . . . people live very superficial lives . . . a lot of people don't even think of things like that." (X, 1976:2)

Participants often claimed that CR sessions were one of the few settings in which a woman could go where she could be free to talk about anything that bothered her. In an impersonal world where there are not many occasions for women to give expression to their feelings. For many of the participants, CR was described in accounts as a significant outlet for their thoughts. The CR sessions were sometimes viewed as being superior to friendship groups as an outlet because of the limitations on the kinds of things that women perceived they could discuss with their friends. For instance, some women did not feel comfortable discussing women's issues in friendship groups.

> "I liked the whole situation of sitting down and talking to women. Being able to talk to people about problems and have them give you objective responses to what you said . . . without hurting feelings. The opportunity to interact with other women about things that don't come up in casual conversations with friends." (X, 1976:2)

> "In the group I was able to talk about some things that I don't get a chance to talk about very much since most of the women that I know are married and all they want to talk about usually is their children. They do not like to talk about intellectual things and I thought that the members of this group did. It was good for me too because I found that others had the same feelings about many things as me." (Q, 1977:2)

Sometimes the participants claimed that friends were not an adequate resource for expression of opinions and emotions because friends were too close to the women to be objective about their problems. Participants argued that friends would often try to interfere or give advice rather than listen sympathetically. Thus, CR participants affirmed the norm present in many CR groups that participants should listen and share their own similar experiences or thoughts, but not advise one another.

> "I feel fairly good about being in it. I wish I could have . . . I think that I am like everybody else and very inhibited in talking about myself personally, with people I don't know. I wish that I had done that easier and faster. On the whole, I think that it was really helpful because of the fact that I had a different group of people to go to on the things that I was working on. And sometimes the people that know you so well just sort of say well there is no problem. Or sometimes friends will try to tell you what to do and you don't really want advice, you want to hear what other people have done so you can pick and choose. I thought that it was a very positive experience." (W, 1976:5)

In addition, some of the problems that the women wished to discuss involved their friends, which made friends inappropriate confidents in those instances. One woman even commented that CR members seemed to have greater sensitivity and awareness of her problems than friends.

Accounts characterized CR participants as easier to talk to than family members as well as friends.

> "I think it was helpful being able to talk. I don't think that I was extremely open—I am not an open person too much. But it gave me a chance to say some things. And I think that a lof of people in the group kind of understood me. A lot of my friends don't understand me and my family doesn't understand me. There are some people that I say one thing to and other people that I say different things to. Sometimes I don't know what I have said to whom." (T, 1976:2)

Finally, for some of the women in the sessions, friendship groups were not available and CR served as a substitute for expressive relations with friends. This was especially true for A, who recently moved to the community and was trying to initiate relationships. Her situation was complicated by the fact that she was lesbian and a public school teacher. She believed that she had to be very careful about choosing confidents because of the potential threat to her job posed by her sexual preferences.

> "I really needed it [CR]. See my lover was in Ohio and I was there by myself and the only friend I had at the time was a male and he would introduce me to his friends but it was very 'Sourhtern Social You Big Strong He Man' types and it just sickened me. I couldn't take it. CR was really a nice outlet and I looked forward to it." (A, 1977:2)

Another member, L, was experiencing difficulty with making friends. She was married to a graduate student and working as a secretary. She believed she did not fit in with his friends or with her work group. For her CR provided an acceptable group of substitute friends with whom to talk over her feelings.

> "I am working on a part-time temporary basis. I had not been working for a long time just climbing the wall and couldn't decide what to do. I had all day to do my housework and it was driving me crazy. It helped me structure my life a little. Having not lived in the town that long it made me feel less

> alien. I just wanted someone to talk to and definitely during the time and after, CR gave me a rewarding feeling about that." (L, 1976:)

Evaluation accounts of the sessions often included the definition of CR sessions as a setting in which to express emotions without fear of contradiction. For some of the women, CR was an alternative to talking to friends or family. Expressions was perceived as a positive outcome because of its therapeutic qualities. The evaluation accounts stressing expression as a positive or therapeutic outcome of CR resemble the accounts given in self-help groups. Writers on self-help groups often positively evaluate "expression" of members in sessions (Verny, 1975). These accounts reinforce the idea that CR has become "therapeutically" oriented in recent years.

Negative Evaluation Accounts

Although the majority of CR participants offered positive evaluation accounts of their experiences in the sessions, two women gave negative evaluation accounts of their experience. Those women knew one another prior to the sessions, came from the same home town and shared many acquaintances. Both of these women began participating in the sessions relatively late (during the summer of 1976), after the other participants had been meeting together for some time. Thus, they perceived that they had come into an ongoing group and had missed something. Both gave accounts in which they evaluated the sessions as unfulfilling and unproductive.

> "I didn't get much out of it. I made one friend—not real close but we kept in touch. I didn't really get anything out of it except that I finally realized that CR groups don't always work out so well." (J, 1976:1)

> "No. I didn't . . . I wasn't effected by CR at all. I just don't think that we got into anything in depth. A lot of things that we talked about, I had talked about before and they weren't new to me. I talked about those things with girl friends." (M, 1976:4)

Both women described the sessions as unorganized and nondirective, that there was a lack of structure and inadequate leadership. They thought that there should have been specific rules of interaction and topics of discussion. In their eyes, the lack of leadership resulted in shallow conversation rather than meaningful discussion of women's issues.

> "I didn't feel like when we went in there that we had something definite to talk about. I felt—although I didn't express it—I kept hoping that it would become more organized and we would talk about something more specific. I thought that we talked about some good things, but we only talked about them on the surface. People tended to talk about personal problems but I don't think that we got into involving the whole group. We even could have talked about one person. Maybe we should have done that for an hour and no one interrupt." (M, 1976:1)

> "I didn't really get much out of it at all. I was real disappointed in it. I didn't think that the leader took the responsibility that she should have. I don't think that she made it work and she could have done a lot more to make it work. In a sense she was the leader. It turned out just like an everyday meeting of people to talk and there was no . . . I think that there have to be limits on what you can talk about in the sessions. It is not like eating lunch together. I didn't feel comfortable to bring up things that I was having trouble with. I don't know why I didn't. It probably had to do with coming in late and I also had a friend in it and some of the things that I wanted to talk about I just didn't trust . . . I just would have felt better that I was telling it to strangers. And everyone else . . . things just didn't get very far at least while I was there. It stayed pretty shallow . . ." (J, 1976:2)

Interestingly, both women said they would like to be in another CR group. They tended to attribute their dissatisfaction to the particular group not to the nature of consciousness raising sessions and to express hope for better results from participation in a different group.

> "It made me want to get into another CR group but it made me not want to be in that one anymore. I waited it out thinking that it was going to get better. They are talking among my friends about forming one soon and I will try that. It may not be like what I have described—it may be just friends because we have neglected each other. I was interested to see that CR could turn out so badly." (J, 1976:3)

> "I wasn't very satisfied but I will have to give it another chance. I don't feel that this was a typical CR group or what they are supposed to be like. It did accomplish providing a place for me to go during the week to talk about myself." (M, 1976:2)

These women shared negative evaluations of the sessions that contrast sharply with the perceptions of the other participants. However, the facilitator and the researcher also thought the discussions were shallow and disorganized during many sessions.

Feminism

During the interviews, the women were asked specifically for their accounts of the effect of the sessions on their own feminism and their feelings about feminism in general. The feminist literature postulates that Consciousness Raising is an important part of the development of feminist orientations (Abarbanell and Perl, 1976). Given the political feminist roots of CR, the evaluation accounts were expected to characterize the sessions as contributing to increased commitment to feminist ideology. However, participants generally did not attribute the sessions with any effect on their feelings about feminism or their own feminist beliefs.

Only one woman believed the sessions had changed her attitude toward feminism or had affected her perception of herself. This member, T, indicated in her account that the sessions had definitely changed her opinion of feminists. She thought the contact with the others in the

sessions led her to develop a more positive perception of feminists. In particular, she reported she was relieved to find that not all feminists were radical "man haters."

> "I have always at first thought of what most men thing [about a feminist] that she is a lesbian in disguise. I thought that she can't get married so she is going to be a feminist. Now I don't think that they are all like that at all. There are a lot of different women that call themselves feminists. It could be a woman who enjoys the man in her life and enjoys her independence and doesn't especially care to have a man support her and has interests she would like to pursue. She doesn't necessarily hate men but she doesn't necessarily need men to support her. She goes out and does what she wants and she is still a woman." (T, 1976:7)

She also thought that the sessions had given her a new perspective on the women's movement.

> "I never was involved in that [the women's movement] and to tell you the truth I never was interested in that and I thought that they were just a bunch of radical women and I don't want to have anything to do with that. I got to see another side of that from being in the group." (T, 1976:6)

She perceived that the facilitator particularly had contributed to her more positive view of feminists because she felt that the facilitator had successfully combined feminism and femininity. In addition, she claimed the session had made her realize that she had not achieved the level of "liberation" she desired and made her aware that she needed to be more independent.

> "I always considered myself to be more liberated than the average woman. I think that when I came out of the group, I realized I needed to be more independent. I think I . . . well before I got in the group I was totally disinterested in other women's problems. As far as I was concerned I had made it—here I was going to law school and I could either get it on my own or my father could get me in. Then I thought—wow—maybe I am not as liberated as I thought. That is when I got a little depressed and wanted to get out and start doing things on my own and that is part of the reason that I took this job,

> because I wanted to start making some money. But my father interfered with that and said he didn't want me working. And I wasn't making enough to support myself entirely. I think that kind of cut me down a little." (T, 1976:6)

The other participants did not believe that the sessions had effected their feelings about feminism or their feelings about themselves as feminists. Several women said they were feminists before they attended the sessions so the interaction had reinforced and clarified their already existing attitudes but not changed them.

> "I had already considered myself a feminist when I came into that group." (M, 1976:3)

> "No, I thought of myself as one before. I probably didn't really know enough . . . wasn't aware enough to call myself a feminist before. It wasn't the group that changed things . . . a lot of things have happened between then and now." (X, 1976: 5)

> "What I got from it was more to reinforce the way that I was already beginning to feel about my decision and my life style. It was nice to have those kind of people [older] to draw on their experiences—to see how much easier you have it now." (R, 1976:8)

> "It just made me more sure that that [feminist] was what I wanted to be and that there was group strength and real strength in women." (A, 1977:6)

Some of the women who believed they were feminists before the sessions began responded that some of the other participants were not feminists. These women thought other participants were not committed to feminist ideology or that discussion in sessions had strayed from feminist issues. They believed these others were afraid to be identified as feminists because they associated feminists with radical politics or lesbianism. Although these women were not disappointed in the sessions and mentioned that the sessions had effected them in other ways, they

did not consider participation in the sessions to be a feminist experience.

> "The only way that it effected my ideas about feminism is that it made me a little surprised and bewildered because so many people seemed to accept the myth that so many people think that feminists have to be the 'rah rah I hate men' sort of person. This is true of men and of society as a whole. The homemaker at home thinks that she is not a feminist because she is at home. I hope what the group did is make people aware they weren't dykes . . . they weren't going to be crucified by admitting that they were worried about who they were." (W, 1976:7)

> "I think that there were a lot of people in the group that were not feminists . . . or at least they denied being feminists. I think that it was that they didn't say that they were feminists because they thought that it wasn't acceptable in the group. I think that this group did not want to identify themselves as feminists or identify with feminism . . . I think that they were chicken." (Q, 1977:4)

> "The effects that it had on me were more personal—which are tied up in feminism. But I think that I could see that a lot of the people in the group weren't really into feminism. And I think that they began to see it. Sometimes that made me think that I should have gotten into another group. But I don't know how you can go around saying that you want a group like this kind of people are here in their feminism." (B, 1976:6)

Thus while CR has been defined as a feminist activity given the roots in the initial phases of the current feminist movement, generally the participants did not define their experience as feminist. Many of the women indicated they considered themselves feminists before attending sessions and therefore, claimed the sessions had only reinforced their already existing beliefs. Their evaluation accounts, in fact, are consistent with the analysis presented in the previous chapter—that the women were engaged in the reaffirmation of definitions of reality rather than in creation of "new" feminist realities.

Review

Accounts tended to stress the more therapeutic outcomes of CR such as personal growth, support, and outlet for expressions. Most of the women in the sessions thought that the sessions had made them feel better about themselves or had helped them handle some problem in their life. The evaluation accounts which defined the sessions as nonfeminist were consistent with the argument that CR has become more "therapeutic" and less "political" in nature. None of the women cited political awareness as an outcome of CR in evaluation accounts. Consequently, evaluation accounts of the sessions tended to present CR as meaningful in the same ways encounter groups and therapy groups are thought to be useful—by providing an atmosphere of personal support.

Evaluation of the Facilitator

One important factor in determining how any organization, group or other social unit operates is the structure of the unit (Deutsch, 1959). While this is a commonly accepted organizational principle, the ideology of CR emphasizes a lack of structure and the authority and power that attend it. "Structurelessness" was an important principle for those who developed CR. Women were to understand their "oppression" without being "oppressed" in the process, unlike their expreience in psychotherapy (Feminists, 1971; Micossi, 1972; Brodsky, 1973; Solomon et al., 1972). A frequent criticism of CR in the feminist literature, however, has been that the lack of structure in CR sessions may lead to nondirectedness and frustration (Freeman, 1972, 1975; Sorensen and Cudlipp, 1973; Payne, 1971).

Consequently, while CR was intended to be nonauthoritarian and leaderless, in many cases participants have found interaction more productive if a facilitator is present.

The role of the facilitator is different from that of leader. Facilitators are not intended to control or dominate the interaction; they should facilitate or encourage interaction. The facilitator usually is responsible for the initial organization and operation of the sessions and also is expected to participate fully in the sessions. Some groups rotate the role of facilitator each session so that control of resources is shared (Dreifus, 1973). The exact nature of the facilitator role varies from group to group.

Although many groups or sessions have facilitators, there are very few guidelines for the role presenting clear expectations.[1] Some of the conceptions of the facilitator role are drawn from the guidelines in the encounter literature. Because of the lack of clarity about the obligations and responsibilities of the facilitator, there is some potential for confusion about the appropriate behavior for the facilitator in sessions.

The way in which the facilitator role is interpreted and enacted could have a significant influence on the operation of consciousness raising sessions. For this reason, the participants' evaluations of the facilitator and how she performed her role were obtained.

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[1]One exception in NOW guidelines for CR facilitators. The pamphlet includes guidelines for qualities of facilitators and techniques to use in sessions. NOW also conducts leadership training in some chapters (Abarbanell and Perl, 1976).

The facilitator was present in all but two of the CR sessions in this study.[2] She was employed in the University's counseling center and was responsible for organizing the sessions. She advertised the sessions in the university paper and used informal contacts to recruit women for the sessions.

Accounts of Facilitator by Participants

In this section, the evaluation accounts of participants about the facilitator are presented. In general, accounts by participants evaluating the facilitator were positive. Participants thought that she appropriately involved herself in the sessions activities, contributing to the discussion.

> "I liked her a lot. Maybe she wasn't supposed to get involved in the group . . . I don't have this clear yet . . . yet she did at times and I liked that. She did not dominate the group or tell us what to talk about." (B, 1976:3)

> "I think that the facilitator sort of got things going if they stalled. I don't think that she was too obtrusive. She wasn't like a teacher or anything. She added a lot to the group talking about her experiences too. She wasn't like an outside moderator of the group because she also participated. I think that helped the group a lot . . . I think that the groups should have facilitators. I don't think that it would be good to have anyone in the group that wasn't participating in the group . . . maybe not as much of the participant as everyone else. If there was someone that was directing things and staying outside the interaction, that wouldn't be good." (X, 1976:3)

Participants also positively evaluated the facilitator for guiding and directing the interaction. Several members believed the quality of

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[2]During the first session she was assisted by another facilitator who substituted for her at one session. There were several attempts to start sessions over school breaks without the facilitator, only one was conducted. Most dissolved in a few minutes.

the interaction was improved because of the facilitator's ability to focus the interaction.

> "Well every group ends up with one [a facilitator] whether they start out with one or not. I thought that it was good. She kind of kept us on track." (A, 1977:3)

> "It was unstructured and I really liked that—that it was unstructured. The facilitator did a really good job. She wasn't directive but she exerted a little influence to keep thinks going smoothly." (L, 1976:2)

They expected the role of the facilitator to include such activities as organizing sessions, encouraging conversation, and suggesting topics for discussion. However, none of these women wanted a formal structure or a formal leader. They approved of the informal, nonauthoritarian style of the facilitator. In addition, several stated that having someone like the facilitator responsible for keeping the interaction going contributed to the smooth operation of the sessions.

> "What the facilitator is—she sort of joins in and is equal—and I think that it helps if she can be sympathetic enough to identify with the group enough to join in but also guide the conversation and occasionally someone needs to bring the group back to center. Like if we start on a subject and then go off on tangents, someone needs to bring them back to center really quick. I think that the facilitator instead of being a person that just listens all the time is, thinking ahead . . . about when the session starts running down, without interrupting." (L, 1976:2)

The facilitator was positively evaluated by members for encouraging participation of quiet women and controlling more dominant women.

> "The facilitator should watch out for the kinds of interaction that is going on in the group and not let anyone pick on others. She should also stop the group if the discussion is wandering. The facilitator should watch out for bitching and keep everything on personal experiences, real not theoretical, but not coffee klatch either. The purpose of the facilitator I guess is to keep the conversation going but not to actually take over and lead the group." (Q, 1977:2)

Most of the participants evaluated the facilitator favorably in their accounts. Much of the success of the sessions was attributed to the facilitator. For the most part, participants' accounts stressed the ability of the facilitator to keep the interaction focused and flowing.

> "I was in another CR group in the summer and I ended up having to drop out of it. I wasn't really sorry because it wasn't the same thing at all. For one thing we didn't have anyone who was in charge. There was one girl—we started each group with an exercise of some kind—she would conduct that. No one would say anything and no one would attempt to introduce a topic. I guess I hadn't really thought about it but that was one of the big differences—there wasn't anyone like the facilitator to keep us on the topic. So we would sit there and stare at each other for a while. There were a couple of people that were outspoken in that group and they tended to dominate things and there were too many that didn't talk." (X, 1976:3)

> "The facilitator didn't interfere in things. She just kept things hopping. She introduced topics. That is what she should do. She might have introduced more of what we talked about and that would have been okay. That is my opinion . . . I don't know how everyone else felt. I see her role as just there to let things flow. If something . . . well nobody ever got into a bad argument but if that ever happened that is what she is there for. She is there to let things go. I don't think that having her was any dysfunction. It was a group and groups in this society have structures and she was the head of the structure. It wasn't like she was the president of a bunch of kids or anything. I liked her." (R, 1977:4)

> "I really enjoyed like what the facilitator did and I think that she did bring up a lot of problems and taking control. There were times when everybody would really be quiet and they would look at their feet and it would put me totally ill at ease and I would just want for her to say alright now lets do something. I think that sometimes she would do that . . . I would like to have a mixture. I wouldn't want to have a leader who would stand up and say alright time to start. But there should be someone to take control of things when they get out of control." (T, 1976:4)

One of the women indicated in her account that a facilitator should not actually direct interaction but rather encourage women to initiate their own discussion. She believed that the facilitator had behaved properly

and had not interfered too much in the participants' interactions. Although this participant's expectations of the facilitator were somewhat different from the other women's, she also was satisfied with the facilitator's role performance. While the participants had slightly different expectations of the facilitator and some had more specific ones than others, most perceived her as meeting their expectations. For example, another participant conceived of the facilitator role as that of "safety valve" rather than as guide.

> "I kind of look at her as a safety valve to step in when things are getting a little out of hand and getting run into the ground or getting too negative. She is not there to say that we are going to talk about certain things and that if we don't she is going to hit you in the head. She keeps a check on stuff. She should keep everything mentally healthy." (A, 1977:3)

The most negative evaluations of the facilitator's performance involved criticisms by the participants that the facilitator was uanble to "take charge" of the sessions. Three of the participants criticized the facilitator for not taking an active enough role in shaping the conversation, e.g., by introducing topics or terminating discussion of a topic. Their accounts reflected different definitions of the proper role of the facilitator in the sessions.

> "But I think at times she could have . . . well she would let one subject just run into the ground until I got so sick of it I didn't care anymore. She didn't seem to be able to say that we had talked enough about something and needed to go on to something else. Maybe, I don't know about the role of the facilitator. I think that there are some things that she could have done like bringing up a topic—which she didn't always do. But it seems like the whole concept of a leader is in that setting is contradictory . . . it takes away from the freedom in many ways. It doesn't belong there." (B, 1976:3)

> "You need a facilitator. But maybe she should have taken more . . . have directed the questions more that we should talk about." (M, 1976:3)

The woman (J) who evaluated the facilitator most negatively viewed the facilitator as ineffectual in her role. J perceived that most of the failure of the sessions could be attributed to the facilitator's lack of leadership. In her view, the facilitator should hav conducted specific activities each session to initiate interaction and should have determined the topics discussed in the sessions.

> "I think that there should be a facilitator in the group but I didn't think that she did that. They should be capable of moderating when a moderator is necessary to prevent harm of any kind. I think that they should stimulate conversations and if no one could come up with anything then I think that they should come up with a topic and have that ready in their mind." (J, 1976:2)

This particular participant faulted the facilitator for not controlling the interaction and organizing the sessions. She thought that the conversation had wandered and that nothing was accomplished in the sessions.

> "It usually strayed to lots of things that I thought were irrelevant for a CR group but I can't remember what they were now . . . I was impatient with them. I was mad and uncomfortable. I was uncomfortable a lot in there. There were a lot of silences and people would be waiting for something to happen and then the hour would be up and nothing would have been done. I was bothered because the facilitator would never do anything about it. That really bothered me. I thought that was her job." (J, 1976:2)

She believed the facilitator could have used encounter group techniques to initiate and develop the discussion.

> "It could have been more organized like—there are all kinds of little exercises that the facilitator could have used I am sure that would have made us feel closer to one another . . .

> to get things started, to create a different atmosphere. I liked where we met that was fine because it was very private. But there wasn't much self exposure. I would have used some of those techniques—I felt like I could have done a better job." (J, 1976:2)

Generally, evaluation accounts of the facilitator's performance in the sessions was positive. For the most part, she was positively evaluated in accounts for her appropriate levels of involvement in guidance and direction of the conversation and contribution from her own experiences. While different degrees of involvement were expected by some of the members, most perceived that she met their expectations of facilitator role. Those who negatively evaluated her performance believed a facilitator should be more directive. One woman in particular attributed her negative experience with the sessions to the facilitator.

Accounts of Participants by the Facilitator

The facilitator of the session was interviewed about her evaluation of the sessions and her role in them. Generally, her perception of the role of the facilitator coincided with those held by the participants, i.e., the facilitator should contribute and participate in the interaction as well as guide and encourage conversation.

> "I see the facilitator as a person who needs to have some minimal communications skills—I don't think that they have to be a therapist or anything like that, just someone who is into listening and has the kind of an overview of what is going on as well as the ability to participate. Maybe the person should be on guard for facilitating people's goals. Also you should be able to notice if something really damaging is about to happen." (Facilitator, 1976:3)

According to her, the facilitator should be responsible for organizing the sessions, handling the scheduling, and making arrangements for

facilities, and attempts should be made to help members verbalize and deal with their feelings and opinions.

> "There is a need for some kind of facilitator as opposed to a leader. Someone who would take responsibility for a place to meet, someone who would do some of the mechanical things that are related to the group. But also the facilitator should be someone who makes sure that everyone in the group got at least some of their personal goals met. I think that the facilitator has the responsibility . . . like if people are not considerate of one another, or really open to anyone else's opinion. They should be a participating-member rather than just an observer or someone who has authority. It should be a nonauthroitarian type thing." (Facilitator, 1976:1)

The facilitator also reconstructed her expectations of the participants. Some of the things that she thought were important to good CR experience were continuous attendence by members, contribution from personal experience, disclosure of important feelings, discussion of women's issues and some direction to the conversation.

> "I think that you have to look at the elements in terms of things like everyone making a commitment—this is something that is really important to the members personally. Then I think that each of them should have some goals or things that they really want to get out of the group, so that they really are willing to invest time and consideration of coming. They have to be honest and trusting and willing to self disclose." (Facilitator, 1976:1)

She also thought that the following were necessary.

> "Members should have a certain level of consciousness and wide scope of issues that they deal with but they should all be women's issues. There should be a lot of depth to the conversations. A really good group would have a wide variety of people—some professional, some older, some married." (Facilitator, 1976:2)

On the whole, her reconstruction of the spring sessions was positive; she believed they had been productive for a number of the participants. On the other hand, her evaluation account of the summer sessions was

negative. She perceived the participants as lacking the motivation to confront difficult issues in their lives. She concluded that several women in the spring sessions had been affected positively by the CR sessions but only one woman (W) in the summer sessions had been helped by the interaction. All of the other women in the spring sessions that she felt had been positively influenced had left the sessions by the summer.

> "I think that some of those people in the spring group were willing to express a little more hostility, one in particular, like when W said that she felt comfortable saying some things." (Facilitator, 1976:2)

One of the reasons she gave for her negative account of the summer sessions was her belief that the facilitator should not always be the person to introduce topics or initiate conversation. The facilitator believed summer session participants were unwilling to stimulate their own discussion or make comments on what was being discussed.

> "After a while the facilitator shouldn't have to be responsible and the membership should take over and run the group." (Facilitator, 1976:7)

She thought that the friendship between J and M (the two dissatisfied participants) created problems for the interaction in meetings. In her view, each of them was inhibited about discussing intimate problems in front of the other, since the other could disclose the information to mutual friends. The facilitator thought the women should have resolved the problem for the good of the sessions because it created an environment lacking in trust.

> "I really wish that we had talked about the relationship between J and M because I felt that was a big impediment to

> the group. Neither one of them took responsibility for that—a little bit came out but not enough to make the group productive. I think if I could have changed it, I would have participated more myself and got out more of my feeling about where we were going. But I think that I had some anger in terms of why should I have to do this. Why me?" (Facilitator, 1976:2-3)

Her reaction to the summer sessions was one of disappointment and some anger.

> "Sometimes with the group in the summer I felt that they were not fulfilling their responsibility. I got very angry about this and refused to introduce topics after a while. Every time there was a pause in the conversation they would look at me and expect me to get the conversation going again. There were times when I was so frustrated with some of the people that I refused to do it. I felt that the members had responsibility to keep the conversation going as well." (Facilitator, 1976:6)

Clearly, the facilitator and J had different expectations of the responsibilities of the facilitator and the members for the conduct of the sessions. Each perceived the other as not fulfilling her role and responsible for the poor quality of the summer sessions. Both the facilitator and J gave accounts which indicated disappointment and frustration with the conduct of the summer sessions. Much of the disagreement resulted from the inability of the members and the facilitator to negotiate a definition of the responsibilities and obligations of the facilitator and the members.

Review

The performance of the facilitator in CR sessions was an important factor in the conduct of consciousness raising sessions. Most of the participants' accounts characterized the facilitator positively, indicating that she appropriately lead the sessions and participated adequately in

interaction. Generally, the participants and the facilitator held similar expectations of the role. Those who gave negative evaluations of the facilitator claimed she was not active enough in focusing the interaction and generally were dissatisfied with the sessions. The facilitator evaluated the spring sessions positively for she believed the participants profited from their participation. She negatively evaluated the summer sessions because the members did not take responsibility for the conduct of the sessions or for creating an atmosphere of trust.

Another form of evaluation account, then, was the evaluation of various other participants in the sessions. These accounts were also a means of constructing reality about self and other's actions.

Evaluation and Expectations

People's evaluations of situations frequently are related to their initial expectations. Everyone has had the experience of being in a long awaited situation and found it to be disappointing because it was not what was expected. Women may come to CR sessions with different expectations of what they want out of it or what it ought to be like, and their evaluations of the experience may be influenced by their initial expectations.

Some of the participants based their expectations on previous experiences in similar types of interactive settings. Others came to the sessions with no specific expectations. In all cases, participants' evaluations of the experience were based on some comparision of experience with initial expectations. To the extent that experience and expectation

coincided, participants would be expected to give positive evaluation accounts to the experiences. Persons who perceived that experience did not meet their expectations would be expected to give negative evaluation accounts. Participants' comparisons of expectations and experiences were investigated. After their participation in the sessions members were asked to reconstruct their experiences and compare them to their initial expectations. Thus, the women were asked to retrospectively construct their expectations of CR as well as their evaluation of how they thought the sessions met their expectations.

Literature on the current feminist movement indicates there are networks of women in most areas involved in the majority of movement activities (Carden, 1975). The overlapping group memberships have lead some writers to speculate that too often feminists are talking only to one another without involving new women in the movement. However, none of the participants had been in a CR group before. In fact, few acknowledged previous or current participation in any kind of all women group. Therefore, few of the women had specific expectations of what CR would be like, although some based expectations on experiences in other interactive groups.

Previous Experiences

The professed lesbian was at the time also in a lesbian rap group and had been involved in lesbian groups in Ohio, where she lived before. She also had attended GWS (Gay Women in Society) meetings and The National Lesbian Conference sessions where there were discussion groups that were "like CR"—except, of course, that they met only once.

A: "I was a member of GWS which is Gay Women in Society in Columbus and I had been in meetings that dealt with things like parents and religion and our inner feelings so it was verging on CR. Plus I was also a member of The National Lesbian Conference Convention and we did a lot of soul searching and I really got my consciousness raised politically through them. I would say that at one time about two years ago I would make statements like 'I don't think that men have hurt me in any way . . . I don't think that women and men are not equal . . . I think that we are all equal.' I didn't know anything political."

Me: "How do you think of these groups?"

A: "GWS was probably a rap group and the other was a rap group to most people but to me it was CR thing too to sit there and listen. I really don't think that you can distinguish. One may be called something different and may have certain goals. I am sure that our group was like a rap group for some people after we got to know each other." (A, 1976:1)

One other woman, W, was also in a Gay Awareness group on campus and active in their discussions and classes. These sessions included both male and females, straights and gays. She was also involved in the Rape Crisis Center in town. Part of their orientation for workers included rap sessions which were intended to increase the counselors' skills in communicating with female victims. She thought that this experience was something like consciousness raising for the counselors.

> "I have not been in any of the rap group or encounter groups or growth groups on campus but I have been involved in the Rape Crisis Center since it started. That really started as a Rap Group because it was a bunch of people that got together to talk and shout and be angry and start some affirmative action on campus. I am still involved in that but not very deeply. I am a volunteer. I need some training because I haven't been trained for a while. Part of being in the Rape Crisis Center was being in a rap group. The training was more of the encounter type training rather than just being trained to be a counselor. I thought that that was very good because it made the group as a whole more cohesive. We were very much sisters in the project which helped a lot. We were trained in communications skills between a counselor and counselee in an encounter type situation." (W, 1976:1)

B had been in a group of friends who met to discuss women's issues but not as a CR group.

> "I have been in one that was kind of a makeshift thing. Just a bunch of us felt like getting together and we did. Then we all started going in different directions and it broke up. That one lasted about 3-4 months. There were anywhere from 5-12 of us meeting. There was no facilitator or leader." (B, 1976:1)

In addition to the quasi-consciousness raising experiences of these women, another participant, L, said she had been in an informal friendship discussion group that had talked about their problems over dinner sometimes or met at someone's house.

> "No I have never been in one under the auspice of anyone who knew what they were doing kind of CR group. I got together sometimes with these six women who were in various professions and we would talk together once a week. We would go to a public place or someone's house and just talk. We had different attitudes toward it. We never siad let's have a CR group but we used it for that. We talked about the problems that we had at work or home. We didn't repeat it or carry it along with us to home or work. There were people in it that were in various stages of divorce, marriage so we had a lot to talk about." (L, 1976:1)

She had also been in the local chapter of NOW but had dropped out because she was very upset about the internal politics of the group.

> "I used to be in a women's group here but I try to supress it. We had a big schism over the lesbian men haters and the nonmen haters. That was NOW. It effected me for a long time. I stayed away from it for a long time." (L, 1976:1)

Two of the participants had been in encounter groups but had never specifically discussed women's issues. Another woman, Q, said she was a member of the League of Women Voters and would sometimes get together with some of the women to talk and share feelings. Other participants had not been in any kind of women's group or discussion group dealing with problems and feelings of women. Clearly, whatever expectations the

women had of CR sessions, those ideas were not based primarily on previous experience in CR. None of the women reported friends in CR from whom they might have developed expectations.

Expectations

The lack of direct exposure to CR was evident in the participants lack of concrete expectations for the sessions. Several women simply wanted to try CR to see if it would be interesting or helpful. In addition, some of the participants in early sessions were attending the sessions in conjunction with their course work and entered the sessions because they were assigned to not because they knew anything about CR.

> "No I had never been in any other CR or anything like that at all. In fact, I don't think that I had ever been in a room with just women and talked before. I had never been in an encounter group either . . . I had read about them and was interested in them. I subscribe to MS like everybody else does and had read about them through that. Also I was having some personal problems. I had been going with someone for about a year and when we started in March I had only been recently singled, so I felt it might help a little bit . . . . When I started there weren't any things that I wanted to achieve. In fact, I didn't even know how it might help. I just thought that it might make me aware of how other women think that aren't personal friends of mine." (X, 1976:1)

Others expressed the same lack of expectations of CR.

> "That was the first one that I had ever been in. The only other all women thing that I belonged to before was the girl's basketball team. I did not even belong to a sorority at the time. I wasn't too sure. I went out there feeling my consciousness had already been raised. I kind of went into it with a snotty attitude. But after I started talking to everyone, I realized that I wasn't quite as consciousness raised as I thought I was." (C, 1977:1)

> "When I first got in the group, I didn't know what the purpose of it was. It was one of those things that I really hadn't thought about." (R, 1977:1)

> "I don't think I had anything in mind to achieve by getting in but to just make me feel better about where I was. I don't know if I thought I would resolve anything—I didn't go there for that but just to have a place to go and to talk." (M, 1976:2)

A few of the participants had specific reasons for joining the sessions and clearer expectations. The most common expectation of these women was their desire to meet other feminist women and to be involved in sympathetic, supportive interaction about their problems and feelings. For example, A, anticipated finding women who were politically involved and other lesbian women. She had tried to find feminist women through a local women's center but was disappointed in the center's activities and then decided to try CR.

> "I had been going to the Women's Center and I didn't see anything there . . . everything costs money there too. I didn't know hardly anyone in town so I thought that this would be a great chance. Plus I thought that I might end up meeting some lesbians and since I didn't know any political lesbians in town, I thought that it would be a good chance to meet some." (A, 1977:1)

Several other women also expressed the expectation of desire for meeting interesting women in the sessions for they felt that they did not have any nearby women friends with whom to talk. L wanted to meet some women with whom she could discuss her frustrations and ideas, who would listen and provide friendly, sympathetic attention. She was very lonely since she and her husband had moved to town. She was working as a temporary clerk and had not made any friends at work. She found her husband's friends were not interested in her problems and her husband was often unavailable to talk because of the demands of his graduate program. She also mentioned that she did not expect the sessions to be

radical or political but interpersonal in nature. She expected the sessions to provide personal interaction.

> "My goals were pretty specific. I had specific things that I wanted when I went there. This is why I was so talkative when I was there because I had saved up a whole lot. I had been living here for a year on the edge of the student community. I was working and wasn't involved in much. I had a lot of frustrations saved up and wanted to go and work off my hyper-activity. I felt like I had a lot to talk about—that was very personal. General political things didn't interest me. I did a lot more talking than I did listening. I got home very week and said I could have gotten more out of this if I had listened. I didn't want to talk about Mao. I felt like I wanted to deal with things on a very personal level. I felt like I had thing that talking about it would make me feel better . . . like if talking to myself in the mirror wouldn't have made me feel too silly . . . I just needed ears." (L, 1976:1)

The participant W indicated in her account that she too expected personal supportive interaction from her CR experience. While she was not anticipating forming friendships with others, she did want a place to talk about her problems to understanding women. She also expected to gain some level of personal awareness for the experience.

> "More awareness of what I wanted as an individual to be like. I think that at the time that I really needed as support group. I had been in . . . I had know some feminists in other things but I hadn't been around those people in quite a while and I wanted to meet some different women. I really didn't know what to expect so it was really difficult to define the goals right off." (W, 1976:1)

A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the married women, B, in her reconstruction of her expectations. She claimed a desire to share her feelings with other women who had similar feelings and experiences.

> "I think that I had an idea from before was mainly that I would come out of it feeling like I was normal . . . a sense of being normal. That is what started our other group. We were all running around with things in our heads feeling like we were strange and when we got talking we found that there were a lot

> of differences but one thing that was supportive to me was that if no one else in the group agreed with you it was alright." (B, 1976:1)

Finally, J stated that she expected to discuss some questions she had about her life with women who would share their ideas and suggestions with her.

> "I wanted to—I hadn't regularly associated with a group of women and I had been having a lot of questions, things that I would like to talk about—raise and have a sounding board. I thought that that would be the purpose that it would serve. To get some more opinions and advice." (J, 1976:1)

About half of the participants had no clear expectations of CR or what they wanted to achieve by joining. The women who did report expectations of CR tended to recall their anticipation that the sessions would provide sensitive, sympathetic, personal and supportive interaction with other women. None of the women stated the expectation that the sessions would be political experience. A few of the women who had expectations of CR had been in groups they described as "like consciousness raising."

The evaluation accounts of the women who had no expectations of the sessions tended to be less critical than women who had specific reasons for joining. The most common account of women who reported no special expectations of CR were similar to that of T:

> "I never went in wanting anything. I just was going to get a grade. Then things happened and I started going and enjoying it more. I got out of it a type of friendship I guess and interaction with other people that I didn't necessarily get at the time living off campus. I had just come back from living at home for several months and had gone through a very bad period in my life and wanted to get back with people." (T, 1976:6-7)

Several women stated that while they had no expectations of CR they had been pleased with the interaction in the sessions.

> "I really didn't expect anything from it. I got a lot out of it. For instance, just the opportunity to talk to her since she was a lesbian. That was something that I otherwise wouldn't have been able to do. That was an education for me . . . it made me more aware of social phenomenon that I didn't know much about. I don't know that it helped me a whole lot with my own personal problems but it made me aware of the fact that there are a lot of women who feel like I do about things." (X, 1976: 2)

> "Well when I went in there I didn't have any expectations so I got a lot out of it for no expectations. I think that a lot of times you don't get anything out of what you have done because you don't open your mind to it." (R, 1976:6-7)

In these accounts, the women seemed to indicate that their positive experiences in CR were almost a "bonus" or an unanticipated reward. Since they had not expected anything from the sessions, perhaps they were less likely to be dissapointed.

A number of the participants did give accounts of their expectations of the sessions. These women could compare their experience to their expectations and some to previous experiences. While they generally gave positive evaluation accounts of the sessions, they were more likely to be critical than the women with no expectations. They did not feel that the sessions had met all their expectations.

L also talked about her expectations and experience. She found that the sessions had helped her to structure her time and that she had been able to have satisfactory interaction with others, both goals of her's when she began the sessions.

> "For one thing I just wanted to do something. I was seeking a sense of involvement in my community. It definitely gave me

> that. I had a little appointment that I had to keep every week. I have always depended on having a structured scheduled life and it sort of helped me get that. I also just wanted someone to talk to and definitely during that time and after it gave me a rewarding feeling about that." (L, 1976:4)

This woman, however, stopped attending after a while because she felt that the sessions were "starting to fall apart" and because she had other things that she wanted to do with her time.

Another participant, W, expected she would gain greater self awareness through the sessions. She perceived that the sessions had fulfilled some of her desired goals, although there were limitations to the sessions. She thought the participants were not as diverse as she would have liked and the interaction was not very "deep."

> "I don't know. I can't give you a scale as to how much I got out of it. I think that my life is a little different than all the people in there so that I think that it would have been real hard to come up with a magic formula to solve it. I don't think that anybody could have done that for me. I think that the support was really obvious. I think that I got a sounding board for some of my ideas. I think that about the only thing that I would really have liked to talk about that more would have been about myself as an artist. And that really wasn't the purpose of the group. I would have to be in a group of people that were working and into that type of thing . . . because your problems deal almost exclusively as yourself as a creator and don't deal that much with your growth as an individual." (W, 1976:5)

B also perceived part of her expectations had been achieved in as much as she was able to gain support from other participants for her feelings. However, her evaluation account suggested that her expectations had been met in part because she had realistic expectations from the beginning.

Me: "Do you think you achieved your expectations?"

B: "To an extent because I didn't come in there thinking that in a week or two we would all be a happy group." (B, 1976:5)

Another participant, A, reported CR had met some of her expectations but not all. She did meet local women in the sessions and was supported. However, she did not meet other lesbians or politically active women as she had expected.

Finally, Q gave much the same evaluation as the others. She joined the sessions expecting to find other women with similar feelings and concerns to her own. She enjoyed the session, but thought that she had not gotten as much out of them as she wanted because of her time constraints which limited her involvement.

> "I don't think that I got as much out of it as I could have because I wasn't able to come regularly. As well as I remember it was at an inconvenient time for me. I think that I was in it too short a time to be really influenced by the group." (Q, 1977:2)

The most critical member, J, perceived her expectations of the sessions had not been fulfilled and indicated that the facilitator had disappointed her because she did not comply with this member's expectations of a facilitator. She expressed expectations that the sessions would provide indepth discussion of pertinent, personal problems and suggestions for solutions to them. She found the sessions shallow and nondirective.

> "I was disappointed because it wasn't doing what I wanted it to do. I wasn't getting anything out of it that I couldn't get out of anything else." (J, 1976:3)

Both J and M felt that the interaction in the sessions was not what they had expected of CR. They claimed they were uncomfortable and angry because the conversations were not focused or deep. J also felt that the topics that were discussed were not relevant to her problems.

> "At the time I wanted to talk about female sexuality. That was the main thing. I had lots of questions about that . . . lots of problems . . . I couldn't talk about them to a man. I needed to compare with people. I would have been willing to talk about any of that but we didn't talk about it much." (J, 1976:2)

Review

During the follow up interviews, the relationship between reported initial expectations and evaluation was explored. About half of the participants had never been in an "CR type" group and had no clear expectations of the sessions. Most of these women's accounts evaluated the sessions positively; something pleasant they had not expected. The remaining members had expressed specific expectations of the sessions and reconstructed particular reasons for joining. Most frequently, the women claimed they expected CR to provide them with sympathetic, supportive interaction. Several hoped this type of interaction would lead to greater self awareness. Almost all of the women who articulated some expectations gave positive evaluations of CR although they did believe that the sessions had not completely fulfilled their expectations. The women who were most critical of the sessions seemed to perceive a larger gap between their expectations and experience. In particular, J gave accounts that depicted the sessions as failing to provide indepth discussion on topics she expected to cover, leaving her frustrated and disappointed.

Apparently, there is some relationship between the nature of evaluation accounts of an experience and the individuals' perceptions of their previously held expectations of the experience. Those who had no clear expectations seemed to believe any benefits of the experience were

a bonus. Those with expectations were less likely to evaluate the sessions as being completely satisfactory.

Review

Evaluation accounts, verbalizations which retrospectively assigned meaning to actions, were obtained from interviews with the participants and the facilitator. Such accounts made past actions meaningful to self and others. Several evaluation accounts were elicited. Participants evaluated the impact of the sessions on themselves. Evaluation accounts tended to characterize the sessions as having a positive impact: contributing to personal growth, providing support and serving as an outlet for expression. Those who did not give positive evaluations of the experience tended to characterize the sessions as shallow and unproductive. When specifically asked for accounts of the impact of sessions on their feminism, the participants indicated the sessions were not meaningful in this way.

Evaluation accounts also were given of the facilitator of the sessions. In general, the women positively evaluated the facilitator's actions and perceived her as important to the success of the sessions. Those women who negatively evaluated the facilitator described her as falling short of their expectations of a facilitator. In particular, they evaluated her as neglecting leadership duties. The facilitator also engaged in evaluation accounts of the participants. She positively evaluated women who she perceived had "gotten something" out of the experience. She negatively evaluated women she believed had not assumed

their share of the responsibility for the conduct of the sessions and development of an atmosphere of trust.

Finally, the participants were asked to retrospectively evaluate sessions in relation to their expectations of CR. In these accounts, participants compared their expectations to the experience. Generally, participants who claimed they had no expectations of CR evaluated their experience positively—as an unanticipated benefit. Those women who reconstructed expectations of CR claimed the sessions basically had fulfilled their expectations although not all of them. Women who wanted support and friendship claimed they received them in the sessions. One woman evaluated the sessions and the facilitator as failing to meet her expectations of CR and as a result reported being dissatisfied with the sessions.

Evaluation accounts served as a way of constructing reality retrospectively. Although sociologists have defined accounts almost exclusively as providing alignments of untoward behavior with present actions, accounts may have other functions. A broader conceptualization of "account" may be useful, then, in the study of construction of reality.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the social constructions of reality of participants in consciousness raising sessions in several ways. First, the participants' constructions of the social world around them were investigated. A set of themes or topics, which reflected the reality the participants were constructing, appeared in transcripts of the sessions. The participants discussed aspects of social reality relevant to women concerned about gender roles.

During the sessions, the women shared and reaffirmed certain beliefs about the nature of the social world. Like participants in early CR groups, the women met to discuss and reinforce one another's views on women's issues. For example, the participants spent a great deal of time discussing and defining discrimination and prejudice. Discrimination was defined as actions which prevent women from participating in particular activities because of their sex or demean or trivalize women's accomplishments. Participants believed that such actions were unfair and expressed frustration and resentment at the treatment accorded women in our society. They referred to prejudice as attitudes which define women in a limited number of roles, such as those of wife and mother. Prejudice against women also was discussed with resentment and bitterness by the participants. The women rejected the definition of programs such as Equal Employment Opportunity as "reverse discrimination." Further, they

believed that attempts to equalize women's economic position in society were necessary, but generally were ineffective.

In other discussions, the women shared definitions of men. Participants characterized men as a category of people who exploit and manipulate women and are inexpressive and insensitive. Relationships with men were defined as a problematic albeit necessary part of a woman's life.

Participants' characterizations of women were generally unfavorable. Other women often were characterized as manipulative and vain. The participants distinguished themselves from other women. They tended to define themselves as liberated women who would not indulge in the manipulative activities typical of "other" women, e.g., crying to get their own way.

At times they were disdainful of women who engaged in what the participants perceived as traditional feminine behavior.

The definitions that emerged from analysis of the transcripts, to a considerable extent, mirrored definitions of reality held by many segments of American society. The women apparently brought to the sessions many of the perceptions of reality expressed in them. The constructions of reality expressed in the sessions sometimes conformed to feminist beliefs and ideology, but not always. In the case of discrimination and prejudice, the women tended to reject general social definitions and favor feminist interpretations of particular activities as unfair treatment of women. Frequently, the activities construed as discrimination were highly visible and easily identifiable kinds of behavior. Several times the women were

angered because of the prohibitions against women playing on previously all male athletic teams. The construction of these acts as discrimination is clearly stated in such legislation as Title IX. Therefore, the participants' construction of such actions as discrimination was not unique.

Although some definitions constructed and shared in the sessions conformed to feminist ideology, there was a conspicuous lack of analysis of discrimination and prejudice from a feminist or structural perspective. Discussions of causes and solutions of discrimination virtually never occurred. Although the women expressed hostility and resentment at the treatment of women in society, the object of their hostility was frequently an individual man (or group of men). For example, in the case of the frustrated soccer player, several women (including the player herself) blamed the coach of the team for her predicament. There was no structural analysis of the problems of discrimination against women in university athletics. The solutions proposed tended to focus on how the "victim" of discrimination could better handle the person who was discriminating against her. Thus, while the actions identified as discrimination by the participants were consistent with feminist perceptions of discrimination, the discussions of discrimination did not indicate the emergence of a new feminist ideology.

In the discussions of men, again, the characterizations shared by the participants were consistent with current feminist beliefs. Men were defined as exploiters and manipulators of women sexually and socially. Relationships with men were described as a necessary evil. As with women

in early CR groups, the participants in these sessions identified men as powerful people who created problems for women. These negative characterizations of men seemed to be shared by all the participants in the sessions. Rarely were any man's actions defended by participants. Only in the case of perceived male inexpressiveness did the women verbalize sympathetic feelings for men; however, they maintained that women were superior to men because of their ability to express emotion by crying.

The characterizations of women were, perhaps, the most noteworthy of the realities that were constructed in the sessions. While feminist ideology encourages women to develop a sense of sisterhood and a positive attitude about women, the participants seemed to negatively characterize women outside the sessions. They seemed to adhere to the social definitions of women as manipulative and vain. Although feminist literature argues that new definitions emerge in CR sessions, in these sessions existing negative definitions of women were reaffirmed. The negative characterizations of women may have resulted from internalization of negative images of women through the process of everyday interaction. Since women may be conceptualized as a minority group raised in the same culture as the majority group, they may internalize the majority's negative definitions of themselves. To the extent that the participants were able to maintain perceptions of themselves as different from other women, they were able to hold negative characterizations of women as a class of people without threatening their own self images.

Perhaps the participants needed to reject other women's behavior in order to sustain positive definitions of themselves. Women who find

themselves in minority position (being nontraditional) within a minority group (women) may feel compelled to justify their beliefs and roles by devaluing those of other women. In a sense, feminists are engaged in a denial of men's realities in order to legitimate their own perceptions of reality. A rejection of "nonfeminist" (i.e. traditional) women may serve the same purpose. In fact, for some women differentiating one's self from "other women" may be an important step in the process of breaking away from traditional gender role behavior. Thus, while the participants' negative characterizations of "other women" did not reflect feminist ideology, they may have been necessary to reject traditional gender roles.

This investigation of reality construction in CR sessions raises some questions about the emergence of new definitions of reality. The participants brought certain definitions of reality with them to the sessions. Through interaction the women seemed to be involved in a process of reaffirmation of existing social definitions of reality rather than the creation of "new" realities. Only some of the beliefs they expressed conformed to feminist beliefs.

The results of this research have some interesting theoretical implications. One tradition in symbolic interactionist literature depicts definitions of reality as highly fluid and constantly emerging from group interaction. Blumer (1969), in particular, has stressed the emergent nature of definitions of reality. He believes that as individuals interact in a social situation, their joint actions produce new and different meanings about the social world that in turn are part of the constant process of the formation of society.

> It sees social action not as an emanation of societal structures but as a formation made by human actors; it sees this formation of action not as societal factors coming to expression through the medium of human organisms but as constructions made by actors out of what they take into account; it sees group life not as a release or expression of established structure but as a process of building up joint actions (Blumer, 1966:543).

Clearly, Blumer perceives that new realities constantly are emerging from interaction in groups and they only infrequently are constrained by social structures.

Analysis of the consciousness raising session transcripts revealed that new definitions of reality did not "emerge" from social interaction. Despite the fact that according to feminist ideology CR alters participants' perceptions of reality, the definitions shared in the sessions strongly resembled those which exist in the larger society. The participants reaffirmed existing social definitions which they had internalized from previous social interaction outside the sessions. New definitions of reality are difficult to produce through limited (in intensity and duration) social interaction.

Some current symbolic interactionist theory may overestimate the flexibibility and fluidity of social definitions of reality in many situations. While change occurs through interaction sometimes, these occasions may not be as frequent or pervasive as some interactionists writing suggests. By and large, when people enter social situations, definitions of reality already have been constructed. While there is some opportunity for negotiation among actors in the situation, the parameters of the definition of reality are set by certain social structures and ongoing cultural definitions. This research has indicated

that social definitions of reality are not always easily changed, even in situations where participants are attempting to change them. This argument does not suggest that new perceptions of realty never emerge from interaction in small groups, but rather that the emergence of radically new definitions is not as common, or as easy as the literature indicates.

Social groups cannot be fully understood apart from the cultural context in which they occur. While some (e.g., Blumer, 1969) suggest that group interaction is society, social structural factors that influence group interaction cannot be ignored. An understanding of the Consciousness Raising sessions would be incomplete without recognition of the importance of ongoing cultural definitions of reality that affected the definitions shared by the participants. This study emphasizes the need for symbolic interactionists to consider the social implications of structural elements in their investigations, and further synthesis of structuralist and interactionist theory.

Generally, when participants in social settings are involved in constructions of reality, the definitions they create are structured by definitions created previously. Meanings are not established in a vacuum. Meanings are derived from ongoing social interaction and carried into social settings by actors.

In addition, the women were in the sessions only an hour and a half each week, interaction of limited duration. The rest of the participants interacted with others who may not have supported feminist definitions of reality. Perhaps, such a short period of interaction can not be expected

realistically to produce radical change in a person's perceptions of reality. More likely, the sessions provided the participants with an opportunity to interact with others who would share their existing definitions of reality, at least for a short time. The idea that short periods of exposure to group interaction may not have a significant effect on perceptions of reality raises some questions about self-help type groups. Encounter groups are sometimes thought to produce great changes in individuals' perceptions of self and/or reality. However, analysis of the CR sessions, a type of self-help encounter, suggested that interaction may simply reaffirm existing beliefs or provide participants with the opportunity to verbalize for one another a particular set of perceptions about the world. CR and encounter groups simply may provide a participant with an uncritical audience that will reaffirm the individual's existing definitions of reality.

When the participants leave such groups or sessions, the effects of the interaction may be negligible on their subsequent lives. Without support for a particular definition of reality, an individual may find those perceptions difficult to sustain. The participant might react by joining another group or finding some other substitute for the social support received from the group. Of course, radical changes in definitions of reality would make it difficult for the actor to return to interaction outside the group or sessions. To the extent that the participants want or need to continue to interact with others outside the sessions, there must be pressure not to completely disregard or disclaim other social definitions.

Some feminists have suggested that CR interaction produces a feminist ideology regardless of the beliefs of the participants who initially enter the sessions. This notion of "emergent" ideology was not verified by the sessions observed. Several factors may be related to the failure of the participants to construct a complete feminist ideology. One could speculate that the turnover of membership prevented the development of certain beliefs. However, other CR groups have reported high turnover and construction of feminist ideology, as well. Another explanation may be that writers have been mislead by the desirable results of early CR sessions. Indeed, the feminist literature indicates that all early CR groups developed radical feminist ideology. But, most of the early CR groups were made up of women who already subscribed to feminist or radical ideologies. They often were drop outs from the student movement who were seeking some special understanding of women's problems. These women were highly motivated to develop feminist consciousness. For them as well as the women observed, the CR sessions involved interaction that supported existing definitions of reality. While early CR participants brought radical or feminist beliefs with them to the sessions, this was not the case with the participants in the sessions observed for this study. In addition, the women in early CR tended to be involved in a number of feminist activities so that the definitions created in CR had relevance for other of their activities. For many women in the sessions observed, CR was their first and only feminist activity.

Another factor that may be related to the development of feminist definitions may be the changing perceptions of the purpose of CR.

Literature in the last few years on CR has tended to stress the personal benefits of participation, rather than the political benefits. There is some evidence to suggest that women who enter CR now may be less interested in feminist ideology than in personal change and support, the therapeutic outcomes of participation. In other words, current participants may be less inclined to create political definitions of reality, at least no to the extent that early participants in CR may have been.

In addition, the women who were studied may not have been committed to effecting changes in their perceptions of reality. The women who joined the sessions were experiencing change and/or stress in their lives (i.e. moving to a new community, graduating from college, obtaining divorces, reentering school). During such times of personal change and emotional upheaval, some people may seek support from others for their definitions of reality, not challenges. People undergoing change may not be interested in instituting further change in their lives by having their perceptions of reality called into question. To some extent, the nonconflictual atmosphere of the sessions provided comfortable, nonthreatening, supportive interaction for participants. The data suggest that the members were more likely to seek support from the session interaction than from development of feminist ideology. Perhaps, women attracted to the "self help" aspects of CR were not personally motivated to create changes in their definitions of the social world, but were interested in having their current world view supported and reaffirmed by others.

To the extent that feminist ideology did not emerge in the CR sessions, several issues are raised. The women in the sessions at times

reinforced one another for nonfeminist attitudes toward women. By criticizing other women, they rejected the ideology of sisterhood that is the cornerstone of current feminist ideology. The participants characterized other women negatively and still maintained a positive perceptions of themselves by defining themselves as different from other women violating the notion of sisterhood. If many of the CR sessions conducted in the country produce interaction which reaffirms social stereotypes of women, then the likelihood that CR groups will produce social change is very small. When the participants reinforced the stereotypic definitions of women, they perpetuated the negative attitudes about women that exist in the society. Thus, the interaction may be constraining social change, rather than serving as an impetus to the creation of new social definitions.

In some instances, feminist definitions of reality may not have emerged in the sessions because none of the nonfeminist definitions presented by participants were challenged. While feminist initiators may assume that feminist beliefs emerge simply through the process of sharing feelings and experiences, other interactive processes may be involved in the generation of feminist or new beliefs. When definitions are presented and not challenged, there is tacit agreement with, and affirmation of, those definitions. If new definitions are to be created, they may have to develop through the process of conflict, the challenging of nonfeminist views, which forces reexamination of definitions of reality. Conflict may be necessary to produce changes in definitions of reality.

The idea that conflict produces social change is not new to sociology, for both Marx and Simmel recognized the positive effects of

conflict on the creation of new social awareness and change. Marx, of course, believed that conflict ultimately would lead to new levels of class consciousness of social oppression. Marx was concerned with structural change, but he nevertheless dealt with altered definitions of reality and their impact on social change. Simmel addressed the positive effects of internal conflict on group cohesion (1955). Simmel argued that group norms and beliefs emerge out of conflictual interaction as members negotiate and identify meanings. It may be necessary for conflict and challenge to occur in interaction for alternative definitions, e.g., feminist definitions, to be produced.

In addition to the analysis of session interaction, individuals' subsequent beliefs were investigated with the new concept of Evaluation Account. Evaluation accounts are verbalizations which give meaning to past interaction for self and other. Evaluation accounts were elicited from participants in follow-up interviews. All of the women were able to retrospectively construct meanings for the sessions by evaluating them. When asked to give accounts of the effects of the sessions on them, most participants evaluated the sessions positively, and thought they had benefited from participation. Among the benefits identified were: personal growth, support, and opportunity for expression. None of the women believed the sessions had affected their own feminism. Two of the participants evaluated the sessions negatively because for them the sessions were unproductive and the interaction shallow.

The participants evaluated the facilitator of the sessions. Most thought the facilitator had done a good job of conducting the sessions.

Those who criticized the facilitator perceived she had not met their expectations of her. The facilitator also evaluated the participants. She tended to believe that the women in the spring sessions had gotten more out of the interaction than the participants in the summer sessions, for in her view they had not taken responsibility for the interaction in sessions.

Finally, the participants evaluated the sessions in terms of their initial expectations of the sessions. Half of the women said they had no initial expectations and these women were likely to evaluate the sessions as an unexpected benefit. The women who recalled expectations of the sessions were not as positive, although they thought that the sessions had been productive. The woman who gave the most negative evaluation account of the sessions asserted that her expectations had not been met at all.

The investigation of evaluation accounts has several theoretical implications. First, participants were able to retrospectively construct meanings for their behavior in response to questions by the researcher. These accounts were not constructed to explain away or justify deviant behavior. None of the women believed that they had done anything untoward, that had to be explained. The women, however, gave accounts which were evaluations of their experience and those evaluations gave meaning to their participation. Therefore, the concept account apparently can be used effectively to study constructions of "normal" reality. Indeed, people provide evaluation accounts of their experiences every day. Perhaps the narrow application of accounts (as explanations of untoward behavior)

has limited the scope of investigations of reality construction. A study of evaluation accounts in other interactive situations would increase understanding of the ways that people make sense of the events they have experienced.

The concept of account may have other uses. Mead (1934) recognized the changing nature of an individual's history (and collective history for that matter) and suggested that people may construct and reconstruct meanings for their past for others. History was always subject to change, depending on how actors wanted their pasts to "fit" with their present situations. Evaluation account may be a useful concept in the investigation of the changing constructions of reality over time. People could be asked to evaluate their past actions at various points in time, and changes in the evaluations over time investigated. For instance, a graduating senior may respond differently to the question "What effect did college have on you?" today and fifteen years from now. Evaluation accounts could give the sociologist a better understanding of how changing circumstances in actors' lives may affect their perceptions of reality retrospectively.

The existence of evaluation accounts may also be useful in the investigation of the nature of "multiple realities." Schutz (1962) has argued that different people may perceive the same situation quite differently. Thus, while they are experiencing the same phenomenon, they are constructing different meanings and realities about the situation. In the study, participants constructed different meanings and realities about the sessions. The majority said they perceived the sessions as

productive and characterized their experience as supportive. Other participants in the same sessions interpreted the interaction as shallow and unproductive and claimed there was no direction to the interaction. Some of the differences in constructions may be attributed to differences in expectations. As Schutz (1962) suggested, the way in which actors define a situation may be dependent on their relevance structures—i.e. what is significant or relevant about life to them at the time. Some of the women had different priorities and expectations about the sessions than others, which seemed to influence the meanings they gave to the sessions in accounts. Thus, the concept of evaluation account may be of utility in understanding the phenomenon of "multiple realities," how different people may retrospectively construct different meanings for the same phenomenon.

The investigation of evaluation accounts was interesting in terms of the support that it provided for the notion that participants in the sessions did not always construct feminist definitions of reality. The participants' accounts indicated they did not perceive their experience in CR to be feminist. Some of the women stated they were feminists before they entered the sessions. Others noted they had not joined the sessions to become feminists, but rather to seek personal growth and support. None of the women expressed a desire to develop a political or feminist ideology or criticized the sessions as nonpolitical. The evaluation accounts indicated the participants evaluated the sessions positively for their effect on such things as personal growth. In many ways, the participants' evaluation accounts resembled the kinds of

responses often associated with encounter groups or therapy groups. To the extent that the women denied any feminist outcomes of the sessions and affirmed the "therapeutic" effects of the sessions on their lives, they confirmed the idea that CR has become like other self-help types of groups. In fact, one participant faulted the facilitator for not being more like the facilitators in encounter groups (by leading exercises in communication and directing the interaction). And, several of the women compared CR to therapy groups they had been in and described their experience as "therapeutic" and supportive.

These kinds of accounts suggest the need for further investigation of the functions of CR for women. The CR sessions observed seemed to provide opportunities for women to get together simply to discuss the things that had bothered them in their lives and did not necessarily entail working on political analysis of those problems. In evaluation accounts, the participants characterized their experiences as positive for the following reasons: it provided a place to talk about themselves, meet other women, receive some social support, gain contacts in the community and structure their lives. These benefits seem to be latent functions of CR participation. Some of them resemble the latent services Allon (1975) suggested diet groups provide. A further investigation of CR might compare its functions to the latent functions of encounter or therapy groups. Also, it might be interesting to investigate what social institutions or groups CR has replaced for women. To the extent that CR participants are not involved in political analysis or action, CR approximates the conversations that used to be held over the back fence more than revolutionary dialogue.

The concept of evaluation account may be useful in the investigation of the effects of therapy type groups on participants. Relatively few studies have been done by psychologists on the efficacy of group therapy (Weisstein, 1971). It might be interesting to study the evaluation accounts of participants in therapy groups to ascertain the meanings attributed to the experience by the participants. Most studies of the effects of treatment have focused on the behavioral changes that therapists perceived the sessions had produced. Using evaluation accounts, the investigator could better understand what the sessions meant to the participants. Finally, the social pressure to make activities such as CR and therapy meaningful in accounts might be examined.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This research project is proposed as part of this consciousness raising group. None of the work on this project deals with personal information. The purpose of this research is to examine forms of interaction rather than any particular content of the interaction. I would like to tape record sessions in order to analyze interaction. I will be glad to share any findings with you after the study.

I am investigating the process by which women form perceptions of themselves as female persons and how groups can help in this process. For this reason I would like to participate as a member of this group. If you are willing to participate under these conditions please sign this form.

Name _____

Date _____

Susan Brown

APPENDIX B

Interview with (B)

November 11, 1976

Me: How did you find out about the group?

B: It was in a round about way. I was in a philosophy of women class and we had to do an outside project and I wasn't especially interested in anything that she suggested. Then T told me that there was this Consciousness raising group and that sounded fine to me. So the teacher let us do that and it was fine. I had been in one before that was kind of a makeshift thing . . . just a bunch of us felt like getting together and we did. Then we all started going in different directions and it broke up. That one lasted about 3 or 4 months. There were anywhere from 5-12 of us meeting. There was no facilitator or leader.

Me: Had you ever been in an encounter group, rap, or any other women's group?

B: No just that one.

Me: How did you get in this particular group?

B: I just sort of ended up in it. I went to join a CR group and this was one that fit in with my time. I never thought about how I ended up there.

Me: When you joined what did you expect to get out of CR?

B: I think that I had an idea from before was that mainly I would come out of it feeling like I was normal . . . a sense of being normal. That is what started our other group. We were all running around with these things in our heads feeling like we were strange and when we got talking we found that there were a lot of differences yes. But one thing that was supportive to me was that even if no one else in the group agreed with me I was still alright. You can't get that anywhere else, you may get it from one friend here and one friend there but when you have a whole group telling you that you are alright it helps a lot.

Me: What do you think that the purpose of CR is?

B: I would think that it is a way for women to explore . . . It is a place that they can go to be with a group of other women to express

themselves without any threats. I think that basically that is what it amounts to. I can go from there but that is how it starts out.

Me: What makes a good CR group?

B: The thing that is wrong with our group and the thing that needs to be done to make it a good CR group is . . . well two things that I saw wrong. I had to get out of it because of the time and that is the only reason that I quit. One was how do you control peoples' lives over a period of time to get everybody together. I think that that . . . something that I am not sure how you do that but I think that this is one thing that is necessary to do. You could introduce new people but you would have a basic group. I think that you have to have that to really be a good group. It is seemed to turn out that a few people in that group were testing the water. They would come in the group and they would throw out something and you could tell that they weren't really doing it for the purpose that they were pretending they were. I felt like a hypocrite by sitting there and not saying anything. That is the thing . . . I wasn't that much . . . well we hadn't been together that long that I felt that I could say anything—I couldn't really be critical of anybody. That was it because we really hadn't been together that long. I think that you have to be critical sometimes . . . it is necessary. If you don't then you are hearing each other constantly but you are not giving each other any real feedback. Partly you are telling half truths. You have to be able to be able to be criticized and accept it.

Me: If you could make a CR group any way that you wanted how would it be?

B: First I would make sure that there was a variety of the kind of people in it. I meet too many people in groups and they are all so much alike. Then everybody agrees and what is the point any more you could go drink beer. I like the idea that there be all different kinds of people and points of view. It seemed to me that . . . maybe that is what I did like . . . there seemed to be a lot of differences in us but nobody thought you were wrong or odd but it was that stupid time thing. Somehow you have got to overcome that. The thing is that I have no idea where it would lead later. I have no concept of that. I think that eventually that it would lead to a dead end . . . people change and different things come up. Maybe at the time it seemed the way. People would come in and you would go through this for years and what do you do . . . keep talking about the same things. I think that there are a lot of things that a CR group can't work through because it is a situation of people saying what they think about things. That is not what is going to change things. It would have to lead into doing something instead of just talking about it.

Me: You said that you felt that the group didn't meet long enough and that people weren't critical enough, what else about the group bothered you?

B: I thought that some people tried to monopolize the group at times and I don't think that that is fair. Some people you literally have to drag out, and I can understand that but I think that they ought to talk too. I had to do that to T once to make her talk. I thought that it was time for her to say something because otherwise it isn't good for her or us. I think that members should try to draw people out. And I think that if somebody really cannot talk then they should be forced to but I think that people should try. I think that they should stay in the group because maybe one day they will realize that they can come out and they can talk. Sometimes in the group too I knew that some people weren't being open . . . they were withholding things . . . but that is their thing. I understood that it was a big personal kind of thing. I figured out a couple of things and I found out later that I was right. They just weren't ready to do it.

Me: What did you like about the group?

B: I think one thing that I really liked and was almost coincidental to the fact that this was CR was A. I loved that because I had my own ideas . . . it was in my head that she was a lesbian and it was no shock when she came out with it. It hit me hard when I say the reactions in that group. There were very few people that weren't shocked . . . like you mean lesbians don't all wear army boots and carry clubs I thought that it was funny to see these people realize that lesbians are people and not wierdos from another planet. I think that if she had come out in the open in the beginning and admitted it that people would have treated her differently. Obviously people really liked her . . . I picked it up quickly. I really liked too . . . well it has been one of the few times that I have had a chance to sit down with women and really hear what women are like. There is not so much of that attempt to present an image or a front. They don't have to live up to any ones expectations. I guess I also liked, like I said before the fact that even though I didn't agree with everybody and they didn't agree with me that basically I came out feeling like I was okay. It helped me . . . it really did . . . it helped me a lot. I couldn't really say what it was but I could feel that things were better by being in the group. I could tell that if there was a week that I couldn't go . . . I didn't get my support. I just like the idea of women supporting each other. Even though you can get it from men it is not the same thing.

Me: What did we talk about in the group that you wanted to talk about?

B: Talking about marriage. I like the idea of talking about children. It sounds like the same old thing but the idea that people have different ideas about having and not having children. The thing that I like to do is if someone had a feeling then they say that they feel this way then that makes me start realizing that I have done that. I am just a nut for wanting to communicate with people. I could see that we all would feel better about it when we would.

Me: Were there things that you wanted to talk about that the group didn't talk about?

B: Yeah, I think that sometimes we would get off on things that I thought were riduclous . . . like men hollering at women on street corners. Who cares. I mean everybody knows that that goes on all the time, we all get mad. That is old and worn out and it got pushed into the ground. There were a lot of things that didn't get started talking about. Like A when she was talking I could tell that everybody was freaking out when she talked about self help groups and that. I think that people were really freaking out. That would be more of the kind of thing that I would like to talk about. Things that aren't just the ordinary run of things. I felt that some people were really threatened by it. I know that I mentioned it in class the other day and one girl just went YUCK!

Me: How did you feel about the facilitator in the group?

B: I liked her a lot. Maybe she wasn't supposed to get involved in the group . . . I don't have this clear yet. . .but she did at times and I liked that. I do like it. She did not dominate the group or tell us what to talk about but I think at times she could have . . . well she would let one subject just get run into the ground until I got so sick of it I didn't care anymore. She didn't seem to be able to say that we had talked something out and needed to go on to something else. Maybe . . . I don't really know about the role of the facilitator. I think that there are some things that she could have done like bringing up a topic which she didn't always do. It seems like the whole concept of leader in that setting is contradictory . . . it takes away from the freedom in many ways. It doesn't belong there.

Me: How about the meetings in the counseling center?

B: It was just a building to me. It never occurred to me that there was a connection. I think that because it was on campus it attracted a lot of people who had some identification with one another even though there were a lot of differences. I think that sometimes it would have been good to get some women in who were from another situation, not on campus.

Me: How would you see your group experience?

B: Partly it was . . . a relief . . . in the sense that it was supportive. I felt a lot of relief. Trying to deal with so many people, especially men, it is a relief to know that you are not wrong and that I am not imagining these things and that it is that way. There are other people there and you can relate to them because of that because it is not a personal crusade anymore . . . like there are a lot of us. I hate it when I think that I am on a personal crusade. If I can relate it to a lot of people then I don't feel wo wierd anymore or so strange . . . I feel much better about it.

VITA

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