that prostitution is for anyone who does not want to be into it. However, there is a difference between—there are some women who want to be in prostitution and some who don’t want to be in it. (Rivera 1989)

Concerning is St. James (1983), who informed the press of the purpose of COYOTE’s efforts:

To defend the rights of consenting adults to have private fornica-
tion for whatever reason, and especially the rights of women to provide the service which is demanded of them. I am not out to rehabilitate—most of the women I know do not want to change professions.

Many of COYOTE’s public statements suggest a clear distinction between those who choose prostitution as a line of work and those who are forced to prostitute themselves in order to survive. This distinction is the foundation upon which many of COYOTE’s claims are built.

While emphasizing that most prostitution is voluntarily chosen, representatives of the prostitutes’ rights movement have repeatedly repudiated the belief that most prostitutes are forced into the sex trade, by extension, are victimized by coercion. For example, the COYOTE charter stresses that “all prostitutes are not mere, helpless objects to whom men do an endless number of things” (COYOTE Hooks 1988, p. 1). Similarly, in an article entitled “Prostitution: A Difficult Issue for Feminists,” Alexander argued that:

The issue of forced prostitution is often used to obscure the right of women to work as prostitutes. Therefore, it is important to discuss the issue separately. At the same time, I want to make a distinction between being forced by a third party (e.g., a pimp) to work as a prostitute, particularly where violence or deceit is used, and being forced by economic reality. Most people who work for compensation do it because they need the money—no themselves, their children. In any society, people make decisions about how to pay their bills based on some kind of evaluation of the options open to them. And most people choose what they perceive to be the best-paying job for the time.

From COYOTE’s perspective, a consideration of situations wherein prostitutes choose to engage in prostitution is not only important, it is imperative as well. As St. James argued on “The Donahue Show,” “we need to demand the right of these women to opt for prostitution if that’s their choice. We can’t deny women a choice” (quoted in Donahue 1988). Moreover, the problems associated with “forced prostitution” cannot be addressed until voluntary prostitution is legitimate (Alexander 1987a, pp. 206-1).

A belief in the affirmation and legitimation of voluntarily chosen prostitution has anchored COYOTE’s national and international crusade. At the same time (as described later in this chapter), the issue of choice, and by extension coercion, constitutes the greatest point of departure between the ideology emanating from the contemporary prostitutes’ rights movement and other feminist discourse on violence against women (Barry 1979; Bell 1987; Overall 1992).

PROSTITUTION AS A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE

COYOTE relies upon claims that prostitution is legitimate and voluntarily chosen work as a foundation for assertions about prostitutes’ civil rights. Namely, COYOTE demands recognition of prostitutes civil rights as service workers. In 1982 the California chapter of NOW adopted a COYOTE resolution that:

affirms its support of the right of women not to be forced into prostitution, as well as affirms the right of women to choose to work as prostitutes when it is their own choice and, California NOW shall support legislation to decriminalize the voluntary aspects of adult prostitution. (Alexander 1983, p. 13)

A public statement submitted to California NOW by COYOTE elaborated on the above declaration:

Whatever one thinks of prostitution, women have the right to make up their own minds about whether or not to work as prostitutes, and under what terms. They have the right to work as free-lance workers, just as do nurses, typists, writers, doctors, and so on. They
also have the right to work for an employer, a third party who can take care of administration and management problems... they have the right to a full human existence. (Alexander 1983, p. 15)

Finally, combining claims about prostitution as work and prostitutes' rights as workers, a 1988 COYOTE newsletter asserted that:

Prostitutes have the right to work independently, to work in small collectives, or to work for agents, they should be covered by enlightened employment policies providing paid sick leave and vacation, disability, health, and workers compensation insurance, and social security, like other employed workers. (COYOTE Hoed 1988, p. 1)

COYOTE argues that along with the right to choose prostitution as an occupation, prostitutes must have the right not to be subject to public harassment, such as stigmatization, rape, violence, denial of health care, denial of protection by and under the law, and denial of alternative job opportunities. From this perspective, as workers prostitutes should be afforded equal protection under the law and should be free from violations of their civil rights, especially in the form of legal repression and public condemnation. Thus, the "problem of prostitution" is rendered equivalent to the "problem of civil rights," which is elaborated upon in Chapter 5.

As COYOTE pressed this image of prostitution in the late 1970s, throughout the 1980s, and into the 1990s, the prostitutes' rights movement developed increasingly close ties with contemporary feminism through coalition building and acrimonious debate. As COYOTE's representatives engaged in public dialogue with contemporary feminism over the status of prostitutes in light of violence against women as a recognizable social problem, its position became increasingly distinct and public. In large part, this was accomplished via alliance building between COYOTE and other "feminist organizations" (Martin 1990).

COALITION BUILDING IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

As part of their national campaign effort, COYOTE secured alliances with other advocacy organizations, especially women's organizations. For example, one of the first significant alliances COYOTE established with a nationally recognized women's organization was with the Wages for Housework Campaign in 1977. The Chicago Tribune reported that:

"Strippers and housewives both need the power money brings... [and] many prostitutes are also mothers with second jobs. Last

September in a Chicago suburb, the FBI arrested three women who were part of a $100-a-night call girl operation. Many of the hookers were housewives supplementing family incomes. (Gornet 1977, p. 2)

The Los Angeles Wages for Housework chapter also formed an alliance with COYOTE to put government and business on trial for "pinching off prostitution and pinning off all the work women do" (Wages for Housework 1977, p. 8). The coalition claimed that "an attack against prostitutes is an attack on all women" (p. 8).

Boasting a membership of twenty thousand, in 1979 COYOTE aligned itself with NOW to promote a Kiss and Tell campaign designed to strengthen lobbying efforts for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The Kiss and Tell idea originated in Europe, particularly Spain and Portugal, where it had some success. In Spain this tactic was used to aid the country of its adultery laws, which had been enforced only against women. In Portugal, it was used to keep abortion and prostitution laws out of the new legal code.

COYOTE's participation in the Kiss and Tell campaign in the United States was designed to assist in a larger effort to get the ERA passed, as well as to secure public funding for abortions (Castonia 1979, p. B14). A 1979 COYOTE newsletter reported:

COYOTE has called on all prostitutes to join the international "Kiss and Tell" campaign to convince legislators that it is in their best interest to support the decriminalization of prostitution, the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion funding, lesbian and gay rights, and all other issues of importance to women. The organizers of the campaign are urging that the names of legislators who have consistently voted against these issues, yet are regular patrons of prostitutes, be turned over to feminist organizations for their use. (COYOTE Hoed 1979, p. 1)

Interestingly, the Kiss and Tell campaign required that prostitutes violate their own code of ethics. As COYOTE Hoed reported, "one of the points in the prostitutes' code of ethics is that the prostitute will never divulge the name of the client" (Alexander 1979a, p. 4). However, the urgency of the passage of the ERA trumped this particular ethic.

In addition to Wages for Housework and NOW, the prostitutes' rights movement also secured affiliations with other women's organizations, ranging from the Professional Women's Organization of the Feminist Party. These affiliations were conducive to COYOTE's entrance into contemporary feminist discourse.
ENTERING CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST DISCOURSE

As documented in Chapter 2, the contemporary women's movement addresses a broad set of concerns, many of which ultimately provided a public forum for COYOTE's claims about prostitution, sexuality, and the status of women in society. Indeed, already subsumed in feminist discourse were discussions of women's sexuality, the social control of women's bodies, women's right to control their bodies, and institutionalized violence against women. Combined, these discussions provided fertile soil wherein representatives of the prostitutes' rights movement could plant their position. That is, feminists' general concerns about sex for sale and violence against women provided COYOTE and its affiliates with a vehicle through which they could develop and publicly present their analyses of prostitution and proposals for reform. By entering, engaging with, and shaping contemporary feminist discourse, the prostitutes' rights movement cemented ties with the women's movement and ensured that prostitution represented a generally difficult, as well as an occasionally divisive, dilemma for feminists (Alexander 1987a; Holson 1987; Overall 1982; Pfeiffer 1989; Snider 1976; St. James and Alexander 1977).

Although NOW adopted a resolution to decriminalize prostitution in 1973, it was not until the late 1970s that NOW recognized prostitution as a legitimate, albeit difficult issue. As Jaget (1980) has documented, the women's movement in the United States had been slow to support prostitute women, and even slower in reaching agreement on the place of prostitution in the pursuit of women's liberation. As discussed in Chapter 2, feminist discussions of violence against women, including pornography and rape, were often complicated when considered along with feminists' central commitments to freedom of choice, the right to self-determination, and the importance of women securing and maintaining control over their own bodies. Debate about the nature of the intersection between these principles, coupled with a concern with responding to violence against women, provided a ripe environment for claims emanating from the prostitutes' rights movement.

COYOTE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In the process of focusing on coalition building and establishing recognition as a legitimate national civil rights organization, COYOTE entered the growing and increasingly institutionalized feminist discourse on violence against women. COYOTE's former codirector, Priscilla Alex-
"look, but don’t touch" philosophy that is compounded by the prohibition of prostitution. . . . Should a woman allow to put on a private, pornographic show for an undercover officer, she would be arrested for soliciting an act of prostitution. (1981, p. 14)

Finally, while addressing an Episcopal Church congregation in Alameda County, California, St. James claimed that prostitution should not be isolated from pornography because present laws allow "white males to sell women's bodies, but do not allow women to sell their bodies themselves" (Anderson 1984, p. 14).

Using contemporary feminist discourse, violence against women as a national forum, the prostitutes' rights movement nationally and internationally responded to the problem of violence against women by proposing the decriminalization of prostitution as a partial solution. In the process, COYOTE representatives and their supporters contended the notion that prostitutes are necessarily victimized by impersonal and commercialized sex. By construing prostitution as nothing more and nothing less than labor, COYOTE's representatives continued to contest the degree of harm involved in prostitution by promoting the element of choice for the majority of those involved in the sex industry.

However, images of prostitutes and prostitution emanating from the prostitutes' rights movement's participation in contemporary feminist discourse did not go uncontested. Consistent with the historically developed feminist analyses of prostitution as victimized women (as described in Chapter 2), an organized nemesis emerged to adamantly refute COYOTE's claims. Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER) in particular pressed numerous counterclaims that culminated in affirming historically dominant feminist analyses of prostitution as institutionalized international sexual slavery.

WHISPER: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEMESIS

Along with the emergence of the contemporary prostitutes' rights movement, competing images of prostitution began to surface and be affirmed within the feminist discourse on violence against women. Most prominent among these was the image of the prostitute described by Kathleen Barry in her book Female Sexual Slavery (1979). In this book, Barry describes women who are abducted or sold for sexual purposes and transported to the United States, West Germany, Saudi Arabia, and other countries.

Female Sexual Slavery, which has been translated into four languages, served as the basis for a 1983 United Nations report that said "prostitution is slavery" and is a grave cause for international concern (Klemesrud 1985, p. 116). Barry founded the International Feminist Network Against Female Sexual Slavery in 1983 in Rotterdam. Financed by grants from the Dutch government and the Ford Foundation, this network included women who worked with grass roots women's organizations from twenty-four countries.

WHISPER emerged in the early 1980s with the expressed intent of decriminalizing and ultimately abolishing prostitution. With its headquarters in New York City, WHISPER is an organization made up of volunteers, feminist scholars, and clergy who are concerned with saving prostitutes from the life of prostitution. Like COYOTE and its affiliates, WHISPER and its supporters stress the importance of decriminalizing prostitution. Compared to COYOTE and its supporters, however, WHISPER and its advocates offer a very different justification and analysis in support of the decriminalization of prostitution.

Representatives of WHISPER argue that prostitution must first and foremost be understood as an institution created by patriarchal structures to control and abuse women. Accordingly, representatives of WHISPER claim that no woman chooses prostitution and that all prostitutes are victims. As Sarah Wyoiter, editor of the WHISPER newsletter, succinctly argued:

Prostitution isn't like anything else. Rather everything else is like prostitution, because it is a model for women's condition, for gender stratification and its logical extension, sex discrimination. Prostitution is founded on enforced sexual abuse under a system of male supremacy that is itself built along a continuum of coercion. . . . We, the women of WHISPER, reject the lie that women freely choose prostitution. (Delacoste and Alexander 1987, pp. 268–69)

From WHISPER's perspective, the fact that women live under patriarchal conditions ensures that prostitutes do not choose prostitution.

From WHISPER's point of view, the "myth of choice" is only one of many myths being supported by the views promulgated by COYOTE. Other examples include the "myth of normalcy" and the "myth of professionalization." In an article entitled "Prostitution Is Not A Profession," which also appeared in French in La Gazette des Femmes and in English in Women's World, the WHISPER newsletter reported:

The oldest profession in the world. Is it really a profession? Does one choose to be a prostitute? Last year, a dozen women and men met as international experts under the auspices of UNESCO to examine the issue of prostitution. The final report of this meeting