The real victim in victimless crimes is the tax payer. ... Prostitution laws, like other laws directed at victimless crime, originate in America's attempt to mandate a uniform code of morality, despite increased acceptance of alternative lifestyles. While police efficiency is such that a person who commits a crime against the person or property of a protesting victim has an 87% chance of never being arrested, police continue allocating resources to non-victim crime to such an extent that non-victim crime accounts for 50% of the arrests made. This is an expensive habit. For prostitution alone, the conservative estimate of $600,000 in direct costs per year nets approximately 654 arrests in San Francisco. We pay a huge price to attempt to enforce a given code of morality. (Teichman 1974, p. 3)

Assertions such as these suggest that prostitution is not only a crime without victims, but that it also represents a source of governmental waste.

While disseminating claims about the unjustifiable use of taxpayers' money to control prostitution, COYOTE also took direct legal action against the city's expenditure of funds to control prostitution: COYOTE instigated and supported two taxpayers' suits in San Francisco and Alameda Counties to decriminalize prostitution on the basis that it is a misuse of taxpayers' money (Ashley 1974, p. 1). Both of these suits facilitated the presentation of COYOTE's perspective to the local community and provided yet another avenue through which COYOTE's pleas were made public.

THE EMERGENCE OF LOCAL COUNTERCLAIMS

Within the first year of its existence, COYOTE had gained enough media attention and local support to force law enforcement and city officials to respond to their campaigns. As the Seattle Post-Intelligence reported, "she's giving the San Francisco Police Department fits" (Clay 1975, p. A18). In response to COYOTE's assertions, city officials, especially law enforcement officials, offered counterclaims to dismiss COYOTE's pleas for reform. These counterclaims dismissed COYOTE's crusade by relying upon historically developed images of prostitution as a social problem associated with other violent and property crimes, the degeneration of neighborhoods, and the victimization of women. Each of these types of counterclaims is presented below in order to demonstrate that COYOTE's early efforts evoked a response, and to show the basis upon which COYOTE's efforts were contested.

The Emergence of Local Counterclaims

Prostitution and Its Association with Other Crime(s)

Central to the assertions made in response to COYOTE's grass roots efforts was the suggestion that the use of taxpayers' money to control prostitution is well spent for a number of reasons. In the first place, law enforcement agents and government officials responded to COYOTE's claims by arguing that vice crimes such as prostitution represent the seeds of larger crime. For example, a San Francisco deputy district attorney publicly argued, "Vice-squad officers look at it the way I do. That there is something sort of subterranean [about vice crimes] which it left to grow and fester would overwhelm certain parts of the city" (Butler 1974, p. 6). Counterclaims such as these evoked and relied upon the historically developed image of prostitution as a precursor to and source of support for more serious crimes. Thus, so the argument goes, the control of prostitution is necessary for larger crime control efforts.

Neighborhood Decay

Continuing with the theme of public harm associated with prostitution, law enforcement agents and city officials also rebutted COYOTE's claims by targeting prostitution as a source of neighborhood decay. For example, then San Francisco sheriff Dick Honigot publicly acknowledged the selective enforcement of prostitution laws. He justified the discriminatory arrest of streetwalkers by pointing out the effects of their visibility:

There are business interests in town that are very powerful. They believe that the only way to keep the city "clean" is to prosecute these things [prostitution]. They're not against prostitution per se, but street prostitution, the visible things that symbolize a "dirty city." (Butler 1974, p. 6)

From this perspective, prostitution constitutes a direct and indirect pollutant to the city. Thus, from the standpoint of law enforcement's counterclaims, prostitution—especially visible prostitution—represents contamination in order to promote and maintain established community standards.

Illicit Sex and the Victimization of Women

City officials and law enforcement personnel also rejected COYOTE's demands for legal reform by denying the "victimlessness" of prosti-
tion. Specifically, city officials and law enforcement personnel promoted prostitutes' status as victims of illicit sex and the larger context within which commercialized sex occurs. In an interview with the local press, the inspector for the San Francisco vice squad offered a response to COYOTE's campaign against law enforcement:

"There's no such thing as a victimless crime. The prostitute is the victim in these crimes. She is usually the victim of a brutal pimp. I don't know any girl without a pimp—it's some kind of psychological necessity." (Bryan 1973b, p. 2)

From this point of view, the victimization of prostitutes by pimps justifies the enforcement of prostitution laws.

In direct response to COYOTE campaigns, on rare occasion, representatives of the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) concurred that enforcement of prostitution laws is selective, at least in terms of gender. However, they were quick to add that the selective nature of law enforcement's response to prostitution is justified from a law enforcement perspective. As then deputy district attorney Joe Ruscio, who headed the vice prosecution, argued in an article entitled "On the Trial of Vice: The Crusade Against Sin on the Streets of San Francisco," that, "the customer is not involved with the commercial exploitation of sex, at least not on an ongoing basis" (Butler 1974, p. 6). In this light, women are viewed as victims of commercialized sex, while men are viewed as merely sporadic participants. Moreover, through the enforcement of prostitution laws, women are being protected from themselves in general, and commercialized sex in particular. Framed in this way, the high arrest rates for women (prostitutes) and the comparatively negligible arrest rates for men (customers) is justifiable.

The emergence of numerous counterclams dismissing COYOTE's demands increased the visibility of COYOTE's crusade. That is, at least in part, opposition to COYOTE's claims served to fuel COYOTE's campaign by creating local controversy. As local controversy developed, so did media attention. However, COYOTE did not rely solely on controversy as a source of media attention to publicize the plight of prostitutes. It also relied upon self-promotion in the form of campy events, which became a civic resource for the city of San Francisco.

**ATTRACTING MEDIA ATTENTION**

Since its inception COYOTE has sent out information, attracted the press, provided speakers, organized lawyers, supported prostitutes in trouble, and fought hypocrisy in government and the courts. In the 1970s, this activity was given visibility. Beginning in 1974 and ending in 1978, COYOTE staged a number of media events designed to raise funds, draw attention to the organization, and legitimize its campaigns. Most visibly, COYOTE staged two media events each year to generate revenue and public attention: the Annual Hookers' Convention and the Annual Hookers' Ball.

With the slogan "'74, Year of the Whore," the First Annual Hookers' Convention was held in June 1974. San Francisco's Glide Memorial Church was packed with prostitutes, plainclothes police officers, city officials, news reporters, and interested spectators. National TV networks and news magazines covered the event, where a "Trick of the Year" award was given to a prostitute, and a giant keyhole was awarded to the "Vice Cop of the Year." The Second Annual Hookers' Convention was held in June 1975. This event featured numerous panels of experts who discussed the decriminalization of prostitution and a variety of related issues. Over twelve hundred people attended, including activists, lawyers, celebrities, and prostitutes.

The First Annual Hookers' Ball was held in October 1974 at the San Francisco Longshoremen's Hall. At this event, the theme was "No More Hippo Cutters," and the song of the evening was "Everybody Needs a Hooker Once in a While." If the purpose of the ball, which was attended by such VIPs as state legislator Willie Brown and the San Francisco sheriff, was to draw attention to prostitutes and their cause, it was successful. As one newspaper stated, "it was something between the 1906 earthquake and fire, and the opening of the opera" (cited in James, Withers, Hall, and Theis 1977, p. 73). The Chicago Tribune reported, "for the press it was an orgy: they filmed, photographed, and interviewed anyone who was generous with her eyelashes" (Keygan 1974, p. 1). More locally, the San Francisco Chronicle described the event as "wild masquerades that drew the kind of people who really knew how to party [and that became] legendary, even though they lasted only a few years" (Rubin 1989, n.p.).

From 1974 to 1978 each Annual Hookers' Ball drew larger crowds and generated more funds than the previous one.2 The 1977 ball grossed over ninety-three thousand dollars. According to the Bay Area Seating Service, over 1,460 publications throughout the United States and around the world covered it. Since the last Annual Hookers Ball in 1978, however, COYOTE has relied upon private donations, honoraria, and government grants for its financial survival.

In addition to the balls and conventions, COYOTE sporadically published a newsletter, COYOTE Heads, which was sold to members of COYOTE, women's centers, women's bookstores, university libraries, and...
4. Indeed, representatives of the Society for the Study of Social Problems and the American Sociological Association have extended invitations to Margo St. James to speak at their national conferences. She rejected both requests.

5. Best notes that "in contemporary America, there are three principal kinds of insider claim-makers. Most obviously, there are lobbying organizations, such as the National Rifle Association and the Sierra Club, employing paid staffs to represent the interests of their clients and/or dues-paying members. Second, there are professionals, the specialists charged with handling the problem, who have responsibility for and expertise about what should be done. Finally, official agencies can be claimants... All three forms usually have direct access to—and influence over—policymakers. Claims making by insiders tends to concern new wrangles in the familiar fabric of established social problems. In contrast, claims that seek recognition for new social problems often come from those outside the polity. These claim makers can be individuals—cranks, lone crusaders, moral entrepreneurs. Or the claims can be made by social movements, seeking to gain recognition both for their social problem and for themselves as the problem's owners. Compared to insiders, these outsiders have limited access to and little influence with policymakers" (1990, pp. 13-14).

INTRODUCTION

Through coalition building and the development of ties with the contemporary women's movement, COYOTE and its emergent affiliates entered the feminist debates of the late 1970s and 1980s. In the process, COYOTE's grassroots campaign was transformed into a national and then an international crusade. Taking up where the previous chapter ended, I describe that transformation in this chapter. These campaigns produced discourse that served to press claims relevant to feminist claims, and a larger movement seeking to establish and protect women's rights.

COYOTE's participation in feminist discourse, especially through public debates on violence against women, shifted the prostitutes' rights movement away from legal discourse and located it within the parameters of contemporary feminism. This allowed COYOTE and its supporters to capitalize on the public attention being devoted to the social problem of pornography and violence against women in order to press and institutionalize claims about the rights of women to choose prostitution as a viable service occupation. COYOTE's engagement in this discourse generated a wider public audience for the movement's views, while at the same time reshaping the substance of its claims. Analytically, this chapter demonstrates how COYOTE's claims about prostitution as a social problem were shaped as a result of moving away from legal discourse and into feminist discourse in a continued effort to decriminalize prostitution and legitimate the work of prostitutes.
A NATIONAL AND AN INTERNATIONAL CRUSADE

In the late 1970s COYOTE began a national and then an international crusade to decriminalize prostitution. In 1976 while in a Kansas City municipal court observing the trial of a prostitute arrested for solicitation, St. James announced that "we feel a national campaign is a necessity. There is no way we could tackle the problem state by state. It would take too long" (Zeeck 1976, u.p.). In order to kick off a national campaign, in 1976 COYOTE held its Third Annual National Hookers Convention, also referred to as the First World Meeting of Prostitutes, in Washington, D.C. At this meeting, the formation of the first Hookers's Lobby was announced. With the theme "Ignorance is No Excuse for the Law" the Hookers' Lobby went to Capitol Hill to lobby for a resolution calling for the decriminalization of prostitution (Palmer 1976; Volz 1976; Zeeck 1976). Formulated by COYOTE, this resolution had been presented in Brussels earlier the same year at the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women and was supported by NOW, the ACLU, and other civil rights and women's groups. Sponsored by COYOTE, the Feminist Party, and the First International Hookers' Film Festival, this lobbying effort included delegates from fourteen states and Canada, several hundred prostitutes from the East and West Coasts, and a chartered plane load of working prostitutes and ex-prostitutes from Europe. After lobbying the Capitol, delegates visited political conventions in Kansas City and New York, where they engaged in "loiter-ins" to protest the illegality of prostitution.

In another move to nationalize its campaign, COYOTE declared itself the National Task Force on Prostitution (NTPF) in 1979. The NTPF was formed in order to establish an umbrella organization responsible for developing a network of prostitutes' rights advocacy organizations in the United States. With the formation of the NTPF, the COYOTE newsletter (COYOTE Heads) became the NTPF News, but continued to bear the logo of COYOTE as well as the subtitle COYOTE Heads. Similarly, most COYOTE letterhead bears the insignia of the NTPF and vice versa. In essence, COYOTE and the NTPF became the same organization, while organizational labels and emblems varied, depending upon activity, context and political moment.

COYOTE made its crusade international by sending representatives to the United Nations Conference on Women held in Copenhagen in 1980. A week before the 1981 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco, COYOTE sponsored the Second Annual International Hookers' Convention, which was billed as a "Women's Forum on Prostitutes' Rights" (Dorgan 1981). This event capitalized on the media personnel in town for the Democratic National Convention to draw national and international press attention to the prostitutes' rights movement. Participants in the convention also drafted a prostitutes' rights platform calling for the repeal of all laws against prostitution, protection and health care for prostitutes, taxation for prostitutes, and a code of ethics for prostitutes.

In 1985 COYOTE's international crusade continued with the formation of the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights (ICPR) based in the Netherlands. The ICPR sponsored the World Whores Congress in Amsterdam in 1985 and in Brussels in 1986. Founders, representatives, and members of prostitutes' rights organizations from all over the world attended these conferences. Two hundred sex workers and their invited advocates from sixteen countries attended the 1985 meeting and were provided with security guards, translators, and considerable media coverage. The activities and claims from the conference were eventually published in two editions of the newsletter World Wide Whore's News (WWWN) and in a book entitled The Vindication of the Rights of Whores (Pelterson 1989).

Throughout COYOTE's national and international campaign, three propositions underlying COYOTE's crusade to reconstruct the social problem of prostitution emerged and crystallized. First, prostitution is first and foremost a work issue and thus the master concept of work should replace the master concept of crime as the fundamental stance of society toward prostitution. Moreover, it is service work that should be respected and protected like work in other legitimate service occupations. Second, most women who work as prostitutes choose to do so, even in a society where prostitution is illegal. Third, and finally, prostitution is work that people should have the right to choose. Combined, these three assertions constitute COYOTE's central challenge to contemporary understandings of prostitution as a social problem, especially dominant feminist understandings of prostitution as forced sexual slavery (Barry 1979; Overall 1992).

In the next three sections, I describe each of these types of claims in order to document a shift in the imagery produced by the claims emanating from the prostitutes' rights movement. This shift parallels COYOTE's move from a grass roots effort directed at local city officials and law enforcement agents to a national and international effort enmeshed in feminist discourse and targeting contemporary feminism.

PROSTITUTION AS SERVICE WORK

More than anything else, the notion of work is central to COYOTE's position. The image of "prostitution as work" is at the core of COYOTE's
assertions and demands, regardless of where they appear. The centrality of work was made evident by COYOTE leaders St. James and Alexander in an editorial in which they express their strong reaction to traditional views of prostitution:

A rather profound misconception that people have about prostitution is that it is "sex for sale," or that a prostitute is selling her body. In reality, a prostitute is being paid for her time and skill, the price being rather dependent on both variables. To make a great distinction between being paid for an hour’s sexual service, or an hour’s tyring, or an hour’s acting on a stage is to make a distinction that is not there. (St. James and Alexander 1977, n. p.)

Continuing with this theme, Dolores French, a self-proclaimed prostitute, author of Working: My Life as a Prostitute (1988), president of the Florida COYOTE, president of HIRE (Hooking Is Real Employment), and an appointee to Atlanta Mayor Young’s Task Force on Prostitution, argued that the work of prostitution resembles other kinds of work women do:

A woman has the right to sell sexual services just as much as she has the right to sell her brains to a law firm where she works as a lawyer, or to sell her creative work to a museum where she works as an artist, or to sell her image to a photographer when she works as a model or to sell her body when she works as a ballerina. Since most people can have sex without going to jail, there is no reason except old fashioned prudery to make sex for money illegal. (quoted in Henkin 1988, p. 3)

Finally, the vocabulary of work is especially pronounced in the following testimony on prostitution, which was delivered to the New York State Bar Association by the leaders of COYOTE in 1985:

The laws against pimping (living off the earnings of a prostitute) and pandering (encouraging someone to work as a prostitute) should be repealed, to be replaced with labor laws dealing with working conditions in third-party owned and managed prostitution businesses. Commissions, a majority of whose members should be prostitutes or ex-prostitutes, including individuals who have worked on the street, in massage parlors and brothels, and for escort services, should develop guidelines for the operation of third-party owned and managed businesses, including but not limited to health and safety issues, commissions, and employer/employee relationships. . . . Because prostitution is illegal, women and men who work in third party run prostitution businesses have no legal status as workers. Therefore, they are unlikely to have their income and social security taxes withheld, or to be provided with health, disability, and worker’s compensation insurance, sick leave, vacation pay (St. James and Alexander 1985, p. 1)

The statements above locate the activities of prostitutes in images of service work and business. Moreover, COYOTE’s claims focus upon the similarities between prostitution and other types of service work.

The prostitutes’ rights movement’s demand to decriminalize prostitution is, in essence, a plea to allow working relationships between prostitutes and their customers and managers (pimps) to fall outside the purview of sex crime laws. Alexander explained the value of decriminalizing voluntarily chosen prostitution:

It could involve no new legislation to deal specifically with prostitution, but merely leave the businesses which surround prostitution subject to general civil, business, and professional codes. The problems involved in forced prostitution, such as fraud and collusion, would be covered by existing penal code provisions. (1987, p. 209)

Clearly, this view of prostitution as service work is at odds with historical and contemporary feminist views of prostitution as a source of victimization of women, as described in detail in Chapter 2.

PROSTITUTION AS VOLUNTARILY CHOSEN WORK

Through their national and international efforts, COYOTE leaders have insisted that, contrary to popular opinion, most prostitutes voluntarily choose to engage in prostitution. COYOTE continually publicly asserts that “most women who work as prostitutes have made a conscious decision to do so, having looked at a number of work alternatives” (COYOTE: Facts 1988, p. 1). More specifically, “only 15 percent of prostitutes are coerced by third parties” (p. 1).

Assertions about prostitution emanating from the prostitutes’ rights movement force a distinction between voluntary and forced prostitution. While appearing as a guest on “The Geraldo Show,” the nationally televised program, Gloria Lockett, Co-Director of COYOTE, argued the following:

If a woman does not want to be in the life, then I advocate her getting off of the streets [and] getting out of the life. I do not think