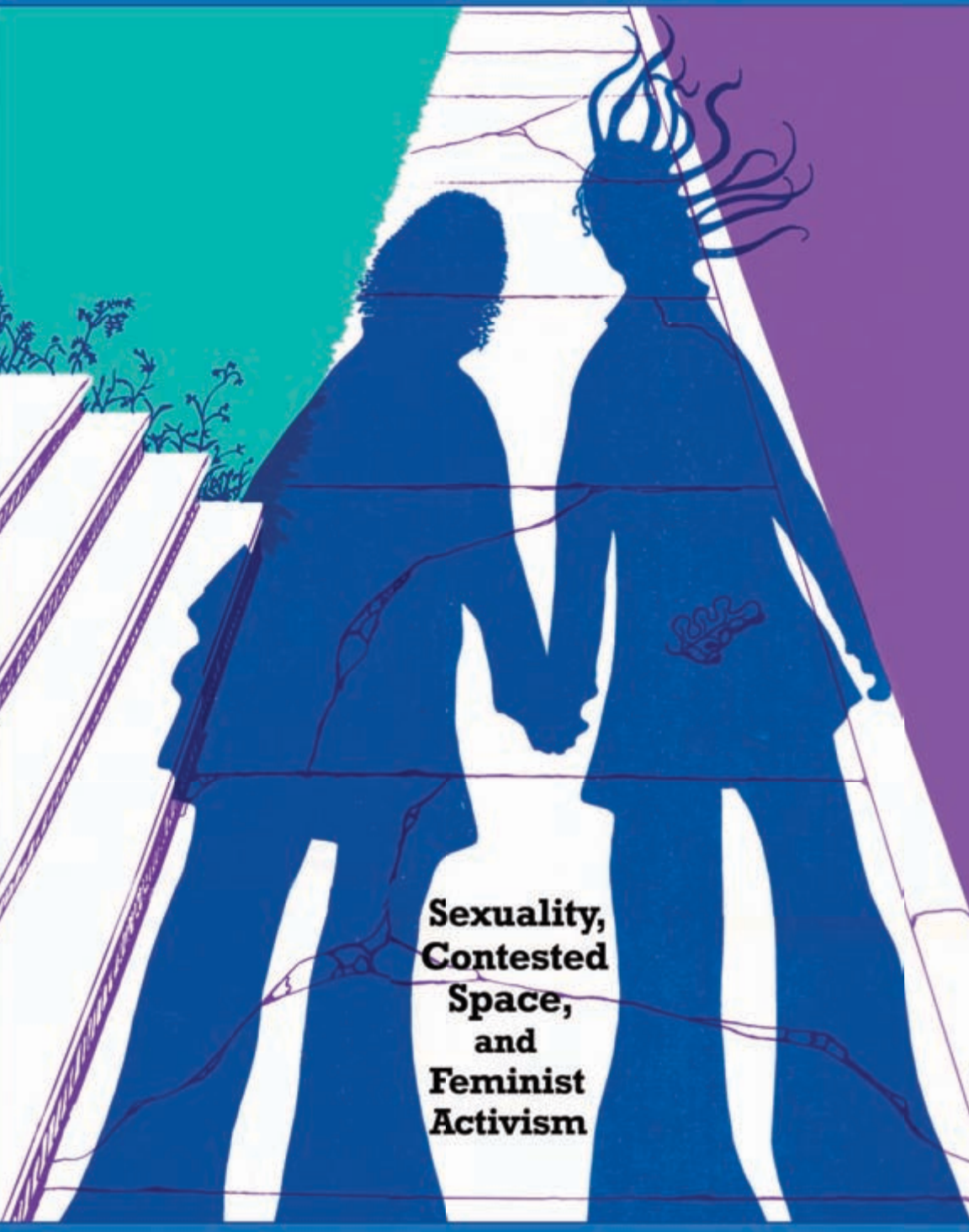
Finding the Movement



Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism

Anne Enke

Finding the Movement

A book in the series

RADICAL PERSPECTIVES *A* Radical History Review *book series*

Series editors: DANIEL J. WALKOWITZ, New York University
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Anne Enke

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Finding the Movement

Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism

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For Nan

Contents

About the Series ix
Acknowledgments xi

Introduction
Locating Feminist Activism 1

Part One *Community Organizing and Commercial Space*

One
"Someone or Something Made That a Women's Bar" 25
Claiming the Nighttime Marketplace

Two
"Don't Steal It, Read It Here" 62
Building Community in the Marketplace

Part Two *Public Assertion and Civic Space*

Three
"Kind of Like Mecca" 105
Playgrounds, Players, and Women's Movement

Four
Out in Left Field 145
Feminist Movement and Civic Athletic Space

Part Three *Politicizing Place and Feminist Institutions*

Five
Finding the Limits of Women's Autonomy 177
Shelters, Health Clinics, and the Practice of Property

Six
If I Can't Dance Shirtless, It's Not a Revolution 217
Coffeehouses, Clubs, and the Construction of "All Women"

Conclusion
Recognizing the Subject of Feminist Activism 252

Notes 269
Bibliography 335
Index 357

About the Series

History, as radical historians have long observed, cannot be severed from authorial subjectivity, indeed from politics. Political concerns animate the questions we ask, the subjects on which we write. For over thirty years the *Radical History Review* has led in nurturing and advancing politically engaged historical research. Radical Perspectives seeks to further the journal's mission: any author wishing to be in the series makes a self-conscious decision to associate her or his work with a radical perspective. To be sure, many of us are currently struggling with the issue of what it means to be a radical historian in the early twenty-first century, and this series is intended to provide some signposts for what we would judge to be radical history. It will offer innovative ways of telling stories from multiple perspectives; comparative, transnational, and global histories that transcend conventional boundaries of region and nation; works that elaborate on the implications of the postcolonial move to "provincialize Europe"; studies of the public in and of the past, including those that consider the commodification of the past; histories that explore the intersection of identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality with an eye to their political implications and complications. Above all, this book series seeks to create an important intellectual space and discursive community to explore the very issue of what constitutes radical history. Within this context, some of the books published in the series may privilege alternative and oppositional political cultures, but all will be concerned with the way power is constituted, contested, used, and abused.

In *Finding the Movement*, Anne Enke re-visions and rethinks the history of "Second Wave" feminism, arguably the "largest social movement in the history of the United States," through the lens of women's spaces. Eschewing the usual emphasis on foundational texts or formative organizations, Enke focuses instead on the *places* of the women's movement—bars, coffeehouses, shelters, clinics, parks, athletic fields—in Chicago, Detroit, and the Twin Cities. The centrality of place in *Finding the Movement* produces several innovative implications. It allows Enke to include actors in the rise of feminism who typically go unacknowledged, even unimagined, in more conventional narratives. The African American and mostly lesbian women in the Motown Soul Sisters softball team may not have styled themselves feminists, but their struggle for access to public space and their assertive style of play influenced the way women in Detroit and other Midwestern cities could imagine themselves, demand playing time on athletic fields, and defy heteronormative constructions of women's bodily movement and public performance. Similarly, lesbians "claiming the nighttime marketplace" provided a crucial precedent for subsequent efforts to create feminist coffeehouses, bookstores, and other ventures in commercial spaces.

Enke cogently argues for a historical perspective on the women's movement that enables us to understand the decisive and continuous presence of lesbians, working-class women, and women of color in the construction of what it meant to be a feminist. This is a sharp departure from the standard depiction of the movement as originating within a white, middle-class cohort that then fails to accommodate demands from lesbians, separatists, and women of color. At the same time, she demonstrates how the choice of specific locations, or of particular definitions of "woman" for a women-only space, often entailed exclusions that mirrored racist and homophobic attitudes most feminists disavowed. Indeed, perhaps her most compelling argument for the centrality of space as an analytical category is her ability to show that, despite feminist groups' discourse of inclusion and of welcome to all women, the locations they selected and constructed often made women desperately trying to "find the movement" feel unwelcome. As a radical and critical history of feminism, *Finding the Movement* allows readers both to experience the heady exuberance of those creative struggles for space and place, and to ponder the limits of a movement for liberation anchored to existing commercial and hierarchical practices.

Acknowledgments

Writing this book pleasantly demolished any monkish fantasy I may have had about writing being a solitary, lonely endeavor, and instead left me humbled by how necessarily social the process has been. Individuals, families, friends, communities, colleagues, and institutions have contributed in countless ways. My debts and gratitude are thus far more extensive than I can begin to explain—much less repay—in these acknowledgments. Just as conducting oral histories, archival research, and even writing have occasioned connection across communities, generations, memories, and histories, it is my hope that this book is not simply a material effect of all that labor but also an invitation for further conversation.

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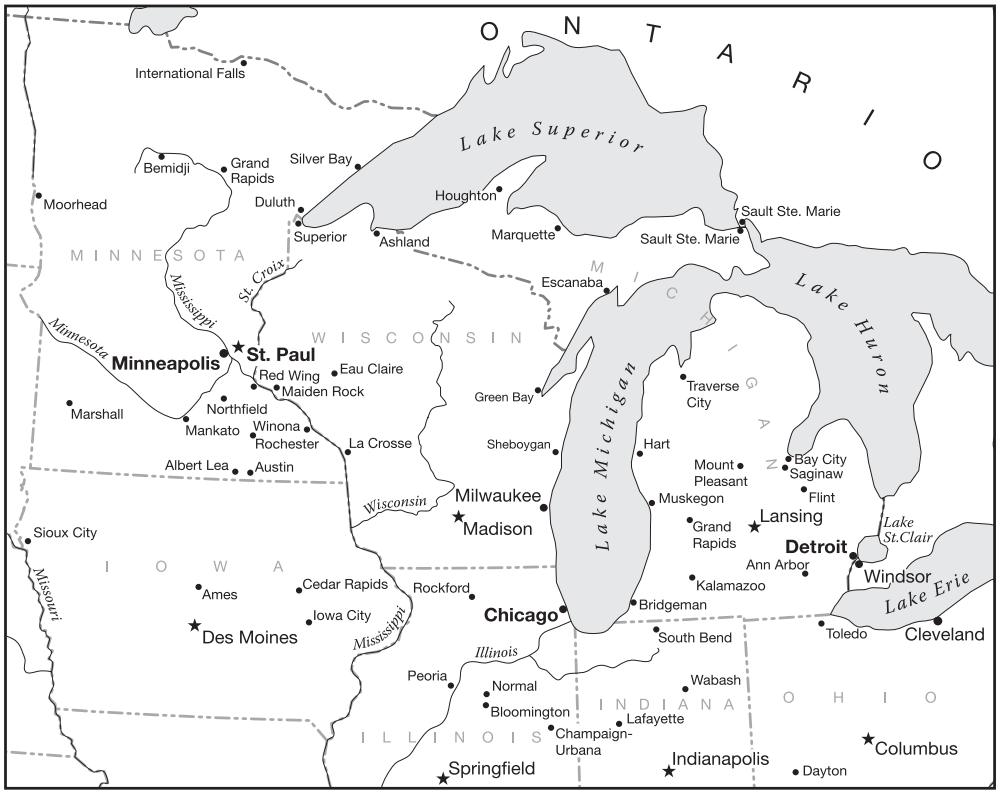
This book bears the stamps of my family history, not only in its attachment to Detroit, Chicago, and the Twin Cities, but also in its drive to comprehend two decades of social movement. First off, Chris Enke taught me a love of questions and all the ways that a good question can lead beyond one's own imagining. He also showed me that in work and in living a life, it is never too late to try something new. Jim Enstad, Chris Enstad, Sophie Pfeiffer, Patty Enstad, Jim Mondoux, and Michael and Ryan Boevers kept a homey and sweet foothold for me in the Twin Cities. David Enke is a perpetual marvel, along with Annie, Nic, and Devon: by example, they have taught me the most important things about communities and ecosystems, and about hard work, faith, and creativity. I wrote this book also with my brother, Paul Enke (1958–87), and my mother, Mary Crane (1935–93), very much in mind and heart. It was partly through their eyes that I, as a child growing up in the midst of the Vietnam antiwar movement, first came to appreciate the hope and rage that moved the generation prior to my own.

Above all, I thank Nan Enstad. She has encouraged me from the mo-

ment I first began the small and unlikely seminar paper that, over the next many years, grew into this book; all the while, she believed in it and in me. From Minneapolis to Greensboro to Madison, she has applauded my various and often peculiar explorations in the world of sound, offered me ongoing reason to work with the written and spoken word, and understood me when language fails utterly. Whether we are dipping in the blue perfection of Lake Superior or finding ground for our grief seeds, she makes everyday life precious. It is to her that I dedicate this book about ordinary acts in ordinary places that made an extraordinary world.



Upper Midwest

Map prepared by Heather Francisco, Cartography Lab, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2006.
For city maps, see pages 140–144.

Introduction

Locating Feminist Activism

In 1971, Eileen Hudon, an American Indian, Catholic woman, suspected there was a movement that could help her. For years, her husband had beaten her and attempted to keep every means of autonomy from her: money, transportation, shoes, even a pen and paper. Hudon repeatedly searched the "one resource available" to her. As she explained, "I remember being twenty-one, and looking in the *phonebook* in Minneapolis, and I was looking through it trying to find the *women's movement*, wondering how to find the women's movement. Because I knew the women would understand what was happening to me. And I couldn't find it in the phonebook: What do I look under? Where do I go? There's no way to find the women who understand."[1]

Hudon's narrative reveals that by 1971, "the women's movement" was widely known; even someone as isolated as she was could imagine "the women" out there who understood and had solutions to the structural conditions that contained her and other women in violent households. Though she also knew people connected to the American Indian Movement (AIM) who were protesting police brutality in Minneapolis, Indians had not yet collectively addressed women's status in Native communities or within the racist hierarchies of the United States.[2] Neither did Hudon's immediate social network know how to respond to her distress: her husband was a nice guy, after all. The women's movement, she thought, would be the obvious place to go. The phrase "women's liberation" was in the airwaves, on the streets and on the shop floors, in schools and the halls of

government, in kitchens and in bedrooms throughout the United States. Everywhere, it seemed, women were resisting gender roles and their relegation to "second place" in a society structured around binary gender divisions that seemed to privilege men in virtually every arena. Throughout the South and the Midwest as well as the East and West Coasts, in rural as well as urban and suburban communities, feminism was changing institutions, landscapes, and lives. Yet many people who had heard of the women's movement did not know where, literally, to find it.

How does one locate a movement that could reach a woman in her home and at the same time seem utterly inaccessible to her? A movement that was "everywhere" and yet nowhere the same? A movement nearly infinite in its origins as well as its continued and changing expressions? Self-identified feminists formed thousands of large and small organizations throughout the United States during the 1960s and 1970s; they wrote, mimeographed, and published innumerable essays, tracts, and manifestos proclaiming feminism's goals and the best strategies for attaining them. But people also enacted feminism through a dazzling array of action that was spontaneous, unattached to named organizations, and left little record in print. As much as some feminists sought to directly change structural and institutionalized inequities, even more women found ways to build lives and generate movement against the day-to-day barriers that told them to "stay in their place." They resisted segregation, wife-beating, gay-bashing, gender and sexual harassment, and police brutality; they built alternative economies and alternative communities; they shared material and educational resources; and they provided shelter, health, and reproductive care where it had been denied. Many came to call themselves feminists, but many did not; many identified with "women" primarily, while others identified with family and community of origin; many embraced politicized identities, and many more disavowed political motivation. Some who could not even find the women's movement, and others who did not care to, actually helped produce it. It is no wonder that historians Linda Gordon, Rosalyn Baxandall, and others have considered the "second wave" of feminism to be the "largest social movement in the history of the United States."[3] But understanding it as such requires windows into broad social contexts to see the ways that ordinary women and men across race, class, and gender expression became involved in diverse activities that constituted the movement.

One night in 1974, a hospital chaplain took Eileen Hudon and her

young children to Women's Advocates, a newly opened shelter for battered women. The next morning, Hudon recalled, "I overheard all these different conversations going on between [the shelter staff]. I was just mopping up the bathroom—that was my chore for being in the shelter. And I remember thinking, 'why can't I be in those conversations? I *finally* found the women's movement, and here I'm mopping the *bathroom*!' " For Hudon at that particular time, "taking part in all these conversations" and the mobility they implied, "seemed unattainable."[4] But as a location inhabited by diverse women, the shelter inspired and required new places of movement; even as a temporary resident, Hudon ultimately did take part in the conversations at Women's Advocates, and those conversations changed her as well as the shelter. The successes and limitations of existing services in fact compelled Hudon to find women where they were, and soon she began coordinating anti-violence programs throughout rural Minnesota. In 1980, she and three other American Indian women engaged in grassroots activism to form an Indian anti-violence program: the four rented a phone line from a Twin Cities church, printed matchbooks with their number and a definition of abuse, and then distributed the matchbooks to "every place that Indian people gather: so we went to Laundromats, supermarkets, bowling alleys, all the Indian organizations, and finally to the bars. We knew that through the grapevine, these thousands of matchbooks would get around the community." Soon after they opened Women of All Nations Shelter.[5] In similar ways, countless people who could not or did not find the women's movement in the phone book became critical actors in the popularization and ongoing emergence of feminist activism.

Just as Hudon and so many others initially puzzled over *where* to find the women's movement, I, too, look to space and place for new ways to apprehend the emergence, proliferation, and on-the-ground manifestations of feminist activism during the 1960s and 1970s. Oral histories first led me to puzzle over the connections between space, women's *movement*, and feminism. Undertaking what I thought would be a small research project on feminist history in the Twin Cities, I conducted interviews with an initial fifteen or so women who had started a coffeehouse in Minneapolis. As I listened to their life histories in person and again on tape, I realized that they consistently narrated their lives through references to places and movement through highly contested geographies: their life stories described pathways, and these pathways were not simply metaphors of jour-

ney but actually the product of struggle over who may occupy ostensibly public spaces. Frequently, narrators discussed their experiences of passing through public space, fighting for legitimacy within spaces closed to them, and creating new spaces of their own. In effect, they were narrating their discovery of social hierarchies embedded in built environments, as well as their confrontations with those hierarchies.[6] Through their narratives, I also began to glimpse the collective politicization of place, and I began to see *movement* as a collective, spatial process. As my project expanded, the more I listened with an ear to contested spaces, the more I heard a story of grassroots movement fueled by diverse people who did not necessarily identify themselves as political activists or feminists, but who nevertheless found and founded feminist activism.

Following this lead, I prioritized my research around contested space and place rather than around feminist ideologies or identities—although of course those also came into play in interesting ways. What would it mean for feminism and for social movement history if we took seriously the claim that the Second Wave was truly "widespread"? Surely women's movement took place *outside* and *alongside* as well as within the institutions and actors bearing the name "feminist." What would happen to the history of feminism if we looked beyond the archives of the already known and presumed feminist subject? What if, additionally, we did not privilege the social formations already identified as feminist, but instead sought to understand how those formations worked to consolidate the movement in part by brokering the signs and identities of feminism? These questions came to the fore as I shaped my project around specific sites of conflict and grassroots movement in Minneapolis and St. Paul (the Twin Cities), Detroit, and Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s. Here, I look at actual locations like bars, bookstores, parks, shelters, and coffeehouses in which activist communities came into being. Grounded in specific sites and in three urban areas of the upper Midwest, my analysis focuses on the ways in which women intervened in public landscapes and social geographies already structured around gender, race, class, and sexual exclusions and on the ways that these processes in turn shaped feminism. A focus on contested space, as opposed to a focus on feminist identity, helps explain how feminism replicated exclusions even as feminists developed powerful critiques of social hierarchy. Simultaneously, it suggests a genealogy of the movement that helps account for its breadth and reveals its diversity.

Finding the Movement extends from a twofold premise about feminist

activism. First, I confirm that the movement was widespread in ways that historians have not yet explained. Increasingly, historical accounts of feminism and women's liberation show that diverse people were involved in feminism; they show the movement's reach throughout the United States and not just within coastal cities; and they show that feminism operated through grassroots as well as legislative channels. Beginning in the 1970s, feminists of color launched a critique of white middle-class hegemony within the movement, and they conceptualized feminist interventions that more adequately addressed race, class, and national hierarchies. Subsequently, historians have offered rich accounts of black, Asian, Latina, Native American, working-class, and global feminisms. While proving that feminist activism was anything but monolithic, the historiography of the movement has largely confined itself to studying feminist-identified organizations and people who embraced a feminist identity. In contrast, through a focus on sites of activism, I show how feminism exceeded feminist identification. Thus, one argument of this book is that to understand the widespread and popular nature of the movement, we must also consider relevant activism and locations that did not always—at the time—earn the label "feminist."

The second and related premise is that the archive of feminist-identified subjects in fact self-selects for the more exclusive and boundary-policing manifestations of the movement and perhaps even for those that were most directed by white, middle-class agendas. Although the historiographic inclusion of black feminist and other feminist of color organizations partially redresses this problem, I suggest we can go further. Additionally, we can seek to understand how feminist activism emerged on the ground, how feminist formation sometimes relied on exclusive identities, and how the movement nevertheless regularly exceeded its own self-definition. One way to do this is through analysis of everyday places and women's varying and contested investments in them.

Finding the Movement centrally argues that between 1960 and 1980, women in the Twin Cities, Detroit, and Chicago constituted feminist activism by intervening in established public spaces and by creating new kinds of spaces. Women took up commercial and civic spaces—bars, bookstores, cafés, and parks—in new ways, and they also created new public institutions—health clinics, shelters, and coffeehouses—oriented around women's needs and resources. At the same time, social geographies and built environments shaped activist communities as they emerged on the

ground. Feminism, then, took shape as a popular movement around the limitations and possibilities of local geographies. While all women engaging public spaces during this period navigated charges of sex/gender deviance, lesbians, women in lesbian relationships, and passing women played a central role in revising the sex/gender dynamics of public space and also within feminism. Those who disavowed political motivation, as well as those who embraced a feminist identity, shared strategies if not always ideologies as they propelled the movement. But as women turned commercial, civic, domestic, and institutional spaces into sites of activism, they produced (as well as resisted) exclusionary dynamics; even feminist spaces were not "free," for as they consolidated the signs of feminism, they sowed seeds of hierarchy within the movement, particularly around race, class, sexuality, and gender expression.

Women in the 1960s and 1970s faced exclusions and hierarchies that were deeply embedded in public geographies. As historians have argued, all women in public space since the mid-1800s have been cast as sexually vulnerable at best, and often sexually suspect and punishable for their deviation from white, middle-class norms of domesticity.[7] Despite post–World War II gains in women's social and political status, everyday spaces continued to structure and naturalize racist hierarchies and gender and sexual norms. As late as the mid-1970s in many cities, it was common for bars that served white people to prohibit entrance to "unescorted women": blue laws governing public accommodations required a woman to have a man at her side, creating the appearance of a middle-class public free of prostitution and lesbianism. Urban establishments that catered to lesbians were often hidden and located in red light districts, and most prohibited homosexual dancing. Across race, class, and gender expression, a woman out at night without a man was met with suspicion and sometimes bodily harm, yet daylight did not free her of harassment on the streets, in public accommodations, and at work.

Civic spaces, too, reinforced gender/sex norms. Well into the 1970s, public parks—already embedded in racially segregated urban landscapes—denied athletic space to girls and women. Conventionally, civic athletics was an arena in which males secured masculinity through assertive use of their bodies in highly visible spaces.[8] Even when girls and women won access to civic athletic space, men regularly challenged their use of it through harassment and occasionally physical violence. The public landscape additionally buttressed the notion that women as a class were not

credible economic participants. Before the mid-1970s, most banks denied women their own accounts and required a father's or husband's signature for loans of any kind; many landlords would not rent to a woman without male signatures, nor would many mortgage companies assist in purchases of property.[9] Such practices drastically limited the number of visible storefront businesses owned by women. Also into the 1970s, norms, laws, and medical practices regularly denied women sexual health care and reproductive control; most women were refused legal abortions, while some were forcibly sterilized. Many cities maintained emergency shelters for men but none for women, further announcing that women should stay ensconced within the domicile under all circumstances.

Women moved within and around these spatial conditions, and they created a massive groundswell of feminist activism by directly intervening in the built environment. During the 1960s and 1970s, they secured illicit meeting spaces on the margins of public economies, and they publicly fought to open bars to women and abolish gendered dress codes and prohibitions against lesbian congregation. They also created alternatives to bars, such as women's coffeehouses where women could socialize, dance together, and organize free of sexual harassment. Across race and class, women managed to secure quality civic space for athletic endeavors, and in the process, they grew activist communities and offered new ways for women to use their bodies in the public world. Women also built alternative means of economic exchange and support, and they set up their own lending institutions. They opened women-oriented bookstores, restaurants, cafés, and clubs, and they took it upon themselves to create shelter for women needing to get away from violent partners. They learned and taught each other medical skills and created new places in which to practice them, thereby establishing new standards of sexual health and medical practice. These kinds of interventions popularized women's movement throughout the public landscape, imprinting marketplaces, civic spaces, and public institutions with specifically feminist stamps. Feminist activism, then, was not just "everywhere" and "in the air," rather, it was known and practiced on the ground of everyday life.

People brought a variety of different interests to their movement: they were not all motivated by feminism, and many did not even consider themselves activists. Many softball players, for example, said they wanted above all to play ball; it happened that doing so required challenging the gender-, sexual-, class-, and race-based arrangements of civic space. Even

as they took on this work, they did not make politicization an explicit goal. Others who did bring a specifically feminist consciousness to their work found that their interactions with everyday spaces further shaped feminist ideologies, expectations, and practices. For example, when self-identified feminists sought to provide shelter for women in violent relationships, they received opposition from neighbors, police, and other avenues of public regulation. From this evolved a now-common feminist critique of the institutions that privatized domestic issues and reinforced patriarchal control over women. Ideals of feminist health care, too, were profoundly shaped by women's ability to secure some kinds of spaces for practice and not others. In a variety of ways, then, women's interventions in conventional social geographies helped bring activist constituencies into being.

The spatial argument of this book has implications for understanding a key controversy within the historiography of feminism, namely, the place of lesbians in the movement. Although historians agree that lesbians, bisexual, and passing women have been important to feminism, movement histories—with some important exceptions—obscure their influence; in most, lesbians appear *as such* only if and when they politicized their sexual identity.[10] But a history of women's engagement with public space is necessarily also a history of sexuality, a field with which this work is in constant conversation. I employ a spatial analysis of women's movement to help explain why lesbianism (as well as sexuality and gender expression more broadly) were so formative of feminist activism. Whenever women entered—much less sought to change—the public landscape, they encountered specters of sexual deviance. All activists, regardless of sexual preferences or gender expression, met with persistent lesbian-baiting and homophobia alongside sexism, and it is thus not surprising that sex/gender liberation became central to feminism in general. But analyzing the ways that women navigated conventional public spaces and developed new feminist spaces reveals that women coped with sexism and homophobia in countless, often conflicting, and always spatially practiced ways. Lesbians—or, more accurately, butches, fems, studs, ladies, passing women, bulldaggers, gay women, women in lesbian relationships, bisexual women, and lesbians—took a leading role in many of these navigations, and thus, they are prominent in this historical study.[11]

A spatial analysis of feminist activism sheds new light on sexuality in the movement in part by reinterpreting the workings of identity politics. Most feminist histories directly resist the "good 1960s, bad 1970s" declen-

sion narrative common to studies of radicalism; after all, in the 1970s feminist activism (and gay and lesbian liberation) arose to shake the country in lasting ways.[12] Nevertheless, synthetic feminist histories share with histories of radicalism a sense that identity politics spelled ruin. Second Wave narratives beginning with Freedom Summer, and those beginning later with radical feminist organizations, portray an initial feminist unity preceding a fraying trajectory as women placed increasing emphasis on sexual identity, racial identity, class identification, gender identity, sectarian identity, ideological purity, and so on, one "group" after another "splitting off" the originary whole.[13]

I do not question that identity politics were costly, nor that we must still grapple with their legacies. I do suggest, however, that the prevailing identity politics model of social movement history distorts even as it explains. By foregrounding identity and ideology, many histories of the Second Wave create two impressions that run counter to their own findings. First, it appears as though feminist identity grew out of an originary, radical, and unified mission: in the beginning, everyone rode the wave. Second, comprehending the Second Wave according to feminist identity and ideological positions has had the effect of reifying the very identity politics most feminist historians seek to critique.[14] We still need new ways to historicize and understand conflict that do not make a small handful of identities and ideologies more primary, more stable, and more universal than they may have been. Focusing on sites of activism helps contextualize emergent identity categories by showing how diverse people generated social positions and identities in the process of inhabiting public spaces already built around exclusions and privileged access. Among feminists, certain identity categories became thinkable and operative as women created place *and* as they constantly sought to transform the terms of inclusion. To the extent that identity played a part in women's activism during the 1960s and 1970s, we might pay more attention to people's *embodied* but not static *locations* in a world of "constitutive sociality."[15] Rather than holding identities responsible for causing divisions, a spatial analysis instead sees the consolidation of identities as an *effect* of spatial practices. Furthermore, spatial practices included contestation, and thus consolidation was never complete.

Reliance on identity politics as an explanatory framework has contributed to the vexed place of lesbian existence in feminism—specifically, the tendency to ignore it unless lesbians politicized their identity has cast

lesbians in the leading role of a play about divisive sexual identities. Historians have documented lively sexual invention propelling feminist organizing in this period: women demanded sexual autonomy, many questioned monogamy, scores became bisexual or lesbian, some became gender separatists or lesbian separatists, and everywhere women politicized the bounds of intimacy.[16] However, even while elucidating the dynamic complexity of sexuality among women, many narratives of the Second Wave continue to invoke "the gay-straight split" in monolithic terms and charge that "lesbianism," in particular, divided feminists.[17] A spatial lens affords a more compelling understanding of sexual emergence and the role that lesbians played in the movement. To be sure, lesbians and bisexual women disrupted the appearance of a sexually unmarked group. This became most apparent as women created explicitly feminist spaces; rather than being preexistent or static, particular sexual identity categories became imaginable and usable in relation to particular spaces and the multiple stakes that actors had in those spaces.[18]

No spatial analysis of feminist activism would be complete without consideration of women's space and separatism. In 1969, Pam Allen's concept of "free space" for women's consciousness-raising instantly became popular because movement women were already seeking just that.[19] By the early 1970s, most feminist-identified women—straight and bisexual as well as lesbians—unapologetically promoted separate space in which to organize, socialize, dance, teach, learn, and develop new skills, authority, and autonomy from men. It was common, if also radical, to seek "a space of our own."[20] But through processes discussed in this book, the meanings ascribed to "women's space" changed dramatically between 1967 and 1977: increasingly, women's space came to imply lesbian space. Much of feminism, in turn, sought to distance the movement from "separatist" spaces by representing them as lesbian, narrowly focused, renegade, and exclusionary. A deeper engagement with the trajectory of women's space offers a more satisfying history of feminism, showing that all along, *all* feminist-identified spaces constructed a culturally specific version of "woman" as the subject of feminism. From the outset, the creation of women's space was neither incidental nor ancillary but rather integral to feminist emergence and to the establishment of the movement's parameters.

Historians have widely agreed that race and class hierarchies have beset feminism from the outset, and yet the dimensions of these conflicts have been notoriously difficult to narrate. Feminism was historically tied to the

civil rights movement and was often antiracist in intent, yet it often engendered race and class exclusion. How, then, do we understand the exclusions and hierarchies, and the ways that they contributed to the differential visibilities of actors and agendas within the movement? What was "white" and "middle class" about this movement when women of color and working women helped generate it from the beginning? A spatial analysis shows that conflicts within feminism gained form and name within tangible spatial contestations over environments already laid through with race, class, and sexual hierarchies. Far from being "spaces apart" or "free spaces," feminist spaces emerged in just such embedded environments; to an extent, they even appeared to substantiate social status by brokering access to them. At the same time, spatial contestation everywhere ensured that feminist activism would never be confined to but would regularly exceed the parameters suggested by self-identified feminist spaces.

This work joins a vibrant and growing body of scholarship on grassroots feminist activism indicating that the Second Wave paradigm—far from simply naming an era—has defined feminism too much according to white women and predominantly white organizations in the urban Northeast. Kimberly Springer, Benita Roth, Nancy Hewitt, Anne Valk, Sherna Berger Gluck, Wini Breines, and others have conclusively demonstrated that women of color generated feminism around a great array of issues. Equally exciting, Dorothy Sue Cobble has argued that women in the labor movement—far from being the "slow bloomers" of the Second Wave in the 1970s—built a feminist agenda from the 1930s on. Together, these works insist that the parameters of feminism bear careful reconsideration.[21] Joining this scholarship, *Finding the Movement* focuses on contested spaces in four cities of the upper Midwest to admit a broader set of actors and agendas into the history of the movement; people became part of this study not by virtue of membership in a named feminist organization or adherence to an already-identified feminist agenda, but because they participated in the politicization of particular places in which we may see the provisional coalescences of a movement.

This multi-urban framework draws attention to the ways that feminist activism took shape around the particularities of local geographies. To be sure, in all three urban contexts, bars, bookstores, and restaurants were important commercial arenas of activism; civic park spaces in all three urban areas yielded rich histories of women's efforts to desegregate athletic

fields; similarly, the kinds of feminist spaces through which women institutionalized the movement bear commonalities as service-oriented or socially oriented spaces in all four cities. But people found feminist activism as it took place locally; even ties with activism elsewhere were mediated through local conditions and spaces. By the same token, *what* people found depended very much on localized environments. While a national story may be told about, for example, the emergence of feminist bookselling, examination of local contingencies reveals why women's bookstores took the shape they did and what that kind of space then meant for the local appearance of feminism as well as for the movement as a whole. Studying women's movement in three urban areas helps make those contingencies more visible than they would be if the study were defined by the borders of just one city. At the same time, pathways of activism connected these cities: for example, softball players, musicians, and entertainers as well as their fans and self-identified activists physically carried print media, insights, skills, and strategies throughout the United States and beyond. A multicity study reveals the ways that feminist activism was deeply embedded in the local even while simultaneously influenced by connections across region and nation. It should be clear, therefore, that this is not a linear, direct comparison of cities, nor of statically imagined spaces (e.g., women's health centers) across cities using any one-to-one correspondence. My analysis frames each instance of contested space in each locale to address distinct questions about the constitution of a movement.

The urban, upper Midwest is an apt region for a study that rethinks the parameters of feminism. Scholarship has thus far focused less attention on the upper Midwest than it has on the coasts, although the Midwest generated a great deal of decidedly feminist activism.[22] Without a doubt, a different and necessary story would also emerge through an in-depth exploration of rural or suburban activism, but for now I leave that to others.[23] Much that is conventionally associated with feminism hails from the four cities I study here: in Minneapolis, there is Amazon Bookstore, the country's oldest feminist bookstore; St. Paul is home to Women's Advocates, the country's oldest battered women's shelter; Chicago not only boasts the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, the country's largest grassroots feminist organization, but also *Lavender Woman*, one of the country's first and longest-lasting lesbian news periodicals; women in Detroit staged some of the first zap actions for child care and reproductive rights and later led attempts to create a nationwide feminist lending in-

stitute in conjunction with opening the country's first internationally conceived, multi-use women's building. The upper Midwest also allows consideration of the ways that less explicit, uncanonized, popular activism fueled the movement, thus affording a dramatic rethinking of the parameters of feminist activism locally, regionally, and also nationally. Finally, as the three largest urban areas in the Midwest, Chicago, Detroit, and the Twin Cities each offer their own distinct insights into the relationship between public geographies, women's movement, and feminism.

Chicago was known as "the city of neighborhoods." At midcentury, grade school children in Chicago studied maps that organized the city into discrete neighborhoods based on ethnic and racial demographics, and they lined up infant mortality rates exactly with neighborhood boundaries. The lesson taught that neighborhoods (place) were self-evidently conflated with race and class (identity), all neatly bounded and map-able.[24] Entire social movement strategies have been built around this conception of people and place. Perhaps the most utilized in the 1960s and 1970s was the "neighborhood organizing strategy" attributed to Chicago labor organizer Saul Alinsky, who proclaimed that "you do the most to organize in your own community." In the late 1960s, alongside the emergence of the Black Panther Party and the decision of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee to become a black organization, neighborhood-based organizing became the modus operandi of the Black Panther Party, Young Lords, Native American Committee, Chicago Indian Village, Young Patriots, Students for a Democratic Society, Rising Up Angry, La Gente, and the Outreach group of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union: all had "their" geographic areas, and many referred to the maxim "organize among your own" to explain the race and class base of their work.[25] But of course boundaries were never so neat in practice. Just who is "your own?" According to what criteria? A single neighborhood could be a locus of both white feminist and Native American action; a predominantly white feminist neighborhood enclave might also be home to handfuls of black lesbian and Latino/a activists.[26] People's personal histories crossed criteria lines all the time, making neighborhood identity both more appealing and less monolithic. How, then, did feminism take shape within a city of neighborhoods?

In Detroit during the 1960s and 1970s, structural and social conditions posed such tangible challenges to women's movement that connections between space and organizing styles are particularly clear. Jobs had been

leaving the city since the 1950s, but following the riots of 1967, Detroit lost half of its manufacturing and retail economy, and its infrastructure crumbled. White flight quickly turned Detroit into the city with the smallest concentration of whites (22 percent) out of all of the United States' most populous cities.[27] Minimal public transportation ensured that neighborhoods segregated by race and class would not be casually traversed, nor would the line between Detroit and its rapidly growing suburbs. Earlier in the century, excluded from mainstream white institutions in Detroit, African Americans in black neighborhoods built institutions for health care, financial assistance, business, and even an autonomous, highly localized government. Most African American women I interviewed called Detroit a "black city": all of them had grown up during the 1950s in "all-black" neighborhoods that were demolished to make way for freeways, housing projects, and urban renewal; most had little contact with white people. At the same time, the white women I interviewed regularly referred to Detroit not as a black city but as a "working-class city." This was a claim to a proud class identity, a reminder of Detroit's bygone industrial jobs, and also a claim to whiteness in a city that most whites had abandoned by the early 1970s. The title "working-class city" also recalled a history of white ethnic diversity and Catholic influence and marked the resilience of Detroit's remaining white inhabitants: by the end of the period under study here, more whites in Detroit occupied census tracts where the poverty rate exceeded 40 percent than in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, or any of the other ten largest cities in the United States.[28] Meanwhile, suburban zoning refused anything associated not only with blackness but also with sexual immorality: feminist bookstores were all right, lesbian bars were not. Social and geographic barriers contributed to relatively isolated activist communities. Yet women *did* organize, moving within, around, and because of larger structural changes. How did these contingencies affect what feminism looked like in Detroit and beyond?[29]

At a time when many Midwestern cities were rusting under deindustrialization and globalization, the Twin Cities gained tens of thousands of jobs, benefiting from an exceptionally diversified economy.[30] Many women I interviewed in the Twin Cities attributed their ability to spend time and energy on unpaid activism to the fact that the cost of living even by the mid-1970s was still relatively low; young women without children often lived on one part-time job, and—at least for educated white women—jobs were available. Many women expected the Twin Cities and state

governments to extend their historic commitment to social welfare funding beyond education and health care to address feminist concerns; many also questioned the prevailing view of the Twin Cities as "white and middle-class," a view that depended on the segregation of poor people and people of color from many avenues of civic life.[31] Yet more than a river separated the two cities even as they grew more intertwined by the latter part of the twentieth century. Through the first half of the twentieth century St. Paul developed a working-class, Catholic identity, whereas Minneapolis strengthened its middle-class, Protestant public face.[32] In the 1960s and 1970s, social activism, freeways, and new jobs helped bridge the river and the cities, but zoning and activist cultures continued to reinforce distinctions between them. For example, in the early 1970s, every bar that lesbians—feminist and otherwise—worked to make "our own" was located in St. Paul, and most feminist-identified institutions such as bookstores, resource centers, and coffeehouses settled in Minneapolis (Women's Advocates was a major exception). How did feminism take shape around actual resources, dominant messages of well-being, and ongoing class distinctions between the cities?

The particular spaces examined in *Finding the Movement* emerged organically through my research. I found the many spaces that I analyze here through something similar to the "snowball method" that researchers use to find research subjects: just as one participant might tell a researcher about several more potential contacts, one space inhered pathways to others—some similar and some surprisingly different. Oral histories have been critical to this discovery. Archived sources, such as the minutes of a Detroit Feminist Health Project meeting, might (on a good day) include an address. But they virtually never include a discussion of why the meeting was there and not in some other neighborhood or of how women came to the meeting and what social and cultural boundaries they had to traverse to arrive there. In contrast, women's narratives of their lives were "travel stories," to use de Certeau's term.[33] And the ways that narrators arranged time, place, and activity in their memories provided important clues about the meanings they made of their activity.[34]

Early in my research, I looked for deliberately feminist spaces like A Woman's Coffee House. Perhaps the most celebrated and notorious of feminist institutions in Minneapolis, the Coffee House operated out of a downtown church basement and served as a hub of feminist and lesbian organizing beginning in 1974. Though predominantly white and middle

class, hundreds of women across sexual identity, race, and class populated the Coffee House on weekend nights; many remember it as "the pulse of the feminist community."[35] There, one might say, one could find "the women's movement": women came from near and far to A Woman's Coffee House, and they grew a feminist and lesbian grapevine that contributed to a coffeehouse network spanning the country. Indeed, through traveling performers, fans, and newsletters, participants in the Minneapolis Coffee House learned of Mountain Moving Womyn's Coffeehouse in Chicago when it opened a year later. Mountain Moving had its roots in a women's self-help, antiviolence, crisis phone line, emerging to provide a *place* in a way that a phone line could not. Although the link between antiviolence work and a women-only coffeehouse seemed natural in Chicago, in the Twin Cities it was far less so. A Woman's Coffee House opened only months after the Women's Advocates battered women's shelter opened in St. Paul, but these two very different kinds of women-only spaces only peripherally overlapped as overt feminist institutions. Women's Advocates' founders, always dealing with emergencies, knew about the Coffee House but felt they rarely had time to participate in what they perceived to be an entertainment-oriented venue, and some, moreover, felt they should not "intrude on" an important space "for lesbians."[36] As I explored avenues such as these, it became clear that even the most obvious feminist institutions consisted of shifting layers of accessibility and contested boundaries.

Equally important were the pathways between these kinds of institutions and other, less distinctly feminist spaces. More than I could have anticipated, people who participated in A Woman's Coffee House *and* Women's Advocates directed me to a prior and concurrent marketplace of gay bars in the Twin Cities. The "chem.-free" Coffee House began in part as an alternative to bars, and yet many Coffee House participants helped create and defend bars for women. Few women sheltered at Women's Advocates cared foremost about lesbian activism at bars, but many did frequent a gay bar within walking distance of the shelter because they figured that there, they would not be hit on. As historians have shown, bars were key sites of GLBT activism from the 1940s through the 1960s.[37] But just how were gay bars and feminist activism related? That they were positively connected in the Twin Cities intrigued me, especially because the prevailing queer studies narrative suggested that feminist institutions of the 1970s had arisen from prudish middle-class sensibilities to supplant

a stable, visibly erotic, and working-class butch/femme subculture earlier developed around bars.[38] When I looked chronologically and synchronically at the development of gay bars and feminist and lesbian institutional spaces, I saw cultural interdependence and interpersonal negotiation rather than the eclipse of one class by another. To be sure, all spaces fostered communities and exclusions around perceptions of class, race, generation, gender, and sexual expression: different kinds of places helped produce, for example, "bar dykes" and "feminist lesbians." But people did not stay in their place, and neither were spaces unrelated. Feminism found itself (in part) in bars and along pathways to them, and those processes directly shaped the movement.

The snowball method of finding spaces led to a diversity of feminist sites, but opening up feminism to a broader set of agendas required following some less clear leads. For example, several white women at the Coffee House—including the founders—had earlier developed "out" feminist lesbian sociality as they bodily asserted their presence on public softball fields. Their role models included the Avantis, a working-class team of white athletes who would have nothing of feminism but who aggressively occupied civic athletic space and expanded opportunities for girls and women to play on quality diamonds. The Avantis had learned that in part through their relationship with the Motown Soul Sisters of Detroit, a black softball team who had resisted segregation, demolition of black neighborhoods, and sexual scrutiny of black women in public in order to play ball in civic parks. Women who frequented A Woman's Coffee House knew nothing of the Motown Soul Sisters: those among them who had played on an "out lesbian" softball team regularly challenged the harassment they received for occupying civic space in Minneapolis, but they did not know that their style of struggle (and indeed, feminism itself) owed something to Detroit, a city where the story of softball was a story of segregation, community organizing, and challenges to gender- and race-laden stigmatization of women in public. Like many feminist-identified women, when I began to learn about the Coffee House, I was not looking for Detroit or for civic space, much less softball, and yet those were historic arenas toward which the Coffee House led.[39] From each site of activism, pathways led in many directions chronologically and culturally as well as spatially; in historical perspective, these pathways are the clues toward understanding the distances that women traveled—sometimes by relay—as they built the movement.

Altogether, *Finding the Movement* closely analyzes movement in and through three different kinds of spaces: commercial spaces such as bars, bookstores, and cafés; civic spaces, such as public parks and softball diamonds; and self-proclaimed feminist institutions, such as shelters, health clinics, and coffeehouses that women built to deliberately politicize what had been commonly regarded as merely personal and private issues. I was drawn to commercial spaces in part because "the marketplace" has long been recognized as a central arena of public order and also of social movement formation, yet women's utilization of it has not always been clear. Some scholars have suggested that women have been unable to create a discernible presence in the marketplace; others have charged that the marketplace "sold out" the movement.[40] The feminist record, too, reveals ambivalence on women's involvement in a marketplace that necessarily reproduces social hierarchies of all kinds. Deeper engagement with the ways that women won access to commercial leisure spaces and also built feminist commercial spaces, shows that women simultaneously used and sought to alter marketplace relations; indeed, these processes both constituted and popularized feminist activism.

In principle, civic spaces—especially city parks—epitomize the functions of public space: as arenas that make possible the activities of leisure, community-building, and political participation, they affirm and compose a public, a citizenry. Although few historians have analyzed women's use of civic athletic space in this light, women who fought for and utilized park diamonds in the 1960s and 1970s encountered these ideals and their contradictory applications. As with commercial space, civic athletic space lent itself to both avowedly *apolitical* activism (it's just about leisure) and avowedly feminist and lesbian liberationist activism (it's all about politics). In contrast, distinctly feminist institutional spaces maintained a consistently explicit political mission. They aimed to make services, resources, and social space newly available to women while also radically altering conventional social institutions and the hierarchies meted out by them. In the process, feminism itself ambivalently became part of the contested public landscape. Commercial, civic, and institutional spaces were key arenas of movement-building, and all provided the terms by which actors and emergent communities asserted varying investments in the spaces themselves.

Above all in my analyses, I was drawn to ordinary yet extraordinary sites of sociality and cultural formation. The specific places I study here

were certainly not the only locations of feminist activism, and all intersected with many others that would be worthy places for close analysis (universities, women's theaters, and women's prisons, to name just a few). I do not propose to exhaustively represent the spaces of feminism within any urban area. Instead, I consider a handful of particularly productive cultural sites in each urban area as windows into the processes through which activist communities constituted themselves and constituted feminism as a mass movement. Exploring contested spaces as sites of sociality admits dynamic assemblages of actors to the story of feminist activism; it also helps explain the multiple manifestations of feminism and people's variable relationships to the movement. In the everyday spaces analyzed here, people talked, banded together, raised consciousness, played, loved, and fought; through them, people dismantled existing social hierarchies and built new ones. Taken together, the spatial stories throughout this work show that women built cultures of activism across sometimes surprising social and regional contexts; equally, they show that local barriers to such exchange profoundly influenced the ideals and parameters of feminism.

Just as people's narratives led me to consider space, so particular sites of activism led me to locate the people who occupied them. I conducted interviews with over 120 people, all of whom became part of this study because of their involvement in contested spaces. One could roughly characterize narrators according to established demographic terms: 8 percent identified as American Indian; 6 percent as Latina (with one Latino); 24 percent as African American; 62 percent as white (a full third of whom emphasized Jewish or other ethnic identity). Six percent identified as men, 92 percent as women, and 2 percent as trans. By background, occupation, or current social status, narrators spanned class: the majority (over 70 percent) who identified as middle-class actually included white-collar professionals, people who earned a wage, and people who owned small businesses; narrators included teachers at all levels, people who worked in health care or social services, people who worked in prisons, cab drivers, writers, welfare or Social Security recipients, and civil service employees. They included people who identified as lesbian or gay, heterosexual or bisexual, and people who resisted sexual identity categories.[41] Although these kinds of characteristics might be delineated with more or less precision, narrators themselves made more or less of them in their life histories and stories of spatial engagement. What became clear above all is that

demographic characteristics and social identities were constituted inconsistently—with varying qualities and relevance—throughout narrators' lives. In the everyday spaces considered here, actors could forget some aspects of their social identities while developing and performing others. Thus, while demographic characteristics were related to broader social hierarchies, only in the context of specific locations did some of them demand particular investment. Rather than relying on them as static features, then, I prefer to show their constitution as part of the process of spatial creation and social movement.

I have organized this work into three parts to provide analytical clarity to women's interventions in various kinds of public spaces. Part I focuses on commercial spaces. Specifically, chapter 1 analyzes women's navigation of and impact on the nighttime marketplaces of house parties and bars, and chapter 2 investigates the dynamics of alternative marketplaces, such as feminist bookstores and cafés. While many activists associated with bar spaces disavowed political motivations, many associated with bookstores and cafés embraced political motivation and feminist identity. Scholars of grassroots activism have shown that people developed social movements in the twentieth century by laying claim to market-driven space: actors created purchasable styles, built neighborhood enclaves, and formed businesses to serve specific communities, and in those ways, they publicized their political interests. These scholars have also assumed that because women historically have not had the capital that white, middle-class men have had, women have been unable to make public assertions through claims to public space.[42] Without dismissing the power of capital, my research instead shows women's creative negotiations with the marketplace. Women did not escape capitalism, but they did intervene in conventional commercial terrain by creating alternative commerce and community in bars, bookstores, restaurants, and cafés; in fact they *used* the marketplace even as they critiqued the ideological and economic forces that restricted women's movement and constructed class, race, gender, and sexual exclusions.

Part II, on civic space, concentrates on women's efforts to secure softball diamonds in public parks for their own use. Chapter 3 analyzes the politicization of civic space by women who disclaimed feminist motivation, and chapter 4 considers explicitly feminist and "out-lesbian" organizing in these same spaces. Public parks, in some senses, were conceived as the most purportedly civic of all urban public spaces: theoretically in-

tended to be "places where people could meet, relax, and mix," public parks might strengthen "urban civility" and even democratic participation in community life.[43] In Detroit, the Twin Cities, and Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s, parks were simultaneously sites of community-building and contestation, as people both relied on and challenged the race and gender segregation of the larger urban landscape. Moreover, in all three urban areas, parks directed the movement and activities of the public within, signifying uses and users of different park spaces according to gender as well as class and race; athletic spaces, in particular, secured male masculinity in large part by prohibiting women's use of them. During the 1960s and 1970s, women newly occupied softball diamonds to overturn their systematic exclusion from public athletic spaces. In the process, they challenged racial segregation and sexism, built visible feminist and lesbian cultures, and asserted new ways for women to move through the public world.

Part III on institutional spaces analyzes named feminist spaces such as shelters, health clinics, coffeehouses, and clubs. Such spaces institutionalized feminism in several respects. All directly interfaced with more mainstream social institutions, changing them even as they also altered the public landscape. Shelters, for example, had to establish arrangements with local police and many social service agencies; most of those arrangements required changing existing laws and interpretations of laws about property. Creating sexual health clinics also required negotiation with neighbors, and with city, state, and federal officials around zoning and the legality of feminist health practice in buildings other than conventional medical establishments. Women's coffeehouses, more often than not, sought to provide a noncommercial meeting ground in which lesbians could develop a positive and public culture; more often than not, they found regular meeting space in churches. Many service-oriented feminist institutions sought and received government and/or corporate funding, and some sought to become profit-making corporations unto themselves. Most of these negotiations began with an interest in formalizing a "women's" or "feminist" space in the public world. All of them involved compromise: feminists left a deep and lasting imprint on mainstream institutions, but many felt that the process scarred the very soul of the movement. As this book shows, however, the movement nowhere began pure and not-yet-scathed. Feminist institutions might be the places where it is easiest to see not only the growing pains of the movement but also the ways in which

issues of property directly shaped the goals and public face of feminist activism.

Considered together, the mobile constellation of spaces and institutions that constituted and were constituted by feminist activism over the years should not obscure the fact that most grassroots feminism developed not by master plan but out of the opportunities and contingencies of daily life and women's hopes for change. *Finding the Movement* highlights a grassroots movement that, if coherent, was certainly not unified: it was a movement made of coalition and conflict, exuberant experimentation and reactionary doctrine, contradiction and transformation; a movement both visionary in its impulse toward democratic participation, and unwitting—and at times intentional—in its practices of exclusion; a movement that could be life-giving and devastating to its participants; a movement that changed the world and yet fell short; a movement that despite backlash, continues to emerge in ever new forms. It was and is also a movement inextricably intertwined with gay, lesbian, bi, trans, intersex, queer, and other movements toward sex/gender liberation. Turn first, then, to some unlikely commercial spaces that became a staging ground for women's movement: the bars.