

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation : FEMINISM *À LA QUEBEC*: IDEOLOGICAL TRAVELINGS OF AMERICAN AND FRENCH THOUGHT (1960-2010)

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This dissertation examines the travelings of three concepts central to feminism – gender, queer, and intersectionality – as they move between the United States, France, and Quebec. The concept of gender, central to U.S. feminism, is relatively absent from feminist theory in France and Quebec until the 1990s; rather, drawing on Marxist and existentialist traditions, French and Quebec feminists will deploy the term “rapports sociaux de sexe” to identify that differences among women and men are grounded in social structure and, further, that the two classes, women and men, are constituted in hierarchicized relation. The term queer, linguistically subversive in English but lacking this potential when translated into French, is mainly resisted by French materialist feminists and feminist scholars in Quebec on the basis that it displaces social reality focusing instead on resistance through performance. Nonetheless, in Quebec, activists groups such as Les panthères rose are able to present a version of queer that also addresses systemic oppressions. Finally, the concept of intersectionality, theorized first by feminists of color in the U.S. trying to reconcile their allegiances to multiple struggles, provides a useful tool for analyzing the interaction between different systems of

oppression and how they shape the lives of people differently located. In France, a similar desire to theorize multiple oppressions led to the development of the concept of “consubstantialité des rapports sociaux,” whereby social “rapports” of sex and of socio-economic class are co-constituted. Yet, in the context of changing immigration patterns and a debate on the headscarf, French feminists re-examine the concept of intersectionality to enhance their understanding of racialization and its interaction with gendered structures. In Quebec, a look at three different moments reveals an early theorization of the interaction of multiple oppressions by capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism with feminists, drawing on their experiences as separatist movement participants, self-identifying as “racialized” based on the model of Third World national liberation struggle. In the 1990s and again in 2007, however, feminists will struggle to develop new models of pluralism that address the marginalization, within society in general and also within feminism, of women from minority ethnocultural or religious groups.

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FRENCH THOUGHT (1960-2010)

by

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Designing an Itinerary

As I am leaving a friend's house, I decide to walk along Sainte-Catherine Street, heading west. My friend lives in the eastern part of Montreal, not too far east though. On the street, I encounter a lively, white, lower-class neighborhood, where white low-income families, speaking French with a very strong Quebec accent unrecognizable to foreigners, nest in triplex townhouses. As I leave this neighborhood infused by the smell of factories, I make my way through a little industrial area, where poutine¹ shops and "dépanneurs"² offer cheap fast food and beer. I then enter the "Village," this now gentrified "gay neighborhood," as lively and colorful as the people inhabiting it. The Village slowly turns into the francophone downtown area, crossing St-Denis with its francophone student population biking across the red light or sipping freshly brewed coffee in little coffee shops, all the way to St-Laurent, where sex workers and strip bars have made their home, side by side with punks and young "street kids" and the not-so-young homeless. As I continue to walk on Ste-Catherine, I hit the artistic district, where a summer festival and an open-air-show cohabit with white-collar office workers and business women and men on this warm summer night. Leaving the loud outdoor music behind, I reach the shopping area, where the famous underground tunnels connect shopping malls, office buildings, and public transportation in a way that shields the average office worker from having to go outside for lunch or a little shopping on cold winter days. Here, I begin to encounter more English, actually an interwoven stream of languages that switches back and forth between French and English. As I continue my long walk, I enter the more anglophone part of downtown, where McGill students cohabit with office workers and mingle in fancy restaurants and clubs. Walking and walking. This English neighborhood once again changes, but this time to make room for Indian restaurants, Middle Eastern shops, and Jamaican bars that alternate with Irish pubs. Here, it is not just English and French that I hear but a diversity of dialects from across the world. The restaurants and shops give way to another residential neighborhood where I can only recognize half of the words spoken on the streets.

You may need to walk a mile in a person's shoes to get to know the person, but you need to walk much more than a mile on the main street of Montreal to understand this city and

¹ A poutine is a typical Quebec dish consisting of French fries, curd cheese, and gravy.

² A *dépanneur* is the local version of a corner store. Most *dépanneurs* rely on the sale of beer and cigarettes for almost all their income.

its people. This account of a simple walk on Sainte-Catherine Street demonstrates the variety of experiences one can encounter in a city as diverse as Montreal. As an example of a “contact zone” (Simon 1996) – defined by Mary Louise Pratt as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (1991, 34) – Montreal reveals the complexity and multiplicity of exchanges that are happening at any given time across a number of different borders: linguistic, class, cultural, and racial, to name a few.

This project was developed as a result of my own encountering of Montreal as a contact zone. An activist in the francophone feminist, anticapitalist, and student movements, I decided to study at one of the English-speaking universities in Montreal. Creating new ties with feminist, anticapitalist, and student activists in the anglophone environment, I had to negotiate the discrepancies between the French and English communities over a number of years as I remained active in both. Moving in and out of these spheres, and at times becoming the contact zone myself – or the bridge between these communities – required not only to shift the language in which I was speaking (French or English) but also to access different semiotic repertoires and conceptual constructions to speak to different audiences, while remaining a somewhat holistic person with more or less stable beliefs and perspectives. The intellectual dissonance that ensued combined with numerous instances of miscommunications and failed “translations” – and the resulting frustrations – triggered a curiosity that was eventually transformed into this research project. I shall be looking at the movement of ideas from one location to another, from one community to another, questioning how and why these movements (or lack of) happen and what impact they have on the development of theory and practices

for francophone feminists in Montreal. Taking Montreal feminists as the locus of research, I look at how bodies, institutions, and meanings travel in multilayered ways through a diversity of scales – transnational, national, regional, local, and personal.

This study uses concepts as an entry point into the Montreal feminist community and its theoretical and organizational development. I focus on gender/genre, queer, and intersectionality. Each of these concepts points to a significant but contested idea central to late twentieth-century feminist movements. The term gender has been central to the development of second wave feminism in the United States in parsing out and exploring the social aspects of being a woman and highlighting social constructions and societal processes. The term queer is more central to contemporary debates around the intersections of sexuality and gender and the deconstruction of binaries in both. Finally, intersectionality opens discussions about diversity within feminist movements, both in the past and currently, and reveals the different ways that racialization, although central to all Western societies, has particular histories and constructions in times and places that shed light on the type of activism and social change feminists (and others) advocate.

This research rests on the assumption that feminist movements and their ideas are influenced by pressures and theories of feminist movements in other locations as well as other social movements. For example, one can name the connections – even when distorted and fraught with misunderstandings – between U.S. feminists and French feminists (Delphy 1996; Moses 1996; Oliver 2000). Similarly, a number of authors have demonstrated the influence of other social movements on feminist movements (see among others Jayawardena 1987; West 1997; Rai 2002; Roth 2004; and Randolph 2009). My research highlights the marked impact of French materialist feminist theorists on

Quebec's feminist movements (see also Maillé 2010). Among others, one can identify the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Christine Delphy (2001), Collette Guillaumin (1978, 1979, and 1981), and Nicole Claude-Mathieu (1971, 1991) as germinal to a strong materialist feminism in Montreal. Also, the presence of some U.S. feminists in Montreal, particularly in the early 1970s, has left a mark on feminist groups, particularly on their organizing structures (O'Leary and Toupin 1982); and since the 1990s, there has been a resurgence of U.S.-based influences on the development of theory, as exemplified by the (delayed) integration of the concepts "gender," queer and intersectionality into Quebec feminist theory. Yet, while navigating these agitated waters, francophone Montreal feminists also ground their struggle in a quest for a distinct identity, whether it is through their relation to Catholicism at the beginning of the twentieth century (Lacoste 1973), the nationalist movement of the mid- and late-twentieth century (Charland 1987), or even the creation of a *féminisme solidaire* (solidarity feminism) with a pluralist *Nous femmes* (We women) (Descarries 1998, 2005; Juteau 2010). At the same time, Montreal as a metropolis and as the main commercial center in Quebec maintains an English/bilingual community considered important for accommodating a constant flow of capital and people. Furthermore, the "almost daily frequenting of English literature" (Descarries and Dechaufour 2006) of feminist scholars, often positions Montreal and its feminist intellectuals as a space "at the crossroads," as Sherry Simons (1996) has described so eloquently. In these ways, Montreal feminists are an ideal case study to consider the convergence of local and transnational influences on feminist theory and practices.

This research draws on literatures in the fields of history, women's history, political science, philosophy, sociology, translation, transnational studies, cultural

studies, women's studies, queer studies, American studies, Canadian studies, Quebec studies, and French studies. As with most interdisciplinary studies, the research is grounded in a number of theoretical fields brought together to address research questions.

For one, the theoretical framework of social movement theory revised through feminist criticism (Buechler 1990; Staggenborg 1998; Mueller 1983) maps feminism as a social movement. New social movement theory argues that social movements need to be understood not only through their official structures, but also in their informal and loosely knit social networks and spaces (Staggenborg 1998) as well as in their capacity to create and modify identity formation (Touraine 1981; Melucci 1989, 1996; Morris & Mueller 1992; Castells 1997; Laclau & Mouffe 2001). Hence, social movement theory maps interactions between institutions, bodies, identities, and meanings for feminists in Montreal. It frames different organizational structures and processes of identity formation.

Second, translation studies provide tools to highlight one element (language) that facilitates or impedes the importation of ideas and integration into the local. Access to knowledge is, in part, mediated by access to language. Looking at language provides a window into understanding the development of theory and praxis. Furthermore, because of the emotional weight that linguistic-based identities carry and the centrality of language as a marker of difference in Montreal (Levine 1990), I foreground this aspect of the conflation of influences of the local and the global. Translation studies help illuminate localized modification and integration of specific theoretical concepts, providing a point of entry into the movement of ideas in different locations.

In addition, as with any study of any Canadian or Quebec progressive movement – feminist or other – this study considers the political context and especially the impact of the Quebec nationalist, or separatist, movement. In the twentieth century, the struggle to redefine Quebec’s identity (Charland 1987) has been central to all political movements in Quebec (Milner & Milner 1973; Mills 2007, 2010). Preliminary research has shown a strong connection between some Montreal feminists and the national issue (see among others O’Leary and Toupin 1982; Lamoureux 2001; Yanacopoulo 2003). Foregrounding ideas of nationhood and the possibilities that this “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) offered to the feminist movement provides an understanding of the local concerns of francophone women in Montreal.

Finally, a number of authors (see among others Friedman 1999; Alvarez 2000; Basu 2000; Roseneil 2001) complicate the relationship between the homogenizing forces of globalization and the local reality of people by looking at transnational feminism. By studying the dialectical ways that external and internal forces operate and interact with each other, scholars better understand how social movements operate and how people’s identities change accordingly. Looking at the movement of ideas from one location to the other through the framework of transnational feminism can allow us to understand globalizing and localizing processes. This research proposes to do that; by focusing on the feminist movement in Montreal, I examine the dual influence of French and U.S. feminism on the construction of the local feminist movement over time and through different scales and hence one aspect of the convergence of local and global influences.

Roadmap

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 will serve two main purposes: to lay out the theoretical and methodological framework in which this research is embedded and to provide a historical, social, and political context for this research. I am well aware that most anglophone readers have only a limited understanding of the specificities and histories that animate and influence Quebec and Montreal feminism. I am hoping that in this short review of history, I provide the readers with enough contextual information to follow the rest of the analysis. Chapter 2 is hence divided into four distinct sections: (1) *Defining a Framework* which reviews the theoretical framework of this research; (2) *Research and Theoretical Questions, Methodologies and Methods*, which posits the aim of this research and highlights the specific methods used; (3) *Lay of the Land, Why Montreal?* which provides some demographic data justifying the choice of Montreal; and (4) *Understanding Montreal*, which explains the historical, social, political, and demographic context of Quebec.

Chapter 3 sets forth the first concept that I follow as it moves through time and space: the term gender/genre. Central to the development of U.S. feminist theory during the 1960s and 1970s as representing “the social construction aspect of being a woman,” the concept of gender remains particularly absent from Montreal and Quebec feminist theory (both academic and grassroots) until the end of the twentieth century (Descarries and Dechaufour 2006). Instead, the Marxist-inspired French terminology of “rapports sociaux de sexe” developed by French feminist theorists such as Christine Delphy (2001 [1970]) and Nicole-Claude Mathieu (1971, 1991) seems to dominate materialist and mainstream francophone feminist theory in Montreal. This absence of the term gender –

although not of its meaning – in francophone discourse highlights a break in transference that I explore further by looking at the various causes. I also assess the impact of this absence on theory and political organizing. Finally, this chapter examines the impact of the emergence of the term gender/genre in the 1990s and early 2000s in francophone feminist theory (Hurtig, Kail, and Rouch 1991) and the new possibilities that this change in meaning brings. Namely, a debate on transgender, an opening to diversity, and a broadening of a gendered analysis are identified as the main positive effects. However, as feminist theorists Francine Descarries and Laetitia Dechaufour (2006) argue, the negative impacts might outweigh the new possibilities. They claim the introduction of the term gender/genre contributes to the expansion of English hegemony, evacuates the political and systemic critique that other terms foster, and does not favor the development of strong, unified feminist communities.

It is particularly interesting here to see how the presence or absence of gender/genre affects the development of the feminist movement and its theory, as well as how local movements have decided to negotiate homogenizing forces of globalization and/or English hegemony. In the 1990s, when globalization gains in strength, French feminists start to question their choice to avoid using gender/genre and, ultimately, choose to refrain from integrating it. Hence, I try to address the significance of the choices of terminology on political thought. Because the usage of the word gender/genre has been explicitly debated (Hurtig, Kail, and Rouch 1991) in francophone feminist circles, this chapter pays attention to the rationale given for those choices. In addition to scrutinizing the Montreal feminist community, I am also interested in other locations that have come to use this term. For example, the usage of gender/genre as a category of

analysis by francophone social scientists in Montreal is an interesting location that interacts with and might have influenced the feminist community in a significant way. Looking at when and how the term is used reveals the nature of Montreal feminists' relations with the transnational feminist movement and how they make sense of these relations if the terminology is used differently.

Following a similar mapping pattern, chapter 4 observes the movement of the word "queer" and its delayed appearance in feminist theory in Montreal (Namaste 2011). Multiple authors have established that the usage of the word queer, instead of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual), transforms qualitatively the understanding of alternative sexualities and even creates an alternative approach to the world – challenging binary thinking and essentialized identities (see among others Warner 1993; Turner 2000). Feminists in Montreal and more broadly in Quebec, just like those in France, have been reluctant to adopt the term. Instead, a strong reaffirmation of a pluralist "Nous femmes" ("We women") – emphasizing the plurality of women in all their differences and pluralities (including differences of gender expression and biological/modified bodies) – has structured the thinking about feminism and women's movements (Szczepanik, Descarries, Blais, and Ricci 2010; Descarries 1998; Namaste 2011). The kind of resistance that the term queer has encountered in Montreal is similar in content to that encountered in the United States, but the strength of that resistance in Montreal has led, until a few years ago, to a lack of its integration into feminist discourse there. The few authors encouraging francophone Montrealers to use the term queer seem to be swimming against the tide, while longing for the kind of paradigm shift that has happened in the United States following the incorporation of queer into feminist theory

there. Still, examples of francophone integration exist (see for example *Les panthères roses* – a radical queer activist group in Montreal), and in the past few years, one can see an increased familiarity with and adoption of the term. Once again, an exploration of the historical resistance to the adoption of the term queer both by academics and grassroots groups sheds light on the conditions essential to the translation of concepts from one community of practice to the next. Furthermore, looking at more recent breakthroughs of the word queer offers additional understanding of the forces at work in allowing/preventing ideas and concepts from moving between different locations and language communities.

The fifth chapter explores how feminists in Montreal have theorized, and translated into action, antiracist positions. I start with a review of the development of the term intersectionality in the United States, grounded in 200 years of black feminist activism, but focusing on the theoretical developments of the 1960s onward. I pay particular attention to the different articulations of interactions between multiple systems of oppression. Moving on to France, I review how the theorization of the term “consubstantialité” and its affiliated “co-extensivité” was developed in France and taken up by Quebec feminist theorists, and attempts to theorize these complex interactions (Kergoat 1982, 2001, and 2009). In the years 2000, different events in France prompt a turn to U.S. feminist theorization of difference. Thus, French feminists translate, review, and criticize the notion of intersectionality in their quest to find useful tools to further their progressive politics.

From early on, feminists in Montreal have expressed a certain variation of intersectionality – although they do not label it as such – because of their perceived

“triple oppression” as women, working class, and colonized by the English cultural and economic domination (Blais et al. 2007). Research shows that a key element of Montreal’s feminists’ understanding of diversity is shaped by their relationship to the Quebec nationalist movement. This relationship has a two-fold implication. First, the Quebec nationalist movement made available early Third World³ literature on decolonization such as the works of Franz Fanon (1961) and Aimé Césaire (1955), which has allowed francophone feminists to position themselves as “colonized” by the English. Second, their investment in nationalist discourse has, at times, reified distinctions between “real Quebecers” (Québécois and Québécoises de souche) and more recent immigrants or their descendants. Some positions taken by feminist groups, especially positions around the preservation of French as an official language, have been instrumental in marginalizing recent immigrants and thus maintaining systems of inequality (see among others Bannerji 2000; Juteau 1992; Lamoureux 2001; Stasiulis 1999; and West and Leclerc 1997). Furthermore, the context of the conflict of the “two nations” (French and English) in Canada promoted an official discourse by the Canadian government around multiculturalism as early as the 1970s (Wayland 1997). Within that framework, a specific kind of diversity has been promoted by the federal state apparatus, one that has been both contested and embraced by feminists (Bannerji 2000).

Contrary to Canada, the dominant paradigm of integration into Quebec society has been interculturalism (Bouchard 1995, 2011; Gagnon 2000), which promotes the integration of others into society through mutually beneficial dialogue between the dominant culture and minorities, while keeping the core values of the dominant culture.

³ The use of the term Third World is contested (Sangari 1987); however, feminists in Quebec often refer to Third World decolonization struggles. I thus decided to use it to stay consistent with them.

Yet, their commitment to antiracism and diversity has taken multiple forms over the years. Through the years, feminists have reiterated their transnational solidarity with women around the world, especially with “working-class women living in non-imperial nations” (O’Leary and Toupin 1982)– as termed during the second wave – and in the 1990s through a feminism based on solidarity with “other women” in Quebec and abroad. Through the *Forum pour un Québec Féminin Pluriel* (Beauchamp 1994), feminists have articulated their own model of integration. More recently, their commitment to fighting poverty, their critique of neoliberal globalization and through participation in transnational feminist movements, such as the World Women March (which they initiated) and the World Social Forums, Quebec feminists have tried to transform this commitment to diversity into action. Yet, Quebec feminist theorist Chantal Maillé has identified among Quebec feminists a general reluctance to integrate recent postcolonial theory as theorized in the English world (Maillé 2007, 2010). As much as Montreal feminists were quick and eager to adopt early anticolonial theory, they seem to be more disconnected with the recent development and complexifying nuances of recent postcolonial theory.⁴

In fact, when confronted with the debates around “reasonable accommodations”⁵ in 2007, only a few groups rely on an analysis akin to intersectionality to prevent their analysis from framing an opposition between “minority” rights and women’s rights. The

⁴ In Chapter 5, I examine this further in my discussion of the position taken different women’s groups in the reasonable accommodation debates.

⁵ Reasonable accommodation is the translation of “accommodements raisonnables,” which is the term used by the state to designate “a form of arrangement or loosening [of rules] aimed at ensuring respect for the right to equality, in particular in combating so-called indirect discrimination, which, following the strict application of an institutional standard, infringes an individual’s right to equality” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 7). To give an example, one of the early cases dealt with allowing a young student to carry a Kirpan (religious sword or dagger carried by Baptized Sikhs) to school, hence modifying the no-weapon policy of the school.

framework of a solidarity feminism fails to provide women's groups with tools to conceive of "minority" (religious, cultural) rights as essential to women's rights.

Chapter 6, Conclusion, brings these topics together to highlight the contribution of this research to the existing literature. I see three particular contributions that will emerge from the research presented in the prior chapters and illuminated in the final concluding chapter. First, the project will bring a new perspective to the history of Montreal feminism. Second, it will set forward an innovative way of writing history by using concepts as the main lens, which departs from traditional ways of writing chronological histories. Finally, the conceptualization of Montreal as a contact zone inscribed in transnational relations will strengthen the literature on transnational feminist movements and contemporary issues of globalization.

Prior literature on the history of feminism in Quebec and Montreal is currently accessible only to francophone readers and only in bits and pieces. One of the most important contributions to that history lies in the germinal book *L'histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* by the Collectif Clio (Collectif Clio 1982/1992). This work covers the lives and work of women in Quebec, from the beginning of colonization by the French to 1990 (in the later edition), detailing the changing living conditions of women and the reasons for these changes, as well as the role that women played in creating these changes, including feminist activism. Yet, this book is not a history of feminism per se; nor does it provide much detail on the feminist movement itself. Another very useful book, *La pensée féministe au Québec: anthologie [1900-1985]*, was published in 2003 by Quebec historians Micheline Dumont and Louise Toupin. Similar to the Collectif Clio's history, this book focuses on also on Quebec more broadly rather than on Montreal

specifically. Nonetheless, this wonderful collection of original documents is a very important source to survey the diversity and range of feminist thought in Quebec; yet, it offers very little analysis for understanding how changes in ideas come about. Rather, the authors compiled original sources from a broad spectrum and introduce each of them briefly by discussing its context of production. Also helpful for documenting the history of feminism in Montreal and Québec, a series of publications have reprinted otherwise inaccessible original material in their entirety. For example, one can find compilations of feminist journals such as *Les têtes de pioches* (1980), *Sans fleurs ni couronnes* (1982), *Québécoises debouttes!* (O'Leary and Toupin 1982; Collectif [FLF and CDF] 1983), or other important documents such as *Le manifeste des femmes québécoises* (1971) and *Les fées ont soif* (Boucher 1978). Although very useful for my research, these documents, again, offer little analysis. Other texts on feminism in Montreal and Quebec have been limited by either a time period (see among others Brodeur et al. 1982; Lamoureux 1986; Femmes en tête 1990; Monet-Chartrand 1994; Mensah 2005), a specific activist group (Tardy 1995; Yanacopoulos 2003); a specific event (Beauchamp 1994; Pélouquin 2007; Blais 2009); a specific issue like nationalism (Sigouin 1992; Tremblay 1992; De Sève 1997, 1998; Lamoureux 2001); or the participation of women in politics (Cohen 1981; Roberts 1988; Quéniart and Jacques 2002; Maillé 2002). Once again, these texts are crucial for constructing a history of Montreal feminism, but they too are limited in their analysis and especially regarding the development of theory. Written generally from a Quebec perspective, these documents have, as an audience, other francophone women, and are useful for understanding specific instances, or specific relations with other Quebec-based movements; yet most of these published materials mention only in passing

external influences or connections with movements outside Quebec. Moreover, apart from a few recent publications that debate the emergence of a third wave of feminism (Mensah 2005; Baillargeon 2011; see also Quéniart and Jacques 2002), very few monographs cover the most recent twenty years of feminism. Doing a full-length history of the Montreal feminist movement and including the period of the past twenty years is an important contribution to the field.

Another important aspect of the published material on Montreal feminism is the language of publication. Due to the very language issues that I discuss here, it is important to understand the lack of availability of material on both Montreal and more generally Quebec feminism in English. I hope that writing in English facilitates the dialogue between English and French feminists in Montreal. In fact, I intend to publish the results of this research in both French and English, so that it is accessible to both communities.

More than a simple history, this dissertation examines the construction of feminist theory. Historical research contextualizes the appearance and development of certain concepts and of theory more broadly. *The Women's Movement and Its Currents of Thought: A Typological Essay*, published in both French and English by Francine Descarries and Shirley Roy (1990/1991), and a report entitled *Les Discours féministes: de l'idéologie à l'utopie*, published in 1993 by a research group, in addition to the *Pensée Féministe au Québec* (Dumont and Toupin 2003) mentioned before, are all useful to this study. Beyond them, however, very little material is available.

Moreover, the dissertation will have offered a new avenue for understanding history. I suggest that using concepts as entry points for a historical account yields

qualitatively different perspectives on history. Like any research, limits and boundaries need to be established. While wanting to construct a manageable research project, I did not incorporate limitations based on time periods or generations of feminists. These projects are often invested in emphasizing differences among generations (Blais et al. 2005; Pagé 2006). Instead, I want to build a research project that recognizes the specific political context of each moment, in both its continuations and its ruptures from previous moments. I believe such a conceptual history allows one to focus on the movements of ideas, by focusing on movements of meanings and bodies within and across borders and institutions, through different scales. By examining moments of appearance and moments of changes in the discourse, I highlight how words carry multiple meanings as scales shift.

I recognize here the political implications of these choices. First, as I have advocated elsewhere, I believe that it might be more productive to think of the political content of discourses than locating that discourse in a specific generation or wave (Blais et al. 2005). Second, the choice of specific concepts as windows into theory – as opposed to currents of thoughts or types of feminism – stems from my personal struggle as an activist in feminist environments in Montreal where I had to constantly wrestle with the difficulties of moving between language communities. Regularly, when miscommunications became evident, I found myself pursuing their sources. Most of the time, I found that misunderstandings were linked to a different understanding of terms used commonly in feminist discourse. I have found in my personal activist life that the meanings of those concepts not only define the terms of engagements, but also orient the political choice made by feminist groups and the kind of discourse that emerges from

these groups. I also want to recognize that words and theory are sometimes purposely developed to justify and explain certain political investments. Hence, I am interested in pursuing these ideas more broadly and from an academic perspective, in order to understand both the political motivations in mobilizing certain terms as well as the fortuitous character of some of these trajectories. I also hope that the conclusions of such an endeavor provide epistemological insight into feminist theory in Montreal.

I do not believe that by looking at concepts, one evacuates the material reality of women who use them. Rather, this research aspires to highlight how these concepts are embodied and how they resonate – materially – for feminists. I intend this research project to reveal the multiple functionality and importance of theoretical formations as it moves across different spaces and times.

Each of these concepts (gender, queer, intersectionality) has been chosen for its centrality to one aspect of feminist theory and practices. As I have explained earlier, gender tackles some of the core elements of the social relationship of women with the rest of society. The concept of queer has not only challenged some fundamental elements of the feminist paradigm, but has also offered new avenues for developing feminist theory. Finally, the issue of diversity, whether it is discussed through the framework of multiculturalism or intersectionality, has pushed feminists to think about their own boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and issues of representations and privilege.

Using concepts as a lens can also contribute to the field of translation studies. Although this dissertation only briefly explains the connections between translation studies and this research, this research contributes to the discussion around the power

dynamics invested in the translator (Simon 1996; Spivak 2004) and the dynamics of English hegemony (Jacquemond 1992; Descarries and Dechaufour 2006).

And finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a return to the meanings and possibilities of a transnational feminism. Throughout the dissertation I affirm the usefulness of a transnational feminist framework to foreground the complexity of exchange between different communities as well as to provide a framework for moving between different scales of analysis. However, the transnational feminist framework also tends to focus on exchanges that are mediated, even as they fail or are counteracted by a local influence, by a transnational feminist movement as a social movement and network of feminists. I argue that combining the use of border-crossing, contact zones, and translation to the framework can lead to a more complex and exhaustive study of a particular local. As this dissertation demonstrates, we need to extend the framework of “reversed transnationalism” to include more saliently local-to-local relationships and networking that are not included in a transnational network per se.

Chapter 2

Packing up the Suitcase: Setting the Stage

This second chapter delineates the theoretical framework in which this research is grounded, as well as an explanation of the research questions, methodology, and methods used for this research. Furthermore, I attempt to provide a quick review of the context for the study of feminism in Montreal, starting with an explanation for the choice of the city of Montreal, followed by a general overview of the context of emergence of autonomous feminism groups in the 1970s, and a short introduction to language politics in Quebec and its impact on the creation and maintenance of two distinct feminist traditions separated by language affiliation.

Defining a Framework: Globalization, Transnationalism, Border-Crossing, Contact Zones, and Translation

The framework setting the stage for this dissertation lies in a complex web of concepts that have been differently mobilized by scholars according to their research project and political stance. To help sort through them, I review here some of these basic concepts and how they have been used in the literature to date, highlighting how they are useful for my own research.

Globalization tends to be used to refer to integrative forces across the globe.

Whether we speak about an economic globalization – thought of as an integration of local economies into a global economy – or cultural globalization – conceptualized as a homogenizing spread of cultural symbols and meanings – globalization carries a

powerful homogenization process that leaves little space for local agency and differences (Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2000; Escobar 2001). In the contemporary moment, globalization is often defined as increasing in pace and neoliberal in tendency. In contrast to the seeming unidirectionality of the term globalization, some authors have used the term “glocalization” to provide an analysis integrating both the dominant homogenizing forces of globalization and local resistance to them (Grewal and Kaplan 2001; Berry, Martin & Yue 2003). Other authors have used “globalization from below” to refer to the multiplicity of ways local communities might resist and/or co-opt homogenization trends (Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2000). As Roseneil argues, regardless of the term used, it is imperative to understand the world – and this research – “as produced through the dialectical relationship between the global and the local” (2001, 90). Studying feminists in Montreal provides an excellent example of glocalization because they are at the junction of some of those global influences while retaining particularity, a traceable connection to local traditions and culture.

One of the subsets of globalization processes identified by feminist theorists, and important for this research, is transnational feminism. When looking at the usage of transnational in literature not specifically grounded in feminism, it is important to first distinguish between “transnational” and “international.” International usually refers to interactions between state actors or actors coming to the table on behalf of the state. In contrast, transnational emphasizes the connections and networks between non-state actors (NGOs, social movements, activist groups, and so forth) (Risse-Kappen 1995, 3). Second, transnational is imbued with multiple meanings grounded in different ideologies. For example, on one hand, corporations and the U.S government have deployed a

conservative version of transnational to further imperial and capitalist endeavors (Cumings 2002). On the other hand, leftist scholars have used transnational to provide a critical analysis of postcolonial relations and human migrations (see among others Appadurai 1996; Tsing 2005; and Segura & Zavella 2007). Yet, as feminist scholars Laura Briggs, Gladys McCornick, and J.T. Way argue, transnational still can be a useful tool for conceptual analysis to highlight nationalism as an ideology and as a construct to be historicized and critically analyzed (2008, 627).

When discussing feminist movements, the word transnational is often linked with the construction of a social movement that crosses borders. Often, this “transnational feminism” relies on the imagination of a third space, an imagined space neither local nor international, beyond state boundaries. It sometimes takes the form of a physical space – like the involvement of NGOs at the different UN conferences on women, or the World Social Forums – but most of the time, it exists solely through immaterial relations between what some authors have termed “global civil society” (Friedman 1999, 358).⁶ Using the term “transnationalism reversed,” Elizabeth J. Friedman (1999; see also Alvarez 2000 for a similar analysis) complicates the construction of this “transnational movement” by studying its impact on the local women’s movement, focusing on how constraints coming from the local context (such as relations with the state, development stage of the movement, presence or absence of external funding) lead to both a positive and negative impact of these transnational communities on the local movement. Similarly, Aili Mari Tripp argues that when looking at transnational feminist movements, it is important to recognize that “the influences have always been multidirectional, and

⁶ In this context, transnational feminism is seen as a social movement, which should be distinguished from using the same words to describe the transnational movement of an idea.

that the current [transnational] consensus is a product of parallel feminist movements globally that have learned from one another but have often had quite independent trajectories and sources of movement” (2006, 52). Thus, transnational is useful for understanding the multiples scales of exchanges between different actors, institutions, and communities as they interact in a globalized world.

By using a transnational feminist framework, this research foregrounds the complexity of exchanges between actors and ideas by acknowledging the multiplicity of sources of influences and their instability across time and location. In addition, a transnational approach highlights “the asymmetries of the globalization process” (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 664). While discussing subject formations around sexuality, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan also argue that even if, at times, the term has become ubiquitous, doing without it leaves us without appropriate tools to address “questions of globalization, race, political economy, immigration, migration, and geopolitics” (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 664). All are important issues for this research.

These much-needed studies of the relation of the transnational and the local begin to reveal the complexities of transnational relations. Yet sometimes, even research inspired by “transnationalism reversed” does not account for all border-crossing influences; the transnational approach remains focused on the relation between one locale and the constructed imaginary space of the transnational movement. Here, an additional distinction needs to be made to distinguish between transnational feminist movements, as social movements and networks of women acting in concert to create change, and the transnational movement of ideas and bodies across borders. Literature on transnational feminism does both: it addresses relations between transnational and local feminist

movements, as social movements, *and* provides some tools to think through the transnational movement of ideas and bodies across borders, national or otherwise.

For this research, I am more interested in the transnational movement of ideas; yet, it is important to recognize that transnational movement is sometimes facilitated and mediated by a transnational feminist (social) movement. For example, small events like the visit of a French feminist speaker in Montreal for an academic conference might be the result of networking that occurred through transnational feminist movements; alternatively, it might result from connections and networks that do not operate through the transnational feminist movement per se. Similarly, the publishing of a book in its translated French version, although embedded in broader global capitalist dynamics of knowledge production, can be understood as a movement of ideas that can happen more or less outside of the transnational feminist movement. Other instances, such as the participation of Montreal feminists in the instigation and organizing of the World March for Women (Dufour 2008), clearly mark these women as part of the transnational feminist movement, thus suggesting a direct impact on the development of the Montreal feminist movement.

To facilitate these distinctions, I am using other concepts to complement transnational feminism as a framework. For one, the idea of border-crossing seems particularly relevant. With the rise of “border studies” numerous conceptualizations emerge. Linda Bosniak has defined the border as

a site that divides insiders and outsiders, and where decisions about who may or may not become insiders are made. It is, moreover, a sphere with its own normative logic, one that itself is structured neither entirely by insider nor outsider but which lies at the interface between them. (2006, 126)

This understanding of the border helps us locate the border as repository or defining of power relations. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987, 3) also identified the fluctuating and sometimes immaterial nature of borders as important elements. Feminist theorist Chandra Mohanty in her book *Feminism without Borders* (2003) analyzes borders critically when she writes:

Feminism without borders is not the same as “border-less” feminism. It acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and containment that borders represent. It acknowledges that there is no one sense of a border, that the lines between and through nations, races, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities, are real – and that feminism without borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division. (2)

Yet, some theorists have suggested that the idea of border-crossing, and the hybrid “in-between” space it has created, has also become ubiquitous (Naples 2008, 7). The emergence of borders everywhere – borders between countries, ethnicities, genders, disciplines – has led everyone to be in the space “in-between.” Ultimately, it suggests that “the experience of moving among different disciplines, different ethnicities, and different countries and cultures is not dissimilar in character [...] This approach not only *homogenizes distinctive experiences* but also *homogenizes borders*” (Vila 2003, 308, emphasis in original). This leads feminist theorist Nancy Naples to emphasize the importance of recognizing “the myriad of ways borders are constructed, how they function to divide us, and what purposes they serve for different constituencies” (2008, 8) in order to foreground asymmetrical power relations and their impact on the development of the feminist movement. These ideas regarding the formation, nature, and crossing of borders inform how border-crossing is used in this research.

Another concept – contact zones – attends to the different and conflicting power that structures and regulates the erection, the crossing, and the policing of borders, in all

their diversity. Law professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos has defined contact zones as “social fields in which different normative life worlds, practices, and knowledges meet, clash, and interact” (2004, 184). He suggests that “[contact] zones are characterized by the disparity among the realities in contact and by the inequality of the power relations among them” (2004, 184). Theorizing the contact zone is useful to analyze critically when and how borders are erected, policed, maintained, destroyed, or crossed. Contact zone, as an analytical tool, is particularly appropriate for this research. Translation scholar Sherry Simon describes Montreal as a contact zone (1999), a “hybrid space” (1996, 24), and a space “at the cross-road” (1996), emphasizing the multiplicity of cultural, linguistic, and intellectual traditions that merge in Montreal. Through these interactions, intellectual traditions clash and erect borders, or influence each other and become integrated, and power relations are asserted, challenged, and reconfigured.

Interestingly enough, the concept of the contact zone brings us back to the idea of translation. Translation, both in its literal and metaphorical senses, provides tools for analyzing the contact zone – the space where two communities of practices come together and interact. As Simons has written, the concept of translation allows one to identify “the intellectual and linguistic points of contact between cultures, and make visible the political pressure that activates them” (Simon 1996, 136). To address the more literal sense of translation, I rely on the words of queer theorist Juana Maria Rodriguez to explain how translation is understood not only as finding equivalence for words between languages, but also as a process that involves an exchange between symbolic and semiotic structures of both the original and the new communities. She writes, “the process of translation involves more than merely translating languages, it

involves translating cultures, values, and institutions of power” (2003, 19). Translation even in its literal sense, as one of the processes that allow concepts to travel, needs to be understood as both informal and formal. When two linguistic communities live among each other, different official and informal spaces allow for the coining and borrowing of words, ideas, and sounds in a way that may defy formal processes. Thus, translation refers not only to the meaning of words, but also to a range of social and political meanings and associations. Of course, it is as important to study the “failures” of translations, the points of contact where communication breaks down or fails (Simon 1996; Foucault 1977), either because of a political collective decision to choose one word over the other, or because of a lack of access to theories in their complexities. I explore this phenomenon in chapters 3 and 4 considering the concepts of gender and queer.

In addition to this literal sense, an important part of how translation is used in this project lies in its metaphorical sense. Translation allows one to identify “ways to link the issues and analysis generated from one campaign or social movement to another in order to strengthen praxis” (Naples 2008, 9). Translation foregrounds how one community makes sense of concepts or practices taken from another community in a way that does not always retain all of the original meanings and intentions. It also explores how communities and discourses are heard differently depending on their audience (Mani 1990). Translation studies provides us with a framework to analyze how border-crossing happens, how communities interacting with each other make sense of the other, not only through language, but also through different modes of exchange and through different scales.

To close the loop of this analytical framework, translation returns to transnational through the notion of different “scales” when, moving away from a narrow understanding of national border-crossing, we pay attention to the navigations between the local, regional, national, and transnational exchanges that permeate any community, and especially a community like the Montreal feminist community. In summary, this research project relies on transnational feminism to conceptualize the different scales of analysis and the movement of ideas and bodies. Border-crossing animates the power dynamics embedded in the creation, maintenance, policing, and crossing of borders. Contact zones allow our lens to zoom into specific locations where the exchange happens and localize the point of contact. Finally, translation studies addresses the “messiness” of these exchanges, the faults and the success of transference and modification of ideas.

Research and Theoretical Questions, Methodology and Methods

A review of these bodies of literature framed my research with the following question: How have francophone Montreal feminists received and transformed American and French feminists’ ideas and praxis?

The following sub-questions complement the main research question: What ideas and practices cross linguistic and/or cultural barriers? Why do some ideas cross and not others? What factors facilitate or impede the movement of ideas from the U.S. and French feminist movements into the francophone Montreal feminist movement? How are these ideas and practices mobilized differently? What is lost in translation? What borders are crossed? How do these borders reify or challenge power dynamics? What emerges out of these exchanges across multiple scales and directions?

While my research is a case study of one specific local movement, results, regardless of the direction, help answer broader questions about the trajectory of social movements in this globalized world. Some of these questions include: What dynamics facilitate and prevent the movement of ideas across communities? What role does language play in the globalizing and localizing forces of contemporary society? What does this case study teach us about the global dynamics operating in contemporary society? How is it inscribed in a transnational feminist movement? How have the processes and rhythms of globalization changed over the course of the twentieth century?

Although one cannot universalize findings from one locality to the whole world, I argue that the specific case of Montreal at the crossroad of multiple influences contributes to existing literature and enhances our understanding of the processes at work on a global scale.

This research relies on a plethora of methods and methodologies to study the meanings, changes in meaning, and lack of meaning of certain words and their impact on the development of feminist theory and praxis.

First, I ground my methodology in a political theory tradition that draws on the work of Quentin Skinner (2002), Michel Foucault (1977), and Pierre Bourdieu (1991). I examine not only the genealogy of specific concepts, and how they come to be integrated (or not) and mobilized by certain actors in the movement, but also the political context in which they are utilized and the impact of choosing certain words over others, on the development of feminist movements in specific contexts.

The work of political theorist Quentin Skinner reminds us of the danger of applying current paradigms to the interpretation of texts written in the past and the importance of

considering a text in its context of production when writing the history of ideas. Skinner's work, *Visions in Politics*, also emphasizes that "we should stop asking about the 'meanings' of words and focus instead on the various functions they are capable of performing in different language games" (2002, 2). Hence, this research, while following the genealogy of certain concepts, is not simply exploring the different meanings of these concepts; rather, it attempts to extract how the specific mobilization of certain words in certain contexts moves feminist theory in different directions.

I draw on Foucault for three helpful points: first, a genealogy is not a linear history with an origin and a stable progression; rather, genealogy prompts the researcher to tackle the "messiness" of the development of ideas in a way that do not follow a definitive history; second, emotions – personal conflicts, hatred and divisions, along with love and friendship – might have as much to do with the development of ideas as the political potential they hold (Foucault 1977, 140-2); and third, that absences, silences, and unfulfilled potentials are useful for reminding us of the "failures of translations" discussed by Simons (Simons 2006, 17).

To this political theory tradition, I juxtapose the insights provided by the previous discussion on transnational feminism, border-crossing, contact zones, and translation to understand the movement of ideas and bodies and the process involved in creating, recreating, and modifying meaning, between different communities.

Because my research focuses mainly on theoretical concepts, it is important to ground this research in written material and interviews to see how everyday understanding of concepts make their way into theory and how they are mobilized in writing.

In ethnographic research, the “highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collections, and analysis” (Altheide 1987, 68) encourages a sorting of the data that takes into account the context in a way that allows items to be relevant for several purposes. In this model, coding schemes are not rigidly pre-established; although some initial categories exist at the beginning of the research, coding schemes also emerge from the data and might be reconceptualized along the research process, leading in turn to additional data gathering if necessary (Tesch 1990, 26). Hence, data collection and analysis is envisioned as an open process where loops of reconceptualizations, corrections of framework, and data gatherings are performed until there is a satisfactory correspondence between the data and the coding schemes.

In doing so, particular attention is given to “the conceptual systems by which the members of the community understand and construct their worlds” (Caughey 1982, 230). The analysis allowed me to construct a larger system of meaning that can represent the community at hand, although I want to recognize here that, staying true to feminist intellectual traditions, I understand the analysis as constructing a situated knowledge, a partial perspective coming from my specific standpoint and the material conditions of francophone Montreal feminists (Smith 1987, 1990; Haraway 1988).

When doing the data collection around the selected concepts, I was mindful of two different kinds of moments: moments of appearance and moments of change. The moment of appearance is defined as the moment when the concept makes its entrance in the discourse (written or spoken). A moment of appearance might be signaled by far-and-apart early sightings, followed by more consistent and regular usage, although one needs to recognize that this process is not as progressive and clean as this may suggest.

Moments of change, on the other hand, are instances when the meaning of the term seems to shift, or be modified significantly. Once again, as with any genealogy, none of these moments are clear and strongly demarked. While studying these moments, I also paid attention to different scales of analysis, including interpersonal, local, regional, national, and transnational scales.

In order to track these “moments,” I attended to elements that answer the following questions: Who? When? Where? What? For what purpose? With what impact?

- *Who*: Who is the actor/author/person using the term? How is the person located in the community? Is she/he feminist? activist? scholar? government official? Is she/he from Montreal? Is she/he a permanent member of the Montreal feminist community or transient? Which bodies are moving? from where to where? crossing which border?
- *When*: When does this happen? What else is going on at that time? What is the context?
- *Where*: Where is this discourse located? In institutions such as the government or the academy? in public discourse through the media? in more informal discourses of activist groups? How is the location of the discourse impacting its content (market-based vs. academic; produced locally vs. produced abroad and imported)? How is this discourse disseminated? To what audience? Where else is this term moving (is it part of a transnational movement of the term)?
- *What*: What is being said? What is the meaning carried by the term? What is the specific deployment of that term? Is the new term coming from a different language? Did it require literal translation? Did it require (or is doing) cultural translation (for example, even if the term is coming from France, the meanings ascribed with the

concept might differ)? Does the meaning remain stable across different contexts?

How is the term embodied?

- *For what purpose:* What is the political investment in the term? What work does the term do? Why is the author choosing to introduce or change the meaning of this term? What is the goal in doing so? What does it reveal? How is that purpose locally/broadly bounded?
- *With what impact:* How does it change feminist practices? How does it change local theoretical development? How does the term reverberate within and across communities of practices? How is the term impacted by local practices and traditions? The research took place in different locations and investigated different modes of communication. Below is a more detailed description of locations and methods for each:

Text analysis

- Formal publications

A survey of published material such as books, academic journals, and online publications has helped me trace the development of ideas in relation to the chosen concepts and their respective prominence or absence in francophone Montreal feminist communities. This part of the research included some quantitative data such as reviewing academic journals for the presence/absence of a word in titles and in full text articles, from which I inferred an analysis of the prominence of a word at a certain time. Furthermore, attention was given to texts that use certain concepts extensively, such as trying to define them, or argue about meaning and political investments. The goal of this method was to highlight how certain terms have been mobilized and used in published literature, which is contrasted with informal literature. Throughout the research, I paid

particular attention to the academic journal *Recherches féministes*. This journal is the only Quebec-based academic publication dedicated to feminism.⁷

- Informal print materials

Because the feminist movement does not only express itself through officially published material, text analysis of informal print materials such as speeches, flyers, posters, manifestos, informal journals, minutes from meetings, and personal correspondence is needed to get a holistic view of the development of the movement and its ideas. For this purpose, informal publications were a key component of textual analysis. I found some of that information in a few key archives in Quebec and Canada, such as *Le Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine* (Montreal), the *Bibliothèque et archives nationales* (Montreal and Quebec City), and the *Library and Archives Canada* (Ottawa). Moreover, personal collections of written material gathered by activists was an additional source.

Interviews

Parts of this research have relied on two pre-existing data sources done by research groups in Montreal. The first set of interviews is used in the chapter on gender. These interviews were conducted in the context of a collaborative research project entitled *Discours et pratiques féministes: un inventaire des lieux* (Feminist discourse and practices: an inventory). Directed by Francine Descarries and Christine Corbeil from the Institut de recherches et d'études féministes (IREF) at the Université du Québec à Montreal (UQAM), the project was designed to identify new configurations of feminist discourses in Quebec and to understand the nature and significance of changes in

⁷ For more on *Recherches féministes* and their mission statement, see <http://www.fss.ulaval.ca/lef/revue/>.

discourse within the Quebec feminist movement, especially in regard to the emergence of new theoretical perspectives and strategies since the 1990s.

The set of interviews consisted of fifty-eight semi-directed interviews with workers and activists from the Quebec women's movement. Twenty-two interviewees are active on the front line, providing services and support through women centers, women shelters, and hotlines; nine social workers work at a Centre de santé et services sociaux⁸ (Center for health and social services); twenty-seven work (as employees or volunteers) in local and provincial women's groups whose mandate is related to improving conditions of living for women, but not by providing direct services to them (for example by lobbying or doing research). The selection of individuals was based on three criteria: (1) their significance as actors in the Quebec women's movement; (2) a diversity of the issues on which they act; and (3) their geographic diversity. Questions were designed to outline the ideas and praxis of the Quebec feminist movement and included questions such as: "What does it mean to be feminist for you?" "What concepts or notions are at the center of your feminist analysis?" "What are the ideas or theoretical positions with which you more or less agree, or completely disagree?" "What are the main contemporary issues at the core of the women's movement?" And "considering these issues, what feminist demands are the most important for you?" The complete list of questions is reproduced in Appendix A. All but one interview were conducted in French; as a result, all quotes in the dissertation in English are my translation.

For my own analysis, I gathered relevant information by doing simple word searches ("genre," "rapports sociaux," and the like) through the verbatim of the

⁸ The Centres de santé et service sociaux are government agencies in charge of promoting the well-being of local communities by providing health and social services.

interviews. An analysis is presented in Chapter 3; a more detailed description of the different steps involved in the research (such as specific word searches, exact results, the “clean up” process) is described in Appendix B. To ensure confidentiality and precision, quotations are followed by a first alpha-numerical combination identifying the respondent with an “R” for “respondent” and a number, attributed by the research group, and when appropriate, followed by a “Q” for “question” and a second number indicating which question prompted this response from interviewees. Thus, for example, R09-Q11 refers to respondent 9 answering question 11.

The second pool of interviews was collected by the Collectif de recherche sur l'autonomie collective - kébec (CRAC-K) whose goal is to document experiences of autonomous collectives in Québec since 1995 and anarchist modes of organizing created within these groups.⁹ Among the different sets of data that the CRAC-K collected, one subset was of interest for me: the interviews with members of the radical queer group *Les panthères roses* active in Montreal between 2001 and 2005. Unfortunately, I only accessed five of the original seven interviews because the CRAC-K was not able to contact the other two individuals on time to obtain their permission to share the interviews.¹⁰ The interviews were conducted in 2005 and 2006.

In this case, I reviewed and analyzed the interviews looking for information about their goals, their theoretical positions, and their relations with other social movements, including feminism. To further my analysis, I also relied on material available on their

⁹ For more on the organization and goals of the CRAC-K, see their website: <http://www.crac-kebec.org/>

¹⁰ The original consent form signed by interviewees stipulated that the data was not to be used for other purposes than the research of the CRAC-K; hence, the collective thought it was ethically responsible to obtain a second consent from participants before sharing the interviews. The email requesting such consent is attached in Appendix C.

website¹¹ and on the monograph produced by the CRAC-K entitled *Les panthères roses de Montréal*, also available on their website.¹² Specific quotations are identified with an alpha-numerical number (e.g.: PR07), PR indicating *panthères roses*. Once again, the original research group attributed these identifiers.

The choice to rely on interviews performed by other research groups was not an easy one. However, following a number of discussions with members of both research groups, I reached the conclusion that the breadth and depth of these existing databases were more than sufficient for the purpose of this research; in addition, the perspective of duplicating a lot of information gathering brought concerns over wasting the time of the interviewees (and mine). Thus, it seemed a more efficient choice for everyone to use existing data. As a result of this choice, in the case of the interviews with actors of the Quebec women's movement, I was able to access a much broader pool of people than a research project supported only by my personal resources would have allowed me to do. However, on the down side, I was not able to ask additional questions that could have shed light on some issues, such as the motivation behind the choice of certain words or precision on the meaning of certain terms. Additionally, in both cases, the distance involved in working with verbatim instead of with people did not provide me with as much "insider knowledge" on the individuals at the center of my research. Yet, I can juxtapose my personal knowledge of both the Quebec women's movement and radical queer groups acquired in different social and activist settings to the information from the interviews.

¹¹ <http://www.lespantheresroses.org/>

¹² <http://www.crac-kebec.org/bibliotheque/les-pantheres-roses-de-montreal-une-monographie>

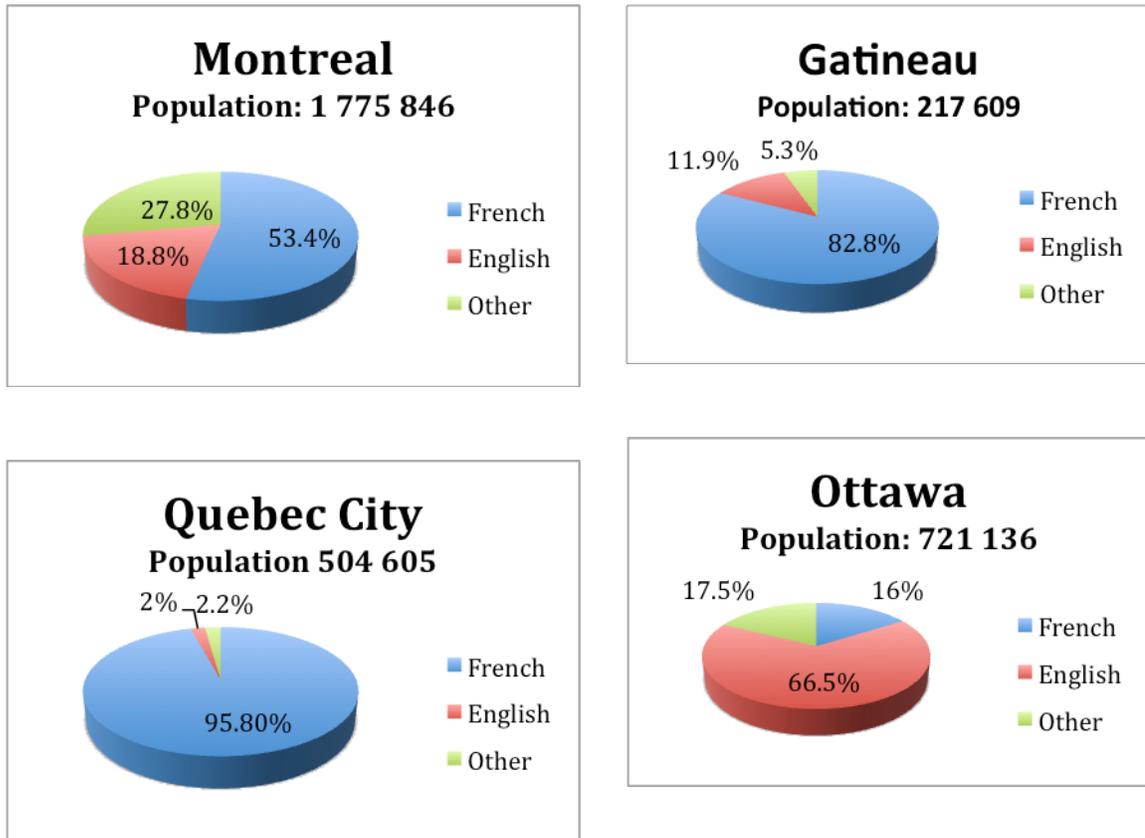
A substantial portion of the sources for this research is in French. Thus, I freely translated all the quotes in the dissertation, except when an official translation was available. In the latter cases, the English text is referenced and the page numbers correspond to the English publication. As a general rule, when an English word is used in a French text, I italicize it, to indicate that English is the original. As well, I chose to leave certain words in French in this text when they do not have English equivalents. In those cases, the words are italicized as well. This is the case, among others, of *genre*, *rapports sociaux de sexe*, and *féminisme solidaire*. Overall, I privileged fidelity to the original over elegance.

In short, my data collection used both print material (formal and informal) and interviews to render a sense of how feminists in Montreal have negotiated, mobilized and deployed different concepts and their impact on the construction of a Quebec specific feminist theory.

Lay of the Land: Why Montreal?

The province of Quebec is one of the only spaces in North America where French is dominant, yet it is also the subject of multiple English influences. Contrary to what some people believe, Quebec (or Canada for that matter) is not filled with people who master both French and English and move in and out of both languages without any difficulty. The concept of the two solitudes captures this lack of interaction between Canada's two official languages. In the province of Quebec, a majority of people have French as their mother tongue, whereas in the rest of Canada, the majority of people considers English their first language (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of population speaking French, English, or another language as their mother tongue in 2001 in the cities of Montreal, Quebec City, Gatineau, and Ottawa.

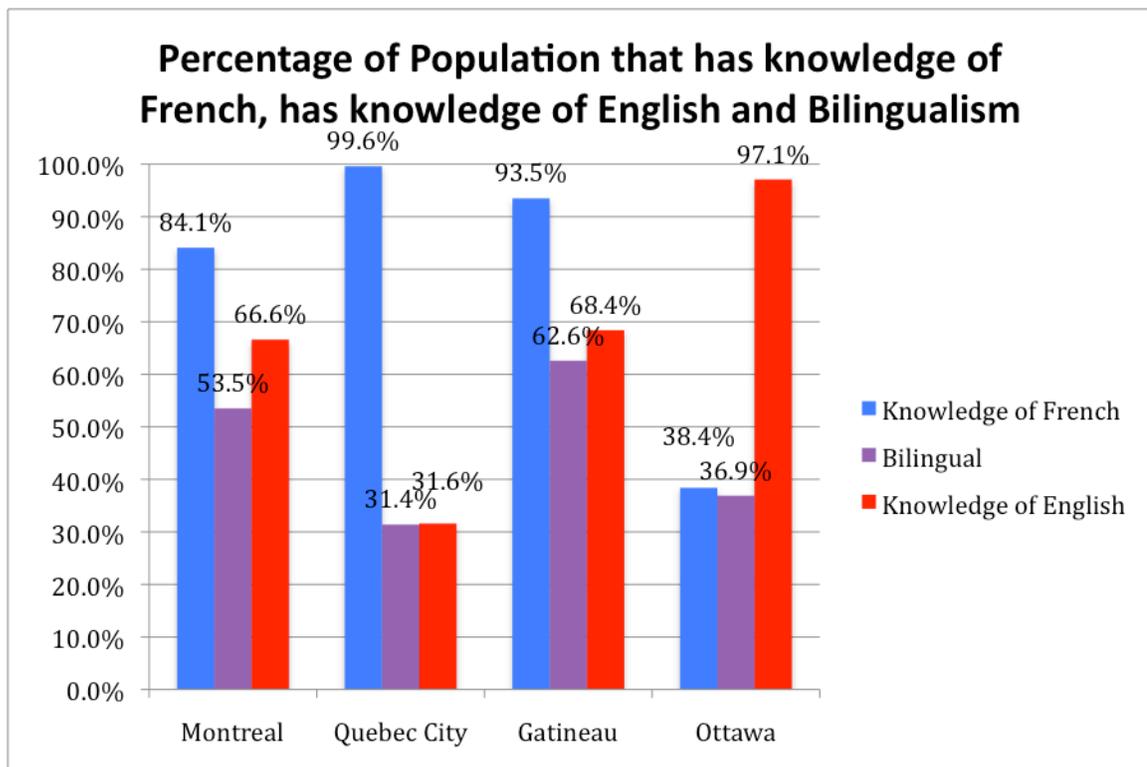


Even when there is a significant portion of the population that does speak both languages, as in the case of Gatineau and Montreal, there is still an invisible division that prevents most people from belonging to both communities.

But why focus on Montreal and not the other big cities in Quebec? Why not, for example, Quebec City? However, this city has a very limited bilingual population and an even smaller anglophone population (see Table 1 and 2) and hence is not the location of much contact with English traditions and ideologies. The limited contacts with anglophones are usually through the tourist industry, which is not the best conveyor for ideas and movement strategies for feminists. On the other hand, Montreal has both a native anglophone population and a constant influx of young anglophone students

enrolling at the two English-speaking universities.¹³ This constant flow of young women coming to Montreal, along with an existing stable “native” community, creates an environment that nurtures not only an autonomous feminist movement, but in fact, two language-based sub-movements that exist and interact on certain terms. Although distinct and surprisingly impermeable to each other, their co-existence nonetheless promotes a certain level of exchange of ideas.

Table 2. Percentage of the population that affirms having knowledge of French, knowledge of English, and being bilingual in 2001.



Note 1. “Knowledge of French/English” is based on answers to a question asking people about their ability to conduct a conversation in that language. All measures reflect knowledge, not usage, and are self-assessed.

Note 2. “Knowledge of French/English” does not mean knowledge of *only* that language. Therefore, a bilingual person would be included in all three columns. One can infer the

¹³ According to their website, only a little over half of the McGill University’s undergraduate population are Quebec residents and only 18 percent identify French as their native tongue. Concordia University’s website did not have data on their students’ civil status (permanent residence, citizen, etc.), but only 15.1 percent of the student body identify French as their native tongue.

percentage of population that speaks only one language by subtracting the percentage of the bilingual population from the other columns.

Another city that one might consider as the subject of research would be the city of Gatineau or the Ottawa/Gatineau/Hull region, which is an urban environment at the border of Ontario and Quebec, with a high concentration of bilingual people (see Table 2) and a constant movement of bodies between the borders. To give an American analogy, Ottawa and Gatineau are like Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia. The real urban center is Ottawa, yet the government has purposely established a lot of government buildings on the Gatineau side of the river to promote economic development in the region. People live and work in both regions, and a substantial number of people cross the border on a daily basis. Yet, because of the population (around 200, 000 people, see Table 1) and because the Ottawa/ Gatineau region is traditionally more quiescent and family-oriented, the feminist movement there has been ephemeral and issue oriented.

Another important element that motivates the choice of the city is the size of the feminist community. In the province of Quebec, since Montreal is the biggest city, its feminist community is bigger than in other cities. Thus, it is often the space where provincial gatherings and mobilizations are held, in part due to the fact that most province-wide groups have their headquarters in the city. In addition, Montreal has seen the birth and death of numerous autonomous feminist collectives, in addition to the two university-affiliated institutions, the Institut de recherches et d'études féministes (IREF) at the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University. It thus stands as a center of activity for feminist activists and scholars.

Finally, an important element in explaining my choice of Montreal as the focus of this research is my intimate knowledge and personal connection to the movement in that city. I was involved in radical feminist groups there between the years 1999 and 2004, before I moved away from Montreal to continue my studies. Furthermore, my political involvement extends over a slightly longer period (1997-2004, with temporary re-insertions for specific events after 2004). Most of my friends in Montreal have been or are still involved in the feminist movement in some way or form, and I met most of them through feminist activist networks.

This intimate knowledge brings advantages and disadvantages. Re-entry into the community was facilitated by personal connections and knowledge of the community. Furthermore, my previous direct involvement in certain groups and struggles provides me with credibility and trust not usually ascribed to a researcher. At the same time, my personal connections and allegiances also have the potential to influence my research, making me closer to certain groups and certain factions of the community. As with any close-knit community, the Montreal feminist movement is full of personal conflicts and strife that serve to divide and classify people. My previous allegiances classify me and position me in a particular location. As much as it can grant me access to certain groups, it might also prevent me from having access to others. In this regard, I believe that my seven years away from Montreal has helped me bridge and attenuate this impact while providing me with some distance. It should also be noted that a new generation of feminists have also entered the community since I left Montreal. Hence, although my connections are still strong with the community, a substantial subset of people and groups are not well known to me. In short, my knowledge is not a “view from nowhere” as

Haraway has described (1988); rather, it is a form of embodied and “located” knowledge grounded in the material conditions of the research, the researcher, and Montreal feminists (Smith 1990; see also Collins 1997); as any member of the community, I had to wrestle with and negotiate political allegiances and conflicts. However, I believe that these struggles added texture and insight to my research.

Understanding Montreal through the Historical, Social, and Political Context of Quebec and Canada

This dissertation began with a brief discussion of Montreal—a city best understood as a site of convergence for two linguistic communities (francophone and anglophone) where, depending on the historical period (1940s or 1970s) and space (eastern and western Montreal), the domination of one by the other has prevailed. Because issues around language have been the focus of much debate at the federal and provincial levels, it is important to reframe this city in the wider political context of Quebec and Canada.

The translation scholar Sherry Simons describes the island as a “hybrid community” that incorporates not only two languages communities (anglophone and francophone) but also a plethora of other cultures from recent and not-so-recent immigration. Yet, while some describe Montreal as the perfect mixing space, its cultural communities remain surprisingly impermeable. Still today, francophones and anglophones inhabit two different worlds, move in distinct social networks, and use distinct social institutions while living side-by-side. Although a numerical minority, “Montreal Anglophones had [until recently] access to linguistically autonomous networks of educational, health, and social service institutions, all largely unregulated by the Francophone-controlled provincial and municipal governments” (Levine 1990, 1). Even

today when the francophone majority has acquired control over these institutions through the power of the state, there is very little overlap between the communities that compose the “two solitudes.”

Even in small circles, such as activist communities or feminist circles, mixing is similarly rare and temporary, and the two solitudes continue to exist within and to perpetuate two different traditions, two different languages, two different communities. Contrary to the popular representation of Quebec, only 36.6 percent of francophones in the province considered themselves bilingual in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001). Although the rate of bilingual anglophones is substantially higher (66 percent), very few people cross the linguistic border easily and navigate both worlds on a daily basis. Hence, although Montreal is ostensibly a hybrid space, in practice there seems to be very little transference of concepts and theoretical debates between linguistic communities.

The history of language in Montreal, and in Quebec in general, can account in part for this segregation. Quebec is both a colonizing and colonized space whose territory was first colonized by French invading settlers during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early half of the eighteenth centuries; however, the French colonizers were defeated by the British army in 1759. From that point on, British colonizers took control of both the political and the economic institutions of what is now Quebec and Canada as a whole, yet allowed French settlers to keep their local structures, continue practicing their religion,¹⁴ and be educated in French. While the French-speaking population kept growing in certain regions of the colony, conflicts between the English authorities and the French-speaking population grew as well. British authorities attempted different policies over time, from aggressive assimilation to complete *laissez-faire*. French-speakers, in turn, deployed

¹⁴ Freedom of religion was granted in 1774 with the Act of Quebec.

different means – from armed revolt to passive acceptance and even assimilation – in response to the different authorities and policies.

The Quebec Nationalist Movement

Like many other non-hegemonic nationalisms of the pre-World War II period (Erk 2010), the Quebec nationalist movement before the 1940s was rather conservative and relied on an emphasis on tradition. During the period that is commonly called “la survivance” (the survival) (1880-1929), the Catholic Church played a dominant role in maintaining the social tissue of the French community, therefore ensuring the survival of the French language, Catholicism as the prevailing religion, and more generally, old traditions (Eid 1978; Hamelin 1984). A major actor in politics, the Catholic Church supported a conservative government (*Union nationale*) and worked with it to maintain a rural model of development, a charity model of redistribution of goods, and other conservative social policies, all of which were framed in a conservative form of nationalism. For example, one of the slogans of the *Union nationale* was *la foi, la langue, la race* (faith, language, race) (Quinn 1979), highlighting the weight of religion in this new trilogy, but still relying on an ethnic nationalism.

Even if the *Union nationale* party maintained power until the end of the 1950s, Quebec society had already started to change. First, a massive migration from rural to urban settings was taking place, decreasing the influence of the Catholic Church on people (Lacoste 1973). Second, with increasing industrialization, unions started to organize independent of the Church, integrating more and more socialist and Marxist ideals in their organizations (Roback and Tremblay 1975; Dennis 1979).

While the number of French-Canadians decreased outside of Quebec and increased in the province, a shift in identities crystallized this difference. In the 1950s and the 1960s, French-speaking communities in Quebec began to identify themselves as *Québécois* and *Québécoises* (instead of French-Canadians), thereby constituting a collectivity not only associated with a language, but also with a territory (Charland 1987), and framing this “people” as different from both English and French Canadians living in the rest of Canada, and hence legitimately deserving its own nation. As the worker’s union movement becomes independent of the Catholic Church, grounded in socialist ideals, and yet still connected with a national identity, a new form of nationalism emerges: one with a left-wing secular agenda.

By the late 1960s, Quebec independentists had been radicalized, taking their inspiration from Third World decolonization struggles through the works of writers such as Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Albert Memmi and the successful example of the Cuban and Algerian revolutions. For Quebec nationalists, the Marxist-inspired discourse of national liberation led them to adopt a *de facto* association between language groups and classes, whereby francophones viewed themselves as proletarians and viewed anglophones as capitalists. The class difference between francophones and anglophones was very real, especially in Montreal where, for example, in 1961 anglophones earned 51 percent more than francophones (Levine 1990, 3). Hence, we see a nationalist movement, grounded in socialist ideals, that equates language with class.¹⁵

Another important association conceptualized by the nationalist movement was the equation of language with race, that is, the “racialization” of a Quebec people. This

¹⁵ In fact, there was substantial debate within the nationalist movement on whether to focus on the creation of a nation first, and then address capitalism, or whether the struggle should tackle both capitalism and English imperialism at the same time. For more on this, see Fournier (1982).

phenomenon was exemplified in the title of Pierre Vallière's influential book on Quebec liberation, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (1968). This association emerged in conjunction with the increased dissemination of Third World national liberation theorists like Fanon and Césaire and also with nationalist groups witnessing and making connections with the U.S. black struggle on the other side of the border.

This self-identification of Quebecois people as a “race” was not only visible in activist and militant groups. As the Quebec government started to promote the development of a Quebec-based “high culture,” the 1960s also witnessed the development and increased recognition of a Quebec street culture that attempted to uncover the history of social injustices towards francophone communities. In that process, the equation between language identities and class identities was carried over in popular culture. Furthermore, this new Quebec-based popular culture also carried, at time, this racial identity. As seen in this excerpt of *Speak White*, a poem by Michèle Lalonde (1974) first presented in 1968,¹⁶ the linguistic identity of francophones is equated both with a class location and a racial (non-white) identity, signified in opposition to the “white language,” that of the capitalist oppressor:¹⁷

(...)
A little louder than *Speak white*
Raise your counter master voices
We are a little deaf
We live too close to the machines
And we can only hear our breath over the tools.

Speak white and loud
So we can hear you
From St-Henri to St-Domingue

¹⁶ The poem was read at a 1968 poetry reading, then published in 1974.

¹⁷ For more examples, see the work of Michèle Tremblay and the manifesto *Le Refus Global* for typical celebration of street language/culture inscribed in economic and cultural resistance.

Yes what an admirable language
To hire/ Give orders
Fix the time of death on the job
And of the pause that refreshes
And revives the dollar

(...)
Talk to us about profits and percentage
Speak white
It's a rich language
To buy
To sell ourselves
To sell our selves
soul
To sell ourselves

(Lalonde 1974) (my translation; italics signify English in original)

Language identities thus became extremely political as they carried class and racialized positions. The position assumed by the separatist francophones became that of a “nation” colonized by the English oppressor, an oppressor who consciously tried to assimilate them and exploit them. The incorporation of a widespread fear of assimilation and extinction of French in the Americas developed as a nationalist discourse.

It is in this context that the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) took center stage in 1970. Organized in autonomous cells, the FLQ was responsible for numerous acts of violence like bombings and robberies. In February 1969, they bombed the Montreal Stock Exchange, causing massive damage and injuring 27 people. They are reported to have attempted to kidnap the Israeli and U.S. ambassador to Canada; both attempts were intercepted by the police. However, in October 1970 the FLQ successfully kidnapped James Cross, then Great Britain's Trade Commissioner to Canada. Abiding by one of their ransom demands, Radio-Canada (French national television) read the FLQ manifesto live on television. Five days after the first kidnapping, Pierre Laporte, minister of Cultural Affairs and Vice-Premier, was also kidnapped and died while in the hands of

the FLQ. The government of Canada, under Pierre Elliot Trudeau, responded by enacting the War Measures Act, which allowed the suspension of *habeas corpus* and sent the army into the province of Québec and also Ottawa, the national capital. Even if the event was quickly controlled by the army after more than 400 arrests (of mostly innocent people) and the death of Pierre Laporte, the crisis, thereafter known as the October crisis, gave an exceptionally important public tribune to such a radical and revolutionary group.

The language of decolonization became omnipresent among leftist groups in the 1960s, regardless of the focus of their struggle, be it workers, students, feminists, or others (Milner and Milner 1973; Mills 2007, 2010) and provided the radical revolutionary framework from which Quebec feminists analyzed their situation and understood and created solidarities with other anti-imperialist movements across the world and against English-Canadians, viewed as “the oppressor” for its dominating economic and political position within Canada. But this “racial” identity was not without its contradiction. On one side, one can observe a wider support for the struggles of Blacks both in Canada and the United States. For example, there is evidence that some members of the FLQ had extended reciprocal relations of solidarity and help with the U.S. Black Liberation Front (Fournier 1982, 94-96) and more specifically Stokely Carmichael (Fournier 1982, 130-138). Similarly, Sean Mills has documented that “of all the student groups in [Canada], only the Quebec students have defended the Black student activists of Sir George William University when they clashed with the police in 1969” (Mills 2007, 133). He attributes this support to their comprehension of and connection with anti-imperialist and decolonization struggles. Yet, through the process of appropriation, there was also an erasure of the specificities of the Black freedom struggle. For example, in the germinal

book *White Niggers of America*, FLQ leader Pierre Vallière states the following: “in Quebec, there is no ‘black problem’ ”(1971, 21), thus erasing the existence of a similar struggle on their own territory and positioning the “Québec problem” as more important than racism in Canada. Furthermore, the basis of developing the liberation struggle on the grounds of being a “colonized people” completely denied the existence of First Nations’ lives and their struggle against both French and English colonizers.

In short, the Quebec nationalist movement became leftist and revolutionary during the 1950s and 1960s. Grounding their theory in Third World national liberation struggles, they developed a unique analysis of their position as a “colonized people” that both served to support and, at the same time, make invisible similar struggles.

Throughout these turbulent decades and up to the present moment, language remains in Quebec a fundamental marker of difference and remains at the center of most political struggles. It is out of that radical nationalist movement that parts of the feminist movement will emerge at the end of the 1960s. But before I address the feminist movement of Quebec, I first review how feminist movements in general have negotiated their relationship with nationalism.

Feminism and Nationalism in Quebec

The relationship between nationalist and feminist movements in Quebec is similar to, but also different from, that relationship in other countries that have experienced a national liberation struggle both in developed and emerging countries. First, we have to establish that, contrary to most Third World countries, the Quebec nationalist movement is not really fighting an imperialist model of imposed neoliberal capitalism. Second, in Third World colonial states, when fighting for their national independence, scholars suggest

that the use of women as a marker of modernity by nationalist elites was one of the ways that women gained access to public spaces (Rai 2002; Jayawardena 1986). In contrast, nationalists in post-WWII Quebec are not opposing a “pre-modern” culture to that of the colonizer because they identify with another colonizer’s identity (read “modern”) as descendant of the French people. Hence, the space for discussion about women’s rights didn’t emerge seamlessly *from* the nationalist struggle. Yet, there was something about the possibility of creating a new nation – the idealist narrative of nationalism (Anderson 1991) – that created enough space for women to redefine their political and economic roles in society, which eventually led to autonomous feminist movements.

Most of the women of the 1960s-1970s radical feminist movement in Quebec cut their (political) teeth in the Quebec nationalist movement and the labor movement (De Sève 1998; Mills 2010). And just like U.S. feminists borrowed a number of tactics from the Black Power movement (Randolph 2009, 236), Montreal feminists, in the 1970s, copied concepts and analysis from the Quebec separatist movement. For example, one of the first autonomous feminist groups in Montreal directly borrowed their name from the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), calling themselves the Front de libération des femmes du Québec (FLF). The slogan of its journal, *Québécoises deboutte*, was “Pas de libération des femmes sans libération du Québec, pas de libération du Québec sans libération des femmes” (No women’s liberation without Quebec liberation; no Quebec liberation without women’s liberation) (O’Leary and Toupin 1982, 17). Women also borrowed the organizing structure – independent, autonomous “cells” – from the radical nationalist movement. And, in the *Manifeste des femmes québécoises*, national liberation was directly paralleled with women’s liberation. As the authors explained:

However, for women, what is important first is women's liberation. [...] But we are conscious that our liberation is linked to national liberation and this is why we join the movement. (Collectif [MFQ] 1971[1970], 12).

Emerging from the nationalist movement, Quebec's radical feminists will try to reconcile both struggles. Nonetheless, as parts of the nationalist movement become institutionalized into an official party, relationships with feminists deteriorated. In the institutional project of state building, some men were relegating women to their role of mothers, calling on them to fulfill their responsibility to reproduce the nation, both physically and culturally (West and LeClerc 1997, 232). But feminists divided on the strategic choices to support the nationalist movement knowing full well nationalists were "flirting" with women to gain their support (De Sève 1998). Although some feminists believed in the project enough to support the 1980s referendum for Quebec's independence, others, creating a group called "Femmes d'abord" (women first), encouraged women to write the word FEMME on their ballot to signify the lack of consideration for women's issues (Yanacopoulos 2003, 95-96).

Montreal Feminism in Two Languages

The politics of language were central not only generally throughout Quebec, but also among those groups – whether francophone or anglophone – who early on referred to themselves as "revolutionary" or "radical." The tensions around language politics led to rather contradictory relationships between francophone and anglophone feminists as francophone feminists tried to navigate the line between their desire to establish solidarity with women regardless of their origin and position in society and working with women who would reproduce the oppression of anglophones over francophones.

It is interesting to look at the influences on revolutionary feminist groups in Montreal – some from English-speaking countries, especially the United States, some from France. Originally, the influence of U.S. feminism was central to the development of Montreal's autonomous feminist groups. In fact, the creation of the first group of revolutionary feminists (1967) is attributed to Marlene Dixon, a U.S. feminist who taught sociology at McGill University (Adamson 1988, 43) and to Naomi Brickman and Suzanne Dubrowsky, U.S. students at McGill (De Sève 1998, 172). Their experience with the U.S. feminist movement fueled the development of women's liberation groups in the anglophone community in Montreal.¹⁸ As anglophone women organized, they tried to reach out to their francophone counterparts in an effort to develop the consciousness-raising movement as widely as possible. Within radical circles, the first contact between women was created when women from McGill called a meeting with French women to discuss women's liberation movements.¹⁹ Hence, a clear U.S. influence can be identified for the early years of revolutionary feminist groups in Montreal.

When anglophone women reach out to francophone women, they looked for women who were already involved in politics. In the case of politicized francophone women, this generally meant women who had been involved in socialist and Quebec nationalist movements prior to turning to feminism. These two local influences became the source of conflictual allegiances in the political trajectory of francophone Montreal feminists. Recounting the difficulty of finding literature that could help them theorize the multiplicity of their anti-oppression struggle, Marjolaine Péloquin said:

¹⁸ For more on the influence of Marlene Dixon on anglophone feminisms, see Vickers, Rankin, and Appelle (1993).

¹⁹ This influence is limited to the organizing of feminism in radical consciousness-raising groups. Francophone feminists were organized before that, but in a more traditional form, through the *Fédération des femmes du Québec*, which was created in 1966.

It is extremely important to develop our own analysis. Thus, we are always searching for texts in French that stimulate our thinking and are in agreement with our line of thought. Because for us, *Québécoises*, it is not easy to try to combine three kinds of struggle! Another difficulty is to justify theoretically why the feminist struggle is “first,” meaning is prioritized over the struggle for independence and socialism. Impossible to find texts that talk about that, and even harder, in French! (2007, 31)

We see here a preoccupation with constructing an identity and a theory that would reflect the specific reality of women of Quebec. Furthermore, when discussing feminism in the early 1970s, Montreal feminists tended to use a language grounded in national liberation, antiracist vocabulary, and Marxism.

But the separatist and Marxist tendencies in early revolutionary feminist groups does not only affect the language they will use to theorize and discuss women’s oppression. It also affects their organizations and the choice of strategic alliances. Thus, their anti-imperialist position grounded in nationalist positions are clearly expressed to U.S. and Canadian anglophone feminists in Montreal. For example, in a letter sent to U.S. feminists and later published in the FLF anthology, members of the FLF disavow Marlene Dixon as the mediator between the two and clearly distance themselves from her on the basis of language politics:

We also want to specify our position towards Marlene Dixon and her friends. Marlene is a professor at McGill University (anglophone); she is not a member of Women’s Lib of Montreal or of the FLF. She has been living here for a year and a half and has never been able to communicate with us directly because *she still does not speak French*. Therefore, she cannot in any way speak in our name or in the name of any *Québécoise*. ([Collective: FLF] 1982[1970], 79; my emphasis)²⁰

Francophone women were clearly wary of uniting with Anglo-Canadian feminists, whom they consider both oppressors and sisters in the struggle, and they were reticent to join in

²⁰ For the complete letter and the context, see [Collective FLF], “Lettre à des féministes américaines,” in *Québécoises deboutte!: "Une anthologie de textes du Front de libération des femmes (1969-1971) et du Centre des femmes (1972-1975)*, vol. 1, ed. Véronique O’Leary and Louise Toupin (Montreal: Ed. du Remue-ménage, 1982 [1970]), 79-80.

wider coalitions or nationwide attempts to change the Canadian state. They outright rejected any attempt to engage with the Canadian federal state on the basis that it did not legitimately reign over Quebec, thereby negating the possibility of coalition with feminists of other provinces – revolutionary or not. As written in a collective statement:

We refuse to demonstrate in front of a parliament whose power it assumes over Quebec we do not recognize. However, we stand in solidarity with women of Canada, because as women, we are all subjected to the same oppression. ([Collective: FLF] 1982[1970], 71)

Similarly, within Montreal, the alliances were scarce and rarely successful. The revolutionary feminists of the FLF tried to navigate the line between their desire to establish solidarity with women regardless of their origin and position in society and the difficulty of working with a group of women considered oppressors.²¹ After an original collaboration between the *Montreal Women's Lib* and the FLF, francophone women pointed out that the anglophone's easy access to U.S. theories reinforces the existing unequal relationship between French and English (O'Leary and Toupin 1982, 76) and consequently severed the ties between the two groups, even as they still share the same space (Lamoureux 1986, 126-127).

Although this “separatist” decision needs to be contextualized – it happened not even two months before the October Crisis – one can see how their focus changed from a women-oriented to a Quebec-oriented struggle in a short lapse of time. The importance of this change in attitude cannot be underestimated as it marks a split between the two communities at least on the organizational level. From this point on, the two communities continued to develop independently of each other. The vitality of the anglophone movement can be seen through the creation of courses in 1970 at both anglophone

²¹ For more details on those difficult negotiations, see Micheline De Sève's “Féminisme et Nationalisme au Québec, une alliance inattendue” (1998).

universities (McGill and Sir George William [later Concordia University]) and eventually the first program in Quebec of Women's Studies at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University in 1978. A similar path can be seen in francophone universities, which culminate in 1976 with the creation of the Groupe interdisciplinaire d'enseignement et de recherche sur la condition des femmes (GIERF) at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM).²²

Thus, one can see how language politics and the national liberation struggle were omnipresent in Quebec society, especially prior to the defeat of the first referendum on the question of Quebec separation in 1980. Revolutionary francophone feminists divorced their anglophone counterparts, first in their organization and later in their theory, when French publications become more readily available, hence creating two distinct feminist communities living side by side in Montreal.

²² For more on the history of the development of women's studies in Canada and Quebec, see "A Chronology of the Development of Women's Studies in Canada: the 1970s" available at <http://www.unb.ca/PAR-L/chronology1.htm>.

Chapter 3

The Travelings of Gender

The first concept that I follow as it moves through time and space is gender/genre. Central to the development of U.S. feminist theory during the 1970s and 1980s as representing the social construction aspect of being a woman, gender remains absent from francophone Montreal and Quebec feminist theory (both academic and grassroots) until the end of the twentieth century (Descarries and Dechaufour 2006). Instead, the Marxist-inspired French terminology of “rapports sociaux de sexe” developed by French feminist theorists such as Christine Delphy (2002), Nicole-Claude Mathieu (1971, 1991), Collette Guillaumin (1978, 1992), and Danièle Kergoat (1982) dominates materialist and mainstream francophone feminist theory in Montreal. This relative absence in the francophone discourse highlights a break in transference that I explore further by looking at the various causes. This chapter also examines the impact of the emergence of the term “gender/genre” in the 1990s and early 2000s in francophone feminist theory (Hurtig, Kail, and Rouch 1991) and the new possibilities that this change in meaning brings. Namely, a debate on transgender, an opening to diversity, and a broadening of a gendered analysis are identified as the main positive effects. However, as feminist theorists Francine Descarries and Laetitia Dechaufour (2006) explain, the negative impacts of gender/genre might outweigh the new possibilities. They claim the introduction of the term contributes to the expansion of English hegemony, evacuates the political and systemic critique that other terms foster, and does not favor the development of strong, unified feminist communities.

It is particularly interesting here to see how the presence or absence of gender/genre affects the development of the feminist movement and its theory, as well as how local movements have decided to negotiate homogenizing forces of globalization and/or English hegemony. In the 1990s when globalization gains in strength, French feminists start to question their choice to avoid using gender/genre, but, ultimately, choose to refrain from integrating it. Hence, I try to address the significance of the choices of terminology on political thought. Because the usage of the word gender/genre has been explicitly debated (Hurtig, Kail, and Rouch 1991) in francophone feminist circles, this chapter will pay attention to the rationale given for those choices. In addition to scrutinizing the Montreal feminist community, I am also interested in other locations where scholars have come to use this term. For example, the usage of gender/genre as a category of analysis by francophone social scientists in Montreal is an interesting location that interacts with and might have influenced feminists in a significant way. Looking at when and how the term is used reveals the nature of Montreal academic and activist feminists' relations with the transnational feminist movement and how they make sense of these relations if the terminology is used differently.

When Simone de Beauvoir wrote in 1949 "One is not born a woman, but becomes one," she probably could not imagine the resonance that this sentence would have throughout the world. This concept of differentiating between biological characteristics and the social construction of women has been central to the post-Beauvoir feminist movements in France, in Canada, and in the United States. Anglophone feminists came to refer to the social construction of women as *gender* and the biological characteristics as *sex*. In France, at least in the period between 1970 and 1989, materialist French feminists

did not make the theorization of the biological central to their analysis and focused instead on the way interactions between women and men shaped the way we understand the social construction of women. French feminists did not have a specific word to differentiate the two components (nature [sex] and culture [genre] and did not come to use the French equivalent of gender—*genre*—as the carrier of similar meanings. Hence, the concept of *gender* seemed to be present to a certain extent without a word to represent it. Yet, other terms were developed to address social processes involved specifically in the construction of the concept of *gender*, understood in the English sense.

Gender in the United States

To begin our inquiry into the travelings of the word gender, we have to start in the United States where the conceptualization of the gender/sex dichotomy first developed.

Strikingly, however, the first appearances of *gender* are far removed from its later feminist usage. Gender—the word—comes to English from the French *genre* and shares with that word its derivation from the Latin *genus*, meaning “kind,” “sort,” or “type.”

The derivation is most visible in the borrowing in English of the French *genre*, for example, in literary forms such as fiction, poetry, and so forth. Similarly, both the English *gender* and the French *genre* designate grammatical gender: feminine, masculine, or neutral. In French, for example, schoolchildren learn that “l'adjectif s'accorde en genre et en nombre avec le nom,” which literally means that the adjective needs to agree with the gender (masculine or feminine) and the number (singular or plural) of the noun.

Although not used so often in English, because inanimate objects only rarely have an assigned gender, when used at all, *gender* in English also referred to a grammatical

quality. By extension, the feminine or masculine qualities of things or persons came to be designated as gender. However, the latter usage was evidently rare before the last half of the twentieth century. In 1926, *Fowler's Modern English Usage* stated that "gender...is a grammatical term only. To talk of persons...of the masculine or feminine g[ender], meaning of the male or female sex, is either a jocularity (permissible or not according to context) or a blunder" (211).

It was not until the 1950s that the term gender, in English, came to refer to the social attributes of a sex. Credit for this usage of gender is usually attributed to John Money, whose 1955 article, "Hermaphroditism, Gender and Precocity in Hyperadrenocorticism: Psychologic Findings," published in the *Bulletin of Johns Hopkins Hospital*, appears to have introduced this meaning. As he writes, "the term *gender role* is used to signify all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively. It includes, but is not restricted to, sexuality in the sense of eroticism" (1955, 211) but also clothing and speech pattern. Money, however, was not interested in how gender was learned and was definitely not interested in the ways that gender functioned to create inequality.

To trace the genealogy of gender *inequality*, one would turn instead to Enlightenment considerations of socialization. Joan Kelly (1982) traces the concept that femininity is learned back to the early fifteenth-century author of *La Cité des dames*, Christine de Pizan; however, Christine's purpose was to defend women against misogynous attacks and not to challenge inequality (Kelly 1982). Mary Wollstonecraft, in her 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, went farther, connecting the poverty of women's

education to her inability to exercise political rights in a democracy where reasoning capacity rather than birthright would presumably confer the right to govern.

And during the 1920s, the connection between sex role socialization and women's inequality was taken up by a group of social scientists, of whom Margaret Mead is perhaps the best known.²³ In fact, in the United States at least, the concept of sex role socialization, or social constructionism, becomes central to the very definition of feminism in the interwar years (Cott 1987). It is perhaps unsurprising that this conceptualization of sex roles as the product of socialization developed early in the United States where liberal paradigms (think here of John Locke's *tabula rasa*) were so deeply engrained in the culture.

Discussion about and theorization of sex stereotypes (Friedan 1963) and sex roles (among others, Amundsen 1971; Epstein 1971; Janeway 1971; Kreps 1972) became even more widespread in the 1960s and 1970s, both among feminists and sociologists in general. Moreover, in pointing to the social aspects of being a woman and questioning related prescriptions of behaviors and aesthetics, U.S. (and British) feminists at the beginning of the so-called second wave increasingly discussed the oppressive nature of sex roles and sex role socialization to challenge notions of innate social differences between the sexes, even if not always the *de facto* hierarchy. To challenge the hierarchical relation between the sexes, however, it remained more common to use the terms, *sexual politics*, *sexism*, and/or *patriarchy*.

²³ See also the work of sociologist Talcott Parsons, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (1955), for more on sex roles as understood in the United States in the 1950s.

The first feminist theorization of the difference between the words gender and sex in English appears to have come from British feminism through the work of Ann Oakley.

In her influential book *Sex, Gender and Society*, she stated:

Sex is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible differences in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. "Gender," however, is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into "masculine" and "feminine." (Oakley 1972, 158)

The novelty here is not that Oakley identifies that some aspects of women and men are socially constructed, but that she assigns two different words to refer respectively to the biological and the social aspects of being a woman or a man. Oakley's definition also expanded the previous "sex role" terminology, in that gender, for Oakley, refers not just to the prescribed behaviors implied in sex roles but to all socially ascribed and culturally inculcated traits associated with being women or men. By extension sex refers to a fixed dimension of womanhood while gender pertains to a fluid and constructed character. Yet, Oakley's differentiation between gender and sex did not imply a necessary asymmetry between the two genders, nor the hierarchy that they create.

As the distinction between gender and sex gained currency in U.S. feminist theory, it started making its way back into the social sciences as a variable category of analysis. Feminists participating in the creation of academic/scholarly knowledge debated its usefulness in their respective disciplines. Moreover, as the term becomes integrated more broadly into the social sciences, the absence of a political significance becomes even more clear; in some cases it even loses its ability to distinguish learned behavior from anatomy as in the more academic social sciences, and more and more in popular media, the word gender becomes synonymous with, and a common substitute for, sex.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, however, a number of feminist scholars and activists carried on a rearguard action against an apolitical usage of sex role socialization theory and its new wording as gender. For example, the Redstockings, a New York-based radical feminist group, tackled the shortcomings of sex role theory for not addressing power relations among women and men in an article included in an anthology of their earliest writings (Brooke 1978[1968], 84). As well, Gayle Rubin—who, by 1975, was already using the term gender—was insistently political in her usage. In her influential text, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” published in 1975, Rubin establishes a framework for analyzing the sex/gender system that permeates all societies. Grounding her analysis in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, she details the “systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products” (Rubin 1975, 106). She defines the sex/gender system as a “set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity” (106). Defining not only gender but sex (in the sense of sexual activity) as a social construct, she highlights the relationship between these two concepts as a result of the sex/gender system (112). Extending the analysis of social construction to women’s oppression, Rubin locates the oppression of women in the social system of the “exchange of women” that is embedded in heterosexuality, rather than in biology (118). She further locates the creation of gender in the sexual division of labor:

The division of labor by sex can therefore be seen as a “taboo”: a taboo against the sameness of men and women, a taboo dividing the sexes into two mutually exclusive categories, a taboo which exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby *creates* gender. [...] Gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes. It is a product of the social relations of sexuality. (121; emphasis in original)

By grounding the creation of gender in “the exchange of women,” the division of labor, and social relations of sexuality, Rubin is able to demonstrate that the two genders do not merely complement each other, but are inscribed in and essential to the maintenance of a hierarchy between the sexes in which men are the beneficiary of a system of exchange and in which women are the gifts. “The asymmetry of gender—the difference between exchanger and exchanged—entails the constraint of female sexuality” (124). Hence, the sex/gender system she describes addresses the inherent inequalities that material social relations reproduce. This groundbreaking article will become, in fact, a milestone of radical and materialist feminism on both sides of the ocean, as well as radical lesbianism and queer theory, as we shall see later.

Following Rubin, a number of other feminists took up the term gender and insisted on its political valence. Historian Joan Scott’s often-cited “Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis” (1986) is a case in point. By arguing for a “gender history,” she is arguing both for the recognition of gender as a system (as in Saussurean linguistics theory) and, specifically, a dualistic relational system that is inevitably hierarchical.

The core of the definition [of gender] rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. (Scott 1986, 1067)

Encouraging historians to move beyond a “women’s history” that ignores the political relations between women and men, Scott highlights the importance of looking at the mutually constitutive nature of the two genders and the way they are imbued with relations of power.

This is the point also of Third World feminists in their shift from a “Women in Development” to a “Gender and Development” discourse. Devaki Jain, in her overview of the United Nations women’s conferences, traces this discursive shift to the period between the 1975 UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City and the 1985 conference in Nairobi (Jain 2005). Again, as with the Scott article, the shift here is attributed to a desire to address differences in power relationships between women and men (Sen and Grown 1987). As advanced by Third World women’s organizations, such as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), the language of gender becomes the language hereafter deployed by the United Nations and other international organizations. Whether it retains its political meaning when it moves beyond feminist-inspired policy and research activists is another question, a question addressed by among others Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz (1997) and Michelle Rowley (2011).

I conclude this brief overview of the term and concept of gender as a social construction in the 1990s when biological sex comes under the same deconstructive scrutiny as gender. Thus the deconstructive lens moves beyond the male-female dichotomy to challenge even the sex-gender dichotomy. The works of philosopher Judith Butler and biologist Ann Fausto-Sterling are key here. Not only is sex role constructed; not only is gender constructed; but biological sex is also constructed (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Thus Butler (1990, 1993, and 2004) is able to question the hypothesis that sex exists prior to gender. She argues that sex and gender are constituted through the repetitive performance of gender and “sedimentation of social practices”(2004, 44). This radically deconstructive strategy is effective in opening up a new feminist consideration

of queer and transgender politics. At the same time, however, it also troubles decades, if not centuries, of feminist politics by questioning the stability of the notion of being a woman and hence the epistemological foundation of feminism by destroying its unit of unity – (biological) women. French and Quebecois feminists will take notice of this theory of gender and, as I will discuss below, engage with U.S. feminists on its implications for feminist politics.

French Treatment of (non)Gender

English-language readers of this dissertation may be surprised that this discussion of French feminism makes no mention of the psychoanalytically inspired theorists best known in the United States—Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva. Although what I explain here pertains to feminist theorists across the ideological spectrum, I develop my argument with attention to those feminists whose writings were the most influential in the development of feminist theory both in France and Quebec --Simone de Beauvoir, Christine Delphy, Nicole-Claude Matthieu, and Collette Guillaumin.²⁴ Not that the latter-named authors are totally unknown in Britain, Australia, and the United States—and in fact, in many ways, their theory is less distant from U.S. ideas than the former three; but in spite of the similarities between U.S. and French feminisms in some aspects, it is the distinctiveness of the French discourses that interest me here.

²⁴ For more on the positioning of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva as exemplars of “French feminism” in anglophone literature, see Christine Delphy, “L’invention du ‘French Feminism’: une démarche essentielle”(1996); Claire Goldberg Moses, “La construction du ‘French Feminism’ dans le discours universitaire américain” (1996); and the English version with revisions, “Made in America: ‘French Feminism’ in Academia” published in *Feminist Studies* in 1998.

A quick survey of French feminist theory prior to 1989 reveals a relative absence²⁵ of either the English *gender* or the French *genre* to describe the social construction of women and men. That being said, the idea behind the term – the notion that women and men are socially constructed – is clearly present. Upon a first look, it might appear rather strange that francophone feminist theorists do not use a word that originates in their own language to describe a notion that they theorize. This absence is particularly striking in a hybrid community like Montreal, where anglophone and francophone feminists live side by side and have worked together on a more or less regular basis. Yet, as translation theory tells us, the traveling of words and ideas is a complex process that needs to account for a variety of factors. As we shall see, in the 1990s, the term *genre* in French starts being used as a literal translation of the English term *gender* in feminist theory – embedded in a debate about the relevance of its usage (Dagenais 1989) – and at the turn of the century in social science scholarly research. But one can question why it took close to twenty years for the English meaning of the word to cross the language barrier and become part of French feminist theory.

A few factors help us trace the travelings of the word *gender/genre* from its English meaning back to French. To explain this, I will explore first the presence of formal institutions that regulate the French language; second, the importance of Marxist and existentialist philosophical traditions in French-speaking feminist communities; third, the development of alternative terms to address some elements of the social construction of femininity and masculinity; and fourth, the cleavage between anglophone and

²⁵ The word *gender* can rarely yet sometimes be found in a few French texts, namely among authors who were more familiar with U.S. feminism like Christine Delphy who studied in the United States during the 1960s. As early as 1981, she uses the term “genre” to describe the “social positions of men and women” (1981, 65). However, these examples remain exceptions.

francophone feminist communities in Montreal. Finally, I will come back to the 1990s when French feminists directly address the issue of whether or not to use *genre* in French feminist theory.

The first element connected to a delay in the usage of *genre* among French-speaking feminists is especially significant for written and published feminist theory: the existence of formal institutions that regulate rigidly the grammar, usage, and meaning of words in the French language. In France, the ultimate authority is the Académie française, instituted in 1626 to formulate official rules and serve as a reference:

To fulfill [its first mission], the *Académie* has in the past worked to fix the language, to make its patrimony common to all French and to all who speak (practice) our language.

Today, it [the Académie] acts to maintain the qualities [of French language] and monitor its necessary evolution. It defines its good usage. It does so by developing the dictionary that fixes usage of the language, but also through its recommendations and its participation in the different commissions on terminology. (Académie Française)

Quebec has a similar institution, the *Office de la langue française du Québec*, which is also an extension of the state. In addition to their mere existence, both the French and the Quebec institutions have played a role in determining the way French has evolved over time. Because of the complexity of the French language's grammar and spelling, more than a simple dictionary is required to enforce uniformity in the language, especially across different countries; these institutions are expected to serve as "enforcers." For example, the *Office de la langue française du Québec*, more innovative than its European counterpart, has been essential in creating a new lexicon of terms designed to offer alternatives to English neologisms and to avoid "anglicisms." It is clear, however, that the power of these institutions remains formal and that they have very little control over how

language is used informally. Yet, because this control is enforced more strongly in written and published sources and we are looking at published feminist theory, the influence of these institutions is still pertinent.

Neither of these two institutions to this date defines the word *genre* as related to the social construction of sexual attributes. In France, as late as 2005, the *Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie*, a sub-committee of the Académie française invested with the task of determining the relevance of and need for the creation of new words, published the following finding:

The growing usage of the term “genre” in the media and even in administrative documents, when dealing with the question of equality between men and women, calls for a position on the terminological level. We can see, namely in articles and books in sociology, an abusive use of the word “genre” borrowed from the English gender. [...] In French, the word *sexe* and its derivatives *sexiste* and *sexuel* are perfectly adapted to most cases to express the difference between men and women, *including its cultural aspects, with the economic, social and political dimensions that it implies*. Consequently, the substitution of *sexe* with “genre” *does not answer a linguistic need* and the extension of the meaning of the word “genre” is not justified in French. In these specific meanings, expressions using the word “genre” and *a fortiori* the adjective “genré” or even the term “sexospécificité” should not be used. (Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie 2005; my emphasis)

As we shall see later, this position was taken even in the wake of the increasing usage of the term in French in the early twenty-first century. Likely with the same reasoning, and certainly influenced by the Académie’s statement, the *Office de la langue française du Québec* also ignores this meaning of the term *genre*.²⁶

Hence, institutions like the Académie française and the *Office de la langue française du Québec* act as a conservative force that restricts the influence of other languages, in this case English, on the creations of meanings and terms in French. Yet,

²⁶ It should be noted that both institutions also do not mention “rapports sociaux de sexe”; yet, I have not found any article that *prohibits* its usage, as in the case of *genre*.

the influence of such institutions, however real and important, should not be overstated. They do not control, strictly speaking, the content of people's texts and their usage of words, and should be seen as reactions against or endorsements of practices already in usage. In particular, feminists are notorious for paying little attention to such institutions, which are easily dismissed as institutions promoting conservative values and acting as “an old men’s club” (Yaguello 2002).

A second factor – I argue – that delays the use of *genre* can be traced to French philosophical traditions. As exemplified by Beauvoir, both existentialism and Marxism were, in post-World War II Europe, dominant currents of thought in a way that was not the case in the United States, even if they were present. The writings of Beauvoir emphasize that "existence precedes essence." Following this line of thought, human beings create meaning in their life. No universal essence dictates their actions. In this sense, humans are responsible for their acts, even when they cannot always foresee their consequences. Applied to women, existentialist theory posits that women have no predetermined or a priori essence or role that binds or restricts them, and that through their choices, women create their own condition. In other words, women are not essences; they are projects that create meaning by acting in the world.

Moreover, Beauvoir was successful at explaining and conveying these distinctions while using the term sex. She not only argued that sex is not natural, but also that there is a hierarchical relationship between the two sexes, in which men dominate women; hence the term “the second sex.” While Beauvoir continued to express herself through sex terminology – as opposed to gender terminology – she could still convey, by expanding the significations of the term sex, the social and cultural meaning of sex and its

constructed nature, as well as the implied hierarchies that regulate it. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that her “descendants” would not feel the need to coin another term to replace sex.

The prevalence of the existentialist tradition in French and Quebec societies is hard to quantify. However, the impact of Beauvoir's book on second wave feminism in both of these French-speaking societies was undeniable, for it constituted the main reference book. In the late 1960s-early 1970s, the rarity of translated American material rendered *The Second Sex* the primary text of Quebec feminism; many even elevated it to the status of a feminist "Bible" (Lamoureux 1986, 66).

Of course Beauvoir was a major figure of feminism in the United States as well. However, the existentialist tradition, in which she should be read, was not as strong in the United States and was likely unfamiliar to U.S. feminists in the late 1960s-1970s. Furthermore, issues with the translation of *The Second Sex* into English suggest that some of her radical stance on human existence may have been misunderstood. For example, Toril Moi cites an instance where H.M. Parshley, the only translator into English of *The Second Sex* before a new translation appeared in 2010,²⁷ translated “human reality” (réalité humaine) as “the real nature of man,”²⁸ hence evacuating some of her radical thought in the English version. Although Beauvoir was widely read in the United States, it is possible that the lack of an appropriate context in which to read her work, in addition to some simplifications, mistranslations, and reduction of the content by 15 percent

²⁷ The original translation by Howard M. Parshley of *The Second Sex* was published in 1953 by Knopf. The new translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier was published in 2010 by the same publisher.

²⁸ For more on problems with the translation of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, see “While We Wait: The English Translation of *The Second Sex*,” by Toril Moi published in *Signs* in 2002.

(Simons 1983), may explain that her influence on the development feminist discourses within the United States and France diverged.

The second important philosophical tradition, Marxism, was widely available in the United States and very present in leftist movements, including the feminist movement; and yet, it did not hold the same weight in the general population. One can note an early development of a distinctly Marxist idiom within the feminist writings of such early second wave feminists as Shulamith Firestone, Angela Davis, Evelyn Reed, and Marlene Dixon, in addition to the numerous feminists who were involved in socialist groups. But as a whole, and maybe because of the lingering effect of McCarthyism, even if most feminists continued to include class as a significant category of analysis, Marxist language and concepts lost currency in the academic and activist environment. In contrast, the Marxist legacy within the so-called materialist strain in French feminism was anchored more deeply than even in U.S. socialist feminism. It may also be that race and racialization analyses in French leftist theory was not as strong as it was in the United States; this may have left the field clear for class analysis to more deeply influence French feminism.

However, the notion of social construction – even in the absence of the terms gender or *genre* – is captured in French feminist discourse by other terms that name, identify, analyze, and ultimately resist the hierarchical power relationships developed through the social construction of women and men and femininity and masculinity. As we shall see, this terminology is deeply rooted in Marxist theory, even if, as it develops, it takes on a meaning that goes well beyond Marxist theory.

French sociologist Nicole-Claude Mathieu, as early as 1971, discussing the power relations embedded in the construction of knowledge, not only used the notion of *sexe social* (social sex) to talk about the social groups of women and men, but also advocated for a consideration of these social categories as “leading to a definition and consideration of these groups through their *reciprocal relationships (rapports)*” (1971, 20; emphasis in original). She later crystallizes this idea by defining “social sex” as the ideological construct of sex, the differentiation of functions that come with this dichotomy, *and* the way the organization of society exploits and transforms the dichotomies between the sexes to maintain unbalanced economic, social, and sexual power relations between women and men (Mathieu 1991, 78). However, although Mathieu, in her own usage, understands social sex as embedded in hierarchy, social scientists do not always use it with such a political valence, often discarding the hierarchical element.

Materialist feminists in France also developed terms to emphasize the collective hierarchy implied in social constructionist theory. Borrowing from the Marxist terminology of the social relations of class, *rapports de sexes* or *rapports sociaux de sexe*²⁹ – first used by Delphy in 1970 but systematized by Danièle Kergoat (1982, 1984) – attempts to theorize the interactive and constitutive nature of the sexes as part of a larger social system grounded in hierarchy and material exploitation between the sexes. A more recent text by Danièle Combes, Anne-Marie Daunes-Richard, and Anne-Marie Devreux (1991) explains how *rapports sociaux* differ from a social relation in that:

a social *rappor*t constitutes an organizational logic of the social that *makes system* [qui font système] through all [its] fields. It makes system, i.e. it

²⁹ This term is developed in particular through the works of Christine Delphy, “L’Ennemi principal,” *Partisan* 54-55 (1970); Nicole-Claude Mathieu, “Notes pour une définition sociologique des catégories de sexe,” *Épistémologie sociologique* 11 (1971); and Collette Guillaumin, “Pratiques de pouvoir et idée de nature,” *Questions féministes nos. 2 and 3* (1978).

gives a systemic dimension to a totality of elements articulated among each other and serving the same logic. In this sense, the concept of social *rapport* differs greatly from the notion of social relations (Combes 1985) because it is a theoretical construct that hence has a certain degree of abstraction and of generality and that brings to the fore the main axis of forces that are the logics of social *rapports* that regulate society. (Combes, Daunes-Richard, and Devreux 1991, 63; emphasis in original)

Much like the concept of class relations, embedded in this concept is the notion that these “logics” constitute individuals in opposite, antagonistic, and hierarchized groups. Hence, the *rapport social de sexe* points toward the antagonistic and binary relationship between the group that are men and the group that are women. This concept emphasizes the transversal and ubiquitous nature of these social *rapports* to all aspects of society, not limiting it to the private sphere, the family, or the division of labor.

Bringing this logic to another level, Collette Guillaumin suggested the use of *rapports de sexage* to describe the reduction of a person to her sex collective and individual appropriation of women as a class by men as a class in the private and the public domain. Notice how she breaks down *rapports de sexage* in this 1978 article:

In the *rapports de sexage*, the particular expressions of this appropriation *rapport* (of women as a group, of the individual body of each woman) are: a) the appropriation of time; b) the appropriation of the products of the body; c) sexual obligation; d) the physical responsibility of invalid members of the group (invalid on the basis of age – infants, children, seniors – or of sickness and disability) as well as the “valid” members of the male sex. (Guillaumin 1992 [1978], 19- 20)

Clearly, feminists in French-speaking communities did not feel the need to adopt the term gender in their theories and analyses; rather, they found other ways to emphasize the social aspect of womanhood.

By the late 1980s/early 1990s, however, the notion and use of the word gender, and hence of the *gender/sex* dichotomy, comes to the fore in a number of French venues

where its potential usefulness for feminist theory is debated. This is evident both in materialist feminist theory and, more broadly (as in the United States), within academe and other scholarly research circles. Among materialist feminist theorists, the willingness to consider English-language discourses seems to appear suddenly, in the year 1989, most notably at a conference held that year by the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), with the title “Sexe et genre.” Also that year, Delphy presented a paper entitled “Penser le genre: problèmes et résistances”³⁰ (Thinking gender: problems and resistances) at a conference in Japan while Mathieu published “Identité sexuelle/sexuée/de sexe? Trois modes de conceptualisation du rapport entre sexe et genre.” (Sexual/sexualized/sex identity? Three modes of conceptualization of the relation between sex and gender) in a book entitled *Catégorisation de sexe et constructions scientifiques* (1989). At the same time, within universities and social science research institutes, the use of the English “gender” – perhaps spurred by the adoption of “gender” in the jargon of the United Nations and development studies – had become increasingly common, although usually devoid of any political content.

Therefore, we look at the return of gender to French, this time in the *gender/sex* dichotomy, as located in two distinct spaces and types of discourse. The first type of discourse is located in materialist feminist theoretical debates about the relationships among gender, sex, identity, power, and society. The second is the academic/social scientific discourse of the academy. In order to foster a full understanding of the differences in meaning between the new materialist feminist usage and the academic mainstream meaning, I look at the content of materialist feminist theories in more detail

³⁰ A different version of Delphy’s address “Penser le genre: Problèmes et résistances” was published in the book *Sexe et genre* in 1991 under the title “Penser le genre: Quelques problèmes?” It is this later version that is used for the purpose of this text.

than for the social science discourse, although they should be understood as dialoguing with each other.

For a second time, French materialist feminist theorists take a look at the concept of gender in the sense used in English. Nonetheless, in my careful reading of the writings to come out of the 1989 conference and especially the work of Delphy and Mathieu, the new-found interest in the English version of gender appears not as much as a unilateral submission to the hegemonic and globalizing powers of English, but rather the construction and extension of spaces of resistance where external influence is recognized, evaluated, analyzed, and addressed with a counter force.

A look at Delphy's texts, for example, reveals a theoretical framework for examining the relation between sex and gender – in French this time - “le sexe et le genre” – different from the dominant English-language framework up until this time. In fact, Delphy is well ahead of her time when she posits sex as sociologically constructed as a result of the category of gender, as early as 1981.

We think, instead, that it is oppression that creates gender; that the hierarchy of the division of labor is anterior, from a logical perspective, to the technical division of labor and creates the latter: creates sex roles, that we call gender; and that gender, in turn, creates the anatomical sex, in the sense that this hierarchical partition of humanity in two transforms into distinctions that are meaningful for social practices and anatomical difference, by itself, devoid of social implications; that social practice and only that transforms in categories of thought a physical fact in itself devoid of meaning like all physical traits. (1981, 65)

Both in this early publication and in her later text as part of the *Sexe et genre* conference, she argues that we need to rethink our understanding of *sexe* as the stable, biological component and *genre* as the social construction of women and men.³¹ She first suggests

³¹ One can probably note the similarity with Butler's argument that *sex* and *gender* are both socially constructed (1990, 1993). Although Delphy first theorizes this as early as 1981, she reiterates it around the

that this naturalized understanding of the *sex/gender* relationship carries an assumption whereby we posit sex a priori to gender, hence forcing a relation of causality between the two. Delphy then questions the apparent non-social nature of *sexe*, emphasizing the failure of scientists to define the two sexes in mutually exclusive categories where every individual finds his or her place – whether we describe it by the presence or absence of a penis or whether we refer to the reproductive functions of the two sexes. Hence, destabilizing the “natural” basis of sex, Delphy establishes that both categories are socially constructed and are a reflection rather than a cause of the hierarchical division of labor and the unequal organization of society. In her conclusion, Delphy challenges feminists to dare to theorize the possibility of destabilizing the dichotomy between the sexes, not just between genders, and to incorporate, both in our resistance and our utopia, the possibility of a sex-less society, which, according to her argument, is the only way that we can challenge the hierarchies between the sexes.

Mathieu also turned her attention to the relationship between sex and gender in 1989. In her article “*Identité sexuelle/sexuée/de sexe? Trois modes de conceptualisation du rapport entre sexe et genre*,” Mathieu outlines three modes of conceptualizing the relationship between sex and gender. The first – “*identité sexuelle*” (sexual identity) – conforms to the dominant discourse of Western society and posits sex as natural and gender as following sex – or “*translating*” sex. She calls this a “*bipartition absolue du sexe*” (absolute bipartition of sex; 1991, 232) in which there is an exact overlap between social and biological sex, since the social aspects *necessarily* follow the sex and are thereby naturalized.

same time as the publication of Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, suggesting that the revision of the sex/gender dichotomy was due for a revision across the board.

The second – “identité sexuée” (sexed identity) – is grounded in a collective identity established through socialization processes with other members of the group. It is recognized as social and imposed; yet it is imposed on the basis of their sex. Here, *gender* symbolizes sex and is analogous to it. The sexed identity nonetheless creates space to develop an analysis of the relations between the sexes as social groups and to contest or value that collective identity.

In the third mode – the most interesting for our purposes – she posits an argument similar to Delphy’s that genders are foreign to biological reality, which suggests that “le genre construit le sexe” (gender constructs sex) (255). This “identité de sexe” (sex identity) is grounded in a class-consciousness of the sexes and allows us to see how the organization of society *manipulates* biological reality to serve the differentiation and domination of one sex/gender over the other (256). This conception of sex and gender as heterogeneous brings us back to the materialist conception of the social relations of the sexes where a “sociological and political” connection is established between gender and sex.

Through these two paradigm-shifting texts, one can see how the English meaning of gender is brought into French theory to deconstruct the dichotomy it was originally set up to clarify. The two scholars bridge the gap between French- and English-language feminist theory while holding on to their resistance to using the term gender – or the French version of it, *genre* – to symbolize the dichotomy between nature and culture. The timing of this “returned gender” in French feminist theory, and the framework in which it is embedded, might suggest another factor preventing the integration of *genre* into francophone feminist literature: the refusal to adhere to its anglophone meaning. Both

Delphy and Mathieu revive *genre* only to dismiss it as a useless concept – at least in the way it had been theorized thus far – and by pointing back to the usefulness of their own terminology, that of *the rapports sociaux de sexe*. Hence, these texts might be seen as a justification for choosing to use *rapports sociaux de sexe* for the political implications and transformative potential it contains.

The second way the term *genre* makes its way back to French is through its increasing use in the social sciences in the French academy. Contrary to the case of materialist feminist theory, this phenomenon is a process that developed over time. As Jacqueline Laufer, Catherine Marry, and Margaret Maruani (2003) assess, we can observe the occurrence of the term *genre* in a variety of disciplines, from the more obvious fields of sociology, anthropology, and history to psychology and economics and even to political science and legal studies.

The use of *genre* in the francophone social sciences also carries its own specific meaning. In these communities of practice, the term *genre* has come to substitute for *sexe* without carrying with it its political content – neither specifying how it differs from *sexe* nor conveying the mechanisms that regulate the relationship between *sexe* and *genre*. This academic usage of *genre* thus masks the distinction between an individual and a collective analysis of genders and sexes, the social, political, and cultural constructions of identity, and the importance of grounding this analysis in the experience of the body and the relationships of power that subordinate one sex to the other (Hurtig, Kail and Rouch 2002, 8). Hence, the appropriation of the term gender by institutions (both governmental and academic) allows them to appear renewed and refreshed while evacuating the political “threat” or subversive character that could be contained in this or other terms.

[The term gender] has the special advantage to cleanse issues that, when discussed in the scientific context under the rubric “rapports sociaux de sexe” and in the activist context under the rubric “feminism,” present a conflictual – even demanding – potential. (Hurtig, Kail, and Rouch 2002, 9).

Feminist theorists Francine Descarries and Laetitia Dechaufour (2006) further assert that critical perspectives on the historical and discursive effects of the dichotomy between gender and sex are evacuated from this new usage. These critiques are not fundamentally different from those addressed by English-speaking theorists in their respective disciplines (see for example, Baden and Goetz 1997; Rowley 2011). Through this wide yet de-contextualized integration of gender, the word loses its political valence, enters the dominant discourse, and becomes as hegemonic as *sex* once was.

Yet, it seems that in addition to the problems common in French and in English in the mainstream usage of gender in the social sciences, a number of problems seems specific to or exacerbated in the case of French.³² For one, the plethora of meanings and situations in which *genre* is used brings confusion and a loss of meaning. On her website, French sociologist Marie-Victoire Louis has reported more than twenty-five definitions or uses of the word *genre*. Hence, the polysemic character of the term *genre* adds confusion and ambiguity and empties the word of any analytical possibility if particular meanings are not specified.

The existence and strength of the grammatical concept of *genre* – a concept central to the French language, but only peripheral in the English language – might further its apolitical and naturalizing nature. According to the French literary scholar

³² In addition to the multiple meanings of gender present in English, one needs to add all the meanings associated with the grammatical gender – which are a lot more present and used in French – as well as *genre* in the sense of type, or style – as represented in English by the use of “genre” as in “This is a good movie in its genre....”

Christine Planté (1991), the choice of the seemingly arbitrary gender of animate and inanimate objects – when it does not refer to their sex – is justified through a reference to sexual/gender attributes that are naturalized for the purpose.³³ Thus, she highlights the risk that the similarity of the term *genre* as a marker of social characteristics to *genre* as a grammatical concept might contribute rather than challenge the naturalization of the differences between women and men:

Hence, the concept of gender appears to me, today, in French, to imply through a linguistic and extra-linguistic confusion, a risk of remotivation of the grammatical “genre” and, paradoxically, of rebiologization of the understanding of the difference between the sexes, that which its usage aimed to criticize initially. (56)

As we have seen, the movement of the word *genre* follows a weaving trajectory that, as a result of both linguistic factors (the prior meanings of gender; the existence of alternatives) and non-linguistics factors (the socio-political context; philosophical traditions; institutions), influences politics and theory.

Before turning our attention to Quebec, I want to point out that the theoretical traditions are not as impermeable as I might have suggested in this article to this point. We can see a constant back and forth between U.S. and French feminist theory, although it remains discreet. For example, it is important to point out that Beauvoir’s phenomenological approach to women’s condition is not so distant from Mead’s earlier anthropological studies. Furthermore, Margaret A. Simons (1999) has documented Beauvoir’s connection to antiracist theorizing then taking shape in the United States by way of her friend, author Richard Wright, who, according to Simons, urged her to read Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.

³³ Planté gives the example of the masculine gender of “soleil” (sun), which is justified through its strength, vitality, and energy in contrast to the moon (lune), which is feminine grammatically, through its association with the night and the softness of its light. Hence some typical “feminine” or “masculine” qualities are mobilized and essentialized to justify this grammatical distinction.

Similarly, when looking at the definition that Scott gives us of gender, one can't help but notice how similar it is to the French development of *rapports sociaux de sexe*.

Combined with the fact that Scott is a French historian who was immersed in French deconstructive and other postmodern theories, this fact is not so surprising. Similarly, Rubin relied on French authors to develop her thoughts. Numerous reference to Saussure, Derrida, and Foucault in Scott's work, and Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan in Rubin's testify to the complexities of these exchanges.

Gender in Montreal

As we have seen in chapter 2, language politics play an important role in negotiating alliances and in the development of feminist thought in Quebec and, as I suggest, on the absence of the word *gender/genre* in Quebec feminist theory. Even as francophone Montreal feminists stop organizing side by side with the anglophones of their city and country, they remain grounded in U.S. feminist theory for a few more years. However, because so few feminist activists were fluent in English, they remain dependent on each other and on the good will of publishing houses to have access to U.S. and English Canadian texts in French. Some of that labor – the arduous labor of translation- will be done by feminists themselves. For example, two feminists involved in the FLF translated Juliet Mitchell's "The Longest Revolution" and Anne Koedt's "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" in the fall of 1971, two texts that they brought back from a trip to New York that summer (Péloquin 2007, 31). As hungry for knowledge as they might have been, their access to U.S. and French texts remained anecdotal and network based – sharing, translating, and photocopying whatever texts they can get their hands on. Here, the

arbitrariness of translation has allowed some texts, such as Margaret Benston's "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation" (1966; published in French in Paris as early as 1970) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (translated as *La politique du mâle* in 1971), to influence the development of Quebec feminist theory, while preventing other important texts from exerting their full influence. In the case of Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women," it was not until 1998 that Mathieu translated it into French, in France. And by then, as we shall see next, numerous texts had used and changed the meaning of the word *genre* in French. Hence, the politics of language affected the traveling of the concept of gender between francophone and anglophone feminist circles through a combination of a voluntary segregation between the communities and a lack of available translated texts that used gender to mean the social construction of women and men/ femininity and masculinity. Moreover, Montreal feminists will start having more direct access to the feminist texts produced in France at the end of 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The influx of French materialist feminist theory will create a shift in feminist theory in Montreal, a shift that will reassert the existing divide between anglophone and francophone feminists.

The prevalence of the existentialist tradition among French-Canadian feminists is hard to quantify, however, as in France the impact of Beauvoir's book on second wave feminism in French-speaking Montreal was undeniable. As I described above, in discussing French feminist theory, the need for a separate term to designate the idea of a non-natural, non-essential woman would not have been as strong in Quebec, where existentialist theory, which had also put down deep roots, stressed the importance of the creation of social meaning in defining existence. Given that the concept of the social

construction of women had already been popularized, the use of a specific term, in this case *genre*, seemed superfluous.

A close reading of feminist texts appearing in Quebec at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s reveals a clear absence of the term gender. Yet, just like their French and U.S. counterparts, Quebec feminists still demonstrate an understanding of femininity as constructed, fluid, and rejectable. One example I can present is taken from the Quebec radical feminist publication *Les têtes de pioche*³⁴ (1975-1978). In a discussion of the cost of letting go of femininity, the assumption that femininity is not "natural" and therefore can be rejected is emphasized:

Each woman who tries to free in herself creative forces, hence desire, is always under the impression [that she] loses her "femininity." If losing one's "femininity" means [to be ourselves] and to give ourselves the means to own ourselves, if "femininity" is a brand name for a better masculine consumption, if it represents the domestication of our desires and projects, then we don't want anything to do with this docile and aseptized femininity. ([Collectif Les têtes de pioche] 1980[1975], 16)

Furthermore, *Les têtes de pioches* actively extends the existential notions applied to men to their own condition:

If there is no eternal masculin[ity], it is because men are always in movement (they make history); we should hence conclude that the simple fact of having a uterus and a vagina (the clitoris is always forgotten) make us "closed" [*bounded*] beings, closed to our own geneticality, dedicated to repetition, to reproduction from century to century. ([Collectif Les têtes de pioche] 1980[1975], 16)

Other examples can be drawn from the *Manifeste des femmes québécoises* (MFQ) and the *Front de libération des femmes* (FLF). As in the United States and in England, even before Ann Oakley's book or Gayle Rubin's article, revolutionary feminists in

³⁴ The literal translation of the name of this collective is The Heads of Pickaxes or The Pickaxes' Heads.

Quebec, echoing Beauvoir's ideas, were invested in a project to de-biologize the justification for oppression of women by men:

Women's exploitation does not rest on biological differences.
([Collective: MFQ] 1971[1970], 26)

[...]because woman's inferior status in our society is not grounded on a biological or psychological difference and because our liberation can only be achieved through the struggle between the sexes.
([Collectif: FLF] 1982[1971], 107)

Rather, Quebec revolutionary feminists identify "women as a class" that share a common condition. Furthermore, while these groups spend very little time discussing "woman's nature" in itself, they seem to posit a fluid conception of woman that can be re-constructed. For example, one can find in the *Manifeste des femmes québécoises* the notion that, in addition to changing the constitutive conditions of women's oppression, "women's nature" can be changed through the struggle:

and also by creating a new women's culture, a culture where women will be in solidarity in the struggle for liberation. Because it is through the struggle that the new woman and her culture will be created, a revolutionary culture from which all dependencies will be excluded.
([Collective: MFQ] 1971[1970], 39)

As these examples illustrate, the notion of the social construction of gender was well articulated in feminist political theorizing even without the use of a specific term to address it.

A number of groups ground their understanding of women's oppression in Marxist terminology, either because it is their intention to deploy a Marxist analysis for feminist purposes, or, at different times, because they are trying to convince Marxist men of the validity of their claims. For example,

We, women, always struggled and will continue to struggle against those who use us, against this phallogocratic and this capitalist and classed society, against the

reproduction of the relations of productions like those of sexist power. [...] To the left we say: We are your equals, engaged just like you against a common bourgeois and sexist enemy, we struggle against male/female power *rappports*, don't forget it. ([Collectif Les têtes de Pioche] 1980[1975], 22)

In this quote, we see a clear dialogue with socialist groups, with women joining with socialist men in identifying a common enemy, while warning that they are also fighting sexism. We can notice the use of Marxist terminology of “rappports de production” and “rappports de pouvoir mâle/femelle,” while also using a more American reference to sexism. Other terms, such as “sexual exploitation” and the constant reference to women’s “oppression,” indicate the importance of the Marxist framework for those women. In short, revolutionary feminists in Montreal use a combination of a Marxist framework and ideas inspired by the Third World struggle for national liberation to frame their feminist discourse. In this mix, there is a remarkable absence of the term gender.

The 1980s decade marks a consolidation of the use of *rappports sociaux de sexe* in Quebec feminist theory. As French materialist feminists developed their own terminology to name, analyze, and resist constructions of women, Quebec feminists followed a similar trend, indicating that the ties between feminists in Quebec and in France were multiplying and that French materialist theories landed in fertile ground and answered the theoretical need of many Quebec feminists (Juteau, 2007). The use of *genre* to designate the social construction of men and women is relatively absent from the vocabulary of Montreal feminists.³⁵ Instead, one can read countless references to “rappports de pouvoir entre hommes et femmes,” “rappports sociaux de domination,” “rappports sociaux de sexe,” “rappports hommes/femmes comme rappports de pouvoir,” “spécificité des rappports

³⁵ This analysis is based on a review of the feminist literature published between 1950 and 1995 available through *JSTOR* and my personal collection of texts. I have noted a few isolated instances where the term *genre* is used.

hommes/femmes,” “rapports de domination hommes/femmes,” and “rapports entre les sexes.”³⁶

French materialist feminist theorists have a particularly strong influence in the social and political sciences in Quebec universities, which was also a stronghold of feminist theory in the 1980s. Two main publications mark the shift in sociological thought, among feminists, as a result of French materialism: an anthology edited by Yolande Cohen, *Femmes et politiques* (1981), and a special edition of *Sociologie et société* entitled “Les femmes dans la sociologie,” also published in 1981. In addition to being two collections bringing together emerging (and not so emerging) feminist scholars mainly from Quebec, they are also the locus of a paradigm shift within the social science disciplines. They question the grounds on which these academic disciplines were built and discuss the impact of new conceptions on research and knowledge. They stabilize a “canon,” giving pride of place to the three French feminists whose work I discussed above, Delphy, Mathieu, and Guillaumin. In promoting a certain trend of thought—materialist feminism—the two collections provide this current of thought the strength necessary to destabilize the epistemological foundations of the social sciences. With these texts, Quebec feminism is translated into an academic (read: legitimate) space.

It is interesting to note that in the introduction to the special issue of *Sociologie et société*, Nicole Laurin-Frenette references both U.S. and French feminists and social scientists. Yet, she seems to stutter every time she references U.S. sociology and its “sociology of gender.” In fact, she says: “This “feminine fact” has become the object of what American sociologists have named it with the almost untranslatable word ‘*sociology*

³⁶ Translation: “power *rappports* between men and women”; “social *rappports* of domination”; “social *rappports* of sex”; “*rappports* between men/women as power relations”; “specificity of men/women *rappports*”; men/women domination *rappports*”; and “*rappports* between the sexes.”

of gender” (1981, 7; emphasis to indicate English in original) and inserts in the footnote a few U.S.-based references to support her point. A little later, she continues: “Feminist research that is connected to sociology of sex (meaning “*gender*”)” (1981, 9, parenthesis and “*gender*” in English in original), a substitution she repeats a few time in the text. Hence, Laurin-Frenette seems to be coining the term *sociologie de sexe* to replace sociology of gender. It seems that it would never occur to her to use *genre* to translate gender, one can infer, because the meaning of gender is contained in the term *sexe*, and so far from the established meaning of *genre*.

As we move into the 1990s, Quebec feminist theorists continue to favor *rappports sociaux de sexe* over gender, although we do see the rare but increasing appearance of the word *genre*. Hence, the notion social construction of women and men is more often than not inscribed in a complex understanding of power, which the word *rapport* often signals, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. For example, in the following citation, political scientist Manon Tremblay integrates both the social aspect and the power dynamics of the constructions of the sexes as elements central to the definition of feminism, without mentioning the term gender:

One of these agents of change is the feminist movement, which refers to the discourses, practices and organizations that propose new models for the socio-political *rappports* between the sexes, inspired by egalitarian and autonomous ideals. (1992, 61)

Social *sexe* thus nullifies the need for *genre* and is positioned in a complex systemic matrix of relations of power.

Here, I want to insert a note on my method to address some change in the material available for review. In addition to the activist material and the few feminist books, I also look at and analyze systematically the production of knowledge through the only Quebec-

based feminist academic journal *Recherches féministes* from its beginnings in 1989 to current years. As the following section discusses, this publication becomes a central locus for debates around feminist theory in Quebec.

In the first ten years (1989-1998), excluding the book reviews, only five articles contained *genre* in their title (Piché, 1989a; Souza-Lobo, 1991; Michard and Viollet, 1991; Dumais, 1992; and Michel, 1995).³⁷ Piché's "L'environnement a-t-il un genre?" caught my attention. Not only was the word *genre* in the title, but the article served as the introduction to the whole issue – an issue presumed to be dedicated to gender and the environment,³⁸ -- and therefore I proceeded to explore the content of all the articles in this issue to explore how many times and in what way the word gender was used by the different authors. The results of these two searches – the search of titles and of the content of selected full texts - can be classified in three different types of appearance of the word *genre*: (1) a translation of gender; (2) a review of anglophone literature; and (3) an engagement in/with the terminology of gender/genre.

In the first category, we find translated articles. For example, the text by Elisabeth Souza-Lobo's "Mouvements des femmes et représentation politique au Brésil (1980-1990): le genre de la représentation" (1991) is a translation of a Portuguese article.³⁹ This is also the case of an article entitled "Genre et subjectivité: Simone de

³⁷ Of these 5 texts, I will not review the one written by Hélène Dumais (1992) because the word *genre* actually refers to the grammatical sense. This text is a review of the work she does to help integrate a non-sexist language into grammar and written texts. Although there is probably a pun in the title, referring both the grammatical and sex/gender identity, the word *genre* does not carry this ambiguity in her actual text.

³⁸ Unfortunately, I could not find the call for paper for this issue of *Recherches féministes* to confirm or infer this assumption.

³⁹ This text was also presented in French at a Brazil-Quebec conference. Because the author died before the publication of the text, the translation was actually done by Marie-Blanche Tahon, based on the Portuguese original text (1991) and the conference notes of the author.

Beauvoir et le féminisme contemporain” by Sonia Krucks (1993), which was a direct translation of her English-language article published in *Signs* in 1992.

In the second category, some authors demonstrate a proficiency in English literature. This is the case of Anne-Marie Séguin, who, in her article on suburbanization and the organization of residential spaces, uses the term *genre* once, in a sentence that follows the use of *rapports de sexes*.

However, we formulate the hypothesis that “rapports sociaux de sexes,” which intervene in the production of residential forms, are also influenced and mediated by them. Residential forms intervene in the social construction of gender (*gender* in English) defined historically and spatially. (1989, 52; emphasis in original)

Contrary to others, Séguin feels the need to define the concept by both adding the English term in parentheses and by creating an endnote where she explains the term in the following way:

The use of the term gender, borrowed from the anglo-saxon works, allows one to distinguish the biological sex from the socially and historically constructed sex (roles, attributes, etc., that are transformed according to different eras). (1989, 63)

One can notice in this definition the use of socially and historically constructed sex.

Although she takes the time to define it, she never mentions the term *genre* anywhere else in the text, and proceeds to use “rapports sociaux.” Hence she establishes a certain knowledge of the term, without deploying it for her theoretical framework.

In the third category, feminist authors demonstrate a certain level of engagement with the term *genre*. This engagement can be either one of adoption, or one of relative criticism. Falling in the category “adoption of the term,” Denise Piché, in her introduction to the environment issue of *Recherches féministes*, justifies the need for such a topic and announces the goals of the issue:

Places and living environments testify in this sense of the “rapport sociaux,” notably the “rapports de genre,” which they contribute to reinforce and reproduce. They are hence an object of interest for feminist research because their interpretation can enrich our understanding of the [living] conditions of women and to flush out the important, but under-recognized, factor of the reproduction of “rapports de genre” and resistance to change. (1989a, 1)

Right away, she presents us with a hybrid term: *rappports de genre*. This author seems to be merging the concept of gender and *rappports sociaux de sexe*, without any explanation.

Not only does she repeat *rappports de genre* numerous times in her introduction, but she also uses it in her later article in the same issue of *Recherches féministes* (1989b).⁴⁰

Another example of an author adopting without a second thought the term *genre* is Andrée Michel in “Militarisation et politique de genre” (1995). Michel’s argument is centered around the concept of *politique du genre*, which she writes in quotes at the beginning of the text, suggesting she might be borrowing it from somewhere else (perhaps an anglophone text?), without ever defining or explaining it. The closest thing to a definition is found in the abstract where she writes:

We will try to demonstrate that through militarization, the military-industrial complexes, social formations erected as military-industrial systems (MIS), structure the economy and power and develop a “war culture” in order to preserve and reinforce the domination of men over women. It is thus legitimate to talk of gender politics [*politique du genre*] as a latent function of a system that presents itself as the ultimate defender of security for both sexes. (1995,15)

It is particularly interesting to note in this quote the use of “both sexes” right after “gender politics” since, throughout the rest of the text, the author never mentions sex again and uses a broad definition of gender to account for, namely, the number of female bodies in certain spaces (for example, how many women hold a position of power in the army). Thus, she suggests that she does not differentiate between sex and gender.

⁴⁰ It should also be noted, that Piché received her Ph.D. in London and hence is probably incorporating some of her English knowledge.

Another element of this quote worthy of attention lies in her definition of “gender politics” where the domination of men over women offers a certain understanding of a hierarchy. But is this hierarchy a function of “politics” or of “gender”? She does not say.

On the other hand, some authors use the term *genre* in order to criticize it or at least enter into dialogue with it. Among them, one can look at Dominique Masson who, struggling with the task of reviewing a book published in English, makes the following comment:

Despite the constant usage of the concept gender, which refers to the process of construction of the social category of *both* sexes, here it is mainly about women. The social definition of women as a group is historically in motion. A consensus emerges around the theoretical importance of an examination of relations within and between the production sphere and the social reproduction as a central location for transformation that come to affect both gender (the social definition and social characteristics associated with being “woman” or “man”) and the constitution of social spaces.” (1989, 141; emphasis in original)

Here, Masson seems to be cynical. According to her, the use of gender should direct the author to focus on the social constructions of both sexes, not just women, hence her scoffing that the book actually deals mostly with women.

Another example is one that tackles the term gender very directly. In the article “Sexe et genre en linguistique – Quinze ans de recherches féministes aux États-Unis et en R.F.A.” (1991), the two authors Claire Michard and Catherine Viollet decide to explore from a sociolinguistic perspective how feminists and social scientists have used the term gender and sex. Not only do they demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the literature from France, the United States, and the Federal Republic of Germany (in French, République fédérale allemande [RFA]), but they also suggest that, in fact, the attribution of gender in a grammatical sense is connected to relations of power:

In sociology and anthropology, “gender” (*gender*) signifies the social differentiation of imposed behaviors on the basis of a natural substrate: biological sexes. In general, one conceives of the grammatical gender as having no relation to sociological gender, because one of the linguistic postulates is the heterogeneity of linguistic structures and social structures (autonomy of language). However, from our point of view, we have good reasons to consider the grammatical gender as one of the forms that the social differentiation of the sexes takes in the symbolic domain. (1991, 98)

This quote exemplifies the complexity of their reflections around the use of one or the other terminology. Throughout the article, they juxtapose multiple understanding of gender, and do so through three different languages.

As we have seen, during the 1990s, the word *genre* starts to appear in different texts, for different reasons. Overall, however, it remains particularly absent from written material, and very few authors integrate gender at the core of their feminist analysis. A similar analysis of the titles of articles published in the subsequent decade (1999-2008) in *Recherches féministes* establishes a marked increase in the occurrence of gender. In fact, one can count thirteen articles – not including book reviews – that contain gender in their title. Thus, at least in academic discourse, the presence of the word gender has more than doubled over the course of a decade.

But what about women in the feminist movement? Do they also reflect this change in discourse? In order to address this question, I surveyed a set of interviews conducted with fifty-eight women of all ages active in the Quebec women’s movement between 2005 and 2006.⁴¹ A transversal analysis of these interviews reveals a relative absence of the term *genre* in contemporary feminist discourse in the province. A keyword

⁴¹ For a more detailed description of the sample, see the section “interviews” in chapter 2.

search, after a manual clean up,⁴² shows that out of the fifty-eight interviewees, only eight women mention the term *genre*. Considering that all these women are not only self-identified feminists, but also active in some sector of activity of the Quebec women's movement, it is rather surprising that only eight of them insert the word *genre* into their discourse. Among them, two (R02 and R09) only use the term *genre* when discussing gender and development. Women who have work in international agencies seem knowledgeable of the GAD analysis described above. For example, one woman says, "when CIDA⁴³ bureaucrats dropped in on women's groups, over there, to talk to them about their gender analysis, none of them tried to understand..." (R02-Q06). In this quote, she both exposes the concept of a "gendered analysis" and criticizes it for the imperialist approach that international workers impose on local women groups.

Three other women (R11, R25, and R27) mention the word *gender* in the middle of a critique of the Queer/trans movement. One interviewee, explaining that some lesbians, "back in the days," also questioned the limitations around the meaning of being female, says, "the whole question of transgenderism...I understand that it is interesting, this idea; anyway, they are not the only ones – the queers – it is not new to want to play with the questions of gender and to counter it" (R11-7). She then proceeds to criticize the impact of those ideas on the feminist movement. In all three cases, the word *genre* remains absent from the rest of the interview. This later absence confirms that even if some women are aware of its existence, they associate the concept of *gender* with a specific body of research and with a specific ideology, against which they are structuring

⁴² Note that *genre* is also used in the spoken informal language as a filler, as well as a word meaning "type" as in "this type of person" (*ce genre de personne*). In addition, there are three women whose usage of *gender* had to be excluded from the "significant" results because it was so ambiguous that it was impossible to decipher what they meant, which further testifies to the ambiguity around this term even for feminists.

⁴³ Canadian International Development Agency

their thought. In the following example, the woman associates gender with postmodernism, transsexuality, and by extension queer, when she insists on the use of sex instead of gender to prevent the deconstruction of the identity of woman:

The ambient postmodernism since the 1990s, it's very annoying. I think we need to continue to define terms, women in terms of a sex class, otherwise, we won't make it. While incorporating types of experiences with a feminine character, like transsexuality for example. I think we have to integrate them. For me, if we deconstruct women's identity to its extreme limit, we are left with a feminism that doesn't have a women's identity. And because for me there is another one [identity? Reason?], it is not only a gender question, but also a sex question. (R27-Q7)

These women demonstrate a good understanding of the term; yet they make the political choice to resist it.

Three women (R07, R26, R3000) stand as outliers in this analysis for their adherence to a *gender* terminology. First, one woman (R07), although she uses *genre* only once, makes the following statement while defining feminism:

There are also oppressions specific to women that are not connected to other systems of oppression uniquely, that are really specific because ... humans are [include] women, that are really related to sex or gender. And feminism, it's thus the analysis of the oppressions and these inequalities. (R07-Q1)

We see here that she uses both *genre* and *sexe* without distinguishing the two. Based on the content of the rest of her interview, I would argue that this is due more to a familiarity with the English body of literature that allows her to negotiate both meanings than with a lack of understanding that could make her conflate sex and gender. In any case, she comes back to *rappports sociaux de sexe*⁴⁴ to discuss women's oppression numerous times in the remainder of her interview, without using gender again. The second woman (R26) I

⁴⁴ In fact, she uses the term *genre* only once during the interview, and the term "rappports sociaux de sexes" seven times.

want to look at mentions *genre* in a way that suggests some understanding of the difference between *genre* and *rappports sociaux de sexe* when she says:

Of course the concept of patriarchy is still current. Of “rapports de sexe”: I think that the concept of gender even if it is older is still a revelation [in] the 1960s, but I think that the most important is the extraordinary discovery of the concept of sex as a social category. For me, it has been the most enlightening notion. In what way was sex not only based on anatomical characteristics, [and] in what way sex was linked to an ideology, to a discourse on nature; how it naturalized the sexes, how this discourse was the same [as] other “rapports d’oppression” that are deep, that are connected to a larger aspect of humanity. (R26-Q6A)

Here, she demonstrates a good understanding of both *genre* and *rappports sociaux de sexe*, but continues on to discuss sex as a social construct. In the rest of the interview, she comes back to the terminology around *rappports sociaux* and *rappport hommes-femmes*. For her as well, *genre* does not seem like a central theoretical tool, yet she acknowledges its existence and its contribution to the field of feminist theory.

Finally, I consider one other outlier significant for her usage of the term *rappports sociaux de genre*. In a similar fashion as we have seen when looking at the content of academic material, it seems like there is a convergence of multiple theories to create a hybrid concept: *rappport sociaux de genre*.

We are at the crossroad of a movement brought forward by human rights in general, a feminist current of thought maybe more based on identity. Maybe certain academics would even qualify it as postmodern. Where gender is not static. Where resistances, practices of resistance, are as important as the analysis of the root of oppression. In opposition to radical feminism. A feminism [hers] where resistance and transformation of the “rapports de genre,” the “rappports sociaux” in general and the protections of human rights, the human rights of every individual, it has a lot of importance. [...] Regardless of the practice we have, I would say that we can not do without an analysis of “rapports de genre.” Of the “rappports sociaux de genre.” (R3000-Q2; R3000-Q6A)

In addition to using the hybrid term *rapport sociaux de genre*, this interviewee is the only one who introduces *genre* without criticizing it and who integrates it fluidly in her vocabulary.

At first, when one compares the prevalence of the concept “genre” in these interviews with that of *rapports sociaux de sexe*, it might be surprising that the latter appears only in 4 interviews (R7, R12, R16, and R27), out of the entire fifty-three. However, when we extend the keyword search to *rapports sociaux*, the number goes up to eleven. Moreover, a closer analysis of the interviews reveals that most women use a variety of terms that can be linked to *rapports sociaux de sexe*. For example, numerous women use “rapports homme-femme,” “rapports d’inégalité/d’égalité,” “rapports de domination (entre les hommes et les femmes),” and “rapports de pouvoir (entre les hommes et les femmes).” Selecting only the instances where this terminology is applied to relations between women and men as groups, these notions are present in twenty-four interviews – more than half of them.

There are, of course, theoretical differences between *rapports sociaux de sexe* and *rapports de domination*, for example. A *rapport de domination* does not necessarily imply the constitution of women as a group in an antagonistic relation to men as a group; rather, it could represent an individual instance of domination. However, one element that seems stable across the interviewees is the construction of a relational oppression. Francophone feminists in Montreal theorize and discuss women’s oppression in terms of the construction of the relation between one group (men) and the other (women), a legacy of Marxist theory that seems to have influenced even non-materialist feminists. For example, a woman explains what feminism is: “In this sense, it is a tool, a way to analyze

society that allows one to change life, to want to change the “rapports de force.” And the “rapports,” well, I think that I gave you a similar definition, between dominants and dominated, of one sex over the other...” (R21-Q2). Similarly, another woman explains:

For me, I would say that it is clear that the “rapports homme-femme” are parts of these, I think, concepts...regular, in the sense that whether you want it or not, when we talk about poverty, domestic or familial violence...well in all these cases, they are “rapports sociaux,” they are relations between people, but more particularly, between men and women, and, well, of course it’s a part of it...it is at the heart of the discussion. (R05-Q6A)

In this case, the word *rapports* is central to her understanding of women’s oppression.

Still another interviewee emphasizes the importance of understanding the relation between the groups, instead of between the individuals, speaking of the work she does in schools: “Hence, it is [about] how to sharpen [your] view, [your] observation, to say, okay, there is a “rapport de pouvoir” there, and how do we intervene. It is thus a completely different approach, it is the “rapport” that is of interest for us, it is not the individual” (R13-Q8). One can notice here the use of *rapports de pouvoir* without using *rapports sociaux*, yet a similar signification is given.

This equation between “rapports de pouvoir” and “rapports sociaux (de sexe)” is worth an additional sentence or two. Although the origin of these terms is quite different, Montreal feminists seem to adopt them both to discuss women’s oppression. Here, one could extend the analysis of the centrality of the concept of rapport to explain the repeated instances of “rapport de genre” seen before. Even when using gender – a term clearly gaining in prominence in French – feminists feel the need to introduce the notion of “rapports” to qualify it, thereby creating the hybrid “rapports de genre.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Note that the appearance of the hybrid “rapport de genre” can also be seen in academic publications. See, for example, Boisclair (2002).

Another interesting element that is found to different degrees in numerous interviews is the reliance on a material analysis of the category of women. In addition to not using the word gender, a few participants actually explain that they understand the category of women based on the material conditions that they face in contemporary society:

The notion of social group, because for me, you know we talked about it the other day, but for me, I believe in it, you know, [I believe] that there are, there are groups of people who are connected through their common social function. Then, that between individuals, it can vary by degrees, in nature or according to intercrossings of all kind, but there is still something that is there, and it is interesting to recognize it, and it is revealing. Thus, I believe that there is a social group of women, and a social group of men, even with intersex people, and all. But...a social group really in the sense that we are treated socially in a certain way, we recognize each other and others recognize us. Well, you know, all this is not only individual, right? It is not "I feel like a woman" or not, you know. But it's really like, you are treated as such, and you have a biological marker that is, that is, ...that's it, that is seen socially in this or that way. In short, social groups, the *rappports de pouvoir*, that's it, its really...it's really the basis, the *rappports de pouvoir* between two social groups. There. (R25-Q6A)

This definition of women as a group based on how people treat you is very typical of a French materialism inspired by Christine Delphy, Colette Guillaumin, and Nicole-Claude Mathieu.

As a final example, I want to add the current mission statement of the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), whose terminology also reflects the French influence:

The Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) is an autonomous feminist organization that works, in solidarity and alliances with other groups, to transform the *rappports sociaux de sexe* in all human activities in the direction of developing women's full autonomy and the real recognition of their whole contribution to society. (FFQ; my emphasis)

Thus *rappports sociaux de sexe* is made the central element of feminist struggle.

This analysis reveals that even in 2005-2006, feminists in Quebec either (1) have not integrated gender into their feminist vocabulary (demonstrated by its absence in their

discourse); (2) use it only with a specific body of literature (as in the case of the Gender and Development discourse); (3) are knowledgeable about it, yet resist it (both through the rejection of the queer/trans discourse and for its own sake); or (4) adopt it, understanding some or all of its implications. In contrast, the notion of *rappports sociaux* is present in more than half of the interviews, although sometimes respondents used different words (*rappports* “sociaux,” “politique,” or “de pouvoir”). Thus, we see a strong resistance to the term *genre* among Quebec feminist activists even in 2005-2006.

Throughout this chapter, I have depicted the use of *gender/genre* as a politically limiting term. However, as much as the spread of the use of *genre* in different communities of practices has its limits, it also carries some possibilities. First, the return of gender opens the door to theories of transgenderism. Contrary to transsexuality, which Mathieu places in her first mode of thinking about the relations between sex and gender by enforcing at the cost of body modifications a concordance between sex and gender, transgenderism negates any relationship between sex and gender, playing and inscribing different genders on bodies regardless of its “biological sex.” Hence, transgenderism seems to be located in Mathieu’s third mode of conceptualizing the relationship between sex and gender. By inscribing on the body an ambiguity or resistance to the correspondence between sex and gender, they enact and embody – although in a rather individualistic way – a disjunction between the biological and the social aspects of being a woman or a man. The creation of this space by and on individual bodies needs to be further theorized; yet, one can see the possibilities that it reveals.

Another positive consequence of the use of the term gender as an analytical concept in feminist theory is that it fosters a less totalizing conception of structural imperatives. Because the term *rappports sociaux de sexe* is so inscribed in the macro-structures of society, it might not be adequate to account for the micro-processes at work. Hence, its macro-focus runs the risk of universalizing certain societal processes without accounting for local realities. Gender, because of its simultaneous meanings, acts at the individual, the collective, and the social level. Hence, as the polysemic nature of gender can be seen as a weakness because of the ambiguity it carries, it can also be a strength as it allows for a fluid and multiple account of the local and global processes at work in the construction of women and men.

Chapter 4

A Queer Journey

This chapter examines the genealogy of the word “queer” leading to its recent usage in the francophone Montreal feminist community. I start this chapter in the activism of the United States, looking at the usage of queer as it was first articulated, in activist groups, the most notable being Queer Nation. I then move to queer as theory, starting with Theresa de Lauretis’s usage and moving on to a general review of how queer theory has challenged feminism in the United States. In this chapter, I try to give a general sense of the main ideas developed in queer theory, especially how they relate to feminism. After a brief note on the globalization of queer, I follow the traveling of the word to France. I first examine its earliest manifestation within the activist group Le Zoo, noting how “queer” is taken up in France relatively removed from feminist circles, before examining its subsequent theorization through the words of Marie-Hélène Bourcier. I am particularly interested in obstacles preventing a smooth integration of queer in France. Then, moving to Quebec, I again take note that queer activism precedes its theorization by feminists and that here too, Quebec feminists who engage with queer theory face numerous epistemological challenges. However, I also present the possibility that a recently organized queer activist group, Les panthères roses, holds out the promise of a more effective alliance. Finally, however, I conclude this chapter with a critique of queer theory in all three locations from the perspective of my feminism and that of many other feminist theorists.

Queer Activism in the early 1990s in the United States

The birth of queer is generally attributed to the group calling itself *Queer Nation* that was active in New York City starting in April 1990. This group, emerging from the gay and lesbian group ACTUP, whose activism was focused on the AIDS crisis in the gay community, is sometimes credited for the publishing and distribution of a pamphlet entitled “Queers Read This.” This pamphlet and the formation of Queer Nation are the first public mobilization around a re-appropriation of the word queer. Rapidly, Queer Nation chapters will emerge in most major cities in the United States and even in some Canadian cities.⁴⁶

If anti-AIDS activism was one important element leading to the development of queer activism, a second element – too often overlooked in genealogies of queer – is a tradition of radical lesbian activism that was also irreverent. Among the most public, one can name the RadicalLesbians, the Lesbian Avengers, the Furies, W.I.T.C.H. (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), and the annual Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. Although some radical lesbians adopted a separatist stance and tried to create autonomous communities, when these started to implode at the end of the 1980s, some radical lesbians, perhaps looking for a new venue for their politics, began to ally themselves with members of the gay community, recognizing common interests in the struggle against homophobia and heterosexism.

This new queer movement, in its actions and its publication, is known for its confrontational tactics, designed to shock and flaunt their queerness in the public sphere,

⁴⁶ In addition to the original Queer Nation group in New York, one can find traces of Queer Nation groups in over 35 cities in the United States and Canada, including a short-lived chapter in Montreal, to which we will return later. For a complete list of known cities, see <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/orgs/QN/queer.nation.chapters>.

whether it was through public “kiss-ins” or through the collective presence of queers in bars considered “heterosexual.” Their tactics and actions are well represented in the motto “we’re queer, we’re here, get used to it.” Queer activists were determined to break the segregation of gays and lesbians to specific (private) spaces. Furthermore, through their lack of deference and their inclusion of diverse “deviant” sexualities, they were also trying to distance themselves from the more conservative tendencies in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community that were promoting gay and lesbian assimilation into society at large on the basis that gays and lesbians are not particularly different in their lifestyle from heterosexuals (Slagle 1995).

From the beginning, anger seems to have been a major driving force for the movement. Frustrated by the number of deaths in the community – due to the AIDS crisis and the inaction of the government and the medical community to undertake AIDS research – combined with the daily physical and rhetorical violence the community had to face, the new queer movement refused to grieve quietly. An anonymous text distributed at the 1990 Gay Pride parade in New York and entitled “Queers Read This”⁴⁷ provides a few examples. Recalling the anger at the number of dead friends due to AIDS, one of the texts reads: “I will not march silently with a fucking candle and I want to take that goddamned quilt and wrap myself in it and furiously rend it and my hair and curse every god religion ever created.” The repetition of the term “I Hate” in some of the texts and the title of a subsection written in big letters “I HATE STRAIGHTS” testify to this. They clearly ground their statements in a call for action and revolt, through repetition of anger words such as “SHOUT IT,” “LET YOURSELF BE ANGRY,” and “AN ARMY

⁴⁷ This text is available online at <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/misc/text/queers.read.this>.

OF LOVERS CANNOT LOSE.” Furthermore, when explaining the choice of the word queer (instead of gay and lesbian,) they include this idea of anger:

Well, yes, "gay " is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using "queer" is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized in the straight world. (Anonymous 1990)

Hence, queers construct an unapologetic subject who is legitimate in his or her revolt against the pain and violence omnipresent in their community. Furthermore, as the last sentence in the above quote also indicates, their discourse also attacks the assimilationist politics of some segments of the gay and lesbian movement (see also Escoffier and Bérubé 1998, 202). The queer movement of the early 1990s does not want to confine alternative sexualities to private spaces. In this same pamphlet, one can read, “Being queer is not about a right to privacy; it is about the freedom to be public, to just be who we are” and “Let's make every space a Lesbian and Gay space. Every street a part of our sexual geography.”

The politics of sexual visibility – the refusal to confine alternative sexualities to segregated spaces – is also obvious in the first few actions that are organized by Queer Nation. “Infiltration of shopping malls and gay bars, kiss-ins and be-ins” (Escoffier and Bérubé 1998, 203) are among their tactics. Furthermore, the controversial tactic of “outing” (Escoffier 1998, 216) public figures goes beyond a simple politics of visibility; it trades in the right of privacy in the name of collective rights (see also Schecter 1991 for a critique of this tactic).

The most widespread tactic representing the politics of sexual visibility taken on by queer activists lies in the queering of mass media and typically American icons. Using

widely available popular culture icons such as Bart Simpson, the U.S. flag, or the U.S. pledge of allegiance on t-shirts, leaflets, or paid ads, queer activists subvert the images by inserting ambiguity about sexuality and pleasure. By queering Bart Simpson,⁴⁸ queer activists reinscribe alternative sexuality into mass culture (Berlant and Freeman 1993, 209). Furthermore, in their parody of the pledge of allegiance, where “I pledge allegiance to the flag” is replaced by “I praise god with my erection” (underneath a huge erect penis) or “I praise life with my vulva,”⁴⁹ queer activists centralize not so much a specific alternative identity, but sexuality itself. According to Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, the investment of queer images into mass culture challenges dominant society in a number of ways:

The Queer National corporate strategy – to reveal to the consumer desires he/she didn’t know he/she had, to make his/her identification with the product “homosexuality” both an unsettling and a pleasurable experience – makes consumer pleasure central to the transformation of public culture, thus linking the utopian promises of the commodity with those of the nation. (208)

This reminder of the differential politics that animate the queer movement is a by-product of the attempt to unite such a diverse group of people under a common banner, as we see next.

Another element of queer politics I note is the broad alliance between “all” subversive sexualities and people who are willing to support the struggle (who will be known as allies later). Jeffrey Escoffier explains this development as challenging the inadequacy of the gay and lesbian community to address the AIDS epidemic and the

⁴⁸ The “Queer Bart” wears an earring, a Queer Nation shirt, a pink triangle button, and says in a balloon “Get used to it, dude!” For a more detailed description, see Berlant and Freeman 1993, 209.

⁴⁹ For a more detailed description, see Berlant and Freeman 1993, 202-205.

recognition that the AIDS crisis made it important to create alliances with people who might have been otherwise marginalized in the gay community.

The countervailing pressures of gay and lesbian identity politics and of AIDS activism produced a political situation that required a new perspective – one that conceived of identity as stable, but also recognized the incredible diversity within the community. The perspective needed to account for the kinship of all sexual minorities and the range of possible gender roles, ethnic, and racial identities. In this moment, Queer Nation was born. (Escoffier 1998, 215)

This diversity is also grounded in an alliance based on the AIDS crisis victim, beyond a sexual orientation grown into an identity. Hence, we see that transsexuals are included as an important subgroup as well as intravenous drug users. Although transsexuals have always been part of the gay and lesbian community to a certain extent, they have generally remained at the margin of the community. Through the AIDS crisis, however, their presence is re-legitimized.

And finally, a fourth element I identify in queer activism as exemplified in Queer Nation and other groups lies in its lack of demand for a reform of either the political structure or civil society. Instead of making demands, such as the ones made by the gay and lesbian movement for anti-discrimination legislation and access to citizenship based on their sameness to other citizens, queer activists assert that they *are* different (Sagle 1995). They want to challenge the boundaries of what it means to be a legitimate subject by playing on the ambiguities around pleasure, desire, and sexuality. In order to do so, they invest and “pervert” mass culture. In their “Queer Nationality” article, Berlant and Freeman described how queer’s claim to nationhood is a way to subvert the established understanding of citizenship through an appropriation of symbols and identities presented in American mass culture.

The case of the parody of New York lotto ads exemplifies their dual investment and resistance to dominant consumer culture in interesting ways. Mimicking the generic citizen (of various genders and ethnic background) who, in the “straight” ad, explain what they would do with the money won from the lotto, followed by a caption that reads “all you need is a dollar bill and a dream,” the queered ad presents the same framing of a normal citizen, but the expressed dreams might read “I’d start my own cigarette company and call it Fags,” followed by the Queer Nation symbol and the slogan “All you need is a three-dollar bill and a dream.” Here, Queer Nation disrupts not only the American dream, but also “gays’ ” aspirations to such a dream. “The ads link citizenship with capitalist gain, but the ironized American dream cliché [the non-existent three-dollar bill] also establishes the group’s resistance to a liberal ‘gay business’ approach to social liberation, in whose view capitalist legitimation neutralizes social marginality” (Berlant and Freeman 1993, 213). Hence, queer activists through their investment of mass culture symbols and consumerist spaces (for example, actions in shopping malls), rather than making demands on the liberal state for inclusion, have questioned the boundaries of legitimate political subjectivity and citizenship.

In short, the activist tactics deployed by queer groups in the United States are grounded in anger, develop a politic of visibility of sexuality, create alliances with a broader community, and demonstrate a resistance to assimilation strategies.

Queer Theory

Interestingly, the field of queer theory is not directly linked to the birth of the queer activist movement.⁵⁰ Rather, it seems to be a matter of timing. While the strategies and discourse in the street change, so does the framework through which to conceptualize the struggle. At first, both seem to change in parallel, until they merge and meet under the banner of queer theory. This section reviews some of the major principles driving queer theory. Queer theory can be identified by three main tenets: (1) the deconstruction of the political subject, and hence of identity politics; (2) an engagement with discursive politics located in popular culture and representation; and (3) a foregrounding of sexuality as a category of analysis.

The term “queer theory” is attributed to Theresa de Lauretis, who, trying to rattle the field of gay and lesbian studies, is reported to have used it in the title of a conference paper presented at the University of California Santa Cruz in 1990. David Halperin wrote of Lauretis’s talk that her aims were to shock and to “disturb the complacency embodied by the rubric 'lesbian and gay studies'” by substituting for it this “queer” theory and to focus attention on “everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and sexual pleasure” (Halperin 1996). In an article developed from her conference paper and published in 1991, Lauretis focuses more on developing a field of theory that can acknowledge both the differences between and within gays and lesbians, claiming

⁵⁰ Theresa De Lauretis writes in a footnote in her 1991 “Queer Theory, Lesbian and Gay Sexualities” that she was not aware of the activist movement when she coined the term: “My ‘queer,’ however had no relation to the Queer Nation group, of whose existence I was ignorant at the time.” Interestingly, she continues, “As the essays will show, there is in fact very little in common between the Queer Nation and this queer theory” (xvii). As we shall see, there is more in common than she had assumed.

that the theoretical and experiential realities of the two communities are not only very different from each other, but also not monolithic.⁵¹

In a sense, the term “Queer Theory” was arrived at in the effort to avoid all of these fine distinctions [homosexual, gay, and lesbian] in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to both transgress and transcend them – or at the very least, problematize them. (de Lauretis 1991, v)

The transition from “lesbian and gay studies” to “queer theory” has indeed sparked some debates around whether using the word “queer” might allow scholars to “mess up the desexualized spaces of the academy, exude some rut, reimagine the publics from and for which academic intellectuals write, dress, and perform” (Warner 1993, xxvi), as some, including Michael Warner, have claimed, or if, according to others, the intended subversive approach of queer theory became, in fact, less threatening for academic institutions (Halperin 1996).

But the shift is not just one of title and is not just about which title is the most subversive within academic institutions. Rather, I want to turn to the content of this new field of research designated as queer theory. Much as in the activist endeavor to create alliances with a wider range of people, the field of queer theory also attempts to include all conceptions of identities that differ from hegemonic heterosexuality (Escoffier 1998, 174). Michael Warner, in his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet*, tells us that queer “therefore suggests the difficulty in defining the population whose interests are at stake in queer politics” (xxvi). Hence, as there is an attempt to broaden the constituency of the

⁵¹ In addition to addressing the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age, it is worth noting here that Lauretis’s criticism comes in part from the erasures of the specific reality of lesbians in the “gay and lesbian” framework; however, I have my doubt that the move to queer theory has provided a space more welcoming and foregrounding for specifically lesbian experiences.

field, there is also a blurring of clear categories of who is included and who is excluded – an ambiguity that queers celebrate, as we will see later.

In fact, according to sociologist Steven Seidman (1993), despite its diverse constituency, there is still a predominance of white, middle-class men in queer organizing and theorizing. Furthermore, the types of activism that have been used in queer politics accentuate this predominance. As we have seen in the example of Queer Nation, queer activists have used market-based institutions, such as bars, newspapers and magazines, and shopping malls, as the primary locations for their activism. “This structural environment has meant that the institutions of queer culture have been dominated by those with capital: typically middle-class white men” (Warner, xvii).

According to his *Genealogy of Queer Theory*, queer theorist William B. Turner explains that the core of queer theory rests on the questioning of the interrelated categories of gender and sexuality. His introduction argues that the failure of identity politics in post-World War II America to address the concerns of minorities led to a desire to reconceptualize politics in a way that does not rest on liberalism and identities.

Similarly, after the exhausting 1970s – which saw the important advances in lesbian/gay civil rights but also the development of significant backlash leading to the Republican electoral victories of the 1980s – feminist, lesbian, and gay activists and intellectuals, even in some cases those who had benefited from the policy changes of the 1960s, remained dissatisfied with the culture and politics of twentieth-century U.S. liberalism. (2000, 18)

The limited gains that political mobilization in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the rising backlash of the 1980s and 1990s, combined with the increasing refusal of marginalized people to completely adhere to the politics that would seem to represent them (for example, antifeminist women) have pushed queer theorists to question the basis for identity politics.

[Queer theorists] wonder how meanings and practices of identity circulate in our culture such that perceptions of entitlement and abjection along lines of race, gender, sexuality, class and so on become the very horizon of individual self-perception for most persons, demonstrably playing a much more important role than any stirring statements of principle in determining the willingness of those individuals to participate in political processes, including protest. (19)

Furthermore, the complex intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and class that lead to the multiplication of identities push queer theorists to question “the concept of identity itself” (31).

Indeed, this is precisely what Judith Butler has done in her often-cited book *Gender Trouble*. Without self-identifying as a queer theorist at the time, since the book was published in 1990 – the same year that Teresa de Lauretis coined the term and the same year as the formation of Queer Nation – she proceeds to a deconstruction of the gendered identity of women (and men). Using Foucault’s genealogy of sexuality, she asserts that sex is constructed just as much as gender, and hence there is no causal relation between sex and gender. Deconstructing the sex/gender binary, she then asserts that gender can be fluid and completely outside of the norms: “When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice” (1990, 6).

As a movement, queer politics defies typical notions of identity and belonging, in part, because of the way it is centered on a discourse of morality. Furthermore, as Warner puts it, “there has always been moral prescription about how to be a woman or a worker or an Anglo-Saxon; but not about whether to be one” (Warner 1993, xviii). Hence, the discourse of morality questions the very existence of this “identity,” not just how it should be expressed. As a result, the queer movement “rejects a minoritizing logic of

toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal” (Warner 1993, xxvi).

Yet, it would be illusionary to argue that the new queer theory is completely devoid of identity politics. Although it becomes evident that queer politics cannot simply mimic the traditional “ethnic minority” model adopted by African-Americans and feminists alike, because of its fluid member/non-member structure, social scientist Cindy Patton argues that both queers and the New Right in the United States deploy a new form of identity, one based on mutual disidentification and which serves to constitute a subject position.

Instead of understanding identity in an ego-psychological or developmental framework, I will argue that identity discourse is a strategy in a field of power in which the so-called identity movements attempt to alter the conditions for constituting the political subject. (1993, 145)

Here, Patton brings out a new definition of identity to address the kind of politics in which both the queer movement and the New Right deploy. Hence, she questions the social-construction/essentialism debate surrounding identity politics, both in the work of Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick, and the critiques of their work that other theorists have put forward. Engaging a postmodern governmentality, groups negotiate power to claim subject positions. “Quotidian uses of identities must be understood in the context of a struggle to control the general rules of identity construction. The plainly essentializing logics within this field must be viewed as options deployed in a deadly game of queer survival, not as ‘foundations’ for ‘identity.’” (167) For Patton, this alternative understanding of identities and their usage allows us to understand how both queer and the New Right construct their identity against each other. In short, although a questioning of essentialist identities seems to be a common trend in queer theory, a more postmodern

understanding of identity suggests that, despite the rhetoric, some forms of identities are mobilized in the process of creating a political subject.

Another central tenet that united queer theorists, according to Turner, is the idea that their political endeavors, at least in part, needs to engage with the realm of the discursive because access to material reality is always mediated by language. He therefore advocates for a questioning of the distinction between material reality and discursive reality (33). This point – the trade-off between material reality and discursive reality – is at the center of contestation of the queer framework by both feminists and other social scientists. As Escoffier explains in different terms in his *American homo*, the queering of gay and lesbian studies indicates a shift from a focus on “historical, social, and anthropological analysis of documents, movements, and social structures” (174) to one focusing on the “representation of homosexuality in literature, film, and popular culture [...emphasizing] close analysis of texts, popular culture, and the media” (173). Hence, in queer theory as in postmodernism, the cultural displaces the social. Warner also provides a similar description when he says, “the energies of queer studies have come more from rethinking sexualities than from rethinking the social” (x). Dennis Altman echoes this, but formulates it as a criticism by suggesting that queer theory does not leave enough space for “politics understood in the mainstream sense of institutions, elections, organisations and lobbying” (Altman 1996).

Finally another central assertion of queer theory is that we need to re-center the experience of homosexuality (later, “alternative sexualities”) to shed light on the heterosexist bias present in every aspect of Western society. In her highly praised and influential book *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick explains that “an understanding of

virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition” (1990, 1). From her point of view, only from the “vantage point” of a homosexual can one begin to see and unmask the depth and omnipresence of heterosexist power deployment. In the same way that feminists argued that a gendered analysis was needed in all analyses, queer theory makes sexuality, along with desire and pleasure, the focus of research and analyses.

Consequently, queer theorists start on the mission to uncover heterosexist bias and the inadequate (or repressed) discussion of sexuality in major social science works. Diana Fuss (1993) reproaches Freud for not considering the social and constructed aspects of sexuality, which leads him to conclude that lesbians are fallen women, while Andrew Parker (1993) explores the homosocial relationship between Marx and Engels and the inability of their work to account for the importance of sexuality as a political signifier. These and other authors hence ascertain that attention to sexuality would not simply add homosexuals into the existing framework, but would transform qualitatively the kind of knowledge being produce.

From the start, with the publication of *Fear of a Queer Planet*, there is a certain universal aspiration embedded in queer theory and a desire for a global queer community. Although the book is not per se global (apart from its coverage of European theorists and a chapter on Quebec, most of the articles focus on the United States), Warner hints at the global move that was to appear at the turn of the millennium, when he says: “The preference for “queer” represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization” (Warner 1993, xxvi). In this sentence, Warner refers to the attempt to

unite, in a non-essentialist community, bodies and practices beyond traditional gender or racial lines, but he also points to a potentially wider generalization. There is only a step before extending this generalization to all forms of subversive sexualities as expressed in different cultures across the globe.

Soon enough, we see the appearance of a plethora of edited books recounting the specifics of different communities, both in racialized communities within the United States and in the experiences of alternative sexualities across the world. From E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson's *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (2005) to José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), we see an emerging critical description and analysis of marginalized positions within queer communities. Similarly, through the framework of diasporas, David L. Eng's *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (2001), Martin F. Manalansan IV's *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in New York City* (2003), Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez Eppler's *Queer Diasporas* (2000) and *Impossible Desire*, authors move back and forth between the conceptualizing significance of race/ethnicity and American narratives around displaced bodies to highlight the spaces "in-between" where certain bodies queer their sexuality. Finally, some collections of texts and monographs (see among others Blackwood and Wieringa 1999; Altman 2001; Berry, Martin and Yue 2003; Boellstorff 2004; Reddy 2005; Swarr 2012) observe how local communities outside the United States and continental Europe live and articulate their subversive sexuality, wrapped in a queer rhetoric.

Donald E. Hall, however, warns us of the dangers in "exporting" queer theory. As he explains, we can conceive of queer theory in two sometimes contradictory ways. On

the one side, queer theory wants to capture a diversity of transgressive sexual practices where these diverse sexual practices can be read as queer. On the other side, it is grounded theoretically in a specific reading of poststructuralist theory drawing on continental philosophy. Discussing the challenges of giving a voice to a diverse pool of voices from across the world, he says:

It is as if we were living out a twenty-first-century update of a Victorian imperial fantasy, in which we imagine finding a lost tribe of Foucauldians writing densely worded queer theory in a remote valley of central Borneo or in a volcano crater in the Andes. (Hall 2010, 74)

Thus, his article poses the following questions to definitions of queer theory on a global scale: is it the transgressive behavior that makes it queer? Or is it the theorization of the behavior into a specific poststructuralist framework that makes it queer? Can an outsider (read Anglo-American) “read” a behavior as queer by theorizing it? Or does the body performing the behavior have to understand itself as a non-essentialist deconstruction of a subject position? How can we apply these politically sophisticated frameworks where the behavior is at risk of provoking the death penalty? Just as feminism was questioned for its imperialist and Western tendencies, queer theory might have to question its ethnocentrism and its heavy reliance on theory to read and to queer bodies and practices. As we move the locus of this research to France, one can notice that in France, as opposed to some other countries, it is possible to have theoretical seminars among activists in order to “translate” and make legible queer theory for people who might identify as queer. However, the case of France is one of another Western country that values and respects free speech and where being queer does not carry the possibility of a death sentence. A similar type of re-signification of queerness might not be the case in some other cultures.

Queer in France

It is useful to note here that many of the ideas we associate with queer theory were developed – well before the term came into existence – by French feminist Monique Wittig. It is she who first theorized heterosexuality as a political system and its connection to the construction of gender. Indeed, for Wittig, the very idea of woman is the result of the heteropatriarchal system, which operates at economic, political, and ideological levels. Most of her arguments in both “One is Not Born a Woman” and “The Straight Mind”⁵² point to the distinction between “the myth of woman” and the reality of women as constituted by relations of appropriations:

Our first task, it seems, is to always thoroughly dissociate “women” (the class within which we fight) and “woman,” the myth. For ‘woman’ does not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while ‘women’ is the product of a social relationship. (15)

Thus, she advocates for a class war between women-as-a-class and men-as-a-class.

For Wittig, the ontological constitution of the concept of woman is intimately linked to heterosexual bias. Drawing on analyses similar to those proposed in “The Traffic in Women” by Gayle Rubin, she reasserts that “woman” and “women” are the product of these heterosexual conceptions of society. She identifies this heterosexual bias in both feminist and continental thinkers such as Karl Marx, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Lacan, as the “Straight Mind” – an idea that became central to queer theory, namely in the works of Sedgwick. However, contrary to most queer theorists, Wittig remained anchored in a material analysis that foregrounds the concept of a “class of

⁵² For this section, all the page citations of Monique Wittig’s works are coming from the reprint in 1992 of her work in the compilation entitled *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. “One Is Not Born a Woman” was originally published in *Feminist Issues* 1, no 2 (Winter 1981). “The Straight Mind” was originally given as a keynote address to the 1978 Modern Language Association conference in New York City, then reprinted in 1980 in *Feminist Issues* 1, no 1.

women” as a political entity resulting from social relations. Furthermore, contrary to most queer theorists, she does not advocate against all forms of construction of the subject. In fact, positioning herself in opposition to Marxism, she advocates *for* the construction of a political subject, but one who would not be caught in relations of domination.

In addition, her ideal construction of a subject identity would be grounded in recognition of sexuality. Her emphasis on sexuality as a central ontological concept is another point that some queer theorists will use and transform. Yet, for Wittig, we need to understand sexuality as a social phenomenon:

For women to answer the question of the individual subject in materialist terms is first to show, as the lesbians and feminists did, that supposedly “subjective,” “individual,” “private” problems are in fact social problems, class problems; that sexuality is not for women an individual and subjective expression, but a social institution of violence. (19)

In this passage, she asserts the need for women to understand their sexuality as imbricated in social relations.

Although Wittig emphasizes a materialist analysis, she also discusses the role of language and culture in creating system of dominations. Wittig sees the importance of discourse and semiotics, but urges us to consider them as part of the social relationships that structure society and oppression. Using the example of pornography, she reminds us that discourses occurring in mass media have a very real impact on women’s and lesbians’ lives and that discourses can be violent and should be treated as such.

This discourse covers our world with its signs, and this discourse has a meaning: it signifies that women are dominated. Semioticians can interpret the system of this discourse, describe its disposition. [...] But for us, this discourse is not divorced from the real as it is for semioticians. (25)

Hence she criticizes the tendency for semioticians to treat symbols and signs as just that: symbols and signs, with no clear impact on women and lesbian's realities. Language is yet another material relationship that we need to invest politically (30).

In short, a number of theoretical positions developed by Wittig have become central to queer theory: the deconstruction of the category of woman, the heterosexual bias, the deep connection between the domination of women and non-heterosexual people, and the importance of language in structuring our reality. Yet, Wittig's material analysis and her desire to construct an alternative subject sets her apart from queer theory. As we shall see in a later section, queers' departure from the materialist framework and its refusal to construct, even strategically, a political subject constitute some of the main criticism of queer theory expressed by feminists.

The term "queer," however, only travels to France in the mid-1990s. The first group that deliberately borrows the term, explores it, and tries to re-signify calls itself Le Zoo. Through seminars, meetings, and events held between 1996 and 2000, Le Zoo attempted to "translate" U.S. queer theory and to make it accessible to a broad audience through a series of cultural events including exhibits, debates, seminars, roundtables, and conferences. In one of their first pamphlets, Le Zoo seems invested in a political project, identifying their intended contribution to society thus:

To explain in what ways gays, through their existential and aesthetical, politico-sexual, and cultural experiences contribute to contemporary debates and social issues (new family structures, deconstruction of the masculine and the feminine abusively naturalized, identity and identification questions, etc.)...even better.⁵³

⁵³ This text is taken from what is seemingly the first flyer produced by the group Le Zoo, in anticipation of their first event in June 1996. This text is taken from the online reproduction available at <http://www.france.qrd.org/assocs/zoo/index.html>, and retrieved on October 20, 2011.

Their process of appropriation is quite literal. As their record indicates: “It is rather in the third meeting entitled “queer politiks” [English in original] that we will clearly define our position: What do we throw away? What do we keep? What is useful to us?” (Bourcier [Le Zoo] 1998, 58)

Although the group Le Zoo is interested in the development of gay and lesbian or queer studies, they believe that knowledge should first come from queers themselves, as opposed to scholars who would study them. Hence, in France, queer starts through a series of events held mainly at the Centre Gai et Lesbien de Paris (CGL). Drawing from their experiences in these intellectual-activist events, a number of members of Le Zoo will become leading queer theorists in France. One can notice among their members, Marie-Hélène Bourcier and Beatriz Preciado.

When reviewing the importation of the word “queer” to France, a number of issues emerge: (1) how to translate the word; (2) the challenge of French universalism; (3) the threat of the imperialist tendencies of American counterculture; and (4) the problematic engagement with local feminist and lesbian cultures.

Numerous authors have discussed the difficulty of translating the word queer (Deschamps 1998; Bourcier 2006 [2001]; Klonaris and Thomadaki 2003; Gunther 2005). Because the word queer in English is embedded in a reappropriation and subversive process – transforming an insult into an affirmation of difference – how does one proceed when the insult is not in the language to begin with? Hence, most authors start by trying to find equivalent insults in French to recreate a semiotic association. This attempt in the end fails at finding *the* equivalent for translation, but succeeds somewhat in carrying a glimpse of the history of the word over to the new audience. Some, such as Marie

Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, argue that to really carry the political sense of the word queer, French subjects should find their own insulting word and start using that, instead of using the U.S. referent that cannot carry its subversive potential in French discourses. Otherwise, according to these authors, queer will become a “hip word,” devoid of its political meaning and brought into discourse as part of a fashionable theory, forming a new “in” crowd who alone know the newest “in” jargon. Despite this warning, the word queer stuck and no alternative was developed. And it is now being used to signify something akin to what it does in the United States.

From the start, queer theory faced a critique that is specific to France: French universalism and its subsequent “anticommunitarisme.” French public discourse has developed, over the years, a dislike for what they call “communautarisme” – or in English communitarianism. According to Pierre-André Taguieff, communitarianism “is first a word in the French political discourse that, for the past 15 years, has functioned as an operator of illegitimacy” (quoted in Halpern 2008). It is posited against a universalism that recognizes rights for every individual. In this sense, communitarianism would prioritize an allegiance to the community – instead of a broader allegiance to the nation – and submit the individuals to the norms and regulation of that community first and foremost, as opposed to that of the universal state. This derogatory term is constructed in opposition to the American understanding of communities and belonging that recognizes and values the diversity of socio-cultural backgrounds of the people constituting political subjects. Because identity politics was central to political and social change in post-WWII United States (civil rights, feminist, and gay and lesbian movements), the American dominant model of subject formation rests on this recognition of difference. In

contrast, France sees claims made on the basis of community identity as a threat to the republican, egalitarian, and secular claims of the French state where claims of difference run up against a universal model of equality.⁵⁴

Interestingly, queer theorists such as Marie-Hélène Bourcier acknowledge this type of argument in France and point out the contradictions and faults of the anti-communitarianism discourse as inscribed in privilege: “minority politico-sexual identities are able to out do the French nationalist-universalist subject who pretends that he is undifferentiated and undifferentiating but that we all know corresponds to a heterocentered, white, and masculine subject” (2006 [2001], 21). According to Bourcier, the republican anti-communitarianist discourse is used to mask the privileges of dominant and naturalized identities (22).

But to say that no such communitarianism exists in France would be an overstatement. In fact, the gay community (notice here the absence of lesbian) has championed the importing and, according to some, has adopted American identity-based politics to the French context, even as – and proving my point – authors like Frederic Martel (1996) warn against the increasing usage of identity politics in the French gay movement. Yet, as we have seen, queer theory does not try to construct an alternative stable (communitarian) identity that would clash with the universal (French) subject. Instead, queer theory, emerging in the United States *against* identity politics, is an attempt to deconstruct the very basis of political subjects.

⁵⁴ The debate around communitarianism and anti-communitarianism has seen a resurgence in France in the past few years notably around the issue of the headscarf for Muslim women. For more on this debate, see among others Macé-Scaron (2001), Grossmann (2002), Landfried (2007), Levy (2005), and Geisser (2003). For a discussion of how these ideas are applied to the gay and lesbian community, see among others Devoucoux du Buysson (2003), Rambach and Rambach (2003), and Marche (2008).

Here, I want to take a side step to address an interesting aspect of the evolution in the “Frenchization” of queer. In the 1998 *Q comme Queer* account of and discussion about Le Zoo, Marie-Hélène Bourcier makes the following statement:

In the United States, it is the movement resolutely based on a gay identity which has led to excluding marks of difference. And one of the reasons for the existence of queer over there is to undo those identities which threaten to become natural. In France, however, the idea of “queer” can first serve to build up an identity in the classic sense. (Bourcier [Le Zoo] 1998, 96)

In this quote, the author tries to delineate differences between American and “French” queer theory. However, her discourse is structured in a (modern) evolutionist paradigm where queer can only be constructed as different if there is a prior existence of a somewhat essentialized gay identity. In the absence of such identity, queer might not be able to function in a similar way to destabilize existing identities, and hence there is a need to use queer theory to create the very identity it is trying to deconstruct. This very surprising statement by Bourcier disappears, however, from her later work on queer theory. In fact, she argues in *Queer zones* that “The homosexual subject can now demand an identity without an essence [...] The (homo)sexual identity can, from now on, constitute itself not as a substance but in an oppositional manner, not starting from what it is, but based on where it is, and how it operates” (2006 [2001], 137). It might be worth pointing out that between her involvement in Le Zoo and the publication of *Queer zones*, she spent a year as a Fulbright scholar in New York working on a project called “Queer Theory and French Philosophy: The Politics of Inverted Translation.”⁵⁵ We also see, in the meantime, the full translation into French of key foundational queer theory books

⁵⁵ This information was taken from the Fulbright website http://www.cies.org/schlr_directories/vsdir00/Soci34.htm retrieved in September 2011.

such as those written by Leo Bersani (1998), David Halperin (2000a, 2000b), and Jonathan Katz (2001).

Coming back to the issue of French universalist discourse, Bourcier proceeds to argue that the disappearance of the political subject through postmodernism and queer theory might constitute an even bigger threat to the universal French subject:

Queer theory masks the subject of political action for supporters of an ontological or humanist vision of the subject of knowledge. [...] Are [the latter] destabilized by the deconstruction of the notion of the subject or are they afraid to lose the privileges given by a humanist, universalist, or unifying conception of the subject of politics [...] especially in France, where Queer theorization and politics lead to a serious questioning of the hypocritical egalitarian and republican model? (148)

Although queer theory in France presents the same ontological questioning as in the United States, it is received in the context of an existing debate around identity politics. But even if French public discourses are more restrained in their embrace of identity politics, the questioning of a stable political subject – universalist or communitarianian – has deep political implications.

This discussion around communitarianism and universalism in France occurs with a preoccupation with cultural imperialism coming from the United States in the background. Accordingly, both identity-based politics of the gay and lesbian movement and queer theory would be the latest (counter)cultural product of the United States to be exported and “sold” to the rest of the world. In the case of the gay and lesbian movement, some authors have argued that the presumption that the gay and lesbian movement became “Americanized” is an oversimplification of the cultural processes of borrowing and translation. In fact, in his study of the Centre gai et lesbien de Paris, William J. Poulin-Deltour explains that “while there may be agreement that American forms, such

as "community centers," have crossed the Atlantic, the content or filling of these forms varies widely between French and American contexts" (2004, 119).

The work of Eric Fassin can help us here to understand the different rhetorical deployments that are at work, both in the case of the gay and lesbian movement and in the discussion around so-called "American communitarianism." In his book chapter, "'Good to Think': The American Reference in French Discourses of Immigration and Ethnicity" (1999), Fassin suggests that we need to distinguish between the United States as a country and the "French mythical construct purporting to portray the United States" (224). Hence, what is tagged as "American" serves a specific function in discourse: either a basis for dismissal (communitarianism) or a call for emulation (identity politics). Poulin-Deltour confirms the presence of this rhetorical play in French discourse when he states, discussing the election of a president for the same gay and lesbian center in Paris who was tagged as American: "Just as his affiliation with American activism had at first been used to endorse him, it was now being used to discredit him" (124). Similar claims of Americanization are made around the concept of queer. For example, Klonaris and Thomadaki (2003) argue that the transplantation of queer into France reflects on American hegemony and its tendency to export its (sub)cultural productions.

In short, a number of factors seem to discourage the integration a specifically queer activism and theory in France. Existing French traditions of diversity force queer theorists to first assert an identity that only then will they be able to deconstruct. The fear of American cultural imperialism creates additional resistance to queer. The reluctance of feminist theorists to let go of their materialist framework prevents a coalition between queer and feminist theory as seen in the United States. Finally, problems related to

translation and language constantly comes up in discussions around queer. As we move to Quebec, we will see that only one of these factors plays a role in discouraging the integration of queer theory into the feminist discourse: the reliance on a materialist framework.

Vive le Québec Queer!⁵⁶

Early Queer Activism

The term queer first appear in Montreal in 1991 through the creation of a local chapter of Queer Nation, renamed Queer Nation Rose to underscore the francophone component while paying tribute to Joe Rose who was killed in a violent gay bashing attack in 1989. The connection between Montreal HIV/AIDS activist groups and their U.S. and Canadian counterparts culminated a little earlier, as U.S. chapters of ActUp organized side by side with the group Canadian AIDS Action Now! and the Montreal Réaction-SIDA group. During the Fifth International AIDS Conference, held in Montreal in 1989, these groups coordinated direct actions to disrupt the conference and demand that science be more accountable to the “people with AIDS ” community. According to some U.S. activists, the confrontation at the Montreal conference in 1989 led to a more humane scientific agenda, encouraging the anti-AIDS activists to continue their politics. Thus, the following year, activists and people with AIDS found themselves sitting side by side with the medical community at the International AIDS conference to denounce U.S. politics around AIDS and to design scientific research that was more humane (Goldberg 1998).

⁵⁶ This title is taken from a newspaper article (Charlton, 1997). It plays on a well-known slogan for the separatist movement in Quebec – Vivre le Québec libre – and the word queer.

Although it is hard to document the specific ways queer activists in Montreal and in the United States maintained a relationship beyond the Fifth International AIDS Conference, the formation of Queer Nation Rose represents a clear connection between them. The frenchification of the name of the group by adding the name of a local victim testifies to the desire to address the specificity of the local struggle. For the group's first documented action, a candle vigil to commemorate the death of Joe Rose was held. An interesting combination of hope and anger was represented in this action: "The candles symbolize hope for a world without anti-gay violence, while the flame symbolizes burning anger for the ignorance that cost Rose his life, said Peter Dubé, a member of Queer Nation Rose" (Lamey 1991a). Hence, the anger component typical of U.S.-based Queer Nation is present, although the use of a candle vigil appears to be less radical than the types of tactics promoted by Queer Nation New York, for example.

Another element that finds its way into the Montreal chapter of Queer Nation in 1991 is the desire to create ties outside of the lesbian and gay community. Queer Nation Rose organized a demonstration to mark the one-year anniversary of the Sex-Garage incident in Montreal, where police raided a private party and arrested fifty-six people. According to *The Gazette* – Montreal's mainstream anglophone newspaper – in an article covering the commemorative march, "organizers have invited black and Mohawk community groups, both of which have had difficulties with police in the last year, to take part in the demonstration" (Lamey 1991b). Thus, Queer Nation Rose attempted to form coalitions with other marginalized groups of society.

A third element making its way across the border is the idea of visibility. During the 1991 gay and lesbian parade, a debate emerged in the community about where the

parade should take place. Organizers of the parade had planned to walk through the gay Village because, in part, the parade was sponsored by Village businesses (Patel, 1991). However, some members of the community, including Queer Nation Rose, opposed this choice and decided to stage another march in downtown Montreal. Two issues were brought up to justify this choice. First, Peter Dubé, a spokesperson for Queer Nation Rose, said, "We want to increase our visibility in the whole city and just going through the village wouldn't do anything to help that" (Patel 1991). In addition, as Patrizia Tavormina, of the Concordia Lesbian Studies Coalition explained, the Village was considered a space mainly for gay men, and lesbians did not feel welcome there (Patel 1991). Thus, the desire to have a visibility that might confront a generally homophobic public, rather than confining themselves to their safe space, or rather, a safe space for some, seems to be at the core of Queer Nation Rose politics.

However, in a significant way, Queer Nation Rose appears to have differed from the U.S. movement. Although holding a the parade in downtown Montreal may seem to have indicated a concern for lesbians in this gay-lesbian alliance, available literature on Queer Nation Rose suggests that the group mainly represented a gay male perspective and did not incorporate feminist theory as much as some of the Queer Nation groups did in the United States. This can probably be explained by the fact that (radical or feminist) lesbian groups in Montreal did not invest themselves as much, or in the same way, in the early queer movement in Quebec as they did in the United States.

Although Queer Nation Rose disappears from the media in 1992, this short-lived organization nonetheless brought to Montreal a taste of the U.S. way of doing queer politics, much earlier than in France. However, this first integration of queer into

Montreal politics remained marginal, especially in regards to the feminist movement. As a matter of fact, the lack of reference and documentation on this short-lived queer group suggests it had little impact on the LGBT community either. Following the disappearance of the group, the term queer in the anglophone LGBT community is used infrequently, when used at all, without explanation and without carrying any specific political ethos. For example, throughout the 1990s, one might find the word queer in a title of a newspaper article, but no mention of queer politics in the article; instead, a simple review of an event in the gay and lesbian community follows.⁵⁷ In the Montreal francophone community, the word will essentially disappear until it reemerges in the academic community in the late 1990s and in activist communities only in 2001 with the creation of the radical queer group, Les panthères roses.

Queer in the Francophone Academy: The 1990s

Only a handful of francophone authors refer to or mention the idea of queer politics or queer theory in their work during the 1990s. In fact, most texts in academic journals that mention the term queer refer to the cultural scene, reviewing a film show or critiquing a play or an art exhibit (see for example, Bilodeau 1993; Namaste 1993; Makward and Miller 1994; Paré 1996; Huffman 1999; Castiel 2000). An exception would be the special issue of *Sociologie et société* entitled “Homosexualités: Enjeux scientifiques et militants” (Homosexualities: scientific and activist issues) (1997) that contains a number of articles that discuss queer theory (Chamberland 1997; Chaumier 1997; Khayatt 1997; Perron 1997; Probyn 1997; Schwartzwald 1997). In her introduction to the issue, Line

⁵⁷ See for example, an article in the *Mirror* that includes in its title the word queer: “Once again at War: Three years after the Human Rights Commission hearings, Montreal’s queer community is ready to pick another fight,” in addition to a recap slogan “Vive le Québec Queer” in its heading. Yet, the rest of the article mentions the “Gay and Lesbian community” (Charlton, 1997).

Chamberland traces the history of gay and lesbian studies and discusses the emergence of queer theory in the academy. Through this discussion, she describes the conflictual yet real connections between the emergence of queer theory and feminist theory, the role of lesbian academics in this debate, and the debates inherent to the emergence of this new field. A few additional articles in the field of sociology and political science discuss the introduction of queer theory into sexuality studies and as a social movement (Schechter 1991, 1992; Smith 1998), however, overall, the topic remains marginal in the social sciences. Similarly, my review of *Recherches féministes*, the Quebec-based journal of feminist research, reveals that in all their issues, up until the present day, only one article has, in its title, the word queer. This article, “Mon/notre/leur corps est toujours un champ de bataille: Discours féministes et queers libertaires au Québec” (My/our/their body is still a battle ground: Feminist discourses and queers *libertaires*⁵⁸ in Quebec) was published in 2007 and reviews the positions of radical feminists and radical queers in Quebec.

The relative absence of the word queer from *Recherches féministes* prompted me to look for alternative words. Because the debate between queer theorists and feminists often comes down to a debate between a materialist versus postmodern idea of the political, I extended my search to postmodernism. During the 1990s, only two articles contained the word postmodernism or postmodern in its title. The first one was a book review by Marie-Andrée Bertrand (1993) of Somer Brodribb’s edited book *Nothing Mat(t)ers: A Feminist Critique of Postmodernism* (1992). Bertrand strongly criticizes the

⁵⁸ In French, *libertaire* means someone who rejects all forms of hierarchies; it is akin to an anarchist. *Libertaire* should be distinguished from libertarian in English, which promotes unlimited individual liberty. The idea of *libertaire*, created in France by Joseph Déjacque in 1857, refers to theories and practices in connection with anarchism, but promotes collectivism and egalitarianism (Pelosse 1972).

anthology for its anti-postmodernist framework and calls instead for an opening of feminism to postmodernism as articulated by some U.S.-based feminists such as Drucilla Cornell. This short book review therefore becomes one of the only spaces in the whole journal where a debate takes place for/against postmodern feminism.

The second title containing “postmodernism,” “*Féminisme et postmodernisme*” (Dagenais and Drolet 1993), is in fact a constructed bibliography of books, articles, and theses discussing feminism and postmodernism. According to the two authors Huguette Dagenais and Gaétan Drolet, the un-annotated bibliography was produced as a response to their personal struggle to integrate discussions around postmodern feminism into their feminist theory courses. To find accessible texts in French for undergraduate classes was a challenge, and hence their desire to share resources with other professors, scholars, and students on the topic. The results are eye-opening: of the 159 references cited, only one is in French. This is particularly surprising considering the efforts of the authors to fully cover French and French-Canadian literature. Placing the emergence of the feminism/postmodernism debates in 1988-89, the authors also reflect on the dominance of American scholars in the debates. In short, in 1993, five years after the emergence of debates in the United States on postmodern feminism, the scarcity of resources available in French is glaring. The authors conclude: “But this nonetheless confirms the impression shared by many Quebec scholars accustomed to refer to feminist texts in both languages: interest for this topic is a mainly Anglo-Saxon phenomenon and, in particular, in the United States” (152). Thus, while U.S. feminists tried to articulate and debate if and how

postmodernism can be useful for feminism, very little literature is produced on the topic in francophone academic journals.⁵⁹

Chantale Maillé, a francophone professor at the anglophone Simone de Beauvoir Institute of Concordia University, stands as an exception to this rule. In 1999, she published a chapter in French entitled “Matériaux pour penser un Québec féministe postmoderne” (Materials to think a Quebec postmodern feminism). In fact, she introduced the text by commenting on the relative absence of postmodern and poststructuralist thinking in the theorization of Quebec feminism, even in 1999. “These theories generally have as an origin Anglo-Saxon or U.S.-based literature, and we find echo of them in contemporary reflections on Quebec’s identity and future” (145). Yet, even in this work, the focus remains on the construction of a collective identity, understood in the context of a Quebec identity, and hence does not per se address some of the fundamental tenets of queer theory.

If a broad topic like postmodernism is practically absent from Quebec feminist literature, the topic queer theory is not completely absent. Four Quebec feminist scholars engage the debate around queer theory in the late 1990s: Louise Turcotte, Diane Lamoureux, Line Chamberland, and Viviane Namaste.⁶⁰ First, Louise Turcotte, renowned for her radical lesbian stance, published in *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers de la*

⁵⁹ A notable exception to this trend lies in literary studies. A few authors have addressed postmodernism in Quebec “feminine” literature, although it remains marginal. One can note for example the anthology *Les Discours féminins dans la littérature postmoderne au Québec* (1993) edited by Raija Koski, Kathleen Kells, and Louise Forsyth. It is notable that Koski and Kells are affiliated with the University of Western Ontario, while Forsyth is stationed at the University of Saskatchewan, and hence none of them are situated in Quebec. Similarly, Janet M. Paterson, who published *Postmodernism in the Quebec Novel* (1994), is a professor of Quebec literature at the University of Toronto. Thus, most texts in the 1990s on postmodernism in Quebec literature remain grounded in an anglophone tradition.

⁶⁰ Because most of these theorists take a critical position against queer theory, I merely name their work here, but I shall return to them in the section I devote to discussing criticisms of queer theory.

Femme, in 1996, an article entitled “Queer Theory: Transgression and/or Regression?” where she criticizes queer theory from the perspective of radical lesbian theory. Although Turcotte writes in English, she is well anchored in Montreal’s feminist and lesbian community and takes this as her point of departure. Diane Lamoureux, along with Carmen Gill, organized a conference on “Les limites de l’identité sexuelle” (The limits of sexual identity) in 1998 as part of the ACFAS⁶¹ annual congress, where she and a few others presented papers that drew on the development of queer theory and activism in the United States. The same year, some of these texts were then transformed into a book with the same name as the conference title. In her response to queer, by acknowledging the diversity of the category of women posited by women of color, lesbians, and postmodern feminists, she affirms a feminism based on fluid coalition, but argues that when oppression is done on the basis of a category (in this case women, or sexuality), it should be fought as such.

Line Chamberland, a Quebec scholar whose research focuses on the Quebec lesbian movement, presented a conference paper entitled “La pensée Queer et la déconstruction du sujet lesbien” (Queer thought and the deconstruction of the lesbian subject) at the 1998 ACFAS where she reviewed how queer theory challenges the basis for lesbian identity. Although the general tone of her presentation pointed to the danger of queer theory for the lesbian movement, she concluded on a more ambiguous note:

I would even suggest that in the Quebec context, the confrontation of queer and lesbian-feminist perspectives can start and stimulate a reflection on certain issues up until now evaded by feminists as much as in the emerging area of gay studies. (1998 [2004])

Thus, queer comes to Quebec in part through the critical eye of lesbian feminists.

⁶¹ ACFAS is the Association francophone pour le savoir, originally the Association canadienne-française pour l’avancement du savoir, and holds annual multidisciplinary conferences in Quebec.

Finally, there is Viviane Namaste,⁶² a professor of women's studies at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute (Concordia University, Montreal). Bilingual, she has been involved with the transsexual community in Montreal, and her current research focuses on women's health, HIV/AIDS prevention, and sexuality. Although involved in the francophone community, her work is mainly published in English, and her theoretical engagement seems to have, as an audience, the anglophone community.

As we move to the years 2000s, a number of factors encourage the integration of queer theory into Quebec feminist theory. First, as in the French context, the translation of a number of key texts makes queer theory more accessible to a broader Quebec audience. That being said, although the linguistic barrier is real, especially when reading theory-heavy texts, most Quebec scholars are accustomed to reading in English to stay up-to-date on the developments in feminist theory. Second, the publication in France of *Queer zone* and the increasing debates among feminists in France create a context where it becomes important to address the questions posed by queer theory. Third, the emergence of francophone activist groups that identifies as (radical) queer allows an articulation of a Quebec-specific queer politics. One such group is Les panthères roses.

Les Panthères Roses

Les panthères roses (PR) focused its activities on direct actions, and later, cultural events such as film production and cultural performances. They were not theoretically-oriented and did not produce many "texts" discussing queer theory. In fact, one member even remarked that:

I think that we were all people who were *not* queer academics. Me, I have never completely read a book on queer theory. Only the first few pages, I thought it was

⁶² Viviane Namaste has also published under the name Ki Namaste (1993)

too complicated. Personally, I discovered queer through the creation of Les panthères roses, and a lot through feminism as well. (PR09)

Thus, in order to convey their theoretical position, I rely on three main sources: (1) interviews conducted with five members of the group; (2) the content of their website; and (3) the monograph written by the Collectif de Recherche sur l'Autonomie Collective – Kébec (CRAC-K) entitled *Les panthères roses de Montréal*.

Following the massive antiglobalization mobilization around the Summit of the Americas in Quebec in 2001, where 100, 000 activists converged on Quebec City to protest the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas,⁶³ a group of young activists noticed the absence of LGBT activism. After the event, they sent out a call for the creation of an anarchist⁶⁴ queer group through alternative media (CRAC-K 2010, 18). After a first failed attempt, at the end of 2002, a new affinity group adopted the name of Les panthères roses, or the “pink panthers,” referencing the U.S. Black Panthers, but modifying it with “pink” for gays and lesbians. Interestingly, other pink panthers would be born a month later in Paris, in January 2003 (CRAC-K 2010, 19), followed by similar groups in Toronto and other European cities, all seemingly unaware of each other at the time of their creation.

The PR define themselves as “queer radicals,” which their website defines as:

The term **QUEER** made its appearance in American intellectual circles at the end of the eighties, introduced by theorists like Judith Butler, Eve Segwick, and David Halperin, who rejected heterosexuality and heterosexist culture without adopting a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity in its place.

⁶³ In April 2001, Quebec City hosted the Third Summit of the Americas where negotiations of the Free Trade Area of the Americas were held. Massive protests were organized by all sectors of civil society, leading to a street confrontation similar to the confrontation at the Seattle World Trade Organization conference in 1999. For more on this, see Brunelle (2010).

⁶⁴ The call did not refer to anarchism specifically, but to “libertaire,” which has no equivalent in English (see note 57).

Revolting against all confused categories, and in particular binary divisions woman/man and homo/hetero, queers considered that the pseudo sexual liberation of the 20th century engendered new mechanisms of social control, much more subtle than before, for example sexual and gender identities, that alienate individuals and impede them from becoming authentic and free.

The term **RADICAL**, often wrongly associated with fundamentalism or fanaticism, comes from the Latin word meaning “root.” Facing a problem with a radical approach therefore implies seeking its causes at the roots themselves and not at the surface. It is in going back to the roots of homophobia and heterosexism that we discover the interdependence of these and other problems in our society, for example sexism and racism.

A radical strategy against heterosexism must therefore seek to abolish savage capitalism, patriarchy, and other systems of alienation, in order to create spaces for self-determination, better intercultural relations, more non-commercial art, and in short, all the best parts of ourselves.
(<http://www.lespantheresroses.org/queerradicalanglais.html>)

The Montreal chapter of the PR organized themselves around three main goals: (1) to bring a critique of “pink capitalism” – the investment by the gay community in capitalism and consumerism as a marker of equality with other citizens; (2) to bring a queer analysis to the anarchist movement; and (3) to foreground a critique of heteronormativity and the gender binary.

The first component, the critique of “pink capitalism” and of the mainstreaming of gay culture, can be seen in direct connection with queer theory and other queer activist groups. One can remember the challenge of Queer Nation against its own community to cease the promotion of simplistic assimilationist tactics. In the case of the PR, a number of actions were aimed directly at the Montreal gay community. In total, the PR organized five actions that directly attacked pink capitalism and the conformity of the LGBT community to other oppressive structures. For example, in the context of the 2003 Montreal Gay Pride events, the PR created a prevention kit against “Advertising

Transmitted Diseases (ATDs),” where tools and detailed instructions are given to protect your brain against advertisement. These “anti-ads” kits aimed at denouncing the sponsorship of the different events during the pride celebration by big corporations such as Coca-Cola and Molson.⁶⁵ Another example lies in the “Pepto-Bismol Action” performed during Valentine’s Day to denounce the fact that, even for the gay community, the expression of love has been co-opted by compulsory consumerism: “the capitalist appropriation of emotions like love and liberty, which have always belonged to everybody and should never have become dependent on consumption.” (PR press release, from website) Hence, the PR staged a “puke-in” where individual members would walk in a store, make a comment about how capitalism makes them sick, and literally vomit in the store, leaving a letter explaining their action for the storeowner. This action was also combined with the distribution of fake discount-coupons.

In these actions, we see that one of the primary targets is the “bourgeois” gay community. In fact, the PR’s anti-capitalist position comes up in every interview and seems to be, in a way, taken for granted. For example, this panthère rose explains that there was no need to discuss it since everyone agreed:

I felt really good in the PR. It corresponds to what I wanted to live in my activism, the questions I wanted to address, that are not so related to the anarchist environment but I know we all come from that environment. That we are anti-capitalists, there are certain things we don’t need to discuss. (PR10)

Furthermore, in the text “Envisioning an Anarchist Alternative to Queer Political Co-optation” by Tom Thomson, posted on their website, the author criticizes the “mainstream” LGBT movement for its adherence to capitalism:

⁶⁵ Molson is the short name for the Canadian division of Molson-Coors Brewing Company, which is the biggest brewing company in Canada.

A popular chant overheard at a recent Pride Day march in Burlington, Vermont- "We're Here, We're Queer, > We Shop" (!!)- perfectly illustrates the smug, classist assumption that purchasing power is a sufficient form of political leverage, that we (or, at any rate, the universalized upper middle-class queer "we") can buy our way out of the crushing homophobia of this society.

It is thus in this spirit that the PR directs their actions at the affluent gay community in Montreal.

The PR do not necessarily define themselves as anarchist per se; however, most of them have a connection with the anarchist movement:

We are a radical queer group. I think that we can say [...] we can't say we are anarchists, but the majority of people in the group define themselves as anarcho-queer, hence there is a convergence of the ideas coming from queer, ecology, feminism – well not all types but certain parts, against patriarchy, against racism. (PR07)

Nonetheless, the Montreal anarchist movement itself is one of the targeted environments to which the PR want to bring a changed discourse. The tensions between these radical queers and the anarchist community in a string of events involving the Anarchist Bookfair – a yearly event where groups and individuals converge to participate in workshops, share information (either in print or in person), network, and organize. To summarize, in 2002, the PR submitted a workshop proposal for the Anarchist Bookfair, however, their proposal was rejected for “unclear reasons.” But then, at the Bookfair, a few anarchists coming from the United States complained to the organizers of the lack of a queer analysis/presence at the Bookfair. The following year, the organizers directly contacted the PR to ask them to create a workshop (CRAC-K 2010, 60).⁶⁶ This opportunity to discuss heteropatriarchy in the anarchist movement was welcomed by the

⁶⁶ It is interesting to note how pressure from anarchists coming from the U.S. had a big impact on the organizers of the Bookfair; it also shows that queer was already integrated into anarchist circles in the United States, which was not the case in Quebec.

PR, and they repeated the experience of giving a workshop at the 2005 edition of the Anarchist Bookfair.

In fact, at first the anarchist movement was very reluctant to integrate a queer perspective into its analysis. Some members explained that even in such a wide coalition as the CLAC (Convergence des Luttes Anti-Capitalistes – Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles), there was resistance to integrating a statement against heterosexism in the list of oppressive systems the group is opposing. According to the analysis presented in the book *Les panthères roses de Montreal*, this might have been due to an assumption that queerness is only a “lifestyle,” not a political movement, and thus is not legitimate among groups oriented toward direct action, even if the PR “made their name” through direct actions (CRAC-K 2010, 62). Nonetheless, because it was important to their political project, the PR persisted in trying to bring a critique of heteropatriarchy into the anti-capitalist and anarchist movement in Montreal and eventually gained recognition for their views.

The PR did not confine their consciousness raising to the anarchist movement, however. Their goal was to promote a critique of the binary of gender, the moral dogmas of sexuality, and the struggle against heteronormativity to progressive movements more generally. Thus, they organized a “banner drop” at the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City, where two of their members were arrested; during the 2005 National Congress of the Conservative Party of Canada held in Montreal, they created a “sodomobile” – a van featuring on top of it a pink panther (the movie character) sodomizing Stephen Harper (the leader of the Conservative Party) – which created quite a commotion; in the context of the pro-choice coalition “Abort their Congress!” mobilizing

against the National Pro-Life Congress held in Montreal in 2005, the PR shocked a group of sixty “pro-life” attendees while they were having dinner at a restaurant in Montreal by performing a trans-nun drag show in the restaurant.⁶⁷ These actions served a double purpose: to resist and counter the Far Right political discourse and to bring a specifically queer critique to the progressive movement.

In particular, the PR always made a point to support feminist and pro-sex-work struggles, while bringing to these their own particular analysis. As one member explains, feminism is an important aspect of their activism, and they do not agree with the “post-feminism” trend in parts of the queer movement. For example, this interviewee, discussing the issue of sex-work said,:

But if we are feminists, we want violence to end now. There are enormous contradictions, and not just theoretical. It is not symbolic violence. Queers are being criticized for being detached from [reality], for saying that categories don't exist anymore. The queer theorists that say we are now in a post-feminist moment, I really don't identify with them. (PR9)

Yet, as with the anarchist movement, some feminists were, at first, reluctant to create an alliance with a queer group:

In the beginning, people were afraid of us, simply, especially [in] the feminist community, they were afraid that there was a queer group being created, but they quickly understood that we were more allies than evil. (PR11)

This tension that turned into an alliance is particularly interesting since feminist theorists in Quebec were actually skeptical toward queer theory. However, the PR's pro-feminist position was always expressed clearly.

But we have positions against patriarchy, profeminism. Maybe on certain issues like sex-work where we will have different positions from certain feminists but at the level of the denunciation of the patriarchal system, we agree on this. (PR07)

⁶⁷ The description of these actions is taken from the press releases available on the PR website.

In fact, the analysis undertaken by the PR is atypical of queer theory since they discuss oppression in terms of systems. Not only do they apply a systemic analysis to capitalism and patriarchy, they also, following in the footsteps of radical lesbians like Monique Wittig, understand heterosexuality as a system: “It was also a critique of the political system that is heterosexuality” (PR07). This same interviewee goes one step further by saying that a queer identity is more connected to one’s reflections on heterosexuality as a system than a self-defined identity. In addition, most interviewees use in their vocabulary the term *rappports de genre*, this hybrid and new term we see emerging in Montreal in recent years.

Thus, contrary to what one could have expected from a queer group, the PR developed a clear systemic analysis of structures that is more in-line with materialist feminist traditions than with queer theory. However, centering the issue of sexuality, breaking the gender binary, criticizing the assimilationist and capitalist trend of the gay and lesbian community, and replacing traditional activism with a more playful, creative, and humorist activism aligns them with radical queer groups in the United States that follow the tradition of foundational groups such as *Queer Nation*. In addition, the tight although conflictual connections with the anarchist movement probably consolidated the PR’s resistance to an individualized and postmodern discourse. Les panthères roses thus stand at the border of a materialist feminist, anarchist, and queer theoretical junction.

It should be noted that there are radical queer groups (some even with the same name) both in France and in the United States.⁶⁸ However, what is particular to Quebec is that this group emerges in an environment where no other queer groups exist. When the group was created, the Montreal francophone community was just starting to hear about

⁶⁸ For a list of other radical queer groups in Canada, the United States, and in Europe, see <http://www.lespantheresroses.org/liens.html>

the term and no other activist group based in the francophone community had appropriated the name (apart from the long-defunct and forgotten, Queer Nation Rose). In fact, they remained the only such group for a few years, making connections and alliances with feminists groups, anarchist groups, and anglophone queer groups. Although the group disbanded in 2007, we can now note the existence of other radical queer groups in Montreal such as Politi-Q, Q-team, and Pervers-Cité.

A Critique of Queer Theory

It is useful to step back from this genealogy and consider the fraught relationship between queer theory and feminist theory generally and in all three localities – the United States, France and Quebec. Critiques of queer theory among feminists are articulated around two main axes of thought: the deconstruction of women as a political subject and the investment in the symbolic realms of politics at the expense of so-called material relations and “real” women’s lives. To these two main axes, I will add two other connected criticisms that are not as predominant, but are still important: the disappearance of a lesbian specificity and a politics grounded in male privilege. Because criticism expressed by feminists from all three locations are similar in their content, although sometimes coming from very different political positions, I review them together, rather than separating them by country. Of course, here, one of the difficulties is to take into account the diversity of the queer movement, both in its activism and in theory; one can always find an example of a group or an author to counter this or that criticism. Keeping the ultimate goal of tracing the emergence of queer in Montreal, this section does not does not discuss in extensive detail the in-fights among theorists.

Instead, I suggest that resistance to queer in Montreal was not unique to Montreal. Rather, it is part of a broader political debate on social transformation.

Before addressing the core of the matter, I want to make a cautionary note on the processes involved in academic and activist debates. As Katie King and Ann Braithwaite have suggested, the writing of history is not innocent; it serves the purposes of creating and validating/criticizing a present and envisioning a future. Hence, through the use of what Katie King has termed “magical signs,” some concepts are invested with specific and stable meanings, which serve “to eradicate the radicalness and complexity of challenges posed by those issues” (Braithwaite 2004, 107). For example, in freezing the concept of “feminism” or even “radical feminism,” queer theorists present in this case feminism as “an unproblematic signifier with a singular definition, in a reduction of meaning” (Braithwaite 2004, 112), hence erasing the different contested locations where it was engaged. This allows them to present some ideas as “new” when, in fact, they are inscribed in a history of debates. Similarly, some feminists tend to reduce the concept of queer to a simplistic “symbolic subversion” (Boucier 2001, 147), devoid of political potential and uniform across different locations. Although not every author is guilty of using this rhetorical tactic, it is a process that we find on both sides of the debate, and hence should remain in the background of the discussion to follow.

Feminism Fights Back

In direct connection with the rhetorical strategies exposed above, I first want to address the critiques of feminism that aim at countering the reduction of feminism to simplistic conceptions of the world in order to dismiss it as “passé” and build queer theory as the “more evolved” theory. Although multiple authors recognize feminist

theory as foundational for the development of queer theory (Butler 1990; Warner 1993; Turner 2000), there is a tendency to “move beyond” feminism and enter the “more nuanced” complexities of queer theory.

First, some queer theorists argue that feminism has the tendency to obscure the differences among women and to frame women’s experiences as homogeneous. As much as this critique is an important one, and one we need to always keep in mind, this conception of a universalized womanhood – whether based on a common nature or common experiences due to the system of oppression – has been questioned and challenged within feminism by women of color, lesbians, and postcolonial feminists, among others. Without implying that the issue is solved in any way, “intersectionality” as a theory within feminism has been addressing this concern for over twenty-five years. In fact, the numerous debates around how best to account for women’s differences, and a constant attention to these issues, probably makes feminism one of the most prolific fields for continuing the development of a framework that incorporates multiple axes of oppression. In this example, Kathy Rudy, recounting her experience of the lesbian separatist/lesbian-feminist community in which she lived, discusses the introduction of the question of “difference” among these women:

Thus, even though women of color were in some sense configuring a similar or parallel argument – that is, that certain racial, class, or ethnic experiences led to an identity that could ground politics – the (unintended) effect of this argument was to challenge the validity of the primary assumption of radical feminism, that is, that being a woman (of any color or ethnicity) was a clear and strong political foundation. The introduction of difference between women pointed out the weaknesses inherent in building a politics on a cross-racial, cross-cultural, unified identity of “woman.” (Rudy 2001, 205)

This challenge to the universality of womanhood was the topic of much controversy all through the 1980s and henceforth. Thus, it is no surprise that feminists are offended when

claims that feminism still conveys a monolithic conception of womanhood today are ascribed to their work. Notice here the rhetorical move to render all feminism, regardless of its type, location, and moment of expression fixed in a simplistic idea of a universal womanhood, thereby rendering invisible the important scholarship of many feminists and women of color.

Furthermore, feminists are often tagged by queer theorists as promoting gender as a category of analysis over and beyond all others – race, class, sexuality, and so forth. For example, Bourcier, lumping together European materialist feminists with American feminists, without giving a sense of who in particular she is talking about, writes:

But did this critique of genders or of the *rappports sociaux de sexe* to take up the European materialist formulation accomplish itself at the expense of a constructivist vision of sex and sexuality? (2006 [2001], 157)

Catharine MacKinnon has replied to similar criticism that she presents a “totalizing theory” and a lack of a constructivist understanding of sexuality by stating:

Feminism has also never, to my knowledge, had what is called a “monocausal” narrative, at least I haven’t. We do not say that gender is all there is. We have never said it explains everything. We have said that gender is big and pervasive, never not there, that it has a shape and regularities and laws of motion to it, and that it explains a lot—much otherwise missed, unexplained. It is a feature of most everything, pervasively denied. That does not mean that everything reduces to gender, that it is the only regularity or the only explanation for things, the single cause of everything, or the only thing there. It is also worth repeating that sexual politics, in feminism, is not an overarching preexisting general theory that is appealed to in order to understand or explain, but a constantly provisional analysis in the process of being made by the social realities that produce[d] it. (2000, 695)

Although some feminists have defined patriarchy as the “main enemy” (Delphy 1970), scholarship on intersectionality and the consubstantiality of the different *rappports sociaux*, as we shall explore in the next chapter, counter the notion of a feminism carrying a monist view of oppression.

Finally, queer theorists operate as if the gender-sex dichotomy has never been questioned before, by positioning the radical interdependency of gender and sex (Butler, 1990, 6) as new. In the United States, feminists have been engaged in a dialogue with postmodernism and Foucault from the beginning of the 1980s and have addressed this issue, although not with a definitive solution (Martin 1982; Diamond and Quinby 1984, 1988; McNay 1993; Hartsock 1983; Nicholson 1990; Modleski 1991; and Bordo 1999). Apart from these postmodern interrogations, a number of authors have also deconstructed sex as a social construction (Fausto-Sterling 1985, 2000). In addition, it is particularly surprising to find authors such as Bourcier who navigate among French materialist feminists, relaying this idea. As I have argued in the previous chapter, materialist feminists have, since the early 1980s, destabilized the idea that sex is a natural, an *a priori* concept from which gender emerges. In fact, Bourcier's 2001 *Queer zones* does not engage with French materialist feminism at all, even as she engages with feminism.⁶⁹

The category of Women and the constitution of a political subject

It is appropriate here to remind us of the previous chapter where I established the relative absence of the word gender in French and Quebec feminist theory. Because queer theory is grounded in a destabilization of the gender/sex binaries as developed mainly through the works of Judith Butler, it is pertinent to wonder how these critiques fare in the face of “rapports sociaux de sexe.”

⁶⁹ In the entire book, she never mentions Christine Delphy, Collette Guillaumin, Danièle Kergoat, or Paola Tabet, all prominent French feminist theorists. Nicole-Claude Mathieu is referenced in relation to her construction of the “identité de genre, identité genré” only. Bourcier seems to relay the critiques of queer theory developed toward American feminists only. It should be noted, however, that in her second book, *Sexpolitiques: Queer zones 2*, published in 2005, she devotes a chapter to materialist feminist thinkers Nicole-Claude Mathieu and Christine Charest as they engage in a review of a Madonna world tour. Yet, one could have expected that Bourcier, in her attempt to create a “French queer,” would engage with French feminists.

Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, questions the stability of the identity of women on which the feminist movement is based. For Butler as much as for Bourcier, gender is constituted by its representations and performances, and “nothing else” (Bourcier 2006 [2001], 17). The parody of gender through the drag performance is a parody of a parody, a mimicking that has no original: “The parodic repetition of “the original” [...] reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of nature and the original” (Butler 1990, 31). This reduction of gender to a performance and its representation, for materialist and radical feminists of all three locations, is a way to negate the reality of women’s lives, of its violence and of its pressures.

How then can we believe that the diffused identities promised to us by queer politics could address the social reality that they attempt to forget? [...] Minimizing objective reality makes us into non-social and non-historical beings who could end up back where we were before we acquired a political conscience. (Turcotte 1996)

This retreat of the individual from the social is also criticized for reproducing a neoliberal understanding of the individual.

We are reduced to individuals, which, of all coincidences, is where liberalism places us. With its affirmation of women’s commonalities in all their diversity, it is feminism that rejects the view that “woman” is a pre-social, i.e., biologically determined, category and the notion that all women are the same. (MacKinnon 2000, 698)

This is echoed in a critique offered by Louise Turcotte who writes:

The queer trend's focus more on a personal identity than on a collective identity raises an important problem. In fact, the way in which we conceive ourselves and the way in which societies conceive us are not the same. (Turcotte, 1996)

Furthermore, by conceptualizing gender as a performance and hence minimizing the experiences of women, it becomes easy to question the idea of a common oppression between women. “Queer marks a strong rupture with feminism, because it relativizes

very strongly the idea of a common women's experience" (Masson and Thiers-Vidal, 2002). Furthermore, MacKinnon explains that the commonality of women is built from their experiences, not an *a priori* nature: "even something often thought by others to be biological—sexuality—is social, and draws power lines. Feminism thus does not "assume," it rather builds, its "women." From women who socially exist." (2000, 696).

And for materialist feminists, the category of women is the result of the common oppression they face. On this, Stevi Jackson explains that the social category of women is constructed from structures, meanings, everyday practices, and subjectivity:

At the level of social structure gender is a hierarchical relation, constitutive of social men and social women, sustained through divisions of labour and other means, notably the heterosexual marriage contract. [...] Gender is also constructed at the level of meaning, through the cultural distinction between women and men, the unspoken and taken-for granted means by which we embody and recognise each other as women or as men as well as the more overt norms of appropriate femininity and masculinity. [...] Here, too, gender and sexuality are constantly in the process of being constructed and reconstructed, enacted and reenacted, within specific social contexts and relationships. Gender and sexuality are thus socially constructed by what embodied individuals actually *do*. Finally, sexuality and gender are socially constructed at the level of subjectivity, through complex social and cultural process by which we acquire sexual and gendered desires and identities. (Jackson 2001, 289)

In this quote, we see that the concept of women does carry a subjectivity (the one attacked by Butler). Yet, this subjectivity is the result of the interactions of social structures, meanings, and cultural practices that surround an individual. Thus, subjectivity is *acquired*; this is not an essentialist understanding of the individual. For feminists, the problem with queer theory is not its desire to address representations and language as legitimate spaces for resistance, but that it is designated as the *only* space where resistance can happen. For some feminists, this is equated with a loss of agency and a loss of the possibility to change the social structures that lead to the conditions in which

women live. This is well reflected in the second criticism that tackles the displacement of the social by cultural politics.

Investment in Cultural Politics

The debates presented here are in fact embedded in a larger debate between poststructuralist and materialist analyses. Thus, queer theory becomes the flagship for poststructuralists while feminist critiques of it represent a reaffirmation of materialist politics. As we have seen, queer politics and theory are invested in an understanding of subversion through performance and representations. Judith Butler affirms that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expression' that are said to be its results” (Butler 1990, 25). If gender is conceptualized as existing only through its repetitive performances, then it should be challenged through alternative performances as well. Feminist critiques of queer suggest that to limit the political analysis to language and performance is not enough to destabilize power. Contrary to Bourcier’s argument that materialist feminists consider reality to precede language, and hence language to be a representation of reality (2005, 134), a close reading of feminist and lesbian critiques reveals that they do valorize language in their politics (Wittig, Delphy). However, *only* focusing on language is not enough. Changing language will not, by itself, transform relationships of power.

“Transgression of a norm does not necessarily equate to the subversion of a system of thought” (Mathieu 1992, 230). This idea is repeated in a number of texts, pointing to the limits of queer theory. To represent such criticism, taken from U.S., British, French, and Quebec feminists alike (see also Walters 1996; Turcotte 1996; Zimmerman 1996;

Chamberland 1998; Lamoureux 1998; Newton 2000; Masson et Thiers-Vadal 2002; and Jackson 2001), I have chosen the words of Stevi Jackson:

Transgressive sexual and gender performances, moreover, can have little social effect without an erosion of material inequalities associated with gendered divisions of labour and resources and a dismantling of the institutions through which heterosexuality's privileged place in society is sustained. (2001, 291)

In this quote, Jackson refers both to sex-gender and heterosexuality as structures. This debate over the potential to create social change through performance and transgression is at the core of the divide between queer and feminist movements.

Furthermore, some authors have criticized in more detail the process of “reading” certain bodies as queer because of their transgression of gender or sexual norms. For example, Esther Newton, in her analysis of the gay beach community Cherry Grove as a site for the production of gay and lesbian culture and particularly drag, argues that one can't address issues of representations without addressing the material conditions that produce them (Newton 2000). Newton further questions the queer scholars' pretention to “read” meaning in the performances of some bodies without proper ethnographic analysis, positioning them as the transcendent “knower” of meanings. This is echoed by the work of Viviane Namaste who criticizes queer theorists for failing to consider the relation between transsexuals' performances and economic conditions. Namaste denounces Butler's usage of transsexual women to support her argument that gender is performative without acknowledging that the specific spaces where she studied transsexual women were *workspaces*, and how issues of class and race are intrinsic to their constitution as transsexual women. “Indeed, performances of female impersonation in the United States are characterized by an explicit relation to work. [...] While the performances undoubtedly raise questions about gender and its constitution, they are also

inextricably linked to matters of work” (2011[2009], 250). Explaining how such an omission serves to erase the experiences of transwomen, Namaste continues to question Butler’s disengagement with the material conditions involved in their lives:

It is in and through work that transsexual women are able to physically embody our sex changes, and thus interact with the world as women. It is in and through work that the gender of transsexual women is constituted. (2011[2009], 251)

Hence, Namaste, like Newton before her, contends that to extract performances from their material context leads to the erasure of the reality of the very people queer theory is trying to engage and whose experiences are supposed to be centralized (Warner 1993, vii).

This failure to acknowledge the social context in which norms and “sexed bodies” are produced constitute the main critique that feminist have launched against queer in general and Butler in particular (Hennessy 1998; Ramazanoglu 1995). As Namaste asks: “What is the relevance of transgender theory or activism that cannot negotiate the world as experienced by people without housing, employment, or health care? And second, what are the consequences of adopting a framework that demands we ignore the institutional aspects of social life?” (2011[2001], 28)

The Disappearance of Lesbians and the Return to Male Privileges

And, finally, I turn to the matter of the disappearance of lesbians and the return of male privilege in queer theory and activities. Remember that when Theresa de Lauretis called for the development of queer theory in 1990, she explicitly envisioned a field of practice and theory where there could be a flourishing of negotiations of differences between lesbians and gays, and differences among them. Yet, more than twenty years later, voices denouncing the disappearance of the specificity of lesbians within queer are becoming

more and more vocal. Even in a context such as the United States, where lesbians, very early on, embraced queer as a movement and as a theory, some find themselves looking back and wondering if they lost something in the process. The relationship between lesbians and queer was slightly different in France, as lesbians as organized groups always looked at queer theory with suspicion, if not outright rejection.⁷⁰ Three main arguments are presented in this regard: (1) the amnesia and distortion of the lesbian (-feminist) movement before the emergence of queer; (2) the domination of queer politics by a masculine politics anchored in a male conception of the world; and (3) the subsequent lack of acknowledgement of (male) privilege in intra-group relations.

In a process similar to the one described above, the legacy of lesbian feminism is reduced to a simplistic account:

[I]f the lesbian feminists of the 1970s and 1980s were excessively narrow in their quest for community, the 1990s paradigm of “lesbian and gay” too often heralds a return to male dominated politics. When “lesbian feminist” is a simple code for outdated theory in a way that “gay liberation” is not, there is a need for strong feminist voices. (Rudy 2001, 29)

Likewise, Bonnie Zimmerman argues that queer theory dismisses and pushes aside a lesbian-feminist discourse while appropriating parts of its discourses and without acknowledging the sources (Zimmerman 1996; see also Jackson 2001 and Chamberland 1998 for a similar analysis).

Additionally, the kind of tactics taken up by queers seems to promote a masculine understanding of both politics and sexuality.

To be queer, they argue, often means to be public, hard, aggressive, "in-your-face"; those attributes historically associated with women which reproduce both children and daily life, such as relationality and caretaking, are sometimes dismissed as soft and accommodationist by the new queer discourse. An

⁷⁰ For details on the confrontation between lesbians and queer in France, see Marie-Hélène Bourcier (2001, 240).

unintentional association takes place between being genderless, being powerful and aggressive, and being male. (Rudy 2001, 216)

In her article “From Here to Queer: Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Lesbian Menace (Or, Why Can't a Woman Be More like a Fag?),” Suzanna Danuta Walters makes a convincing case that the white gay male has been naturalized as the referent for queer theory. By arguing that even women such as Eve Sedgwick and Sue-Ellen Case have “identified as gay men,” she demonstrates that queer’s model for radical sexuality has led to a denigration of “lesbian attempts to rethink sexuality within a feminist framework” (1996, 847).

This idea, that the obliteration of gender differences in the treatment of sexuality might lead to a predominance of men’s conception of sex, was already present in Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman’s 1993 discussion of the politics deployed by groups like Queer Nation. As they explained, the specific forms of displayed sexuality, stemming from a desire to shock, make visible alternative sexualities and question the association between citizenship and appropriate sexual behaviors, but does not carry the same liberatory potential for lesbians. Women, regardless of their actual sexual desires and orientation, are always already sexualized in the public sphere:

female subjects are always citizens in masquerade: the more sexual they appear, the less abstractable they are in a liberal corporeal schema. Lesbian theory’s solution to this dilemma has been to construct imaginable communities, which is to say that America’s strategies for self-promotion have not worked for lesbians, who have historically and aesthetically often embraced the “space-off” in expatriate expression of their alienation from America. (1993, 219)

Hence, because lesbian sexuality is already represented differently in the public sphere (not as repulsive, but as eroticized), the tactic of flaunting lesbian sexuality has different implications. In this case, to “move beyond gender” and to refuse to pay attention to

gendered differences in the construction of sexuality only serves to further stigmatize lesbian sexuality in existing tropes. It is not surprising, then, that some have argued that lesbians and gay men have a very different political agenda, with different priorities (Turcotte 1996) and consequently have questioned the subsuming of the two under a common term, which risks increasing the disappearance of the reality and issues specific to lesbians.

For feminists, the absence of gendered analysis means the reaffirmation of the dominant: men. A lack of critical self-reflection from men is likely to lead to the reassertion of their privileges.

In a culture in which male is the default gender, in which homosexual is all too often imaged as male, to see queer as somehow gender neutral is ludicrous and willfully naive. Feminism has taught us that the idea of gender neutrality is not only fictitious but a move of gender domination. I applaud queer theory's expansion of the concept of difference but am concerned that, too often, gender is not complicated but merely ignored, dismissed or transcended. (Walters 1996, 845)

Louise Turcotte even suggests that queer's absence of recognition of the specificity of lesbianism stems from the fact that it might be unimportant for men precisely because of their privilege: "In having as a principal issue a different sexual orientation, the gay man's questioning of heterosexuality is made more on the basis of a social norm than on questioning the social system" (Turcotte 1996).

This absence of an analysis of privilege poses problems for feminists. Even Leo Thiers-Vidal, a materialist pro-feminist man, discussing the pros and cons of queer theory, has said: "A young man discovering the issues of sex/sexuality/gender through a queer lens is not likely, I think, to become conscious of the brutal, fundamental, and omnipresent violence that men inflict upon women through out the world" (Masson and

Thiers-Vidal 2002). In this quote, Thiers-Vidal implies that the absence of critical self-reflection among queer men ends up perpetuating the status quo on violence against women.

For Pat Califia, the re-affirmation of male privilege happens through a disregard for the labor involved in the reproduction of social life. Weary of men's lack of awareness of the privilege they hold, and recounting queers' origin in the AIDS movement, Califia says:

while the AIDS crisis is a dire emergency that every thinking, caring person must address, it alarms me to see queer men blindly absorb women's caretaking without making much of an effort to reciprocate. The majority of gay men remain woefully ignorant about feminism, and too many are contemptuous of women's bodies and hostile toward lesbians. When I see a mass movement among queer men to raise money for breast-cancer research, or a volunteer army of queer men who are taking care of women with chronic and life-threatening illnesses, this resentment will be appeased. (Califia 1994, 25)

Rudy similarly suggests that this lack of attention to mundane daily tasks and the glamorization of public politics only serve to reproduce gendered and racist divisions of labor, re-affirming the differential valence in the public-private dichotomy (1996, 218).

The absence of the notion of privilege in queer theory does not only affect the interaction between lesbians and men; it completely erases the notion of privilege from knowledge production. Because of queer's contention that "membership" is not based on actual behavior or identity, speaking "as queer" is not grounded in a particular point of view – a "subaltern" or marginal location as women of color would say – and hence remains uncritical of existing structures that favor certain bodies in discourse production.

On this issue, Suzanna Walters asks the following questions:

What are the implications involved in claiming "queerness" when one is not gay or lesbian? And, would we tolerate this passing (indeed, it is even being

celebrated!) in another context, say the context of race or ethnicity? (Walters 1996, 841)

Of course, the analogy with race is difficult since racial politics have been grounded in identity politics, which is not the case for queerness. Yet, a lack of attention to privilege, in terms of whose voice is heard and deemed legitimate, might lead to the reproduction of the very system of knowledge production criticized by queer theorists. Feminists suggest we have to pay attention to who develops the discourse, where the discourse is produced, what resources and institutions are involved in producing it, and for what political purpose the discourse is mobilized. In short, feminists argue that, although a questioning of a gendered analysis might be useful in certain contexts, a complete disregard for gender (and race and class) leads to a reproduction of existing hierarchies, whether based on gender, race, class, or sexuality. In this sense, queer theory has failed to fulfill its promise of being more inclusive than feminism.

Another point of contention lies with the increased attention to transsexuals and transgender in queer theory and the centrality of the rejection of norms in queer theory. The subversive potential of queer politics lies in the destabilization of the norm through performance and embodiment. But are all “deviances” valued equally in queer theory? Inevitably, contradiction in the discourse emerges, and, as Walters suggests, it might be for the better. First, one can find numerous references in the work of Butler and Halberstam prescribing and valuing certain behaviors over others. For example, Halberstam, commenting on masculinities writes, “alternative masculinities, ultimately, will fail to change existing gender hierarchies to the extent that they fail to be feminist, anti-racist, anti-elitist, and queer” (1998, 306-307), a statement feminists would support. This runs counter to queer’s contention that it is the transgression itself that carries the

political potential. Walters similarly asks questions about how the absence of prescription for sexual or gendered behavior as long as they are “different” can lead to a progressive movement when she asks whether we should unite with pedophiles and incest perpetrators on the basis of alternative sexuality. To push the rallying around differences without the imposition of any norms, as Foucault would argue, is in her sense dangerous politically:

This reduces queer politics to a banal (and potentially dangerous) politics of simple opposition, potentially affiliating groups, identities, and practices that are explicitly and implicitly in opposition to each other. To link politically and theoretically around a "difference" from normative heterosexuality imposes a (false) unity around disparate practices and communities. Politically, of course, these different groups/ practices do not necessarily share a progressive political agenda on sexuality; nonnormativity is hardly a banner around which to rally. (1996, 838-839)

In fact, a debate around whether groups such as NAMBLA (North American Man-Boy Love Association) should be included in the queer community has been severely criticized, especially by lesbian feminists (Walters 1996, 838). To push the logic of a movement based on difference from the norm to its extreme highlights some of the contradiction inscribed in its discourse.

Another point of contention in the de-normalization of the queer movement stems from the work of Viviane Namaste. She takes up Judith Butler’s condemnation of transsexuals who “reinforce normative sex/gender relations because they want to live as a woman in the suburbs with a washing machine.” (Butler 1993, 131, quoted in Namaste 2005, 24). For people doing work among and with transsexuals like Namaste, this creation of the ‘good vs. bad’ transsexual is disrespectful for their lives and reality and, I would add to her argument, hitting the limits of the non-normative claims of queer theory. For Namaste, this is a reflection of the fundamentally privileged position of queer

theorists and the application of a gay-lesbian framework to transsexuals, who, according to Gary Kinsman and Clarice Kuhling, do not understand their lives as such:

It does not speak to the transsexuals who do not make sense of their lives, and their political struggles, within the confines of the gay/lesbian framework. [...] My empirical research contradicts this underlying assumption, since most of the transsexuals I have interviewed do not articulate their needs according to the lesbian/gay framework. (Interview reprinted in Namaste 2011[2002], 2)

Once again, the limits of regrouping under the idea of difference does not seem to serve justice for everyone.

Finally, Line Chamberland (1998) has suggested that queer's contention to do away with identity does not apply to all so-called queer theorists. She gives the example of Leslie Feinberg who, in her manifesto-like *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (1992), makes a rallying call anchored in identity politics for transgenders to unite. Here again, Chamberland demonstrates the difficulty in trying to implement change without using identity politics.

In short, feminists and other theorists have pointed to the limits of queer theory. The most worrisome concerns for feminist activists lie in the failure of queer theory to address structural oppression, the destabilization of the category of women understood as living a common reality, and the reaffirmation of a masculine ethos through the dismissal of the notion of privileges. These debates are inscribed in a wider discussion on structuralism and poststructuralism. However, it seems that some queer activists are able to combine some of the subversive elements of queer politics while keeping a structural analysis. This observation poses questions on the relation between queer activism and queer theory.

Conclusion: On the Complicated Relation between Theory and Activism

This chapter started with a review of the development of an activism that reclaimed the label “queer.” Developing in the United States as a response to the moralistic discourse of the religious Right and in continuity with actions against the AIDS epidemic, queer activism promoted an in-your-face activism where anger was legitimate and shock a goal. Queer activists refused the assimilationist model of integration used by the gay and lesbian movement and proposed a radical transformation of society. Queer *theory*, developing at first independently of activism, applied a poststructuralist framework to issues around sexuality, gender, and identity more generally. When theory and activism merges, a new form of politics anchored in performance emerges.

Queer’s journey from the United States to France was not without difficulty; yet, the concept eventually made its way as an important element of the political landscape, namely through the activities of Le Zoo. Theorists such as Marie-Hélène Bourcier will eventually develop their own version of a queer discourse, although they only engage minimally with the local feminist community in their debates.

In Quebec, after a short-lived Queer Nation chapter, one will have to wait until the late 1990s to see the emergence of queer theory. Overall, Quebec feminist theorists remain skeptical of the political potential of queer theory and, like their French and U.S. counterparts, reassert the need for a political project through a materialist analysis.

The study of the travelings of the term queer reveals that movement of ideas from one space to the other is not an easy process. In France, the difficulty of translating the word itself, a republican anti-communitarianism, and the predominance of a materialist framework among feminist intellectuals prevents a smooth integration of queer with

feminism. In francophone Quebec, the resistance among feminist scholars lies also in their very strong materialist position. Yet in Quebec, this will also lead to the development of a specific kind of queer activism that integrates a systemic analysis of oppression and refers to *rapports de genre*, embodied in Les panthères roses. Although there are radical queers in France and in the United States, Les panthères roses presented right from the start a queer project that incorporated a systemic analysis of oppression.

I want to end this chapter with a reflection on knowledge production and the complex relation between activism and theory. In all three locations studied, this relationship was different yet overlapping. The case of the United States presented us with an activist movement and a theoretical field developing, at first, simultaneously and independently. Quickly, however, they converge and rely on each other: queer theorists analyze the action of queer activists; queer activists pick up on queer theory. This is particularly evident in the work of Michael Warner (1993) and Jeffrey Escoffier (1998), both of whom bridge activism and theory in their political/intellectual work. Although queer theory will continue to evolve more or less independent of the changes in activism, the popularity of queer in the academy (creation of departments, research funding, book sales, hiring of professors) is also fueled by the wide pool of young people who adhere to – or at least are curious about – queer, often developed in activism circles.

The case of France presents us with a quite different situation. Queer first comes through theory. Le Zoo designed seminars and workshops to make queer theory “readable” in the context of France. Quickly, however, Le Zoo also organizes cultural events and participates in public debates, motivating a surge of activism. Out of this

activism emerges in turn intellectuals and scholars furthering queer theory, closing the circle of knowledge between theory and activism.

The case of Les panthères roses presents us with a third account of this relation between theory and activism. Some members of the groups have never read queer theory while others did. In any case, the PR seem to perform a patchwork of ideas taken from a mix of theory and activism. They take some anti-capitalism and anti-state analysis, which they mix with a materialist analysis of *rapports de genre* and patriarchy, a definition of heterosexuality as a political system reminiscent of radical lesbian theory mixed with a deconstruction of the gender binary and a politically incorrect irreverence. And, because the group is not focused on theory, the contradictions inherent in these different frameworks do not seem to emerge and interfere with their actions. Yet, the presence of a radical queer group seems to contribute to the rising popularity of queer theory in Quebec, namely among young feminists, despite a very skeptical position from feminist theorists in the francophone community.

Chapter 5

Intersectionality in Multiple Locations

This chapter has as a subject the concept of intersectionality. As with the concept of gender, the exercise of tracing its genealogy involves a simultaneous excavating of, on the one hand, the specific instances when the term is used, how it is mobilized, and for what purposes, and, on the other hand, instances where similar ideas are mobilized without recourse to the term. This endeavor is further complicated by the polysemic uses of intersectionality as it moves through space and time. I thus start with a review of the context leading to its emergence in the United States, covering alternative frameworks and debates around how to best conceptualize the relations between different systems of oppression. I then move to France, where I first review the development of alternative concepts – *consubstantialité* and *co-extensivité* – before exploring French perceptions of the usefulness of importing the term intersectionality to further their own feminist analysis.

Finally, traveling back to Montreal, I survey feminist literature that engages intersectionality. I then explore three “moments” when feminists have articulated a vision of the feminist movement and/or Quebec society, looking at each for ideas akin to intersectionality. The first moment is the late 1960s - early 1970s when the emergence of a so-called second wave of feminism, coinciding with the heightened ethnic nationalism of the resurgent separatist movement, led to the articulation of three simultaneous oppressions for women: by patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism/imperialism. The second moment is 1992, when the provincial-wide Forum *Pour un Québec Féminin*

Pluriel brought together feminists to elaborate a vision for a diverse and feminist Quebec society. The final moment is 2007, when women's groups presented a number of briefs to the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. These briefs addressed the complex question of which minority religious and cultural practices might be "accommodated" without undermining women's rights.

U.S. Intersectionality: Theorizing from a Racialized Position

I start this genealogy of the word intersectionality by looking at the emergence in the U.S. feminist movement of a theorization of multiple and simultaneous oppressions. The context of this emergence is characterized by the conflicting allegiance of women of color who have multiple political commitments: to the women's movement, to their "racialized" community, and to a critique of the class system. Yet, in all three arenas, women of color have found their experience marginalized and the theoretical foundation of these movements inadequate to explain their reality. As this section demonstrates, a "monist" ideology – the idea that one system of oppression is more important than other systems and the resulting tactical commitment to struggle against it before dealing with other oppressions – reproduces other oppression and makes women's of color experience invisible and irrelevant. As a result, women of color committed to feminism will advance theory that centralizes their specific reality created by simultaneous system of oppression.

Of course, black women in the United States have spoken about their particular condition as black and female from as far back as we can trace black women's writing (Guy-Sheftall 1995; Giddings 1996). Indeed, Beverly Guy-Sheftall's anthology *Words of Fire* (1995) includes writings by Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper and Maria Stewart,

who were expressing these themes already in the nineteenth century. In the early 1970s, Frances Beale coined the term “double jeopardy” to name the experience of being black and female in the United States; and in the 1980s, Gloria Anzaldúa conceptualized “La Meztiza,” while in 1991, Patricia Hill Collins wrote of a “matrix of domination” to capture the experience of multiple identities. The term “intersectionality” likely appeared first in the work of critical race legal scholar Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989, and for two decades now, it seems to have become the most commonly used term for creating theory, practices, and analyses capable of accounting for the ways in which multiple systems of oppression interact and converge to marginalize, make invisible, and oppress women of color in particular ways.

In tracing the steps that ultimately result in the adoption of “intersectionality,” we note however that this is not simply a shifting of terms over time, but that there is a development of and growing sophistication of theory itself. One can understand this development by looking at prior texts. One text that is useful for my analysis was produced by the Third World Women’s Alliance⁷¹ in 1970. Their “Black Feminist Statement” highlights some elements of commonality between racism and sexism: the use of biological characteristics to confine people to certain roles and limit opportunities. This text, directed mainly at black men, points out the contradictions between, on the one hand, fighting against a system that uses one’s skin color as a biological marker to limit opportunities in life and, on the other hand, reaffirming the importance of another

⁷¹ The Third World Women Alliance was an organization emerging from the Student Non-Violent Coordination Committee (SNCC) that grouped together Asian American, Black, and Latina women united against racism, sexism, and economic exploitation and existed between 1968 and 1980 (Roth 2004, 89-93). The term Third World women has been used by some, especially Chela Sandoval (2000[1991]) and Chandra Mohanty (1991, 2003) to refer to women of color in the United States (U.S. Third World women) as well as women in non-European, non-North-American countries. Sandoval (2000[1991]) has defined U.S. Third World feminism as an oppositional movement and consciousness, an alternative to “hegemonic” (white) feminism.

biological characteristic (sex) to define similarly limiting gender roles. In other words, in arguing their position, the Third World Women's Alliance has established an analogy of the logic behind oppression and suggested the need to fight that logic itself, not just its expression.

Another element that fueled the writings of women of color early on is their desire to challenge a purported hierarchy between different systems of oppression. Countering simultaneously the claims by the feminist movement that patriarchy is the primary oppression, the claim by the black community that racism is the main determinant in shaping their lives, and the Marxist claim that capitalism is the source of all oppression, some black feminists refuse any monist view. One excellent and well-known example of the anti-monist view is Beale's "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" article, which asserts the importance of black women's participation in the socialist revolution, touches on the economic oppression of black women through the capitalist system, the oppression of black women in terms of the patriarchal system, and of their oppression as blacks. Her model, later called the "additive" model, tackles the compounding effects of living under multiple systems of domination. She concludes: "Black women in America can justly be described as the slave of a slave" (Beale 1970, 112). Although this additive model will eventually be abandoned, Beale's text nonetheless represents one of the first attempts to theorize the complexity of black women's lives during that period.

Two texts from the mid-1970s, one by the Boston-based Combahee River Collective published in 1977 and a second by Barbara Smith (also a member of the Combahee River Collective and very likely the principal author of their statement), written around the same time but only published in 1979, pushed the argument further in

the direction of intersectionality. The Combahee River Collective statement uses the following language to establish their political position: “we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking” (164). Words such as the “synthesis of these oppressions,” “manifold and simultaneous oppressions” (both on 164), and “multilayered texture of black women’s lives” (167) were laying the ground for an intersectional analysis. Moreover, the statement explicitly names heterosexual oppression, making their analysis four-fold (race, sex, class, sexuality). Similarly, writing under her own name, solely, Barbara Smith, in a paper entitled “Notes for Yet Another Paper on Black Feminism, or Will the Real Enemy Please Stand Up?” written after a difficult encounter at an International Women’s Day program, both situates the experience of Third World women as specific and insists on the confluence of multiple systems of oppression:

Black and other Third World women’s relationships to the systems of oppression in this society are, by definition, different from those of other oppressed groups who do not experience both racial and sexual oppression at the same time. The effect of this double, actually triple oppression because of class, is not merely arithmetic – one plus one plus one – but geometric. There is such a thing as a racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual. (1979, 123)

In this text, she explains how black women’s oppression can’t be solved by only criticizing the “ruling class” and that we must acknowledge that some black men are the source of oppression for black women in some cases. For her, to deny that is to render invisible some of the violence experienced by black women such as rape and domestic violence.

In 1979, sociologist Bonnie Thornton Dill, in her article “The Dialectics of Black Womanhood,” suggests the use of a dialectical model to understand the reality of black womanhood. This article puts forward three significant lines of argumentation. First, it discusses “the intersection of ethnicity and social class” (551), reviewing the concept of “eth-class” developed by Milton Gordon (1964). Yet, she adds a political stance to the otherwise descriptive concept:

The concept of "eth-class" is useful in that it communicates a sense of the ways in which ethnic differences interact with social class. However, it has serious limitations because it ignores the elements of domination and oppression which are at the root of black-white relations in the United States and which account for the high concentration of blacks in the lower class. (551)

Second, the article suggests that understanding the reality of black women’s lives might be useful to white feminists. While black women have suffered tremendous hardships, they nonetheless developed a sense of self-reliance and autonomy that reconceptualizes womanhood in a way akin to what white feminists are trying to achieve.

I would suggest that the image of women – as more than housewives and as sexual equals – toward which white women strive is, in large part, synonymous with the dominant image and much of the experience of black women. (554)

Hence, in this text, Dill encourages us to pay attention to the dialectical ways different systems of oppression interact to create different experiences: race intersects with both class and gender in a way that modifies the experiences lived by people. And finally, she asserts that the experience of black women could be useful for feminist theorizing.

Drawing on post-Leninist Marxian ideas of the privileged epistemological position, Dill posits that it is the experience of black women that should be the basis for theorizing a new understanding of all oppression. Black women’s experience, she contends, can be

particularly useful for the construction of a framework that will successfully address multiple and simultaneous oppressions.⁷²

Mention should also be made here of the activities of Chicana feminists in this same period of the 1970s. According to sociologist Benita Roth, whose history of white, black, and Chicana feminists in the 1960s and 1970s traces their “separate paths,” Chicana feminists remained almost exclusively anchored in the Chicano/a community and directed their criticism toward Chicano men in the movement (Roth 2004,172). At the same time, however, enormous efforts were deployed to maintain ties with the Chicano community and to counter claims that they were using Anglo-feminist arguments inappropriate to the needs of their own community. Indeed, they legitimated their activism as a way to get more women involved in the broader struggle for the Chicano/a community. While black feminists challenged both the black movement and the feminist movement, Chicana feminists concentrated their efforts on making the Chicano movement more responsive to Chicanas’ needs. For example, one of their main concerns was to challenge gender roles and family structures in the Chicana/o community (Baca Zinn 1975). And often, in countering resistance to their feminist claims within the Chicano/a community, Chicanas do in fact articulate a discourse not unlike that of black women in the same period: “women are oppressed both as women and as part of La Raza” (Vidal 1971, quoted in Roth 2004, 147). Nonetheless, very little was written to theorize the intersection of oppression. Instead, feminist Chicanas theorize specific alternative visions of the Chicano community that would include a world free of sexism.

⁷² Patricia Hill Collins develops at length this convincing argument in her 1991 book *Black Feminist Thought*.

It is intriguing, therefore, that one of the most important publications of the early 1980s in furthering the development of an intersectional analysis was the work of two Chicana editors, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Perhaps the specific location of these authors – not only as Chicanas and feminists, but also as lesbians – played a role in their desire to move beyond the project to make the Chicano/a community less sexist; in fact, Anzaldúa refused to glorify the Chicano/a community, not just because of the restrictions it imposed on women but also for fostering alienation based on one's sexuality. Discussing the rampant homophobia within her community, she later writes: "Most of us believe that if we reveal this unacceptable aspect of the self our mother/culture/race will totally reject us" (Anzaldúa 2007 [1987], 42). But only by grounding her critique in a deep connection with her culture, does she feel the legitimacy to criticize this culture: "Not me sold out my people but they me.[...] Though I'll defend my race and my culture when they are attacked by non-mexicanos, *conozos el malestar de mi cultura*. I harbor some of my culture's way, how it cripples its women, *como burras*, our strengths used against us, lowly *burras* bearing humility with dignity" (Anzaldúa 2007 [1987], 43).

A significant difference in Anzaldúa and Moraga's Chicana feminist discourse is the fact that they identify as women of color (Moraga 1981, xiii), in addition to identifying as Chicanas. Therefore, their political project and vision of politics includes social change that would affect all women of color, not only Chicanas. It is in this capacity, as women of color, that they embarked on the project to create the now famous anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, in which they attempted, along with differently

racialized authors, to have an honest dialogue both among themselves and with white women. In the words of Moraga:

Audre [Lorde] is right. It is also the source of terror – how deeply separation between women hurts me. How discovering difference, profound differences between myself and women I love has sometimes rendered me helpless and immobilized. (1981, xvi)

This book is remarkable for sharing with the reader both the love that women of color have for their white sisters, but also the depth of the pain that working in a racist context has involved, and hence the sense that they don't want that burden anymore.

This Bridge Called My Back is also an attempt to construct a sense of community among women of color and theorize the differences existing among them. As Moraga explains in the foreword to the second edition of the book (1983), the original project carried an optimism around the creation of a united community among women of color – if the right questions are asked, an honest dialogue could emerge – although a few years later, a sense of disillusionment can be heard:

The dream of a unified Third World feminist movement in this country as we conceived of it when we first embarked on the project of this book, seemed more possible somehow, because as of yet, less tried. [...] In the last three years I have learned that Third World feminism does not provide the kind of easy political framework that women of color are running to in droves. [...] The *idea* of Third World feminism has proved to be much easier between the covers of a book than between real live women. (1983, no page)

Although *This Bridge* is not a book of theory per se, women, in this book, discuss the complexities of their lives and the failure of theories and practices to address this complexity. For example, Rosario Morales, a Puerto Rican woman, tells us that we cannot reduce identity to their one's position in generalizable terms of class and race, thereby promoting an anti-essentialist conception of identity politics:

Color and class don't define people or politics. I get angry with those in the women's movement and out of it, who deal with class and color as if they define people and politics. [...] Understanding the racist ideology – where and how it penetrates – is what is important for the feminist movement, not “including” women of color or talking about “including” men. (Morales 1981, 91; emphasis in original)

Other authors discuss in length the complexities of race and class and how they are understood and acted upon. For example, Mirtha Quintanales, a Latina lesbian feminist, ponders:

Things begin to get even more complicated when I begin to consider that many of us who identify as “Third World” or “Women of Color,” have grown up as or are fast becoming “middle-class” and highly educated, and therefore more privileged than many of our white, poor and working-class sisters. (Quintanales 1981,151)

The women writing in this anthology do not shy away from the ramifications of their politics and attempt to reconcile their personal experiences with existing political parameters, thus pushing the boundaries of theory further.

This Bridge Called My Back is seen by many as a deciding moment in defining the interaction among women of color as well as between them and white women. Because it is grounded in women of color's reality, it emphasizes the complexity of being at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression, thereby reaffirming the inadequacy of the additive model and the need for a theory that can account for this complexity. By asserting the wide experiential range of women of color located differently and calling for a theory able to conceive these different locations of race, class, sexuality, gender, nationality, and religion, among others, it advances a feminist understanding of intersections.

Following the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*, there was an explosion of texts attempting to articulate differences among feminists. For example, in 1987,

Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands-La Frontera*, redefined identity in more fluid terms.

Trying to stay true to both a critique of the Chicano community and of the feminist movement, she explores the “in-between” spaces in which she finds herself.

As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (102-103)

Through the concept of *mestiza*, she advocates a politics based on political commitment rather than identity because any and all identities are restrictive.

While some feminists focus on the fluidity of identity, others tackle the more structural ways systems of oppression interact and how a failure to account for that leads to the reproduction of these systems. In 1981, Gloria Joseph published “The Incompatible Menage à Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and Racism”⁷³ where she explained how using women as a universal category serves to reinforce white supremacy because it does not address how white women profit from the exploitation of people of color. This idea is taken up by, among others, bell hooks who will push it further in her 1984 *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* where she critiques mainstream feminism as a white supremacist project that serves to allow only a few women more access to power without radically changing the structures of inequality embedded in our society. She argues that no truly feminist project can afford to overlook racism and classism and hence advocates a feminism that tackles all three systems of oppression:

⁷³ This text is in fact a response to Heidi Hartmann’s “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism” (1981) discussed in the next section.

By repudiating the popular notion that the focus of feminist movement should be social equality of the sexes and emphasizing eradicating the cultural basis of group oppression, our own analysis would require an exploration of all aspects of women's political reality. This would mean that race and class oppression would be recognized as feminist issues with as much relevance as sexism. (2000[1984], 25)

In the second half of the 1980s, hooks starts to talk about “interlocking systems of oppression” and “politics of domination,”⁷⁴ a terminology that was taken up and expanded upon in Patricia Hill Collins's work.

In *Black Feminist Thought* (1991), Patricia Hill Collins reasserts that to use the standpoint of black women allows one to understand that different systems of oppression are “interlocking” and part of an “overarching system of domination” (2000 [1991], 222). She contends that to understand any specific situation in its socio-historical context requires one to understand that situation as structured by interlocking systems of domination. In fact, understanding how each system of oppression “needs the other in order to function” fosters a completely different framework than the additive model.

Collins criticizes the additive model for its tendency to create dichotomies, which she sees as anchored in masculinist Western thought, forcing not only black women to “choose” being either black or a woman, but also rendering invisible people whose “race” or ethnic identity are ambiguous. Furthermore, a dichotomized understanding of categories maintains them as exclusive, facilitates hierarchy between these categories, and does not capture the complexity of reality. Therefore, she suggests that we think about systems of oppression as interlocking, part of a larger matrix of domination.

⁷⁴ bell hooks does not use the words “interlocking systems of oppression” per se in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, but by the time *Talking Back* is published (1989), she states in an interview that she has been using this term frequently. In *Feminist Theory* she does mention once “interconnections among various systems of domination” (1984, 20), which she actually credits to Charlotte Bunch.

Embracing a both/and conceptual stance moves us from additive, separate systems approaches to oppression and towards what I now see as the more fundamental issue of the social relations of domination. Race, class, and gender constitute axes of oppression that characterize Black women's experiences within a more generalized matrix of domination. Other groups may encounter different dimensions of the matrix, such as sexual orientation, religion, and age, but the overarching relationship is one of domination. (226)

Hence the analogy of the matrix is applicable to different experiences. Finally, Collins points to the fact that the matrix is also structured at three different levels: "the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions" (227). All three levels are both sites of oppression and sites of resistance. These different levels in the matrix of domination are particularly useful because it allows feminists of color to not only understand how the systems of oppression might converge in their personal lives, but also prompts feminists to analyze how these interactions shape social structures, institutions, communities, and also social movements and resistance. Therefore, it opens the door for organizing that might tackle one or multiple levels of the matrix. Moreover, the focus on culture and social institutions creates a space where white feminists might be able to engage in a way not allowed in a theory that is grounded in the personal experience of women whose personal identity is conditioned by multiple oppressions.

Around the same time, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw also wrote a groundbreaking article that will further shed light on the limitations of using racism and sexism as two independent systems. Her analysis, grounded in the experience of black women, clearly demonstrates the "problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" (1989, 57). Using the analogy of a car crash at a street intersection, she explains the difficulty in

attributing blame and reconstituting the event among conflicting and incomplete information. Similarly, to force a black woman to identify whether her oppression is based on gender or race does not capture the complexity of the situation. She thus coins the term intersectionality to account for the specific ways in which racism and sexism interact. For her, “because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (58). Crenshaw continues to develop her idea of intersectionality in a 1991 article titled “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” Like Collins, Crenshaw, in this second article, argues that the interaction of systems of oppression happens at multiple levels (structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality).

Intersectionality is the term that came to dominate feminist discourse in the United States, although sometimes “interlocking systems of oppression” is also used. Even if multiple definitions of this concept still abound, some key components are central to contemporary uses of the term. First, this theorization is clearly grounded in the experience of black women and other women of color. This reliance on the experience of women of color to define theory follows a feminist epistemological tradition that sees experience as a legitimate source of knowledge. Furthermore, this focus on experience also provides tools for women of color to make sense of their everyday experience and relate to theory on an intimate level. It also centralizes experiences that have been marginalized by both the feminist and the antiracist movements.

Second, intersectionality allows one to understand how the interaction of race and sex (and class) is also solidified through institutions and social structures. Furthermore, these institutions and social structures need to be reconceptualized to account for their multidimensional role in reproducing domination if they are to address the experiences of women of color. This is the case of the legal system, but also of some of the structures implemented by social movements, such as rape crisis hotlines and battered women shelters.

Third, intersectionality asks us to reconsider how we understand power and oppression. Collins and hooks ask us to think of *relations of domination*, conceived as multiple and unstable, where people might both dominate and be dominated at different moments and in different contexts. Intersectionality thus sees oppression as fluid and changing while any situation is understood as the result of multiple factors. More recent uses of intersectionality emphasize this situated character by reminding us that “rather than grant primacy to race, gender, or nationality as prediscursive—or, more popularly designated “contradictory”— phenomena, we are better served by observing what becomes salient through the field of play in which power reveals itself” (Rowley 2010). Thus, contrary to postmodern understandings of power, intersectionality suggests we should pay attention to the specific expression of power in any given situation.

Before turning my eyes to the development and treatment of multiple oppressions and intersectionality in France, a mention of the treatment of socio-economic class in the development of intersectionality in the United States is needed. In the 1960s and 1970s, the proximity of feminists with anti-capitalist leftist groups led to sustained attempts at theorizing the confluence of capitalism and patriarchy. Sometimes from a predominantly

Marxist feminist perspective, sometimes from a predominantly radical feminist perspective, a number of authors have tried to understand the relation between the two structures of domination as well as the differential impact of capitalism on women.

First, one can note on the one hand that Marxist feminist texts usually reaffirm that the condition of women is a by-product of capitalist structures (see among others Engels 1972[1884]; Reed 1970; Zaretsky 1976) and hence suggest that the struggle for women's liberation is best attained through a Marxist struggle; on the other hand, some radical feminist texts anchored in a Marxist methodology argue the primacy of patriarchy over capitalism and hence suggest that the struggle for women's liberation should be directed first towards combating patriarchy (see for example, Firestone 1970).

But overall, starting with the 1979 publication of the anthology *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, edited by Zillah Eisenstein we see a number of feminists wrestling with the theoretical issues of viewing capitalism and patriarchy as intertwined systems of oppression. For example, a number of feminists, such as Heidi Hartmann, Joan Kelly, Rosalind Petchesky, and Iris Marion Young, integrated aspects of Marxist theory, in particular, the concept of historical materialism, into their writing. And even if the primacy of one system over the other varies from one author to the other and cannot always be clearly defined, we see in these beginnings certain attempts at theorizing the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy, with more or fewer details.

In 1981, the text by Heidi Hartmann on "The Unhappy Marriage of Feminism and Marxism" (1981) and the responses to it by Gloria Joseph and Azizah Al-Hibri, published in Lydia Sargent's *Women and Revolution* (1981), attempt a theorization of

intersectionality from the basis of the class system. Hartmann argues for a materialist analysis of the relations of domination of men over women; in doing so, she identifies (1) the appropriation of women's work by men; (2) the importance of the division of labor for the construction of gender; and (3) the power and domination involved in this division of labor.

The material base of patriarchy, then, does not rest solely on childrearing in the family, but on all the social structures that enable men to control women's labor. [...] The strict division of labor by sex, a social invention common to all known societies, created two very separate genders. [...] Although it is theoretically possible that a sexual division of labor not imply inequality between the sexes, in most known societies, the socially acceptable division of labor by sex is one which accords lower status to women's work. (16)

This materialist exposé of the relations of domination between women and men bares a clear resemblance to the concept of "sexage" developed by Colette Guillaumin a few years earlier in France, and which I shall examine in the section on France.

In addition, Hartmann refuses to subsume one system under the other and rather, asserts their interaction:

The whole of society, then, can be understood by looking at both these types of production and reproduction, people and things. There is no such thing as "pure capitalism," nor does "pure patriarchy" exist, for they must of necessity coexist. (17)

Although Hartmann briefly touches on race, she does not develop a complete analysis of how the racist system is imbricated in capitalism and patriarchy, but rather extends her analysis of gender to race, exposing the similar social processes through which race and sex are created (17). She then reaffirms the importance of connecting all three systems in

our understanding of society: “It might be most accurate then to refer to our societies not as, for example, simply capitalist, but as patriarchal capitalist white supremacist” (18).⁷⁵

However, a few years after the publication of such a text, the issue of class, although constantly named in the trilogy race, class, and sex, seems to diminish in importance, at least theoretically. Although numerous texts will mention women’s lower economic status and their undervalued or unpaid work, the theorization of class as a system that interacts with patriarchy and racism falls out of view. While the voices of women of color demanding that the (dominant) feminist movement addresses its internal racism are increasingly heard and theorized, the similar demand that feminism address its middle-class bias is less theorized.

Michelle Fine and April Burns, in their article "Class Notes: Toward a Critical Psychology of Class and Schooling" (2003), observe a trend that they refer to as the “disappearance of class” from feminist research through their study of the treatment of class in schools. They conclude that even though "social class is often included within the 'race, class, gender and sexual orientation' mantra of feminist and critical race work . . . [it is] rarely scrutinized with rigor or serious scholarship" (841). Vivian Adair, a self-defined “multigenerationally poor woman and feminist, poverty-class scholar” (2005, 575), further researched this trend in her study of 200 graduate and undergraduate women’s studies programs. She argues that “considerations of class are given short shrift in feminist studies” (577). Her analysis, based on the content of syllabi, major texts taught in introductory courses, articles published in feminist journals, and faculty self-declared

⁷⁵ Note the similarity with bell hook’s concept of white-supremacist-patriarchal-capitalism developed the same year in her book *Ain’t I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1981).

research interests all lead to the same conclusion: a disproportionately low amount of time, space, and resources are dedicated to the theorizing and teaching of class.

While it would be false to argue that class is not theorized at all in intersectional analyses,⁷⁶ Adair's point goes a little further. Grounding her argument in feminist methodology, which recognizes the importance of the epistemological commitment to theory emerging from marginalized people's experiences and self-interpretation of those experiences, she argues that:

in stark contrast to articles that are named as being primarily about race, gender, and/or sexuality, in the vast majority of essays about U.S. class, the lives of poor women - encompassing women of color, lesbians, disabled women, and women on welfare - were represented and analyzed as objects of scientific investigation, allegedly written by "objective" outsiders, at best positioning poor women as "ethnographic informants" and at worst as simply objects of study and analysis. The not so-hidden implication here is that poor women's theories and understandings of their own experiences of class as they intersect with gender, race, sexuality, and/or disability in the world - or in academe - are not central to feminist studies. (2005, 580-581)

Therefore, Adair's point has not only to do with the quantity and resources dedicated to the development of a comprehensive social class analysis within intersectionality, but also with the lack of voice given to women whose lives are embedded in their experience of poverty.⁷⁷ In short, the concept of socio-economic class in intersectionality is undertheorized by U.S. feminist scholars.

⁷⁶ One can note for example such texts as Lynn Weber's *Understanding Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: A Conceptual Framework* (2001), Dorothy Allison's "A Question of Class," (2000); Donna Langston's "Tired of Playing Monopoly?" (2004); Lisa Catanzarite and Vilma Ortiz's "Family Matters, Work Matters? Poverty among Women of Color and White Women" (2004); and the publication of a whole issue of *Feminist Studies* on social class (1998, vol. 24, issue 1), which contains a number of articles dedicated to welfare struggles and affirmative action policies.

⁷⁷ See also, for a similar argument, Bonnie Urciuoli's "Representing Class: Who Decides?"(1993).

French Intersections: On *Consubstantialité*, *Co-extensivité*, and the French Treatment of Intersectionality

Feminists in France in the 1970s were also preoccupied with understanding how multiple systems of oppression affect each other and shape the reality of women's lives.

When reading the French texts side-by-side with the U.S. texts, however, what one notices immediately is the extent to which French feminists gave their attention to questions of class but less so to the question of race – indicating a reverse of U.S. concerns. As we have seen in the chapter on gender, most feminists in France were in contact and in dialogue with Marxist groups, which led to the coining of the term *rapports sociaux de sexe*, using the Marxist terminology of *rapports sociaux* and applying it to an understanding of women as a class. Relations between women and men are thus understood as the product of an antagonistic interaction between women as a group and men as a group.

Beyond the development of *rapports sociaux de sexe*, materialist feminists also tried to think through the interaction between capitalism and patriarchy, but to a lesser extent, between patriarchy and racism. This section reviews their treatment of this understanding, focusing first on the development of the terms “consubstantialité” and “co-extensivité” to understand the relation between the different *rapports*, mainly through the work of French sociologist Danièle Kergoat. And through a discussion of the work of Colette Guillaumin, I shall also review the construction of race as a *rapport social* in feminist theory, and its impact on an understanding of women as a diverse group, shaped by multiple oppressions. Although Guillaumin theorized race as a social construct, this chapter argues that the notion of race remains relatively absent from early French feminist theorizing.

By the early 2000s, we see in France a renewed interest in feminist theory coming from the United States, which brought with it a review of the word intersectionality. At first, as we shall see, French feminists seem to be quite critical of the term and its application, claiming at times that the concept of intersectionality serves to reify categories and obscures the social processes involved in constituting people into groups. After a first negative evaluation, the term intersectionality nonetheless enters French feminist theory and, by the year 2010, we see an increase in its usage. Therefore, the new millennium can be characterized by a discussion about intersectionality, first rejecting it and then, among some feminist theorists, at least, adopting it although with caution. I argue here that this increased attention to the concept of intersectionality is due in part to: (1) an increase and change in migration patterns in France; (2) increased tensions in the “banlieues” (poor suburbs of Paris) and a heated debate on the headscarf in France, which forced feminists to position themselves in regards to ethnic subgroups; and (3) an increased access to U.S.-based feminist theory, made possible both through the Internet and by the translation of and discussion of key texts.

The terms consubstantiality and co-extensivity first appeared in French feminist literature during the early 1980s. In her extensive study of women blue-collar workers⁷⁸ *Les ouvrières* (1982), French sociologist Danièle Kergoat documents the specific ways that women’s work is not only quantitatively more oppressive than men’s work, but also so qualitatively different that one might want to talk about a different caste or class. This book is her first attempt at conceptualizing how class relations and sex relations are not

⁷⁸ She uses the term “ouvrières” to designate mainly women who work in industrial factories. The masculine referent “ouvriers” can be comparable to blue-collar workers, working mainly in factories. Because of the precarious nature of women’s work, the same women who work in factories might also work as domestic workers for part of their lives.

just adding on to each other to create a double oppression, but also fundamentally affect each other in a way that defies traditional conceptions of class and sex oppression. In her words, these rapports co-constitute each other, and are thus consubstantial. To the question she posits in the introduction, “are they [women workers] not part of the working class only sporadically or do they constitute a popular caste substratum, always in motion, that would include the strictly speaking working class and would have with it some *rappports consubstantiels?*” (8), she answers in her conclusion:

Yet, it is precisely the antagonistic *rapport* between classes that can become more perceptible for [women] workers as soon as the feminist dimension comes to include itself, to imbricate itself in their class consciousness. Because this latter is then impacting all aspects of their condition. *Both consciousnesses constitute each other, just like the two structures, capitalism and patriarchy, reproduce each other.* (136-137; emphasis in original)

Her analysis of women workers suggests that difference in women’s conditions of work is fundamentally grounded in the integration of the sexual division of work into labor. Accordingly, job categories in which women predominate are devalued because they are considered a “natural” extension of women’s work; women are policed and surveyed as if they were children; women’s participation in the labor force is considered unnatural and temporary, and going against their true role in society, and therefore women are presented with few possibilities for permanence and/or advancement.

The reliance on the sexual division of labor, for Kergoat, makes it impossible to reduce women’s oppression and exploitation in labor to a simple by-product of capitalism. Instead, she argues that

The sexual division of labor is an integral dimension of the mode of production; it is not exterior to it, even if it existed before capitalism [...] Because it was a necessary condition to the establishment of the capitalist mode of production, the sexual division of labor is still necessary for its survival. *Capitalism and patriarchy are not autonomisable*: capitalism was able to change the modalities of

women's oppression to use it to the best of its interests their labor force; patriarchy gave capitalism the possibility of creating a difference and a hierarchy of labor force. (15-16; my emphasis)

Therefore, she posits that the two systems need to be conceptualized together, not just as two processes each adding on to the other:

Even formulated that quickly, such contestations demonstrate that we cannot think as separate the capitalist forms of exploitation and patriarchal domination: it is not a juxtaposition but an organic connection between paid work and domestic work. (102)

Through this book, Kergoat establishes an imbrication of capitalism and patriarchy and its implications for women's everyday reality. Finally, in a later text Kergoat also makes the point that the different social relations cannot be hierarchized and hence there cannot be any primary struggle:

Wanting to articulate production/reproduction means for me working simultaneously on *two* groups of *rappports sociaux*, *rappports de sexe* and *rappports de classe*, *rappports* that we name respectively *oppression* and *exploitation*. This formulation is not innocent: it implies, among other things, the refusal to hierarchize these *rappports sociaux*; for me, there is no *principal front*, no *principal enemy*. A *rapport* cannot be more or less alive than another: it exists or it doesn't. (1984, 210; emphasis in original except for the words I kept in French)

Therefore, her definition of consubstantiality relies on both an integration of the different *rappports sociaux* and the antagonistic relations they produce among the groups they create, and a refusal to present one system as more oppressive than the other. This refusal to create a hierarchy between the different systems is central to her understanding of consubstantiality.

These *rappports* are also, for Kergoat, "co-extensifs." By this, she means that they expand to similar domains. Both *rappports de classe* and *rappports de sexe* extend to the

realm of ideas and the realm of the material. One should not relegate one *rapport* to the structure and the other to the superstructure, as some Marxists have claimed.

It is noteworthy to mention that in *Les ouvrières*, contrary to her previous book, *Bulldor*⁷⁹ ou l'histoire d'une mobilisation ouvrière (1973), she does not directly address racial relations. In fact, she does not make a connection with any racialization process even when she discusses State interventions to implement more humane working conditions for women because of their role as “reproducers of the race.” For example, in the following quote taken from the French National Assembly proceedings, the reference to race is direct and inscribed in both a racist and a sexist discourse; yet, Kergoat uses it only to further her point on the permanence of the conception of women as mothers, but not to address its racial implications:

If you seriously want, as I do not doubt, to preserve your race even more, to protect it against the decadence that threatens it, [...] it is up to the law, a wise and measured law that does not fall into any excess but that nonetheless allows a woman to really be what she should be, i.e. a wife and mother of a family. (22)

Even in her in-depth study of *Bulldor*, her treatment of race and social categories related to nationality, place of origin, and immigration remains superficial.⁸⁰ Her research at one factories examined a few strikes and an experience of “collective self-management,”⁸¹ focusing on the development of a collective identity among diverse groups of workers in that specific enterprise. Although at first the employees are presented as heterogeneous

⁷⁹ *Bulldor* is both the name of Kergoat's book and the fictional name she gave to the company owning the factory she studied.

⁸⁰ In an interview, Danièle Kergoat claims to have theorized “les rapports Nord-Sud” (North-South) through her study of factory workers (2010). The discrepancy with my reading of *Bulldor* and her recounting might be due to the poverty of the theoretical tools available and used in that period, making it hard in retrospect to read into this text an explicit theorization of race. It is also important to note that even if race and racialization remains relatively absent from French feminist theory, some feminists had been involved in some anti-racist/colonial struggles, namely the Algerian war.

⁸¹ The term in French is “autogestion,” which refers to the process by which employees take control of the means of productions, (re)start production, and collectively self-manage production.

and with diverse interests (French, Portuguese wanting to stay in France, and Portuguese wanting to go back to Portugal), she details the process by which differences are sometimes overcome through the collectivization of the struggle. Yet, it is interesting to note that she does not analyze these relations between immigrants and nationals with the same analytical tools that would constitute them as a class, such as antagonist *rappports sociaux*. Hence, although she has the possibility to do so because of her topic of research, she does not theorize an intersection with race and national origin.

This trend of analysis – a focus on gender and class and a lack of theorizing of race or nationality – can be observed in a number of texts produced in the 1980s and early 1990s in France. We see a prolific production by feminist theorists of texts analyzing capitalism and patriarchy and their mutual influence and articulation, with little mention of race or nationality.⁸² Therefore, while the notion of intersectionality in the United States is grounded in an analysis of race, and only to a lesser extent, class, the notion of consubstantiality in France is mainly grounded in an analysis of class and attends to questions of race only minimally, if at all.

One important theorist did theorize race and racialization processes: French sociologist Colette Guillaumin. Her first book, *L'idéologie raciste*, published as early as 1972 (actually written in 1967-68 according to the foreword of her book) presents racism as created by the “racisant” – the person who imposes race categories and the following attributes – and imposes a posteriori a biological marker to a social situation. Tracing the history of racist ideology, she posits that race should be understood as a social construction that shapes material conditions of living and thereby becomes a reality. In

⁸² For an exploration of the influence of and debate with Marxist groups, see Fougeyrollas-Schwebel (2005) as well as Lépinard (2005).

her 1977 article entitled “Race et nature: système des marques, idées de groupe naturel et rapports sociaux,”⁸³ tracing the history of slavery, she argues that markers (either the color of the skin representing belonging to a racial group or biological sex representing belonging to a gender) are the products and not the cause of social relations. She details how slavery was first driven by economic imperatives, and preceded the categorization of people into different races; hence, markers of identity came a posteriori to reify relations of domination among different groups already constituted (1995 [1977], 141). Thus, she discredits the idea that a specific “nature” can be attributed to a specific group, since the group is first constituted through social relations, thereby producing a similarity in material conditions among members of the group, which is then used to reify their position as “natural” members of the group. Claiming a similar process for the social construction of “natural” differences for women, she gives the following (blunt) example:

It is the nature of women to clean up the shit,” a statement that (practically throughout the world) means: “Women are women; it’s a natural fact; women clean up the shit; it’s their nature that makes them do it; and besides, since this is a specialization of genetic origin, it doesn’t disgust them, which is itself proof that for them it’s natural. (1995 [1977], 142-143)

This example illustrates the inversion of causes and consequences (nature vs. product of social relation) that creates a false idea of what is “natural.”

The spontaneous idea of nature introduces an erroneous relationship between the facts; it changes the very character of these facts. And it does this in a particular way: Nature proclaims the permanence of the effects of certain social relations on dominated groups. (142)

Guillaumin’s work stands apart from the work of most French sociologists on race. Although some sociologists take race as a given, and discuss whether or which

⁸³ This article and the following ones by Guillaumin reviewed and cited here have been collected and translated for the publication of the book *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology* published in 1995. The citations are thus from this official translation of her texts, and the page numbers refer to the pages in the 1995 book.

behavioral characteristics are associated with it, more commonly, French sociologists, especially progressive ones, simply refuse “race” and deny its existence completely because it has no biological foundation.⁸⁴ Danièle Juteau documents this “color blindness” in her 2006 article, “Forbidding Ethnicities in French Sociological Thought: The Difficult Circulation of Knowledge and Ideas.” Tracing the history of sociology of “race” and ethnic relations in France, she explains how “a complex interplay between the Republic, colonialism, universalism, and antiracism” (391) creates a double erasure leading to a dead-end in understanding the social relations of domination involved in racial and ethnic relations. She explains further, and it is worth quoting at length:

adopting the paradigm of inter-ethnic relations is to reject the French sociological and political paradigm of integration, to repudiate the Republican model of citizenship, to disavow universalism, to question the principle of equality of all citizens, to choose difference over equality, to reject modernity and modern individualism. Choosing the inter-ethnic relations paradigm is to violate the French model of integration – it represents an assault on French society and “Frenchness.” And worse still, since sociological categories shape the imagined community, symbolically and concretely (Bourdieu, 1987, p.29), sociologists of ethnic relations are destabilising the French model of Republican integration. Therefore, the field should not exist: its very presence goes against the meaning and values inherent to the Republican tradition, in sociology and in politics (Schnapper, 1998, pp. 411–412). For Schnapper then, the ethnic relation paradigm is not scientific but ideological, involving the inappropriate adoption of Anglophone, mainly American, approaches, where they correspond to the dominant paradigm of integration. Doing this sociology is to adopt foreign models of integration. So now we understand why one paradigm is scientific while the other is not – why the ‘right’ ideological choice is scientific and the ‘wrong’ one is non-scientific. (2006, 402-403)

Claims of U.S. cultural imperialism therefore juxtapose themselves to the idea that the republican universalist model is the most egalitarian, and for Pierre Bourdieu and

⁸⁴ An alternative framework has also been the development by black intellectuals in France of the concept and movement of *la négritude*. Much like the ‘Black is Beautiful’ movement in the United States, although much earlier (late 1940s and 1950s), *la négritude* celebrates black culture and tries to restore a dignity to black people. In addition, this literary movement was opposed to Western domination and colonialism, and carried some Marxist ideas. The three authors most notably known as founders of this movement are Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas. For more on this movement, see the work of Gary Wilder (2005).

Loïc Wacquant (1999) as well as Dominique Schnapper (1998), for example, to adopt such a paradigm would be equivalent to giving way to U.S. cultural imperialism and domination. Therefore, as we have seen with the queer movement in France, the framework of republican universalism prevents an in-depth theorization of racial relations based on identity.

For our present purposes, what is important to remember is that the lack of theorization of race in France is therefore not the lot of feminists only, but rather a phenomenon common to most progressive movements and theorists. This fact emphasizes the important contribution of Guillaumin, who, against all odds, theorized race relations as social relations, emphasizing that race exists not because of biological characteristics, but because it is produced by social relations that have a real and material impact on people's lives.

Finally, it is important to note that Guillaumin applies her theory of "biological markers" as following social relations to both race relations and sex relations. Thus, she develops a materialist framework that attempts to conceptualize oppression and marginalization of both racialized people and women. Yet, in her early writings at least, she rarely expands on the way racialized women are affected by both systems. It is also interesting to note that, even if Guillaumin herself makes a connection between the social construction of race and of sex, her work is used very differently by different bodies of research: "race scholars" in France often reference her work on race, but never mention her work on women; similarly, feminists often cite her work on women (namely the notion of "rapports de sexe" explained in the chapter on gender), but rarely mention her work on race.

This erasure of race from feminist discourses in France will change radically in 2003-2004 when the French government proposes a new law that would ban all representations of religious beliefs from public institutions, including the wearing of headscarves in public schools and other state institutions. Muslim women and schoolgirls would thus be presented with the choice to “stay home” or remove their headscarves. To justify this, government officials co-opt feminist arguments that the head covering is a symbol representing the oppression of women. This controversy was thus being constructed through a fundamental opposition between feminism and anti-racism (Winter 2008).⁸⁵ The ensuing debate among feminists reveals the inadequacy of feminist theorizing on race as many of them not only support the law but will promote it with arguments tainted by racist and colonial discourse (e.g. the need for us to “liberate” Muslim women from the oppression of Muslim men).

However, there were those who recognized the need to address racism within feminism. Among feminists critics of the law, researcher Christelle Hamel (2006) from the *Institut national d'études démographiques* in France, for example, wrote about “racialization du sexisme” (racialization of sexism) to designate the process by which feminist discourses are used to further stigmatize racialized communities and to posit racialized men as “more guilty” of sexism (Guénif-Souilamas and Macé 2003). The debate around the headscarf will lead French feminists to rethink the articulation of feminism and anti-racism. And to do so, they turn to U.S.-based feminist theory, which has a history of articulating racism and patriarchy.

⁸⁵ For the sake of comparison, one can recall in the United States how the debate over the O.J. Simpson trial was constructed in the media in a similar way, pitting feminists advocating the condemnation of violence against women against anti-racist activists framing O.J. as the modern example of lynching the “dangerous Black man.”

Thus, we see, around that time a growing interest in feminist theory produced in the United States. A number of publications take it upon themselves to translate key American texts. For example, Françoise Collin and Pénélope Deutsher published translations of ten key texts by U.S. feminists, including Carole Pateman, Patricia Williams, Catharine MacKinnon, and Judith Butler in their 2004 anthology *Repenser le politique: l'apport du féminisme*. In 2005, *Les Cahiers du genre*, in their special issue on “Féminisme(s): Penser la pluralité,” reproduced a French translation of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” along with a contribution by Nancy Fraser on multiculturalism. This publication also included a number of discussions of the concept of intersectionality. The same year, Christian Poiret published in *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* an often-cited article, titled “Articuler les rapports de sexe, de classe et interethniques,” where he reviews extensively and critically the concept of intersectionality as used in the United States and, while expressing some criticism, suggests how to import it in the French context. In 2006, Jules Falquet published “Le Combahee River Collective, pionnier du féminisme Noir” in *Les cahiers du CEDREF*, which proposes a historical review of black feminism and culminates in the Combahee River Collective’s statement and its theoretical contribution. In 2007, Elsa Dorlin continues the task of making literature from the United States accessible to French feminists by translating and reproducing in the anthology *Black feminism: anthologie du féminisme africain-américain, 1975-2000* texts from the Combahee River Collective, Laura Alexandra Harris, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberly Springer, Michele Wallace, Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Hazel Carby, and bell hooks. In a similar

spirit, Danielle Haase-Dubosc and Maneesha Lal recapitulate the essence of postcolonial feminism in their article, “De la postcolonie et des femmes: apports théoriques du postcolonialisme anglophone aux études féministes,” published in *Nouvelles questions féministes* in 2006, while Laeticia Dechaufour, in the same journal, also publishes in 2008 a review of postcolonial feminism, titled “Introduction au féminisme postcolonial.” Therefore, starting in 2005, the need for theoretical tools for thinking through the intersection of anti-racism and feminism leads to a plethora of texts reviewing, criticizing, translating, contextualizing, and re-appropriating U.S. feminist thought, particularly in relation to race, multiculturalism, intersectionality, and postcolonial theory.

So what are the positions of French feminists towards the concept of intersectionality? The word “ambivalence” might be the best qualifier of their review. Although not the first article published, I start here with Christian Poiret’s text (2005) because of its comprehensive review of different writings around intersectionality and because it is often cited in French feminist literature. After a brief history of the role of black women in the struggle for women’s rights and the early theorizing of race and gender (Beale, Combahee River Collective, hooks, and so forth), he reviews the work of Patricia Hill Collins in the following terms:

To designate, at a macro-social level, the connection between different systems of oppression, Collins (1995: 492) uses the term *interlocking oppressions*, i.e. a “model describing the social structures that create social positions. [Instead] the notion of intersectionality describes micro level processes – namely, how each individual and group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression described by the metaphor of intersectionality [...] [that] shape oppression. (9)⁸⁶

⁸⁶ It is particularly interesting to note in this review of Collins’s work that Poiret actually inserts an opposition between the matrix of oppression and intersectionality into Collins’s text that is not present in the original. Instead, Collins’ text suggests that a useful conceptualization of domination needs to use *both*

This citation from Collins, as we will see, is particularly interesting in relation to the French critique of intersectionality because in it, she highlights how social positions are *created* by social structures. In short, Poiret suggests that the basic idea of intersectionality lies in the idea that “the different forms of dominations are not separated nor additive, but instead they are interactive in their process as well as in their effects” (9). Poiret ends his article on the usefulness of intersectionality, but with a cautionary note regarding the essentializing potential of such a concept when used in a legal framework:

Through these narratives, it is possible to understand how the different *rappports de domination* become a reality when they combine with each other. Even then we need to avoid being caught in a categorical approach that postulates the existence of identity groups instead of analyzing their conditions of emergence, reproduction, resistance, and transformation. However, the impulse of the debate on “intersectionality,” through the creation of a judicial-administrative process is a bad omen in light of the recurrent (and maybe unavoidable) tendency to co-opt analyses of *rappports sociaux* under analyses of categories, as soon as they are used by the judicial and administrative register of the law and the state. This transition from a paradigmatic frame to another can be understood more generally as a movement of reification or essentialization of categories of otherness. (20)

In her article “De l'usage épistémologique et politique des catégories de ‘sexe’ et de ‘race’ dans les études sur le ‘genre,’” published in *Les Cahiers du genre* in 2005, Elsa Dorlin presents a similar critique of the term intersectionality. Discussing Crenshaw’s contribution to feminist theory, Dorlin appreciates Crenshaw’s attempt to think through the intersection of oppression as a structure of domination itself:

levels of analysis, “first” the macrosocial through the matrix of oppression, and “second” the microsocial through intersectionality. Hence, Poiret inserts an idea of opposition between the two through the words “alors que,” best translated by “instead” or “while,” when Collins saw them as complementary. Here is the original quote from Collins: First, the notion of interlocking oppressions refers to the macro level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender. This is the model describing the social structures that create social positions. Second, the notion of intersectionality describes micro level processes – namely, how each individual and group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression described by the metaphor of intersectionality. Together they shape oppression. (1995: 492)

Crenshaw demonstrated how political intersectionality of relations of dominations (*rappports de domination*) is a structure of domination itself that prevents or weakens discourse against sexism or racism. (91-92)

Yet, her review also suggests that Crenshaw, because she treats oppression as “sectors of intervention,” leads to a naturalization of groups and promotes an understanding of domination as ahistorical:

However, this definition not only isolates, but also unifies positions that are socially antagonistic and tends to conflate stigmatized, imposed, and political identities of minoritized groups. The concept of intersectionality and, more generally, the idea of intersection can hardly [help us] think through a moving and historic[-ally situated] *rappport de domination*, hardly analyzable (West, Fenstermaker, 1995). In other words, intersectionality is an analytical tool that stabilizes relations into fixed positions, that sectorizes mobilizations exactly in the same way that dominant discourse naturalizes and encloses political subjects into othered identities always preexisting. (92-93)

Thus, she goes further than Poiret by suggesting that intersectionality as a tool for analysis is fundamentally caught in naturalizing categories of political subjectivity.

Kergoat borrows this criticism from Dorlin in her 2009 article on consubstantiality. She adds that intersectionality posits fixed categories:

The multiplicity of categories masks the *rappports sociaux*. Yet, we cannot dissociate social categories from the *rappports sociaux* through which they were constructed. Then, to work on categories, even when reformulated in terms of their intersection, is to take the risk that certain elements will remain invisible, elements that can be the strongest aspects of domination, just as they can be the elements with the most potential for resistance. The notion of multipositionality thus poses a problem because there are no “positions,” or more specifically, positions are not fixed but in constant evolution, renegotiation, entrenched as they are in dynamic *rappports*. (2009, 117)

She asserts that we need to de-naturalize the *rappports* without de-materializing them, meaning that even if their existence produces very real differential material conditions, we have to avoid taking them for granted and study how they come to produce those conditions.

Finally, in their introduction to the special edition of the journal *L'homme et la société*, entitled “Prismes féministes: Qu’est-ce que l’intersectionnalité,” Elise Palomares and Armelle Testenoire argue that even if some misusages are possible, the term intersectionality still has the potential to help feminists think through the ways different systems of oppression interact:

We would like to highlight the transformative potential [that intersectionality] represents for sociological thought as a paradigmatic framework to grasp the differentiation [process] and social inequalities in their complexity. Certainly, intersectionality corresponds to plural usages; nonetheless it holds a heuristic potential provided that it [is used to] refer to the *rappports sociaux de pouvoir* understood in a dynamic perspective. (26)

Hence, it seems that in the end, French feminists demonstrate a desire to adopt the concept of intersectionality provided that it is used to address the notion of *rappports sociaux*.

The adoption of intersectionality in France allows us to consider one of the central questions of this study: how language, discourses, and concepts travel. And by asking “how,” I mean more than translating articles into the receiving language and location, but rather how successful is the translation. For intersectionality, I suggest that the term is often mistranslated and this is, I contend, because the context that provides meaning to U.S. discussions of intersectionality is not well known in France. Although some authors (Dorlin, Poiret, Falquet) demonstrate some knowledge of the context leading to the creation of the term intersectionality in U.S. feminist theory, this knowledge, even at its best is still inadequate. In the United States, even if the term intersectionality has been the “buzz word” for a few years now (Davis 2008), it is usually read as part of a body of literature that understands the social construction of identity categories and structures of oppression. Intersectionality is seen as a tool for looking at a specific situation, freezing

time momentarily (but knowingly), in order to pay attention to the specific ways domination, oppression, and exploitation affect the lives of the people under scrutiny in that situation. When the word is imported in France, however, this “freezing of time” becomes a code for essentializing and reifying categories. This can be due to the fact that, again, it would be hard to translate every single text into French. Yet, it leads to some astonishing contradictions whereby, for example in Poirer’s text, he can cite Patricia Hill Collins explaining that social positions are constructed through social structures while concluding that the concept of intersectionality is flawed for its reification of categories. One might argue that Collins talks about the matrix of domination when she says that, not intersectionality. But for her, both concepts need to be understood and used together. Hence, the absence of a translation of the concept of the matrix of domination, to give a macro framework to the concept of intersectionality, leads to a misrepresentation of her meaning.

Similarly, even when looking only at Crenshaw’s work, because the only available text from Crenshaw in France is “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” French feminists are missing an important part of the puzzle. Crenshaw is fundamentally a legal scholar; her work aims at changing the field of legal studies and practices. This is particularly evident in her 1989 article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics” that criticizes the framework of discrimination as fundamentally flawed *because* it obscures the way categories and norms are created through relations of power.

Another important point lies in the use of language and the movement between different levels of analysis. French materialist feminists might be correct in emphasizing that one level of analysis is missing from the theory surrounding intersectionality: that of *rappports sociaux*. Both Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks discuss the importance of structures in analyzing oppression. But their theory is more located at the level of social structures, i.e. how capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy work together; in their theory, through the framework of intersectionality, there is an emphasis on how people experience the contradictions and imbrications of these systems. And although as I have noted, there is a tacit understanding that categories of identity are the product of these systems, these categories – their formation, evolution in time and place, and their relation to production and resources – are not theorized per se by feminists in every texts. The absence of a vocabulary to describe the formation of these social groups as antagonistic and intrinsically linked in feminist discourse – I am of course thinking here of the term *rappports sociaux* – might explain the scarcity of theory describing this process in and of itself. Yet, the theorization of race as a social formation, always moving, always to be renegotiated, is nonetheless part of theoretical tradition in the United States, popularized mainly through the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986). Although it might not be explicitly referenced in feminist texts, it is an integral part of the conception of race and racial relations. Therefore, although French feminists might rightly point to an aporia in theorizing the social formation of categories, to claim that intersectionality as a conceptual tool reifies categories does not do justice to feminist thought from the United States.

But there is also the possibility that asking about the successes or failure of translation is not the right question. French feminists, after all, became interested in U.S. intersectionality theory in order to address racism in their context, not in the U.S. context. Perhaps the right question to ask is how these recent discussions of intersectionality encourage the development of a more inclusive French feminist movement, one more adequate and equipped to deal with the reality of a rapidly transforming French society.

Pluralism and Intersectionality in Quebec feminist theory

This section looks at how, over the years, Montreal feminists have integrated a certain pluralism, either through an intersectional framework or not, and its consequence on their praxis. For this purpose, I first review the feminist academic literature dealing with plurality in the Quebec feminist movement as well as the literature addressing intersectionality directly. As I demonstrate, starting in the 1990s, the Quebec feminist movement has been engaged in a pluralistic project in order to address the multiplicity of oppression experienced by women, while keeping as a central analytical tool the materialist *rapports sociaux de sexe*. Although they remain critical of the concept of intersectionality, they do not dismiss it completely. Yet, they privilege an alternative framework: the development of a *féminisme solidaire* (solidarity feminism) anchored in a strong but pluralist *Nous femmes* (We women).

The second part of this section analyses three moments where women's groups attempt to articulate a feminist vision, and the place that diversity among women and the notion of intersectionality take in these visions. I have chosen to look at (1) the radical feminist groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s; (2) the Forum pour un Québec

Féminin Pluriel (Forum for a Plurial feminist Quebec) in 1992; and (3) the briefs submitted by women's groups to the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences in 2007. These three "moments" have the advantage of being separated by more or less fifteen years each.⁸⁷ One of the limits coming with the choice of these three case studies is of course the difficulty or danger of representing an "evolutionary" process of development. In fact, the goal was not necessarily to define such a narrative and, as we will see, my analysis demonstrates that instead of a linear progression, the Quebec feminist movement is characterized by tensions and contradictions leading to a back and forth between theoretical frameworks. Second, the Quebec-wide character of some of these events (the Forum and the Commission) made it difficult to make a clear distinction between Montreal feminists and the Quebec feminist movement more generally.

The specific situation of women in Quebec has always tainted Quebec feminists' relation to women from diverse origins. The early coalition between feminism and nationalism has served both to bring an early understanding of how multiple oppressions interact, but also, at times, to mask the privileges of white feminists in Montreal in comparison with racialized women "here or elsewhere," to use their words. It seems that starting from the 1960s, women in Quebec choose the model of solidarity to frame their

⁸⁷ Other moments could have been used. For one, the *Marche du pain et des roses* (Bread and Roses March) as well as the *Marche mondiale des femmes* in 2000 are also important events in the history of Quebec feminism. However, extensive research has assessed its potential for constructing a local and an international solidarity (see among others, Barbot 2000; Barbot and Rose 2000; Giraud 2001; FFQ 2001; Osmani 2002; Galerand 2007). As well, another option could have been the organization of the gathering "Femmes en tête" (1989-1990) around the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of woman suffrage where, in fact, tensions between racialized women and white women lead to the withdrawal of the *Collectif des femmes immigrantes* (Immigrant women collective) a few months before the event (Fournier 1990; Femmes en tête 1990). Instead, I preferred to hope that the Quebec feminist movement had learned from its mistakes and thus I decided to look at how, two years later, Quebec feminists articulated their "Québec féminin pluriel."

alliance with and respect of differently positioned women. As the national issue moved in and out of feminist politics, feminists tried to reassert their specificity as Quebec women with the integration and respect of “other” women, a rocky adventure to say the least.

Most Quebec feminists involved in the academy chose to address the problem of difference among women, and the threat created by a fragmentation of the category of women, by responding with a reaffirmation of a sense of collectivity, embodied in the terms “Nous femmes” (We women) or “Nous féministes.” These terms are intended to reflect the plurality of people constituting the group that are women, while reasserting a certain unity. Sometimes, this idea is also developed through the notion of a different kind of feminism, the “féminisme solidaire” (solidarity feminism).

The *Nous femmes* term emerged as a response to the threat posed by postmodernism, queer, and intersectionality to the unity of the category of women and hence the political project of feminism (Descarries 1998, 2009; Juteau 2010). Feminists in Quebec sought to reassert the need for and the importance – both theoretically and in activism – of understanding women as a social class constituted by the *rapports sociaux de sexe*. Danielle Juteau pioneered this trend in an important article (1994) where she addressed the fragmentation of the category of women. Using the work of U.S. sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant, British critical theorists Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, as well as French materialist feminists Nicole-Claude Mathieu and Collette Guillaumin, she established parallels between the social construction of positions related to race, sex, and class, and attempted to theorize how these systems (racism, patriarchy, and capitalism) interact with each other.

After explaining how this “category of women” is produced by the *rappports sociaux*, she reasserts the need to understand how women are united through a common social formation process, although different in its specific manifestations. To counter the claims that the usage of “women” as the political subject of the feminist movement is essentialist, she relies on an analogy with capitalism:

When we pointed out that the proletariat is not homogenous, that an international division of labor existed also differentiated by gender, when we recognized that the proletariat was not only composed of white men from advanced capitalist countries but also black women and men as well as white women, and when we discovered that Blacks (women and men) and Whites (women and men) as well as women (black and white) and men (black and white) did not occupy the same positions in the division of labor, we did not call essentialist the Marxist analysis of social class. Economist? Yes. Reductionist? Yes. But essentialist? Rarely! (1999 [1994], 127)

Thus, she warns against the intellectual slippage between recognizing differences within a category and rejecting the category itself as useless and essentialist. She advocates for a theory that studies precisely the construction of different categories through social *rappports* in terms of sex, race, and class.

In a more recent article, “‘Nous’ les femmes: Sur l’indissociable homogénéité et hétérogénéité de la catégorie” (2010) (“We” women: On the indivisible homogeneity and heterogeneity of the category), Juteau states that:

The recourse to *rappports* and classes of sex is essential to the theorization of the category women *and* to its heterogeneity. It is by placing these *rappports* at the heart of our endeavor that we will avoid the culturalism [...] of contemporary analysis, which nonetheless maintains women as a category while fragmenting it. (65)

Therefore, she advocates for the construction of a *Nous femmes* that also recognizes other oppression.

In 1998, Francine Descarries was asking a similar question in these terms:

[Can] contemporary feminist thought, or should I say, feminist thoughts [...] carry “alternative definitions of [the Women’s] movement and its political object? Finally, can they fuel a solidarity feminist struggle, a politics of coalition open to diversity and differences “without falling into the trap of infinite fragmentation”? (183)

She further emphasized the importance of keeping a united feminist perspective while accounting for the diversity of women’s experience and identities and the constant renegotiation of the boundaries of domination (183). Already in 1997, writing then with Christine Corbeil, Descarries had identified the development of a *féminisme solidaire* anchored in fighting against poverty and for social equality in coalition with other groups defending similar interests in the face of the neoliberal turn. Accordingly, this new feminism:

emerges as a consequence as a project more global, more unifying (*rassembleur*), less sectoral and more open to diversity. [...] The diversity of its ideological orientation and of its practices is thus confirmed. The focus is now on the development of solidarities with women from here and elsewhere instead of the achievement of a consensus. [...] Rather, it reoriented its action with the intention of reaching women where they are, through their multiple experiences, while paying more conscious and direct attention to the problems of women doubly oppressed. (24-25)

Thus Descarries and Corbeil posit a new “trend” in Quebec feminism, invested in recognizing differences among women, turned toward and in solidarity with all women from “here and elsewhere,” engaged in criticizing local and global (economic) processes while maintaining as central the analysis of *rappports sociaux de sexe*, along with other forms of domination.

This new commitment was particularly visible in the 1995 Bread and Roses protest and then again in the international mobilizations leading to the first World March of Women in 2000. In short, this “solidarity feminism,” which is attributed to the Quebec feminist movement, can be defined as

a feminist culture of differences and a will to construct a mobilization that is plural, pluralist, and in solidarity [...] to overturn the *rappports* of power, regardless of their form and their nature. To achieve this, it is suggested not only to undertake selective actions through coalitions, but also to promote a *solidaire* adhesion, instead of the consensus of the biggest number possible of women, to a feminist project in which rhythms, approaches, and expressions are diversified while maintaining the goal of the elimination of sexual social processes of division and hierarchy at work in all societies of the world. (Descarries 1998, 207)⁸⁸

Although a good description of the vision carried by the Quebec feminist movement, it remains mainly descriptive and does not provide insights on how to conceptualize the intersections and mutually constitutive character of these different oppressions.

Furthermore, one can question whether solidarity is strong enough to reverse and account for disparities in power among women.

In the article “Penser le *Nous féministes*: le féminisme solidaire” (2010), Geneviève Szczepanik, Francine Descarries, Mélissa Blais, and Francine Ricci analyze the discourse of women active in the Quebec women’s movement, evaluating the development of this solidarity feminism and the pluralist *Nous femmes*. Defining the concept of solidarity feminism further, they reaffirm Descarries’s contention that

the division-hierarchy of sexes remains the central axis of its analysis, but the limits of its analysis and practices based on this unique division are recognized. Thus, the *Nous femmes* always represents the nodal point of theorization, cooperation, and mobilization of *féminisme solidaire*, but it is a *Nous femmes* intended to be more open and inclusive. (189)

Furthermore, they identify this solidarity feminism as one that pays attention to how the different *rappports sociaux* are imbricated and co-constitute each other, trying to integrate and address the criticism formulated by black feminism, postcolonial studies, and lesbian feminism. Then, they analyze sixty interviews made with activists and workers of the

⁸⁸ For more on solidarity feminism, see Descarries (2005); and Descarries, Marchand, Ricci, and Corbeil (2011-2012).

Quebec women's movement conducted through their collaborative research project with Relais-femmes.⁸⁹ They conclude that although the testimonies resonate with the concept of solidarity feminism, the need to further integrate “transversality and interdependence of the different divisive *rappports sociaux* (class, sex, race, sexuality, religion, etc.)” (203). As it turns out, in the quotes from the interviews provided in the article, the “openness and inclusivity” of a *féminisme solidaire* is sometimes presented in a vocabulary that suggests that although an integration of racialized, younger, and other marginalized women is desired, women are not necessarily open to challenge the movement too much. This can be seen in expressions such as to “open ourselves” to the diverse realities and needs of women, “seek out” women from ethnic communities, “establish dialogue on diversity,” “recruit” younger women and “convince” them of the importance of feminism, and “make efforts” to integrate “minoritized”⁹⁰ women (195-196, 203). Thus, the discourse is more one of assimilation than real inclusion. Creating a *féminisme solidaire* and a pluralist *Nous femmes* might be easier said than done, or in the words of Michelle Dumont and Louise Toupin, “a project yet to be achieved” (cited in Szczepanik et al. 2010, 202). What is even more sobering is that both Josée Belleau and Francine Descarries reached the same conclusion respectively in 2000 and 2002, testifying to the slow progress of this issue.

In short, the framework privileged by the Quebec feminist movement seems to be the construction of a pluralist *Nous femmes* and a *féminisme solidaire*. Although most

⁸⁹ These are the same interviews I used in my chapter on Gender. For more information on these interviews, see the interview section of chapter 2. It should be noted that because the research group had already analyzed the data in terms of the articulation of multiple oppressions (in this text and in Corbeil and Marchand 2006; and Ricci and Marchand 2010), I did not repeat the work.

⁹⁰ The use of the term “minoritized women” (*femmes minorisées*) is becoming increasingly used in French to avoid suggesting that only certain women belong to an ethnic community or a “race” (Lamoureux 2011). I personally prefer the term “racialized” (*racisées*) because it denotes the social process involved in attributing a race to an individual or a community, and the ensuing hierarchy.

feminist academics recognize the contribution of women of color in criticizing the monist feminism dominant during the second wave, they generally refrain from making intersectionality their tool for analyzing how multiple oppressions interact. Although Quebec academic feminists demonstrate a better integration and understanding of the diversity and complexity of the debates among feminists in the United States, they also reference the criticism made by French feminist theorists on intersectionality. We now turn to the few theorists in Quebec who directly address the concept of intersectionality to examine their appraisal.

Much as in France, the concept of intersectionality makes its way into Quebec feminist theory later than in the United States. In fact, a keyword search in the database of the Quebec-based journal *Recherches féministes* reveals that the first article containing the word “intersectionnalité” or “intersectionnel” in the full text appears in 2004, in an article on feminism and the anti-globalization movement by Diane Lamoureux.⁹¹ Starting in 2006, we see a resurgence of the use of the term in feminist research and of its usefulness for feminist research (see for example Corbeil and Marchand 2006; and Ricci and Marchand 2010).

The discussion among academic feminists is mainly lead by two authors, Danielle Juteau, whose work I discussed above, and Sirma Bilge. Both, although feminist in their perspectives, actually held positions in research units focused on ethnicity at the

⁹¹ The database used for this research was Erudit (www.erudit.org), which hosts the journal *Recherches féministes*. To satisfy my own curiosity, the search was not limited to that journal; only three other references were found to use the term “intersectionnalité” in their text before or at the same time as Diane Lamoureux. Two articles were published in *Les Cahiers du Droit* (Belleau 1998; Boivin 2004), and the other one was a translation of an English text on racial relations in Canada (Wilkinson 2003). Based in Quebec, Erudit hosts more than 80 scholarly journals, most of them published in French.

Université de Montréal;⁹² in other words, it is mainly through ethnic studies that Quebec feminists enter the discussion on intersectionality. That being said, their work on intersectionality has been published in feminist journals and is referenced widely among the feminist community, both in France and in Quebec.

Contrary to their French counterparts, neither Juteau or Bilge are invested in a project to translate and make accessible U.S. feminist theory. Their broad knowledge of ethnic studies allows them to understand intersectionality in its context of production. Numerous references to, for example, Omi and Winant (1994[1986]) or Hall demonstrate wide knowledge of the literature in English. Moreover, they are both well versed in U.S. feminist literature, often referencing classic authors on intersectionality such as Collins, Dill, hooks, and Weber, in addition to the two articles I discussed by Crenshaw.

As mentioned above, already in 1994, Juteau was articulating the co-construction of dominations and systems of oppression. She takes from bell hooks (1981) and Hazel Carby (1982) the idea of simultaneous oppressions, and from British theorists Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard (1984) the importance of a multidimensional paradigm.⁹³ Relying on distinctions made by Stuart Hall (1986), she favors a “relative autonomy” of systems of oppression, which suggests that the different *rappports sociaux* need to be theorized as analytically distinct yet always influencing each other in their application

⁹² Danièle Juteau was the founder of both the Groupe de recherche ethnicité et société (GRES) (Research Group on ethnicity and society) and the Centre d'études ethniques des universités montréalaises (CEETUM) (Center on ethnic studies of Montreal universities). She was also the holder of the Chaire en relations ethniques at the Université de Montréal (Chair on ethnic relations of the Université de Montréal) between 1991 and 2003. Sirma Bilge was also the director of the CEETUM between 2005 and 2010.

⁹³ It is interesting to note that in this 1994 text, Juteau only references, in terms of American feminists, bell hooks (1981) and Paula Giddings (1988). She does not mention Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, or any of the other authors I identified as significant in the development of intersectionality in the United States, a shortcoming that will be remedied in her later texts.

(122). Thus, “race and sex are analyzed as organizing principles of *rappports sociaux*, which can be studied at the micro and macro level of social formation” (123).

In her 2010 article, “‘Nous’ les femmes...,” Juteau critically invests the notion of intersectionality. In her words,:

Intersectional analysis represents the arrival point of research dealing with the articulation of *rappports sociaux*. In it, multiple oppressions are seen as intercrossing, interactive in their processes as much as their effects, in constituting each other. (70)

But Juteau, in her insistence on using *rappports sociaux* as processes creating categories, also refers to Kergoat’s concept of consubstantiality and co-extensivity.

Finally, the positions occupied by women are inseparable from other *rappports*, of which we can examine the articulation in terms of co-extensivity and consubstantiality. From this later imbrication of *rappports sociaux* emerges the assignation of women to concrete and diverse usages, thus the different modalities of their appropriation and, consequently, the heterogeneity of the category [of women]. (76)

In short, Juteau’s analysis focuses centrally on different *rappports sociaux* involved in constructing social categories and posits a certain interaction in these processes, without subsuming one system of oppression under another.

Writing around the same time, Bilge, in a 2009 article on intersectionality entitled “Théorisations féministes de l’intersectionnalité,” defines intersectionality as a transdisciplinary theory that:

refutes the confinement and hierarchy of the big axes of social differentiation that are the categories of sex/gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, ability, and sexual orientation. An intersectional approach goes further than a simple recognition of the multiplicity of systems of oppression operating from these categories and postulates their interaction in the production and reproduction of social inequalities. (2009, 70)

She also explains how an intersectional analysis operates at both the micro- and macro-social level, distinguishing between the intersections of oppression on the conditions of

people's lives and how the different systems of oppression are imbricated to produce, organize, and maintain inequalities.

Interestingly, she also suggests that in Europe – especially Germany – the term intersectionality is mostly used to promote a postmodern framework, emphasizing the fracture of the group “women,” while in the United States, intersectionality is more often used as a response to postmodernism, emphasizing a look at the material implications of oppression on groups of people. She also notes national differences in the usage of intersectionality, suggesting that British usage accentuates the “dynamic and relational aspects of social identity” (77), while in the United States, more significance is given to “an analysis of the impact of the system or structure instead of identity formation” (77).

She then engages a debate on the relative autonomy of the different systems of oppression. Using Hall's theory of transversal politics, she argues that although the different systems converge to impact individuals in indistinguishable ways, it might still be useful to theoretically analyze the systems as relatively independent. This departs from an understanding of consubstantiality that theorizes the co-constitution of *rappports sociaux* but resembles Juteau's notion of relative autonomy.

Recognizing the multiple significations of the word intersectionality and hence its potential to fall short of its promises, Bilge reminds readers of the importance of “contextualiz[ing] and historiciz[ing] power structures that intersectionality aspires to analyze, in order to avoid any reified and ahistorical description.” (84) Bilge furthers this idea by pointing to, in another article, the danger of such a polysemy. Originally published in the journal *Homme et société* (2010), but also reproduced in the above-mentioned French book *Prismes féministes* (2010), Bilge retraces the evolution of

different ways feminists have theorized the relation between oppression based on sex and other oppressions, from a monist view to a holistic approach. In her introduction, she suggests that the popularity of the concept of intersectionality might be a result of its less threatening character. Noting the haste of institutions – academic, governmental, and legal – to adopt the term, in particular in anglophone environments, she says:

Besides, one can ask if the attraction of this term alluding to a geometric figure or a road intersection cannot be explained, to a certain extent, by its sanitized character, thereby perceived as less threatening than notions such as racism, sexism, and multiple oppression. We can also legitimately criticize the proliferation of references to intersectionality only by form – tokenism – and the vacuity of certain of its usages, which suggest a certain faddish effect. (2010, 45)

Furthermore, she suggests that to apply an intersectional framework uncritically – or *dogmatically*, to use her term – might fail to serve its purpose by always considering all oppressions as having a similar weight in a given situation. For her, in certain contexts, one oppression might be more prevalent than another, in a given situation (2010, 62).

This reminds us of the argument made in the United States on the non-formulaic application of an intersectional framework (Rowley 2010).

Throughout this review of some of the more important analyses of intersectionality in Quebec, one concept consistently appears: the unfading reliance on *rapports sociaux* to examine power, domination, oppression, and exploitation. Whether they are building an alternative model such as the *féminisme solidaire* or evaluating the usefulness of intersectionality, all Quebec authors systematically come back to the social processes involved in creating categories of domination and their ensuing hierarchies. Through the work of French theorist Guillaumin, this framework is applied equally to the construction of women as a category (caste, class) and race/ethnicity. Yet, this theoretical

consistency in the work of academic feminists does not always carry over to the Quebec feminist movement, as the following examples will illustrate.

The 1960s and 1970s: Intersecting (Ethnic-)Nationalism, Capitalism, and Patriarchy

The context in which radical feminists emerged in the 1960s and 1970s allowed them to develop a unique, although contradictory, discourse about autonomy/solidarity and around the concept of multiple oppressions. Drawing on the detailed description of the context of Quebec presented in Chapter 2, I here review how the specific circumstances of the emergence of radical feminism created politics quite unique to Quebec feminism. I first review the relationship of feminists with Marxist groups and ideas, leading to the incorporation of an anticapitalist position. Then, I look at how the development of a racialized ethnic nationalism – grounded in theory from Third World decolonization struggles – leads feminists to articulate a multilayered struggle against patriarchy, capitalism, and colonization. The database for this analysis is constituted by the same groups – and the material produced by them – as I used in the chapter on gender: the Front de liberation des femmes (FLF), the têtes de pioches (TDP), and the text *Manifeste des femmes québécoises* (MFQ) published by an anonymous collective of authors.

Contrary to descriptions of radical feminists as promoting a monist and privileged view of women oppression (Jaggar 1983, 84), a review of early writings by radical feminists in Quebec indicates a multifaceted understanding of oppressions. Although one cannot speak of intersectionality per se, it is interesting to note parallels in the thought process happening simultaneously in the United States by women of color and in France by, among others, Danièle Kergoat. While U.S. feminists emphasize the interrelations

between the structures, and French feminists the co-constitution of *rappports sociaux*, Quebec feminists emphasize the need to struggle on all fronts simultaneously.

First, there is ample evidence that feminists, and particularly radical feminists, articulated as part of their analysis a critique of capitalism. All groups studied take the time to explain this relationship, relying on the division of labor, the structure of the family, lower wages in the labor market, and unpaid domestic work – often identified as a pre-capitalist relation of servitude. To develop this theory, they heavily rely on Friedrich Engels, but also on Margaret Benston, Evelyn Reed, and Christine Delphy.⁹⁴

Almost all groups have, at one time or another, affirmed the need to combat both systems simultaneously. For example, the FLF states:

The specific exploitation of women is based on material conditions that are connected to the division of labor, the structure of the family, and a class society. [...] Quebec women's liberation requires the transformation of the family structure and of the current political and economic system. (FLF 1982 [1971], 107)

And later, after a long exposé positioning the nuclear family as the locus of patriarchal exploitation, they state:

The liberation of women necessitates the destruction of the capitalist system and the nuclear family. One cannot happen without the other. (FLF 1982 [1971], 111)

The frequent discussion of capitalism in early feminist writings can be explained as much by the influence of, as by the tensions with Marxist(-Leninists) groups. As Véronique O'Leary and Louise Toupin explain, feminists were constantly trying to legitimize the autonomy of their struggles, in part because of the virulent critiques they

⁹⁴ In fact, one text wrongly cites a certain Christine Dupont as author of “L’ennemi principal” published in the special issue of *Partisan* entitled “Libération des femmes: année zéro” (1970). It should be noted that, as for all authors who contributed to the issue, Delphy signed the article with her first name, followed by the first letter of her last name, thus leading to the confusion seen in the FLF text.

received from organizations such as *En lutttes!* and *La ligue communiste m-l du Canada*, two Marxist-Leninist organizations (1982, 32-39).

One radical feminist group, the TDP, was less inclined to play the game. In fact, their position was more ambiguous in regards to the double struggle. At times, they clearly state that the patriarchal system precedes capitalism and thus implied that women's struggle should stay a priority:

Women's condition is qualitatively different because it is the basis of all other discriminations. Women's submission was the first form of oppression [...] It is therefore because women's exploitation exists that all other forms of oppression exist and it is impossible to make them disappear without eliminating the one at the source. (TDP 1980 [1976], 62)

Yet, this statement is quickly followed by a call for the destruction of the economic and socio-cultural system:

Because [feminism] is not satisfied with demanding equal participation of women in the existing society, [it] requires an overhaul of its structures. Economic structures on one side, socio-cultural structures on the other side. (TDP 1980 [1976], 62)

The other groups seemingly refused to create a hierarchy between the two systems. Furthermore, all groups expressed a clear conviction that destroying capitalism will not lead to women's liberation, sometimes citing the specific examples of China, Cuba, and Algeria (FLF 115, 119; MFQ).

Connections with the nationalist movement were also evident in all groups, especially the FLF and the MFQ. Indeed, both the name and the slogan of the FLF were direct references to the nationalist struggle. The name Front de libération des femmes comes from the name Front de libération du Québec and their slogan "No Women's Liberation without Quebec Liberation, no Quebec liberation without women's

liberation” establishes a direct connection between the two movements, asserting that they are not willing to subordinate one struggle under the other.

Similarly, the preface of the MFQ ends with the following words:

FOR WOMEN’S LIBERATION
FOR A FREE QUEBEC
WE WILL WIN
(MFQ 1971[1970], 10; capital letters in original)

In addition, one can notice in the MFQ text direct references to theorists associated with decolonization struggles. For example, they use the work of Albert Memmi to explain why women sometimes resist feminism:

Considering the fact that freedom is always scary, this opposition [to feminism] can only be explained by the typical schema defined by Memmi (Albert) on relations between oppressed and oppressors. Because the oppressed wants to [conform to what] the oppressor wants [her] to be, because [she] relies on the oppressor for [her] value. (MFQ 1971[1970], 38-39; gender not specified in the original)

In this case, literature written in the context of racial oppression is applied to women as a group. In fact, allusions to slavery are common, as in the expression “we define ourselves as ‘slaves of the slaves’”([FLF] 1982[1970], 65).

As we have established in chapter 2, it is important to remember that the Quebec nationalist struggle developed under the influence of Third World decolonization struggles, and has come to equate language with class *and* with race. Thus, radical feminists come to see the struggle for the liberation of Quebec as a decolonization struggle. As a result, they identify decolonization as a non-negotiable third struggle, essential to women’s liberation:

The struggle for the liberation of women of Quebec must therefore be located at three levels:

- Against patriarchy
- Against American imperialism and Anglo-Saxon colonialism

- For socialism
(FLF 1982[1971], 117)

In a few instances, radical feminists try to articulate in more detail how these systems interact. For example, the authors of the MFQ theorize a certain “imbrication” of sex and class. They posit both capitalism and patriarchy as entities to be destroyed:

We see that the patriarchal system (patriarchal family) and the capitalist system (division of labor, exploitation) go together and are imbricated into each other. [...] Women who struggle against exploitation must struggle against two systems. (MFQ 1971 [1970], 31-32).

Furthermore, they recognize a mutual interaction between all three systems when they write: “Each of these exploitations are connected to each other and all together they interact one with the others.” (MFQ 1971 [1970], 25).

It should also be mentioned that if the theorization of a colonized ethnic nationalism pushed some feminists to think differently about how systems of oppression interact, it also rendered invisible the struggle of other women in Quebec, namely First Nations women.

As we have seen, radical feminists in the 1970s are articulating the beginning of what could have been a three-way intersectional analysis. Yet, these ideas never materialized into a clear framework or analytical tool comparable to intersectionality or even consubstantiality. The idea that white francophone Quebecers are racialized slowly lost its salience as a significant proportion of them became the new middle-class. The analogy with Third World struggles became harder to substantiate, although nationalists still use the image of colonization in their discourse. Recognizing their privileged position on a global scale, contemporary Quebec feminists rarely use the analogy of colonization to designate the linguistic oppression anymore. As we move in time to the

early 1990, we see that economic preoccupations remain central for the feminist movement; however, issues related to race cease to be about white francophone women and become about immigrant women, First Nations women, and women from other (“Othered”) ethnocultural communities.

The Forum *Pour un Québec Féminin Pluriel*

The second “moment” I consider is that of the *Forum pour un Québec Féminin Pluriel*. Before addressing the content of the forum, I first give a short explanation of the events leading to its creation. Then, I review the preparatory document as well as the conclusions from the Forum published in the book *Pour changer le monde: Le Forum pour un Québec Féminin Pluriel* (1994) by Collette Beauchamp⁹⁵ in order to explore how the women’s movement theorized, at this particular juncture, the intersection and imbrication of oppressions. As argued in this section, in 1992, the Quebec women’s movement demonstrated a clear integration of preoccupation around marginalized women – either because of their sexual orientation, class, ethnocultural⁹⁶ affiliation, age and/or ability – in all sectors of society, from education, to media representation, all the way to poverty and access to resources. Yet, despite the clearly stated commitment to pay attention to marginalized women, the Quebec feminist movement, at least in 1992, did not theorize how the different dominations modify each other and are co-constituted.

The context for this forum is the 1982 Constitution Act, whereby Queen Elizabeth II officially guaranteed the complete sovereignty of Canada, fully recognizing Canada’s

⁹⁵ This book is written by Colette Beauchamps but was coordinated by Sylvie Paquerot.

⁹⁶ Throughout the documents of the Forum, the term “communautés ethnoculturelles” (ethnocultural communities) is used. Thus, I will reproduce this trend to carry a similar meaning, with both its strength and weaknesses.

independence from the rule of the British Parliament. Out of the ten provinces constituting the Canadian federation, only Quebec – through its elected premier René Lévesque – refused to sign the new Constitution Act. This refusal continued to fuel anxieties about the fate of Quebec within the Canadian state. To remedy this situation, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, in 1987, attempted to get Quebec to endorse the 1982 Constitution by negotiating with all ten provincial premiers, a set of amendments to the constitution, which would be known as the Meech Lake Accord, from the name of the lake where the negotiations were held. To pass, these constitutional amendments needed the approval of both houses of the federal Parliament and all provincial legislatures within three years. The Accord ultimately failed in 1990, bringing back the separatist debate in Quebec. The provincial government proceeded to establish a Commission on the Political and Constitutional Future of Quebec, also known as the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, from the name of its two chairs (Michel Bélanger and Jean Campeau). The commission grouped together thirty-six commissioners from all sectors of society, from labor unions to political leaders. Yet, although they repeatedly demanded one, women's groups were not allotted a seat at the table.

This refusal to consider women a significant constituent of society worthy of sitting at the table was a major blow to women's groups who had been active in both federal and provincial politics, repeatedly taking positions in national debates, and were already in the process of thinking about the future of society. Following an analysis of the different briefs submitted during the commission hearings, the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), drawing on the proposition presented by one of its members, decided to hold a province-wide forum to develop a feminist societal project. Together with other

groups, over the course of the year 1991, they prepared a document to be used as a guide for discussion in over 1300 local groups. Numerous local forums and workshops were organized; a plethora of organizations and individuals with different preoccupations and living conditions (First Nation, immigrant, racialized and white women, lesbians and heterosexuals, young and old, able-bodied and disabled women) were consulted, all this in connection with discussion held by other social movements such as the labor and the ecology movements. The federation then produced a synthesis of the women's groups' local consultations, which was to become the working document for the Forum. This process was seen as a first not only in developing a global vision for the future of Quebec from a feminist perspective, but also because the federation succeeded in working with very diverse groups of women (Beauchamp 1994, 23).

All this work culminated in three days of workshops, plenaries, and debates with over 1000 women in attendance. The main topics were economy, health, education, culture, ecology, feminism, pluralism, the state, power, young women, violence, pacifism, and solidarity with women abroad (Beauchamp 1994, 23-24). First Nations women also created a special workshop.

To analyze this event, I rely mainly on a book produced out of the discussions, notes, and reports from the Forum, *Pour changer le monde: Le Forum pour un Québec Féminin Pluriel* (1994), written by Collette Beauchamp. The notion of a pluralist feminist movement is omnipresent in the text, including in the name of the Forum. In fact, from the start, the groups organizing the Forum made a point to reach out to a diverse group of women, and according to their own evaluation, succeeded pretty well. Probably as a

result, preoccupations such as poverty, First Nations people, and immigration are present throughout the Forum analysis.

In fact, issues related to diversity were not treated in separate workshops; rather, they were integrated within all the theme-based workshops. Consequently, participants discussed the specific problems of racialized women as much in discussions about education as in discussions about the media or state structures. For example, out of the workshop on representation and the media came the following statement:

Similarly, they express the desire that the media transmit a positive image of women and that the content correspond to the life of all women, of native women and women belonging to ethnocultural communities. (97)

The concerns of women from First Nations were also discussed in multiple workshops not specifically designed to address this issue.

Another important point coming out of the discussions is the recognition of the violence of racism, along with other forms of oppression. “Punished very lightly, violence becomes the privileged mode of expression of all forms of domination and intolerance: racist violence, violence toward children, sexual aggressions, etc.” (58-59) Similarly, racist violence is put side by side with sexual harassment (81).

These statements reflect a real concern for the situation of racialized women. Throughout the text, racism, poverty, and exclusion based on different social categories is a constant preoccupation.

It consists in *knitting a plural Quebec* and in installing long lasting relations of equality and solidarity among all members of society. (58)

And later:

Quebec’s women’s movement [...] conceives of pluralism as a fundamental value of its societal project: “As long as all [women and men] will not be received by institutions or structures adapted to the ethnic, economic, and socio-cultural

diversity of our society, we will not be able to talk of pluralism and tolerance.” In its eyes, the challenge of pluralism demands first that we raise the standard of living of those [women and men] who are still marginalized. (62)

Thus, the notion of equality is understood, through out the consultation, as meaning equality between all members of society, with specific attention given to marginalized women, whether based on race, class, civil status, age, sexual orientation, or ability.

The Quebec feminist movement is also realistic in regards to its passed attempts at uniting all women. Without providing any clear solution, they assert the need for a more inclusive movement:

Up until now, the women’s movement has shown itself as relatively closed to this reality (the integration of new comers [immigrants]), in its structures as much as in its composition. During the consultation, participants expressed loud and clear that the movement will not overlook cultural pluralism anymore and a real “stitching” is necessary between the movement and women from ethnocultural communities. They affirmed the necessity for the women’s movement to develop its welcoming and opening capacity towards them, through an intensification of exchanges, collaboration, and common strategies, in order to struggle together against poverty, domination, and discrimination. (64)

They also attempt to understand some of the barriers preventing racialized women to fully participate in the feminist movement, which they attribute to identity issues and a failure of the movement to fully integrate concerns of women from ethnocultural communities and other marginalized women:

On the other hand, the beginning of a certain rapprochement with women from ethnocultural communities demonstrates that the latter don’t identify themselves just yet with the women’s movement, not enough at least to invest it massively and take their place. It seems that belonging to two groups, sex and ethnic, does not ground itself enough or that it has not been proven that the women’s movement can accept this double-belonging. Lesbians, young women, disabled women, elders, women from low economic social environments tell us they feel isolated, because the movement has yet to integrate in its conception of the problem all those excluded by the system, to enlarge its analysis to new fields of identity and belonging. (129-130)

In short, throughout the public forum, there is a clearly stated recognition that feminists must pay more attention to the needs and demands of marginalized women, whether they are marginalized due to their race, sexual orientation, age, ability, and/or class. For the participants in the forum, equality cannot be achieved without addressing multiple forms of discrimination and violence. Their attempt to create a feminist vision for a progressive and inclusive Quebec society is an excellent response to the debates at hand in Quebec society more generally.

It remains striking, however, to find so few references to the interactions of different systems of oppression. It might not be surprising to learn that the term intersectionality was absent in the debates. In fact, the term was just starting to emerge in the United States and did not have time to travel to francophone feminist communities in Quebec. But what is more surprising is the fact that the idea of an interaction between the different forms of oppression and the co-constitution of systems is also absent. There are a total of two instances when the notion of cumulative oppression is mentioned explicitly:

Participants to the consultation underlined that for a lot of social groups and people, the discrimination caused by intolerance, sexism, and racism is *doubled* by a flagrant inequality of revenue. (Beauchamp 1994, 38; my emphasis)⁹⁷

[Native] women *suffer a double oppression*, as women and as native women. Besides, their people are among the groups in society most affected by a set of socio-economic problems: poverty, discrimination, suicide, alcoholism, familial violence. (63; my emphasis)

Although the notion of this double oppression is only mentioned twice, the existence of multiple oppressions acting simultaneously is present.

⁹⁷ All the following quotes in this section are taken from the report on the Forum written by Colette Beauchamp and entitled *Pour Changer le Monde: Le Forum pour un Québec Féminin Pluriel* (1994) unless otherwise noted.

Because this forum was framed in a desire to envision the future, one might argue that theorizing oppression was not its goal. Yet, as U.S. feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser reminds us, theory can help us to “clarify the situation and perhaps contribute a reflection that helps people to distinguish, within the range of political orientations available to them, which options are better or worse” (Avendaño 2009). Thus, the theoretical framework is central to framing issues in a certain way and influences the kind of solutions presented to solve it. In 1992, the Quebec feminist movement demonstrated a commitment to reach out and integrate marginalized women who have not yet invested in the movement; perhaps this desired integration is what will bring a different theoretical framework to the feminist analysis.

The Bouchard-Taylor Commission – A Return to the Primacy of Women’s Oppression

Since men are not equals in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?
bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, p.19

In February 2007, the Quebec government launched a public debate through the creation of the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*, discussing what is termed “reasonable accommodations.” This concept, coming from the judicial jargon of labor law, usually references the practice of relaxing certain rules in order to counter direct discrimination. In a broader context, “reasonable accommodations” is used by public and private managers to allow the integration of people systemically marginalized.

This practice has been used in Canada since 1985 to accommodate and foster the integration of differences in a society dominated by a white Western Protestant (Catholic

for Quebec) society and insure equality among all. Early cases included accommodations for religious purposes. For example, in December 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled through the Ontario Human Rights Commission, that Theresa O'Malley, a Seventh-Day Adventist, "should not have been terminated by her employer because she refused to work on Friday evening and Saturday morning to observe Sabbath" (Bouchard-Taylor 2008, 48).

Starting in May 2002, one can see an increase in media attention to cases of so-called reasonable accommodations. The case of a young man demanding the right to wear his Kirpan (a ceremonial small knife carried by Orthodox Sikhs) to school, thereby breaching the school's weapon prohibition policy made some waves throughout Canada. Of more importance for our analysis, in 2004, Ontario courts debated whether or not to allow family arbitration courts to rely on Muslim Sharia Law to solve family disputes. Although family arbitration had allow members of the Jewish community to use religious law in some instances, in the wake of September 11 and an increasing Islamophobia, the prospect of allowing Muslims to solve some conflicts through Sharia law raised fear both among Muslim women and in society more generally. The ensuing mobilizations by women's groups lead to a clear position against this possibility in Quebec, and the abandonment of this practice in Ontario in 2005.

Yet, in the midst of this debate, numerous journalists started to pay attention to a number of other cases involving in particular the Muslim and the Hassidic Jewish community, pitting them against "values fundamental to Quebec society," among which they name women's rights. For example, some media reported that men were excluded from a pre-natal class based on the expressed desire of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh women

in the class (Gagnon 2007), although according to the report of the Commission, this never happened (Bouchard-Taylor 2008, 70). Two other events involving public institutions were viewed as threatening women's rights: (1) an internal memo by the Montreal police department suggesting that women officers let their male counterparts intervene when dealing with men from the Hasidic Jewish community; and (2) the purported case of accommodating the request of certain men to have their driving test administered by a male representative of the SAAQ (Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec – the Quebec equivalent of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)). In addition, the media reported two cases of young female athletes being prevented from participating in sports competition (one was a soccer tournament, and the other a Tae Kwon Doe competition) because they refused to take off their headscarf (Bouchard-Taylor 2008).

The role of the media in framing this issue was crucial; questions such as “how far is too far?” and the explicit pitting of women's rights against immigrant/religious/ethnic communities – without distinguishing between all these labels – created a climate of fear whereby the threat of the Other was exacerbated, a rhetorical distortion to which I will come back at the end of this section. Yet, this public outcry accusing immigrants/religious/ethnic communities of questioning core values of Quebec society led to the commissioning by the Quebec government, in February 2007, of a public consultation⁹⁸ on reasonable accommodations.

⁹⁸ Public consultation is a political process common to most Commonwealth countries where the government seeks the input of the population by offering them a chance to speak on the issue in different forms (speech, briefs, etc.). Typically, after listening to the people, the commissioners will issue a report on the content of the consultation, and make recommendations to the government.

The role of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission was, in part, to “formulate recommendations to the government to ensure that accommodation practices conform to the values of Québec society as a pluralistic, democratic, egalitarian society” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 7). First, the commission invited groups and individuals to submit briefs containing recommendations on the road to be taken to create such a “pluralistic, democratic, egalitarian society.” Women’s groups more specifically focused their briefs on ways to pursue the idea of equality and the integration of ethnic minorities in Quebec without infringing on women’s rights.

I decided to study this “moment” because it offered a unique opportunity to see how feminist organizations and women’s groups articulate the intersection of racial (ethnic) discriminations and their redress, and women’s rights. This section reviews the sixteen briefs presented by women’s groups and gay and lesbian rights organizations. I limited my search to briefs presented by groups, as opposed to individuals, because they generally represent the result of a local discussion within the group and in most cases are grounded in a certain expertise connected to the mission of the group. Three out of those sixteen were presented in English, and were therefore excluded from the analysis, bringing down the number to thirteen; three came from organizations with a specific gay and lesbian rights orientation and were kept in the analysis because of their potential to carry a feminist and intersectional discourse.⁹⁹

Out of the thirteen documents studied, only three actually addressed the notion of intersectionality, either using the specific term or related concepts; interestingly, two of those three briefs, plus an additional two briefs from other groups, also relied on the additive models to discuss the oppression of immigrant or racialized women; two other

⁹⁹ For a complete list of the briefs under study, see Appendix D.

briefs recognized multiple forms of oppressions that affect women; five discussed differences among women, without articulating how these oppressions interact; and seven named equality between women and men as a priority over accommodating religious rights. I conclude this section with an analysis that draws parallels with the French debate on the headscarf.

The idea of intersectionality was only present in three briefs: the FFQ, L'intersyndicale des femmes, and Multimundo.¹⁰⁰ For example, the brief presented by the Fédération des femmes du Québec tackles intersectionality both at the level of identities via social categories, and at the structural and systemic levels:

of the pluralism of Quebec society and of the diversity of the women's movement, particularly, of women in a situation of poverty or who are exposed to experiencing discrimination as a function of, among others, their [skin] color, their ethnic origin, their sexual orientation, their disability, their age, their religion or their lifestyle
[...]

According to our feminist analysis, patriarchy is not the only form of oppression. Patriarchy is a thousands year-old system of oppression that expresses itself through the attribution of specific and sexist roles reserved to men and women and a hierarchization of these roles. Neo-liberal capitalism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism as well as racism are also systems of oppression. And it is the *combination* of these oppressions that is the subject of current feminist struggles.

[...]

The sex, socioeconomic status, "race," class, immigration status, sexual orientation, functional limitations [disabilities], are *combined with other systems* of discrimination, such as colonialism, neocolonialism and neoliberal globalization, thus creating *even larger inequalities* for these women. (10; my emphasis)

In this definition of the organization, we see an attempt to expose an intersectional analysis, both at the level of systems and how they converge to create a diverse reality for women. Far from shying away from addressing differences among women, the FFQ, at least in its mission, claims to fight against all oppressions lived by women. Their focus,

¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that the Canadian Council of Muslim Women did not address intersectionality, although their standpoint could have let them to theorize it. It seems that their focus was on denouncing racism against Muslim women, particularly the barriers to employment that are specific to Muslim women. This might have been a strategic move considering the strength of the racist atmosphere.

throughout the brief, is on the intersection of racism and patriarchy, although they name other systems of oppression such as neoliberal capitalism, imperialism, and neocolonialism.

Similarly, the brief submitted by a group representing women from a number of labor unions (L'Intersyndicale des femmes) defines the problem in these terms:

A feminist analysis tries to uncover different forms of oppression, of discrimination towards women while taking into account the *crossing* of these discriminations as a function of, among others, ethnic origin, [skin] color, sexual orientation, disability.

[Values and rights] *cannot be isolated*, as much in their elaboration as in their application, from the *rappports sociaux* made of dominations and tensions, among which the *rappports sociaux entre les sexes*. (4; my emphasis)

The text from the *Intersyndicale des femmes* is also interesting because it is the only one that names class-based oppression, in addition to oppression based on sex and race.

Although most briefs discussed economic inequalities and named access to employment as an important factor for the integration of immigrant women, only this text frames it as a class issue – which is not so surprising coming from the labor movement.

The last example comes from a brief submitted by three LGBT groups involved in racialized gay and lesbian communities (Multimundo coalition; Homosexualités vulnérabilité et résilience; and Ethnoculture), that I shall henceforth refer to as Multimundo for the sake of concision. In their brief, the notion of living under multiple oppressions was omnipresent; as they write in the introduction:

An identity is composed of multiple facets. Those are *intercrossing and engage each other*. Minority identities in particular are subjected to *complex and multiple forms of discrimination and oppression*. (4; my emphasis)

And later:

However, who says multiple identities says multiple oppressions. As an ethnic and visible minority, we experience racism and xenophobia both within society in general and sexual [LGBT] communities. [...] We often have to struggle against homophobia in our own cultural communities. (6)

These LGBT groups, hence, addressed the intersection of homophobia and race; although they mentioned the specific conditions of women in these circumstances, they did not theorize patriarchy as an oppressive system. Thus, only three briefs out of the thirteen studied explicitly discuss intersectionality.

The so-called additive model, however, seems to co-exist with intersectionality within the same briefs. For example, Multimundo's brief stated: "We live double, triple and even quadruple discriminations that belittle our existence." (5) The additive model is thus juxtaposed to an intersectional analysis.

As we have seen, the FFQ also discussed both the intersection of different oppressions and its cumulative impact on racialized women, as in the following two sentences:

In this context, any feminist analysis cannot ignore inequalities among women themselves, due to the *intercrossing discriminations* related notably to patriarchal oppression but also to neo-colonialism and racism, etc. The crossing of discriminations connected to sex, ethnic origin, [skin] color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, etc., *leads notably for women from ethnocultural groups and racialized women to situations of vulnerability and exclusion even more important than for the group of women.* (4; my emphasis)

This reference to an even "more important exclusion," or other references to "larger inequality," suggests that the FFQ's understanding of intersectionality implies that, even if oppressive systems influence each other, their impact on women is cumulative. Later in the document, there is a direct mention of double and triple discrimination:

Because "living together" necessitates the full and complete participation of women from minority groups and *the most vulnerable* to Quebec society by ensuring that we lift certain obstacles and by struggling *against the double, or*

even triple specific discrimination that they experience in different fields. (17; my emphasis)

And further, one can see side by side the ideas that discriminations cross each other, yet, only to create situations where women are even “more vulnerable” also seen in a previous quote. This idea of vulnerability was present in other documents that suggest that multiple oppressions might lead to specific conditions for immigrant and racialized women.¹⁰¹ For example, the brief from the Fédération de ressources d’hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficultés du Québec (Federation of shelter resources for abused women and women in difficulty of Quebec), named the cumulative discriminations as causing a situation of increased vulnerability:

Immigrant women and women from ethnocultural communities experiencing violence generally face numerous obstacles on their path to their first demand for help. These barriers – that are *multiple and often cumulative* – contribute to slow down their attempts for a life without violence [...] but also the need to be supported and accompanied in their course of action *considering their particular situation of vulnerability*. (9; my emphasis)

In this case, the vulnerable situation was not necessarily attributed to a consequence of racism and discrimination in Quebec society, but to a mix of internal (ignorance of their rights, feelings of shame, and so forth) and external causes (“cultural” taboos, increased isolation, dependence on the partner because of immigration).

The brief from a coalition of groups in the city of Laval (La Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine) addressed the “double oppression” of racialized women in more systemic terms:

Immigrant women and women from ethnocultural communities are *discriminated doubly*, on the one hand as women, and, on the other hand, because of their belonging to a different ethnic group [...] In this sense, in addition to aiming for

¹⁰¹ It should be noted that most documents do not distinguish between racialized women and immigrant women, contributing to the confusion and Othering of certain women. Because of this always-simultaneous usage in the briefs, I decided to reproduce it, not knowing which group was targeted in a specific sentence.

equality between women and men, we need to aim for equality among women themselves. (2; my emphasis)

Similarly, the document produced by scholars from Université Laval presented this view:

Prejudices against women from minority groups constitute another threat to these women's right to equality [because] they face multiple forms of discrimination. Immigrant women are *discriminated doubly*. They face *even more difficulties* in integrating the work force due to their sex and their ethnic affiliation. (8; my emphasis)

The idea of an increased difficulty for women of color or immigrant women is also shared in the brief submitted by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, but in contrast to their male Muslim counterparts:

It is well known that integration in a host country starts by insertion on the labor market. And Muslim women find themselves even more disadvantaged than men. (3)

Hence, the notion of double/triple oppression is very present in the different briefs studied, even in some that also endorse an intersectional analysis. The notion of double/triple oppression often exists side by side with the notion of vulnerability, suggesting that the role of the state is to protect marginalized women, and sometimes almost slipping into victimizing them even more.

Interestingly, in the context of the commission, most briefs¹⁰² submitted by women's groups on the one hand recognized the multiple oppressions that women live, but also reasserted equality between women and men as a primary goal for and value of Quebec society, and non-negotiable. As explained above, the commission was created as a result of media hype that portrayed accommodations for "immigrants" or "religious communities" as a threat to women's equality; thus, it is not surprising that most

¹⁰² Seven out of the ten briefs from women's groups (excluding the three LGBT briefs) asserted this idea with greater or less strength.

women's groups would feel the need to reassert the importance of not compromising what they have won over the years, even if it means not "accommodating" everyone.

Hence, women's groups in Quebec generally frame equality between women and men as a fundamental value of Quebec society, and insist that immigrant communities must adapt to it. This is consistent with the model of intercultural integration present in Quebec – a model that recognizes the primacy of a dominant culture (consisting of, according to the briefs, French language, a secular state, and equality between women and men) constantly in dialogue with other (minority) cultures and open to other cultures provided that they do not challenge fundamental core values of the dominant culture.¹⁰³ In fact, we see a number of references to interculturalism in the briefs from women's groups.

Thus, most briefs seemed caught up in the (false) dichotomy set up by the media, which presents efforts to combat racial or religious discrimination as threatening women's rights. For example,

[The practice of reasonable accommodations] is often used to struggle against all forms of discrimination. However, we are opposed to any accommodation as reasonable as it might appear that could infringe upon women's gains notably the equality between men and women. (Le Far, 5)

In fact, this is the position carried by the official government body in charge of women's condition – the Conseil du statut de la femme (Council on the status of women).

The council reaffirms its desire to make equality between the sexes a fundamental value, structuring, *that must guide the interpretation of other freedoms and rights*.

¹⁰³ This is contrasted, on the one hand with the Canadian multiculturalism model where, theoretically at least, all cultures co-exist without a dominant one. On the other hand, it also departs from a purely integrationist model where one's culture must fuse with the dominant one. These distinctions are mainly theoretical, but nonetheless shape integration policies in different governments. For more on these distinctions, see among others the work of Gérard Bouchard (1995, 2010); and François Rocher and Micheline Labelle (2010); for a feminist critique of these models see among others Micheline Labelle (2006); and Geneviève Larouche, (2012).

In no circumstances, should today's Quebec tolerate an attack on that right. (17; my emphasis)

Throughout the brief, they reassert the primacy of women's equality in a simplistic way that obscures how women are also affected by racism and religious discriminations, thereby preventing them from reaching this idealized equality. In these cases, the assertion of the concept of women's equality at the expense of other bases of equality is clearly in contradiction with notions of intersectionality.

In general, the three groups that did develop an intersectional analysis did not express the idea of the primacy of equality between women and men per se. Rather, because they articulated how women's oppression takes different forms and is deeply influenced by other structures, they promote the idea that to achieve real equality, one must address and struggle against all systems of oppression. For example, the FFQ explained how discussing equality means paying attention to all discrimination preventing the empowerment of any woman:

The most important issues in the context of "reasonable accommodations," the place of religion in public spaces and equality between women and men, are for us first and foremost to take inventory and reaffirm means to reach and enforce *all dimensions of the right of all women to equality*. (10; my emphasis)

Notwithstanding these exceptions, women's groups, for the most part, failed to create their own framework of analysis to understand the problem at hand. Rather, they accepted the framework of the media, which puts in opposition women's rights and immigrant or racialized people's rights, rendering the reality of immigrant and racialized women invisible. To further this analysis, I rely on Christine Delphy's text "Antisexisme ou antiracisme? Un faux dilemme" (2006), which discusses a similar failure of the feminist movement to develop its own analytical framework to deal with racialized

minorities in France, in the context of the ban on the headscarf. Delphy's argument denounces the construction of two types of sexism: one "ordinary," referring to white men's sexism, and one "extraordinary," referring to the demonized sexism of racialized men. The increased attention to and castigation of racialized men serves as a way to displace the focus and obliterate the very real existence of sexism in dominant French society. It allows otherwise sexist men to claim a pro-feminist position in defense of women's rights by attacking the "worse" sexism of racialized men. Furthermore, this discourse also affects their relation to racialized women. The latter are considered "oppressed" and "submissive," and, even worse, "guilty" of not wanting to break free from the community that oppresses them, thereby preventing them from any legitimate claim to discourses since they are helpless and brainwashed. Not recognizing how racism in society might lead them to create solidarity with members of their community, dominant discourse suggests that these women should flee their community and break ties with their families in order to escape an oppressive setting.

Although Delphy has been rightly criticized for overgeneralizing, her article is useful for pointing out the process by which focusing on racialized men's sexism allows white men to exonerate themselves from their own sexist behaviors and society's systemic oppression against (all) women. Furthermore, it explains why feminist discourse further marginalizes racialized women. I want to suggest that some of the discourse present in the briefs submitted by women's groups operate in a similar way.

First, the reference to equality between women and men as a fundamental value of Quebec society, not to be questioned by "outsiders," implies that Quebec has attained this equality and negates the different ways that all women still experience oppression due to

their sex. Second, the use of the additive model in some briefs and the constant reference to the “vulnerability” of racialized women serves to disempower racialized women and further marginalize them. For example, the Fédération des maisons d’hébergement names, as part of the obstacles to dealing with conjugal violence specific to women from immigrant/religious community, their ignorance of their rights, the taboos of their community, and the fear of being judged (10). By presenting these otherwise real barriers as *specific* to immigrant/religious women, they, on the one hand, minimize the existence of these barriers in the life of “Quebec women,” and, on the other hand, present immigrant/religious women as helpless and in need of special assistance. Although this discourse is often presented side by side with a recognition of the multiple oppression that racialized women experience, it does not necessarily translate into a recognition that fighting racism is essential to achieve equality for all women. It also ignores the role that a “feminist” discourse might play in exacerbating racism.

A few briefs stand as exceptions to this general analysis. First, three briefs (FFQ, Intersyndicale, and Université Laval) explicitly denounce the reliance on a pseudo-feminist discourse to further a racist or xenophobic agenda:

Second, the defense of the principle of equality between women and men cannot in any situation serve a racist discourse toward immigrants [women and men] belonging to certain religious communities (notably Muslim and Jewish). In other words, the co-optation of feminist discourse should not serve as a screen for racism. (FFQ, 3)

Additionally, these same three briefs make a distinction between *de jure* equality and *de facto* equality. Through this distinction, they not only affirm the fact that Quebec should not compromise on the principle of equality, but they highlight the road left to travel to

achieve this equality, understood as *equality among all women*. Thus, these briefs see the importance of fighting all systems of oppression in order to achieve a real equality.

In short, the briefs submitted by women's groups to the Commission Bouchard-Taylor attempted to consolidate the value of equality between women and men by recommending that no "reasonable accommodation" challenge this fundamental principle. Yet, because they argued through the framework set up by the media, which succeeded in pitting minority, immigrant, and religious rights against women's rights, and because they do not use an intersectional framework, most women's groups failed to see how immigrant, minority, and religious rights are essential to achieve such equality – an equality among all women. Furthermore, the few examples of the briefs that do present an intersectional analysis confirm that it is a useful tool for avoiding the marginalization of racialized women when making demands regarding women's rights.

I want to end this section by reaffirming that the Quebec feminist movement would gain in its theoretical stance and in its praxis by integrating some of the literature of their South-of-the-border counterparts who, through the insights of women of color, have developed an analytical framework that better accounts for the lives of marginalized women, whether based on class, race, ability, civil status, or religion. To this end, I come back to the opening quote by bell hooks demanding that the feminist movement rethink its demands for equality between women and men; instead, only a demand for equality among all and a complete social transformation can lead to a real equality for all women.

Concluding on Intersectionality

This chapter has traced the development of intersectionality by feminists of color in the United States, followed by the development of consubstantiality and the attempted

integration of intersectionality in France, and finally the specific framework used by Quebec feminists – *féminisme solidaire* and the pluralist *Nous femmes* – to account for and act on hierarchies and differences among women. We can see that intersectionality in the United States – a theory developed by women of color and grounded in their historical, material experience – has been very useful to de-center the experiences of white middle-class feminists, make room for those of marginalized women, and provide tools to analyse and counter the complex reality of oppression, at least academically.¹⁰⁴

In France, the early development of consubstantiality did not lead to a widespread shift in paradigm among feminists. Whether it is because the term was too academic or too threatening, one has to wait for the turn of the century to see feminists in France “re-discovering” their own theoretical tools, while at the same time evaluating whether importing those developed by U.S. feminists might be more useful.

Similarly in Quebec, although “pluralism” and “multiple oppressions” have shaped feminist discourse since the 1990s, in the face of conflict and confrontation, the idealized solidarity and inclusion proclaimed by the women’s movement disappeared and only left behind a return to the primacy of “women’s rights.” Only groups that demonstrated a full integration of something resembling intersectionality or consubstantiality were allowed to avoid the media trap.

This chapter has also demonstrated the difficulty of translation and integration of foreign concepts into existing theoretical traditions. While French feminists were overcritical of intersectionality because they did not see it as addressing *rapports sociaux de sexe*, Quebec feminists, instead, understood intersectionality as addressing those

¹⁰⁴ Here, I don’t want to present the United States as being “more advanced” in its dealing with the intersections of oppression; in fact, the examples of the O.J. Simpson trial and the Anita Hill case similarly represent a failure of a feminist intersectional approach to significantly impact public discourse.

rappports. Yet, through this process, both French and Quebec materialist feminists reasserted the centrality of the *rappports sociaux* to understand patriarchy, capitalism, sexism, and other oppression, while rejecting, partly adapting or fully endorsing the intersectional framework.

Perhaps another important element that needs to be taken into account is the origin of the theory of intersectionality. The specific history of the United States creates a context where black women have been part of numerous political struggles. Out of this 200 years old tradition, emerges strong figures such as Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins who have not only a long personal history of radical politics, but also can rely on a collective in-dept understanding of and involvement U.S. politics. It might be difficult to expect the same kind of engagement from a first generation immigrant. The concept of intersectionality thus comes out of a cultural heritage that has been grappling with these issues for two centuries. In addition, the implementation of the term is the result of restless commitment by feminists of color to make their perspective central to feminist theory. This process was not always successful; one can name the 1981 conflict at the National Women Studies Association (NWSA) (Sandoval 1990) and the Anita Hill case as examples of failures that led to nationwide questioning among feminists. Since then, the presence of two women of color as presidents of the NWSA has led to a politically motivated centering of intersectionality in feminist productions of knowledge.

Our analysis needs to consider the not only the content of the different theories, but also the context of production of these different analytical tools as part of the equation. Women of color in Quebec and in France might choose to develop tools to address their own reality that are different from those of feminists from the United States

to address racism and classism. In the same way that francophone feminists in the 1960s and 1970s developed theoretical tools and made political choices based on their understanding of their oppressed situation, we might need a stronger feminist of color community to develop concepts to address their specific reality in Quebec society. This brings me to a limit of this study. Further research might explore in more detail the discourse of marginalized women on their own understanding of the multiple oppressions they live and evaluate the conditions under which their voice is heard.

Chapter 6

Returning Home

On English Hegemony and the Importance of Language

I want to end this dissertation on a note that de-centralizes the localization of Montreal in this discussion about global and local influences on theoretical development of feminism. As much as Montreal is an interesting case study for its proximity to both French- and English-speaking feminists, similar language politics are at work in other non-English localities across the world. With an accelerating globalization process at work throughout the world, a reflection on English hegemony needs to follow these observations.

The barriers of language, when considered in their simple form, work both ways. Hence, as much as francophone feminists are dependent on translations to gain access to the theories developed in the United States or Britain, so are U.S. feminists for theories developed in French, and thus power relations might seem symmetrical. Before a theory or concept can cross that barrier, it needs to be mediated either through the work of translation or through the intellectual capacities and labor of individuals in influential circles. The first mediation, translation, is at the mercy of laws of the market, of publishers' choices and preferences and their personal and socially constructed understanding of what is "worth" translating or not. In the case of feminist communities of practice all over the world, the vulnerability of theories to this tyranny is reinforced by the marginality of certain types of knowledge produced. Although paradigm-shifting at times in its content, the audience for such work remains relatively small and has limited resources, as the low rate of survival of feminist periodicals can attest. Hence, feminist

theorists have to rely on small autonomous or university presses to publish their work in translation. In order to counteract this problem, feminist theorists will sometimes take it upon themselves to do the tedious work of translating important work into their own language in order to make it accessible.¹⁰⁵ Yet, this very difficult task takes time and labor away from the development of new theory, research, and scholarship, and I should add, activism. This dependence on publishing institutions is shared across the world as a function of not only the actual audience for each linguistic community but also of the state, and the development and progressive nature of publishing institutions.

A second means for breaking the language barrier is for individuals located at the center of knowledge production to have bi-/multi-lingual capacities. These individual scholars could bypass the control of publishing houses by drawing on or detailing the argument of a text published in another language, which can also increase the impetus for its translation.

English stands in a unique position in regards to both of these methods in ways that serve and reinforce English hegemony. First, English in this time and space, because of its “universal” nature, holds such a dominant position that it does not need to translate its cultural production to attain dissemination across the world (Descarries 2003). Institutions of higher education all over the world – including in Quebec – have no choice but to require a minimum of English-reading skills from their students, especially at the graduate level, given that some reading materials will inevitably be in English. Only in a few specific fields is the production of knowledge localized enough to rely solely on a non-English body of works. Whether the cause or the consequence, English-language

¹⁰⁵ For example, see the discussion in chapter 3 of the 1998 translation of Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women” by Nicole-Claude Mathieu and of the two Montreal activists who translated Juliett Mitchell’s “The Longest Revolution” and Anne Koedt’s “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” (Péloquin 1997, 31).

writers do not have to rely on translation by publishing houses to see the influence of their theories disseminated across linguistic barriers – although full translation does increase accessibility and hence the strength of that influence. This is diametrically opposed to the case of non-English-language writers, who need to rely heavily on the translation of their work into English if their theory is to exert an influence beyond the local boundaries of their linguistic communities. Second, English-language hegemony is also perpetuated by the low rate of bi-/multi-lingual individuals in English-language communities, especially in the United States, and the marginalization of those individuals who are bilingual through racialization of accents, among other features of exclusions. In such a context, language can act as a veil that acknowledges the existence of something (theories) behind it, yet does not allow the eye to see either its nature or its importance. This unilingualism reinforces the reliance on English translation whereby if something is not published in English, it is non-existent. These asymmetrical relations of knowledge production are part of global homogenizing forces that are also coupled with the power of the ideological apparatus of the United States, both in its dominant and its alternative forms.¹⁰⁶

Thus, as Quebecois feminist theorists Francine Descarries and Laetitia Dechaufour have documented, it is rather frustrating for francophone feminists to see the limited impact of their own theoretical developments on feminist theory globally as a result of this English-language hegemony.

Our almost daily frequenting of English literature especially leads us to observe to what extent, with a few exceptions, Anglophone feminists – all countries included – know of or use very little, if at all, Francophone feminist works. And what to say about the fate reserved for other linguistic communities such as Latino-

¹⁰⁶ I do not want to negate here the importance of the production of knowledge in other spheres and linguistic communities, but rather emphasize the asymmetry in power.

American or Asian? As an inevitable consequence of this lacuna, *mainstream* feminism ignores and rids de facto their theoretical contributions of notions or concepts as fundamental as *rapports sociaux de sexe*, domestic mode of production, sexual division of labor, or even patriarchy. (Descarries and Dechaufour 2006)

Along with naming the limited impact of non-English-language texts on feminism throughout the world, we should also keep in mind the numerous instances of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and ideological misrepresentation of certain schools of thought or concepts developed in languages other than English.¹⁰⁷

In the cases at hand in this dissertation, the asymmetrical power relationship between the development of feminist theory in, respectively, the English and French communities of practice calls attention to the need to resist the unilateral forces of globalization and to recognize the multiple ways that local social, political, economic, and cultural realities mitigate these homogenizing forces. The case of the traveling of the *sex/gender-sexe/genre* concept in Quebec serves as a prime example of the ways language both prevents and allows this negotiation. As much as the relationships between sex and gender theorized in English exert a constant pressure for integration into French thought – which is achieved only in the 1990s – we see the exercise of resistance through institutions regulating language, existing philosophical traditions, alternative terminologies, and political movements. We also see how the existence of other international – yet not global – linguistic communities, such as the French Diaspora, allows knowledge to move independently or in spite of the hegemonic domination of English as *the* language of feminist theory. The prominence of *rapports sociaux* among

¹⁰⁷ See for example the case of “French Feminism” as criticized by Claire Moses (1996; 1998) and Christine Delphy (1996), the case of the translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, and of the difficulties in translating intersectionality in France.

francophone communities on both sides of the Atlantic reaffirms the strength of language-based ties.

These ties are not impermeable, however. Although they act as a force, slowing down the process of integration of terms from other language communities and fueling a resistance to American cultural imperialism, they are not sufficient to prevent the movement of ideas. Here, I don't mean to say that preventing the movement of ideas is always necessary or desired; however, ideas should be adopted and integrated based on their usefulness and political potential, not as the result of fads. For example, resistance to the epistemological challenges that queer theory proposes by materialist feminists in France and in Quebec is grounded in political investments. Yet, the growing popularity of queer theory has rallied, especially among a younger generation, a significant pool of supporters, whose allegiance at times seem to rely on distorted notions of feminism and on a move "beyond" feminism, or what others have called "post-feminism."

The case of intersectionality speaks to another dimension of the travelings of concepts across different communities of practices: the importance of local production of knowledge. In the United States, intersectionality comes from the experience of marginalized women, and has been consistently and forcefully pushed in feminist theory by these same women, adapting in and modifying it along the way to correct for weaknesses and potential failures embedded in the concept. At the risk of sounding too "standpoint-ist," the movement of intersectionality from the United States to France and Quebec did not happen through an appropriation, modification, translation, and re-signification of the term by local women of color involved in the feminist movement. Instead, we see a more top-down integration that ultimately fails to respond to the

concerns of both marginalized feminists and “dominant” feminists. This supports my argument that re-signification and adaptation is central to translation; but it has to be done by women (and men?) who have vested interests in addressing specific failures of existing paradigms. I understand this process in a materialist sense, reminding us that it is not so much people’s “identity” that drive their political endeavors, but their material interests and investment in social transformation. Queer succeeds in its translation because it is re-signified and pushed forcefully by a group of people invested personally *and* politically in such social transformation. Intersectionality, on the contrary, is being adapted and pushed in Quebec and in France by white, privileged, and often academic women trying to be inclusive and, thus who have a political yet not necessarily personal interest in this process and worse, a not wholly innocent history in the racism this politics intend to challenge. Thus, I believe it might lead to a mistranslation, a translation not anchored in the needs and political projects of the people who would be best served by the incorporation of intersectionality into feminist theory.

Coming back to French feminist materialist theory, we need to integrate ideology and structures of thought as part of the material reality that requires critical analysis and resistance. In Delphy’s words, a broad understanding of materialism requires us to “consider intellectual productions as the product of the *rappports sociaux*, and to consider these as *rappports de domination*” (Delphy 1975, 274). Thus, knowledge production, translations, and travelings and integrations of concepts are parts of power relations and are constituted by and reproduce *rappports sociaux*. Who produces what theory, for what political purposes, and with what political interests along with who *can* produce theory,

with what resources, and with what reach remain important questions that I have only started to address.

Finally, I want to end on a note that reasserts the importance of language and terminology in the construction of (political) ideas. We need to reposition language not as a neutral vessel through which ideas are conveyed but as a constitutive element of these ideas and as the product of social relationships of domination. Hence, as we have seen, the move from the concept of *rappports sociaux de sexe* to *genre/sex* is not a simple and innocent question of terminology; it carries different political positions and assumptions about the nature of womanhood and thus about potential political transformations of society. The negotiation of terms, both as a process and a practice, carries and defines meanings that structure political thought and in turn produce and reproduce or resist hierarchical relations. Theoretical concepts are not just ideas; they have a material impact on how people do politics. They shape the direction of and strength of political actions and social movements.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

This appendix contains the interview questions from the project *Discours et pratiques féministes: un inventaire des lieux* directed by Francine Descarries and Christine Corbeil. The interviews were performed in 2005 and 2006. Two different sets of questions were asked depending on whether the interviewee was a woman with direct interactions with women – a social worker or *intervenante* – or an activist or worker working in groups *not directly* providing a help-based service to women.

First set of questions: social worker (*intervenante*)

1. Que veut dire être féministe pour vous?
2. En quelques mots, quelle est votre définition du féminisme?
3. Est-ce que vous pouvez me parler des principales raisons ou événements qui vous ont amenée à vous impliquer dans le mouvement des femmes?
4. Comment considérez-vous que votre féminisme a évolué au cours des années?
5. Quels sont les auteures ou des livres féministes qui vous servent plus particulièrement de référence?
6. A- Pour votre part, quels concepts ou notions sont au centre de votre analyse féministe?

B- Parmi ceux-ci, quels concepts sont particulièrement pertinents pour votre pratique sur le terrain?
7. À l'inverse, quelles seraient les idées ou positions théoriques qui traversent actuellement le discours féministe avec lesquelles vous êtes plus ou moins d'accord ou carrément en désaccord?
8. Quels sont, selon vous, les principaux enjeux que rencontre le mouvement des femmes actuellement?
9. À la lumière de ces enjeux, quelles sont les revendications féministes qui vous apparaissent les plus importantes?

10. Comment entrevoyez-vous l'avenir du mouvement des femmes au Québec?
11. Quelles sont les motivations qui vous ont amené à travailler dans x groupe?
12. Quel est le profil des femmes que vous rencontrez?
13. Quels sont les principes d'intervention qui caractérisent votre pratique auprès des femmes?
14. En regard de votre pratique, quels sont les objectifs que vous poursuivez lorsque vous travaillez auprès des femmes?
15. Plus spécifiquement, quelles sont les stratégies d'intervention que vous privilégiez?
16. Qu'est-ce qui vous a amené à choisir cette approche?
17. Empruntez-vous d'autres approches ou techniques d'intervention pour enrichir votre pratique ? Lesquelles et pourquoi?
18. Quelles sont, selon vous, les limites de l'intervention féministe tel qu'elle est appliquée aujourd'hui?
19. Depuis que vous travaillez auprès des femmes, y a-t-il eu des changements importants dans votre façon d'intervenir?
20. Quels sont selon vous les défis qui se posent actuellement à l'intervention féministe?

Second set of questions: activist or worker in the women's movement

1. Que veut dire être féministe pour vous?
2. En quelques mots, quelle est votre définition du féminisme?
3. Est-ce que vous pouvez me parler des principales raisons ou événements qui vous ont amenée à vous impliquer dans le mouvement des femmes?
4. Comment considérez-vous que votre féminisme a évolué au cours des années?
5. Quels sont les auteures ou des livres féministes qui vous servent plus particulièrement de référence?
6. A- Pour votre part, quels concepts ou notions sont au centre de votre analyse féministe?

B- Parmi ceux-ci, quels concepts sont particulièrement pertinents pour votre pratique sur le terrain?
7. À l'inverse, quelles seraient les idées ou positions théoriques qui traversent actuellement le discours féministe avec lesquelles vous êtes plus ou moins d'accord ou carrément en désaccord?
8. Selon vous quels sont les moments importants de votre pratique de féministe?
9. Quelles sont les motivations qui vous ont amené à militer ou à travailler au sein de ...
10. Comment situez-vous votre propre analyse féministe par rapport aux positions idéologiques et politiques mises de l'avant par votre groupe?
11. Quels sont, selon vous, les principaux enjeux que rencontre le mouvement des femmes actuellement?
12. À la lumière de ces enjeux, quelles sont les revendications féministes qui vous apparaissent les plus importantes?
13. Comment entrevoyez-vous l'avenir du féminisme et du mouvement des femmes au Québec?

Appendix B

Keyword search

In order to gather data on the uses of gender/genre in the discourse of the Quebec women's movement, I used keyword searches in the interviews.

A search of the word "genre" gave 145 results among all interviews. However, in the vast majority of encounters, *genre* was not used in the sense of the gender/sex dichotomy. *Genre* is used in French to mean "a type" of something (for example in the sentence, "I am the *type* of person who wants to act on it" (R2700-Q3)). *Genre* is also, in spoken French, a filler similar to "like" in English ("There is, *like*, cell phones now, but before that,..." (R01-Q3)) or to signify an approximation ("it was *like* 7 or 8 years ago" (R07-Q11)). *Genre* in French also refers to the grammatical gender; however, this meaning was not frequently used in the context of the interviews.

After discarding manually all instances of *genre* that were not relevant for our purposes, only eight interviewees (R02, R07, R09, R11, R25, R26, R27, R3000) used *genre* in the sense of the gender/sex dichotomy. Two of those uses are in the context of international organizations such the United Nations or in the sentence "genre et développement" (gender and development); three other interviewees used it in the context of a discussion around queer and transgender.

The same exercise was performed with the words "rapports sociaux de sexe," "rapports sociaux," "rapports de pouvoir," and "rapports." The term *rapports sociaux de sexe* was found 31 times, and did not require any cleaning up. It was present in a total of 9 interviews R05, R07, R08, R11, R12, R13, R16, R27, R2500).

The term *rappports* was used 315 times. In this case as well, a manual clean up was necessary because of the multiple meanings of the term. However, the term was predominantly used in the sense of *rappports* between individuals or social groups. Thus, we see a plethora of “rappports entre les hommes et les femmes,” “rappports sociaux,” “rappports de pouvoir.” The term *rappports* in the sense of power dynamics between individuals or groups was found in more than half of the interviews.

Appendix C

Consent Email for Interviews

This email was sent to a selected subgroup of participants in the CRAC-K research project on *Autonomie collective* (Collective self management). It was elaborated in collaboration with the CRAC-K research collective and approved by them before it was sent. It was sent to all members of *Les panthères roses* and all self-proclaimed “radical feminists” from their database. The email was sent on November 11 2011.

Bonjour!

Je me nomme Geneviève Pagé. Je suis une étudiante au doctorat à l’University of Maryland en Études des femmes (Women’s Studies). Je suis originaire de Montréal et j’ai milité dans différents groupes. Je fais mes recherches sur le développement de la pensée féministe à Montréal, notamment sur les influences américaines et françaises sur le féminisme à Montréal. À travers l’étude de concepts tels que le genre, les rapports sociaux de sexe, le queer, l’intersectionnalité et la consubstantialité, j’analyse les facteurs qui facilitent et préviennent le mouvement des idées entre différentes communautés à travers, entre autres, les barrières de la langue et les traditions existantes qui permettent ou non ce transfère d’idée. Ainsi, je veux regarder comment les militantes ainsi que les académiciennes utilisent et mobilisent des différents concepts.

Dans le cadre de mes recherches, je voulais faire des entrevues avec nombre de féministes et de queers à Montréal. En parlant avec les membres du CRAC-K, il m’a semblé évident que puisque des entrevues en profondeur ont été faites avec des membres de groupes radicaux de féministes et de queers dans le cadre des recherches du CRAC-K, il serait superflu de refaire des entrevues similaires. Je vous écris donc aujourd’hui pour vous demander la permission d’utiliser pour mes recherches, les données et les entretiens auxquels vous avez participé, il y a de ça plusieurs années déjà. Je crois que mes recherches s’inscrivent dans une philosophie similaire à celle du CRAC-K, soit basée sur une conviction du potentiel important de transformation dans la réflexion et l’action – collective ou individuelle.

À la différence du CRAC-K, cette recherche n’est pas inscrite dans un processus de recherche action. Cependant, les résultats de mes recherches pourront, j’ose l’espérer, contribuer à la réflexion sur les mobilisations et théories féministes et queer à Montréal.

Dans cette perspective, je vous demande de répondre à Anna Kruzynsky par courriel en indiquant si oui ou non vous êtes d’accord pour que j’utilise les données, et ce, si possible, avant le 21 novembre 2011. Puisque les données ont déjà été transcrites, je n’aurai accès qu’à ces transcriptions anonymes, assurant ainsi un autre niveau de

confidentialité. Votre participation est volontaire ; vous êtes libres de vous retirer à tout moment sans préjudice et sans justification. Si vous décidez de vous retirer ou de décliner, vous n'avez qu'à nous aviser verbalement ou par écrit. Les transcriptions et les analyses préliminaires serviront à la rédaction de ma thèse et de publications subséquentes. Ces données seront détruites 5 ans après la publication de ma thèse.

De plus, dans un esprit de transparence, je mettrai à la disposition de chaque participante ses propres citations directes qui seront utilisées, provenant d'une version préliminaire de ma thèse, par courriel par l'entremise d'Anna Kruzynski. Vous aurez un mois pour y apporter des modifications, que vous pourrez me transmettre par courriel, par la poste ou par téléphone.

Je vous rappelle quelques éléments du formulaire de consentement original, simplement pour votre information, puisqu'ils s'appliqueront à mes recherches.

- Vos propos demeureront confidentiels. Dans le cas de divulgation d'informations indiquant un danger imminent de mort ou de blessures graves pour une personne ou un groupe de personnes identifiables, nous nous verrons dans l'obligation soit de prévenir la ou les personnes menacées, soit d'en avertir les autorités compétentes.
- Par contre, même si vos propos demeureront confidentiels, étant donné la taille réduite du milieu et le nombre restreint de militantEs dans ce réseau, il y a des risques qu'on vous reconnaisse. Étant donné la marginalité politique des initiatives étudiées, il y a la possibilité que la publication d'informations sur vos implications militantes puisse nuire à votre réputation dans certains milieux plus conservateurs.

Si vous avez la moindre question, n'hésitez pas à me rejoindre par courriel ou par téléphone. Je suis très ouverte à vous donner plus de détails sur les objectifs et méthodes de mes recherches.

Merci énormément

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Appendix D

List of Briefs Submitted to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission by Women's and LGBT Groups

Briefs submitted by women's groups and gay and lesbians groups to the Consultation Commission on the Practice of Reasonable Accommodations Related to Cultural Differences. All briefs were submitted in September or October 2007. When a specific title was given to the brief, I include it here. When no title was given, I only list the group who produced the brief.

Briefs used in the analysis:

Women's groups:

1. L'Intersyndicale des femmes
2. L'Afeas régionale de Québec-Chaudière-Appalaches
3. Fédération des femmes du Québec
4. "L'égalité entre les femmes et les homes: une valeur fondamentale de la société québécoise" presented by professors and researchers of the Université Laval
5. Le Conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes (Québec)
6. "L'égalité entre les femmes et les homes: une valeur commune et fondamentale de la société québécoise!" presented by the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine.
7. Fédération des ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec
8. Le far (Maison d'hébergement)
9. Conseil du statut de la femme
10. Regroupement des groupes de femmes de la region de Québec (03) Portneuf-Québec-Charlevoix

LGBT groups:

1. “Indentités invisibles: diversité sexuelle des minorités visibles, des communautés culturelles et des personnes bi-spirituelles au Québec” presented by the Coalition MultiMundo, Ethnoculture, and the research team Sexualités et genres: Vulnérabilité et résiliences (SVR)
2. “S’engager pour l’égalité sociale des membres de la communauté LGBT” presented by the Conseil québécois des gais et lesbiennes
3. “Homosexualité et différences culturelles: une crainte raisonnable” presented by the Fondation émergence and Gai écoute

Briefs excluded on the basis of language (written in English):

1. South Shore University Women’s Club
2. Muslim Women of Quebec
3. South Asian Women’s Community Center

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