

FEMINIST RESISTANCE IN THE GTA: THE HARRIS YEARS (1995-2001)

**FEMINIST RESISTANCE IN THE GTA: STORIES OF FEMINIST STRUGGLE,
RESISTANCE AND SUCCESS DURING THE HARRIS YEARS (1995-2001)**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy**

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McMaster University DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2014) Hamilton, Ontario
(Sociology)

TITLE: Feminist Resistance in the GTA: Stories of Feminist Struggle, Resistance and
Success During the Harris Years (1995-2001) AUTHOR: Gillian Anderson, B.A., M.A.
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353

ABSTRACT

While neoliberalism has increasingly been entrenched in the province of Ontario, it has also encountered resistance. A primary goal of this dissertation is to provide a vivid historical account of women's organizing and feminist resistance that emerged during the Harris years (1995-2001). Drawing on the narratives of thirty three feminist activists and leaders working within three different organizational settings, namely organized labour, anti-racist, and anti-violence organizations, this research project aims to capture an important moment in time when women and feminists were speaking out against some of the most pressing issues of the day including gender (in)equality, poverty, violence, sexism, racism and discrimination. Thematically, this research highlights the numerous challenges, strategies and successes experienced by a variety of differently located feminists and women's groups. By theoretically and analytically situating these women's narrative accounts within a qualitative, intersectional feminist framework, this collection of stories not only allow us to (re)examine theoretical and practical issues related to intersectionality and pose questions for the present state of feminist organizations, but also contributes to our understanding of feminist organizational resistance in the future, the long-term impact of said resistance and how we might go about addressing the challenges that lie ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to all who made this research project possible. I would like to especially extend much gratitude and heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, and supervisory committee comprised of Dr. Robert Storey, Dr. Pamela Sugiman and Dr. Donna Baines. Your unwavering support, intellectual guidance, mentorship, patience, and generosity of time and spirit – among countless other contributions, are most appreciated. I have benefitted personally and professionally from your collective wisdom and labour and for this I am thankful. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Barbara Crow and Dr. Rhonda Lenton who provided feedback on early portions of this work. And to my friend and colleague Dr. Joseph Moore, thanks for your support and encouraging words.

This research was also made possible in part due to funding provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in the form of a doctoral research fellowship; an Ontario Graduate Scholarship; and an internal research grant awarded by the Department of Labour Studies, McMaster University.

To the feminist women who gave so freely of their time and openly shared their stories and experiences with me, I sincerely hope this work does justice to your ongoing efforts. Your staunch support of women's equality rights, feminist activism and resiliency evidenced at a particular historical moment have not only contributed to the richness of the sociology of feminist organizing, but have enabled me to craft an academic work that acknowledges and centres the importance of feminist resistance.

Finally to Simon and my Mom and Dad, thank you for your continual support of my educational and professional pursuits.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Feminist Organizing in a Neoliberal Climate

A recent news headline reads, “Harper government cuts funding to key feminist groups” (Mullins, 2010). A CTV news Top Story reports “Harper government axes funding for 11 women’s groups” (<http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/TopStories/20100504/Harper-womens-funding-100504/>, accessed May 22, 2012). And so it seems that in the current neoliberal climate of government cutbacks and austerity measures, women’s equality rights remain in constant jeopardy, while the “very organizations” that have long championed said rights are being “conveniently weaken[ed]” (Beaman as cited by Mullins, 2010: <http://digitaljournal.com/article/291658>, accessed May 1, 2012).

Given the rightward shift in Canadian politics exemplified by the social and economic conservative stance of Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s federal Conservative Party of Canada (c.2006) and the fiscal conservatism of Ralph Klein’s Alberta (c. 1993-2007) and Gordon Campbell’s BC Liberal (c. 2001-2011) governments, women’s movement claims and feminist demands may be “delegitimized” (Harder, 2003) and eroded by neoliberal¹ governments with a vested interest in “evacuating politics from the

¹Note my use of terminology. The terms neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism are often confused (Bezanson, 2006:9). In the United States, the term “conservative” is generally used to refer to the “policy cluster of deregulation, privatization, and austerity cut-backs in government social programs attributed to neo-liberals in much of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe” (Moody, 1997:5). Brenda Cossman and Judy Fudge in their edited collection *Privatization, Law, and the Challenge to Feminism* (2002) explore the similarities and differences between neo-liberal and neo-conservative discourses within a Canadian context. Cossman (2002) explains how the terms are often used “interchangeably” in a general sense to refer the changes employed on the part of the New Right to dismantle the welfare state. This she suggests, may “conflat[e]. . .important differences between social and fiscal conservatives” (2002:176). However, for the purposes of this discussion, I will use the term “neo-liberal” in order to convey the “the rolling back of the state” (Bezanson, 2006) vis a vis a “multi-faceted” (Coulter, 2009) privatization project as it was pursued by the Ontario Conservative Government under the leadership of Mike Harris. The Harris government’s “suturing” (2002:178) of neo-conservative and neo-liberal strategies are evident in a number of discursive

state” (Brodie, 1994, 1995; Harder, 2003; Yeatman, 1990). This neoliberal surge poses a potential threat to organized feminism, one reminiscent of the Mulroney era² - a period marked by “ideological clashes and policy battles”, and a severe “money crunch” that reduced federal funding for feminist projects (Bashevkin, 1998). As Sylvia Bashevkin (1998:4-5) has pointed out, Mulroney’s brand of new conservatism was characterized by lower taxes, reductions in government spending, deregulation, the dismantling of social programs, and a ruggedly individualistic doctrine. This, she says, placed feminist activists and feminist organizations “on the defensive” and they had to rethink and “re-evaluate what Susan Faludi (1991) termed the ‘politics of ‘backlash’” (1998-4-5).

Navigating these backlash politics warrants further sociological investigation. To date, few Canadian studies have explored feminists’ “fate” in conservative times (Bashevkin, 1998). Sylvia Bashevkin’s (1998:245) above work clearly documents the struggles that Canadian women’s groups experienced during the 1980’s, and the “variety of inventive defences to try to “cope with hard times”. Lois Harder (2003) has explored the struggles of feminist claimsmakers as they faced “the transformation of governance” or change in “state forms” in the province of Alberta. Harder investigates the erosion of the welfare state during the 1980’s and the imposition of a neoliberal state formation during the 1990’s and early 2000’s. She argues that the neoliberal state form reduces the role of government as a “guarantor of equality” and she assesses the impact of this “shrinking state” in relation to feminists’ demands for equality (Harder, 2003). Luciana

schemes identified by Fudge and Cossman (2002:17-24), including the discourses of reregulation, reprivatization, commodification, familialization, individualization, delegation, and depoliticization. These processes will be explained and discussed in more detail in the chapters that follow.

² Brian Mulroney, leader of Progressive Conservative Party and Canadian Prime Minister, c. 1984-1993.

Ricciutelli, June Larkin and Eimear O'Neill's (1998) edited collection, *Confronting the Cuts: A Sourcebook for Women in Ontario*, focuses on the impact of the government's spending cuts on women, families, and communities. More recently, Kate Bezanson's (2006) analysis of household insecurity in Ontario has drawn much needed attention to the detrimental impact of neoliberal policies on women and the poor.

These studies notwithstanding, we need further Canadian research and in this instance, additional scholarly sociological analyses at the provincial level in order to better understand the "politics of backlash". Specifically, we need (1) to address the constraints that feminist organizations and activists encounter within an antagonistic social, political and economic "state form" (Harder, 2003; Brodie, 1995, 1996), or what social movement theorists term a hostile "political opportunity structure" (see for example Gamson and Meyer 1996; Gelb 1995; Ray and Korteweg 1999; Staggenborg and Meyer 1996); and, (2) to better understand how feminists resist and mount effective organizational responses to these kinds of challenges.

This study takes up these key concerns. It is a critical comparative analysis³ that tells the stories of feminist organizing in a neoliberal climate. The setting is Ontario, where in the mid to late 1990's and early 2000's, neoliberalism became firmly entrenched under the Conservative government of Mike Harris (c.1995-2001). Following closely in the footsteps of both the UK and the US, the Harris regime established its own version of welfare state restructuring that emphasized the role of market citizens, gendered family roles and favoured policies that eroded public investments in social reproduction

³This study broadly compares feminist organizations working in three main arenas, including violence against women (VAW); labour/union; and anti-racist sectors.

(Bezanson, 2006:xi-xii; 161). Drawing on the personal narratives of over thirty women in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), I explore how feminists active in three key social policy and advocacy arenas, including organized labour, anti-racist, and violence against women organizations, “weathered the storms” (Bashevkin, 1998) of the “Harris years”. These women’s personal narratives shed light on how feminist organizations and claimsmakers steered their way through the “collision course” (Bashevkin, 1998) of backlash practices and policies implemented by the Mike Harris government. The women’s stories presented here describe feminists’ struggles, resistance, and “success”. In short, Harris’s neoliberal agenda was resisted by many groups, including women and feminists and this resistance is the major focus of my research project.

The Research Context: The Harris Years and “The Common Sense Revolution”

Most Ontarians have a “commonsensical understanding” or a taken for granted understanding of what “The Common Sense Revolution” entailed⁴. Still it seems fitting to provide a cursory review of some of the important historical dates, decisions and outcomes that have now come to define the so called “Harris years”⁵. Mike Harris’ Conservative government came to power in an election win on June 8, 1995, gaining 44.8 percent of the popular vote⁶, marking an historical shift in the socio-political climate of

⁴ That is not to suggest that this research is directed to and or only of interest to Ontarians. Mainstream media would lead us to believe that the common sense revolution was welcomed on behalf of Ontario voters who were disenchanted with the state of government spending under the previous NDP government lead by Bob Rae c. 1990-1995.

⁵ For an overview of the “Neo-liberal Experiment in Ontario” see Kate Bezanson’s (2006) Gender, the State and Social Reproduction: Household Insecurity in Neo-liberal Times. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 3-21.

⁶ MacGregor (1997:106) suggests that the 1995 election of Harris’ Conservatives has often been attributed to the apparent discontent among middle class voters who believed that their tax dollars were used to support the lifestyles of the “lazy” and the undeserving. She notes that the three key “deciding factors” in the election seem to have been the Conservatives campaign promises to slash social assistance, introduce

the province (Lightman and Baines, 1996:145). Once in power, the Harris government sought to cut government spending and reduce government debt by systematically dismantling the existing welfare state and imposing a more neoliberal state formation. This “transformation of governance” (Harder, 2003:158) rejects notions of inclusivity and demands for equality by allegedly “treating everyone the same”, as “equal rational economic actors” (Harder, 2003:160), or “market citizens” (Fudge and Cossman, 2002).

After less than a month in office, in July 1995, the Conservatives announced that the province had “inherited a severe spending problem” (Eves, 1995:5). They were quick to frame Ontario’s financial woes as a “spending crisis” created under the Premiership of New Democrat, Bob Rae. The implication was that the NDP’s “unacceptable” and “irresponsible” spending had “undermine[d]the financial stability of the province.” Ontario, they claimed, was on “the wrong track” and it was “time to do something about it” (Harris, 1995:1). Reckless, out of control government spending had to be put to an end. While they conceded that it might be “difficult” and “not welcomed by the special interests” (Harris, 1995:2), the Conservatives believed Ontario taxpayers “understood” what needed to be done, and they moved to implement a set of measures to “put things right” (Harris, 1995:2).

The policies and practices guiding the Conservatives’ “Common Sense Revolution” were publicly unveiled on July 21, 1995, first, in an emergency “Statement by the Honourable Mike Harris, Premier of Ontario” (1995)⁷, and second, in an “Ontario

workfare legislation and a 30 percent reduction in income tax (1997:106).

⁷ Published by the Ontario Ministry of Finance, <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/fallstatement/1995/prem.html>, last accessed September 26th, 2011.

Fiscal Overview and Spending Cuts” by Finance Minister, Ernie Eves (1995)⁸. The government announced it was “cutting spending” by proposing a “realistic and workable plan” (Eves, 1995:6) totalling \$1.9 billion in savings⁹ for the 1995 fiscal year. These budget cuts were deemed “essential” (Eves, 1995:8) for the sake of prosperity, essential in order to restore confidence, hope, opportunity, pride, and to build a better future for the people of Ontario (Harris, 1995:2). The government, the Conservatives argued, was cutting spending and cancelling programs and projects the province “simply [could not] afford”. According to Ernie Eves (1995:8), “the spending crisis our Government inherited [meant] that no other course of action [was] possible. We are taking swift and decisive action to bring spending under control.”

Based on a “restructuring discourse” (Brodie, 1995, 1996) that emphasized individualism, personal responsibility, fiscal restraint, and the (re)privatization of public and private life, and “trumpeting the rhetoric of privatization with statements such as ‘history has shown that the private sector can use such assets more efficiently and provide better service to the public’ (Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, 1995:17)” (as cited by Coulter, 2009:30), the Conservatives’ “Common Sense Revolution” was a project focused on solving the province’s fiscal crisis by introducing tax cuts and slashing social spending in an attempt to reduce government debt and or, to use Harris’ words (1995:2), “re-ignite” economic growth. The Harris government quickly implemented massive cutbacks to a number of social programs, including social assistance, employment equity,

⁸ Published by the Ontario Ministry of Finance, <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/fallstatement/1995/finalj21.html>, last accessed September 26th, 2011.

⁹ All figures and “savings” are drawn from the Statement by the Honorable Mike Harris, Premier of Ontario and Ontario Fiscal Overview and Spending Cuts by Ernie Eves Minister of Finance, dated July 25, 1995.

pay equity, child care, social services, education and health care¹⁰. The rhetoric surrounding this decidedly “market-driven approach” (Brodie, 1996:15), stressed individual self-sufficiency and minimized state involvement in the provision of social welfare (see for example discussions by Bakker, 1996; Brodie, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002; Kitchen, 1997).

The first and biggest cut the Conservatives made was to welfare. In 1995, approximately 1.3 million Ontarions were on social assistance (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146). Over 400 000 of these recipients, nearly one-third, were children (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146). Prior to these cuts, a single person on social assistance received a maximum monthly benefit of \$663: \$249 as a basic living allowance and \$414 as a maximum shelter allowance. A single parent with a child under twelve years of age received a maximum monthly total of \$1221, including a basic allowance of \$569 and a maximum shelter allowance of \$652 (Appendix Tables, 1995: Table 8 Ontario Social Assistance Monthly Benefits). The Conservatives introduced a 21.6% reduction in social assistance allowances effective October 1, 1995. It was anticipated that this would result in a saving of \$469 million by the end of the fiscal year. The Conservatives anticipated saving another \$938 million in 1996-1997 (Eves, 1995:2-3). Following these cuts, a single recipient received \$520 in monthly benefits: \$195 basic allowance for food, clothing, transportation and other subsistence needs, and \$325 maximum shelter/rent allowance. Similarly, a single parent with a young child received \$446 and \$511

¹⁰ For a detailed chronological overview of the key actions undertaken by the Conservatives in their first year in office, see Bill Dare’s (1997) “Harris’ First Year: Attacks and Resistance” in Diana Ralph, Andre Regimbald and Neree St-Amand’s (Eds.) Open for Business, Closed to People: Mike Harris’s Ontario, Halifax, Fernwood Publishing, pp. 20-26.

respectively (Appendix Tables, 1995: Table 8 Ontario Social Assistance Monthly Benefits). The reality of these cuts meant that single people and single parents, especially women and children, were pushed even further below the poverty line, reducing the standard of living of already marginalized groups (Bezanson, 2006) and intensifying income and economic inequality in the province.

The Harris government repeatedly argued that even with these reductions in social assistance, Ontario's new welfare allowances would still be, on average, 10% higher than those of nine other Canadian provinces (Eves, 1995:2). They insisted that the "deserving poor", namely seniors, and people with disabilities and their families would be exempt from these reductions (Eves, 1995:3). However, women and children, especially single mothers, were relegated to the ranks of the "undeserving poor" (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146; see also Evans, 1996). The province maintained their poverty was the result of, to use Harder's words (2003:162), "individual rather than structural" flaws or poverty unworthy of "respite for those who [could not] succeed in the private sector" (Harder, 2003:162). By making this distinction between so called "deserving" and "undeserving" citizens (Brodie, 1996), the government further legitimized the stereotypical image of "welfare Moms" as "undeserving mothers" (Evans, 1996:160), mothers who supposedly sit around all day, watch TV, and drink beer (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146) ¹¹. The Conservatives were not going to support these "indolent women's lifestyles" (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146). And their gendered "vilification of the poor" ensued (see for

¹¹ According to Cossman (2002) mothers on welfare were targeted by the Harris government. Cossman (2002:201-202) notes when the Harris government was questioned regarding the cutting of the food allowance for pregnant mothers, the Premier reportedly stated "We are making sure that those dollars don't go to beer". See "Harris apologizes for Comment on Pregnant Welfare Mothers: Said Allowance Cut as They Might Spend the Money on Beer" published in the Hamilton Spectator, 17 April, C4, 1998.

example Little, 1998; Little and Hillyard 2001; and Mayson 1999 as cited by Coulter, 2009:30)¹².

Tighter eligibility requirements were introduced in an attempt to reduce welfare fraud and to “ensure that welfare goes to those persons who are truly in need” (Eves, 1995:3). Eves (1995:3) argued this cost-cutting measure was expected to save the province \$15 million in 1995. To combat welfare fraud, the government introduced “cheat lines”. Along with these tighter measures, the Conservatives reintroduced the “spouse in the house” legislation which had been previously challenged under the Charter of Rights (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146-147; see also Fudge and Cossman, 2002; Kitchen, 1997, Marshall, 2000). This policy prevented single mothers allegedly living with men from collecting social assistance¹³. The policy effectively reinforced women’s financial and economic dependence on either a male breadwinner or the state and intensified the feminization of poverty. Lastly, the Conservatives decided provincial municipalities with high welfare case loads were no longer eligible to apply for special relief (Eves, 1995:3). This change enabled the government to reduce transfer costs to the tune of \$30 million in 1995 (1995:3).

The Harris government capped pay equity funds at \$500 million per year in order to save \$85 million in 1995-1996 (Eves, 1995:5). According to Lightman and Baines

¹² In an Ottawa Citizen article entitled, “Ontario Targets Welfare Drinkers: Forced-Treatment Order Extended to Cover Legal Drugs” Tom Blackwell (2001:A1) reported on John Baird’s plan mandatory drug testing for those on social assistance, that included a “photo-op holding syringes and suggesting that welfare recipients would no longer be allowed to shoot their cheques ‘up their arms’” (as cited by Coulter, 2009:30; see also Brodie, 2010).

¹³ Marshall (2000:136) provides a “hypothetical” example where it was reported that men’s clothes “appear[ed]” to be hanging on the clothes line of a woman receiving social assistance when in fact it belonged to her daughter.

(1996:148), pay equity legislation was designed to ensure work typically performed by women would be paid at the same rate as “work of equal value” undertaken by men in the private and public sectors. They note that on January 1st, 1997 the government ended the “proxy method”, a means through which pay equity could be applied when similar male jobs did not exist. Revoking the proxy method left many underpaid women workers in female-dominated occupations, for example, shelter and day care workers, with little or no access to pay equity (Lightman and Baines, 1996:148). Further, they suggest that the capping of this funding preserved and in some instances intensified the gendered wage gap. It reinforced women’s marginal status in the paid labour force and made it more socially acceptable for employers to pay them less (Lightman and Baines, 1996:148). The Harris government was indifferent to gender inequality in the sphere of paid employment. In fact, their programs and policies exacerbated existing gendered income inequalities. The Harris government, according to Kitchen and Popham (1998:46-47) largely viewed these equity initiatives or “measures as interfering with the ability of private investors to engage in profitable business enterprises in the province.”

Similarly, funding for employment equity programs was cut following Harris’ election¹⁴. Ernie Eves (1995:4) announced that public sector employment equity funding would be eliminated in order to save \$8 million. According to Lightman and Baines (1996:147), employment equity legislation, first introduced by the NDP in 1993, was designed to address discriminatory hiring and promotion practices and to alleviate

¹⁴ Some scholars have argued that it was part of Harris’ election strategy to portray employment equity legislation as a “quota system” in that “if we call it quotas and promise to get rid of it – they will vote for us” (quoted in Burr 1995 by Hamilton, 2005:128).

systemic inequalities experienced by four groups of workers. These four groups were women, Aboriginals, people of colour, and people with disabilities (Lightman and Baines, 1996:147). The Harris government repealed the bill and most corporations aside from “the Big three auto makers” union, the CAW, (who “bargained the guts” of the legislation into their collective agreements (Peggy Nash CAW, 2002), promptly rescinded their commitments to employment equity (Lightman and Baines, 1996:147). Workers were left with little protection against discrimination in the paid labour force. The onus was placed on individual workers to challenge unfair labour practices and to seek recourse through the cumbersome Ontario Human Rights Commission (Lightman and Baines, 1996:147). The Harris government protected white male corporate interests and simply refused to intervene and regulate inequities in the workplace. By cutting and eliminating equity programs designed to ameliorate historical inequalities, the Harris government tacitly “promote[d] the resurgence of racism” in Ontario (Trickey, 1997:113-115). Cuts to the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Anti-racism Secretariat (ARS) were indicative of the Harris government’s indifference to anti-racism projects and services¹⁵ (Trickey, 1997:119).

The Conservatives cancelled employment and job training programs such as the JobsOntario Training Program and the Jumpstart Program. These two program cancellations were expected to save \$86 million and \$60 million respectively in 1995-1996 and another \$40 million over the next two years (Eves, 1995:4-5). Funding for

¹⁵ According to Trickey (1997:119), the Anti-racism Secretariat (ARS) acted as the funding body for anti-racism programming. Moreover, she cites the Toronto Coalition Against Racism’s (TCAR) (1996) claim that the ARS also acted “as the centralizing body for initiating and implementing anti-racist programs for the province” (as cited by Trickey, 1997:119).

social service agencies administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services experienced the greatest reduction. A direct cut of \$161 million was made effective on October 1, 1995 to save \$44 million. A direct cut of 5% was made the following year (Eves, 1995:5). These cuts had a major impact on women's social service agencies making it more difficult for the larger numbers of women forced to seek services. Simultaneously, it diminished the resources available to women service providers. Here we can see the contradictory role the neoliberal state plays in women's lives, whether they are state employees or social service clients (Brodie, 1996:8).

Funding for second-stage housing and counselling for abused women and children were eliminated in late 1995 (OAITH, 1998:29). Women escaping violence also experienced difficulty finding affordable housing given the clamp down on social housing (OAITH, 1998). The government went from building 6000 affordable housing units, to none (Coulter, 2009:30). Single mothers with dependent children were often forced to choose between "paying the rent or feeding the kids". Furthermore, neoliberal ideology embraces the traditional (read: nuclear, heterosexual, male breadwinner) family and the overriding assumption is that child care is a private, familial responsibility (Cossman, 2002). The Conservatives cancelled child-care spending which resulted in a saving of \$20 million over two years (Eves, 1995:3). Subsidies for child care were withdrawn (Dare, 1997:23). Access to safe, quality, and affordable child care is critical for women (re)entering the paid labour force. It is also necessary for women undertaking education or job training, and leaving violent relationships (OAITH, 1998; Skipton, 1997).

The Harris government publicly denied that women were unfairly targeted by its

cost cutting measures, yet it cancelled many of the social programs primarily used by women and children (Lightman and Baines, 1996:146). The services and programs cancelled by Harris' Conservatives had a harsh and disproportionate impact on women and the introduction of neoliberal policies, to use Finkel's (2006) words, largely "ignored the needs" of poor women, working women, racialized women and women experiencing violence. This led many feminists to suggest, that here was a government whose social policy was bent on "eliminating deficits on the backs of women" (undated pamphlet, initially prepared for International Women's Day, March 8th, 1996).

To summarize, the "Common Sense Revolution" was largely an androcentric, hegemonic narrative personified by the Harris government. This series of real, concrete, material changes centred on the "speedy" and "brutal" redefinition of the role of the provincial government as a provider of public services and as a protector of citizens' rights (Kitchen and Popham, 1998:45). The Harris government's "free market agenda" (Kitchen, 1997) seriously undermined the role of the welfare state in meeting the "extra-economic well-being of its citizens" (Harder, 2003:150).

The government's neoliberal agenda attacked public sector infrastructure. From the Harris government's perspective, high levels of public spending had reduced Ontarions "self-reliance", resulting in an "abdication [of individual] responsibility", the weakening of "family ties", and "encouraged a passive dependency on government programs and services" (Kitchen and Popham, 1998:45). Lois Harder (2003:6-22) argues that through massive spending cuts and fiscal restructuring, increased accountability for public service delivery, the implementation of "private-sector performance standards"

and the branding of feminists and other social justice advocates as “special interest” groups, this “transformation of governance” served to erode societal consensus surrounding the legitimacy of strong social programs and public sector services. And yet according to Kitchen and Popham (1998:45), these very programs and services are what effectively “symbolized the sense of community and caring that [had] defined civil life in Ontario.”

Moreover, the “retrenchment of the state [from the processes of] social reproduction” (Cossman, 2002:17; see also Bezanson, 2006) has also resulted in the simultaneous “intensification and erosion of gender” (Bezanson, 2006; Brodie 1994, 1995; Cossman 2002; Fudge and Cossman 2002; Harder 2003). According to Cossman (2002:174-176) and others, in shifting the burden of social reproduction back onto families, women’s role as caregivers in the private sphere is intensified. At the same time, women’s care giving capacity is undermined by greater demands being placed on them as workers to support their families through increased participation in the public sphere of paid labour (Ursel, 1992; Bakker 1996a; Brodie 1995; Haraway 1991 as cited by Cossman, 2002:174, 176). This is what Jenson (2004) describes as “the struggle to care and the struggle to earn”. Consequently, we are also witnessing the simultaneous “intensification and erosion of the family” (Cossman, 2002:171, 174). Fudge and Cossman (2002:21) comment that the (re)articulation of the “traditional” nuclear, heterosexual family naturalizes the privatization of social reproduction. Given the “normative claim” that families should take care of themselves (Brodie, 1996 as cited by Fudge and Cossman, 2002:21), child, elder, and health care are reconstituted as familial

responsibilities (Cossman, 2002; Fudge and Cossman, 2002). The retreat of the state from its “redistributive role” (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:403), has “mean[t] more responsibility for families that have a decreasing ability to carry out the work” (Armstrong, 1996:227 as cited by Cossman 2002:176).

I would argue that Harris’s dismantling of the welfare state was not simply a means to deal with the province’s budgetary woes, rather it had a much broader objective. Harris himself noted “getting our finances in order is not an end itself – only the start of the process of reigniting our economy and restoring opportunity and hope to our province” (Harris, 1995:2). This sentiment was echoed by Minister Eves who later stated “these measures do not represent a complete fiscal plan” (Eves, 1995:8). However, to use Harder’s (2003:16) and others (for example, see Yeatman 1990 and Brodie 1996b cited by Fudge and Cossman 2002:23) words, I would argue that Harris’ larger goal was to “[evacuate] politics from the realm of the state.” As a result, “state agents no longer considered access to, provision of, and debate over public resources to be a matter of citizen entitlement” (Harder, 2003:16). Therefore I would further argue that the “Common Sense Revolution” cannot simply be read and or interpreted as the Harris government’s response to a perceived fiscal crisis. Focussing on debt reduction or what Ralph, Regimbald and St-Amand (1997) call Harris’s manipulation of “deficit hysteria”, only reveals “part of the story” (Harder, 2003:x)¹⁶. Moreover, this reading conceals the interwoven systems of oppression and the diversity of women’s lived experiences, experiences that often “oppose” (Harder, 2003:x) or contradict the popular Conservative

¹⁶ This is not to suggest however, that this reading is intent on denying that there was opposition or resistance.

narrative or “restructuring discourse” (Brodie, 1994, 1995, 1996). It overlooks the gendered, racist, and classist implications of Harris’ fiscal reform by “fail[ing] to recognize that not all women are disadvantaged by restructuring, at least not to the same degree, and that the effects of restructuring can be quite different across racial and class groupings” (Brodie, 1995:22). It also downplays feminists’ historical and present day struggles with/in major Canadian institutions, including women’s relationships to “markets, families and the state” (Kitchen, 1997:111; see also Porter, 2000:29). Women’s agency is denied and women’s resistance is “delegitimized” (Harder, 2003).

This research on feminist organizing on the ground, in grassroots and established feminist organizations, suggests much more complex stories and material realities. My analysis of feminist organizing in a neoliberal climate disrupts the straightforwardness of this master narrative and reveals very little “common ground” (Bashevkin, 1998) as evidenced by the varied forms of resistance mounted against the Harris agenda. And this is the socio-political context, the backdrop against which feminist claimsmakers’ narratives have been situated and their stories of struggle, resistance and success unfold.

In the following pages, I will present a brief overview of my study. I identify the research problems and questions that guide this project. I also introduce the theoretical approaches and empirical analyses that inform my research.

My Study

Over the last three decades neoliberalism has been firmly entrenched not only in Ontario as was the case during the Harris years, but elsewhere in Canada and abroad. That said, my primary goal here is to provide a vivid historical account of women’s

organizing amidst the shifts and changes to the socio-political landscape in Mike Harris' Ontario by drawing on the perspectives of feminists working within three different organizational settings. Given this hostile "political opportunity structure"¹⁷ (for example, see Gamson and Meyer 1996; Gelb 1995; McAdam 1996; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Ray and Korteweg 1999; Staggenborg and Meyer 1996; Tarrow 1996, 1994), I explore feminists' narratives that tell a number of different stories about Harris' so-called "Common Sense Revolution". I focus on the stories constructed and recounted to me by feminist activists in an attempt to understand these women's subjective experiences and how their lived experiences influence political agendas, shape organizational practices, and foster strategies for making change (Ferre and Martin, 1995). My research is guided by the following key research questions: In their view, what were the major pressures and challenges that feminist organizations and activists encountered under Harris' regime? What were their organizational responses? For example, what types of strategies or processes did differently located feminists develop in order to maintain and or further their agendas and policy objectives? And how "successful" and or effective were these practices in producing progressive "feminist outcomes" (Martin, 1990) as understood by feminist activists within different organizational contexts?

¹⁷ The concept "political opportunity structure" is employed by social movement scholars. Generally, it refers to the external environment within which social movement organizations are located and the "institutions, values, and ideologies" that shape the development and impact of feminist organizations (Gelb, 1995:128-131). Or in a more traditional social movement sense, to use the words of Tarrow (1998:7), it is referred to as "consistent - but not necessarily permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentive for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure."

These research questions are informed by a theoretical framework that incorporates an understanding of socialist, radical, and critical anti-racist feminist perspectives. This multidimensional feminist framework emphasizes the plurality of women's lived experiences and the intersections of gender, "race" and class. "Feminist intersectional theorizing", sensitive to the shortcomings of second wave feminisms' one-dimensional analyses of women's oppression, recognizes difference and diversity and strives to illuminate the ways in which racism, sexism, and classism and other social inequalities are simultaneously interwoven systems of power and privilege (for example, see Andersen and Collins, 2004; Aulette, Wittner and Blakely, 2009; Collins, 1990; Coulter, 2009; CRIAW 2006; Dudley, 2006; Jhappan, 1996; Stasiulis, 1998; Siltanen and Doucet, 2008; Simpson, 2009; Sudbury, 1998; Sugiman, 2003; White, 2010).

I explore the relationship between feminist women's narratives and their lived experiences. As theoretical and analytical constructs, narratives capture the richness of social life and experiences (for example, see Elliot, 2005; Garro and Mattingly, 2000; Gubrium and Holstein 2009; Laslett, 1999; Maines, 1993; Passerini, 1989/1992; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Sugiman, 2003). They reveal "meaning" (Garro and Mattingly, 2000; Laslett, 1999). According to Aptheker (1993:89), stories are a way women impart meaning to their lives. She suggests everyday life impacts how women's stories unfold. Women's day to day lives not only shape how their stories are told, but their thoughts, and the importance women attach to different parts of their stories (1993:89). Narratives, then, are stories that "[give] meaning to experience" (Garro and Mattingly, 2000:1). "Personal narratives" are stories told "by or from the perspective of the narrator" (Laslett,

1999:392). These stories recount lives, experiences, and historical events across time and space (Laslett, 1999:392). They are constructed “intersubjectively...in dialogue with those around them” (Hunt, 2000:89).

As narrators reflecting on their lived experiences, the women in this study are actively engaged in the political project of “story telling” (Roy, 1998). According to Beth Roy (1998:98, 129), “story telling is a political act...[w]hat we choose to tell and to omit is often an act of consent to power relations or of resistance.” Women’s personal narratives can unmask the domination of women in relation to androcentric hegemony, offer alternative understandings of situations, and document women’s responses (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:6-7). Feminist researchers find that women’s personal narratives are useful because they “present and interpret women’s life experiences” and they “illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of system-level constraints within which those courses evolve” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:4-6). Thus, the concepts of “narrative” and “counter-narrative” expand our knowledge of women’s organizing and they enable us to better understand the varied meanings that women attribute to their social and political economic activities.

My qualitative research project adopts a feminist intersectional research agenda. Women, some of whom are privileged, others marginalized, are engaged as knowledgeable and active participants in the research process. I locate feminist women’s experiences at the centre of my analyses. I focus my study on the narratives and experiences of those “vulnerable” Ontarions who have been most directly “targeted”¹⁸ by

¹⁸ According to Janine Brodie (1995:73-74) “targeting” is a process characteristic of the dismantling of the

Harris' Common Sense Revolution including workers, women, the poor, First Nations, and ethno-cultural communities (Ralph, 1997:17).

Methodologically, I employed two primary data gathering methods. Throughout 2002, I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with thirty-three feminist leaders and activists (N=33) including, twenty-two women working in seventeen different feminist organizations in the GTA (including Toronto, Scarborough, Mississauga, Hamilton and Dundas, Ontario). Similar to those groups studied by Disney and Gelb (2000:43-45), a number of these organizations engage in "service provision, public education, advocacy", and are mandated to "empower" women and children. Some are single issue organizations, while others have more "multi-issue" platforms. The women I interviewed were active in unions, immigrant women's centres, native women's centres, rape crisis centres, and shelters for homeless and or abused women. They were positioned as executive directors, as staff members including counsellors and managers, rank-and-file union members, union executives and volunteers.

Like other research projects (see for example Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:107) not all types of feminist organizations are represented in this study. Nor are all organizations equally represented. Anti-violence and labour organizations are well represented, anti-racist organizations less so, for reasons that I will explain in more detail in my discussion of methodological issues. I also interviewed eleven grassroots feminist activists (N=11) who were involved in "women's community activism" (Naples, 1998) around a variety of issues, for example, social justice, homelessness, health care, and

welfare state. She argues "targeting" pathologizes and individualizes structural inequalities by subjecting some groups to greater state surveillance and control.

disability. Much like Nancy Naples' (1998:4) work, my attempt to move beyond an analysis of the experiences of white, middle class women to better reflect the interests and concerns of working class and racialized women, involved me conducting interviews with feminists of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds.

Granted it has been almost ten years since I first began to conduct my interviews, and this passage of time needs to be acknowledged. However, I am of the mind that my interviews and the women's stories contained therein retain a contemporary relevance insofar as they enabled me to capture a particular moment in time when women and feminists were speaking out (and at a time when I might add, that for some groups and or individuals it was certainly risky to do so) against some of the most pressing issues of the day including gender (in)equality, poverty, violence, sexism, racism and discrimination. Ten years on, many of the same issues remain. These are "long-standing dilemma[s]" (Sugiman, 1993), characteristic of enduring struggles. It could even be argued that these very issues are all the more salient and or widespread today, as many movement participants seem to find themselves resisting the same things over and over again, a sentiment reflected in the oft cited activist expression, "I cannot believe I still have to protest this shit!"¹⁹. In other words, the narrative themes explored in this interview data are ones that I think will likely continue to resonate with a variety of audiences for some time to come. In addition, this period of time has also afforded me ample opportunity to reflect upon the content of these women's stories, stories that in an applied and or

¹⁹ For a recent example related to the tenuousness of women's reproductive rights in the United States, see a piece by Mathew McKnight entitled "The Politics of Contraception" that appeared in the March 15th, 2012 New Yorker, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2012/03/contraception-abortion-women-health-rights.html>, accessed May 4, 2012.

pragmatic sense, not only allow us to pose questions for the present state of feminist organizations, but will likely continue to inform our understanding of feminist organizational resistance in the future, the long-term impact of said resistance and how we go about addressing the challenges that lie ahead. And so this passage of time has allowed me to produce a stronger piece of work.

These interviews have allowed me to draw on the reflections, experiences, and stories of both feminist activists and leaders. The open ended interview questions tapped into feminists' ideas and actions (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1995). Interviewees were contacted using a snowball sampling procedure. I began by identifying a few key feminist informants. Through these women and their networks, I recruited other possible research participants.

I also undertook preliminary analysis of organizational documents, for example, policy papers, pamphlets, and other types of promotional literature produced by the groups. This background reading and documentary analyses supplement the interview data. My analyses of these two sources of data enable me to compare the problems different organizations and activists experienced. I was able to characterize their strategic responses and to evaluate how successful certain tactics and techniques were in producing progressive (read: feminist) organizational outcomes. A major strength of this type of comparative research is that "it can show us the variety of forms feminist organizations can take, help us see how they differ from and resemble one another and non-feminist organizations, and help us identify their effects on both members and society" (Martin, 1990:202).

Chapter Overview

This overview summarizes the content and organization of the theoretical and empirical material that I will be present in the following chapters. In Chapter Two, *Review of the Literature: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview of Feminist Organizing* I outline the theoretical framework for this study. I begin by providing the reader with a “working definition” of the term “feminism” (Delmar, 1986). I briefly trace how contemporary feminist theories emerged within the context of emancipatory social movements, namely, women’s movements, initially termed “the women’s liberation movement” (Hamilton, 2005:44). I then review the central contributions of socialist, radical, and anti-racist feminist theory and discuss how these “feminisms” inform and guide my analyses. I explain how “feminist intersectional theorizing” (for example see, Chouinard, 2006; Collins, 1990; Cooper, 2009; Cosgrove, 2009; Dudley, 2006; Galupo, 2009; Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004; Jhappan, 1996; Klodawsky, 2006; Silius, 2010; Stasiulis, 1998; Sugiman, 2003; Ward, 2004; Weber 2004; Whitzman, 2006) as a feminist framework draws attention to the interrelations of gender inequality with other forms of social inequalities. I also discuss my use of “narrative”, specifically “women’s personal narratives” (Garro and Mattingly, 2000; Laslett, 1999; Maines, 1993; Passerini, 1989/1992; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Sugiman, 2003) as theoretical and analytical constructs that frame my investigation of feminist organizational theory and praxis in a politically neoliberal milieu. Conceptually, I draw on Patricia Yancey Martin’s (1990:183) analyses of “feminist organizations” and discuss the key criteria that she believes can be used to build comparative analyses of feminist organizing. Next, I

discuss how the establishment and pursuit of “feminist goals” and processes or “feminist practices” (Martin, 1990) have been defined and conceptualized in the literature. I then draw on the empirical literature that assesses the effectiveness of feminist organizing, that is, the viability of feminist strategies and the extent to which they are able to produce “feminist outcomes” (Martin, 1990).

Chapter Three, *Research Design and Methodology: A Feminist Case Study*, provides a more detailed account of the research methods and the sources of data gathered to help me (re)tell the stories of feminists’ organizing in a neoliberal climate. In this chapter, I consider the power and privilege that surround women’s personal narrative projects (Gluck and Patai, 1991:3). I attend to a number of issues identified by the Personal Narratives Group (1989) and by social historian Susan Geiger (1990). Context, voice, truth, “narrator-interpreter relations” (Geiger, 1990), and Maines’ (1993) concern about what we as sociologists “do to and with [our] and other people’s narratives” are discussed. My aim is to weave an analysis of these women’s personal narratives, that “retain[s] the integrity of the specific events, actors, and context while revealing the broader processes at work, which may not have been visible to the individual participants or even to the researcher, at the time they were engaged in the struggle” (Naples, 1998:6).

Chapters Four to Six represent the core of this dissertation. In these three data chapters, I present and analyse my research findings. I frame these comparative analyses around a number of feminist women’s personal narratives. My analysis of these narratives is organized around three major themes or storylines including: first, feminist struggle, second, feminist resistance, and third, “feminist organizational effectiveness”

(Disney and Gelb, 2000) or “feminist success”.

In Chapter Four, *Feminist Challenges: Stories of Struggle* I examine and compare the challenges feminists organizing around labour, race and violence against women issues experienced at the hands of the Harris government. Drawing on feminists’ reflections on the Harris years, I explore the legacy that his “brutal” and “mean spirited” governments’ backlash policies and practices have had on women’s organizing. I focus my analyses on a number of substantive and organizational issues that emerged from my reading and interpretation of the women’s stories. I discuss the numerous challenges that arose with respect to the devastating cuts to social assistance, housing, childcare, employment, and pay equity and the impact these cuts had on women in general, on women seeking resources and requiring services, and on women providing services; the struggle for financial survival and the peril of insecurity during an era of fiscal restraint and resource withdrawal; the sense of fear and intimidation that accompanied this funding crisis and the “silencing” impact this had on individual and organizational advocacy; the resulting tension between organizational service provision and political action (Spalter-Roth and Schrieber, 1995); or between social service versus social change (Disney and Gelb, 2000:68); and the ongoing challenges stemming from the (re)privatization of public and private life.

In Chapter Five, *Feminist Survival Stories: Strategies of Resistance* I describe the organizational activities and strategies feminists working in three contexts employed in an attempt to challenge Harris’ neoliberal project. In this chapter, I focus my analyses on women’s stories of resistance. The women’s narratives reveal that they employ an array

of “survival strategies” and follow several “survival paths” (Hyde, 1995:307-308).

Several strategic themes emerge in the women’s narratives. First and foremost these include the increased and or renewed importance of coalition building and engaging in coalition-based work (Bevacqua, 2008; Bunch 1987 cited in Arnold, 1995:276-277; Bays, 1998; Ferree and Hess, 1985; Gilmore, 2008; Gilmore, 2008a; La Valley, 1998; Morrow et als., 2004; Reinhelt, 1995); the push to diversify and restructure funding models (Disney and Gelb, 2000; Hyde, 1995:318); the use of “direct action” and “insider tactics to address outsider issues” (Ferree and Martin, 1995:8; Mathews, 1995; Spalter Roth and Schreiber, 1995; Tyyska, 1998); the importance of community activism and outreach (Hyde, 1995; Naples, 1998, Pardo, 1995); and the rationale and implications of “apparent accommodation” and “covert resistance” (Mathews, 1995:298). I explore these and other feminist strategies in detail in this chapter.

In Chapter Six, “*Small Victories*” and “*Partial Wins*”: “*Feminist Success Stories*” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999) I focus on women’s narratives that question and assess the effectiveness of these aforementioned “survival strategies” and the extent to which these can produce “progressive feminist outcomes and realize feminist goals” (Tyyska, 1998). Here again, three key themes emerge from the women’s stories. First, the women’s personal narratives offer various operational definitions or measures of organizational “success”. Second, the women’s narratives clearly demonstrate the importance of being effective strategists. However, there is some disagreement over what strategies feminists themselves consider to be the most effective in achieving their goals. In some instances, these differences vary by organizational sector or social location. This

finding suggests that women in certain sectors take into account the high levels of perceived risk associated with the use of particularly visible strategies. It also suggests women's "survival projects" vary along gender, race and class lines which in turn, shapes women's collective action (Brenner, 2000:295). And third, the women's narratives speak to feminist organizational effectiveness in the face of adversity. They show how turmoil can sometimes inspire (Mansbridge, 1995:33), as is evidenced in many women's interpretations of increased levels of public consciousness and politicization that developed during the Harris years.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter Seven, *Ongoing Struggles: The Future of Feminist Organizing in 'Unsympathetic Times'* I review the major findings and themes to come out of my research project. I address some of the strengths and limitations of my study and I suggest how future researchers might build on this work. It is my sincere hope that this work contributes to critical, feminist knowledge and sociological discourse on women's organizing for social change. By focussing on structural inequalities and women's personal narratives, I hope that I have encouraged sociologists to expand our study of personal narratives and to explore the relationship between struggle and resistance. I would like to believe that this research also reflects the practical importance of sharing "successful" change-oriented strategies in order to strengthen women's organizing in the future.

Summary

In short, listening, (re)telling, and interpreting these women's stories is important for several reasons. First, these narratives tell us about the material realities of women's

“contradictory” (Naples, 1998:343) relationship with the neoliberal Ontario state and the impact that these oppositional relations have on women’s lived experiences in their homes, families, workplaces and communities. Sociological analyses of women’s narratives draw attention “to the ways in which narrators are constrained by and at the same time contest their social environments” (Gluck and Patai, 1991:3). Second, the women’s narratives further illustrate that feminists’ strategic responses vary and that the development, implementation, and effectiveness of these strategies are contingent upon the social context and structures within which they are situated. They also reveal the fluidity of social movement organizations and activists’ abilities to respond to “difference”, “diversity”, and social change (Arneil, 1999; in conversation with Sugiman, 2003). Third, these women’s stories contest and critique “post-feminist analyses” including “reports of [feminisms’] demise” (Hamilton, 2005:40) and demonstrate the resiliency of women’s movements and social movement organizations during the late 1990's and early 2000's. Women’s agency and feminist resiliency in the face of adversity are evident (Harder, 2003:162). Fourth, women’s narratives may be conceived of as “dissenting voices” that, according to the Personal Narratives Group (1989:4-7), challenge and disrupt dominant ideologies and androcentric narratives. These women’s accounts may be conceptualized as “counter-narratives” (Geiger, 1990; Passerini, 1989; Personal Narratives Group, 1989) which can be a potentially rich source of “counter-hegemonic insight” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:7). Finally, despite the numerous constraints placed on their organizations and activism, these women’s narratives attest to feminist resistance in the GTA between 1995 and 2001. Their stories, to use Brodie’s

(1996:7) words, clearly show that “feminists have not stood passively by as the new [neoliberal] order emerged.”

Researching women’s activism is important. This is research “by, about and for women” (Gluck and Patai, 1991:2). I anticipate that this research will contribute to the growing body of scholarship on feminist organizing (for example, see Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988; Agnew, 1996; Backhouse and Flaherty 1992; Freeman, 1995; hooks 1984; 2000; Marx and Martin; 1995; Mueller, 1995; Naples, 1998; Rebick, 2005; Strobel, 1995; Tom, 1995; Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, 1993). This project “takes to heart feminist calls to contextualize race, gender, and class relations rather than privilege one dimension or produce an additive formulation” (Naples, 1998:2). Following Naples (1998:2-8), by “centering this intersectional [feminist] framework” and providing comparative analyses of feminist organizational praxis that are not based entirely on the experiences of straight, white, middle class women, this research highlights the ways gender, “race” and class intersect to shape feminist actions and agendas.

Moreover, in bringing together theory and practice, I strive to make feminist academic and activist work more visible. By chronicling feminist lessons of organizing against oppressions, this sociological analysis advocates and supports an activist stance and sheds light on the processes of politicization and the continuity of feminists’ struggles over time. It contributes to the study of feminisms and feminist organizing by articulating an academic and activist response to Harris’ neoliberal agenda that can be read, like feminist theory, as a “product, manifestation and tool of [women’s] resistance” (Hamilton, 2005:37). In many ways, this research project itself may also be understood

as a form of scholarly feminist “resistance” (Brown and Strega, 2005).

My research helps us better understand what happened during the Harris years. In doing so, it draws our attention to a number of longstanding themes and issues that will likely continue to resonate with a wide variety of audiences, including not only those interested in feminism, feminist struggle, and feminist resistance, but readers with more broadly based concerns related to the historical study of inclusive, progressive politics and social and political change. It also provides insight into how we might continue to approach the study of the ongoing struggle for women’s equality rights. Therefore the timeliness of this research and the search for feminist inspired analysis and solutions to enduring social inequalities needs to be underscored. In short, the women’s narrative accounts presented and analysed here not only raise sociological questions for the present, but for the future state of feminist organizations and activism as well.

It remains unclear for example whether feminists and feminist organizations have experienced any gains under the current provincial Liberal McGuinty government or if new tensions have arisen²⁰. Over time, as Gelb (1995:134) has noted, new and different challenges will probably emerge. She writes, “adapting to a [potentially] more receptive political opportunity structure and environment may result in new possibilities, but new problems are likely to arise in the ever changing dynamic of the political process” (1995:134). We need additional provincial and Canadian studies of feminist organizing in order to better understand how feminists deal with issues of difference, diversity, and inclusivity. We also need to consider the specific difficulties that feminists may

²⁰ Dalton McGuinty (c. 2003-2013), current leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, first elected Premier of Ontario in October 2003

encounter. Clearly, even the narration of strategies of resistance may be difficult in a neoliberal climate. Therefore further comparative historical research on women's organizing in neoliberal times is most welcome.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview of Feminist Organizing

In this chapter, I present the theoretical and analytical framework for my case study. I begin by providing the reader with a “working definition” of “feminism” (Delmar, 1986) and a brief overview of how feminist theory and practice is contextualized within the literature on women’s movements. This discussion is followed by an introduction to a growing body of feminist scholarship on “feminist intersectional theorizing”. Here my aim is to incorporate various strands of feminist theory and practice namely, socialist feminist theory, radical feminist theory, and anti-racist feminist theory to illustrate the power of employing a feminist intersectional framework in order to construct a narrative sociological analysis of feminist organizing in a neoliberal climate. I then illustrate how my research relates to our understanding of feminist resistance given the “transformation of governance” (Harder, 2003) that has occurred with the “hollowing out” (Brodie, 1994, 1995, 1996) of the welfare state and the imposition of a neoliberal “state form” (Brodie, 1996; Harder, 2003) during the Harris years (1995-2001).

“What is Feminism?”

Rosiland Delmar (1986) raises an important question when she asks “what is feminism?” Therefore in order to ground my analyses of feminist organizing during the Harris years, it is prudent to begin by articulating what she terms a “working definition” of “feminism”. “Feminism” as a social movement and as an ideology foregrounds gender inequity (DeVault, 1996:31). Still, “feminism” has been conceptualized in a variety of ways and feminists’ explanations and understandings of women’s oppression, as well as

the solutions put forward to eradicate these oppressions, have been the subject of much debate²¹. As Freeman (1995:406) notes, feminists have not only made a point of identifying differences among themselves, but how these differences set them apart from “non-feminists” as well. Therefore, feminist analyses are not “monolithic”. Our ideas of feminism “are both enriched and constrained” by the theories and practices that inform our actions and beliefs (Harding, 1993:14).

According to bell hooks (2000:1), “simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” For hooks, this “open-ended” definition of feminism embraces a politics that “aims to end domination”, and she therefore maintains “feminism is for everybody” (2000:1,118). Syliva Bashevkin’s (1998:7) analysis of feminist organizing in a conservative climate is based on an understanding of Canadian feminism as a political and theoretical movement that challenges notions of social order, social hierarchies, and decision making. And Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane (2005:1) conceive of feminism as “a political way of thinking, being and living in the world”. Further, they maintain that feminism as a political process is based on an

²¹ The debate over the “origins” or “root” (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993) cause of women’s oppression is evident in the different perspectives of mainstream feminism that emerged during the second wave of the women’s movement in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. This three-fold typology typically included liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism. According to Nelson and Robinson (2002:90-95) liberal feminists maintained that gender inequality stemmed from “inequality of opportunity”. Women’s lack of access to and participation in major societal institutions perpetuated gender inequality. Radical feminists argued that women’s subordination was rooted in patriarchy. Socialist feminists insisted that patriarchal and capitalist relations exploited women’s “labour power” and resulted in inequality. Moreover, Nelson and Robinson (2002) argue feminists also debated the “course and strategy for change”. Liberal feminists advocated working for change within existing social structures, while radical and socialist feminists called for a complete rebuilding of major social systems (Nelson and Robinson, 2003:90-95). For an overview of feminist perspectives see discussions by Nelson and Robinson, 2002; Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993; Tuana and Tong, 1995.

awareness of the connections between women's everyday experiences and larger social structures (2005:1-2).

For the purposes of this study, like many other researchers (i.e. Bashevkin, 1998; Code, 1993; Hamilton, 2005; Maroney and Luxton, 1987/1996), I conceptualize feminism as a practical and a theoretical project. In this way, we can understand how theory is both shaped by and informs practice (Code, 1993:19), and how feminist theory emerges from women's thoughts and actions (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1995:373). Feminism recognizes women's oppression as a result of multiple and intersecting social inequalities that when simultaneously experienced, operate to situate women in disadvantaged social positions. I also agree with many scholars (for example, see Devault 1996; Hamilton 2005; Martin 1990) who argue, that feminism is "transformational". Feminism embraces the importance of social change in order to transform individuals and society (Martin, 1990). Further, I would agree with Devault (1996:31) that "there are many feminisms, with different emphases and aims". In fact, we now often speak of "feminisms" (Delmar, 1986), "multiple 'feminismS'" (Gluck et als. 1998) and as bell hooks (1984) and others have written of feminist movement(s) in the "plural" (see also Gluck et als., 1998:31), as opposed to "the" feminist or "the" women's movement. Gluck et als. (1998:31) maintain that this shift in thinking reflects a deeper analysis of women's community based organizing. Perhaps then, feminism is best conceived as an ever "changing and contested discourse" (Mansbridge 1995 cited by Devault, 1996:31), a discourse embodied in political practices that embark on a "collective project of critique and transformation" (DeVault, 1996:30).

Conceptualizing feminism(s) as a discursive theoretical and practical project enables us to investigate how at particular points in time, some discourses “prevail over others” and how “dominant discourses” are influential in shaping our political realities (Brodie, 1995:27-28). According to Janine Brodie (1995:28), these “prevailing discourses” facilitate our understanding of social relations and institutions. They also inform our construction of social problems, proposed solutions, and acceptable “spheres of political negotiation” (Brodie, 1995:28). Feminism also directs our attention to and challenges dominant neoliberal discourses that “attempt to make politically contestable positions appear to be non-political and uncontestable [or] part of the natural order of things” (Brodie, 1995:27).

In this project, feminism helps us interpret the state of gender relations and the emergence of a new “gender order” (Bakker, 1996; Cossman and Fudge, 2002:27) during the Harris years. Feminism helps us to understand how relations between the private and public are (re)drawn across time and space (Boyd 1997; Thornton, 1995 as cited by Fudge and Cossman, 2002:18), and how race, class and gender frame the contours and fluidity of those boundaries (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:18). Following Brodie’s argument (1995:28) then, feminism also helps us understand how Harris’ discourses of privatization individualized “social problems” and recast them as personal or familial shortcomings (Fudge and Cossman, 2002; Harder, 2003), advocated individual “solutions” to systemic issues (Morrow et. al; 2004), and attempted to “evacuate politics from the realm of the state” (Harder, 2003) by relegating the interests of women and

children from the public “sphere” of economics and politics to the private “sphere” of home and family.

Feminism and Women’s Movements

My exploration of feminist organizing is also loosely situated within the sociological literature on social movements, namely women’s movements. In the 1960’s a wave of so called “new social movements” including the civil rights, student, peace, and environmental movements took shape in many industrialized societies (Hamilton, 2005:43). These movements organized around economic and social justice issues (Hamilton, 2005:43) or what Canel (1992:22-23) among others refer to as the “control over the production of meaning and the constitution of new collective identities” that extended beyond class based struggles. These “new social movements” challenged two interrelated myths “that everyone was getting better off, and that getting better off was all anybody wanted” (Hamilton, 2005:43).

Roberta Hamilton (2005:44) maintains that by the end of the 1960’s there was an “active” women’s movement in Canada. Initially termed the “women’s liberation movement”, Hamilton (2005:44-46) argues that the Canadian women’s movement has never been embodied in a “single organization”, nor has it been organized in a “traditional” manner. She identifies four issues that have contributed to the movement’s history. First, she notes an early divide between liberal and radical feminists (Black, 1993 as cited by Hamilton, 2005:46). Second, she notes separate movements for women’s equality rights arose among anglophones and francophones (2005:46). An “influential” branch of the women’s movement in Quebec tied their feminist to nationalist

concerns, and sovereignty issues. This she says, created tension between English Canadian feminists and the Québécoise, particularly in terms of how feminists viewed and approached the Canadian state (2005:67). Citing the work of francophone feminists such as De Seve (1992) and Dumont (1992), Hamilton (2005:67) notes that English feminists demanded that the state act to change laws and effect public policy, while Quebecois feminists rejected the legitimacy of the federalist state and fought to empower the provincial government. Seeking an independent Quebec, they also argued anglophones were “privileged by their dominant national status” (2005:67). Third, Hamilton maintains that during the 1970’s tensions also arose along the lines of sexual orientation (2005:46). According to Hamilton, lesbians involved in the movement sought increased recognition of their participation and a greater awareness of their lived experiences. Some straight feminists resisted, arguing that the acknowledgement of lesbians’ concerns might stigmatize the movement and hamper its success. Homophobia generated internal movement discord (Vancouver Women’s Caucus, 1972 and Weir, 1987 as cited by Hamilton, 2005:46). Lastly, Hamilton notes women of colour, First Nations, and immigrant women formed ethno-specific organizations and sought state support to meet the varied needs of their members. These women’s organizations publicly challenged the racism and universalism embedded in the mainstream movement’s rhetoric of “sisterhood” (Srivastava 1996; Adamson, Briskin and McPhail, 1988; Agnew, 1996; Brand, 1984, 42; Chunn, 1995; Das Gupta, 1999; Robertson, 1995; Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, 1993:305-319 as cited by Hamilton, 2005:46).

Research on women's movements has also been guided by social movement theory (Banaszak 1999; Beckwith 2000; Gelb and Hart 1999; Phillips 1991; Staggenborg 1989, 1998). However, given its historical focus on the mobilization of members, resources and the so called "unglamorous nuts and bolts" (Zald and McCarthy, 1987) of male dominated organizations and activities, I would argue that the scholarship on social movements is for the most part, not a feminist literature (in conversation with Sugiman, 2005). According to Ferree and Roth (1998), critics of social movement theory note how both the American civil rights movement with its emphasis on race, and organized labour's emphasis on class, have largely been characterized as movements of African American and white men (Barnett 1993; Robnett 1996; and Roediger 1991 as cited by Ferree and Roth, 1998:627). Women's contributions to these movements have been marginalized (Ferree and Roth, 1998) and "women's work" has often been rendered "invisible" or "perfunctory" (Hamilton, 2005:51). Hamilton (2005:44) suggests women's reflections as activists within these "male-dominated social movements" have exposed the "gap" between the liberating rhetoric of the new social movements and women's material realities. Further, the bulk of this literature tends to ignore women's experiences in small scale, grassroots organizations (Ferree and Martin, 1995:9). Studies of the women's movement in the United States have focused primarily on the activities of white women involved in mainstream organizations such as the National Organization for Women or NOW (Buechler 1990 as cited by Ferree and Roth, 1998:627). In mainstream feminist accounts, the actions and experiences of working class women and women of colour have appeared as "little more than footnotes" (Gluck et als. 1998:35), the "women

usually left out of our historical record” (Naples, 1998:2). In contrast, I situate my current study within a growing body of sociological literature on feminist organizing that is informed by feminist theory and practice (for example, see Acker 1995; Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988; Agnew 1996; Backhouse and Flaherty 1992; Burt 1990, 1995; Dauphinais, Barkin and Cohen 1992; Disney and Gelb 2000; Ferree and Martin 1995; Freeman 1995; Gelb and Hart 1999; Gelb 1989; Grahame, 1998; hooks 1984; 2000; Hamilton, 2005; Mueller 1995; Naples 1998; Runyan and Wenning 2004; Staggenborg 1989, 1995; Steinstra 1994; Strobel 1995; Tom 1995; Vickers, Rankin and Appelle 1993). This body of feminist literature illustrates the importance of a developing a gendered analysis or a more “gender sensitive” (Brodie, 1995, 1996) approach to research on women’s organizing. A widely cited contribution in this area has been Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin’s (1995) *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement*. Writing about their edited collection, Ferree and Martin (1995:15) note that most of the research is centred on white middle class women’s involvement in feminist organizations in the United States in the 1980’s. Emphasizing these women’s efforts is not perceived as a major limitation on their part because they maintain women’s organizational experiences have been so understudied. They write:

We think it crucial for the book to include non-U.S., non-White, and non-1980’s organizations, because these studies draw attention to feminism of different types and forms and prevent an overly parochial definition of feminism. Yet we do not see it as a shortcoming that this volume focuses on the efforts and situations of predominantly White women in the United States in the 1980s who were struggling to practice feminism in organizational contexts, because their experiences are still seriously under-researched (1995:15).

Over fifteen years later, I am uncomfortable with their disclaimer. I think it would be a mistake to suggest that this oversight stems solely from a paucity of empirical research in this area. While mainstream social movement scholars may have neglected women's organizational pursuits, a number of feminist institutes and or researchers have undertaken socio-historical and community based studies both in and outside the realm of feminist studies that have explored the connections between class and gender (see for example Bezanson, 2006; Christie, 2000; CRIAW 2005; Ferree and Roth 1998; Fonow 1998; Haywoode 1997; Leach and Yates, 2008; Maclean 1999; O'Brien, 2008; Seitz 1998; Srigley, 2009; Stephen, 2007; Tom 1995; Krauss 1998). There are also a few studies that highlight the connections between race, ethnicity, and gender (see for example Barnett 1995; Bays 1998; Cosgrove, 2010; CRIAW, 2002; Gordon, 2005; Grahame 1998; hooks 2000; Howe 1998; Ostrander 1999; Pardo 1995, 1998; Robnett, 1997; Strobel 1995; Transken 1997). Their rationale also gives the impression that a lack of research on women's organizational efforts excuses them from moving beyond what Agnew (1996:4) refers to as "acknowledging the biases" in their own work, and that these omissions can be explained away by their decision to focus primarily on the experiences of white women. This line of thinking reproduces mainstream feminist historiographies that contribute to the historical erasure of feminist organizing on the part of women of colour (Dua, 1999:8-9).

To avoid producing a similar limited, historical account, I have embarked on a feminist research project that attempts to consider how gender, race, and class simultaneously affect women's organizing for change. If we consider how feminist

organizations are impacted on a daily basis by the structural forces of sexism, racism and classism, then different understandings of women's activism and feminist resistance will become clear. My study of feminist organizing in the GTA during the Harris years is informed by a feminist intersectional framework. As a feminist framework, "feminist intersectional theorizing" attempts to integrate various elements of feminist theory: socialist feminist theory's focus on class relations, radical feminist theory's focus on patriarchal relations, and anti-racist feminist theory's focus on race relations and racism. I have framed my study in such a way that I hope to develop an analysis that is respectful and sensitive to the intersections of race, gender, and class and the implications of these interconnections for women's organizing for social change. But what is the logic behind my adopting this conceptual framework? What can be learned by framing my analyses in this way?

Feminism as a Theoretical Project: Feminist Intersectional Theorizing

Feminist theories have developed within the context of emancipatory women's movements, that is, they have been borne of practice (Hamilton, 2005:37-38). Feminist theories have also developed in response to the perceived limitations of mainstream or what some observers have termed "malestream" (O'Brien, 1981 cited in Nelson and Robinson, 2002:86, Siltanen and Doucet, 2008) sociological theories, theoretical frameworks that historically tended to ignore the gendered dimensions of social life. Women's experiences were often left either untheorized or under theorized which led some feminist scholars to suggest that much sociological thought rendered women "invisible" (Nelson and Robinson, 2002:86). For instance, Ferree and Martin (1995) note

that many social movement and organizational scholars have tended to ignore feminist organizing in small group settings. Instead they have focused on large scale male dominated corporations, bureaucracies, or unions (Acker, 1990 as cited by Ferree and Martin, 1995:9). These theorists they argue, were “unlikely to perceive small, grassroots, social movement organizations founded by feminists as interesting or important” (1995:9).

Jane Flax (1993:81-82) in “Women Do Theory” maintains that women and men do not experience the world in the same way(s), women and men may experience similar social situations differently. A primary task of feminist theory as she sees it is to explain these differences in order to understand how women’s oppression is intricately related to the organizational structure of the social world (1993:82). Feminist theory she argues, attempts to explain how and why these sets of structured relations emerge and persist. To do so, feminist theory advocates understanding the power differences that characterize gender relations as well as an understanding of, and how to overcome, oppression (1993:82). Moreover, Flax (1993:82) states that the challenge for feminist theory is to understand “oppressive power structures” and to change these relations through direct political action thereby making the connection between theory and praxis explicit. She writes, “within feminist theory there is a commitment to change oppressive structures and to connect abstract ideas with concrete problems for political action, it is senseless to study the situation of women without a concomitant commitment to do something about it” (Flax, 1993:82). Thus the task for feminists as Flax (1993:82) sees it is to draw out the

theoretical implications of women's lived experiences in order to facilitate the theory building process.

Contemporary feminist theory has a number of starting points, each with a slightly different understanding of the origins of women's oppression and the proposed solutions to eradicate inequality. Two important theoretical developments that emerged during the second wave²² of the women's movement in the late 1960's and 1970's were a highly academic strain of socialist feminist theory (for example, see Armstrong 1998, 1997; Brodie 2005, 1994, Eisenstein 1977; Evans and Wekerle; Fox 1980, 1989; Jaggar 1995; Hartmann 1981; Maroney and Luxton 1996; O'Brien 1981) and radical feminist theory (for example, see Bunch 1975/1993; Daly 1978; Firestone 1970; Frye 1983; Millet 1969; MacKinnon 1987, 1993, 1995; Rich 1979/1986). These so called "hyphenated feminisms" (Freeman, 1995) challenged the gendered character of public/private relations and women and men's places in these social spaces (Arneil, 1999:163-164). These second wave frameworks shared a commitment to reconceptualizing the relationship between sex and gender and to illustrating the gendered nature of power relations (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005:2). Social change was a fundamental aspect of these two theoretical approaches (2005:2), although the kind and extent of changes advocated by second wave feminists, for example revolution also varied with respect to

²² The use of the "wave" metaphor in feminist theory and activism has been well documented. Many scholars use the term to denote the "peaks and valleys" or what Mitchell and Karaian (2005:59) term the "ebbs and flows" of feminist movements across time and space. Mitchell and Karaian in their article entitled "Third-Wave Feminisms" (2005) note that some scholars, in particular young women or members of the so called "third wave" have problematized its usage. They argue this conceptualization oversimplifies feminist theory and practice and has contributed to the erasure of women of colour's scholarship, activism, and experience by downplaying more complex and nuanced histories (2005:59). That being said, they also suggest that many third wavers are also quick to acknowledge the concept's contemporary relevance, namely the fluidity characteristic of this new generation (Mitchell and Karaian, 2005:59).

their ideological and organizational commitments. Socialist feminists challenge classical Marxist notions of production. As Eisenstein (1977) notes, even though Frederick Engels in *Origins* (1972:71), recognized the “twofold” character of production relations - “the production and reproduction of immediate life...the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools necessary for that production [and] the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species” (as cited in Eisenstein, 1977:7), traditional Marxist analyses tend to subsume the relations of reproduction to the relations of production (Eisenstein, 1977:7). Moreover socialist feminists (Eisenstein 1977; Hartmann 1981; Fox 1989; Maroney and Luxton 1996; Armstrong 1998) have critiqued Marxist historical materialism as a “gender blind analysis” (Fox, 1989:149). Marxists tend to locate women’s oppression in the capitalist mode of production. Since women’s oppression is believed to be rooted in “capital/labour relations” (Maroney and Luxton, 1996:90), Marxists maintain it can be eliminated through class based struggle. However, these “sex-blind models” fail to acknowledge the important ways gender shapes women’s lives (Fox, 1989:125). For example, the pivotal role women play in the processes of social reproduction has been overlooked by classical Marxists. Socialist feminists have argued that “social reproduction [is] a form of production” (Dua, 1999:239) and as Maroney and Luxton aptly note “when the mode of production is understood [dialectically] to include relations of reproduction as well as production, then the conceptualization of class must change. Household and gender relations must be taken into account” (Maroney and Luxton, 1996:90).

According to Fox and Luxton (2001:26-30), the exploitation and privatization of women's role in the processes of social reproduction under capitalism serves to reproduce gender inequalities because it "physically separate[s]" and 'socially differentiate[s]' men and women's work. Unpaid domestic labour traditionally performed by women in the private sphere of the home, came to be defined as a "familial responsibility" which contributed to the invisibility of women's work (Fox and Luxton, 2001:29). They argue that the privatization of social reproduction furthered traditional gendered divisions of labour (2001:29). Often work performed by women in the home is not considered "real work" because it is performed outside of the capitalist marketplace. Because it is not compensated as waged labour, it is not considered "real work", and it is devalued. And yet as Fox and Luxton suggest (2001:29), it remains an "essential" part of the capitalist economy. Moreover, other feminist scholars have also argued the "naturalness" of this work as "women's work" is rationalized within the capitalist system. Women's undertaking of household labour is characterized as a "natural" result of their "labour of love" (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005:16; Luxton, 1983).

Therefore socialist feminists argue the capitalist system is a gendered one: gender and class based oppression intersect and must be confronted simultaneously. Focussing on issues related to women's "labour power" (Hartmann, 1981), they have made repeated calls for a complete overhaul of the gender division of labour and advocate for changes such as the "collectivization" of both productive and reproductive labour. Housework for example, could be "socialized" (Benston 1969; Deckard, 1979:448; Hartmann, 1981) which would entail a redistribution of domestic labour accompanied by a redefinition of

gender roles in order to help ease the burden of women's "double day" (Luxton, 1980). In addition, socialist feminist critiques of the traditional nuclear family propose that childcare be restructured to involve both women and men as the "equal nurturers" of children (Ferguson 1980 as cited by Jaggar, 1995:319). "Child care [could also] be socially performed" (Deckard, 1979:449) provided we were to invest in a public, affordable, quality run national day care scheme. And in the "public sphere", socialist feminists have long demanded equal access to employment opportunities and have a lobbied hard for income security, employment equity and equal pay for work of equal value, as well as maternity and paternity benefits (Morris 2002 as cited by Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005:16).

While socialist feminists maintain that women's oppression can be altered by the transformation of the political economy, radical feminists (Daly 1978; Firestone 1970/1979; Frye 1983; Millet 1969; MacKinnon 1987/1995; Rich 1979/1986) are more apt to stress the role patriarchy, namely, men's domination and subordination of women (Nelson and Robinson, 2002:92) plays in structuring social relations. They contend that all societies, historical and contemporary, are patriarchal (Deckard, 1979:451). More specifically, radical feminists emphasize how patriarchy or male supremacy operates as the "root" (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993) form of societal power relations. They argue for example "the personal is political" (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993). Social constructions of femininity embedded in institutions of compulsory heterosexuality and male sexual violence against women must be eradicated (Tuana and Tong, 1995:131-132). In fact, an important tenet of radical feminism is "that the systematic oppression of

women will require not only legal, political and economic changes; it will also require a radical reconstruction of sexuality” (Tuana and Tong, 1995:132).

Radical feminists argue that personal problems are inherently political struggles but that male dominated power structures tend to relegate these “so called” concerns to the personal sphere where women’s efforts to change them are delegitimized and trivialized (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993:121). Moreover, “private” or “personal” problems related to reproduction, contraception, reproductive technology, and violence against women need to be redefined as public issues and as feminist issues (1993:121-122). By organizing around issues such as access to abortion, safe child birth measures and birth control, radical feminists sought to challenge male control of women’s reproductive lives and male definitions of female sexuality (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005; Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993; Nelson and Robinson, 2002).

Patriarchy oppresses women. Capitalism profits from sexism and exploits women (Eisenstein,1977). According to Eisenstein (1977), these are interdependent systems of oppression. Socialist feminist theory is insightful because it characterizes class relations as gendered and draws attention to gender inequality embedded in the capitalist system, whereas radical feminist theory argues gender relations are rooted in patriarchal relations. But the extent to which these second wave feminist analyses reflect the lived experiences of *all* women, including for example women of colour, immigrant women, lesbians and disabled women has rightfully so been called into question (Code,1993). In fact the major criticism of much of second wave feminist theory is its “gender essentialism” (Jhappan, 1996; Spelman, 1987). It primarily addressed the needs and interests of able-

bodied, white, middle class, heterosexual women. Because much of second wave theory assumed the “universality” (Spelman, 1988) of women’s experiences, other unequal social relations were either ignored and or marginalized. Racial inequalities among and between women were for the most part unrealized, as well as the processes and patterns of racialization in “post-colonial” societies (Calliste and Dei, 2000:14).

Another strain in feminist theory, is anti-racist feminism which identifies “race” as an important analytical category and acknowledges the pivotal role racism plays in shaping women’s lives (for example, see Agnew 1996; Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996; Bannerji 1987; Calliste and Dei 2000; Dua 2005; Dua 1999; Dua and Robertson 1999; hooks 1984, 2000). Anti-racist feminist theorists abandon second wave notions of “unitary theories of gender”, rather they maintain we need to “rethink the category of women” by “situating women and men in multiple systems of domination” (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, 1996:321-323). A strength of this perspective is that it locates the experiences of racialized women across a variety of social spaces at the centre of its inquiry (Calliste and Dei, 2000:16). This perspective also examines how gender and race intersect and are simultaneously experienced, structured social inequalities (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, 1996). In addition, anti-racist scholars often stress the “*prioritization of race and racism* despite the general insistence upon the simultaneity of social relations based upon race, gender, and class” (Stasiulis, 1998:356). Dua (1999:24-26) emphasizes how the processes and discourses of “racialization”²³ shape the lived experiences of

²³ According to Fleras and Elliot (2003) racialization involves understanding: (1) how intergroup relations come to be defined on the basis of perceived racial differences entrenched in social processes such as colonialism, capitalism, and immigration (2003:42-44); and (2) how some behaviours or activities become associated with race i.e. the racialization of sport, specifically African American involvement in sports

women of colour in social institutions like the economy, law, families, and how racialized social policies and practices reproduce racism. Thus, anti-racist feminists have suggested feminists must address “the multifaceted process through which racialization has taken place” (Dua, 1999:16).

According to Enakshi Dua (2005:60-61/1999:8-9), the central tenet of anti-racist feminist thought is that discourses of race need to be systematically integrated within feminist paradigms. She argues earlier work exploring the connections between race and gender (often written by women of colour) has either been undocumented and or marginalized in most feminist historiographies (2005:61/1999:5-6). Dua (2005:61/1999:8-9) notes that these historical omissions have contributed to the perceived absence or invisibility of feminist theorizing on the part of women of colour and this perpetuates racism²⁴. At present, much anti-racist theorizing continues to come out of the writings of “women of colour”²⁵ though Dua notes while some theorists working within

(2003:45-48). In this way, they maintain social inequalities or “race-based disadvantages” are said to be “racialized” because they “adversely affect those who are most visible” (2003:386-387).

In his presidential address “Contradictions of racial discourse”, to the CSAA in London, Ontario on June 2, 2005, Peter Li indicated that the process of racialization entails the arbitrary assignment of characteristics to racial groups on the basis of different genotypic or phenotypic categories and how these perceived differences become naturalized and essentialized through (en)coded racial discourses. Through this process, he argues apparently neutral terms take on racialized connotations. Li notes terms such as “diversity”, “visible minority”, and “third world” that operate at the level of discourse, enable “Canadians” to talk subtly about race and to evaluate immigrant people by skin colour. For example, Li (2005) discussed the racialized coverage by the Vancouver Sun of the “monster home” debate in Vancouver in the 1980’s. Neighborhood residents were outraged by the building of large, “garish” homes by Hong Kong immigrants in their once graceful neighborhoods. When, as in this instance, racial differences are perceived to threaten a romanticized Canadian way of life, Li argues the racialization of such issues are condoned and socially accepted. He believes these discourses naturalize existing race relations and justify meanings of race in that they reflect and influence social relations. Thus Li concludes the significance of race persists in liberal democratic societies such as Canada.

²⁴ Dua (2005) notes that this idea is echoed in Himani Bannerji’s (1987/2005) well documented “Introducing Racism: Notes Towards and Anti-Racist Feminism” which speaks to the “erasure” of women of colour from much mainstream Canadian feminism.

²⁵ Following Dua (2005), for the purpose of this discussion I use the term “women of colour” to “refer to

this framework tend to emphasize the scholarship of “Black feminists”, others begin by centering the concrete experiences of women of colour and or locate their anti-racism within an analysis of a “multiplicity of experiences” (Stasiulis 1990; Khayatt 1995 as cited by Dua, 2005:61/1999:9). In short, anti-racist feminist theorizing has a rich history and is largely defined by discourses that theorize the interconnections between gender and race and the critical examination of how gendered and racialized subjects “negotiate their identities and politics across [many] historical spaces (Calliste and Dei, 2000:11).

Dua (2005:65-66/1999:16, 22-27) also considers how anti-racist feminists’ discourses of race impact women of colour and (re)create racial differences among women. She suggests some writers such as Phillip (1992) have argued that racial differences are (re)produced through cultural constructions of whiteness and racialized notions of femininity (2005:65/1999:22). She notes other researchers (see for example, Brand 1988; Hoodfa 1993; Bannerji 1995; Li 1998) have looked to the way employment practices and government policies reinforce racialized workers and migrant categories. In short, the anti-racist feminist literature illustrates how discourses of race are implicated in the societal (re)positioning of Canadian women of colour. Still those scholars working within anti-racist feminist frameworks are cognizant of the fragmentation that exists within this field of theory and research (Bain, 1999; Dua, 2005:66-67;1999:24). Because scholars have tended to concentrate on a specific structures such as the economy, nation, and or the state, she says this approach often lacks a synthesized analyses of the processes by which racialization manifests itself in Canada (Dua, 1999:24).

indigenous, mixed race, African Canadians, Asian-Canadians, Arab-Canadians, and Central and South American-Canadians” (2005:67).

What anti-racist feminists among others (Andersen and Collins 2004; Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996; Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004; Collins 1990; Lugones and Spelman 1995; Stasiulis 1990, 1998; Spelman 1988; Weber 2004) have made increasingly clear, is that feminist theories need to integrate an analysis of the intersections of race, gender, and class. Feminists have come to recognize and acknowledge the numerous problems associated with attempts to articulate “women’s experience” (Tuana and Tong, 1995:4). We now know we must take more “multidimensional sets of relations into account” (Stasiulis, 1998:379). However, mainstream theoretical paradigms or discourses that have consistently conceptualized women’s movements through various “lens” (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993) or “branches” are still upheld by many as an useful “pedagogical tool” (Gluck et al. 1998:31). Gluck et al. (1998:31-32) argue this model is perceived to be a more “manageable” tool compared to the complexity of analysing feminist theory and practice along the lines of numerous social inequalities. Therefore, as a “hegemonic model”, or a “master narrative”, it is one that is consistently “reproduced” (Gluck et al. 1998:31-34).

I would argue that the reproduction of these mainstream models is problematic. First, it knowingly perpetuates the inadequacies of one dimensional theoretical perspectives. It is unlikely that a single theory can ever hope to capture the magnitude of, or explain a particular social phenomena. Moreover, no one theory or perspective can stand alone (Nelson and Robinson, 2002:89). Second, presenting feminist perspectives as different “branches” (Gluck et al., 1998), perpetuates the idea that these frameworks are somehow mutually exclusive and therefore separate or disconnected not only from each

other, but from larger bodies of social thought. For instance, the mainstream paradigm distances socialist and anti-racist feminist approaches from the long standing conflict tradition in sociology. Conflict based models that focus on inequality and power continue to inform the study of unequal relations along the lines of gender, race, and class. The mainstream feminist paradigm obscures these historical sociological contributions.

Third, by locating the root cause of women's oppression in a particular system or social institution, not only are many of these theories based on "class-blind" analyses, but also "race-blind" (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993:114-115). This has led to disputes surrounding the question of "primacy" (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993:115) or prioritizing debates as to whether gender or race or class is the most pressing concern for feminists and the "hierarchical" (Spelman, 1988) ranking of oppressions. Mainstream feminist theory has historically focused on the needs and concerns of white, middle class women. What anti-racist feminist scholars have made clear is that the term "women" has generally been synonymous with "white women" (see for example, Spelman, 1988). Much like "diversity", as Peter Li (2005)²⁶ explains, functions as a "code word" necessary for the construction of racialized or non-white Canadians; in mainstream feminism, the category "woman" has typically been defined as "white". And according to feminist philosopher Elizabeth Spelman (1988:13) "the phrase 'as a woman' is the Trojan horse of feminist ethnocentrism" and that "the problem of difference" in feminist theory is largely "a reflection of the problem of privilege" (Spelman, 1988:182).

²⁶ Presidential Address, CSAA meetings, Western University, London, Ontario, May 31st to June 3rd, 2005.

Fourth and relatedly, over time, according to Jaggar and Rothenberg (1993:115), feminists' debates have become more complex and sophisticated. Reconceptualizing gender, race, and class in more nuanced ways has shifted the level of discourse beyond the "primacy" debates characteristic of second wave discussions. Oppositional analyses have given way to different sets of interrelated questions (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993:115). Fifth, as Delmar (1986:9) has observed, the paradoxical desire to "pin feminism down" by categorizing organized feminism under the litany of liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism has contributed to what she terms the "sclerosis of the movement". This reflects what she sees as movements' ongoing struggle to appeal to all women and its history of exclusion (Delmar, 1986).

I am not denying that socialist, radical, and anti-racist feminist frameworks continue to provide critical insight for feminist projects, but I would argue that we need to think more "relationally" (Andersen and Collins, 2004). "Thinking relationally" entails moving beyond "thinking comparatively" about gender and race oppression, and towards building an analysis of interconnected power relations that impact people's varied experiences (Andersen and Collins, 2004:6). Thus as Marilyn Frye (1983/2004:50-51) reminds us, we must be wary in constructing and investing in theoretical frameworks that isolate or myopically focus on certain forms of oppression, and that neglect to take into account entire structures. We must as Thornton Dill (1983:148) reminds us, "fight the segmentation of oppression into categories".

In their book, Unequal Sisters social historians Ellen Dubois and Vicki Ruiz (1990) insist:

Growing demands for the recognition of ‘difference’ - the diversity of women’s experiences - can no longer be satisfied by token excursions into the histories of minority women, lesbians and the working class. The journey into women’s history itself has to be remapped. From many quarters comes the call for a more complex approach to women’s experiences, one that explores not only the conflicts between women and men but also the conflicts among women; not only the bonds among women but the bonds between women and men. Only such a multifaceted perspective will be sufficient to illuminate the interconnections among various systems of power that shape women’s lives.

At the heart of early *feminist intersectional theorizing* is this notion of “difference” articulated by Dubois and Ruiz (1990). Feminist intersectional theorizing highlights the exploration of difference, not only the gender differences between women and men, but the differences among women too; differences often overlooked by second wave feminist theory and practice (Arneil, 1999:193). Feminist intersectional theorizing addresses the various forms of women’s difference including gender, race and class (Fox 1989; Brodie 1994; Stienstra 1994; Maroney and Luxton 1997; Daenzer 1997). Stasiulis (1998:350) suggests this tripartite framework while “insightful”, is still “limited” in its “naming of relevant analytical concepts.” She advocates another trend in feminist intersectional theorizing which has been to “move beyond” this “holy trinity” to illuminate the “simultaneous impact” of oppression on women’s lives (1998:350). She among others notes for example, the importance of incorporating an understanding of how ethnicity, colonialism, language and disability impact feminist theoretical projects (Stasiulis, 1998:350; see also Mohanty et als. 1991; West 1992; Gonzalez 1993; Yuval Davis 1994; Andrew 1995; Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill 1996; Weedon 1997; Stasiulis 1998; Heitlinger et als. 1999).

Feminist intersectional theorizing does not see these differences as “discrete categories”, rather as Stasiulis (1998:354-355) argues, the interaction of race, gender and class “produces a distinct result not captured by analysing race, gender and class separately” however, “what this ‘distinct result’ looks like continues to be a challenge for intersectional theorizing”. In other words, she says feminist intersectional theorizing recognizes the simultaneity and interconnectedness of social relations and the “interdependence” of women’s oppressions. For example, it challenges the centrality of class and class relations in traditional Marxist analyses and critiques the myopic focus on gender at the expense of race in much Euro-American and Euro-Canadian feminist scholarship. It problematizes reductive, one dimensional analyses that ignore the intersection of multiple oppressions simultaneously experienced. Stasiulis (1998:347) summarizes it best when she states intersectional theorizing realizes “the social reality of women and men, and the dynamics of their social, cultural, economic, and political contexts to be *multiply, simultaneously, and interactively* determined by various significant *axes of social organization*” (italics in the original). Theoretically the “shift from ‘gender difference’ to ‘differences among women’ to ‘multiple intersecting differences’ is an unsurpassable gain” (Fraser 1996:207 as cited by Marshall, 2000:97).

This is not by any means to suggest that all feminist scholars have embraced discourses of “difference” and “diversity”. The usefulness of “difference” for feminist theory and praxis has been the source of much debate and “fragmentation”²⁷. According to Calliste and Dei (1999:12) “critical anti-racist feminist discourse examines ways

²⁷ See Karian and Mitchell’s (2010:65) discussion where they argue that this “fragmentation” can be viewed on the part of third-wave feminists as a major strength.

‘difference’ both fractures and enhances the understanding of community for anti-racist practice.” Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill (1996) and Andersen and Collins (2004:4-7) also provide a critical overview of this theorization. Andersen and Collins argue that difference as an analytical construct perpetuates “comparative thinking” (2004:4). By “thinking comparatively”, they mean that as we learn about other people’s lives, we tend to engage in “compare and contrast based analyses”. These analyses Andersen and Collins suggest, typically involve considering how one’s individual or subjective experience(s) differs from members of other social groups. This process reflects our struggle to understand shared and different life experiences. They argue this is a crucial but inadequate step because it constructs an “artificial norm against which other groups are judged” (Andersen and Collins, 2004:6). Moreover, they suggest it tends to rest on the assumption that gender, race, and class operate “separate[ly] and independent[ly]” of each other, and that these different experiences are readily comparable (2004:6). While comparative thinking can further our understanding of “diversity” by shifting the centre of analysis and encouraging “tolerance”, they argue invoking difference as a concept remains “limited” (Andersen and Collins, 2004:4-6). It can maintain existing power relations, relations that reinforce normative privilege and stigmatize difference (2004:4). Importantly, institutions of power and privilege are left unchallenged and intact (Andersen and Collins, 2004:4-6).

Second, when “thinking comparatively” about difference, Andersen and Collins (2004:4) suggest we immediately fall back into the trap of “dichotomous thinking” or

“‘either/or’ thinking” that has been characteristic of a long-standing exclusionary sociological tradition. They argue by configuring difference in terms of an oversimplified binary relationship, these models cast people into dominant and subordinate categories of “oppressed or oppressor”, “powerful or powerless” and “normal or ‘different’” (2004:4). Those characterized as “‘different’ routinely form the subordinate side of the dichotomy and are often seen as victims” (Andersen and Collins, 2004:4). This line of thinking can for example, “overemphasize” racialized people’s experiences and may overlook the impact of race in structuring White people’s experiences; downplay how gender affects men’s lives; and discount how class privilege influences the lived experiences of the affluent (Andersen and Collins, 2004:5).

Another critique levelled at feminist discourses of difference is that this theorization sustains “additive analytical models” (Andersen and Collins, 2004:5, see also Spelman, 1988; Stasiulis, 1998:355, 378-379). Anderson and Collins argue that additive analyses do not reflect different women’s diverse experiences. In order to account for women’s differences, we cannot just “add women and stir” (see for example Bunch, 1987; Harding, 1987), or, to use Hesse-Biber and Yaiser’s words, “add difference and stir” (2004:105). We cannot establish frameworks based on the assertion of “double”, “triple” or “multiple jeopardies” (Andersen and Collins, 2004:5; Stasiulis, 1998, Nelson and Robinson, 2002). An appreciation of difference alone is insufficient to understand the multidimensional nature of social inequalities. As I have argued before (Anderson, 1999), we cannot give gender, or race or class top bill or the sole spot in our analyses. Certain relations should not be privileged over other social relations. We need to avoid

engaging in the “hierarchal” ranking or privileging of various forms of inequality. No form(s) of oppression can stand alone. Inequalities associated with gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability are not isolated from the “interlocking” (Stasiulis, 1998) effects of the other(s). Thus we must avoid constructing “additive analyses” (Spelman, 1988; Stasiulis, 1998) that relegate other forms of oppression to the back burner. If racism, sexism and classism are understood as interlocking forms of oppression, simultaneously experienced (versus individual oppressions additively piled one on top of each other) then claiming one “ism” is more fundamental than the other is problematic (Anderson, 2002). In this way, “adding together ‘differences’ produces a hierarchy of difference that ironically reinstalls those who are additively privileged as the top, while relegating those who are additively oppressed to the bottom” (Andersen and Collins, 2004:5).

Additive analyses have also been challenged because the “adding on” of difference to the concepts gender, race, and class implies that additional forms of difference are one and the same, that they are somehow “equivalent” or substitutable (2004:5). While Andersen and Collins (2004:5) agree that difference comprises more than race, gender, and class, this constant addition they say can spiral into an endless process. This they argue, can also result in the erasure of the ways in which power operates in our society (2004:5). Difference as an analytical framework is “not enough...because comprehensive coverage is impossible, difference models can never be complete...thinking relationally about race, class, and gender need not entail thinking

about all groups at one time” (2004:6, 8). Instead they maintain, we need to consider group experiences in particular contexts (2004:8).

Patricia Hill Collins (1990/2000/2004) has characterized this intersectional framework as a “matrix of domination”. Her dynamic conceptualization stresses the importance of social structures in shaping people’s lives. To use Collins’ words “a matrix of domination posits multiple, interlocking levels of domination that stem from the societal configuration of race, class, and gender relations. This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges” (Collins 2000 as cited by Anderson and Collins, 2004:7). This framework emphasizes focusing on the structural connections of race, gender, and class. Collins’ “matrix of domination” considers how oppressive social systems operate simultaneously or to use her words “together” to shape people’s lived experiences (2004:7). Her conceptualization of this matrix facilitates an understanding of the interlocking and mutual reinforcement of social inequalities. These categories should not be separately assessed, nor are they “reducible to individual attributes that can be measured and assessed for their separate, specific contributions to the individual’s experiences and identities...to social and behavioural outcomes” (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004:115).

Lynn Weber (2004:122) in her article entitled “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Race, Class, Sexuality, and Gender” summarizes six common themes that characterize this brand of scholarship which she believes can assist us in our research, teaching, and activist endeavours. First, Weber (2004:124) notes the “contextual” aspect of gender, race, class, and sexuality. She reminds us that these categories are not “fixed”

or “static”, rather, these categories and the social meanings that we as a society attach to them constantly change. In other words, she notes that the meanings ascribed to these categories vary across time, place, and social contexts (2004:124).

Second and relatedly, she argues these categories are “socially constructed” through the process of “group struggle” (2004:125). She further states members of dominant groups attempt to control the definition of these categories by creating social rankings or hierarchies. These hierarchies are then naturalized to justify the power and control exercised by members of dominant groups (2004:125). Weber for example notes how mothering as a social institution is constructed along the lines of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. She questions how is it that “middle class mothers who stay at home to care for their children are often viewed by the dominant culture as ‘good mothers’, yet poor women who do the same are viewed as lazy or ‘welfare queens’” (2004:126). She believes these dominant ideologies espouse gendered expectations of women as mothers from different class backgrounds (2004:126).

Third and perhaps most importantly, Weber (2004:127) emphasizes that these interconnections are “power relations”. She says gender, race, class, and sexuality are sources of social conflict that pit groups against each other in their struggle to retain dominance and exercise control over resources. These power struggles become more apparent when we consider more than one arena of inequality (2004:128). As “systems of power relationships” she maintains we are forced to examine “who exerts power and control over whom” in order to preserve and extend existing sets of power relations (2004:127).

Fourth, Weber (2004:128-129) draws attention to the ways in which these power relationships become embedded in macro and micro social contexts and the links between the two levels. Further, an intersectional framework helps us examine the simultaneity of these connections, that gender, race, class, and sexuality are “simultaneously expressed” and experienced (2004:131). Lastly, Weber (2004:132) notes that intersectional scholarship stresses the “interdependence” between “knowledge” production and “activism”. Intersectional frameworks challenge traditional knowledge forms (Andersen and Collins, 2004). Drawing on what some scholars have termed “subjugated knowledge forms” (Foucault, 1980) or “contested knowledge” (Seidman, 1994), challenges the “confines of traditional knowledge” and transforms knowledge (Andersen and Collins, 2004:9). This framework builds analyses of oppression to effect social change and empowerment. Its “truth value” stems from “its ability to reflect back to social groups their experiences in such a way that they can more effectively define, value, and empower themselves to seek social justice” (Weber, 2004:132) and the “develop[ment] of just social relations”(Andersen and Collins, 2004:9).

Following Andersen and Collins (2004) and Weber (2004) among others (see for example recent works by Chouinard, 2006; Coulter, 2009; Cosgrove, 2009; Dudley, 2006; Galupo, 2009; Klodawsky, 2006; Ward, 2004; Whitzman, 2006) my study of feminist organizing in the GTA during the Harris years is informed by a feminist intersectional framework. I have framed my study in such a way, that I hope to develop an analysis that is sensitive to the intersections of race, gender, and class and the implications of these interconnections for women’s organizing for social change. First

and foremost, this framework highlights the sociological importance of structural inequalities and the links among social inequalities. Second, I anticipate that this conceptual framework will add to our sociological knowledge of feminist organizing because it foregrounds women's everyday experiences. It has the potential to demonstrate how the development of feminist theory and strategy are interrelated. In other words, this framework highlights how theoretical and empirical insight is often situated in women's ideas and practices (Christiansen Ruffman, 1995:373).

Third, by linking thinking with doing, this framework attempts to bridge the so called "activist/academic divide" (see for example Naples, 1998:8). Following Naples, (1998), it demonstrates how sociological research can bring together knowledge generated by feminists engaged in social justice work. This approach makes both feminist activist and academic resistance possible. As Naples (1998:343) research on women's community activism indicates, "it is vital to keep the struggles as well as the analyses alive."

Finally, an intersectional framework provides a means through which researchers can explore the diversity of women's activism and the work of feminists embedded in different organizational sectors. This framework captures multiple forms of oppression and how these oppressions are addressed by feminist organizations. Not only does an analysis of different organizational sectors represent the major issues taken up by intersectional feminist theorizing - the connectedness of gender, race and class - but the concrete issues related to these theoretical concerns, namely violence against women, women's involvement in organized labour and anti-racist feminist projects were blatantly

targeted as “special interests” by the Harris government. Embarking on sociological inquiry from the standpoint of diverse women’s experiences, and understanding how feminists of different races and classes confront dominant discourses enriches feminist analyses. This approach produces a more nuanced understanding of feminist organizing in a neoliberal climate.

Theoretically I believe that this is a step in the right direction. As feminists we have sought to integrate these intersections into our theories. Empirically incorporating this intersectionality has proven to be difficult. Very few empirical works integrate all aspects in terms of analysis, most end up centering one or two areas (Das Gupta 1989 as cited by Maroney and Luxton, 1996:99-100). Likewise, (Bordo, 1990:13) has questioned “the coercive, mechanical requirement that all enlightened feminist projects attend to ‘the intersection of race, class and gender.’ What happened to ethnicity? Age? Sexual orientation? On the other hand, just how many axes can one include and still preserve analytical focus or argument?” (as cited by Stasiulis, 1998:351). While addressing these intersections has begun, integrating these theoretical and empirical analyses is where much more work needs to be done.

Granted, most qualitative, feminist researchers, myself included continue to grapple with the implications we are presented with when studying across the intersections of race, gender, and class. But that does not mean we should shy away from moving our research in this direction. Now we must also address the concrete task of how to put these theoretical insights into practice. It would be arrogant for me to assume that my study will be able to resolve or transcend this issue. The sheer methodological

and empirical complexity of working through these intersections poses a real challenge for feminist researchers. As Silius (2010:281) notes, “intersectionality might be easy to account for in quantitative, multifactor types of analyses, but it is much more complicated in qualitative research.” While there are a few examples of scholars who have tried to build intersectional analyses (Agnew 1996; Brenner 2000; Cosgrove, 2009; Leah 1999; Naples 1998; Poster 1995; Smith 1995; Thornton Dill 1983; Vorst et al.1991) the field as a whole continues to struggle with this²⁸. While some studies state at the outset what intersections will be explored, few studies are able to consider all aspects of intersectionality, in fact, this is a rarity (Simpson, 2009:23)²⁹. But unlike previous analyses, I strive to address women’s organizational experiences in a more inclusive and systematic way³⁰.

²⁸ As Mandell and Duffy (2011:8 citing Andersen and Collins, 1995) note, gender, race and class relations “‘matter’ because they structure interactions, opportunities, consciousness, ideology and forms of resistance.” Intersectional feminist frameworks are not the sole purview of feminist sociologists nor of feminist studies. Intersectionality has increasingly been acknowledged by scholars and activists working in a number of disciplines including geography, history, and labour, disability, and family studies. See for example, the work of critical feminist geographers Fran Klodowsky’s (2006) “Landscapes on the Margins: Gender and homelessness in Canada”; Carol Whitzman’s (2006) “At the Intersection of Invisibilities: Canadian women, homelessness and health outside the ‘big city’”; and Vera Chouinard’s (2006) “On the dialectics of differencing: Disabled women, the state and housing issues”. There is also some interesting work being done by Canadian labour studies scholars and social historians. See for example Nancy Christie’s (2000) “Engendering the State: Family, Work and Welfare in Canada”; Katrina Srigley’s (2010) “Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression Era City, 1929-1939; and Jennifer Stephen’s (2007) “Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity and the Gendering of Canada’s Welfare State, 1939-1947”. At the level of theory, while said approach is attractive to scholars working in a number of arenas, employing it in terms of research and analysis proves to be more of an ongoing challenge (Siltanen and Doucet, 2008). As Siltanen and Doucet ask (2008:27) “exactly how are we to do intersectionality research when we have to take so many dimensions into account, consider inequalities within as well as between, and deal with such a high degree of complexity in the configuration of both social contexts and identities?”

²⁹ For a practical and applied look at the topic of intersectionality, please see Joanna Simpson’s (2009) CRIAW publication “Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality”.

³⁰ Fortunately as Silius (2010: 281) suggests, the field is expanding. For example, she cites Beverly Skeggs’ (1997, 2001, 2004) intersectional analyses of gender, sexuality and class that builds on the work of Pierre Bourdieu’s. See Skeggs, Beverly. 2004. “Context and background: Pierre Bourdieu’s analysis on

The strength of this project lies in my interviewing a number of women of different racial, ethnic and class backgrounds who are working in organizations with different mandates and constituents. In doing so, I am able to move away from analyses based solely on the experiences of white, middle class women (Naples, 1998). By adopting an intersectional feminist framework, we avoid falling back on one dimensional analyses and analyses that view gender, race and class as multiple oppressions. We can see how the socially constructed categories of race, gender, and class take on new and different meanings, meanings that reflect the dominant ideologies at a particular point in time. It enables us to locate feminist struggles within the context of power relations and to observe how these power relations impact feminists working in organizational settings. And it stresses the importance of empowerment in transforming social relations.

Some of the works on the intersections of race, gender, and class have emerged from feminists' autobiographical, fictional, and personal accounts (Andersen and Collins, 2004:7). Mitchell and Karian (2005:65) argue that feminists' use of "personal narratives" stems from the criticisms levied at second wave feminism by black feminist writers in the 1980's and 1990's. They argue, works by bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins for example, problematized the inaccessibility of much academic feminist scholarship. The writings of Black feminists facilitated the emergence of a new form of feminist theorizing, practice, and history (Dua and Robertson, 1999 as cited by Mitchell and Karian, 2005:65), where personal narratives as a "form of resistance" came to be

class, gender and sexuality" in Lisa Adkins and Beverly Skeggs (Eds.) Feminism After Bourdieu. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 19-34.

understood as an integral part of feminist activism and theory building. Mitchell and Karian (2005:65) argue that writing in an accessible manner - in a way that is both understandable and inspirational - is considered by some feminists to be a political move. While feminists use of personal narratives have been critiqued as “self-indulgent”, “unchallengeable”, and “theoretically weak”, feminist researchers are increasingly drawing on personal narratives to better understand women’s life experiences, to examine “not only how the personal is political but also how the *personal is theoretical*” (Mitchell and Karaian, 2005:65, italics in the original). In other words, feminist researchers recognize how women’s personal narratives contribute to feminist projects of “theoriz[ing]” everyday “experience” and how personal narratives are important “tools”, “tools for resisting, reclaiming, and engaging in dialogue with others” (2005:66).

In this research project, I too draw on feminists’ stories in order to construct a sociological analysis of women’s organizing in the GTA. Empirically I draw on women’s “analytic reflexivity” or what Laslett (1999) refers to as their “personal narratives as sociology” (Laslett, 1999). Personal narratives, Laslett writes:

are works of history about an individual or individuals, about the social spaces they inhabit, about the societies in which they live. They are also about the intersection of all three...through analyses of such stories, we can learn about individual and collective action and meanings as well as the social processes by which social life and human relationships are made and changed (1999:392).

These personal narratives are the main source of data for my research project. An inclusive research project strives to bring the experiences of diverse women together and attempts to capture the diversity of women’s narrated accounts. Therefore it is important for me to explore and listen to different women’s narratives (Sugiman, 2003). As

Sugiman (2003) suggests, a single narrative may conceal the diverse experiences of women structurally located in different societal or organizational spaces. Women's narratives, much like their lived experiences are not monolithic. They may vary in terms of ideology, analysis, and practice.

Conceptualizing Feminist Organizations, Feminist Goals, and Feminist Practices

Social movement scholars maintain that women's movements are tied to organizational "entities" in that they serve to "mobilize and coordinate collective action" (Ferree and Martin, 1995:13). The literature suggests that feminist organizations play an important role in women's movements. Feminist organizations have been instrumental in the development and "spread of feminism", and have the potential to transform individuals and "better society" (Martin, 1990:183). For the purposes of this study, it is important to clarify how I conceptualize "feminist organizations", "feminist goals", and "feminist practices" (Martin, 1990).

What are *feminist organizations*? Ferree and Martin (1995:13) define feminist organizations "*as the places and means through which the work of the women's movement is done.*" Feminist organizations they claim are also the product of "*situationally and historically specific processes*" (1995:8, italics in original). In other words, feminist organizations are the organizational settings in which feminist activism takes place. They are not only shaped by political practices, opportunities and environmental constraints, but they also change over time in order to respond to their own organizational needs and to the needs and demands of the women they serve (Ferree and Martin, 1995:7-8). However one of the ongoing dilemmas feminist researchers often face

involves deciding what “feminist activism” entails (Gluck et als. 1998:34). Gluck et als. (1998:33-34) have argued that focusing our studies on organizations advocating “strategic gender interests” (Molyneux, 1985 as cited by Gluck et als., 1998:33) is problematic because it reinforces mainstream feminist paradigms. Moreover, we cannot necessarily tell on the basis of ideological frameworks whether an organization is “*feminist in action* as well as belief” (Marieskind and Ehrenreich, 1975 as cited by Martin 1990:192, italics in original). On the other hand, if we focus on a wide range of community based organizations, our analyses may be reduced to the study of those organizations who simply seek to empower women (Gluck et als. 1998:34).

According to Gluck et als. (1998:34), the California State University, Long Beach, Feminist Oral History Collective has proposed a way out of this dilemma by developing their own “working definition of feminist activism”: a definition that attempts to avoid focusing only on groups motivated by a gender based analysis and or on groups that associate feminist activism with any type of organizing that empowers women (Gluck et als, 1998). Their definition is as follows:

Women’s groups (including formal and informal committees, subcommittees and caucuses) organized for change whose agendas AND/OR actions challenge women’s subordinate status [or disadvantaged] status in the society at large (external) and in their own community (internal) (as cited by Gluck et als. 1998:34).

This definition emphasizes the idea that feminist organizations are those groups who are actively engaged in the pursuit of social change and or whose actions challenge women’s subordination at both a micro and macro level. However as Gluck et als

(1998:34) note, the issue of “intent”, that is, whether the effects of feminist organizing are (un)intentional, remains unresolved.

Patricia Yancey Martin’s (1990) work on feminist organizations also makes an important contribution to the literature on feminist organizational practice. In “Rethinking Feminist Organizations” she constructs a conceptual framework for sociological research on feminist organizations that focuses on concrete organizational “forms and practices and on the dilemmas and effects their participants experience” (Ferree and Martin, 1995:10). While Martin (1990:183-184) argues there are no “essential” characteristics of feminist organizations, she persuasively identifies a number of “dimensions” that can be used to “frame comparative analyses of feminist organizations”.³¹

According to Martin (1990), an organization qualifies as “feminist” if it meets any one of the following five key criteria: (a) embraces “feminist ideology”, for example, organizations that “*officially* endorse feminist beliefs associated with the women’s movement” may adopt a liberal radical, socialist, Marxist, and or lesbian feminist perspective (1990:190-191); (b) is guided by “feminist values”, values that reflect a political analysis of women’s material reality (Gornick, Burt, and Pittman 1985; Rodrigues 1988; Smith 1987 as cited by Martin, 1990:192) that prioritizes interpersonal relationships, promotes empowerment and personal development, self-esteem building, acquisition of knowledge, skills, political awareness, autonomy and gender politics

³¹ It is important to note that Martin’s (1990) work offers but one definitional strategy, however her conceptualization of feminist organizations is one that I will draw on in the course of my case study.

(Ferguson 1984, 1987; Ferre 1987; Freeman 1975; Gelb 1987; Leidner forthcoming; Rothschild 1987 as cited by Martin, 1990:192); (c) espouses “feminist goals” related to the delivery of social services and as agents of social change (1990:193); (d) “produces feminist outcomes” for both members and society at large, outcomes that transform the subjective or material reality of participants and societal transformation (1990:190); and (e) the organization was founded during and or as part of the women’s movement, that is, it was founded in association with a particular stage of the women’s movement such as the anti-rape movement, the feminist self-help movement or the violence against women movement (1990:185,194).

Variations of Martin’s (1990) dimensions have been employed by researchers studying different types of feminist organizations (see for example Christiansen-Ruffman 1995; McNair Barnett 1995; Pardo 1995; Spalter-Roth and Schreiber 1995; Staggenborg 1995). Suzanne Staggenborg (1995:342-343, 354) believes Martin’s (1990) criteria are useful for characterizing feminist organizations. However Staggenborg goes on to suggest that Martin’s notion of “feminist outcomes” requires further clarification (1995:354). Staggenborg’s (1995:354) work on feminist organizational effectiveness makes a further distinction. Staggenborg (1995:354) argues that “feminist outcomes” must be produced “*intentionally*” for “one can well imagine an antifeminist organization that inadvertently produces feminist outcomes (e.g. by creating a feminist mobilization in response to its actions), but we would not want to call such an organization ‘feminist’”. She suggests those organizations that “intentionally” strive to benefit women and society at large and thereby produce “feminist outcomes” are by definition “feminist” - they are

purposively feminist in action - whereas those that unintentionally or “inadvertently” produce feminist outcomes are not (1995:354).

Keeping Staggenborg’s (1995) distinction in mind, for the purposes of this research project, I rely on Martin’s (1990) definition of feminist organizations because as Pardo (1995:358) aptly notes, her conceptual framework draws attention to both the ideological claims and actions of women’s groups. Thus Martin’s (1990) work clearly recognizes the link between feminist theory and political practice. And this is an important conceptual contribution for anyone wanting to study women’s organizing for social change³².

An understanding of *feminist goals* is also important for undertaking comparative analyses of feminist organizations (Martin, 1990). Feminist goals are “*action agendas* that an organization claims it wishes to achieve and that it actually pursues” (Hall, 1986 cited by Martin, 1990:193). Again, here Martin’s (1990) work is informative. She identifies three major types of “feminist goals”. These include goals that she says are meant (i) to personally empower women through self-esteem building and expanding women’s knowledge and political consciousness; (ii) to offer service provision for women by way of education, counselling, health care or shelter; and (iii) to transform society and improve women’s status, opportunities and overall quality of life (Martin, 1990:193). Thus for the purpose of my study, following Martin (1990), I define feminist goals as organizational goals that focus on the themes of equality, empowerment, education, politicization, and transformation.

³² The organizations and their respective mandates included in this study will be outlined in more detail in Chapter Three.

In order to achieve their goals, feminist organizations engage in a number of practices (Martin, 1990). Martin (1990:196) conceptualizes “feminist practices” as “the strategies and tactics that feminist organizations employ, both internally and externally”. These strategies have been conceptualized as “a web of practices or ‘tactical repertoire’ (Snow and Benford, 1993) that organizations adopt at different times” (Mathews, 1995:296). These include analyses of feminists’ attempts to use “insider politics” such as lobbying, litigation, testifying and accessing the judicial system to address outsider or feminist issues (Ferre and Martin, 1995; Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:105; Tyyska 1998); coalition building or the collective coming together of different groups or organizations to achieve a particular concrete goal (Bevacqua, 2008; Bunch 1987 cited in Arnold 1995:276-277; Bays 1998; Ferree and Hess 1985; Gilmore, 2008; Gilmore, 2008a; Morrow et. al. 2004; Reinhelt 1995); “direct action” tactics or “active engagement” which involve “attempts to intervene in the state either proactively or reactively to change its policies” (Mathews, 1995:301); “apparent accommodation” and or “covert resistance” which involves “adjusting practice so that it conforms or appears to conform to state rules (Mathews, 1995:298); and community activism and outreach strategies which are designed “to expand grassroots ties and mobilize” oppositional activities (Hyde, 1995:319; Naples 1998).

Clearly, a number of strategies or “tactics” have been identified and discussed in the social movement literature. In this study, I examine how different feminist organizations articulate and engage in strategies of resistance from an intersectional feminist perspective. Resistance is a key theme in my project and I recognize that

feminists organizing in anti-violence, anti-racist and labour groups may have access to different resources and opportunities that make certain practices, praxis and forms of resistance more or less feasible (in conversation with Sugiman, 2005).

Lastly, Martin's (1990) work speaks to the importance of "feminist outcomes". She stresses that while it may be challenging to assess the impact of feminist organizations, "we still need analyses of outcomes in relation to other aspects of feminist organizations" (1990:194). To gauge the effectiveness of feminist organizing Ferree and Martin (1995) insist we must attend to the following important issues:

how are its [organizational] options expanded or limited by the features of the legal, political, or economic situations with which it has to deal? by the specific generational, economic, or racial/ethnic experiences and identities of its members? by its history? (Ferree and Martin, 1995:9).

According to Gelb (1995:128) "defining the meaning of success for a movement organization is important" and yet social movement scholars often admit it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of social movement organizations (Gelb and Palley, 1982:176). Still many mainstream scholars have relied on William Gamson's (1975/1990) notion of organizational "success". Gamson (1975) defined success largely in terms of social movement organizations' abilities to achieve societal acceptance and accrue new advantages (Gamson as cited by Staggenborg, 1995). He writes "a challenging group can win recognition as a legitimate actor in politics and or gain new advantages for itself or its beneficiary constituency" (as cited by Meyer and Whittier, 1994:280). Thus much of the social movement literature tends to equate organizational "survival with success" and organizational "demise with decline" (Gelb and Disney, 2000:39).

Feminist scholars (Disney and Gelb 2000; Gelb 1995; Mueller 1987; Staggenborg, 1995) have “expanded” Gamson’s notion of success to include other aspects of the process. Suzanne Staggenborg (1995:340-341) has argued that feminists have extended the literature on organizational “success” to include other aspects of the political process such as “getting movement demands on the political agenda”, implementing new policies, making intentional impacts, and “transforming political structures”. Staggenborg’s (1995:341) work on feminist organizational success suggests feminist organizing can then be assessed on the basis of three broad outcomes: (1) “political and policy outcomes” reflective of “substantive change” to political system; (2) “mobilization outcomes” that focus on undertaking collective action; and (3) “cultural outcomes” that not only foster change in social norms, values and behaviours among the general public, but the emergence of women’s collective consciousness.

Similarly in their comparative analysis of eight national level American women’s movement organizations, Gelb and Disney (2000) also attempt to develop a more nuanced understanding of feminist success. They identify four basic components of success including: a political component related to the realization of feminist policy outcomes; a mobilization component which involves building a pool of activists and resources for the purposes of present day and future organizing; a cultural component to counteract patriarchal norms and values in public and private life; and lastly, organizational maintenance and survival (2000:48-49).

Other scholars (see for example, Burt 1990; Gelb and Hart 1999) have attempted to quantitatively measure feminist success in terms of progressive policy outcomes.

Sandra Burt's analyses of Canadian women's groups in the 1980's found that policy success tended to vary with respect to the type of feminist's claims (1990:17). At that time, she argued policy makers were more likely to accommodate feminist claims related to the role of the welfare state and claims that reflected women's and men's gendered roles and responsibilities (Burt, 1990:25-26). Similarly, Susan Phillips (1991:777) analysed the role of meaning and structure in several national level Canadian women's organizations. Phillips (1991) argued that assessing the effectiveness of a group or organization typically involves measuring the degree to which group activities impacted policy outcomes, but that this is a "difficult task" (Phillips, 1991:777). Finally, some social movement scholars (i.e. Gelb and Palley, 1982) have argued that "success" tends to be achieved "incrementally", as "increments for change rather than total victory." This notion of "incremental success" also suggests that "there are no easy victories" (Gelb and Palley, 1982:167, 173, 182).

Contrary to Staggenborg's (1995) macro level characterizations of feminist organizational effectiveness and keeping Gelb and Palley's (1982) idea of "incremental success" in mind, for the purposes of my study, I foreground operational definitions of feminist success that emerged from the women's stories, stories of their own experiences. I intend to rely on feminist's reflections of their own experiences as organizational leaders and activists in order to understand how they came to define the meaning of "feminist success" in a particular social context. My analyses of these women's personal narratives demonstrate a need to appreciate the social context of women's resistance³³.

³³ The importance of attending to context is noted by Gordon (2005) in her work on immigrant workers

Thus I remain open to the idea that the women's narratives may necessitate a rethinking and or a rereading of their aforementioned strategies and their effectiveness.

Unlike other social movement theorists (see for example Staggenborg, 1995), it is not my intent to quantify or measure feminist success in terms of large scale social policy influences or political, legislative or cultural changes. To do so, I believe restricts the use and flow of these women's narratives. It overlooks the study of "doing" and the complex processes involved in social change. Instead it tends to emphasize an evaluative, results and or outcome oriented approach, often perceived as adverse to the broadly defined feminist goals of personal empowerment and personal change. The women's narratives analyzed here recognize the value of these intangibles and suggest that feminist success may be, at once welcomed but also unexpected and in the words of one socialist feminist and union activist I interviewed, as something that happens "behind the scenes" (Carrol-Anne Seceviour, OFL, Toronto, 2002). Perhaps, this is what Staggenborg (1995:353) means when she suggests that feminist success may be, to use her words, "hidden" and that some organizations may be effective but in ways that remain unrecognized (1995:345). Therefore, I would agree with other community based scholars such as MacKinnon et al. (2006:69) who maintain that "participation in community-based programming has benefits beyond what is traditionally and quantitatively measured." Therefore, feminist success may go "unnoticed" (MacKinnon et al., 2006:71) by various out-group members such as government funders, policy makers, and or society at large.

centres where "the lesson to draw from the Project, then, is not that what it did successfully should be replicated. It is that each context gives rise to a set of obstacles and opportunities, and that organizing in each context requires attention to them, both at the start and as they change over time. Similar conditions will suggest similar solutions" (Gordon, 2005:284).

One could then argue that the success of feminist organizations is at once, paradoxically “seen and unseen (Ferree and Martin, 1995:16 citing Spalter Roth and Schreiber, 1995).

Feminist Organizing and the Neoliberal State

According to Roberta Hamilton (2005:40) analysts of women’s movements must recognize that women’s organizing, both past and present, has encountered resistance. The backlash prompted by feminists’ struggles for equality and social change has generated what she refers to as an “ongoing history of women’s resistance and resistance to their resistance”. This history, she states, makes it challenging to evaluate feminists’ goals and strategies. She argues movement success may be met with defeat followed by remobilization (2005:40). My study attests to and contributes to this evolving history of women’s resistance. The theme of resistance clearly runs throughout this work. We need more Canadian studies of feminist organizing to better understand how feminists sustain and confront resistance in their pursuit of external and internal action agendas. We also need to consider the difficulties feminists may encounter in the development, implementation, and evaluation of such strategies in a neoliberal climate. Hamilton (2005) further argues that studies of feminist organizing need to consider the recent structural changes that have occurred as a result of the globalization of capitalist relations³⁴. Global restructuring coupled with the imposition of a neoliberal agenda are “antithetical” to many feminists’ goals and have eroded feminists’ “successes” (Cohen et al. 2002:6; Bashevkin, 2002 as cited by Hamilton, 2005:40).

³⁴ See for example Serena Cosgrove’s (2009) research on Latin American women’s leadership in community development. Cosgrove (2009:181) notes that it is women who are particularly vulnerable to major policy changes, including structural adjustment policies.

This project recognizes feminists' contributions to our understanding of women's often "contradictory" or "paradoxical" relationship with the Canadian state, that is, feminists acknowledge both the oppressive and emancipatory role of the state in women's lives (Harder, 2003:7, 156; Naples, 1998:343). Janine Brodie (1995:39-41) notes how the Canadian welfare state supported a certain gender and familial order. She argues welfare state ideology and policy have tended to conflate "women's interests" and "family interests" (1995:41). Women's relationship to the state was largely tied to their dual role of wives and mothers in nuclear families where they were economically dependent on a male earner (Brodie, 1995:39-41). Welfare state provision was based on a particular configuration of private and public life and there was often a lack of awareness familial oppression (1995:41)³⁵. However, the Canadian welfare state also "created new political spaces for women. It viewed women as a different kind of political actor with different claims on the state" (Brodie, 1995:40). These "new political spaces" largely provided white, middle class women with an opportunity to organize, make claims, and lobby the state for improved services. The welfare state also afforded space for the expansion of state funded women's organizations that brought "the political arm of the women's movement" into the fold of "new state centred 'progressive coalitions'" (1995:41). Thus the state, Brodie (1995:41) argues, became a "political resource, albeit an ambiguous one, for women." As Naples (1998:343) notes, one of the main themes running through the

³⁵ The writings of women of colour and in particular Black feminists though have often demonstrated that comparatively speaking, family was often experienced as one of the least oppressive institutions in their lives.

literature on women's organizing, reveals the "contradictory role of the state as both a catalyst for, and site of women's politicization."

According to Siltanen and Doucet (2008) and Brodie (1995, 1996) feminist analyses of the welfare state show how women were provided with a measure of economic independence from male breadwinners as state employees (i.e. in the nursing profession). The welfare state has been a major employer of women. For instance, many women are employed as state workers (Harder, 2003:7). Further, the introduction of social assistance, family allowance and child care benefits has also afforded women some form of independence from men (Harder 2003:7). However, many of the policies and practices of the welfare state continued to make women responsible for care giving work and neglected to acknowledge how women's work sustained the economy (Harder, 2003:7-8). So while the welfare state may liberate women from their "personalized dependency on men" (Harder, 2003:7) it also according to Wendy Brown (1992:30) actively (re)creates gendered state subjects. Brown writes the "state does not simply handle clients or employ staff." The state creates "bureaucratized, dependent, disciplined and gendered" subjects (as cited by Brodie, 1995:26-27; 1996:12.). These issues are at the heart of what Cossman (2002:171) terms the "older 'stories' of gender and family", characteristic of welfare states, but a shift in the "gender order" that has accompanied the change in "state forms" under neoliberalism (Brodie, 1995, 1996; Harder, 2003) has altered gender and family relations.

Following Coulter (2009), in order to situate my current study, it is important to provide an overview of neoliberalism in general, and neoliberal policy in Ontario in the

1990's in particular. Coulter's (2009:26) recent work on women and poverty in Ontario provides a solid summation of neoliberalism as "a multifaceted project". Neoliberalism she argues (2009:26) needs to be understood as more than an "ideology" and or an "economic agenda", rather it is as "an economic, political and moral doctrine that posits the individual as the fundamental basis of society (Gill, 2000:3)". This emphasis on individuals is characteristic of an altered relationship between people and governments, a relationship that primarily identifies us as "tax-payers or service users" (Coulter, 2009:26), or "stakeholders" (in conversation with Storey, 2011). There is also a distancing from what Coulter (2009:26) terms a "social state" or what I have referred to as the welfare state model and a move towards a neoliberal "state form" (Harder, 2003) intent on improving "conditions for market activity and capital accumulation (Harvey, 2006)" (as cited by Coulter, 2009:25-26). It is amidst these changes, that Coulter (2009:28) argues neoliberal policies promoting the values of individualism, personal responsibility and choice are pursued, largely devoid of any critical commentary with regard to how existing inequalities in terms of gender, power and economic position may play out in individual's everyday lives (Coulter, 2009:28-29).

As discussed in Chapter One, in the 1990's the Harris government extended the "neoliberal terrain" in Ontario by introducing policies explicitly designed to solve the problems the Conservatives attributed to the "wasteful" welfare state, government regulation and unemployment spending (Coulter, 2009:29-30; see also O'Brien, 2008; and Leach and Yates, 2008). The Conservatives were not apt, as is Coulter (2009:29-30), to blame neoliberal policies implicated in increased free trade or a transnational recession

for provincial woes, rather they sought to further introduce policies that brought the neoliberal agenda front and centre in Ontario. As noted elsewhere, Coulter (2009:30) also suggests how largely in one fell swoop following their election, the Harris government introduced massive cuts to welfare rates; eliminated employment equity, halted the development of social housing, cut municipal grants, froze the minimum wage, severely reduced funding for women's shelters and eliminated funding for second stage housing (Coulter, 2009:30). However, according to Coulter (2009:31) there was "substantial resistance to these neoliberal pursuits among large segments of the provincial population and some of the largest political demonstrations in Ontario's history occurred." She further notes that feminists represent but one segment of the population of "dissenting voices" (including for example recent works by Bashevkin 2002, 2006; Bezanson 2006; Bezanson and Luxton, 2006; Brodie, 2007, 2008; Ilcan 2009; Ilcan, Oliver and O'Connor 2007; McKeen, 2004; and Vosko, 2006) that have contributed to a substantial literature on the subject and their works serve to document the "detrimental effects [of Harris'] neoliberal agenda on women" (Coulter, 2009:31).

Taken together, these and other feminist analyses of the neoliberal state illustrate how the "retrenchment of the state from social reproduction" (Bezanson, 2006; Cossman, 2002:171), coupled with market based assumptions of citizenship, paradoxically "intensify and erode gender" (Brodie 1995, 1996; Fudge and Cossman 2002:171; Haraway, 1991; Harder, 2003). According to Leach and Yates (2008) neoliberalism's "gender blind" focus, renders women invisible, such that "gender privileges and the collective constraints of being a woman are no longer valid claims" (Leach and Yates,

2008:36). By ignoring and devaluing women's role in social reproduction, neoliberalism insists that women need to be ever more tied to the sphere of paid labour, despite the lack of collective supports (Leach and Yates, 2008:30).

Neoliberal ideology then also redefines what kinds of demands citizens can make of the state (Harder, 2003). Claims made on the basis of systemic inequalities are trumped by market forces that emphasize individual responsibility and self-reliance (Brodie 1995, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002; Harder 2003). Neoliberal ideology rests on the assumption of a new "gender order" (Bakker, 1996; Brodie 1995, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002), one that reflects the shift of government policy away from structural issues and a move toward more "micro- individual self-help solutions" (Brodie, 1995:62-63). Further, "...under neoliberal conditions, the price of women's liberal individualism is that their needs and satisfactions are defined by the market paradigm. Neoliberalism has been vocal in its opposition to welfare state support for women on grounds of gender and gender disadvantage...Neoliberalism pictures women in the same terms as men, equally possessive individuals" (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver, Year:54 as cited by Leach and Yates, 2008:30). This ideology "degenders" (Brodie, 1995:59) women and redefines them not as "women" or "mothers" but as employable individual "workers" or "market citizens" (Cossman, 2002; Evans, 1996). At the same time, it also "regenders" (Brodie, 1995:59) women as dependents on social assistance (Brodie, 1995, 1996; Cossman, 2002; Evans, 1996)³⁶.

³⁶ This "degendering and gendering" is well documented by Belinda Leach and Charlotte Yates (2008) in their analysis of working class women's employment in the southern Ontario autoparts industry. They maintain that "we see the making and unmaking of gender at work in the present context in Ontario not as a management fait accompli but as a site of struggle between workers and management – in other words, a

Recent research on feminist organizing has focused on the challenges feminist organizations and claimsmakers have encountered as result of the dismantling of the Canadian welfare state and the impact that the imposition of neoliberal model of governance has had on women's daily lives (Bashevkin 1994, 1996a, 1996b; 1998; Bezanson, 2006; Brodie 1994, 1995; Cossman and Fudge 2002; Coulter, 2009; Creese and Strong Boag 2005; Evans 1996; Evans and Wekerle 1997; Harder 2003; Leach and Yates, 2008; McKeen, 2004; Morrow et al. 2004; Porter, 2003). Some of this research has been conducted at the national level (Bashevkin 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1998; 2002)³⁷, while other studies have focused on feminist organizing amidst this transformation of governance within the provinces of Alberta (Harder 2003), British Columbia (Creese and Strong Boag 2005; Morrow et al. 2004) and Ontario (see for example, Bezanson, 2006; Coulter, 2009; Leach and Yates, 2008). These studies reflect a literature that has provided much needed feminist analyses of the gendered impacts of neoliberalism and economic restructuring. My study complements these works by investigating the impact this transformation has had on women's organizations in Ontario. There appears to be less literature examining feminist organizations and activists who on a daily basis vis a vis their paid work, activism and or volunteerism attempt to mediate these gendered impacts on some of the most vulnerable women in the GTA, women experiencing violence, racism, discrimination, unemployment, poverty and homelessness. This is the empirical

site of worker and management agency. Gender is thus a site for everyday struggle over creation of the particular kind of workers management desires. . .ways that gender is being constantly reconstructed at the workplace" (Leach and Yates, 2008:34).

³⁷ Bashvekin (2006) has conducted much work in this arena and has most recently undertaken a comparative study of the impacts of neoliberal restructuring on women in two Ontario municipalities, namely London and Toronto.

gap that my study attempts to close. It is meant to be read as a feminist account of feminist organizing amidst the ushering in of neoliberalism in Ontario. It strives to document with academic rigour and respect, the struggles, resistance and successes experienced on the part of feminist organizations to not only intervene and mediate the gendered, racist and classist assault meted out by neoliberalism, but to provide a sustained, gender sensitive, critique of neoliberalism's disproportionate impact on women's daily lives, a narrative that remained absent in the dominant discourse. My study is informative because it helps to fill an important gap in our knowledge of how women's groups coped when faced with Harris' brand of neoliberalism and facilitates more comparative based analyses across feminist organizational sectors.

All of the aforementioned studies speak to the importance of the concept of "privatization"³⁸. Privatization reflects the shift in capitalist relations of production and reproduction that have occurred as a result of the globalization (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:17-18). Drawing on Smith and Lipsky (1993), Fudge and Cossman (2002:18) identify privatization as a "broad policy impulse to change the balance between public and private responsibility in public policy" (Smith and Lipsky 1993 as cited by McFetridge 1997). This shift in public policy involves the reconstitution of "once public goods and services" and the redefinition of social issues related to people, government, work and families (2002:18-20). Privatization then, is a crucial concept for capturing the "renegotiation" (2002:18) of the public and private spheres that has occurred as result of

³⁸ According to Fudge and Cossman (2002:4) the term "privatization" first appeared in the "Canadian political lexicon" under the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney which entailed the selling off government assets and the contracting out of government services. Government was restructured in such a way as to reflect a more market based model where efficiency and provision was tied to profit (Cameron, 1997:12 as cited by Fudge and Cossman, 2002:4).

the transition from the welfare state to the neoliberal state form (Fudge and Cossman, 2002; see also discussions by Brodie, 2007, 2008; Coulter, 2009; Ilcan 2008; Ilcan, Oliver and O'Connor, 2007).

Fudge and Cossman (2002:17-24) identify a number of overlapping and mutually reinforcing strategies of privatization³⁹. Citing Evans and Wekerle (1997), they suggest the process of “reprivatization” involves the redefinition of public goods and services based on the normative assumption that it is more efficient to have goods and services provided by the market, families, or charities (2002:20). This process “naturalizes” (Brodie, 1995, 1996) the reconstitution of child care, elder care and health care as gendered, familial responsibilities. It rests on the idea that these forms of care giving “‘naturally’ belong” in the private sphere (Evans and Wekerle, 1997 cited by Fudge and Cossman, 2002:20) and essentialist notions of family. While the reprivatization of social reproduction is not an altogether “new phenomenon”, Cossman (2002:170-171) further argues that there is something distinct about the present project. Reprivatization, she says has been coupled with another privatizing discourse, the process of “familialization”. Familialization upholds the expectation that families should take care of themselves and like reprivatization, this process relegates certain goods and services, namely, various forms of care giving to the private sphere (Brodie, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002:21). As result, we are not only witnessing what Brodie (1995, 1996) among others (see for example Fudge and Cossman, 2002; Haraway, 1991; Harder, 2003) have termed the “simultaneous intensification and erosion of gender” but also what Cossman (2002:174;

³⁹ Some of these strategies are reflected in Brodie’s (1996:21-23) analysis as well i.e. privatization, “refamilialization”.

Cossman, 2002 citing Brodie, 1995, 76 citing Haraway, 1991:166) refers to as the “simultaneous intensification and erosion of family”.

Another dimension of privatization identified by Fudge and Cossman (2002:21) is “commodification”. Following Brodie (1996), commodification they argue refers to a process that reconstitutes “once public goods and services” as “market” based commodities, goods that now are to be bought and sold. This process also emphasizes the importance of efficiency which again is tied to the market provision of goods and services (Brodie, 1996 cited by Fudge and Cossman, 2002:21). The process of “individualization” (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:21-22) highlights how a number of social issues such as health care and poverty are reconstituted as individual responsibilities (see also Morrow et al. 2004). Social problems are portrayed as personal inadequacies and structural analyses and collective responsibility are abandoned based on the normative assumption that people should be self-sufficient and care for their personal well-being (2002:21-22). “Depoliticization” they note, involves the removal of a range of goods, services and or social issues from the political sphere (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:22). For instance, according to Cossman (2002) the “fundamental retrenchment of the state in social reproduction” leaves women in families to shoulder the brunt of care giving activities. The reconstitution of care giving as a “natural”, not to mention, individual or familial responsibility effectively removes it from the realm of what Brodie (1996) would term “political contestation”. Thus the politics of care giving are not only reprivatized, but to use Cossman’s words, they are also individualized, familialized, and depoliticized (Cossman, 2002).

Feminists have interrogated and resisted these “dominant” or “prevailing discourses” (Brodie, 1995, 1996) and the supposed gender neutrality of neoliberal ideology and politics. Thus the feminist literature on welfare state restructuring is insightful because it demonstrates that “women’s relationship to the state, economy, and family” (Porter, 2003) continue to be important sites of feminist struggle and resistance. My objective here is to demonstrate how the dominant “restructuring discourses” (Brodie, 1995, 1996) of neoliberalism embraced by the Harris government have been used to relegate feminist interests and demands to the political backburner. Discourses of privatization and fiscal restructuring have been invoked to reduce the role of the state as a “guarantor of equality” (Harder, 2003) and they aim to displace and “evacuate politics from the realm of the state” (Harder, 2003). Following Harder (2003) and Brodie (1994, 1995), Fudge and Cossman (2002) among others, I argue that the branding of feminist claimsmakers and social justice advocates as “special interest groups” has resulted in “the simultaneous erosion and intensification of gender”(Brodie 1994, 1995; Cossman 2002). Lastly, I recognize that the globalization of capital and the processes of restructuring have not only exacted a gendered impact (Bakker 1996; Brodie 1995), but that they have also been implicated in the intensification of racial and class based inequalities (Bakker, 1996; Brodie, 1995, 1996; Leach and Yates, 2008; Siltanen and Doucet, 2008). Thus as Brodie (1995:79) reminds us “we should never assume that all of the oppressive strands of restructuring always ‘add up in the same direction’.”

Summary

This chapter has reviewed some of the key concepts and themes that guide my analyses of feminist organizing during the Harris years. Here my intent has not been to summarize at length a number of different bodies of literature, rather I have attempted to highlight how various contributions from these literatures can be used to contextualize my current research project. I have emphasized the importance of feminism in grounding this project and my rationale for adopting a feminist intersectional framework. I have conceptualized “feminist organizations”, “feminist goals” and “feminist practices”. I incorporate the feminist literature on welfare state restructuring and the emergence of neoliberal state forms to highlight the gendered impact of this “transformation of governance” (Harder, 2003). This literature draws out a number of key themes relevant to my study. These include the themes of resistance, privatization, and the intensification and erosion of gender embodied in neoliberal discourses and policies.

This chapter is followed by a more detailed methodological discussion of my case study. For more information on the social research methods I employed in this study, and a short summary of some of the issues that emerged from my experiences as a white feminist academic engaged in a qualitative, critical, intersectional research project, let us proceed to *Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology*.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology: A Feminist Case Study

In this study, I investigate and analyse the narrative accounts of feminist activists and feminist organizations under the Ontario Harris government (1995-2001). My research design and methodology are informed by my theoretical framework, one that incorporates elements of socialist, radical and anti-racist feminist perspectives. This multidimensional or intersectional feminist framework (IFF) (CRIAOW, 2006) emphasizes the intersection of gender, “race” and class in women’s lives. Applying an intersectional approach to my research involves as Simpson (2009) notes, actively incorporating the concept of intersectionality into various steps of the research process (Simpson, 2009:23). Employing such a perspective empowers me as a feminist academic and activist, to centre women’s stories and women’s experiences. Further, this intersectional approach enables me to contribute to the scholarship on women’s activism and resistance by developing comparative analyses based on the “personal narratives” of a diverse group of feminist activists.

In this chapter, I highlight the relationship between my theoretical and methodological approach which not only informs my research agenda, but also my choice of research methods. I consciously situate myself as a feminist researcher engaged in the research process. I provide a more detailed account of my research design and the methods I employed to gather my data. I attend to sampling issues. Ethical concerns, for example issues of confidentiality and anonymity are also addressed in this chapter. In addition, I offer a concrete description of my data analyses. Finally, by way of reflection,

in this chapter I contemplate some of the important personal and professional issues that arose for me as a white feminist scholar engaged in the process of critical, anti-racist, qualitative research.

Overview: Feminist Theory and Research

Between April and November 2002, I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with thirty three feminist activists (N=33) and or organizational leaders in the GTA (including Toronto, Scarborough, Mississauga, Hamilton and Dundas, Ontario). I interviewed feminist activists involved in a number of different feminist and equality seeking organizations focused on labour, anti-racist and anti-violence issues⁴⁰. In addition, I also interviewed grassroots feminist activists engaged in a variety of community based projects. These women were actively involved in social justice, homelessness, health care, disability and peace related issues. Interviews with these women lent individual women's voices to my study, and allowed them to share their own personal stories and activist experiences. The stories of grassroots activists were included to enhance my understanding of feminist political action that emerges from more informal, community based settings.

My decision however, to focus on the experiences and struggles of feminists engaged in the three aforementioned organizational sectors was deliberate. My rationale here was threefold. First, according to Reinharz (1992:166) mainstream academics seldom researched women's organizations or communities and historically this oversight

⁴⁰ For a breakdown of select activists and their organizational affiliations, please see Table One in Appendix A.

often went unnoticed. Recall many “malestream” sociologists are not apt to regard “small, grassroots, social movement organizations founded by feminists as interesting or important” (Ferree and Martin, 1995:9). Reinharz (1992:166-167) has argued, the lack of studies centred on women’s lives and experiences contributed to the “invisibility” and “disappearance” of women’s histories. Further she argues, these omissions produced not only a “distorted” understanding of women and women’s structural locations but “sociology itself [was] distorted” because empirical generalizations tended to reflect men’s experiences and perspectives (Reinharz, 1992:166-167).

Given these past oversights, for the purposes of my study, I chose to interview women only. In this study, I recognize that “women’s accomplishments” and contributions inform and shape the “historical record” (Reinharz, 1992:166) of feminist resistance. By focusing my research on feminist activists, including those structurally located within a variety of organizational and grassroots settings, I hope my work will contribute to a growing body of feminist scholarship on women’s organizing and women’s resistance.

Second, Ian Morrison (1997:73) has argued that members of marginalized and disadvantaged groups in our society often lack a “public voice”. He suggests that the Harris government regularly “refused to consult, meet with or even acknowledge anyone who [didn’t] agree with its agenda . . . and the premier routinely dismiss[ed] anyone who question[ed] [his] vision or agenda as ‘special interests’.” Morrison further notes that a Harris MP reportedly “threatened” to “defund” organizations critical of the government’s “actions or agenda” (Toughill 1995 cited by Morrison, 1997:73). I would argue that

feminist activists working in these three arenas were to use Morrison's (1997) words "routinely" disregarded by the Harris government. Upon being written off as "special interest groups" (Harder, 2003; Morrison, 1997), many feminist activists and organizations saw some of their goals and activities delegitimated (Harder, 2003). Still, feminists have persevered. Even in neoliberal times, dissenting voices have struggled to be heard and to carve out critical, social space(s). Of these dissenting voices, feminist voices are afforded much space in my study.

Finally, feminists working in these three organizational settings take up some of the major issues embodied in anti-racist, socialist and radical feminist scholarship. These women put feminist theory into meaningful political practice on a daily basis. Feminist theory may not be explicit or articulated in an academic sense, but it is part of everyday praxis, employed in an everyday way. Theory is lived, it is embodied and personified in day to day activities, interactions and evident in non-hierarchical models, anti-oppressive policies and communities of practice. The writings of anti-racist feminists and women of colour for example, have drawn attention to the "diversity of feminist theories" and have problematized essentialist notions of "womanhood" and "feminism" voiced by Western, white, middle class feminists (Rezai-Rashti, 2005:83). Many scholars have noted the absence or marginalization of these women's narratives in mainstream feminist paradigms. I have purposively drawn on the narratives of a racially and ethnically diverse group of women. By focusing on "ethno-specific organizations" (Daenzer, 1997), such as the Native Women's Centre and the Ontario Coalition of Visible and Minority Women among others, I aimed to include the narratives of feminist activists from a variety of

racial and ethnic backgrounds. Some of these women's stories speak to experiences of racism and sexism in Canadian schools and the education system (Rezai-Rashti, 2005:91-94). These women's stories critique mainstream feminist agendas. They also focus our attention on how issues of sexism, racism and discrimination continue to shape feminist struggles both theoretically and politically (Rezai-Rashti, 2005:94).

Socialist feminists, on the other hand, have argued the oppressive systems of patriarchy and capitalism together influence women's participation and involvement in paid and unpaid labour. Socialist feminists also argue women's work experiences differ from men's (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005:15). They suggest women's experiences in the public and private sphere vary along class based lines. In an attempt to incorporate socialist feminists concerns of the persistence of gender inequalities in an increasingly market driven political economy, I sought out feminists organizing within organized labour and unions such as the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the United Steel Workers of America (USWA). In these unionized settings, I was able to tap into the stories of both working class and middle class feminist activists situated in a variety of occupational sectors including healthcare, the garment industry and municipal service workers. Issues related to women's participation in the paid labour force, the uneven or gendered impact of economic restructuring, worsening working conditions (i.e. length of work day, pay equity, employment equity, seniority issues) and the lack of accessible and affordable child care figure prominently in union feminist activists narratives - narratives that tended to reflect the basic tenets of socialist feminist thought.

Radical feminists have traditionally theorized around issues related to violence against women, particularly male control of female sexuality and the power differences between men and women (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005:19). They have rallied against sexual assault, pornography and prostitution (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane, 2005:19; Elliot and Mandell, 1995; Nelson and Robinson, 2002; Tuana and Tong, 1995; Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993). Thus my rationale for including women engaged in anti-violence work reflects my attempt to focus attention on the concrete concerns of radical feminists, particularly the violence women experience in their everyday lives. The narratives of women working in sexual assault centres, rape crisis centres, and shelters for abused women and children illustrate Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane's (2005:24) point, that radical feminist's theories and ideas continue to inform our understanding and organizing around the issue of violence against women in society. Together, these three strands of feminist theory bring to light how issues related to gender, "race" and class impact feminists thoughts and actions. They also direct attention to the major issues and concerns of activists working in a variety of organizational and community based settings.

The Interviews

The interviews were designed to gain insight into feminist activists' histories and experiences, as well as perceptions of their struggles, strategies and successes during the Harris years. The interview schedule itself was broken down into five general areas of inquiry including: (1) personal background and history; (2) organizational information; (3) identifiable problems and challenges; (4) processes and strategies and; (5) outcomes

and successes⁴¹. The interview questions tapped into feminists' "ideas and practices" (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1995:373). Many of the questions were the same, modified, and or adapted from Bashevkin's (1998:259) interview schedule, but also reflected some of the ideas researched by Disney and Gelb (2000) in their comparative analyses of eight American feminist organizations. The ten questions were all open ended thereby allowing the women to answer the questions as they saw fit, to use their own words and to express their views and experiences. For instance, following Bashevkin (1998), I asked the women a number of questions related to their organizational ideology and activism such as: "How would you characterize the 'Harris years'?" "What were the major problems you and or your organization encountered during the 'Harris years'?" "What types of processes did you employ to deal with these problems?" and "In your estimation, how effective were these strategies? Would you say that they were successful in producing progressive feminist outcomes?" I did not foresee this to be too difficult an exercise given that organizational leaders and activists are often well versed and practised at fielding questions from various media and funding agencies⁴². The interviews ranged between just over one hour, to almost three hours in length. I conducted face to face interviews with all of the women involved in this project.

⁴¹ For a copy of the interview schedule please see Appendix B.

⁴² As practised public speakers, this familiarity could also pose a potential problem in terms of the candidness of participant responses. In some instances I had to probe activists in order to get them to move beyond the 'well-polished', 'canned' or standard 'run of the mill' response or what Rubin and Rubin (2005:195) refer to as "getting past the party line". For example, I probed by asking follow-up questions such as "can you tell me more about that?" or "could you explain that more for me?" (Neuman, 1997:257). As I have noted elsewhere, (see Anderson and Langford, 2001), another potential problem relates to how leaders or 'experts' may try to control the course of an interview. For example, we note Flick's (1998:92) discussion of this issue. In my experience, this was rare. While there was some variation in terms of the women's ability to articulate their experiences and their willingness to be reflective, most were very accommodating.

As I have done in the past (see Anderson, 1998), potential interviewees were first sent a short, informal letter on McMaster University, Department of Sociology letterhead inviting them to participate in my study. In many cases my affiliation with McMaster was positive. The letter identified the primary objective of my study: to highlight the major difficulties feminists encountered at the hands of the Harris government and the tactics and strategies they employed to meet these challenges. To this end, I indicated that I would like to interview a number of organizational representatives and activists from various groups working in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to find out their views and opinions. I explained that prospective organizations and activists had been identified and selected on the basis of preliminary documentary data I had collected from the local media including newspaper reports, pamphlets, and other information available on the internet. I stated that I would like to gather firsthand, activist accounts and would very much appreciate their participation in this research project. I stressed that I was interested in hearing their stories and experiences.

This initial contact was followed up by a second contact, usually a telephone call to find out whether the prospective participants had received my letter and were willing to take part in my study. I clarified that participation in my study was entirely voluntary; that the women were under no obligation to participate, but that I was hoping that they would consider sharing their experiences with me. Most of women were quite willing to do so and we proceeded to set up a time and place to meet. The majority of the interviews with organizational leaders took place at their office or place of work. I also interviewed grassroots activists in their homes, at coffee shops, restaurants, a pub and in

one instance, in my office at the university. In each of these cases, the interview location was chosen by the participant. At the end of each interview, I also asked the women whether there were any issues that they thought I had perhaps missed or overlooked that they thought were important and that might be important to my study and if so they were encouraged to add any further comments. After I conducted the interviews, I thanked the women and asked them whether they would allow me to contact them again with any follow-up questions or responses that may require clarification.

As the interview stage of the research project progressed, my interviewing skills steadily improved. Taking notes throughout the interview enabled me to focus on what the women were saying and on the experiences and examples they provided. It encouraged me to “pay attention” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Over the course of the interviews, this habit also facilitated probing. It allowed me to paraphrase back to the women what it was I was hearing, that is, what I thought that they were saying and it also gave them an opportunity to respond to, confirm or clarify my interpretation. For instance, during an interview with Beth Jordan, Executive Director of the Assaulted Women’s Helpline (AWHL) she mentioned some of the problems associated with the Harris government’s dismantling of second stage housing. I followed up with:

GA: I wanted to ask a follow up question about second stage [housing] because my understanding of it was that it was completely eliminated, that the entire budget line was eliminated. So what was the impact of that. . .what impact did the ‘Harris years’ have on the women that you serve? I heard you say that this was a devastating impact. Can you elaborate a bit on that?

In another interview, a researcher and policy analyst from Toronto talked about her understanding of the shifts and changes in the social and economic sphere dating back

to the early 1990's characterized by what she saw as a reduction in public services and the detrimental impact she believed those cuts had on women in Ontario. I probed a bit further:

GA: You said before and I wonder if you can elaborate on this, that we've seen a gradual continuation of the shredding of public services and when that happens provincially, federally, internationally, women and children [tend to be] on the short end of the stick.

Interviewee: Women more often than anybody else.

GA: [Women] more than anyone else. . .can you talk a little bit more about that or your sense of that?

Interviewee: Well. . .well I mean part of it is that, for instance you'll find an increase in women dying at the hands of their partner. You find an increase in kids in care. And more pressure on people like CAS...

In these two instances, "paying attention" involved "communicating a sincere interest in what informants [were] saying and knowing when and how to probe and ask the right questions" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:95). Thus "paying attention" and note taking helped me follow along, probe and become a more effective interviewer.

While the majority of the data for my study was gathered from these personal interviews, I also collected a number of primary documents in the form of policy publications, magazines, newsletters, and brochures from local feminist groups. Primary documents are important resources because they can convey significant issues, themes and current activities. These documents can also provide information about the different organizations' founders, leaders, contact persons and the groups' varied histories (Anderson, 1998). Many of the activists accommodated my requests for documents and provided me with copies of their public education and outreach materials. I used this literature to identify organizational mission statements and mandates; cross check and confirm policy positions and areas of organizational importance; and to document

advocacy and types of service provision.

However in order to avoid becoming bogged down with policy paperwork, I made an important distinction between (1) loosely drawing on these documents and (2) analysing them (in conversation with Baines, 2005). I have done the former, I did not explicitly analyse them. I have largely relied on these documents as an important source of background information which assisted me in organizing the data I gathered in the interview process. That being said, in *Whose Feminism, Whose History*, Gluck e. al (1998:52) note that documentary sources have tended to be written by feminists whose “stories” have been “collected”. They also suggest that in some instances, reliance on government funding may shape an organization’s presentation of its goals (1998:52). Therefore, these were two issues that I kept in mind when consulting primary documents published for the purpose of public consumption⁴³.

Sampling Considerations

Who were the feminists and feminist organizations I studied?⁴⁴ How were they chosen? On what basis were they included in my case study? The process of selection and inclusion of participants for my study was crucial. In total, I interviewed 22 women involved in 17 different feminist organizations focused on labour, anti-racist and anti-violence issues. More specifically, I interviewed ten (N=10) women representing four different labour organizations including the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), the United Steelworkers (USWA), and the

⁴³ For a list of the primary documents collected for this study, please see Appendix C.

⁴⁴ For an introduction to and a brief summary of some of the mandates and mission statements of the organizations included in this study, please see TABLE TWO in Appendix D.

Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL). I interviewed women who were union stewards, rank and file members, and executive members. Some were involved in the healthcare sector, others in the garment industry and or municipal services. I also interviewed the executive director of a Toronto based organization that is committed to women's economic self-sufficiency, employment and empowerment.

I interviewed a total of eight women (N=8) working in eight different anti-violence groups such as the Hamilton and Area Sexual Assault Centre (SACHA), the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH), the Assaulted Women's Helpline (AWHL), Nellies; and METRAC (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children). I interviewed the executive directors of these five organizations. The remaining three interviews I conducted were with women working in a variety of unidentifiable shelters for abused women and children, public education and social service organizations. They were employed as shelter workers or managers, front line service providers, and public educators.

I interviewed four women (N=4) engaged in anti-racist feminist work, including the executive directors of the Ontario Coalition of Visible Minority Women (OCVMW) and the Hamilton Native Women's Centre. The two remaining activists were affiliated with an Immigrant Women's Centre and an ethnically diverse Rape Crisis Centre. These two women were employed as an executive director and a support and outreach coordinator respectively. I also interviewed eleven (N=11) grassroots activists, including nurses and health care activists, anti-poverty, housing, peace and disability activists in the

GTA⁴⁵.

I attempted to include a variety of feminist activists involved in a number of organizational sectors that fit Martin's (1990) aforementioned criteria for delineating and analysing feminist organizations. It is noteworthy that most of the activists were structurally located in organizations that either explicitly or implicitly defined themselves as "feminist" organizations. SACHA and Nellies for example, officially identify themselves as "feminist organizations." Most of the organizations openly embrace what Martin (1990) has termed "feminist ideology" and are guided by what one organization studied, Sistering, refers to as "the principles of anti-racism and anti-oppression. Sistering works to change social conditions which endanger women's welfare" (<http://www.sistering.org/mission.html>., 2006:1). Almost all of the organizations endorse "feminist goals" and "values", that is, they stress the importance of women's empowerment, education and social change (see Martin, 1990; Disney and Gelb, 2000). Most demonstrate a shared commitment to community and social justice issues including the eradication of violence, poverty and economic inequality. Like other studies have shown, many groups were established during the heyday of the second wave of the women's movement, namely the 1970's. Organizations such as METRAC, OAITH, and the Hamilton Native Women's Centre were all founded during this time period.

Further, some of these groups such as SACHA, "a feminist organization that believes all women have a human right to live without violence" (<http://www.sacha.ca/home.php>) openly identified themselves as "feminist" organizations, while others

⁴⁵ For a list of Feminist Leaders and Activists Interviewed in the GTA in 2002 see Table Three in Appendix E.

including the Hamilton Native Women's Centre whose stated purpose is to "[provide] safe, emergency shelter for all women regardless of age, ancestry, culture, place of origin or sexual orientation with or without children who are experiencing crisis in their lives due to family violence, homelessness, or conflict with the law" (<http://www.nativewomencentre.com/page.aspx?menu=32&app=159&cat1=404&tp=2&lk=no>), did not. And, yet, even among those groups that did not explicitly describe themselves as "feminist", the ideas and guiding principles of feminism are clearly evidenced in organizational vision or mission statements that emphasized equality and anti-oppression analyses, and so "though the word intersectionality may not [be present], many of its principles are reflected" (Simpson, 2009:25) in non-hierarchical organizational and shared power structures, support for feminist goals of equal power and ending discrimination, and collective and consensus based decision making strategies⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ That some organizations, including those studied here make a conscious effort to operate along non-hierarchical and democratic lines is not meant to suggest that feminist organizations are altogether unique in this respect. Historically, other social movement organizations have attempted to structure and operate along similar lines (in conversation with Storey, 2011). For instance, some of the feminist organizations in this study embodied organizational structures and practices similar to those identified by Gordon (2005) in the "Workplace Project" including participatory organizing; shared decision-making and engaging in collective action. They too could then be understood to be "democratic structures" operating in and around a "democratic culture". See also for example, Serena Cosgrove's (2009) work on Latin American women's leadership experiences in civil society organizations in which she documents women's participation in community development projects. She notes "women in Argentina, Chile and El Salvador are leading marches, giving orders, and talking in to the microphone, but they are also networking, mentoring, and using empowering or participative strategies" (2009:181). Likewise, Kathleen Coll's (2010:133-135) work on immigrant women's involvement in "collectivities" - in grassroots, community organizing and citizenship politics focuses on developing leadership skills among Chinese and Latina women across the divides of difference. Organizing collectively encouraged "the education and mobilization of other immigrants for longer-term and larger-scale political change" (2010:134), and helped to "build women's capacities as social analysts and the development of their relationships with one another through convivencia ensured what have proved to be much more robust, sustainable organizations in the long-term (Zolniski, 2006; Garcia Bedolla, 2005) (as cited by Coll, 2010:135).

The literature on non-profit, voluntary and grassroots organizations also highlights the importance of organizational structure. As service providers, but also "social innovators", Walden (2006:717-718) notes, "grassroots organizations, in particular, are closer to the ground, more familiar with communities, operationally more flexible, not restrained by rigid bureaucracies, and better able to experiment with diverse

Some of the feminists I interviewed were involved in anti-violence organizations such as METRAC which focuses primarily on eradicating violence in women and children's lives. Specifically, METRAC seeks to "decrease and finally eliminate all forms of violence against women and children. METRAC is committed to the right of women and children to live their lives free of violence and the threat of violence" (<http://www.metrac.org/about/about.htm>; 2002:1). In addition, a number of feminists in this study were active in organizations such as SACHA, Nellies, and various shelters that "combine[d] service provision, public education, and advocacy" (Disney and Gelb, 2000:43). Other women were situated within organizations that adopted anti-racist platforms, including an immigrant women's centre that describes itself as an "equality seeking, anti-racist, non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to the social, political and economic inclusion of refugee and immigrant women in . . . and across Canada." Moreover, the centre explicitly recognizes "the differences that evolve from immigrant women's unequal access to power and resources and continuously seek alliances with other civil society actors who are building movements toward equality and continuously seek new strategies. . . that aim to eradicate sexism, racism, poverty, isolation and violence" (<http://www. .on.ca/aboutus.html>, 2005:1-2). Several women were active in labour unions that demonstrated a shared commitment to fairness in the workplace and social and economic issues, including the Ontario Federation of Labour, which prides itself on representing "700 000 organized Ontario workers and provides its affiliated labour councils and local unions with the services in the fields of

communications, education, research, legislative political action, human rights, health and skills” (<http://ofl.ca/index.php/about/>, 2005:3)

That the groups included in my study varied in terms of organizational structure is important to note. According to Martin (1990:195) one of the major structural debates in the existing literature centres on the distinction between “collectivist” or “participatory” and “bureaucratic” or “hierarchical” orientation of feminist organizations. Martin suggests that these internal arrangements inform day to day organizational operations including the distribution of power, work, and decision making, in other words, “the way things are actually done” (1990:195). However, these structures are largely understood to be “ideal types” and Martin stresses that most feminist organizations “are impure mixtures of bureaucracy and democracy rather a single type” (1990:195).

This seems to hold true in my study, as most of the organizations I would say, reflect Martin’s (1990) notion of “impure mixtures”. While some of the organizations were hierarchal in nature, such as the OFL, the CAW, CUPE, METRAC, Nellies, the Hamilton Native Women’s Centre, and Sistering among others, all of these groups stressed the importance of working consultatively with various internal and external stakeholders (e.g. staff, program managers, service providers, rank and file members, volunteers, and communities), either under the direction of an executive, executive director(s) or a board. While the day to day work of the organization may be managed by an executive, executive director or co-directorship per se, most internal relations and decision making processes demonstrate a commitment to feminist organizational goals

and values. SACHA for instance, has adopted what the executive director termed a non-hierarchical “modified collectivist” orientation. This working arrangement I was told favours a collectivist approach through consensus based decision making in consultation with the Centre’s management team. Another anti-violence organization noted that while they are not a “collective”, they tend to engage in collective decision making processes.

In addition, many of the organizations were non-profit, charitable and service or community based groups with office space, paid and unpaid staff and bills to pay (Martin, 1990:201). To do so requires an organizational budget or “the means by which an organization pays for itself” (Martin, 1990:201). To give you a rough idea, the annual budgets of the non-profit and service agencies ranged from approximately \$200 000 (i.e. OAITH) to \$1.5 million dollars (i.e. Assaulted Women’s Helpline) a year. In this study, funding sources included the government (all levels), grants, project or foundation funding (i.e. the United Way), contracts, charitable donations, and membership dues (Martin, 1990:201). Unions included in this study tended to have larger budgets (i.e. CAW National), based primarily on the income generated through membership dues.

I aimed to include women of colour, immigrant women, native women, working class and middle class women as well as young and older women in my study. All the participants were adults over the age of 18 years, but many of the women appeared to be in their early and mid-fifties, though I did not ask their age. The youngest woman indicated to me that she was in her late twenties and the oldest woman in her mid to late sixties. The majority of these women had been involved in feminist organizing for anywhere between ten and forty years of their adult lives. One older woman was visibly

disabled and a bumper sticker on her wheelchair read “Caution: Woman at Work.” A number of women also openly identified as lesbian during our interview sessions. Some of the women appeared to be comfortably middle class, while others I would suggest were situated among the occupational ranks of the working class. A few of the women were retired, but most were still working, supporting themselves and their families. Many of the women were mothers of children of various ages and a few women indicated that they were grandmothers.

In *Studying Across Difference*, Margaret Andersen (2000:82) suggests inclusivity begins by integrating discussions of race, gender and class throughout the entire research process and data analyses. Recognizing that difference shapes women’s material realities and their collective experiences, initially I had planned to interview ten women representing the three different organizational sectors. In the end, I interviewed more women working in the labour and anti-violence sectors than those explicitly engaged in anti-racist activism. The majority of the women I interviewed were white women (N=25) of various ethnicities, including Italian. Approximately one quarter of the women I interviewed (N=8), were women of colour, including women of Jamaican, Barbadian, Korean, Aboriginal and South American descent. Most of the women of colour included in my sample (N=6) were actively involved in either anti-violence or union based organizing. The remaining women were involved in different ethno-specific (Daenzer, 1997) organizations.

During the data collection stage of the research process, I wondered how some feminist activists might respond to an interview request and interview questions posed by

a relatively privileged, white, feminist academic given the somewhat strained relationship that is said to exist between feminist academics and community activists (see for example, Naples, 1998:8). Preston (2000:64) speaks to this strain when she suggests that feminist academics may have greater access to power, privilege and resources given their institutional affiliations. I also questioned my ability to arrange interviews with women of colour, which for solid historical reasons I attributed to the ethnocentrism of the mainstream women's movement. In doing so, I realize that the stories these women of colour relayed to me may, to use Andersen's (2000:82) words "always be partial, incomplete, and distorted." Following Andersen (2000:82), by acknowledging my own social location as a feminist researcher, I recognize that the narratives shared by these women would likely differ from the stories they would tell to a black, working class, lesbian or older interviewee, however, "that does not make their accounts any less true."

Although I consider the GTA to be a very suitable location for studying feminist organizing, the narratives of rural women are noticeably absent in this study. If time and resources had permitted, it would have been desirable to conduct a provincial level study. This would have been a more inclusive venture and would have facilitated further comparative based analyses. For example, feminists organizing in the northern part of the province and or those working in more rural areas may have faced slightly different issues and constraints. How were women and feminists working in such communities impacted, communities that are often isolated and marginalized at the "best of times" (Morrison, 1997)? What stories would these women tell and why? It would be especially interesting to consider what if any, rural/urban differences arose with respect to feminist organizing

and to investigate in what ways these differences operate. And what similarities exist? In what ways may their struggles and strategies be comparable to feminists in the GTA?

To answer these questions, more systematic provincial data need to be gathered. Such a study would also assist researchers wanting to undertake comparative analyses of feminist organizing in other Canadian provinces. It would be interesting to examine whether what has happened during the Harris years mirrors the experiences of feminist claimsmakers in Alberta following four decades of successive Conservative governments (c. 1970 to the present, see for example Harder's 2003 work), and what happened in the province of British Columbia under the premiership of Gordon Campbell (c. 2001 to 2011).

Snowball Sampling

Both activists and organizational leaders were brought into my study via a snow ball sample. Snow ball sampling, also referred to by Neuman (1994) as "network", "chain" or "reputational" sampling is a method for "identifying and 'sampling' (or selecting) cases in a network" for researchers "interested in an interconnected network of people or organizations" (Neuman, 1994:199). Snow ball sampling is a "multistage technique". Neuman states researchers begin the process by identifying a few key people or cases (in this instance, organizational leaders and activists). The sample he says, then builds and "spreads out" given the direct and or indirect linkages to those initial cases. In this way, each person in the sample is tied into an interconnected network of people or organizations (Neuman, 1994:199).

Initially I began by identifying a number of key informants working on sexual

violence and violence against women issues in the Hamilton area, as well as a few well known labour and anti-racist activists engaged in feminist organizing in the GTA. I established contacts with these women through my participation in a number of community based events such as the annual Labour Day Parade and Picnic, the annual Take Back the Night March, Pride Celebrations and the December 6th Memorial. Beginning to develop contacts with these initial actors, I then networked through these women to recruit other potential participants. At the end of each interview session, following Ostrander's (1984:9, 11) approach (as cited by Neuman, 1994:199), I asked the women whether they could recommend the name of another woman they knew who might be willing to talk with me. In this way, by putting me in touch with another person, (i.e. co-worker, friend, volunteer etc.) my sample eventually snowballed to include those leaders and activists identified by at least one other woman active in the existing network.

In many cases, the women responded positively to the interviewees' recommendations that I contact them. I believe these connections afforded me a window of opportunity and lent credibility to me and my study. After I had completed between 20 to 25 interviews, I began to feel confident that I had connected with a number of high profile and influential individuals involved in women's organizing in the GTA. For example, when I asked later interviewees to suggest other potential research participants, the women they suggested were women I had already interviewed or had future plans to meet with. Granted, as Gluck et als. (1998:52) note, these "visible" or "high profile" activists are often easier to "locat[e]" or "trac[e]".

Thus, I am aware that much of the existing research on activists has tended to

focus on the leaders of feminist organizations (Dauphinais, Barkin and Cohen, 1992:332). These authors suggest that feminist “leaders” are typically highly educated, middle class, white women. This gives me pause, because most white women, according to Grahame (1998:388) are not a part of women of colours’ networks. As a white woman, I too recognize that I am not “sufficiently connected with women of colour” which I believe speaks to the larger issue raised by Grahame (1998), that is, of the “absence of white women from the crises of women of colour in their communities” (Grahame, 1998:390-391). Because as Grahame (1998:388) suggests, many white feminists are “unaware” of their networks and activities, racialized women are rarely “called upon as ‘women leaders’ to participate in conferences, forums, talks and information exchanges” (1998:388). Thus, my focus on the narratives of organizational leaders may have contributed and or perpetuated this “unawareness”. Grahame (1998:389) also notes how white feminists need to reconsider our own understandings of “leadership” and revisit how our notions of leadership reflect the definitions and practices of mainstream women’s organizations. As such, Grahame’s (1998) work ties into Pardo’s (1995:357) main argument, in that much grassroots feminist activism, including community based organizing on the part of Mexican American women she studied or “border feminists” often “goes unrecognized as political”.

For example, after completing one interview, as per usual, I turned the tape recorder off. It was then that one woman commented that women of colour may not necessarily engage in traditional forms of “feminist” activism, rather they may express their feminism through choral performances, by staging a play, holding a community

kitchen or a dance. She felt that these activities may not be typically conceived of as activism per se, but that these were events members of her community felt less vulnerable participating in. She stressed this heightened feeling of vulnerability given the recent response of the Toronto police to acts of public dissent. She provided the example of women from her community consciously avoiding engaging in large scale public demonstrations for fear of being reprimanded for something as minor as stepping off of the sidewalk during a rally or protest. Her words echo Karen Flynn's (1998) study of the lives of single, black women in Toronto. Flynn (1998:145) notes "women may engage in different forms of activism that do not always involve demonstrations or involvement in a union, or other political groups. . . For some black women the daily struggle of surviving in a racist, classist, and sexist society is their method of activism."

As a result, I have questioned whether the organizational and activists narratives included in this study reproduce yet another ethnocentric or dominant feminist discourse? And I have often wondered how some feminist activists may feel about what Naples (1998) would call my "'academic' construction of community activism" (Naples, 1998:8). While I wish that I had been able to conduct interviews with more women from diverse backgrounds, I also recognize some of the constraints involved in doing so. Still, guided by my intersectional feminist theoretical framework, I have made a conscious attempt to include the narratives of a diverse group of women in my sample. I also interviewed a number of grassroots activists. By interviewing a number of differently located women, I have made an effort to move beyond an analysis based solely on the experiences of straight, white, middle class women and high profile feminist leaders.

Like many researchers, I began my study by contacting women involved in local advocacy organizations. Simpson (2009:23) in her analysis of intersectionality notes that in some instances the organizations one approaches may not be entirely reflective of the community of groups being studied. Therefore when selecting participants to engage in the research process, she suggests that it is important to approach different types of groups (2009:23-24). I too share Simpson's (2009) concern and it was this thought that provided the rationale in my own mind of the importance of interviewing women of various positions (predominantly organizational leaders, but also members and rank and file) in a number of different women's groups. In my study I made sure to approach a range of advocacy groups including social service, anti-violence, anti-racist, union and the like and as such, I attempted to gain insight into the feminist community via a number of different types of organizations that varied in terms of structure, mandate, membership and leadership. Doing so, enabled me to include and involve marginalized women in this research project as recommended by Simpson (2009:23), who reminds us of this importance when employing an intersectional approach to research (see also Siltanen and Doucet, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

This research project was approved by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB) in January 2002. According to Reinharz (1992:27) "ethical questions are heightened in feminist interview research because feminists try hard to avoid perpetuating the exploitation of women". Care was taken to address participant's perceived vulnerability with respect to the social risks of participation in my study such as the

possible invasion of privacy or reputation. For example, I questioned whether leaders and activists may be embarrassed by their participation and or would their participation fuel potential internal or external organizational conflicts? I strived to minimize the potential social risks to participants involved in this research process.

Interviewees were informed about the general purpose of the study - that it constituted part of my dissertation project - and were asked to sign the appropriate consent form. I provided the women with a copy of the consent form for their records. Only women who voluntarily consented to be interviewed were included in my study. All of the women voluntarily consented to participate. Those leaders and activists who agreed to be interviewed were also informed that they were not required to answer any or all of my questions, and that they were free to end the interview at any time. Interviewees were also advised that they reserved the right to withdraw from the study at any time without question or reprisal. I informed them to notify me directly should they wish to withdraw their participation, and I explained that I would return the tape recorded interview data to them for their disposal.

In terms of anonymity, a number of the women consented to being identifiable. Those women who consented to being identifiable have allowed me to use their names in conjunction with their organizational affiliations and their narratives. For those interviewees wishing to remain anonymous, I have guaranteed their anonymity. All of their names and other identifying features have been removed and if need be pseudo-names have been assigned. In some instances, the interviewees themselves suggested how they might like to be addressed. For example, one woman working in an anti-

violence organization indicated that her comments may be attributed to a “shelter manager”. This was a term she said she felt the most comfortable with and indicated under the auspice of a “shelter manager” she felt able to speak the most freely. Other interviewees were agreeable to being identified as local feminist activists; feminist activists in the GTA; social justice activists; and or labour activists.

Interviewees were also advised that they speak “on the record” and with the women’s permission, I tape recorded all of the interview proceedings. I suggested that the interviews be conducted “on the record” otherwise I would have to rely on detailed hand written notes. All of the women allowed me to tape record our sessions and when I asked the women, none of them said that they were uncomfortable with me taking notes during our interview⁴⁷.

With respect to confidentiality, I assured the women that all of the data, including tapes, hand written notes, or copies of interview transcripts would be kept under lock and key and that the data would only be accessible to myself and my supervisor. I offered to send a copy of the transcribed interviews to all of the participants. Some of the women were interested in receiving a copy, others were more interested in a brief summary of my research findings which I also volunteered to send to them at a later date.

Data Analysis

While the number of women I interviewed may be modest, my sample size facilitates in-depth analyses of women’s personal narratives in the course of this dissertation. Following an inductive, “grounded theory” approach as discussed by Strauss

⁴⁷ One woman I interviewed did express concern as to whether I would be able to read my interview notes. She asked “are you going to be able to understand your writing” and I agreed. She chuckled.

(1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1994) the research interviews I conducted were transcribed and then openly coded. This was an intense process. Interview transcripts “familiarize readers with the people who were studied and enable the reader to ‘hear’ what the researcher heard” (Reinharz, 1992:39). Open coding attempts to condense qualitative data into analytic categories by drawing out relevant themes (Neuman, 1994:407). To do so, I first separated and divided the interview data according to organization or activist and set up specific files (both folder and computer) for each. I began by putting together a running list of recurrent themes, concepts and ideas that emerged from the interview transcripts. As Neuman suggests (1994:407-408), predominant issues, themes, critical events and concrete examples were noted (either highlighted, underlined or labelled) within the transcribed text (and to a lesser extent in the primary documents provided by the groups), and then categorized under the appropriate thematic headings in the ever expanding “list”. Having constructed such a list was advantageous. It not only helps a researcher identify emergent themes but assists one in the process of future open coding and can stimulate further analysis (Neuman, 1994:408). This form of coding, organizing the data, and reflexive analysis was systematically conducted for each interview. Further this process of immersion provided me with what Neuman (1994) refers to as an “intimate familiarity” with the data.

I also made copious notes throughout the data collection and analysis stage, that is, I engaged in what Neuman (1994:409) refers to as “analytic memo writing”. Following Neuman (1994:409-410) these notes have been invaluable in that they offer me another way of sifting through and reorganizing the data: a way to reflect on my findings;

jot down any spur of the moment ideas; form preliminary interpretations; develop logical arguments. I have relied on these notes in many instances and I have done much reading and rereading of them. In short, “qualitative analysis requires more effort by an individual researcher to read and reread data notes, reflect on what is read, and make comparisons based on logic and judgement” (Neuman, 1994:424).

In this study, as I have done in the past (Anderson, 1998), comparisons will be drawn among organizations and activists on the basis of what Mason (1996) refers to as “thematic cross sectional analyses”. According to Mason (1996:158) the logic of cross sectional analysis implies:

making comparisons across the whole of your data set, around certain specified themes. This form of analysis therefore does not insist upon, though can certainly tolerate, a strategic approach to comparison. In other words, the focus of the activity is in comparing everything on the basis of specified themes, rather than selecting specific comparisons in order to test out developing explanations.

Employing Mason’s analytical approach, will not only involve me developing comparative narrative analyses, but will also entail that I “ask questions of my data set” (Mason, 1996:155). In this way, my search for “analytical insight” in this project is grounded in “the actual ideas and practices of women” (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1995:373). By examining the narratives and experiences of activists located in three broadly defined sectors, I expect that these analyses will highlight some interesting patterns in the data set which I use to compare feminist organizational constraints, coping strategies and successes during the ‘Harris years’.

One final note with respect to my data analyses. As a qualitative researcher, I remain conscious of the fact that in this study I am not only using “narrative as a way to

present [my] data” (Bailey, 2007:162) per se. I am also very much aware that I too am engaged in the process of creating a story, and in doing so, feel it important to recognize my role of “researcher as narrator” (Elliot, 2005:152). In feminist fashion, I have written myself in and have woven my own narrative in and around the presentation of my data and results⁴⁸ (in conversation with Storey, 2011).

Feminist Reflections on the Research Process

Much sociological inquiry in general and feminist inquiry in particular, begins with what is meaningful to a researcher. In *Feminist Methods in Social Research* Reinharz (1992:259-260) suggests that feminist researchers often frame “personal troubles” as “intellectual questions”. Following Reinharz (1992:261), I believe it is important to acknowledge how “starting from one’s own experience” can shape and inform the research process. According to Reinharz (1992:258), a feminist researcher is “likely to describe the research process as a lived experience and she is likely to reflect on what she learned in the process.” This involves situating oneself within the context of the research process and examining one’s own social location, not just those of the women participating in one’s study (Andersen, 2000:77). The “personal as political” is a key methodological issue in much feminist research. Not only have I learned much “about” others but I have also, to use Bronstein’s (1982) words, “learned [much] from” the women who participated in my study (Bronstein as cited by Reinharz, 1992:264). Through their shared knowledge, in turn, I have learned more about myself. And I firmly believe that the “creation and sustenance of feminist knowledge is vitally important”

⁴⁸ For a good discussion of the idea of “researcher as narrator” see Chapter 9 in Jane Elliot’s (2005) text, *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

(Crow and Gotell, 2009:xi).

Acknowledging the Social Location of the Researcher

As a feminist sociologist, it is important that I acknowledge my own social location and recognize how my gender, “race” and class positions have shaped me and my engagement in the research process⁴⁹. My introduction to feminism began while I was an undergraduate student at the University of Calgary in the early 1990’s. Through a number of women’s studies courses, I was introduced to feminist theory and practice. A young, white women’s studies professor⁵⁰ introduced me not only to the classic writings of Simone De Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and other second wave feminist theorists, but also to the work of black feminists and the writings of women of colour such as Angela Davis, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins and Audre Lorde. She exposed me to the work of early lesbian feminists including Adrienne Rich and Anne Koedt. I was especially interested in her introduction to the then emerging debates that centred around theorizing the intersections of women’s oppressions, and the theory and research that acknowledged the diversity and differences in women’s lived experiences.

As an undergraduate, I remember coming to the realization that women experience multiple forms of oppression; that the so-called “generic woman” or to use Spelman’s (1988) term, “essential women” in reality does not exist, that we are not all the same, and the implications of this social construction given women’s varied histories and biographies. I recall being introduced to the concepts of “difference”, “diversity” and

⁴⁹ Much like Coll’s experience (2010:146), during our interviews, some participants may have also “indirectly addressed my own subjectivity” - such that my subjective identity impacted “the language the women used in interviews to describe their experiences and critiques.”

⁵⁰ Many thanks to Dr. Barbara A. Crow and her introduction to women’s studies.

“privilege” and began to think about how these constructs inform our everyday social relations, including my own life and relationships. I began to question the role of privilege in my own life and to recognize how it had in many ways, shaped my personal experiences. As I started to unpack what Peggy McIntosh (1988) has referred to as the “invisible knapsack” of “white privilege”, I struggled to understand how women could be the oppressors of other women.

Around this time, I became a volunteer at the University of Calgary Women’s Centre and an organizing member of the December 6th Memorial Committee. I was also involved in SIRENS, a short lived, young feminist collective on campus. The 10-15 women comprising the collective were largely white, middle class students such as myself, engaged in the process of consciousness raising. We would get together for pot luck discussion sessions and hold informal get-togethers either on campus or at someone’s home. As a member of this collective, I participated and volunteered at International Women’s Day celebrations and community led Take Back the Night marches. In the spring of 1994, the collective organized its own rally, a “Take Back the Campus March” at the University of Calgary. This event was intended to draw attention to equity issues and to the “chilly climate” on campus. For me, these early “everyday rebellions” (Steinem, 1983) were safe and empowering experiences.

Upon further reflection, however, I would argue that my initial involvement in these feminist projects was for the most part, social and academic in nature. It was not until I arrived at McMaster University in the fall of 1998 and became a member of CUPE Local 3906 that my involvement and commitment to women’s equity issues became more

public and political. The strike by our local in 1999 had a major impact on me and a number of my peers. The strike centred on tuition issues, benefits, job security and pay. Walking the picket line with other teaching assistants and graduate students politicized me. Soon after the strike ended, I became actively involved in the union executive, first serving as women's rep (1999-2001) and then equity rep (2002-2004). It was through my involvement with CUPE, that I was able to make the connection between "theory" and "practice" a reality in my own life and work, and for that, I am most grateful.

My scholarly interest in feminist politics stems from my own personal involvement and politicization as a white middle class woman engaged in Ontario union politics in the late 1990's and early 2000's⁵¹. Celene Krauss (1998:131) has described this process of politicization as "the ways in which individuals develop a framework of meanings and beliefs that challenge dominant ideologies and empower political action." Her conceptualization of "politicization" best captures my experiences⁵². Thus, my political and activist experiences within CUPE and the labour movement, combined with my academic awakening to intersectional feminist theory and practice have guided my research and have informed the present analysis.

Issues Arising in Feminist Research

Throughout the data collection phase, I was aware of a number of issues and experiences that impacted the interview process, data analyses and the presentation and

⁵¹ Today as a University-College Professor, I am a member of Vancouver Island University Faculty Association (VUIFA) and currently sit on the VIUFA Steward's Council.

⁵² While Krauss' (1999) piece speaks to the experiences of white, working class women's involvement in toxic waste protests, it also nicely characterizes my own left leaning experience. However, the same perhaps could also be said with respect to the issue of the politicization among right wing social movement activists as well.

discussion of my findings. These include: the “stress of interviewing”; developing rapport; “learning to listen”; “the problem of voice” and utilization of interview data; and engaging women as storytellers. Straddling and or attempting to bridge the so called “activist/scholar divide” (Naples, 1998:8) was an ongoing challenge for me as a feminist researcher. As an “insider/outsider”, I experienced what Oakley (1985) referred to as the “stress of interviewing”. Given the largely one-sided nature of the interviewer/interviewee relationship, at times, I internally struggled to relate to the women as people and not as mere data sources (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) or data providers (Oakley, 1985)⁵³. Since I did not have the opportunity to develop any long term, ongoing relationships with these women, I was amazed that in many instances, after only one or two phone calls they were willing to share not only their time (a hot commodity, since many women indicated they were time stressed) but also their personal experiences and stories with me.

When we met, I was often offered something to drink or coffee or tea. Two women and I met over the course of a meal (lunch and dinner) and I interviewed another at a local pub. I interviewed a couple of women, including a member of OWN (Older Women’s Network) in their homes. One Black woman, the former executive director of the Ontario Coalition of Visible Minority Women invited me to her home to conduct our interview and we sat at her kitchen table for almost two hours. During the interview, I

⁵³ This was a struggle for me because with no prior contact or few shared experiences, I felt like an “insider/outsider” (Oakley, 1985), that I was asking much of the participants and giving very of myself little in return. And I often worried that I might be exploiting them and using their stories for my own personal benefit, as it is their stories that form the basis of the data for my dissertation. Still the women who consented to participate did so voluntarily and were generous in their participation. Naples (1998:14) citing Naples and Clark 1996) also speaks of the “insider/outsider relationship to the community”.

was introduced to both her husband and one of her sons whom she scolded for making too much noise in the kitchen sink. Following the formal interview, she showed me to her home office/library located in her basement. There I was told I could look through her collection of materials (books, journals etc.) and that I could borrow whatever I thought I might need. Later on my way out, she showed me through her living room and drew my attention to a number of volunteer and service awards she had received over the years. In particular, she wanted to show me a framed photo of her with the late Lady Diana that was taken during one of her visits to Toronto in which she was recognized for her community activism. She also proudly pointed out pictures of her adult children and grandchildren. After I had thanked her again and was about to leave, she gave me a quick hug good bye. After the formal interviews were completed, a number of the women expressed interest in my background, how far along I was in my studies, what I hoped to accomplish, and wished me success.

Another lesson I learned throughout the interview process was the importance of listening. By “learning to listen” (Anderson et als, 2004; Anderson and Jack, 1991) I mean, I had to listen, really listen and I had to just “[let] people talk” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:94). I had to resist the urge to want to interrupt and probe when something they said peaked *my* interest. I generally followed Taylor and Bogdan’s (1984) suggestion, and waited for a natural break in the conversation and then attempted to refocus our discussion either by following up on something they had already mentioned, or by moving on and asking another question. Still it was difficult. “Learning to listen” also made me keenly aware that I was not the expert in the interview situation which differs

from the paradigmatic interviewer-interviewee hierarchy. I did not perceive the women as subordinates, rather many of the women were far more knowledgeable than I about the history of certain struggles, the order of events and the outcomes of policies and practices. As such, I did not present myself as an “expert” in the interview situation, rather I attempted to engage the women themselves as “experts” in terms of their own lived experiences (Andersen, 2000:80).

In feminist qualitative research, much has been written about the importance of rapport. Rapport involves engaging people and enabling them to “open up” about themselves and their experiences (McGoodwin, 2001; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984), however gaining and maintaining rapport is certainly not a “taken for granted” on my part as a feminist researcher. The following example reflects the importance of establishing rapport and the impact rapport has on individual personalities and negotiating different stages of the interview process.

Over the phone I contacted a woman whom another interviewee had recommended I get in touch with. Initially she was very abrasive. Her immediate response was to say that if I had already spoken to Vilma, that she couldn’t see why it was necessary for me to speak with her as well. I continued by saying that I was following up on Vilma’s suggestion and I mentioned that perhaps she may have a slightly different analyses or perspective to offer. I thought it might be helpful to hear her take on similar events in the same time period. She then relayed that she was very busy, working out budgetary issues. At that point, I indicated that I appreciated how busy she must be and suggested that meeting at a later date may be more convenient for her. I offered to

wait and work around her schedule. She responded that she was always busy and would rather do it sooner than later, and suggested getting together the following Thursday. She then provided me with detailed directions to her office in Toronto.

When I met with her the next week, she was still somewhat guarded. I entered the office, introduced myself and asked her if she was Eileen. She retorted something to the effect “well I’m the only here, aren’t I?” Introductions then followed. We sat down at a board room table and I began to give her an overview of the project and proceeded to go through the consent form with her. She voluntarily agreed to participate. I then told her I had a series of ten questions that I was going to go ask and she interrupted me and asked to see the interview schedule. I offered it to her for her to peruse. She flipped through it for a minute or two, looked up and said to me, “you know OAITH is a provincial organization, we’re not just based in the GTA.” I agreed with her, that I had realized that on the basis of my background research. I said that I thought that she may be able to offer an unique perspective given the number of organizational entities located throughout different regions of the province. She seemed appeased. I asked her if she had any other questions before we began, and she said no so I began to ask my first question.

Once the “official” interview started, the tone in the room changed. The interview itself ran rather smoothly. Her responses were both detailed and informative. I think, in part, this may have been due to her past interview experiences, as the executive director and public voice of OAITH. Still, when I asked how her organization would describe the Harris years she quipped “how many words do I get” and I replied “as many as you want.” In fact, the interview lasted almost three hours and we had to take a washroom

break about three quarters of the way through. After the interview, she retrieved some publications including *Locked In, Left Out. Impacts of the Progressive Conservative budget cuts and policy initiatives on abused women and their children in Ontario* (1996) and “*No More!*” *Women Speak Out Against Violence* (2000) which she co-edited and gave me personal copies. She also showed me a few anti-violence related websites and sent me on my way saying “I hope you get an ‘A’ on your paper.”

Drawing on a wealth of interview data, this project presents a collection of women’s voices, as such it is “multivocal” (Naples, 2003). That said, I think it also important to speak to the representativeness if you will, of the interview data and my use of some “interview material (or some women’s stories) above and beyond that of others” (in conversation with Storey, 2011). While I do not want to overstate the issue, I would suggest that again this reflects my understanding of the importance of attending to “voice” in this project, but it also draws attention to the larger issue of “the problem of voice” (Holloway and Biley, 2011) evidenced in feminist qualitative research in general.

According to Holloway and Biley (2011:970) “being a qualitative researcher means being accountable – for the choice of data and their interpretations”. But being accountable also poses a number of dilemmas, particularly when we as critical, feminist scholars present our research accounts or findings as stories. As we craft and tell stories, we are often reminded that “there are a number of participants in any study. Whose voices do we give more or less weight? Those of the vocal individuals? The quiet participants? Those we like more, or those who seem to be more honest?” (Holloway and Biley, 2011:972). And this project is no different. The stories of high profile and

coalition leaders for example are well cited in the analyses that follow, but these stories also garner support from the other women I interviewed.

Being accountable then involves keeping these ideas in mind. In each of the data chapters that follow, we hear a range of women's voices. Chapter Four for example includes the voices of twenty two different women, ranging anywhere from one to six times. Likewise, Chapters Five and Six include the voices of twenty two and nineteen different speakers respectively, ranging anywhere from one to a maximum of nine times. By drawing on a range of quotations and passages, I aim to "illustrate such features as: the strength of an opinion or belief; similarities between respondents; differences between respondents; the breadth of ideas" (Hancock, 1998:23). The inclusion of a number of different speakers further challenges the notion that there is a monolithic "feminist voice", although it may be the case that some voices are more prominent than others.

Granted, some individuals who participated in this study are quoted a great deal, but this need not be interpreted as necessarily problematic, provided we as qualitative researchers recognize that "the participants, readers and the researcher together shape the text" and "the voice of the participants is presented through the reflexive and discursive lens of the researcher and the reader" (Holloway and Biley, 2011:973). It may be the case that some of the interviews I conducted just turned out better than others (in conversation with Storey, 2011). Some of the key informants I interviewed were high profile individuals, women particularly adept at public speaking and fielding questions from a variety of sources and their responses were often well versed, professional and rich in terms of content and detail.

Of course it could also be the case that some of the similarities, differences and the breadth of interview materials may also be understood as a reflection of the “iterative” (Dohan, 2004) process of my research, and how aspects of the interview process changed or evolved and perhaps even improved throughout the study. As the process of data collection proceeds, researchers and interviewers often learn more about past events and issues that they may not have known much about in the earlier stages of their research. By undertaking subsequent interviews, we gain greater insight into the importance of said events and the saliency of certain story lines (in conversation with Storey, 2011). We are then also better positioned to probe interviewees and or to ask more specific or follow up questions that we did not conceive of at the outset of our study. Therefore, the knowledge gleaned as a result of our ongoing participation in the research process itself, paired with our engaging in preliminary data analyses (Dohan 2004) no doubt shapes and informs or “structures” the interviews that follow, given that our research skills and expertise likely “evolve with time and experience” as well (Dohan, 2004).

Lastly, in this project I have attempted to actively engage women in the process or act of “storytelling” (see for example Beth Roy’s (1998) work)⁵⁴. Life stories provide “unique and rich data that cannot be obtained from experiments, questionnaires, or observations” (Lielich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilbert, 1998 as cited by MacKinnon et al., 2006:70). Some authors maintain “the powerful impact of personal stories is most certainly not captured by statistics and or other quantitative measures” (Mackinnon et al.,

⁵⁴ This also raises questions such as “what is a good story” and or “who is a good storyteller?” as noted by Gubrium and Holstein (2009) in their recent book *Analyzing Narrative Reality*. See Chapters 16 and 17 for their discussion of “narrative adequacy”.

2006:70). Beth Roy (1998:98) among others has suggested that “storytelling is a political act. How we portray the past, ourselves, and our fellows can defend or contest social arrangements.” Citing Irwin Zarecka’s (1994) work, she further argues that our memories can be “distorted” but that “it is precisely in these distortions. . .that political arguments reside.” Roy maintains that the stories that “appear in memory as ‘truths’, are not accidental. Instead, they mediate the social relations of power and hierarchy with great force and constitute a concrete link between individual consciousness and social structure” (1998:99).

Both Judy Giles’ (2002) work on memory and personal narratives and Barbara Laslett’s (1999) make a similar point. Giles suggests “the storyteller ‘forgets’ or selects specific experiences, and the listener’s questions elicit certain experiences” (2002:25), while Laslett (1999:392) drawing on Stein’s (1997) work also notes that personal narratives can be structured by the “research question at its focus.” Moreover, our memories can “fail” us and according to Karen Fields (1994:89):

leaving blanks, and memory collaborates with forces separate from actual past events, forces such as an individual’s wishes, a group’s suggestions, a moment’s connotations, an environment’s clues, an emotion’s demands, a self’s evolution, a mind’s manufacture, and yes, even a researcher’s objectives (Fields (1994) as cited by Roy 1998:98-99).

Involving women in the process of remembering and engaging them in this kind of “story telling” (Roy, 1998) and or “memory work” (Giles, 2002) afforded them an opportunity to exercise agency in terms of what stories they chose to tell me and what memories they decided to share. I will never know for certain whether what the women told me was the “truth” and frankly, I am not searching for “truths” per se (in

conversation with Sugiman, 2003). Thus the stories and memories the women shared with me were likely based on a combination of the questions I posed, who I am, what I am hoping to do with the information, and the realities associated with making their words public. I expect that they made a conscious decision as to which stories they would share and tell. I realize that as such, I was not privy to what Scott (1990) has termed their “hidden transcripts” of the Harris years, or “those stories people only tell among themselves” (Scott 1990 as cited by Roy, 1998:129). And in this way, the process of engaging in story telling itself becomes a political act, and it may also then be understood as an act of resistance (Roy 1998; see also Brown and Strega, 2005 for a discussion of resistance). Not only can we begin to see how women exercise a sense of control in the construction of their narratives, but also as Nancy Naples (2003:3) notes, “how power operates in the research process and in the production of narrative accounts.”

Summary

This study examines how a number of feminist organizations and activists fared during the Harris years (1995-2001). I aim to ground my analyses of feminist organizing in a close reading of the women’s narratives, remaining cognizant of the fact that my analyses, reflect but one reading of these data, when in fact there may be several different ways of reading and interpreting these women’s stories. By drawing on the personal narratives of thirty-three women active in a number of social policy arenas, this study and my analytical stories thereof highlight the major problems feminists faced under the Harris government, their organizational responses and their strategies for change, and considers whether these practices were able to produce progressive outcomes. The

women's narratives reveal a number of important issues, including the ongoing tension between service provision and political action (Spalter-Roth and Schrieber, 1995; Disney and Gelb, 2000) experienced on the part of most social service organizations and their community support networks; the struggle to secure funding; and the larger struggle to maintain a feminist agenda in an anti-feminist, anti-equality climate. These and other emergent research findings will be presented and analysed in the following three data chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

Feminist Challenges: Stories of Struggle

If you wanted to design a system that was intended to roll back the clock for women, to squeeze them out of the workplace, and force them into stereotypical roles that made them more vulnerable in the home, that made them more vulnerable in the workplace and in society, I don't know how better you would do it than the approach that the Ontario government is taking . . . It seems like everything is designed to that end. It is such a clear anti-gender equality agenda. And if you are a newcomer in society, as the majority of people in Toronto are, if English isn't your first language, if you are a person of colour, and you're facing racism, then just compound all those problems I don't know how many fold (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

In this chapter I present and analyze women's narratives that reveal some of the challenges differently located feminists organizing around labour, race and anti-violence issues experienced at the hands of the Harris government (1995-2001). I explore the "brutal" and "mean-spirited" legacy his government's "slash and burn" policies have had on women and feminist organizing and activism. The women's narratives recounted in this study problematize the "one size fits all" approach to policy making" (Siltanen and Doucet, 2008:190), the gendered, racist and classist nature of the policy changes and related budget cuts introduced by the Harris government. Like Morrow et als. (2004:364-365), I argue that budgetary cuts to one area of the social safety net eroded supports in other areas and served to (re)entrench gender, class and racial inequality.

The women's narratives also suggest that feminist organizations, particularly gender and race based women's organizations in the public sector, struggled financially. Many anti-violence and anti-racist activists endured fear and intimidation and in some instances felt that their organizational voices, as dissenting voices, were either stifled or silenced during the Harris years. The government's characterization of women's

organizations as “special interest groups” or “advocacy based-groups” undeserving of government funding (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:24; Harder, 2003), created tensions between organizational service provision and political action (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995) on the part of social service providers. Further, many of the women’s stories expressed the difficulties involved in maintaining feminist organizational principles in the face of adversity.

In short, my findings suggest that the emergence of neoliberalism in Ontario during the Harris years “undermined” feminist organizing around women’s equality rights (Morrow et al. 2004:358). I argue that the resulting shift in social policy simultaneously eroded and intensified unequal social relations (Brodie 1994, 1995; Cossman 2002; Haraway 1991) and that feminist organizational narratives in favour of strong social programmes, social cohesion and collective notions of citizenship (Cohen, 1997; Bashevkin, 2002 as cited by Morrow et al., 2004:371) were marginalized in a socio-political climate that sought to individualize, privatize or naturalize social and political problems, and do away with welfare state solutions to equity issues (Bashevkin, 2002 as cited by Morrow et al 2004:371; see also Brodie, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002). The women’s stories described and analysed here, also lend support to my argument that the emergence of neoliberalism has had a negative and disproportionate, albeit uneven, impact on women (Brodie, 1995): including poor women, working class women, women of colour, immigrant women, Aboriginal women, abused women, and even white, middle class women, who all “suffered as both clients and public service providers” (Bashevkin, 1998:93) during the Harris years. To use the words of one of the women I interviewed,

“women were assaulted on all fronts.”

Feminist Reflections of Harris’ Legacy: “Compounding Cuts” and “Policy Shifts”

As Glenda Simms (as cited by Brodie, 1995:81) has aptly noted “life is not gender neutral and neither are government decisions.” Budgetary constraints and policy changes are typically experienced the most intensely by women dependent on the welfare state such as lone mothers, women with disabilities, Aboriginal, and homeless women (Battle and Torjman, 2001; Bezanson and Noce, 1999; Brodie, 2002; Christopher et al., 2002 as cited by Morrow et al., 2004:366). Virtually all of the women’s narratives expressed concern about the deep cuts to social assistance, child care, the lack of affordable housing, and the elimination of employment equity levied by the Harris government. Almost all of the women’s stories suggested that having to contend with the fall out of this “social policy by stealth” (Battle, 1990) was a major challenge, not only for feminist organizations themselves, but for their various constituents (i.e. clients, participants, volunteers, rank and file members, employees) and or the women their organizations were mandated to serve and represent.

In this section, I identify a number of arguments that I wish to build upon and discuss in relation to feminist’s reflections of the Harris years. First I would like to suggest that all of the women’s narratives speak to the growing inequality that they saw emerge during this time period, particularly inequalities operating along gender, race and class based lines. Second, following the introduction of Harris’s numerous budget cuts and policy changes, these stories of struggle indicate that it was women who were most often impacted and burdened and that it was women (as activists or members of women’s

organizations) who often laboured to pick up the pieces and or to try and soften the neoliberal blow to women's equality rights. More work was put onto women's shoulders, and it was women who either absorbed and or were expected (primarily through their paid and unpaid labour) to close the gaps caused by the cuts to social programs and services. These government decisions were largely understood to have created and fostered a culture of mean-spiritedness and feminists of all stripes tended to view the cuts as punitive, deep and uneven. Lastly, there was much agreement on the part of feminists that the negative effects of these changes would be long lived and very difficult to undo.

Increased Gender Inequality

Most of the feminists in anti-racist and anti-violence organizations argued that the budget cuts were a blatant attack on women's equality rights and that abused, poor and low income women, mothers, women of colour and immigrant women they sought to serve and or represent often found themselves worse off as a result of Harris' policy changes. Stories from the feminist front line tell us that few areas of women's lives were left untouched. As one labour executive commented, women's voices are effectively silenced when equality and accessibility issues are not part of the political agenda and that is harmful to society. She said:

. . . strong social programs are an equality measure . . . Right wing governments are an attack on women's equality rights. You cannot cut back on the public sector, you cannot cut back on the social infrastructure without attacking women's rights. When you attack those measures in society: access to education, access to social services, when you fail to provide child care, when you cutback on funding for women's organizations, you fail to fund organizations like NAC, you intentionally silence women's voices. Obviously you are attacking those rights . . . I think it does massive damage. I think all we can do now is to fight and organize to protect what we have (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

OAITH reported that shelter workers in Ontario observed that “a significant number of women in Ontario [were] now making decisions to remain in, or return to abusive situations based primarily on barriers created by budget and service cuts” (OAITH, 1996:27; see also Morrow et al., 2004). As another woman working in the anti-violence sector put it, “women were assaulted on all fronts.” The Director of an anti-violence organization characterized the Harris years as follows:

. . . we have an erosion of the social safety net. The huge cuts to welfare are absolutely devastating for women who experience violence. So it made our work that much more difficult. Women will not necessarily leave a violent situation if they have no way to feed their children. The other piece is that there is no housing. There is a moratorium on building and that needs to stop. That has been absolutely devastating. The cuts to subsidized child care and the lack of any real commitment to universal child care is entirely problematic. They are basically trying to turn back the clock on all the labour advances that we've made, have had a huge impact on the work that we do as well. So for us, all the things that happened during the Harris years impacted those three key areas. Women's equality rights. So whenever there is an erosion of any of those rights, you see an impact in direct service, in what we're able to deliver. The feeling of despair. You know, there are times when we didn't know what to say to a woman because she's like, 'well I'm going to stay here and get the shit kicked out of me because I've got nowhere to go. I can't go to a shelter. My child is severely disabled and needs supports and the shelter has no funding to give me. What am I gonna do?' And what is she going to do? Where is she gonna go? And all these things are intersected by the failings around race and class and culture and language . . . (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

In fact, the women's narratives were unanimous in their critique of the government cuts to social programs and their negative impact on women's equality rights and women's daily lives. The cuts made it more difficult for women to access social services, child care, safe, affordable housing, education, training and employment. “For women, everyday life can be a site of political struggle” (Sudbury, 1998:56 citing Essed, 1996:97) and for single women, mothers, abused women, racialized women, low income women

and working women, cuts to the social safety net, especially social assistance and child care programs made the day to day struggle to “earn enough and care enough” (Jenson, 2004) much harder. An employment service provider described the all-encompassing, and negative long term impact of the Harris years on women’s lives as follows:

In every area of their lives - from access to food, access to service, access to social assistance, to the demands that were placed on them around child care, to the lack of understanding about the real conditions of women’s lives, to the forcing of women to stay in abusive situations because they could not even get into a shelter. Every element of women’s lives and we will continue to see the impact of that for many years to come . . . The government may be gone, but the implications for women’s lives have been significant (Executive Director, Women’s Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

Women Pick Up the Pieces

There was a common assertion that women both as activists and as workers were the ones called on to “close the gap” or “clean up the mess” given the erosion of the welfare state model under Harris’s brand of neoliberalism. A feminist activist in the criminal justice system commented that in many ways this was a reoccurring problem. She believed that women are constantly the ones called on to “clean up the mess”:

Again, it’s so old. The men come in, they make a mess and women come in and clean it up. That’s what I see. Their legacy is for us to pick up the pieces . . . to me it’s almost like we’re cleaning up yet again. We’ll be mopping up behind . . . We’ve been trying very hard to be the band aid in all of this, being the best we can with the clients we have, with the money and resources we have, but it’s always this sense of mopping up after. . . (Criminal Justice Worker, Hamilton, 2002).

And a labour activist spoke about the gendered nature of the labour involved in closing these gaps:

Women really close the gap in a lot of ways, because they provide the community services and the community infrastructure among different communities. But when you talk about a community, a lot of the time, [women] are the community and even if there’s a male leader in the community, the women really are spending the

time providing that infrastructure (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

This theme mirrors Harder's (2003:157-158), who notes how women's voluntary and community based work is often expected to fill such a void, and the resulting impact it exacts on activists and organization's ability to engage in advocacy.

A Mean-spirited Culture

The women's stories also spoke to what they interpreted as a "mean spiritedness" and "viciousness" exhibited on the part of government. They argued that the Harris government legitimized the marginalization of vulnerable groups of citizens (Bezanson, 2006). As one working class woman suggested, it was a case of the "classic blame the victim all the way through." There was "a demonization of anybody who expressed an opinion that wasn't mainstream government support." A shelter manager commented that this "blame the victim" mentality legitimized the denigration of vulnerable groups in society, especially poor women and racialized women and eroded any sense that equality was a government priority, something that she (among others) found quite alarming:

It just gave power to the voices in our community that wanted to blame people and individuals; that wanted to have an individual analysis; that wanted to talk about the 'pull up your bootstrap' stuff and 'if you just work hard enough you get ahead'; and the blaming the victims stuff; and that you're poor because you don't work hard enough or you're poor because you're lazy or you're abused you know, that's not so great, but go get a restraining order. . . It gave people who had kind of scary things [to say] a forum and in fact, it legitimized those arguments. So we could blame poor people. We could blame abused women. We could blame minorities. So it stopped equality. It stopped all those things that were moving forward. They weren't priorities anymore. . . So it became legitimate to put poor people down. It became legitimate to talk about how 'those immigrants were taking our jobs' and all sorts of crazy stuff. It just legitimized some very scary opinions (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

The Executive Director of a woman's employment agency agreed. She maintained that

the language used by senior government officials sanctioned the targeting of marginalized groups and that this rhetoric then became an acceptable form of public discourse. This rhetoric served to reinforce the dominant narrative, grounded in neoliberal ideology within the public mind:

They gave people a way. . .the language to describe a really hateful kind of targeting of marginalized people. And they gave people a language to be very hateful and to continue to disenfranchise and marginalize people further. So they gave them a way to talk about 'welfare bums' and you had Ministers, elected Ministers talking about not giving people cheques, because they were going to buy beer. You had elected officials, leaders of the Province talking in this manner and really quickly, a legitimization that it was ok to talk about people that way. . . There was a collective sigh of 'yeah, that's right, that's right', with the finger pointing and the language. Nobody really knew how to talk about it, until we had politicians giving us the language and [then] it was acceptable language (Executive Director, Women's Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

Similarly, a Toronto labour activist and co-chair of the Toronto Days of Action stated:

. . . the mean spiritedness, I mean he [Harris] did appeal to the absolute worst in human nature. I mean, I think everybody has a streak of selfishness in them and he appealed to that. He made that legitimate. He sort of turned the whole Province of people into, 'I'm ok' (laugh) 'and that's all that counts', which I think is absolutely appalling for somebody in a position of authority. That's not what the reins of authority are all about (Linda Torney, Labour Activist and Co-Chair Metro Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

This mean spiritedness on the part of government contributed to an increased sense of financial poverty and elicited an emotional and personal response among some activists. The Executive Director of an immigrant women's centre in the GTA poignantly recalled her experience of being belittled. She also remembered feeling depressed and humiliated. She characterized the Harris government's cruelty and collective lack of respect for women and in particular, immigrant women in this way. She said:

It was very, very depressing. Very depressing because we lost practically control, we were humiliated . . . We were humiliated because they began to take the

benefits, the safety net away from us and we were not prepared. I say we, I speak with we because I am a woman and I share the feelings of many other women and it affects me because I feel even more powerless that I cannot help other women recover from that. He mocked me, he made a laughing stock out of us. He was cruel and he humiliated us. I remember when he said that women would stay home, that money, welfare were being quote “for beer” and I thought it was horrendous and I also thought it was just horrendously humiliating to calculate how much it would cost to eat and what kind of food we had to eat. I cannot forgive him for that . . . Yes so I believe that lack of respect, not for me, it is lack of respect for women, for immigrant women, a woman who has an accent and it’s diminishing, it’s demeaning (Executive Director, Immigrant Women’s Centre in GTA, 2002).

When asked how she would describe the Harris years, a socialist feminist active in the labour and women’s movements for over 25 years recalled that her initial response was also a very emotional one. She suggested that she was angered during the Harris years and the thing that angered her the most was that Harris created a very “mean spirited society” (Linda Tourney, Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

Long Lived Effects

Many of the women’s narratives indicated a belief that Harris’ legacy would be long lived. In general, there was a sense that women and women’s organizations would continue to feel the impact of the cuts for years to come. As a result, many feminists believed it would take a long time, perhaps years for women to recover from the cutbacks and policy changes. As Angela Robertson, the Executive Director of Sistering explained:

I think the legacy is (pause), increased poverty, reduced social services and social support, and that it will take such a long time to recover from that. The legacy is the knowledge that change will not happen quickly and for an agency like us, it means the knowledge that the numbers of women and the conditions that we see women in, we will continue to see women in those conditions for a long time (Executive Director, Homeless Women’s Shelter, Toronto, 2002)

The Executive Director of METRAC concurred. She stated that it would take time to overcome the change in public sentiment and redress the situation:

[T]he legacy it's gonna to leave is increased poverty and I don't just mean financial poverty. There's a more mean-spirited atmosphere and attitude. So five years from now, as we continue to work as feminists, particularly on the issue of violence against women, no matter who's in power, we're still gonna be cleaning up the mess from this. Seven years with no social housing being built is not something you can fix just by having a new government in place . . . It's gonna take years to eradicate that. Years (Executive Director, METRAC, Toronto, 2002).

Summary: Feminist Critique of Effects and Logic of Neoliberalism

Many feminists maintained there was little interest on the part of the government “in the human consequences of [its] fiscal off-loading” (Bashevkin, 1998:132, 235). Rather their emphasis on “‘fiscalized’ social policy” (Morrow et al, 2004:360) supported feminists suggestions that Harris’ “‘bottom line’ [was] more than an exercise in fiscal ‘efficiencies’” (OAITH, 1998:37). The women’s narratives analysed here highlight the “idea that social entitlements (i.e. to adequate income, to shelter and to live free of violence) are important components of citizenship and equality, [are] being undermined by neoliberal state values, expressed in federal and provincial policy shifts that favour self-sufficiency and economic competitiveness over a strong welfare state” (Morrow et al., 2004:374). One union feminist characterized the Harris years as follows:

I would describe it as an anti-democratic, macho, and anti-equality in the broadest sense, in terms of women's equality, economic equality. . . anti-democratic in terms of not even willing to discuss, not even deigning to talk to the other side. So highly partisan. Basically a “fuck you” attitude to everybody who didn't vote for them. . . And they have this notion that anyone who organizes around equality rights are to be dismissed, because they're special interest groups. So you are already going into a meeting with them disadvantaged, in fact, they have characterized you as wanting something that other people, you know, wanting more than you deserve. When in fact, we see

that quite differently. We see we are wanting what we are entitled to both under the law and morally (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

Feminist analyses are telling because they illustrate how gender as a social construction has been integral to the neoliberal project of restructuring and how gender is often “taken for granted” on the part of policy makers (MacGregor, 1997:105). And yet gender is all but absent in the dominant discourse around neoliberal restructuring (see for example work by Bezanson, 2006; Leach and Yates, 2008; O’Brien, 2008). The cutbacks to social services and equality programs had a great impact on women’s daily lives, “devastating” even (MacGregor, 1998:105). The material conditions of women’s lives became increasingly circumscribed and defined by neoliberal ideology and embodied in the discourses of privatization, individualization and familialization (Fudge and Cossman, 2002). The impact of Harris’ privatization project also increased inequalities in and among women along the lines of race and class. The “growing inequality among women is in part generational. It is also racialized” (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:25). Fudge and Cossman (2002:409-410) note, “the combined effect of these privatization policies has been to widen the gap in the living situations and life chances between women who are white, born in Canada, well-educated, able-bodied, and live with another adult and those who are members of visible minorities, recent immigrants, or disabled, those who lack higher level education, labour market skills, and an adult partner, deepening poverty for women already on the bottom on the income ladder” (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:409-410).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Recent statistical data documenting women’s poverty, food bank use, homelessness and experiences of violence echo the stories recounted in these participant’s narratives, stories that tell us how women’s day to

day lives were impacted as a result of the changes the Harris government made to Ontario's welfare state. The statistical material compiled and presented below is therefore largely intended to supplement and complement the qualitative data collected and analysed here, in order to more fully convey the detrimental long-term impact these changes have had on women in the GTA. (1) Poverty: "Government policies contribute to women's poverty" (Townson, 2000:8). We hear in these women's narratives that the feminization of poverty and child poverty was entrenched during the Harris years. Women as the head of single parent families exhibit some of the highest rates of poverty in Canada, as many rely on social assistance, and rates remain low (Townson, 2009:1). Townson (2009:1) notes that when adjusted for inflation, most welfare incomes peaked in 1994 and have since continually declined, especially in Ontario where "a lone parent's income has dropped by over \$5,900, and a couple with two children have lost more than \$8,400." Moreover, citing a National Council of Welfare report, Townson (2009) states that welfare incomes in 2006 represent less than 66% of the poverty rate in a about 50% of the households studied (Townson, 2009:1).

According to the 2003 report Card on Child Poverty in Ontario, familial and child poverty persist in Ontario (2003:1). Utilizing child poverty data prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development Income Trends in Canada 1980-2000 and Statistics Canada 13F0022XCB, Ontario Campaign 2000 (2003:1-2) reports that 390,000 children live in poverty in Ontario and that the "child poverty rate of 14.4% for 2000 remains significantly higher than the 11.4% figure achieved during the peak of the last economic boom in 1989." Equally troubling is the finding that 43% of children in female lone parent families live in poverty and that "low-income female lone parent families remain, on average, \$8,600 below the poverty line. Among low-income two parent families, the gap between income and the poverty line actually widened by nearly \$900 since 1996 to almost \$10,500 by 2000" (2003:1). The report card suggests that economic growth and tax cuts have not addressed the income security needs of Ontario families, nor has undercutting programs that many disadvantaged families count on (2003:2). The report calls for timely investments to be made in five key areas including jobs programs; social assistance; early childhood education; housing; and public education, all of which are needed to eradicate family and child poverty (2003:1). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has also addressed issues related to women's poverty as part of its "Growing Gap" series. See for example Shelia Block's June 2010 publication "Ontario's Growing Gap: The Role of Race and Gender" (<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/reports/docs/The%20Role%20of%20Race%20Ontario%20Growing%20Gap.pdf>, downloaded January 4th, 2012). Block (2010:3-4) reports racialized women encounter racism, sexism and earnings differentials in the paid labour market. For example, racialized women not only earn less than non-racialized women (87.4 cents to every non-racialized women's \$1.00) and racialized men (73.6 cents compared to \$1.00), but they only earned 53.4 cents for every \$1.00 earned by non-racialized men in 2005 (2010:3-4). The intersection of race and gender inequality also impacts rates of family poverty. In 2005, 18.7% of racialized families lived in poverty, compared to 6% of non-racialized families (2010:4).

(2) Food bank use: Hunger and food security issues are also indicative of poverty. Between May 1996 and April 1997, Tarasuk and Beaton (1999) in partnership with the Daily Bread Food Bank surveyed women in Toronto families who used emergency food programs. The women surveyed ranged in age from 19 to 48 years, 63% of the women were born outside of Canada but few were relative newcomers and the majority of their families were reliant on some form of social assistance (1999:110-111). These authors also found "90% reported household incomes which were less than two-thirds of the 'poverty line'", "94% reported some form of food insecurity over the last 12 months" and "seventy percent reported some level of absolute food deprivation, despite using food banks" (Tarasuk and Beaton, 1999:109). In addition, The Daily Bread Food Bank's "Who's Hungry? 2004 profile of food bank clients" reported 175,000 people in the GTA used their programs on a monthly basis. The average age of clients is 41 years; 53% of the clients are women, 47% are men, and 36% are children (2004:1). Further, their "Who's Who?" report indicates 26% of food bank clients are single parent families, and that there are 37% more single parent families than there are couples with children (2004:1).

(3) Homelessness: Consider also for instance, how the Harris government's moratorium on social housing has (en)gendered homelessness. Shelter and service provider data compiled by the Ontario Women's Health Council in their report "Health Status of Homeless Women" (2002:1) indicate that women, single

Research by Fudge and Cossman (2002) and Cossman (2002) and among others has shown, for example, that the Harris government's workfare policies aimed to eliminate welfare dependency by reintegrating individuals into paid work, namely transitioning lone female parents from unemployed mothers on social assistance into employable workers (Cossman, 2002:201). These same policies, however, failed to take into account that women as mothers, particularly single mothers, are the primary

mothers and children are among the growing ranks of the homeless in Ontario. The report documents the gendered nature of homelessness in Ontario, specifically in urban areas such as Toronto. The report notes that "single women and women with children together compose 29% of shelter users; there was a 78% increase in shelter use among single women between 1992 and 1998; young women are at great risk of homelessness, as almost a quarter of shelter users are between 15 and 24; families compose the fastest growing group of shelter users, with single mothers encountering the system at twice the rate of couples with children; and there was a 130% increase in the number of children in shelters between 1989 and 1999". Feminist geographer Fran Klodawsky's (2006) recent research examines the connections between social, political and economic factors that "produce and shape gendered homelessness". She argues visible homelessness increased in Ontario in the 1990's due to the "reinventing [of] government" and the subsequent cutbacks made to social housing. Citing evidence from Statistics Canada Census of Collective Dwellings (2002), Klodawsky (2006:376-377) notes "in 2001, the number of residents in emergency shelters for 'persons lacking a fixed address, other shelters and lodging and rooming with assistance services' was far greater in Ontario than in any other province – 6100 compared to 3365 in Quebec and 1085 in British Columbia. Similarly, residents in 'service collective dwellings' includ[ing] hotels, motels and tourist homes, lodging and rooming houses, school residences and YM/YMCAs' exhibited a similar pattern: 20,440 in Ontario compared to 11,760 in Quebec and 7740 in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2002, p.5)." For more information see Fran Klodawsky, Susan Farell and Tim Aubry's (2002) "Images of Homelessness: Implications for local politics"; Carol Whitzman's (2006) "At the Intersection of Invisibilities: Canadian women, homelessness and health outside the 'big city'" that examines women's homelessness experiences outside Ontario's major metropolitan areas; and Vera Chouinard's (2006) "On the dialectics of differencing: Disabled women, the state and housing issues".

(4) Violence: The women's narratives reveal that violence too is gendered and women experiencing violence need access to shelters and services. According to Statistics Canada's (2009) Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile "the majority of victims of spousal violence are women, representing 83% of victims" (2009:5 as cited by Ontario Women's Directorate, http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd_new/english/resources/stats.shtml#domestic, downloaded January 4th, 2012). In its 2011 profile, Statistics Canada (2011:7) indicates "more than 6% of Ontario women living in a common-law or martial relationship report experiencing physical/sexual assault by a spousal partner", but often incidences of violence often go unreported to police (as cited by Ontario Women's Directorate, http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd_new/english/resources/stats.shtml#domestic, downloaded January 4th, 2012). A snapshot survey published by Statistics Canada (2009) "Residents of Canada's Shelters for Abused Women 2008" found that "there were over 30,000 women and children staying in various types of shelters across Ontario on a given day" and "for every 100,000 married, common-law and separated women in Ontario, there are 29 women in shelters to escape domestic violence" and "over half of abused women are admitted to shelters with their children" (as cited by the Ontario Women's Directorate http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd_new/english/resources/stats.shtml#domestic, downloaded January 4th, 2012).

caregivers of young children (Fudge and Cossman, 2002). According to Cossman (2002:202) working women need affordable child care to access the paid labour market. Affordable child care is critical for women's entry and participation in the paid labour force, undertaking job and educational training or exiting violent relationships (OAITH, 1998:28). And yet, child care under neoliberalism is primarily understood as a familial responsibility, not a public/collective responsibility (Cossman, 2002; Fudge and Cossman, 2002). The Harris government's gutting of social assistance and child care policies are just two examples of "social policy by stealth" (Battle, 1990) that consistently failed to acknowledge the gendered, classist and racialized division of labour synonymous with the capitalist processes of production and reproduction (Fudge and Cossman, 2002) characteristic of neoliberalism.

Working mothers who could not afford privatized solutions to their child care dilemma or those opting to go the stay at home parent route saw their participation in paid labour negatively impacted and even their parenting skills called into question (Weber, 2004). Weber's (2004) work notes how mothering as a social institution is constructed along the lines of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. She asks how is it that "middle class mothers who stay at home to care for their children are often viewed by the dominant culture as 'good mothers', yet poor women who do the same are viewed as lazy or 'welfare queens'" (2004:126). These dominant ideologies espouse gendered expectations of women as mothers from different racial and class backgrounds (Weber, 2004). Instead of being praised as good stay at home parents taking care of their own children, low income women on welfare and racialized mothers who did stay at home

with their children were openly criticized and negatively stereotyped. Mothers on welfare were specifically targeted. As previously mentioned, in Ontario, some pundits went so far as to characterize these women as lazy, undeserving, beer drinkers - thus reflecting a class and a racial bias explicitly and publicly directed towards differently located mothers. The reality of the Harris cuts meant that single persons and sole support parents (predominantly single mothers on welfare) and their children, were pushed even further below the poverty line, intensifying income inequality and the feminization of poverty. The cuts also reflect a lack of respect for the gendered work that women do perform – namely care giving work both at home and in the public sphere for pay (i.e. child care; senior care; counselling, social service work in the so called “caring” or feminized professions), including much feminist anti-violence and anti-racist work.

The Struggle for Financial Survival

If we play nicely, we get the funding we need to stay alive. Working toward compliance is energy draining . . . we had to play nicely. . . it has been draining, we lost our focus (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2004)

When asked to identify the major problems their organizations encountered during the Harris years, funding emerged as a key issue for feminists, especially among those women organizing in the public sector. This was not necessarily the case for women situated in union environments and I will address this issue shortly. The funding woes of feminist organizations raise issues with respect to organizational stability and longevity (Sudbury, 1998:13). Most non-profit organizations, especially anti-violence and anti-racist groups have typically relied on state funding, although the proportion of core government funding (municipal, provincial and federal) and foundation funding has

steadily declined in recent years (Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, 1993). This is not to suggest that state funding has not been a longstanding challenge for feminist organizations, but that much anti-violence work continues to rely on state sponsorship and intervention (Morrow et al., 2004: 370). However during the Harris years, feminist arguments in support of strong social programming lost whatever favour they may have had, as economic competitiveness began to trump the social values of cohesion and citizenship (Cohen 1997; Bashevkin, 2002 cited by Morrow et al., 2004:370-371). Thus, given the erosion of their “funding base” (Sudbury, 1998:232), funding loss and financial insecurity were dominant and reoccurring themes in many women’s organizational narratives.

One of the most common challenges noted by several organizational leaders was the reduction of core funding⁵⁶ across the board. Most social service agencies and community based organizations funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services experienced a direct 5% budgetary cut. This funding cut was interpreted as an additional source of stress and strain by anti-violence and anti-racist groups given the already tenuous financial position of many government funded not for profit, social service, community based organizations and shelters organizations. Not knowing, not being able to predict or rely on any particular source or amount of funds contributed to a sense of uncertainty, a lack of predictability and long term organizational viability. This fiscal vulnerability impacted feminist organizations ability to plan projects and offer programs. It made running programs, hiring and paying staff, and covering monthly

⁵⁶Agnew (1996:170) refers to “core funding” as “an annualized budget” from “state agencies” or “private organizations” including United Way funding.

expenses including rent and utilities difficult. A Toronto feminist spoke to the implications this situation presented in terms of organizational and program/project sustainability over the long term:

...when Harris came in it was impossible to get any grant money . . . access to equity funding is tiny, tiny, you could get \$5000 here or \$10,000 there, but that doesn't sustain anything (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

The former Executive Director of the Ontario Coalition of Visible and Minority Women, Elaine Prescod, among many others, was quite outspoken about this financial blow. She explained how her organization was devastated by the reduction in government funding and her organization's inability to achieve charitable status given its commitment to group advocacy:

The funding was decimated, the funding was cut, no warning, everything just went. And in non-profit organizations nothing is secure. . . Because its year to year funding, and year to year you write proposals and you send them in, you meet the deadline, but you don't know who is looking over those proposals. . . So you're at the mercy of the program officers and the funders. It's a very insecure, unpredictable way of working. . . You don't know. You never know. From government to government, from year to year. . . We were decimated for funding (Elaine Prescod, Executive Director, Coalition of Visible Minority Women, Toronto, 2002).

The lack of stable financial resources was a key factor in the organization's failure to withstand (Sudbury, 1998:77) the Harris years. Lack of government funding Prescod argued, was what ultimately led to the Coalition's demise in the late 1990's. She continued:

It has been the hardest 6 years I've ever had to work. During the time that the coalition was in existence, we have never been hit so hard for funding. We couldn't hire staff. Without the commitment of our volunteers, our services would not be provided. Everything we had going for us was completely decimated due to funding and not only our organization, but others as well. And it was particularly noticeable that a lot of women's organizations were depleted of funding. . . The

organization was decimated. We couldn't pay the rent. We couldn't hire any staff, so we were actually operating for those years after he came into power with volunteer help (Elaine Prescod, Executive Director, Coalition of Visible Minority Women, Toronto, 2002).

It is important to note that not all organizations were impacted to the same extent by these funding cuts, nor were they necessarily impacted in entirely the same ways (Freeman, 1995). The cutbacks clearly affected those organizations (i.e. anti-violence and anti-racist organizations) who were more dependent on government funding than those (i.e. union and labour organizations) that were not (Freeman, 1995:404). Still, working class women involved in unionized settings and feminist activists were well aware of the impacts of the funding cuts experienced by women's service and community based organizations. However, union feminists were less likely to cite funding withdrawal as a major concern in their own sector per se. Almost all of the local union representatives I interviewed stated that their budgetary resources were generated primarily through membership dues. Carol Anne Sceviour, Director, Women's Department of the OFL explained that 100% of their funding was derived from their membership dues. Occasionally she indicated the OFL may get project funding, but for the most part, that was rare. Similarly the staff rep for CAW local 40, Jenny Ahn stated that the only form of funds her local has to work was the income generated through union dues. This tended to be the norm among women organizing in union environments.

While union feminist's financial resources were not tied to government sources, Bashevkin (1998:108) notes, increased instances of contracting out potentially reduces working class women's access to better paying jobs (Bashevkin, 1998:119; Skipton, 1997:22). When unionized companies are downsized and plants or shops close, the loss

of “good jobs”, unionized workers, and the resulting decline in membership dues, may be perceived to be a financial burden. Increased downsizing and a smaller membership base means there may be significantly less resources to work with when it comes to organizing around equity issues. A staff member of a USWA local in Toronto described the predicament surrounding her local’s need to provide the same level of services and support to all its members with a “smaller pot of money”. She indicated:

...we certainly don't want people to think that we're not still trying to make sure that workplaces are reflective of [diverse] communities and that they include people of colour, people with disabilities and all, but it's getting a lot harder to do because you gotta try and do it through other mechanisms and I think it's putting more of a financial burden on the union. . .with the downsizing of workplaces and decent jobs disappearing. That's had a huge impact on the union because the way that we get funds to do the work that we do is through dues, and the less members we have, the smaller the pot of money, and we don't want the services that we offer to suffer. We've gotta try and find a way to offer the same services with a smaller pot of money (GTA Steelworkers Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Trying to maintain the same level of services in support of diversity and equity issues across the board was identified as a challenge by union feminists. In addition, in racialized, female dominated workplaces or sectors where unionized wages were comparatively lower than male wages (for example among garment, textile and hotel workers compared to male auto workers), less dues were generated, which meant there was less money available for certain locals to work with. Some women spoke about the resulting financial struggle to provide all members with the same benefits of entitlement. A staff representative of a CAW local that represented primarily working class, immigrant women and women of colour in Toronto described this problematic aspect of the dues structure as follows:

Yes 'cause its [dues] only 2 hours and 20 minutes of what you make hourly so if

you make 10 bucks you know, it's like \$20.20. If you're a GM worker making 30 bucks an hour, then you're making \$65 that the local gets a month. And you've got to do the same stuff. I would never say to somebody 'oh I'm not going to take your case to arbitration 'cause we're going to go broke.' We take them on and we take a lot of cases to arb if we need to. We never back down from it, 'cause we never want the employer to think because of the money situation we're not going to. . . But the dues structure makes it tough (Jenny Ahn, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

She further indicated that her union executive had not backed down from any grievances because of the potential financial implications, and that the local had refused to let monetary issues prevent them from taking cases to arbitration.

Equally problematic is what Sudbury (1998:121-122), citing Sivanandan (1990), argues is “the divide and rule” tactic employed by the state to break down the funding of black women’s organizations along ethnic lines. This tactic, she argues, serves to reinforce intragroup divisions, downplays criticisms of inadequate service delivery, and diminishes black women’s challenges to racist funding practices (1998:122). One woman Sudbury interviewed characterized the “the ethos of divide and rule” as a means by which the state diverts attention away from the reality of scarce resources and instead fosters intragroup competition for what little funding does exist. She described the experience as follows “if you divide [grant aid budget] between the different black communities, what you do is make us keep busy fighting each other about the crumbs, the little there is. Instead of looking at the real issue which is the lack of funding and resources” (interviewee cited by Sudbury, 1998:122).

To summarize, many women’s narratives spoke to the intense financial insecurity and hardship experienced by feminist organizations during the Harris years. The key difference between feminists working in labour organizations and those active in anti-

violence and anti-racist organizations appeared to be the degree of dependence on government funding. Many women spoke about having to “do more with less.” What is also important to note is how funding issues were directly related to other feminist struggles as well. Loss of funding was also often associated with a sense of fear and intimidation when it came to challenging government policies and making women’s voices heard, largely for fear of further funding reprisals. These cuts made it difficult for feminists to remain critically engaged in public policy debates (Crow and Gotell, 2009:xi) and to maintain vocal narratives that were contrary to the neoliberal approach. Thus almost all of the women working in the anti-violence and anti-racist sector shared the following concern “is our funding going to be cut if we speak out on this issue?” The struggles resulting from this climate of fear are examined in the following section. Moreover, the point at which not for profit, social service, charitable, community based organizations such as these come face to face with funding agencies, captures feminisms’ confrontation with the state (Mathews, 1995:291-292).

The Fear of Funding Loss and Loss of Voice

The women’s stories of struggle clearly speak to the fear of funding loss that increased dramatically during the Harris years and the potentially silencing impact this worry had on a number of organizational and activist activities. Their narratives illustrate how this fear and anxiety compromised feminist voices due to for example, feminist self-censorship; changes in feminist organizational structures and relations; and the drift or push towards service provision, which made it all the more difficult for feminists to maintain structural analyses and critiques of neoliberalism.

A major struggle for feminist social service agencies in particular then became how to “develop an autonomous voice and speak to controversial issues while relying on government and foundation funding” (Gelb, 1999:168). Indeed, the “relationship between state funding...and the inability or unwillingness of these organizations to take on a political role” (Sudbury, 1998:82) proved to be a challenging task during the Harris years. In the words of one white, middle class woman, the “paranoia” about attracting and keeping government funding presented numerous implications for feminists in the GTA, especially among service providers who sought to maintain a “critical advocacy role” (Gelb and Hart, 1999:177). As Spalter-Roth and Schreiber (1995:119) note, “the stress that results from relying on government and corporate funds to empower victims and survivors of exploitation and abuse is most likely to be experienced by the coalitions of service providers.” Feminists have to make savvy political decisions regarding what types of state intervention to support and which to critique in order to effect systemic change (Morrow, 1999; Morrow et al., 2004:369).

Women in union settings were well aware of the impacts of the funding woes or the “money crunch” (Bashevkin, 1998:8) experienced by anti-violence and anti-racist organizations. However, working class feminists in unions and other labour organizations were less likely to voice concern or fear about speaking out against government policies and practices because their financial and budgetary resources were not directly tied to government sources. As a result, union women’s narratives were not punctuated with the same accounts of fear, anxiety and intimidation that were evident in anti-violence and anti-racist feminist’s stories. Perhaps this may be attributed to the

historical struggles of the labour movement and its confrontational experiences with the state. Independence from government funding sources perhaps meant that labour organizations to quote Sudbury “less likely to be the object. . .of reprisals for such criticism” (Sudbury, 1998:83) thereby making some working class women in this study, less susceptible and or apt to voice concerns related to what Sudbury (1998:85) calls “the containment of fear” and this presented less of a ‘barrier’ to their organizing.

For other women’s organizations, funding losses were coupled with an overwhelming sense of fear and intimidation experienced both on the part of individual feminist activists and organizations. This “manipulation of funding” and “the containment of fear” presented barriers to women’s political activism (Sudbury, 1998:82-85). Many of the women’s narrated accounts repeatedly expressed feelings of fearfulness, combined with worry and despair. It was obvious that this fear stemmed from the realization that if feminists and feminist organizations were to publicly challenge or openly speak out about Harris’s backlash policies and practices, that there would be a financial and or an organizational price to pay. Many women in the anti-violence sector, especially, characterized the penalty or punishment for speaking out as the withdrawal of funding, including core, project and program funding. As well, some women noted being subjected to increased accountability measures and organizational scrutiny.

As some scholars suggest, “funding and granting agencies increasingly require that recipients describe ‘indicators’ and ‘outcomes’ as part of their financial accountability” (Mackinnon et al., 2006:69). Other community based activists have noted the “need to be accountable to [their] funders, but [that] it is more important to [them]

that [they] are accountable to the people and communities that [they] serve” (interviewee as cited by Mackinnon et al, 2006:72). In this respect, “funding has been [used by the state] to coopt grassroots struggle into more manageable forms of activity, by turning activists into service deliverers” (Sudbury, 1998:82). Further the volume of paperwork that often accompanies government funding “has the potential to restrict the activities of funded...organizations” (Sudbury, 1998:82).

Angela Robertson, the Executive Director of Sistering, noted that outspoken organizations were “penalized” for vocalizing dissent:

...what has happened is that agencies and programs have been penalized for doing that [speaking out, engaging in advocacy work] and the penalty looks like withdrawal of funding. The penalty looks like, greater demand for accountability beyond the systems that are already in place, and the challenge looks like not being given project funding (Executive Director, Women’s Homeless Shelter, Toronto, 2002).

In the face of this fear, the struggle for some organizations then became one of trying to reconcile their financial security and feminist politics in a way that not only maintained individual and organizational integrity and an anti-racist, anti-oppression, feminist based analyses, but in a way that realized the impact this had on organizational working conditions and their feminist goals of empowering women. The women engaged in anti-violence and anti-racist work in this study were keenly aware of the need to be both cautious and strategic. The Executive Director of SACHA recalled the fear that was created during the Harris years had a profound impact on how SACHA publicly positioned and presented itself as a feminist organization. She said:

When the Harris government came into power in 1995 and began to slash and burn so many community based organizations, we experienced the 5% cut which was significant, but what happened was that all of a sudden, there was this FEAR

that got created that if any way you challenged, you would lose everything. So, certainly as an individual I began to think, OK, I have to now be careful about what I say and how I represent this organization, because there are seven other women who are making their living in this organization. So I was very, very aware that I couldn't be, that I had to be strategic. There wasn't a lot of room for recklessness. I didn't think that there was a lot of room to act as one agency on its own. It became really important for me to make sure that we were working hard to make connections in the community with other anti-violence activists, with other shelters and allies within some of the more mainstream organizations. Because I certainly didn't want this organization to be isolated, once you are isolated and marginalized you can be easily gotten rid of. The struggle was how do you maintain the politics and how do you speak out against injustice and how do you make sure that you are acting with integrity in a way that is helpful to women who are sexually assaulted and that became a real challenge (Vilma Rossi, Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

The Executive Director of the Assaulted Women's Helpline expressed similar sentiments. She spoke to the "culture of fear" and anxiety that feminist service organizations experienced first-hand during the Harris years. She suggested some feminists sensed that if they were to openly contest or challenge the government, that they knowingly ran the risk of jeopardizing their organizational funding. She stated:

I think it was a period full of fear. Services didn't know if they would be open tomorrow. A lot of services were cut completely. . . So I think there was a lot of fear around challenging the government. Various organizations were under the impression that should they challenge the government, they would lose their funding and I think that was a very real fear for some folks. . . anybody who resisted had a very heavy price to pay. I know OAITH was defunded as a critical advocacy group (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

She believed this fear resulted in the silencing of critical voices. Fear, according to Sudbury (1998:86) then may be understood as "a critical weapon in controlling black women [and other women] and preventing them from organizing." It thus presents a major barrier for feminist politics (Sudbury, 1998).

Given these fears, many women's narratives revealed their experiences of being

“completely stifled and shut down”, “quieted” or “silenced”. One woman remarked, “we felt silenced and [our] participants felt silenced too.” Some feminists and organizations also indicated that they felt “threatened”. Government attempts “to use funding as a form of control were actively opposed” (Sudbury, 1998:84) by OAITH. As this lengthy but pertinent passage by Eileen Morrow, the Executive Director of OAITH revealed:

A lot of organizations were threatened either implicitly or explicitly. And there were organizations within our association that felt threatened. . .The threat was certainly felt both [on the part of the organization or on the part of the people working within the organization] because they are part and parcel of the same thing, but organizations were reminded, for example, that they are non-profit, charitable organizations and they're not supposed to be speaking out publicly, even though you have a responsibility to support women and children. . .People were reminded about that and some suggestions were made that maybe they shouldn't be doing any kind of political action We lost a couple of members from OAITH because they were afraid of being members of OAITH. OAITH is definitely a public advocacy organization. We're not a registered charity. We are an organization that does public policy work, government consultation etc. There was a chilling effect that occurred at the time and OAITH was very public . . .So very early on OAITH, made it very clear to the Progressive Conservative government where we stood and that we would publicly oppose them on these kinds of policies (Executive Director, OAITH, Toronto, 2002).

A Hamilton activist also commented on this silencing impact. She applauded SACHA's staunch struggle to maintain its feminist politics and retain its integrity to not bend to financial pressure. She recalled:

. . .during that period of time, suddenly people started getting quiet. I think that what happened was that the organizations that were being funded by the provincial government suddenly shut the hell up because they were so worried about their funding. . .but the Sexual Assault Centre refused to cow tow to the kind of fear and the kind of intimidation that was created by Harris. But I think a lot of organizations did do that, they did cave in just to keep their funding so. . .[they caved]to the pressure, to not fuck shit up, to not stir up the pot. . .because they were so fearful of their funding, but the Sexual Assault Centre just stood firm, that they were not going to be intimidated by Mike Harris and his government. . .I

mean they didn't go around pissing everybody off, but they definitely did not compromise their integrity. . . Harris impacted organizations and they quietened down and opened up a great big opening for the feminist backlash to just go crazy because nobody was really saying anything strongly to defend themselves anymore because they were scared about the funding. . . (Feminist activist, Hamilton, 2002).

She further noted how fortunate she felt to have been working at the Women's Bookstop in Hamilton at the time, because "nobody was funding us" and there she had the opportunity to express her views "and do the stuff, you know, just like do whatever I wanted to do to."

The experience of being "silenced" put some feminist organization's "on the defensive" (Bashevkin, 1998:8) and forced some activists and organizations to go "underground", so to speak, in order to avoid the financial repercussions and or sanctions levied at dissenting voices. Dissenting or critical voices were, according to some women, "remembered" and or "monitored", and in some instances, as was the case with OAITH, severely financially reprimanded. One woman remarked on this need to go "underground". She recalled:

*Your reality was being denied and you felt like you had to be **on the defensive**. The other thing that was made very clear to us was that people in this government remember if you speak out, and so there was a sense of needing to go underground and that you couldn't make too much noise or your funding would be jeopardized. So I think that was an incredibly smart tactic on their part, because I think it sent us all into sort of a quieter place (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).*

Some feminists in the anti-violence sector were also aware that they ran the risk of jeopardizing organizational survival if their work was perceived to be "too political" on the part of funding bodies. An anti-violence educator stated:

If the funder sees that the work is too political, they're gonna cut your funding . . .

The way it affects organizations like us is, they watch. . . They actually are monitoring what any of us say, and if the government perceives you as an agency of being too publicly critical, you're jeopardizing your funding. So our ability to exercise our right to freedom of speech could threaten the very survival of our organizations (Executive Director and Anti-Violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

And as one white, middle class woman working in the anti-violence sector commented, “when you are doing contentious work, you have the due diligence to do it well.”

Thus, in the anti-violence sector McDonald (2005) notes, neoliberalism “has effectively silenced structural analyses of domestic violence and displaced feminist service models.” The Harris government increasingly began to fund what the anti-violence activists I interviewed and scholars alike have termed “gender neutral systems of supports and professionalized responses” (Barnsley, 1985; 1995; Faith and Currie, 1993; Walker, 1990 as cited by Morrow et al., 2004:369). In contrast, feminists took exception to the use of gender neutral terms like “domestic violence”, rather they argued that violence against women is “gender specific” and that solutions to eradicate violence also need to be gender specific (CSVAWSG, 2000).

Moreover, as previous research has uncovered, in their continual search for resources, some feminist organizational agendas and or structures have been changed (Acker, 1995; Ferre and Martin, 1995; Gelb, 1995). They have been “mainstreamed” (Adamson and McPhail, 1988; Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:119) or “institutionalized” (Freeman, 1995:404-405), given “funders’ insist[ence] on more bureaucratic and or hierarchical relations between clients and staff” (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:119). In the anti-violence sector, for example, a few women commented that financial support from government meant that their organizations felt more

constrained to adopt mainstream models (i.e. hierarchical models) to deal with their participants or clients. The hierarchical relationship between staff who “manage survivors experiences through direct service” and their “clients” who access and use services (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995) is but one example. Several anti-violence, labour and anti-racist organizations were committed to working within “feminist”, “non-oppressive”, “equality seeking” frameworks and yet were structurally organized along hierarchical lines. Few organizations were organized as pure collectives. Only SACHA spoke of having adopted a “modified collective” (or “structural hybrid” see for example Gottfried and Weiss, 1992 as cited by Gelb, 1995:130) approach to organizing over the years. Thus feminist organizations “desire to avoid hierarchies did not necessarily evolve into overtly feminist models of organizing” (Sudbury, 1998:134). As Mueller (1995:273) notes “because of their responsibility for providing services to the public, feminist service organizations have tended to formalize their structure and employ professional staff to secure a more reliable financial base while maintaining a feminist or anti bureaucratic set of values to varying degrees.”

Finally, reliance on state funds for the “treatment” of “victims” of violence or “clients” created difficulties for anti-violence service providers who work towards encouraging women to advocate on their own behalf (Spalter Roth and Schreiber, 1995:115). These changes were most clearly evidenced in the women’s narratives that articulated a definite shift or pull towards service provision, given the tension between organizational service provision and political action (see Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995). In a climate of fear, instead of advocating for broad, structural changes, many

organizations and activists found themselves advocating on behalf of individual women to access necessary social services (i.e. welfare, housing, child care, education and training). The “balance” (Gelb, 1995:128) between feminist activism or “their desire for change” and service provision was upset, as some organizations felt forced to put their political activism on the backburner and to take on the primary role of “service deliverers” (Sudbury, 1998:82). A Black, anti-violence crisis counsellor suggested:

The balance around doing activism work and doing supporting work, social service work has changed, most of your work is not around activism anymore, you do not have the time to do that and if you had to choose between sitting down and sort of strategizing or problem solving around coalition building you can't do that. Your time is all spent doing advocacy for individual women, so coalition building is not happening in the same way. Most of our work is now trying to advocate so that that woman can get service from welfare or immigration. A lot of individual strategizing is happening, rather than the agency as a group looking at political changes and how it's affecting women as a whole. We're doing more individualized work (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

Government funding has been a constant source of struggle for some feminist organizations (Acker, 1995). Accepting said funding may be necessary for feminist organizational survival, but antithetical to feminist goals (Acker, 1995:140). And I would be hard pressed to suggest that this dilemma dates to the Harris years; rather, I would argue that despite the constant struggle to fund women's programs and services, that this problem is not unique to the Harris years⁵⁷. However, the women's narratives

⁵⁷ Women's groups have long struggled to fund programs and services, but they are not alone in this respect. The injured workers movement (IWM) for example, has encountered similar difficulties. Some scholars such as Storey (2011) have noted that the IWM was fractured as result of Harris's funding practices. According to Storey (2011), the government fostered internal divisions within the movement when it defunded injured worker organizations intent on pursuing advocacy. Some organizations backed away from said work and received WCB funding, while others cried foul and protested. He argues these divisions have yet to be fully mended and to date, injured workers have not yet recouped the level of benefits cut during the Harris years. Current benefits remain 22% below 1995 levels (Storey, 2011). Therefore one should note that the theme of financial struggle is not new or novel to social movement scholars, nor is it something unique to the women's movement and or feminist organizations. In fact, many

analysed here reveal that “the relationship between funding and political censorship is not static and changes over time” (Sudbury, 1998:83). Funding issues for anti-violence and anti-racist organizations were clearly heightened during the Harris years. The relationship between the so-called “special interest groups” and the emerging neoliberal state had “shift[ed]” (Sudbury, 1998:84). This relational shift reflects the neoliberal model of governance characterized by increased self-sufficiency and economic competitiveness (Morrow et al., 2004:374) and a “fiscalized” (Morrow et al., 2004) approach to social programming. As Harder (2003:8) suggests, “the diminishment of the state through spending reductions, program elimination, and the explicit pursuit of policies to ensure the state’s decreased fiscal responsibility [that]. . .forces people, particularly women, to reorganize their lives in order to accommodate the privatization of social goods.”

The fact remains, that to do their day to day work, most social service and advocacy groups depend on external funding, primarily from government, but also from other funding sources. And I would venture a guess to suggest that most feminists and those activists interested in social justice and equity issues would likely argue that these organizations and the work they do should be supported and publicly funded. However, what these women’s narratives suggest is that funders themselves clearly do not either

SMOs have long struggled – in good times and bad – to provide an alternative, ideological and political worldview. What feminist organizations share with other SMOs is that their views are often contested: their voices, authority, legitimacy and credibility questioned by opponents. So I would not say that feminists are the only groups to have experienced struggle, or that their financial struggles are unprecedented, but that these struggles became increasingly more salient during the Harris years. Funding issues have also for example, been explored by researchers studying civil and human rights (Clement, 2009); disability rights (Chang, 2007) and the disabled people’s movement (Cooper, 1999; Roulstone and Morgan, 2009; Yoshida et.al 2004); as well as health (Kolker, 2004); and sports-related social movements (Davis-Delano and Crosset, 2008).

operate from, nor adopt a feminist approach, much less an intersectional approach to services, programs and projects (Simpson, 2009). In fact, I and others (in conversation with Storey, 2011), am certain that as Simpson (2009) so aptly notes, that many may be unaware as to what an intersectional approach even entails (2009:21). For instance, most funders routinely set out a number of requirements that need to be met; that is, organizations must satisfy certain eligibility criteria and make good on a set of deliverables within a specified time-frame (Simpson, 2009:20-21). It is these limitations that may result in organizations having to turn people away from programs or services and inclusivity is sacrificed given the risk of funding loss (Simpson, 2009:21). These sorts of situations present a real and ongoing problem for feminist organizations. However limited our human and financial resources, Simpson (2009:20-21) has advised that organizations, particularly those working in the non-profit sector, “to think beyond [their] deliverables” so as to draw funders attention to how certain criteria may actually operate to exclude and the impact exacted on community (2009:21). This may be another way of reading the women’s narrative struggles, as a concrete attempt to put feminist intersectional theory into practice.

The “Attack on Advocacy”: The Tension Between Service Provision and Political Action (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995)

Well you probably heard that the ‘A’ word became a really bad word so. . .
(Executive Director, Women’s Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

The funding narratives analysed above, reflect feminist attempts to “balanc[e] the tension between the ideal and the reality of... women’s organizing (Sudbury, 1998:140). During the Harris years, neoliberal efforts to defund feminist activism created what

Bashevkin (1998:93) has called the “advocacy crunch”. Another dominant narrative among the women in this study were stories of the strain that developed between maintaining service provision and advocacy (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995) and the limitations this contradiction placed on feminist groups’ political action. The “attack on advocacy” sent many women in the social service sector scrambling. In the anti-violence sector, it meant that many activists were operating in crisis management mode. While in crisis management mode, women were often consumed with the day to day responsibility of meeting increased demands for service, and were left with little to no opportunity to address the larger, structural, systemic issues that they believe perpetuate violence against women. Feminists who found themselves continually responding to crises, were frustrated because they were less able to participate in the public agenda setting process, thereby enabling the Harris government to proceed with its “deficit-elimination agenda” (Harder, 2003:123).

The Executive Director of Nellies, Cindy Cowan, commented that:

with the Harris government coming in, things have gone at such a fever pitch. I mean slam, social assistance rates, cut, slam this, slam that, just down a pipe. In terms of the ability to respond to all of this stuff, we’re also always in crisis response. We’re responding, we’re never setting the agenda, right? And so, that piece is a real issue because it’s certainly not an effective way to organize. What it does is spin people out, it burns them out (Cowan, 2002).

Similarly the Executive Director of OAITH, Eileen Morrow, argued that the increased demands for service had a negative impact on the ability of anti-violence and shelter organizations to maintain their advocacy roles:

You have cuts within services to programs. You have cuts to advocacy organizations and the end result is that people cannot keep up. [Women’s groups] are running all over the place trying to respond to the service demands of

women and this is a very effective strategy to keep women from actually being able to organize and speak out, because they're so busy responding to crises for individual women within services, that they have no time or energy to organize against the policies that have put women there in that place. And governments refuse to fund anybody to do advocacy. . . women that are working on the issue can't make the public aware of the situation or can't even make the politicians aware of the situation, even if they were genuinely well-intended and wanting to do something about it. So that's a huge problem. The drop in resources and refusal to resource at all in any way, shape or form public advocacy on this issue (Executive Director, OAITH, Toronto, 2002).

This “advocacy crunch” (Bashevkin, 1998) illustrated the ongoing tension between service provision and political action (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995) experienced on the part of feminist activists positioned in social service organizations, including shelters for abused and homeless women. Angela Robertson noted:

There is a definite tension. It is very clear from funders that ‘We do not fund you to do advocacy. We do not fund you to fight us’. Where Sistering is able as an organization to respond to that from a really critical and legitimate place is because who we serve and support are women whose lives are impacted by poverty, by homelessness. We have legitimate reasons to speak to the issues of poverty and its impact because it is tied to our service. . . So I think that there is a way that Sistering can speak legitimately to those issues that doesn't threaten our status about being an advocacy organization. But clearly there is a limit, and the limit is I think really demonstrated in what actions can we participate in to demonstrate our advocacy position (Executive Director, Homeless Women's Shelter, Toronto, 2002).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Such a statement raises the question of whether governments should provide grants or fund groups and/or organizations that oppose them (Storey, 2011). “Funding of advocacy work is controversial. There are those who believe that no tax dollars should go to fund efforts to lobby government and the public on behalf of certain causes or the need for services. But in the history of non-profit and voluntary organizations in Canada, advocacy on behalf of one's community has been regarded as part of the role of many organizations” (Scott, 2003:17). Here I would tend to agree with Scott (2003:15) who argues that “nonprofit and voluntary organizations act as the conscience of our communities... They remind us of what is happening to people who are left out or treated unfairly.” Still, questions surrounding funding are ongoing, particularly in non-profit and community based sectors where governments (both nationally and provincially) are reluctant to fund anything that “resembles advocacy” (personal communication with Hinbest, 2012). And the women's stories collected here speak volumes about the government's general unwillingness to fund their work, advocacy or otherwise. For further information on the “advocacy chill” and or funding issues please see: Scott's (2003) “Funding matters: The impact of Canada's new funding regime on nonprofit and voluntary organizations - Summary Report” published by the Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa. For a post 9/11, American view, see Walden's (2006) “Who's watching us now? The nonprofit sector and the new government by surveillance” published in *Nonprofit and Voluntary*

Funding that could be secured by feminist organizations was largely perceived to have been earmarked to provide “services” to women who had already been abused, sexually assaulted, or to assist and protect women who were unemployed, underemployed, but not to empower women or change the existing systems of power and patriarchal relations that perpetuate social inequality (Harder, 2003). With respect to violence against women, Harder (2003:129) notes this approach tends to reflect traditional notions of femininity in which women, who experience male violence invoke sympathy, compassion and the “commonsens[ical]” solution is to provide temporary shelter. On the other hand, Harder (2003:129) argues feminist solutions to violence against women which focus on providing women with material resources to resist systems of subordination and domination threaten existing power relations. She further states, the breadth of political action is then narrowed (Harder, 2003:137).

Government reticence to fund feminist advocacy work was interpreted by some feminists as an effective strategy employed by the Harris government to keep women busy and to keep them from organizing, thereby containing feminist resistance. One woman commented that she viewed this as part of a larger government strategy to “demolish any kind of resistance, active resistance to what’s happening, to keep us scurrying around for funds that don’t exist and wrapped up in these kind of processes that make it almost impossible to go out there and network.” Refocusing feminist organizational efforts on servicing women, children and families in need, preoccupies women’s time and depoliticizes feminist advocacy and resistance. It also attempts to

undermine their other organizational goals. As the Executive Director of a women's employment agency in Toronto observed:

There was a real curtailment to the advocacy, political advocacy, letter writing that we were doing at the time too, until we got a sense on where this [was] coming from, what are the safe areas for us and what are the parameters? Are people actually being fired for this, are agencies closing down as a result? And they were of course. They weren't told they were closing down because they were speaking out, but all you had to do was look at why, and they were feminist organizations and active organizations. It trickled down through the way that grants were awarded and the way that transfer payments were made from the province to the city. And we lost our ability to advocate (Executive Director, Women's Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

In some instances, as other researchers have noted (see for example Harder, 2003:151), the women's stories suggest feminist organizational maintenance and survival were prioritized at the expense of advocacy. Some of the community based activists who spoke to me explained that out of necessity, they had to reorganize their efforts to ensure their survival. And, at times, this "survival project" (Brenner, 2000) was interpreted as a loss of "focus" on their part. As one feminist activist from Toronto commented, organizational survival took precedence over advocacy:

I think in general groups have become less activist. I think they have limited their activism. This is just a felt thing, I don't have any proof, but I think Harris put a real climate of fear, a pall over any agency that could be perceived as feminist and that really you just struggled to maintain your funding, maintain your services, do more with less. . . survival becomes the focus and activism and advocacy become secondary to survival (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

"The "unwritten rules" or "strings attached to government funding" (Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, 1993) had the potential to suppress feminist organizations' ability to advocate and empower women. With respect to violence against women, feminist activists maintained political advocacy and action was and is necessary to educate the

public and address the root causes of violence in order to make the kinds of changes in women's personal and public lives possible. Moreover, what these women's stories tell us is that services and/or shelters alone, as a "stop gap measure" cannot address the larger issues (Harder, 2003:129; MacKinnon et al., 2006), namely, the unequal relations that perpetuate violence against women. Service provision, though critical, in and of itself cannot change the structural (read: social, economic, legal and political) conditions necessary to eradicate violence against women.

Given the chilly climate in the GTA, some feminists were forced to reconcile their desire for change with demands from funding and political bodies to modify their strategies (Gelb, 1995:128). Numerous organizations voiced these concerns but still felt compelled to challenge race, class and gender inequalities, to do advocacy work, to undertake political action and to speak out. They remained committed to "gender-sensitive" (Brodie, 1996:8) analyses and practices. These women's stories clearly convey feminist's struggle "to sustain a critical advocacy role alongside an accountable service function" (Gelb and Hart, 1999:177). Many organizations expressed difficulty reconciling the "dual demands" (Gelb, 1995) of their political and social service agendas and were engaged in a precarious balancing act. To use Morgen's (1995:241) words, they struggled to "articulat[e] political goals that transcend progressive service delivery."

To this end, I would also argue some feminist organizations experienced what sociologists have termed "role strain" (Macionis et als. 1997:149). They struggled to reconcile and resolve the challenges resulting from competing sets of demands and expectations, from clients/participants, the public and funding agencies, while

simultaneously attempting to maintain their own organizational goals and mandates. On one hand, feminists sought to transform power relations, but, on the other, they still had to rely on government funding to ensure the survival and delivery of vital, day to day services. As such, many women's narratives illustrated the ongoing tension between organizational service provision and political action. While most of the women engaged in anti-violence work did not conceptualize these as contradictory or mutually exclusive goals, government and corporate funders clearly tended to think and respond otherwise. Having said this, it is also important to note that in some instances, this "retreat from advocacy" and move toward service provision on the part of social service agencies may also be interpreted as one of several "strategies of adaptation" (Harder, 2003:151) employed by feminists organizing in a neoliberal climate.

In addition to the obvious tensions surrounding organizational funding and political action, women in this study were also apt to cite tiredness, burnout and time constraints as having had a major impact on feminist advocacy during the Harris years. Almost all of the women, across all organizational sectors, expressed feelings of being tired and or physically exhausted. One woman characterized this tiredness as "protest fatigue". She said:

I think as activists, some of what happened was that you just really, got really stretched and found yourself going to Queen's Park every other day and then what happened was that people got protest fatigue. (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

The co-chair of the Metro Toronto Days of Action, Linda Tourney noted:

... I had never been busier. It was a very, very intense period of time. So I think, I think the fact that women are still generally the caregivers at home and the ones that sort of manage the supportive networks, you know, a lot of women came

close to being burnt out through that period of time.

A CUPE feminist activist agreed. She said:

I think in the Harris years it was really hard to get people to be active. . . Trying to just keep the local going became harder. The pool of activists was much smaller, which meant more work for everybody. A lot of us have been burned out and the people who are coming along and becoming interested now just don't have enough time, even though they want to (CUPE Socialist Feminist Activist, Hamilton, 2002).

Perhaps an anti-violence activist described the situation best by suggesting that the tiredness experienced on the part of feminist activists impacted their organizational capacity to advocate:

We're tired. Tired, tired, tired, tired, tired. And I think in a climate like this, it's easy to focus on day to day survival, right? But if you truly want to sustain yourself, you always have to strategically plan your future. And it's unfortunate, because everything we have today in women's services and a lot of public policy around women's rights, is because of feminist lobbying, and I think we're losing that edge because we're tired. (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

This tiredness did not bode well for feminist organizing and political action during the Harris years. Further, many of the women's narratives around advocacy were also punctuated with references to the concept of "time" (Sugiman, 2003). Women in this study most often conceptualized time as a valuable and a scarce resource. A number of women lamented the lack of time available to engage in networking, meeting and strategizing with other like-minded groups and activists. When workers are tired, as Simpson (2009:20) notes, finding the time to develop and implement an intersectional approach to programs and services can be difficult. However, she suggests that by building intersectional policies and practices into organizational structures, service delivery can better meet participant's needs. Such a process requires organizational

commitment on the part of staff, boards, and committees (2009:20-21).

Some of the women I interviewed took exception to what they viewed as a “wasting” of their time and as a result, some of their narratives reveal that they became much more selective in terms of how they chose to allocate and or spend their time during the Harris years. For instance, working within the system often distances feminists from supportive aspects of the larger women’s and broader social movements (Adamson and McPhail, 1988:183). Some women regarded the challenge of working within the system for change to be a very time consuming project. Women in the anti-violence sector often questioned whether their time input in committee work could not be better spent elsewhere. Women talked about being “choosy” or “selective” when it came to making decisions with respect to where to expend their time and energies. In the following excerpt, a shelter manager explains how time constraints undermined her advocacy. Thus her decisions around advocacy were both mindful and selective. She based her decisions on what she felt would best serve the short and long terms interests of abused women.

She said:

Well you know, some of the work is great and it is so productive. But sometimes, like for example, there are lots of committees I sit on as a result of the fact that we have a domestic violence program community. And some committees, I just don’t, I start to feel like I’m part of the system that isn’t working, and I’m in a system that isn’t working and wasting my time. I shouldn’t say wasting, I’m not using my time in the best way. . . Now I’m just much more selective. I’m very choosy and selective with my time, because my time for advocacy is so limited that I make decisions based on what is going to help women. And sometimes it might mean is this going to help an individual right away and sort of a micro view, and then at other times it’s a macro view, how will this in the long term help women in a broad sense. (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

The women in this study were quite outspoken about the implications these issues

presented for feminist political action and advocacy. Tiredness and time constraints meant there were fewer opportunities for feminists to find the time to get together and strategize. The less time feminists were able to devote to this kind of organizational networking, there was the sense the more insular and isolated feminist activism may become. An anti-violence activist said not having the time to come together, to share experiences and discuss important issues, was one of the biggest challenges encountered by organizations:

We didn't have time to go to meetings. We didn't have time to share information the way we had been. We didn't have time to jointly take on different things with other groups because there was no time for planning meetings. It isolated us politically in that respect. (Anti-violence educator, Toronto, 2002).

Relatedly, the less time feminists had to engage in political action and advocacy, there was a sense that the more depoliticized feminist activism may become. She went on to suggest the following:

. . . the backlash and the cutbacks have to an extent, succeeded in depoliticizing. Even organizations like this one, which have in the past often been on the cutting edge of lots of issues, so much of our time and energy has gone into survival. . . So if we can't get together, how do we present the united front to withstand the backlash and the cutbacks? So as more pressure is put on our time, and it becomes increasingly more difficult to survive as organizations, we have less time to do the advocacy and political work and I think the long term effect of that, and it's no accident, is that the movement becomes more depoliticized (Anti-violence educator, Toronto, 2002).

Maintaining Feminist Principles in the Face of Adversity

While conflict between social movement organizations, activists and the state is to a certain extent expected, Carol Mueller's (1995) work on conflict in contemporary feminism illustrates the importance of recognizing internal conflicts within feminist organizations and the implications these disputes have for the "identity" of the movement. She notes that race, class, ideology, and sexuality have for example, emerged as sources

of contestation (1995:266). Mueller (1995:266-267) attributes much of the early internal or intra-movement conflict in second wave feminism to women's racial and class differences, and notes that these controversies were often played out in small groups and collective settings. She argues documentation of these struggles has tended to come from analyses of women of colour's participation in feminist organizations that provide service delivery such as health clinics, shelters and women's studies programs (Mueller, 1995:267-268). Mueller further argues negotiating these multiple feminist identities has served to transform and reconstruct the collective identity of feminism and the women's movement and that these experiences have generated much theoretical work on the intersection of gender, race and class (1995:266, 275).⁵⁹

Other empirical studies have made it quite clear that bridging racial and class differences has been both a source of internal strife and an ongoing challenge for feminist organizations (see for example Andersen 2000; Chater 1991; Naples 1998a; Smith 1995; Sudbury, 1998). And I anticipated hearing similar stories from some of the long-time activists that I interviewed. But this was not really the case. Rather, my findings indicate many organizational leaders and groups largely externalized their struggles during the Harris years. Discussion primarily centered on organizational struggles to maintain what Martin (1990), has referred to as their "external action agendas". In general, organizational struggles with government and policy were emphasized in the women's narratives, not internal organizational relations or what Martin (1990) terms "internal

⁵⁹ See for example Julia Sudbury's (1998) research on Black women's organizations in the UK during the 1970's, 80's and 1990's. Sudbury's (1998) book, "Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organizations and the Politics of Transformation" adopts an intersectional race, gender, class framework and provides analyses of the internal tensions and challenges encountered by black women's groups as they attempted to respond to the emergence of neoliberalism in Britain.

action agendas”. This is not to suggest that feminist organizations were free of internal tensions and conflict during the Harris years, but the women I interviewed did seem somewhat less apt to want to discuss any internal tensions. Internal contradictions related to “race” and “class”, for example, were not often problematized in the women’s narratives.

However as Mueller (1995:266) reminds us, “internal conflict” or “internal disputes [are]...no less important” and so I found this lack of introspection and silence on the subject interesting. As Gordon’s (2005) work on immigrant workers centres suggests, such tensions “can be generative, shedding lights on gaps...want[s] and need[s]” (Gordon, 2005:300). And yet this did not appear to be the case. Would raising these issues have made for an uneasy discussion? Are these threatening subjects? Not to be openly discussed with outsiders; including a social researcher positioned such as myself? I cannot imagine that such contradictions did not exist, but certainly feel like these stories were not ones to be shared, even with an empathetic researcher or “insider/outsider” at this point in time.

Of course, it might also be true and could therefore be argued that the presence of a clear external threat and attack (as evidenced during the Harris years) had the potential to create real internal cohesion among differently located feminists, at least in the short term. Or, perhaps in the short term, the solidarity displayed on behalf of feminist groups and activists in the GTA was furthered by their adopting a rather pragmatic approach to issues of diversity and inclusiveness. To realistically uphold some of the very basic principles of feminist intersectional theory and praxis may have prompted some of the

more established groups and or long term activists to step aside, thereby opening spaces for young women, immigrant women and women of colour organizing in ethnospecific organizations (Daenzer, 1997) to situate their activism. And some of the narratives of women of colour, lesbians and older women I interviewed do offer reflective glimpses into the state of inter-organizational and activist relations, largely by way of their lived and personal experiences.

Several key themes emerged from these women's stories, the first of which relates to issues of difference and diversity and the struggle to organize inclusively. The women's narratives spoke to the challenge of organizing inclusively during the Harris years. Their stories suggest that the socio-political climate made it more difficult for groups to organize across these historical boundaries. For example, internal tensions not only related to race, but to age and generational issues among young and older women were in some instances attributed to different starting points, life experiences and different feminist theoretical frameworks. In other instances, activists typically part of the second wave generation (women in their mid to late fifties for example) expressed a perceived notion of "taken for grantedness" exhibited on the part of younger women. One woman considered this "taken for grantedness" dangerous because it overlooked historical struggles and the fact that hard fought feminist gains with respect to reproductive rights and freedom for example, may be easily lost. Another anti-violence educator noted some of the difficulties associated with this age gap among activists and the impact on internal organizational relations. She said:

Some younger women take a lot of gains for granted and don't even understand why we're still concerned about some of those things. It's like 'you're old-

fashioned, passé because you're still worried about reproductive rights', because of the backlash which they haven't experienced. They take a lot of their place in relationship to women's equality issues for granted. That creates a kind of ageism and tension within a number of the organizations. It's not that these women don't have a gender analysis, but their starting place is very different from ours, because their life experience has been very different. That's a challenge right now in working within the women's movement. How to do our work as feminists from a clear anti-oppression framework which relates all the isms, but doesn't lose the gender analysis. It's a real challenge (Anti-Violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

The Executive Director of a women's centre in the GTA explained the implications of the age gap or generational divide among feminist activists in this way, she said:

We remember, our generation remembers our own activism, and we kind of think young women are taking so much for granted and there's some fear that once we take things for granted, there may be backsliding. That the gains that have been made, have been made continuously by people being active and actively raising them. If that's not done, there's a generation growing up that doesn't make it, that doesn't question certain ways of being and doing things in women's specific roles and needs, and there's a danger that over time all the gains will be lost (Executive Director, Women's Centre in the GTA, 2002)

Put differently, these stories may reflect more than mere age differences. That is, this sense of “taken for grantedness”, I believe, may also be read to reveal a second wave feminist critique directed at third wave feminism (Pinterics, 2009:67); namely, that “third wave feminists are forgetting the incredible battles it took to get the second wave achievements that women enjoy today” (Pinterics, 2009:67). Of course, the opposite could also be true, namely that these stories reflect not only “different generations” but “different issues” (see Wingfoot (1998) as cited by Siltanen and Doucet, 2008:18). “Third wave feminists, came of age in a different world, face different problems and as such, it should be no surprise to feminists of the second wave, that they ‘work with different issues’” (Wingfoot 1998 as cited by Siltanen and Doucet, 2008:18).

Some of the women's narratives also articulated the difficulty of "walking the talk" or putting intersectional feminist theory into practice. Their stories spoke to the challenges of getting diverse groups of women "to the table" and expressed feelings of frustration when not all women's voices were solicited or heard. In the following example, one middle aged, white woman critically reflects on the long-term implications these limitations pose for the women's movement. She commented:

One of the biggest frustrations in terms of feminist organizing, is making sure that all women's voices get heard. In 2002, we're still talking about physical accessibility, we're needing to provide more cultural interpretation or translation, to make sure those women who are in the services, who are reliant on some of the services and most impacted, are at the table and their voices are present, and until we as a women's movement are able to do that we're not going to be very effective. It's a real issue, because you cannot build without everybody's voice being heard at the table, and that's one frustration with feminist organizing. . . We have to start with making sure that we are putting our actions where our words are. (Executive Director, Nellies, Toronto, 2002).

As one of the first black Executive Directors of an anti-violence organization in Toronto, Beth Jordan, eloquently described her personal experience in putting feminist theory into practice and some of the important lessons she learned in the process. For her, attending to women's difference and diversity involved working in a meaningful way with women who have been systemically silenced, marginalized, or in her words "invisabilized". Her words or language challenge privileged, essentialist and additive analyses of women's oppression, such as the "add women and stir" (Spelman, 1988, Fox 1997) or "adding difference and stirring" (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser, 2004) model and her praxis attests to the ongoing importance of self-criticism and reflexivity for the contemporary feminist movement. She poignantly recalled:

When I first took this position at the Help Line, I was the only Black director at

the VAW service that I saw in the city of Toronto. And we are one of the most diverse cities in the country. So that was very difficult for me, because when you are at a table, and you want to make sure that everybody is being looked at and you're the only person of colour, the only lesbian, or the only woman with a disability, it makes your work more difficult and it can be isolating. It's frustrating, because you see folks who say that they're feminist, but yet they've done nothing around access issues for women, or they will hire placement equity hiring when you can, so again, the theory versus the practice, and I resist that. I will always resist that, because I think it's really important that we force the issue within our own circles. I struggle because there have been times when I've been very frustrated and don't want to call myself a feminist because of who's left out when I use that term. But at the same time, the roots of what feminism is supposed to be ring true for me, and I think that's because of the integration of the analysis (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Admittedly, Jordan argued that it can be difficult for feminists to “walk the talk” because this often means being self-critical and requires feminists to think and do things differently. It involves an organizational will to engage in risk taking and to demand follow through. It involves questioning how organizational policies and practices are arrived at and implemented. While Jordan recognized that this may be a difficult process, she remained optimistic that organizing inclusively across the various dimensions of women's difference was possible. She stated:

*It's about policy and procedure. It's about actually following through with those policies and procedures. The policies and procedures attach themselves to hiring practices, to representation on the board, and to anti-discrimination, anti-oppression policies. Then you start doing with the environmental scans. How comfortable is the workplace for the rest of them? Do you see a pride flag anywhere? Do you see women symbols? How comfortable is it for First Nations women? How comfortable is it for women with disabilities? Is it even accessible? Scanning your environment is really important and finding ways to make change. It's one thing to walk a walk, or talk the talk, **you have to walk the talk**. You have to actually do [that]. And that's hard. That's a hard step, because it means that you may have to do things differently. . . It's about having the will to do it . . . You have to take a lot of risks (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).*

Several of the women's stories characterized women's difference as a source of

organizational or movement renewal, but they were also careful to note the changes in existing organizational power structures necessary in order to facilitate the movement of women of colour, women with disabilities, lesbian and transgendered women into leadership positions within established feminist organizations. A union feminist, active in the both the labour and women's movement for over 30 years remarked that able bodied, heterosexual white women and men need to step aside and/or share power, something that is not easily or even willingly done in order to mentor and support younger sisters of colour, immigrant sisters, and Aboriginal sisters:

It forces the movement to renew itself, as it should. And I know some people get frustrated but. . . I would argue that you have to make room, sometimes you have to step aside and that's hard to do. Quite frankly the white boys, the white, able-bodied, heterosexual old boys club sure as heck didn't step aside for women to come in. Some of them did give us a hand, but most of them had to be jimmied aside and in some respect the white, able bodied, mostly heterosexual girls club also had to. People don't share power or perceived power very easily and one of the things that we're starting to talk more and more about is that in the women's movement we don't mentor. I shouldn't only be mentoring young, white women, I should be mentoring young women and identifying young women who may have a disability, young women who may be Aboriginal or may be black or East Indian or Asian and purposely providing support for those young sisters and that's a hard thing to do. And it's not an easy thing to do. But in any movement as you grow, as you renew some of the hardest things is to accept challenge and to accept change (Carol Anne Sceviour, OFL, Toronto, 2002).

A feminist activist who worked for 17 years in a Toronto rape crisis centre recalled the difficulties associated with establishing and resourcing what Patricia Daenzer (1997:282) has referred to as "ethno-specific services":

At the rape crisis centre we were organized collectively and shared responsibilities and I really enjoyed that, but it became apparent that we weren't going to get more money from anywhere, and the only way to be able to open up spaces for women of colour to be able to work, to take their volunteer commitment and turn it into a job the way I was able to do, was for some people to move over. . . You need new people in there both for them to have the experience and to learn

the skills and also to make sure that the service is pertinent. As soon as women of colour were involved in the rape crisis centre more women of colour used the service, it just makes sense. . .the bigger problem is when you can't get any more money for anything or if women of colour did want to organize a service that was more focused on the needs of their community, there was no new money, so their only option for helping out women in the immigrant community was to become part of already established agencies. In an ideal world there's enough for everyone to be able to do resources and then everybody can be working exactly where they want to be, but it's not the world we've got (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Neoliberal change coupled with various financial constraints meant that feminist attempts to organize inclusively tended to focus on bringing, for example, women of colour, women with disabilities, transgendered women “on board” so to speak within established (read: mainstream, white middle class) feminist organizations, at the expense of the development of new “ethno-specific services” (Daenzer, 1997). However, this move was not uncritically accepted. Nor was it perceived to be unproblematic. Some women were cognizant of the way it reinforced the expectation of women from different sectors and or communities joining mainstream white, middle class feminist groups, rather than affording differently located feminists’ access to the necessary resources and social supports required to establish alternative community based programs and services that reflect the diversity of women’s lives, experiences and needs (see Higginbotham, 1992 as cited by Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:122).

According to Greaves (1992:152), these ongoing debates concerning diversity and inclusivity reflect the “complexity of the women’s movement.” This complexity, she argues, entails “growing past the need for the security of ‘totalizing feminism’, whether that is in theory or practice, growing comfortable with the contradictions and the complexity of women as a group, and then the women’s movement, allows us to more

freely acknowledge and understand the different experiences of many women.” For Greaves’ (1992), this complexity is perceived to be a key source of strength and vitality for the survival of the women’s movement and one that will attract young women to the movement. However, research by other scholars has suggested that these differences have not only been a source of external tension between black women’s organizations and white middle class women’s organizations, but that racial and class based differences have also been a source of internal tension within black women’s organizations (Sudbury, 1998).

In an effort to avoid “dichotomous thinking” (Andersen and Collins, 2004) many feminist organizations and activists still found themselves attempting to resolve longstanding dualisms, (i.e. micro/macro; individual/structural; service provision/political action) and engaging in a precarious balancing act as they attempted to meet/reconcile their dual demands and competing tasks. They struggled to not lose site of the larger picture and structural analyses given the increased demand to attend to individual women’s multiple barriers and complex needs (Harder, 2003). An employment agency director talked about attempting to salvage a degree of political advocacy while keeping one’s head down when in the line of fire. She spoke to the complexities experienced by those “community organizations which engage in both campaigning and service delivery” (Sudbury, 1998:12):

We put a lot of our time and energy into looking at direct service and partnering up where we could to address the political issues. But when you’re under fire, you tend to put your head down and we wanted to work with the women and salvage things that they were in the process of losing like their housing, to save some of our political advocacy. We knew when you’re under attack you tend to get very focused on the stuff in front of you and we didn’t want that to happen to the

extent of losing our sort of broader picture. Sometimes we did, sometimes we had to forego the broader picture because we had numbers of women coming in wounded and bleeding so to speak, and we had to take care of it, but it was not always an easy balance (Executive Director, Women's Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

Some anti-violence groups spoke about the need to develop organizational policy initiatives around fundraising programs and processes to avoid a conflict of interest and or a contradiction of their stated feminist principles of supporting and empowering women. In the following excerpt, a crisis counsellor discusses some of the issues stemming from the fundraising process, in particular the question of whether or not feminist organizations should accept funding from what Spalter-Roth and Schreiber (1995:125) have called "hostile" sources. She recalled the controversial decision a southern Ontario sexual assault centre had to make with regard to accepting financial restitution from an abuser. Her narrative also reflects the aforementioned larger, external struggle to maintain the integrity of feminist politics and organizational accountability first and foremost, to women who have experienced sexual violence. She mentioned:

We are working with an outside consultant to develop our policy, to develop our fundraising program. We are fundraising more, before we didn't spend as much time fundraising in the same way. We're also developing policies about who we take money from that doesn't contradict our principles [principles related to women centeredness and women's power]. So for example, as we are fundraising we still need to develop, would we take money if there was an issue at [hand]. I think it was either London or Windsor where there was an abuser that was given a financial, sort of part of being accountable based on the crime that he committed, and that was a donation to a sexual assault centre and they refused to take the money. There was a large controversy within the community, well if you're wanting money, then why are you refusing money you are being given? And then you need to look at the politics of, yes you may be needing money to operate, but does that mean that you will take money from someone who has violated the same principles that you are working against? (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

Paid and unpaid women often work side by side to elicit change (Blackford,

Garceau and Kirby, 1999:326). Sudbury's (1998:172) work highlights the potential tensions between paid and unpaid employees given socio-economic and educational status differences among women workers and volunteers. Some organizations were aware of their increased reliance on women's unpaid, volunteer labour and the potential impact on internal organizational relations between volunteers and paid staff. Morgen's (1986) research shows how government funding was used to hire more women of colour as paid staff in a US health clinic. These women she notes "could not afford to be volunteers" (Morgen, 1986 as cited by Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:119-120). Given budgetary constraints and hiring freezes, some organizations had to increase their volunteer labour pool. A crisis counsellor at a multicultural rape crisis centre expressed concern about the Harris government's emphasis on volunteer recruitment and the resulting exploitation of women's volunteer labour. She said:

...volunteering, that became a real large push right, by governments saying that 'you should depend on, rely much more on volunteers' which means that consciously they're saying that, 'it's ok to exploit' (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

Furthermore, she expressed concern about another organizational problem that arose largely as a result of the Harris cutbacks: the divisiveness contract work may have in rape crisis centres among salaried staff and contract employees or volunteers. Her comments highlight the potentially exploitative work relations among women employers and employees, specifically the relations between part time, contractual workers and full time staff members, both of whom are expected to perform similar work related tasks, but who are not equitably compensated in terms of pay and benefits. She explained:

We also started to do contracts. We couldn't hire full-time which meant we were

looking at and questioning our procedures and our contexts and our commitment about doing the work, because we look at issues of power and privilege and we also look at that in the context of full-time and part-time staff and the exploitation of women right. So when we're not able to hire full-time, it meant that we had to look at contracts, which brought certain issues to the table, as to how do we in a way that is non-violating, that is non-oppressive provide fee for service at a rate that was, equitable to the present staff when we're asking them to do the same work (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

Feminists are sensitive to issues of “exploitation” without “compensation” (Gelb and Lief Palley, 1982:41). One woman of colour I interviewed recognized how these organizational working conditions bordered on contradicting her centre’s anti-oppression analysis and its principles of equality and empowerment. She said:

It took some negotiating, and I think in some ways we were on the borderline of contradicting some of our principles, given that if you are working full-time and this is a real contradiction. If you are working full-time, there is an expectation that you will be supplemented with benefits and you have sick time and everything else right. . .when we're contracting it's very exploitative to say to someone 'we can pay you ten thousand dollars and now you have to be a superwoman for six weeks right, you need to do the counselling.' So what had to happen is that we needed to find a way that wasn't exploitative. How do we expect someone who's doing a contract to come to a meeting or to stay over because a job is not done within the hours of what they are being paid for? (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

Laiken’s (1999:226) research suggests situations like this have the potential to create ambivalent feelings about volunteerism. Socioeconomics may dictate that volunteers “will likely be middle class white women of privilege, who have both the time and the inclination to voluntarily support social-change projects, as well as having easy access to potential sources of funding” (Laiken, 1999:228-229). As a result, anti-racist, ethno-specific and or “Black women’s organizations, many of which already are under-resourced” (Sudbury, 1998:232), may find themselves in a disadvantaged position. Low income women, poor women, immigrant women or women of colour may be unable to

afford to volunteer their time (Laiken, 1999:226). Time again is understood to be both a scarce and a valuable resource. Further, differences between staff members and volunteers may not only raise questions concerning the exclusivity of organizational staff and membership, but could be a potential source of conflict (Laiken, 1999:226-229). For example, the concentration of Black women in lower paying jobs that require long hours may contribute to their organizational exclusion, given the paltry support for those attempting to balance paid and unpaid labour (Sudbury, 1998:55). Likewise McKeen (2004:11 citing Nelson, 1984) notes how poor women's lower participation in political activities (and I would argue feminist activism and volunteer activities as well), compared to poor men is related to their primary care giving responsibilities. The tensions and contradictions surrounding working class, immigrant women, and women of colour assuming multiple roles as workers, as mothers, and as volunteers remain unresolved. Here a labour activist speaks to the realities of women's "double day" (Luxton, 1980) and the increased reliance on women's unpaid and voluntary labour. She notes how meeting the dual demands of daily life, particularly women's care-giving responsibilities, made engaging in feminist political activism even more challenging for working class women:

What the Harris years did to women was increase the burden on women tenfold, because they undercut all of the social systems on which women rely more heavily than men, because women in our society are still traditionally the caregivers. So you find women trying to do the dual role and on top of that having to organize, if they were political activists [it was] a lot harder during that period of time.
(Linda Tourney, Labour Activist and Co-Chair of the Metro Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

Social policy, including the changes introduced during the Harris years blatantly disregarded women's pivotal role in the process of social reproduction and the reality that

much of society's caring work is still gendered (McKeen, 2004:vii; Bezanson, 2006). What these women's narratives suggest is that some feminists were not only cognizant of, but struggled to resist the exploitation of women of colour and working class women's volunteer and paid labour and confronted questionable work place practices that contributed to unfavourable working conditions in feminist organizations. Still like Sudbury (1998:175), I would argue that "it is incumbent on these organizations to recognize where they can learn from Black women [Aboriginal, immigrant, refugee women and women of colour] who are single mothers, unemployed or trapped in low paid jobs." To be clear, I am not suggesting that women of colour "dedicate themselves to educating or otherwise servicing white feminists" (Welch, 1984 as cited by Sudbury, 1998:213) rather, that white, middle class women commit "to creating an anti-racist feminism which could serve as the basis of solidarity between black and white women" (Sudbury, 1998:213), in short, a feminism that acknowledges the race and class privilege in feminist activism and how it still operates in feminist organizations.

Summary

What has Harris left for us? I would think a total disrespect for the work that women have done, for the gains, for the historical work. . .[the implication being] back to the drawing board. We have sort of digressed (terse laugh) and I'm thinking that we're doing a lot of repair work. . .As women we're in the process of regrouping and looking at what needs to be implemented and how (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

To suggest that feminist organizations have had an "ambivalent" relationship to the state is not a new argument (see for example Chappell 2002 as cited by Westhues, 2004). But how have feminist and women's groups' relationships with the state been altered with the emergence and entrenchment of neoliberalism? In this Chapter I have

presented and analysed some of the stories of feminist struggle that reflect the numerous problems created by the Harris regime as narrated by differently located feminists. Taken together these women's stories represent a critical counter-narrative, a collection of dissenting feminist voices that challenged the imposition of a neoliberal agenda in the GTA. These stories of feminist struggle tell us about the relations between individuals and society, and the influence social structure, social context and difference have on feminist agency. What these narratives also suggest is that feminists continued to resist and to respond to these problems as the problems themselves change and evolve. And my reading and analyses of the women's narratives illustrate the creativity of feminist responses undertaken during the Harris years. It is these varied "survival strategies" and "survival paths" (Hyde, 1995) envisioned and enacted on the part of feminists to counter Harris's brand of neoliberalism , that are discussed at length in *Chapter Five Feminist Survival Stories: Strategies of Resistance*.

CHAPTER FIVE

Feminist Survival Stories: Strategies of Resistance

We have to be effective strategists. We have to do our research, more than ever. We have to move from anecdotal evidence to hard core statistical data. We have to be able to show impact. We have to be able to provide an alternative. We're really good at sounding off, after we sound off we need to have suggestions ready and we have to have some kind of agreement and consensus on those suggestions. I think we have to be more media savvy. We have to work in coalition in a coordinated way to protect ourselves and protect the work. . . So pushing the work back onto them and off of us, and forcing them to do deal with their own mess, rather than us dealing with it is a strategy (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Feminist Survival Stories: Narrative Themes

Resistance is part and parcel of feminist struggle. Feminists recognize the importance of being “effective strategists” and feminist resistance is a recurring and an underlying theme that is woven through all of the women's stories. In this chapter, my findings and narrative analyses reveal that feminists engaged in a number of “survival projects” (Brenner, 2000) during the Harris years. Feminists in the GTA were not complicit (in conversation with Baines, 2005); rather their narratives reveal that they employed an array of “survival strategies” and followed several “survival paths” (Hyde, 1995).

Several themes of feminist resistance emerged in the women's narratives. These include the increased importance of coalition building and coalition work (see Bunch 1987 as cited in Arnold, 1995:276-277; Bays, 1998; Bevacqua, 2008; Gilmore, 2008; Gilmore, 2008a; La Valley, 1998; Morrow et als., 2004; Reinhelt, 1995) as being central to feminist based opposition; the push to diversify and restructure funding models (Gelb

and Disney 2000); the use of “direct action” and “insider tactics to address outsider issues” (Ferree and Martin, 1995:8; Mathews, 1995; Spalter Roth and Schreiber, 1995; Tyyska, 1998); the importance of community activism and outreach (Hyde, 1995:319; Naples, 1998); and the use of what some scholars have called “apparent accommodation” and or “covert resistance” (Mathews, 1995:298). These diverse tactics are reflected in the women’s narratives of resistance. Thus, in this chapter, I contend that feminist resistance during the Harris years called upon diversity, that is, when faced with adversity feminist organizations and activists recommitted to undertaking a variety of survival strategies, with an increased or perhaps a renewed emphasis on the importance of coalition building as a major form of feminist resistance.

For the purpose of this discussion, I will focus on two of the most prominent examples of coalition building as evidenced in the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group (CSVAWSG) and feminist involvement in The Days of Action (DOA). Then I will briefly discuss other strategies of resistance employed by feminist activists in a range of organizational settings.

Coalition Building: The Meta-narrative of Feminist Resistance

My rationale for presenting and analysing the data in this way, and in particular my justification for choosing to focus on two broadly based coalitional strategies (the CSVAWSG and the DOA) lie in my reading and interpretation of coalitional opposition as the overarching or meta-narrative with respect to feminist strategizing during the Harris years. To be clear, I am using the term “meta-narrative” here rather loosely. What I mean to suggest is that a “meta-narrative is a *story* about a story” that encompass[es]

and explain[s] other ‘little stories’” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/Metanarrative>.accessed June 2010). In this instance, stories of feminist resistance are stories about coalitional opposition as evidenced in the stories of the CSVAWSG and the DOA. Therefore, this meta-narrative of coalitional opposition may be interpreted as the major thread that tied the women’s stories of organizational and activist resistance together.

When faced with such a “multi-faceted” project as neoliberalism (Coulter, 2009), or as stated in Chapter Four, an “assault on all fronts”, these women’s narratives may be read to imply that feminist organizations were backed into coalitional politics, if only out of protective self-interest to safeguard what they and other supporters of social justice considered to be essential women’s and social services, as well as the protection of feminist based organizations (e.g. women’s shelters, anti-violence and anti-racist organizations). But the women’s stories of resistance and feminist involvement in coalition work, in my mind, retain more complexity than this cursory reading would perhaps lead us to believe. I would also like to suggest that while at first glance, as an apparently defensive, collective move on the part of radical, socialist and anti-racist feminists activists, that coalitional politics served another equally important purpose (and or possibly one more important for the future of feminist organizing): to reinvigorate a progressive, structural and feminist intersectional analysis of some of the most enduring policy issues and demands at hand. Indeed, my reading of these women’s narratives centered here, provide a vivid account of coalitional opposition that helped to reinforce the most challenging, if not dissenting “women’s voices” of the day.

Other Stories of Survival Strategies

But coalitional opposition is by no means the only story of feminist resistance to emerge in these women's narrative accounts. There is no monolithic or universal story of resistance, and comparative analyses of these women's narratives speak to the diversity of feminist's organizational and activist responses. Following Mathews (1995:304), one could argue that during the Harris years feminists relied on a number of different "survival strategies" and women situated in different organizational sectors occasionally employed different tactics in an attempt to achieve their goals. Some of the strategies evidenced in the women's narratives of resistance are not altogether new. As one woman remarked, during the Harris years there was a "dusting off of old strategies". That feminist organizations and activists employed a variety of strategies of resistance may not only reflect ideological differences and/or draw attention to the importance of "the site of struggle" (in conversation with Sugiman, 2005); but also suggests a move beyond what Westhues (2004:196), citing Chappell (2002), refers to "the normative debate about whether feminists *should* engage with the state" (italics in the original) and instead speaks to the concerted efforts made by feminists to influence policies that shape and constrain aspects of women's day to day lives, including those related to violence against women, discrimination, equal pay and work. It also seems to bring to light how intersectional feminist frameworks suggest that we recognize and embrace a variety of diverse forms of feminist praxis.

In the analyses that follow, what will become clear is that resistance is a defining feature of feminist struggle and feminist's strategic responses may for a variety of

reasons, vary across time and space. Further, these narrative analyses suggest while feminist strategies of resistance may indeed be influenced, they are not wholly dictated by the larger socio-political climate. Therefore, feminist resistance *was not*, contrary to the dominant, hegemonic (read: CSR) narrative of the day, considered futile.

Contrary to the Meta-Narrative: Feminist Resistance *is not* Futile

According to Ralph (1997), from day one, Harris encountered resistance. He faced demonstrations, legal challenges and angry crowds, all protesting his policy changes (Ralph, 1997:178). Thus it is not surprising that a common theme in all of the women's narratives, regardless of "race", class and organizational sector was the theme of *feminist resistance*. The women's narratives reflect a shared and ongoing commitment to resistance. Direct service providers engaged in anti-violence and anti-racist work maintained that they were not going to give up, that they would not and could not walk away from these important issues. As Beth Jordan emphatically stated:

We are a viable service and we refuse to go away. We will be here as long as women need us and we will evolve to meet the needs of women and we are going to speak to the reality of the women who call and tell us. We won't be silent. . . We deliver a vital service, but I don't know that there's an interest, a real interest in doing anything about the barriers we identify (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

The narratives of socialist feminists and working class women situated in labour organizations also attested to their "fight back" experiences. A CUPE activist, one of the first black women in her local was steadfast: "I would dare not say that he triumphed during his time because we fought back. We picketed. We did joint picketing. Even though we did not have a strike, even when OPSEU was striking CUPE was on the line with OPSEU. We fought back."

All of the women's stories speak to the importance of perseverance during "hard times" (Bashevkin, 1998). As Pam Cross explained, METRAC's persistence was strategic, it involved making sure women's organizations were always "at the table":

It's a question of constantly reminding them that you're there, that you're legitimate, that you're professional, and you want to be part of the process. It doesn't always get you invited to the table, but it gets you there some of the time. . It's a question of being endlessly persistent. We manage to maintain a line where we're not folding, we're not selling out, we're not caving in, not saying what they want to hear us say so we get invited back (Executive Director, METRAC, Toronto, 2002).

"Being there" at the table was important to activists. A shelter manager concurred:

We make sure we're at tables. Despite almost killing us, trying to balance the in-house needs of the shelter with the external need to be at tables, we just made sure we never stopped being there. There were times we've been demoralized and there were times we felt like we were hitting our heads against a brick wall, and there were times we were quiet, but I made sure I was at tables. I sat on committees. I met with people. We wrote letters to the minister, we talked to our local reps. We tried to still be there (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

Resistance is what some feminists believe sustained them and their organizations throughout the Harris years. It became increasingly clear that feminists were going to have a "fight" on their hands, and that they were going to have to find the personal and organizational strength to survive. Some drew strength from the commitment to the women they work with and as a result recognized that certain "choices" had to be made, including for example, the decision to work longer hours for little or no pay. Simpson (2009) argues, working extra hours stretches staff and makes an intersectional approach to programming and services challenging (Simpson, 2009:20), but "if intersectional policies are built into organizational structures, it will have a direct impact on how service delivery is carried out." And yet it remains important to note how the rhetoric of choice

played itself out in this process. Beth Jordan, the Executive Director of the Assaulted Woman's Helpline talked about the choices feminists often had and have to make within the context of having "no choice". She explained:

Part of it is underlying sheer determination and commitment to the women you work with. You refuse to lay down and die. That's why a lot of us are still here. Women made choices to work longer hours, to put in overtime they were not paid for. It was very clear that we were going to have to fight. That was really, really clear. During that time, you had to make a decision if you were in or out. A lot of people were in. I think that was the start of some resistance. And resistance is what eventually got us through to some extent (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Again, she stressed her feeling that feminists had as she put it, "no choice". She continued:

. . .you find the strength to continue to fight because you don't have a choice. I don't know anyone that's gonna walk away from a woman that needs shelter, support, safety. I'm not willing to do that, and I know a lot of other people who are also not willing to do that. We don't have a choice. We have to keep our doors open. We have to challenge the current level of analysis that's out there. We have to provide alternatives to this law and order agenda. We don't have a choice. We have to do that, a lot of women are trying to work both individually and collectively. . . (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

The women's narratives described and analyzed here suggest that feminist resistance manifested itself in many forms. These varied strategies reflect the political and ideological diversity of feminist organizing. Many of the strategies employed by feminists were in response to the obvious actions *and* perceived inaction on the part of Harris government. As Agnew (1996:229) suggests, "women's resistance . . . is to some extent, determined by the social context." In other words, the "political opportunity structure" appears to have impacted how women from different racial and class backgrounds and organizational sectors engage in feminist resistance, but it did not

preclude it and may have in some instances, precipitated it.

Comparatively speaking, there seems to be a difference between feminist's use of so-called "reform" and "radical" strategies as evidenced across the organizational sectors. For instance, there appears to be a move toward more "reform" related strategies in terms of service provision and public education on the part of anti-violence and anti-racist feminists. Consequently, there is a move away from some of the more "radical" strategies in the form of direct action, such as public demonstrations and rallies. I suspect that this stemmed from the need to protect women's services and increased organizational funding insecurity as noted in Chapter Four. In contrast, the stories of feminists organizing in union and labour organizations speak to the continued importance of more "radical" strategies, particularly the mobilization of rank and file members through direct action tactics such as mass protest, marches, and strikes. Socialist and working class feminist's commitment to these practices are most clearly evidenced by their prominent participation and involvement in the labour-sponsored Days of Action campaign. Some women even argued that participation in direct action, on an individual or organizational level may have created potential opportunities for the use of more traditional or "insider" strategies.

Generally speaking then, feminist resistance and responses to Harris's introduction to neoliberalism were diverse. Narratives of feminist resistance emphasized or called upon diversity, that is, when faced with adversity feminist organizations and activists re-committed to a diversity of organizational strategies. Union and labour based organizations under the umbrella of socialist feminism carried the torch of direct action in

terms of undertaking offensive strategies and tactics, while other organizations, including anti-violence and anti-racist groups focussed more on defensive or protectionist tactics and yet in my mind, there is little doubt that these latter groups may have also benefited to a certain extent from the actions of the former. Many activists, feminists included often consider (sometimes endlessly) what tactics or strategies are likely to be successful in any given context, often seeing these choices as a “zero-sum” game. However, while radical/offensive/direct action tactics might on their own appear futile and or largely unsuccessful to movement outsiders, what they may in fact do, even when they may appear to accomplish very little, is open up political and cultural spaces, and create “new openings” (Rebick, 2003) or spaces in which reformist strategies are perhaps more likely to be used and or are potentially more effective.

So I seem to be making two different, but related and maybe even contrary arguments that shed light on what some may term a seemingly, “never-ending debate” (in conversation with Storey, 2011). First, reformist or defensive strategies that emphasize limited, but cooperative ways of being and doing (from non-hierarchical organizational forms to progressive social policies that are non-market, but not necessarily overtly feminist in orientation) are what provide the building blocks or the basis for carrying feminist organizing into the future. They are strategies of resistance that help make the possibility of some form of feminist inspired radical protest and democratic socialism more imaginable and plausible. At the same time however, one could argue that radical tactics in the form of mass protest or direct action may serve to push forward reforms that have contradictory results. Such tactics may save the system from some of its own

contradictions, and thus forestall radical notions of change, but at the same time also provide a base for future organizing and the envisioning a more democratic and equal society.

Feminist Resistance and the Importance of Coalitional Opposition

Ethel LaValley (1998:159) believes coalition building is an effective organizing model. She conceptualizes a coalition as comprised of “several groups working together for a particular cause.” She argues while they may have different goals, structures and or values, when groups come together in coalition, they tend to have a shared interest or goal (LaValley, 1998:159), whereas according to Arnold (1995:277), “a coalition is a supra-organizational form that enables distinct parties to mobilize around common concerns while preserving separate political and organizational identities.” Working in coalition was considered advisable rather than “trying to go it alone” (CUPE 2000a:38).

This section speaks to the increased importance of feminist coalitional politics as evidenced in the women’s narratives. Coalition building occurred across all sectors around several issues including violence against women, healthcare, and the privatization of Medicare and Hydro. “Through joint work on specific issues”, Thornton Dill (1983:146) maintains “we may come to a better understanding of one another’s needs and perceptions and begin to overcome some of the suspicions and mistrust that continue to haunt us.” And while some groups may have been pushed into coalition building stemming in part from the ideological and financial attacks by Harris’s regime, what one may consider a defensive move to protect vulnerable organizations, may have also unintentionally contributed to the rediscovery of the importance of coalition based

opposition in furthering the development of intersectional frameworks and analyses in feminist movements.

On one hand, participating in coalition building out of organizational necessity and or as a result of the pressures exerted by funding bodies may, for example, be read as illustrative of some of the tensions associated with engaging in intersectional work and politics. But at the risk of sounding essentialist, which is by no means my intent, one could also argue that coalition building may also be understood to be an inherently feminist means of organizing. These women's stories may be read to suggest that coalition building during the Harris years reflected a coming together of different groups and constituents that necessitated moving beyond single issue politics and an "identification of all issues as feminist issues" (Kendall et. al, 2008) and as a strategic move to ensure that a variety of perspectives and voices were heard. In this reading, coalition building and coalition work may also be understood as an active attempt on the part of feminist organizations and activists to put intersectional theory into practice. Further, while organizational necessity, survival and or external pressure from outside sources may have dictated feminist groups' participation in coalition work during the Harris years, this was also perhaps over the long term, conducive to reaffirming the guiding goals and principles of feminist intersectional analyses and enhancing the development of "collaborative programs, services and projects that involve different communities, perspectives and points of view" (Simpson, 2009:21)

One could argue that the women's stories analysed here attest to feminist organizational struggles to challenge and sustain a critique of neoliberalism which made

them vulnerable given the socio-political environment of the day. Backed into a corner in this hostile “political opportunity structure”, and wary of the potential dangers or pitfalls often associated with coalitional work (e.g. acknowledging power differences among women and the challenges of organizing across differences, namely racial and class differences; that finding common ground may result in uncomfortable compromise; that compromise may benefit some groups more than others; that some voices may be lost, and other voices may dominate; that addressing ideological differences may result in a watered down, or worse a homogenized feminist voice - to name a few), feminist groups resorted to adopting coalitional strategies as a defensive move, but a move that was also in some respects, offensive in that it led to a rediscovery or to use the words of one activist, a “renewal” of the organizational praxis behind the heart of the debates embodied under the rubric of feminist intersectional theorizing.

Entering into coalitions such as the CSVASG and the DOA resulted in a coming together of a broad range of groups that aimed to produce a systemic critique of neoliberalism, an important counter-narrative that might have otherwise been lost during the Harris years. Coalition work illustrates “how separate organizations comprising activists of different racial and class backgrounds came together to form coalitions around what one scholar calls ‘bridge issues’ (Bevacqua, p. 165)” which not only brought together different perspectives (Newman, 2011:225), but afforded a more intersectional analyses of violence against women (the CSVASG) and work and labour issues (the DOA). Perhaps feminist inspired analyses may not have existed or survived, if it were not for the pursuit of said coalitional strategies. Rather than giving up a critique, or

having their dissenting voices silenced, when forced into coalition, shoulder to shoulder feminists were perhaps better positioned to not only maintain their own organizational survival, but were also able to sustain a deeper, structural critique of neoliberalism, and an anti-hegemonic discourse fostered by desire to maintain feminist voices. Granted this is not the only reading of these women narratives, nor perhaps the most informed, as it could be read as essentialist, particularly if we consider the problem of “voice” in feminist scholarship. It is but one reading, and that said, this observation I think again reflects Brodie’s (1995) aforementioned idea that the larger political opportunity structure may shape (but not necessarily determine), feminist organizational strategies of resistance.

Working in coalitions enabled labour organizations for example, to build more explicit bridges with women’s advocacy groups, shelters, service providers and community based organizations. Peggy Nash of the CAW believed that “there has been more of an explicit building of bridges with women’s organizations throughout this period, again, whether it’s childcare, whether it’s anti-poverty, whether it’s women’s rights organizations.” Carolyn Eagan of the USWA noted that when the NDP were in power, organized labour had more influence, but under the Conservative government they “had to really make a lot more noise to have any influence.” Working in coalition with other unions and community groups was a way to exert influence and to ensure that “ordinary people’s interests were put forward”, because working class people’s issues, not to mention, working class women’s issues, were not on Harris’ political and economic agenda. She stated that coalition work became a priority among steelworker activists:

We had to work in coalition, work with other unions, do everything we could to put the agenda of ordinary people on the table, because it was not on the table. It was much more difficult. We worked with the Toronto Health Coalition. We worked with Ontario Health Coalition. We had members working in the Coalition Against the Privatization of Hydro. We try and plug people into the activities that are happening, and try and support both by funding and having people involved (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

Coalition work enabled women to work together en masse and provided a sense of security and voice and strength in numbers. It was a strategic attempt to reduce the organizational isolation, visibility and perceived vulnerability of some groups. A Hamilton CUPE activist speaks to the feeling of strength afforded to her by her union. She said:

CUPE has given us that strength, we can see other issues and we can make them known, we can bring it to CUPE and say this is what's happening can we do something about it? Can we join the group that is doing something about it? Can we speak on it? . . . I became strong by being in CUPE (CUPE Activist, Hamilton, 2002).

Another woman, a crisis counsellor in Toronto, expressed a similar sentiment. She said, “we’re strong in numbers.” And a Hamilton shelter manager recognized that strength in numbers ensured that no one organization was isolated or made extremely vulnerable. She talked about her experience of shelters linking up with sexual assault centres to speak out in a unified way on issues related to violence against women. She stated:

In our community, shelters link[ed] up with sexual assault centres. From our perspective, there was strength in numbers and we weren't leaving an organization vulnerable to be the one speaking up, we were all speaking up. You didn't want to leave anyone flying in the wind by themselves. . . We really tried to get together as shelters. The group I was involved with, we tried to raise these issues in unison as opposed to dividing and conquering (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

Participating in coalition work also empowered feminists to strategize across

organizational sectors; encouraged collaboration and coordinated action; facilitated the sharing or pooling of financial resources and personnel; and the recruitment of a more diverse community membership base. Thus working in coalition with allied groups and organizations fostered what one woman perceptibly explained as “strategizing not just as communities, but across communities”. For example, a shelter manager recalled her group’s decision to engage in the process of information sharing, first with other shelters, and then with other feminist organizations. She suggested:

[A]fter really being quiet for a long while, there was a huge chill and we were just scared that we weren’t going to exist. We made decisions that we had to come together. Other shelters had to start talking to other shelters more clearly and strategizing not just as communities, but across communities. ‘So are you experiencing this? Yes we are too, what’s that all about? Or what’s happening?’ So information sharing became big (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

Working in coalition also may have afforded some of the more vulnerable groups, namely publicly funded groups, more authority and legitimacy when speaking to women’s and feminist issues. CUPE noted when different groups get together they may experience “increased clout and credibility” (CUPE, 2000a:38). It counteracted the Harris government’s attempts to isolate, target, and delegitimize feminist claimsmakers and their allies. It also helped counteract the government’s “divide and conquer” mentality (see Bashvekin, 1998; Sudbury, 1998), a diversionary tactic designed to pit women’s groups against one another. Vilma Rossi, Executive Director of SACHA voiced the sense of security and assuredness she felt in knowing that other organizational allies were on board. She asserted that by working in coalition she could speak with more confidence and authority. According to her:

I feel more secure knowing that the Cross Sectoral Group exists and that the

Cross Sectoral Group has enjoyed some success, and that we are working in coalition with women like Eileen Morrow and Beth Jordan and some of the unions. I think that is really important to me, that they know me and I know them, and that we're all on the same page. When I go into a meeting, wherever that meeting might be, I feel like I can speak with more authority because I've got some allies out there, and I've got this document that I can say, 'it's not just me saying these things, it's women across the province saying those things' and the document has been signed by two members of political parties, so it gives it that credibility (Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

Coalitional Opposition as a Reformist Strategy: Feminist Resistance and The Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group (CSVAWSG)

As mentioned in the above quotation, one of the most prominent examples of coalition work during the Harris years was the rise of the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group. The CSVAWSG was a proactive, community based coalition initiated by three women working in the anti-violence sector in the GTA. It was orchestrated initially on the part of shelters and shelter activists to help keep issues of violence against women in the realm of public and political consciousness.

The Strategy Group emerged following the “the brutal and unrelenting reality of violence against women” during the summer of 2000. In just over three months, several Ontario women were murdered by abusive partners or stalkers including Gillian Hadley of Pickering; Bohumilla Luft of Kitchener; Hemoutie Raghunauth of Pickering; Harjaap Bolla of Mississauga; Laurie Lynn Vollmershausen of Stratford; Renee Joyson of St. Catharines; Jennifer Zumach of Orangeville; and Eva Papusak. A number of other women including Maria Frana of Malton, Zahra Zeinali of Rexdale; and Camille Bonterre of Scarborough were injured (2000:1; [dawn.thot.net/csvaw/ Emergency_ Measures_ and_ Beyond.pdf](http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/Emergency_Measures_and_Beyond.pdf)). And without being interpreted either as crass or insensitive to the seriousness of the issue of violence against women, one could also argue that it was these

women's violent deaths as part of the larger socio-political context that made such coalition building possible.

From a radical feminist perspective centered on assessing the role that power, privilege, and control plays in perpetuating male violence, feminists have long argued violence against women is a structural issue and one that is often hidden. Such violence is also used by media to sell sensationalized accounts (by focussing on “individual evil” or the “out of the blue intimate partner murderer” (Dobash and Dobash, 2001)) and by “law and order” politicians to court the “get tough on crime” vote. Feminist coalitional politics allowed for more structural explanations of violence against women and related policy demands to come through. It is highly unlikely that individual shelters could have successfully engaged in such praxis on their own. In fact, they may have been backed into and or had their demands (re)framed merely as another call for additional funds to help “victims” of “domestic violence” or “family violence”, a reframing that as I noted earlier, degenerates the issue.

As a result of these women's violent deaths, a number of groups, over 160 organizations in total, representing women of different ages, races, and classes from a variety of sectors and communities such as labour, health care, violence against women, shelters, equity, education, anti-racism, research, women's centres, family and social justice groups drafted and endorsed a list of 39 emergency measures for women and children in Ontario⁶⁰ (CSVAWSG, 2000; <http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/docs.html>). These

⁶⁰ The summary of measures is drawn from the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group's policy document entitled “Emergency Measures for Women and Children in the fall 2000 legislative session”. Groups that participated in the CSVASG included but were not limited to the following: “Ontario Women's Health Network, Immigrant Women's Service Organization - Ottawa based but has

measures focussed on ensuring the allocation of “core government resources” in three key areas (2000:1) including (1) funding for services i.e. emergency shelters, crisis lines, second stage housing and sexual assault and rape crisis centres; (2) funding for legal and family law reforms largely stemming from the Arlene May⁶¹ inquest; and (3) economic reforms (i.e. income security, pay equity) and workplace safety pertaining to the Employment Standards Act (CSVAWSG, 2000:1).

The strategy’s policy document called for \$50 million in funding for community based services and neighbourhood supports for women and children (2000:3). These measures largely centred on supporting front line services and advocacy groups. The emergency measures’ document (2000:3-4; dawn.thot.net/csvaw/Emergency_Measures_and_Beyond.pdf) included: \$15 million for funding for shelters; funding provincial and federal crisis lines to offer assistance in a number of languages; \$3.36 million for second stage housing to facilitate the transition from shelter to affordable housing; and reinstating the 5% cut to core funding for sexual assault and rape crisis centres. The measures also called for funds for women’s neighbourhood and province wide advocacy groups including anti-violence organizations and women’s centres;

provincial and national influence, Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, Housing and Anti-poverty groups, Sistering, Older Women's Network, Teacher's Federation, OAITH, OCRCC, regional shelters and sexual assault centres representing Durham, Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Toronto, AWHL, EWA - women with disabilities” ([HYPERLINK "http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html"](http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html) <http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>).

⁶¹ According to the Ontario Women’s Justice Network, in 1996 Arlene May was murdered by her ex boyfriend Randy Iles, who then killed himself. This murder/suicide occurred despite May had reported instances of abuse to police. And at the time of her death, Iles was out on bail and was not allowed to contact her. May’s case prompted the Chief Coroner of Ontario to investigate not only her death, but the issue of domestic violence. Both OAITH and METRAC were granted standing at the May-Iles inquest and provided the jury with a jointly crafted set of recommendations (<http://www.owjn.org/archive/arlene.htm>).

immigrant, ethno-specific and francophone services (2000:3-4; dawn.thot.net/csvaw/Emergency_Measures_and_Beyond.pdf).

The second set of measures focussed on legal reforms and called for another \$50 million to be allocated in the following three areas: legal aid, criminal law and family law reform. The strategy maintained that “women have a constitutional right to fair and equal treatment under the law” and need better access to legal aid (2000:5), while criminal law reforms again centred on implementing recommendations from the May inquest (2000:5). Family law reforms drew attention to children’s safety issues, and addressed concerns regarding child witnesses (2000:6). These measures for example favoured implementing “a policy of no use of mediation where there is evidence of past or present abuse”, and “increasing the availability of supervised access exchanges” (2000:6; dawn.thot.net/csvaw/Emergency_Measures_and_Beyond.pdf).

The third set of measures focussed on ensuring women and children’s economic well-being and workplace safety (2000:6-7). Economic insecurity contributes to women staying in and or returning to abusive situations (2000:6). Thus the strategy’s policy document made several economic recommendations such as adjusting social assistance rates; forgoing appeals to “the spouse in the house” legislation; addressing punitive issues with respect to “benefit stacking” and ending the “clawback” for low income families; exempting abused women from seeking spousal or child support before being able to qualify for social assistance; and honoring pay equity obligations in women’s services and agencies (2000:6-7).

Finally, the policy document (2000) addressed the concerns of abused women at

work. In addition to making the first week of June “Province-wide Sexual Harassment Awareness Week”, the document outlined several changes be made to the *Employment Standards Act* (2000:7) such as protecting women experiencing abuse or harassment from being let go and extending proposed “Emergency Family Leave” provisions (2000:7).

Analyses of the CSVAWSG policy document indicates that that coalition members locate the root cause of violence against women in gendered social and economic inequalities. Clearly strengthening women’s social and economic position needs to be at the core of initiatives to end violence against women and children (2000:1). These ideas were also reflected in the Strategy Group’s demands - demands that resisted the social construction of abused women as “victims in need of state protection” (Gotell, 1998 as cited by Morrow et al, 2004:363) and challenged the Harris government’s “gender neutral”, “law and order agenda”. The Strategy Group called for additional funds and social supports for gender specific, women’s services. Government funding designated for “services” resulted in organizational energies and resources being devoted to administering “gender neutral” or “victim” services in the form of crisis support and counselling. Many feminists argued this approach not only “degendered” the issue, but that a service based orientation came about at the expense of actively pursuing larger, structural issues.

Vilma Rossi, then Executive Director of SACHA, explained how the social construction of women as “victims” needing protection (Gotell, 1998) or therapy, reflected government funders’ lack of understanding of anti-violence work and the implications this created for feminist organizational advocacy around values and politics.

She suggested:

So if you say that you are going to help a 'victim', they think that you are going to provide therapy to a victim and they'll fund that portion of your work. So the energies of an organization can really be diverted to the need to provide services to the community. This isn't an attempt to suggest that these services aren't critical, but if you've got limited resources and you are operating in a certain context that values some work over other work, that understands some work over other work...how do you make sure that the support continues, but that there is enough time and energy and resources to do activism and social development and social justice work, in order to stop violence from happening? (Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

Here we can see how the Harris government's push towards a new "gender order" is also reflected in changes to the rhetoric and language surrounding the issue of violence against women (see Gotell, Beres and Crow, 2009; Gotell, 1998; Morrow et al, 2004). The move toward "gender neutral language" and "gender neutral service provision" is indicative of the difference between rhetoric and reality. As one shelter manager remarked, "there is very little talk about abused women anymore, we can't say women or god forbid 'feminist'." Rather the gender neutral concept of a "victim" is routinely substituted for an "abused woman" and the term "domestic violence" or "family violence" has replaced the gendered term, "violence against women". The gendered nature of the problem is effectively removed from the dominant social discourse. Abused women are rendered invisible, and "these women are disconnected from the structural biases that make their lives 'different'" (Brodie, 1996:20). Domestic violence is then publicly presented and policed as a "crime" under the government imposed "law and order agenda", instead of a longstanding social problem rooted in structural inequalities that are tied to an explicitly gendered, feminist political analyses. In other words, women were discursively constructed as "victims" which negatively impacted anti-violence

activists' ability to advocate for broader based structural changes to eliminate violence against women (Gotell, 1998; Morrow et als, 2004). Retaining structural explanations of violence against women and women's equality rights has been made more difficult (Bashevkin, 2002:5 cited by Morrow et al 2004:371).

Under the Harris government, emphasis was placed on the process of "criminalization" (Brodie, 1996:23-24; see also Morrow et als, 2004), increasing funding for the criminal justice system and simultaneously defunding small, not for profit, community based social service agencies (see also Gotell, Beres and Crow, 2009). The CSAWSG recognized feminist's historical efforts in terms of criminal law reforms, but they were "disturbed by the way [their] safety issues are now used to justify law-and-order initiatives in place of effective social programs" (2000:2). They maintained the law and order agenda "serves to scare off women in low income and racialized communities from reporting violence, putting those women at further risk of death or serious injury" (2000:2). Equally problematic is the uneven application of the law and order agenda along the lines of race and class, such that "it favours the use of heavy-handed law enforcement strategies against socially disadvantaged groups" (2000:2) as evidenced by the criminal justice system's response to marginalized male batterers (McIvor and Nahanee, 1998 cited by Morrow et al 2004:370). Thus these "law and order initiatives" that are, to use Gelb and Hart's (1999) words "devoid or unattached to feminist analyses" of violence against women are still very much cause for concern.

In addition to the development of a strong, written policy document, the cross sectoral strategy was a proactive, concrete opportunity to develop and strengthen ties with

other feminist groups and allies en masse. What was innovative about this project was its commitment to linking issues and sectors. And it did so from the outset. It appears to have been an attempt to put feminist intersectional theory into practice. Again, the Strategy Group embraced shifting the focus from strategizing “as communities, to across communities.” By organizing across the boundaries of race, class, age, ability and sexuality, a broad base of women from various sectors were speaking out in unison against violence against women. As this pertinent passage from Eileen Morrow, one of the co-founders of the CSVAW Strategy Group illustrates, working in coalition enabled feminists to engage in a more public form of advocacy. She recalled:

We began to engage in more coalition work in terms of public advocacy, with other like-minded sectors that had any interest at all in supporting violence against women. The cross-sectoral group is an example of that. It's new in that instead of reacting to the government's reaction to the murders of women in 2000, in the summer of 2000, we provided a proactive strategy. We linked all of these issues, all of these broad prevention strategies, from the very beginning, because that's what the women identified. They needed financial support. They needed legal aid. They needed child care. They needed housing. They've always identified those, as opposed to all we need are shelters, and then we'll be fine. Or all we need are police to stop treating us like we're a bunch of liars, and then we'll be fine. And they've always known that it was more than services, more than emergency, more than crisis management. This was one of the first times in my memory when we reacted to a crisis that was evolving sort of in the media, and in the political consciousness with a broad proactive strategy, as opposed to saying these women died because of this, respond to this. We are saying you need to respond to violence against women on a broad spectrum, because that's what will stop violence against women. And it was one of the first times that I know of in the province of Ontario that we were actually linking those sectors. So it wasn't just the women's shelters saying that you have to do something about poverty. It was the women's shelters linked with anti-poverty groups, labour, rape crisis-centres, the women centres, Aboriginal women and immigrant women. You had a broad spectrum involved in the group, responding to violence against women (Executive Director, OAITH, Toronto, 2002).

The Executive Director of METRAC, Pam Cross, also reflected on her

organizational involvement in “saving women’s lives”. Women’s safety was what some may term a “bridge issue” (Bevacqua, p. 165 as cited by Newman, 2011:225), one that seems to have transcended different feminist ideologies and organizations. She commented on how this strategy, orchestrated cross sectorally, differed from past attempts at lobbying, particularly because it brought together a diverse group of organizations with a vested interest in eradicating violence against women. Her thoughts on the campaign were as follows:

We had women and organizations in the group who didn’t work [specifically] on the issue of violence against women. We had child care people. We had union people. I don’t mean they were oblivious to the issue of violence against women, but they weren’t your sort of traditional violence against women group. We have those too. We have shelter crisis centres, organizations like this one. But what we said was, ‘this is an issue that affects all women’ and we want to talk to the government and say, ‘look, we have a francophone group here, we have a First Nations group here, we have disabled rights people, we have health care advocates, we have child care advocates, educators. Because we’re all concerned that women in this province are not safe’. There’ve been lobby campaigns before for sure, but what we did here was bring together 160 really diverse organizations that was able to [reach a] consensus on a list of 39 demands that we wanted the government to meet (Executive Director, METRAC, Toronto, 2002).

A feminist activist from Toronto recognized the need to link sectors and analyses in order to build a more broad based response to the issue of violence. In addition to increased funding, she believed working cross sectorally was a positive approach to feminist intersectional theorizing and organizing, as a way to simultaneously take into account everything that makes women more vulnerable to violence. She said:

The group’s philosophy is that strong women’s resources and services are absolutely essential, but that real changes in real women’s lives are also essential, and that you need to be pursuing all of this at the same time. And I think we’re going to see more and more organizing like that. The women who’ve done some of the writing and developing of those demands have come from labour, and

women's services, and health, and education, a real cross section, immigrant women services, settlement services. The immigration laws and the changes we're seeing are horrific and you can't ignore that those laws will make women more vulnerable to violence. So it's looking at those kinds of things, and I think that that really is the way to approach organizing around feminism now (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Analyses of the Cross Sectoral Strategy confirms Tyyska's (1998) finding that inter-organizational connections are important and that women's organizations can garner support from "powerful women's 'camps'" and build solidarity with other advocacy groups across organizational and sectoral lines. The diverse participation of multiple groups in the Cross Sectoral Strategy enabled feminists to strategize to a certain extent across the boundaries of gender, race, class, sexuality and other social inequalities and to counter the "divide and conquer" mentality of the Harris government. A Toronto activist suggested:

I think the strategy of organizing [across] the cross sectors, building a platform that addresses the variety of things that are affecting people right now is really an excellent way to go. I think it counteracts the division and all of the stuff that Harris has been so good at doing (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

In this respect, building a broad based policy platform would appear to lend itself to putting intersectional feminist theory into practice. It may also be a way to challenge the Harris government's "one size fits all" approach to social policy (Rankin and Vickers, 2001; Bakan and Kobayashi, 2000; and Kenny et al. 2002 as cited by Siltanen and Doucet, 2008:190) and/or its "silo" approach/mentality (an acknowledged government weakness). Adopting such a theoretically informed platform may be an opportunity for feminists to offer insight into developing more integrated services and coordinated service delivery that reflect feminist based models of service provision, especially when it

comes to making connections among the issues of social assistance, housing, employment and child care for example. Again, while governments and or funders may not subscribe to a feminist intersectional analysis (Simpson, 2009) of violence, various feminist organizations and activists engaged in the work of the coalition certainly (theoretically and in practical terms) recognized the potential benefit in forming partnerships with groups representing and serving diverse populations and communities (Simpson, 2009:21).

What these stories tell us is that working cross sectorally was one way feminists attempted to address the realities of women's difference when it came to dealing with women's experiences of violence and abuse. Women often described their involvement in the Cross Sectoral Group as an energizing and invigorating experience. Another co-founder of the Cross Sectoral Group, Beth Jordan, articulated her participation in the coalition in this way:

A strategy which was incredibly important, was we worked cross-sectorally. We looked to the other sectors who were impacted by violence, had positions, to come to the table with us, and we came together and agreed upon 39 emergency measures. We did that. We did it successfully. At the end of the day, there were 160 agencies and organizations and associations across the province that signed on to the emergency measures, and that in itself is amazing. There was almost this energy that was growing out of working together, across sectors, to try and make a difference on this issue, to try and put forward the reality. From the direct service side, we were able to articulate what this meant for women, and why the law and order response was unacceptable, and how it fell far short of what was actually needed (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Many feminists also recognized the importance of coalition building as a key strategy around advocacy. Angela Robertson, the Executive Director of Sistering, a shelter for homeless women in Toronto, believed that in order to be effective, feminists

had to work in coalition, particularly on the advocacy front. Like Eileen Morrow, she said:

The strategy around advocacy is more now than ever, the importance of coalition building. There was a point in feminist organizing where we were coalitioned out (laugh) and I think we are back at that point where we need to do coalition building, to really effectively respond to, and challenge the systemic issues, the systemic inequities that government policies have created. So that is one strategy on the broad advocacy front (Executive Director, Homeless Women's Shelter, Toronto, 2002).

To summarize, the Harris government coopted the issue of violence against women as part of its “get tough on crime” agenda. In doing so, the issue of male violence against women was “de-gendered”, individualized and or privatized (Gotell, Beres and Crow, 2009). The Harris regime systematically attempted to dismantle support for feminist organizations working in the area of violence, and introduced a number of aforementioned economic and social policy initiatives (see my earlier discussions in Chapters One and Four) that redoubled the socioeconomic conditions that many radical, socialist and intersectional feminists would argue underlie and perpetuate violence against women. Faced with this multi-pronged attack, one could argue feminist organizations were backed into and or forced into the fray of coalitional politics (if only to protect individual organizations and or to maintain existing services). While apparently a defensive and or a pressured move, coalitional politics, in fact, may have reinforced and or perhaps even rejuvenated a progressive, structural analysis of the issue of violence against women. Indeed working in coalition reinforced some of the most challenging or dissenting voices in the women's movement at that time.

During the Harris years, coalition building and engaging in coalition work were

important strategies used by feminist activists and organizations to connect with community groups and allies and to strategize across sectors and issues. Working in coalition made individuals and organizations feel less vulnerable. In the process of coalition building, women had an opportunity, according to Agnew (1996:223), to further develop their lobbying, organizational and leadership skills to pursue advocacy and progressive social policies. The development of the CSVAWSG policy document and set of broad based group based demands highlights the ability of feminists to come together and work en masse. It was a proactive strategy designed to keep popular discourse around violence against women issues alive at a time when the Harris government's solution to violence against women was bent on defunding gender specific, not for profit organizations and diverting financial resources into victim's services and the law and order agenda. Instead of assigning blame, it attempted to force the government to respond the issue of violence against women. The Strategy's policy document countered the government's gender neutral approach to domestic violence and the coalition's politics provided members with a sense of voice and strength, not to mention, safety in numbers. By embedding feminists working in anti-violence organizations in a larger, supportive, broad based "multi-organizational field" (Curtis and Zurcher, 1993; Klandermanns, 1991), it promoted a safer, unified form of feminist protest, one that served to diminish individual and organizational isolation and vulnerability, and strengthened participation in more intersectional, multi-group based advocacy.

Perhaps then, feminist involvement in the CSVAWSG may be understood initially as a defensive strategy, one that attempted to bridge ideological and organizational

difference as a means to avoid cooptation of the issue of VAW; to challenge the degendering of VAW; to challenge the “criminalization” and “law and order” approach to violence. But as the strategy itself gathered strength and steam, perhaps not originally and/or unintentionally the momentum of the CSVAWSG also resulted in and or produced a strategic move towards a more formalized, enduring systematic approach to ending violence, more than was initially conceived. What was conceived of a defensive mechanism, was in turn transformed and translated into a more systematic approach to the issue. The coalition enabled feminist groups concerned with the issue of violence to offer a coordinated, sustained, systematic critique of Harris’ “law and order” approach, a criticism that may otherwise have been lost, if anti-violence groups were to have continued to labour alone, in isolation on the issue.

But what are the ideological implications of this shift in strategy? Does this cross sectoral move suggest a less rigid divide between the different strands of feminist praxis and or types of feminism articulated as part of second wave theoretical debates? Or are these differences perhaps less important today? Or does it suggest that feminists *are* making more of a move toward feminist intersectional theorizing and praxis that attempts to deal with the differences of gender, race and class? Did groups who participated in the coalition informally decide to shelve any existing ideological differences, at least for the time being, given the immediacy of the issue at hand? That is, did they put any major ideological and or theoretical differences aside and instead decide to emphasize common interests, common goals and or a common enemy? Choosing to focus on common goals or a “bridge issue” such as eradicating violence or empowering women, or as basic a goal

as ensuring women's safety? And what about those organizations and individuals who weren't involved in the coalition? Were there perhaps ideological differences that could not be put aside? What implications does their apparent lack of participation present for feminist intersectional frameworks? Are there some differences or issues that coalitions simply cannot bridge? Even for a certain, if not an extended period of time?

Given these questions, I think it is also important to briefly note some of the potential issues that may arise with respect to feminist coalition work. For instance, what groups and issues were left out? It might be interesting to know what groups were not involved in the coalition and why? What might their lack of participation mean for feminist theory and organizing? What issues were not addressed? Who was (dis)advantaged as a result of these issues being "left out"? Further, writing about the challenges of coalition-building, Bernice Johnson Reagon (1983) (as cited by Naples, 1998:5), notes that organizing across difference can inhibit coalition work, even when "the actors appear to share common material interests." Arnold's work (1995) suggests that these dilemmas often stem from feminist organization's ideological and structural differences, as well as unresolved issues surrounding collective identity. These and other issues lead one to ask "what is the role of coalitions among feminist organizations of diverse types and orientations?" (Gelb, 1995:129-130).

The women's narratives discussed here seem to indicate that the main issue posed by coalition work was the struggle to find "common ground". While, Ferree and Miller (1985) have argued "coalitions do not require ideological agreement among members but instead rely on an overlap of interests" (as cited by Arnold, 1995:277), I am less sure.

These stories suggest feminist's search for common ground reflects the difficulty of strategizing inclusively across the boundaries of race and class as well as across sectors, sectors with perhaps different ideological orientations, priorities and analyses. It involves understanding how different women in different sectors "come to see their interests in common and struggle across their differences" (Naples, 1998:5).

CUPE (2000:38) for example notes "it isn't always easy to get agreement on the direction of a coalition-led campaign. Coalitions take steady care. Good group-to-group communication is essential and finding compromises that don't water down your position takes care. Be patient!" Similarly, one of the co-founders of the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy group spoke to the challenge of what Code (1993) terms, finding commonality amidst women's difference. Beth Jordan observed that the Cross Sectoral Group members recognized the need to reach a compromise and they attempted to forge some "common ground" in an amicable manner, namely by openly sharing their expertise. She stated:

...one of the things that was important about the way the cross-sectoral group worked was, many constituents involved agreed to drop some of their issues so that everybody's issues could fit in. There was an agreement, that, 'O.K., maybe we can't talk about this right now, but we're gonna talk about that', so that we could fit everybody's stuff in, 'cause there was a lot. I think that everybody at the table willingly, honestly shared their expertise, which was invigorating. I learned so much from women at that table, it wasn't even funny, especially in terms of labour and social justice. I hadn't fully understood all the nuts and bolts of the cuts to welfare and benefit stacking, and the horrible penalties for folks who didn't follow every rule. It was invigorating for a lot of people. It was challenging in the sense, that there [were] differing analyses, at the table. So finding a common ground. But it was never hostile. We all knew that we needed to make this work and we did (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

She attributed this challenge of finding "common ground" to the diverse concerns,

priorities, and analyses that different groups and women bring to the table. Thus she advocated “broadening” her organizational and other sectoral perspectives to bridge these differences and lend support to each others demands. Still, she believed the Cross Sectoral Group was a “start”. She explained:

...because there are very huge differences in analysis. There are huge differences in priorities. But there are commonalities. Eventually, I'm hoping to start broadening our perspectives at the table. We left a lot out in the first round and we know that. A lot of things were left out, most notably childcare issues in a meaningful way. It was a start (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

In this study, the data is quite rich. The women's narrative excerpts serve as a constant reminder that feminist analyses are not monolithic, that there are, as Jordan (2002) clearly stated, “huge differences in analysis” which pose potential dilemmas for feminist organizing. This is what Elizabeth Spelman refers to as “the paradox at the heart of feminism. How can we describe those things that differentiate women, without eclipsing what we share in common?” (Spelman, 1988:3). Code (1993) notes this involves developing theoretical frameworks that allow us to consider both the similarities and differences in women's material realities concurrently, “without losing sight of the boundaries of commonality and or specificity” (Code, 1993:21). Russo (1991:310) argues feminists must be more open to not only recognizing how difference reproduces advantage, but how difference can also be a site from which to strategize alliances in order to build a strong, diverse women's movement. This work she says is “not only difficult but many times painful and unsuccessful. *But it is possible*” (1991:310 italics added).

Based on these women's stories, one could argue that coalition work involves

compromise and the sometimes painful task of slowly bringing multiple voices into coalition. But in this case (and maybe even more generally), while the government attempted to coopt feminist analyses of violence against women into a de-gendered, individualistic, get tough on crime issue, this coalitional process was able to produce and sustain a deeper critique of and hence a more profound challenge to Harris's neoliberal policy agenda. And, perhaps the CSVAWSG was in fact "a start", and the possibility that Russo (1991) speaks of, is more of a reality today because of the CSVAWSG.

Coalitional Politics and Direct Action: Feminist Resistance and The Days of Action (DOA)

In October of '96, the largest demonstration in Canadian history [the Toronto Days of Action] took place on that Saturday, and a million people didn't go to work on the Friday. The city was just shut right down. This was something that was happening right here, with very, very real consequences for people (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

Women organizing in social service and community based organizations were less inclined to undertake direct action as a form of feminist resistance. Direct action was perceived to be a more risky endeavour among anti-racist and anti-violence activists and organizations, primarily due to fear of further/future funding reprisals. They often chose to avoid this more visible, oppositional strategy because of the potential financial price to be paid. As one activist suggested that "if you're perceived to not be working with this government there will be consequences, and I think what's happened is direct action is now being done by groups that aren't receiving government funding."

Direct action or "active engagement" involves "attempts to intervene in the state either proactively or reactively to change its policies" (Mathews, 1995:301). Direct action during the Harris years typically took the form of proactive mobilization, marches,

strikes, solidarity and flying picket squads and mass protest. These so-called “radical” strategies were more often adopted by socialist feminists organizing in unions and labour organizations, and primarily among working class women who were apt to link direct action strategies to the processes of contract negotiations and collective bargaining. Perhaps this greater willingness to engage in direct action tactics is due to the aforementioned fact that unions do not draw on state funding to subsidize their annual budgets (see my earlier discussion in Chapter Four). This is not to suggest that unions do not face funding and financial issues. However, unions also have a different history of confrontation with the state, and unionized workplaces have historically afforded workers and activists a certain amount of political legitimacy and protection.

Given the real and/or perceived financial consequences of not “working with” or being critical of government, Angela Robertson commented that community based organizations, including Sistering, have tended to shy away from the use of direct action tactics:

There was a point where one could be part of a mass community mobilization that would march on Queen’s Park and demand things, where one could be part of a campaign using the media to highlight a particular issue and be really engaged in media advocacy or using the media to do advocacy to highlight issues. Organizations and Sistering being one of them is a bit more shy about doing that. And if we do that, we ensure that we are not the only ones, that there is a mass, if we use those really visible strategies, we really want to be buried in that (Executive Director, Homeless Women’s Shelter, Toronto, 2002).

This finding points again to the difference in feminist activists use of tactics by organizational sector and or perhaps what Dudley (2006) notes as the different ways organizations may “do” or “apply” intersectionality – an idea I shall discuss further in Chapter Seven. It also underscores the vulnerability of poor women, racialized women,

and immigrant women who may tend to “shy away” from such tactics for fear of harsher reprisals. Rather, direct action as a survival strategy may as one woman commented demonstrate an “intensification of old strategies”. A CUPE healthcare worker commented on the necessity to mobilize individuals: “[if] you stop mobilizing in the streets, you don’t have a movement anymore. The ability to mobilize, the ability to get people to walk, to mobilize is vital and very important”.

One of the most obvious examples of organized labour’s commitment to grass roots politicization and mobilization were the Days of Action (DOA). As a direct action tactic, the Days of Action openly, publicly challenged Harris’ agenda. The strategy was initially conceived of at an OFL convention in the fall of 1995 (Turk, 1997). There the OFL “agreed to organize a series of community shutdowns” scheduled to begin in London, Ontario, December 11th, 1995 (Turk, 1997:166-167). Carolyn Eagan of the USWA believed that the impetus of the Days of Action was sparked by labour activists need to spur a “fight back”. She remembered:

When Harris was first elected, a very real demoralization set in amongst many activists. I don’t think there’s any doubt about that. But at the same time, activists were talking about the need to do something, and to spark a fight [back] . . . here were sparks of fight back beginning, and we talked about it, and we talked about the importance of connecting with community organizations and doing what we could to spark a fight back (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

The Days of Action Turk (1997:166) writes, challenged Harris’ ideological framework, a framework that “denied collective rights in favour of a nineteenth century version of primitive capitalism in which individualism overrode any notion of community or collective responsibility.” Union women were also apt to link the strategies of direct action with ideological battles between union and management characteristic of

labour/capital class relations.

Long-time labour activist, Carolyn Eagan was at the first shutdown on that cold day in London, Ontario. There she said, working people, working women were involved in waging an ideological battle and the DOA provoked at the very least ideological debates that extended beyond the union halls and workplace and into the everyday:

To start the Days of Action, do a workplace shutdown, London, Ontario was the place that it was scheduled for, and a coalition of both labour and community organizations, including women's organizations got together to plan that. And it was a bitterly, bitterly, cold day, and many of us bussed down, and it was successful. There were a lot of threats from industry about injunction, and charges and all that, but I believe 40,000 workers did not go to work that day in London, and it was the beginning of that whole struggle around the Toronto Days of Action. People were involved in fighting an ideological battle. It was very, very important about what type of society we wanted to live in (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

It seems fitting that union and working class feminists would frame their participation in the DOA within the ideological context of socialist feminism. It would also seem logical then that these women's involvement had much to do with the political focus of the strategy, as it did with the larger goals of socialist feminism and intersectional feminist frameworks, namely to eradicate women's inequality in the family and the workplace by challenging the exploitation of women's (re)productive labour power in the private and public sphere. I would argue that these women's narratives about their active participation in the DOA could be read as representing a direct challenge to Harris' patriarchal, corporate agenda, an agenda that simultaneously "de-genders" women's relationship to work and family life for the sake of corporate power and greed and simultaneously "re-genders" women as mothers at home and as underpaid female workers overrepresented in the "pink collar" garment and hospitality industries for example.

According to Linda Tourney, labour activist and co-chair of the Metro Toronto Days of Action Committee, the Days of Action were an organized attempt to simultaneously: (1) bring labour and non-labour community groups together, to build bridges and better working relationships across sectors and organizations (2) to raise awareness around central social, political, and economic issues in the province and resist right wing government policies and practices by initiating dialogue and providing a forum for debate and discussion; (3) to reinvigorate people's right to engage and participate in "in the street democracy"; and (4) to provide a sense of hope to sustain social justice activists for the duration of the Harris years. A massive joint undertaking, she believed the Days of Action helped hold the Harris government at bay. She recalled:

We actually managed to hold things at bay, and the Days of Action, is a major contributor to this. . . The other thing, it was done in coalition, it was the labour movement and community partners. It brought groups together that hadn't been together before. . . there were people from certain unions that found themselves working side by side with people from the environmental [movement] or whatever that hadn't done that before, and we brought those activists together, and they worked together. We had community members on the picket lines for the first time in their lives on the shutdown day. They'd never participated on a picket line before and they learned about that. We had people working with community, we had both labour and community people working on the cross picketing and working well together. It was amazing. We had teens out leafleting the streets. Labour and community working together, and leafleting in various different languages, and that was an eye opener for many unions (Labour Activist and Co-Chair Metro Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

That organized labour and union activists had their "eyes opened" as Tourney's narrative suggests could be read as a move on the part of these groups towards advancing a more intersectional approach to work and worker related issues, an approach that encouraged unions to "open their doors wider to the communities they serve" (Simpson, 2009:7) and to embracing collective organizing beyond the confines of "shop floor", the "union hall"

– and or those more “traditional services” (Hanley and Shragge, 2004). This “eye opening” may be read as a chance to link worker’s struggles with other social, economic and justice issues and for organized labour to build alliances with community to act on labour issues outside of workplace settings (Hanley and Shragge, 2004).

Writing about their involvement in the founding of the Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC) in 2000, Hanley and Shragge (2004:166) note how the centre, was a “place of intersection of the traditions of the labour and community movements.” Perhaps like those union activists involved in the IWC, working women’s participation in the DOA was interpreted on their part as “place of intersection”, or what Hanley and Shragge (2004) view as an opportunity to build union-community relationships among immigrant, women and youth populations. And “this place of intersection” or participation in the DOA is what opened unionist and feminist eyes and afforded them “a different place to defend and organize labour” (Hanley and Shragge, 2004:164). To borrow Simpson’s (2009:25) words, “while the word intersectionality may [have] not enter[ed] into this initiative [the DOA per se], many of its principles are reflected.” What I mean here is that while “feminist” or “intersectional frameworks” may not have been openly and or explicitly stated as strategic on the part of working women who participated in the DOA, what their narratives do speak to are the ideas and principles embedded in feminist intersectional frameworks that are in turn reflected in their coalitional praxis, namely working together with an array of labour and community groups outside what have been referred to as the confines of the traditional “workplace” or “traditional notions of unionization” (Hanley and Shragge, 2004:165), to draw attention to the ideological and

material consequences to workers in increasingly neoliberal markets.

What these women's stories also demonstrate is that their participation in the DOA affirmed in their minds a commitment to "community activism and community outreach" (Naples, 1998). The women's narratives spoke to the strategic importance of connecting with communities and building community links to expand grass roots ties and mobilize oppositional activities (Hyde, 1995:319). Undertaking community activism involved feminists in all sectors realizing the need to be more "on the ground". It entailed cooperating and working more closely with communities to broaden movement agendas, by working together to integrate multiple issues and drawing on various communities' expertise. Peggy Nash of the CAW noted:

What all these attacks have taught us, is that we really need to cooperate on a really broad agenda. Labour can't be isolated from the community and we can't get picked off issue by issue. It can't be high school funding, childcare, women's shelters, minimum wage, and this is where I think there is a recognition of the need for broader organizing, really developing a broader, strong social movement (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

Developing linkages between labour and community agencies speaks to the importance of working en masse, to combat organizational vulnerability. Secondly, linkages between labour and community agencies were critical for political reasons. These links were critical for political fights and reflect labour organizations' commitment to defend issues beyond the level of the rank and file or union membership. Again Peggy Nash commented:

I think that link between the union and the community is fundamental. Those links are really critical because these are political fights ultimately. . . We don't want to pull up the drawbridge and figure we're O.K., because there's a moat, we're alright in our union, 'cause obviously even if all we wanted to do was just defend our members, that's not alright because there are bigger political forces at work.

You can't just defend your own membership (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

If some of those women involved in the DOA I interviewed came to realization that “you can’t just defend your own membership”, what impact, if any, does this realization have on those workers, namely women and immigrant workers who are currently not unionized and or unlikely to be unionized? As Hanley and Shragge (2004) noted, male dominated unions have often assumed and acted on the premise that the labour movement’s approach to organizing is the best vehicle through which workers’ rights are protected and their voices are heard (Hanley and Shragge, 2004:165-166). But as many scholars have noted, some groups of workers, including those marginalized by “race” and gender, are more difficult to reach and to organize along so called “traditional lines” (see for example Sugiman, 1993; and more recently work by Coll, 2010; Cosgrove 2009; Gordon, 2005; and Scott (2008) as cited by Siltanen and Doucet, 2008). These difficulties may be more pronounced in recent years given the push to cut labour costs amid increased anti-unionism and the globalization of capital (Hanley and Shragge, 2004). Thus the practical dilemma of how to organize around multiple issues with differently located groups remains problematic. And the feasibility of “on the ground” grassroots, community based organizing remains somewhat tenuous, again largely because of the implications related to government funding experienced on the part of community based organizations. Still one could argue that these women’s narratives about their involvement in the DOA speak once again to the importance of advancing intersectional approaches in the pursuit of coalition based praxis.

Lastly, some women believed that direct action, as a “radical” strategy, created

more opportunity for the use of more “reform” based strategies. A Toronto activist indicated:

I believe that direct action is really, really important, and it is not new or anything like that, but I do think it moves people. What direct action does is it moves the goal post back a little bit, and then the folks who want to work from inside or pursue more traditional ways of organizing have more room to play. I do think it is an important strategy, direct action (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Thus, direct action, as evidenced by working class women’s participation in the DOA, in some instances had the potential to pave the way for other organizations and community groups to adopt a more professionalized “insider style” to meet similar challenges posed by Harris’ agenda. Some of these so-called “insider tactics” (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995) are described and analysed below.

Additional Stories of Feminist Resistance: Partnering as a Feminist Strategy?

Blackford, Garceau and Kirby (1999) argue establishing alliances between different organizations (e.g. academics and activists) or between various organizational components (e.g. caucuses and committees) is a “critical component of feminist change” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:325-326). In this study, however, the women’s narratives seem to express a more ambivalent stance. While many suggest the potential of partnerships as a viable feminist strategy and point to successful examples, others were highly critical of “forced” partnerships, partnerships largely not of their own choosing that were viewed by some as little more than a front for privatization. Government imposed attempts to cut funding for feminist organizations and or leading with money, was at odds with feminist understandings of partnering and most groups were wary and rightly so.

Clearly context is important, as under the right conditions, informal partnering can be understood to be a viable form of feminist resistance. When defined by feminists, to serve feminist goals and interests, partnering may be an effective intersectional strategy. Partnering may represent an opportunity to work in coalition and to build a more integrated analysis around different issues. It could facilitate the sharing of resources, and offer a means to build organizational capacity. Cindy Cowan, Executive Director of Nellies, indicated that what her organization among others were looking for were more “integrated, coordinated partnerships” in order to do anti-violence work:

What we’re looking for is integrated, coordinated partnership. Partnership, I hated even using it because it’s a government buzz word. Usually it means taking away money. But when we’re talking about partnership, we’re talking about not doing things in isolation, but recognizing this great experience and strength in the community and when we work together across sectors, we’re able to do that much more. . .we bring that to the work that we’re doing in coalition and partnership. We have to be involved across the sectors. We have to be involved in poverty. We have to be involved with anti-poverty groups doing workfare, immigration stuff, housing, and trying to bring that approach to all of the work that we do (Cindy Cowan, Nellies, Toronto, 2002).

Similarly, an anti-violence educator conveyed some of the positives of partnering in the form of “swapping” or “work exchanges”. In this example, she talks about “swapping” anti-violence public education materials with other women’s groups that helped translate the materials into multiple languages to reach women whose first language is not English. She recalled:

We also tried to increase our efforts of doing everything in partnership. We swapped things. We produce materials in over twenty languages, so for each language, we identified an agency that we would partner with. We went to that agency and said, ‘we don’t have money to produce a pamphlet in your language and we don’t have the skills to do it, but we have a full production and distribution network. If we can get money to print and produce the pamphlet, would you supply the people who could write it in your language, and cultural

context, and we'll give you x number of pamphlets as payment' (Executive Director and Anti-Violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

These partnerships, according to Arneil (1999), need to be inclusive but fluid, enabling groups to decide on their approach. Arneil (1999:219) highlights the fluidity of such partnerships:

Third wave practice seeks to create what Angela Davis calls 'unpredicted coalitions'. That is to say that several smaller organizations exist, each with its own agenda and approach, and rather than replacing each other with bigger or better, we need to synthesize and use each other as resources, pulling together our strengths and abilities in order to be effective and efficient in reaching our goals - long term and short. Simultaneously, we need to strive to move beyond the boundaries that exist between us. We must challenge our own fears of difference, whatever the shape, size, colour or name.

The women's stories revealed that their views of partnering largely depended on how the strategy was defined and by and for whom. As Sherry Lewis, Executive Director of the Hamilton Native Women's Centre observed, while partnering may seem like a sound concept, it was often problematic in terms of definition and application. Partnering may be helpful in that it informally encourages the sharing of expertise and forming supportive connections between groups, but it can also be frustrating and stressful due to the "dwindling of resources". Partnering imposed on the part of governments or funders, often results in "spreading the poverty around". Amidst this poverty, several groups are expected to maintain the same level of service provision, without increased access to scarce resources. She commented:

We are now required to partner and that means what little resources we had to begin with are stretched even further. The concept of partnering is wonderful. We've had such a value and expertise across the board that has just been tremendous. But the resources are still the same. So even though we may partner with another organization to continue the service, the resources never change. And Harris was always 'you gotta partner and this is the way to go and the

sharing of resources'. Well, if the resources continue to dwindle, no matter how much you share, there's just not enough and what we were doing was just spreading the poverty around amongst organizations. . .The concept is sound, partnering and the expertise, and the support of one another, it's just amazing. Those kinds of connections have been invaluable. But observations have shown that all we are doing is spreading around the lack of resources, and eventually almost every partner we've worked with has had to say, 'we can't do this anymore' (Sherry Lewis, Executive Director, Native Women's Centre, Hamilton, 2002).

Likewise, Joanne Green, Executive Director of Opportunity for Advancement, lamented the lack of available resources to make partnering meaningful for her organizational participants. She contended the Harris government pushed partnerships, but failed to provide the necessary monies or infrastructure to support those endeavours:

The issue's no admin dollars, another way that feeds into government disempowerment because it looks good. We'll give you all this money to do these partnerships, but there won't be any money to actually support the infrastructure. So the service partnership is great, when it works. But usually the issues that come back is, the lack of dollars for the infrastructure to build it. The lack of concern and care for that (Executive Director, Women's Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

For the most part, partnering in and of itself is not what feminists deemed problematic. Blackford, Garceau and Kirby (1999:325-326) suggest that some of the most difficult partnerships are those that are struck between women's organizations and government or business groups. They attribute these difficulties to the power differences between the partners. Moreover, they argue that the outcomes tend to be more important for the women involved than the partner(s) (1999:325-326).

Feminists in this study do recognize the need to work cross sectorally in partnership. They realize the importance of undertaking this kind of strategy informally on their own accord. That said, government imposed partnerships, partnerships affected

through policy and procedure, resulted in some organizations feeling “forced” into partnerships. Cindy Cowan said:

[A]s a feminist movement, we absolutely have to work cross-sectorally and look at linking these issues as opposed to being our own little island where we operate, because the system is also forcing us to do that, right? I mean they're forcing us through partnerships, they're forcing us through protocol (Executive Director, Nellies, Toronto, 2002).

Some of the feminists identified what they called “forced partnerships” as one of the obvious pitfalls of partnering. Another problem with partnering was that some feminist organizations that would like to work together, albeit informally, still may encounter difficulties related to philosophical and or ideological differences. Partnering, like coalition work, may bring together ideologically diverse groups (Arnold, 1995:286). Arnold (1995) has researched the dilemmas of coalitional work. She found that ideological differences are not necessarily a roadblock, provided coalitions concentrate their efforts on “issues that only need superficial consensus” (1995:286). For instance, a criminal justice worker commented on how her organization could conceivably partner with the Elizabeth Fry Society, but because her work is situated as part of a larger, Christian based umbrella organization, the philosophical differences between the two groups makes this sort of partnership unlikely. She explained:

If I report to the [organization] and I want to enter into a partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society, how do we split the money? We can do it, but also there's the problem of philosophical differences. I personally think I can work around it, but other people don't. I would love to work in partnership with E. Fry Society. It just makes sense that we would work in partnership and we do on a very informal basis, but their board and the [organization] looks at that and says, 'major philosophical differences and we can't go there. We just can't do that' (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

The government-imposed push for fiscal partnerships also created problems when

there were ideological differences between women's groups. Splitting money may be possible, but splitting ideological hairs complicates matters. Different ideological positions may preclude feminist partnerships. This imposition glosses over major philosophical differences, goals and or agendas and the partnerships may "feel forced". Partnering then largely becomes, as one woman noted, about governments getting "more bang for [their] buck". In this instance, she noted how a fiscal partnership between her organization and the Native Women's Centre would be difficult because of women's faith based differences:

It's forcing a marriage, amongst two different agencies. We can enter into a partnership with the Native Women's Centre and very informally, we have this supportive relationship with them, but if we were to enter into a fiscal partnership, a funding partnership with them, the whole thing about, Christianity being the driving force for the [organization] and Native spirituality in the Native Women's Centre, how do we negotiate that? I can easily partner with [another organization] because it's [part of the same organizational structure]. It's easier for me to partner with them, because philosophically. . . I always thought, if you enter into a partnership with somebody, it's about an agreement between the two. Just feels so forced. It does. I know it's about getting more bang for your buck (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Thus partnering as a strategy, does not alleviate feminist fiscal challenges and in some instances creates new challenges. Is partnering then a means by which the informal working arrangements among feminist activists and organizations are being formalized in an effort by government to save money? In other words, are workable, established, friendly, informal feminist organizational relations at risk of being "professionalized" by way of invoking the "dominant language" (Splater-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:115) or Harris' dominant neoliberal discourse?

[T]his whole concept of partnership is something that is being discussed right now. What exactly are people talking about? Agencies have generally worked

alongside with each other anyway. And now because of funding purposes, we have to develop this partnership? It's about getting more for the buck. We've always worked hand in hand with other agencies, and now they're forcing us into this fiscal partnership. It does make things rather challenging (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Finally, partnerships were perceived on the part of some feminists to be problematic because they inevitably create more work. Cultivating and coordinating well thought out partnerships can be time consuming. It takes time to build and develop community relations. As one woman noted, developing such a strategy can be worthwhile, but is also complicated and very time consuming:

Going to communities of colour, immigrant communities and not asking them to come down to OISE for a meeting or U. of T, but actually going to those communities, setting up those community meetings, mobilizing and partnering with a number of communities, like the Latin-American community, the Tamil community, the Caribbean community in ways that make sense to those communities. . .to go out into those communities and have information meetings and mobilize from there in people's languages and their communities takes a lot of work and it takes a long time kind of building of relationships (Socialist Feminist and CUPE Healthcare Worker, Toronto, 2002).

It is worth underscoring that the time, effort and work necessary to build and maintain these relationships may be increasingly, or doubly difficult, to undertake given the neoliberal climate. When as I noted earlier, organizations, staff, members and activists are already stretched thin, finding the (extra or additional) time (Simpson, 2009:20) required to nurture these budding relationships may be next to impossible.

To reiterate, socialist feminists in labour organizations were critical of partnering as a strategy. Given Harris' attack on public services, "partnerships" as part of the dominant discourse were understood to be synonymous with the politics of privatization. More than one woman noted that the word "partnership" is itself problematic, that it is a

“government buzz word”, a form of government rhetoric that is usually equated with the loss of money. Women in labour organizations particularly disliked the term, because in many instances they felt “partnering” was just another word for the “privatization” of public services. Union feminists were critical of what they called “3P” schools and hospitals” and of Harris’s \$20 billion “Superbuild Fund”. They were wary of the implications these private/public partnerships would have in and on workers in the health care and education sectors. “By pooling all the government’s capital project budgets, the Superbuild is hoping to attract billions in matching/partnering dollars from the private sector” thus CUPE Ontario’s focus on privatization issues prioritized organizing around public/private partnerships across sectors. CUPE Ontario joined a coalition with the OFL and the Ontario Health Coalition to fight the province wide privatization of community health care (2000b:15-17). Thus activists across the organizational board were somewhat sceptical of the viability of engaging in partnering as a strategic form of feminist resistance.

Feminists in community-based and advocacy groups were as well. While partnering as a feminist strategy may sound great in theory, it actually presented a number of practical dilemmas. Moreover, top down, government- imposed partnerships did little to alleviate the larger problem of attracting more program dollars and it certainly did not make up for Harris’ cuts to core funding. As a woman in the anti-violence sector concluded:

[Partnering] has a negative and a positive to it. If we had core funding, we would work that way anyway, because then we’d be able to sustain the staff, who could put the time into building those relationships. When you’re doing it out of economic necessity, it adds to the stress of the people involved. So while it has

some positive results, it also brings some negative results, because it puts pressure on your time . . . have we succeeded in finding sort of creative ways to make up for what we lost? Absolutely not. We haven't even come close (Executive Director and Anti-Violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

Thus, feminists, namely those in social service and community-based groups, also began to rethink their strategies around attracting and securing the funding necessary for organizational survival. These diverse funding strategies are the subject of the following section.

“Diversification of Funding Strategies” (Disney and Gelb, 2000)

It's always about fundraising. . .It takes money to make money and we just don't have the money to make money. And [workers] really got burnt out. It now falls on agencies to try and survive in their own right, which means trying to do their own fundraise[ing] (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Women in labour organizations were less likely to voice concerns around funding cuts in their sector, because their budgets were largely contingent on the amount of revenue generated through union dues. As such, union feminists voices are noticeably absent from the following discussion⁶². However, one should note that this omission reflects the content of the women's own personal narratives. It not an oversight on my part in terms of description or analyses, rather it is a result of the experiences they shared with me. In contrast, almost all of the feminists in social service and community based groups were dependent on some form of public funding and all complained about the inadequacy of funds as a result of Harris's cutbacks.

Disney and Gelb (2000:55) argue a diversified funding strategy is essential for

⁶²This does not mean that unions do not also face funding issues. For instance, in the previous chapter, I noted how one socialist feminist commented that the growing practice of contracting out has eroded the base of dues paying members and created funding woes for unions where the majority of workers are women engaged in so-called “pink collar work”.

feminist organizational survival in order to deal with financial losses resulting from budget cuts. They suggest that organizational survival amidst these funding losses illustrates the diversification of funding sources (Gelb, 1999:168). In this study, “diversified funding” (see Hyde, 1995:318) or “combining core funding from government with funding from other sources” (Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, 1993:108) emerged as a key funding strategy. As one activist remarked:

I see that as a really useful thing to pursue, diversifying funding sources so that no one source can hurt you by withdrawing. And if they don't have power over you and influence, then you are able to organize in the way you see fit. I really think that's worth taking on (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Many community groups received core funding from the Provincial Government primarily through the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of the Attorney General. Other core funders included The City of Toronto, The City of Hamilton, and The United Way. For example, METRAC had an annual operating budget of approximately \$400 000. They received \$119 000 a year from their single biggest funder, The City of Toronto. Beyond that, the executive director noted that it is a “hodge-podge of cobbling things together.” All of the anti-violence and anti-racist organizations worked toward attracting funds from a number of sources including foundation dollars, project funding, and to lesser extent donations and memberships drives. They also spent increasingly large amounts of their time engaged in the process of fundraising. One anti-violence organization in particular hired a fundraiser to work with them to develop a strategic plan in order to try and tap into areas they may have previously overlooked. They also used a grant they received to hire a volunteer coordinator to assess the feasibility of voluntary program delivery and sustainability. Finally, in their search for

program dollars, they identified high need areas and sought to develop more specific funding proposals. The Executive Director said:

We had never had a fundraiser, per se. We hired a fundraiser to work with us, to develop a more systematic fundraising plan, to try to see if there were areas we hadn't identified, where there was potential for funding. We also got a grant from the United Way to hire a volunteer coordinator. We looked at whether or not it was possible to build a volunteer base in such a way that there'd be program sustainability through volunteer delivery of some of it. Those were two things that we tried. Also, in terms of how we went after program dollars, we separated out a couple of areas that were very high need areas, and if we develop programs specific to those areas in a more focused way, we might have access to different pools of money (Executive Director and Anti-Violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

During the Harris years, fundraising took on increased importance as a feminist survival strategy and fundraising is problematized in many of the women's narratives. Community based groups had to find funds to support their budgets and to support their organizational goals and agendas. Women working in shelters noted that provincial government guidelines require them to fundraise approximately twenty percent of their annual budgets. Transken (1997:67) attributes this "trick package" to the neoliberal agenda. By "trick package" she means that "government or granting agencies will inform an organization that they are eligible for grant money provided they **first** raise a percentage (typically 20%) of the funding within the community. **Then** the government funders will kick in the remaining 80%" (1997:67 bold in original). The onus is on the organization to raise the initial funds.

The Hamilton Native Women's Shelter was one of several organizations that found itself in this situation. The Executive Director, Sherry Lewis concluded that "not only do we have to deal with the harsh reality of violence against women, but we have to be experts in fundraising at the same time." Nellies, a shelter for homeless and abused

women in Toronto, with an annual budget of roughly \$1.5 million had to privately raise approximately \$200 000 annually in order to support its then current operations. A women's centre in the GTA had to fundraise approximately \$80 000 to \$90 000 of their \$250 000 annual budget. An anti-violence educational organization with an annual budget between \$600 000 and \$700 000 received approximately one sixth of its funding, in the form of core funding from the United Way. The rest of their funding had to be project-raised which the Executive Director indicated was a direct result of the Harris cuts. A crisis centre in Toronto employed seven women and had an annual operating budget of over seven hundred thousand dollars. They received core funding from the Ministry of the Attorney General and a small amount of core funding from the City of Toronto. Still they were expected to fundraise nearly forty percent of their operating budget. A crisis counsellor commented that they spent more of their time fundraising and that this was hugely time consuming:

We fundraise at least 40% of our operating budget. We have been flatlined. In the last ten years or so we have not received an increase from either of our two funders, so as our budget grows, we are responsible for more, like the rent increases, and other expenses. It means that we are spending much more time fundraising . . . (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

In contrast, when the NDP were in power she believed there was more of an opportunity to access the necessary funds and the onus was shared between government and organizations to support anti-violence work. Under the NDP, the vision around crisis centres was different. She said:

When Bob Rae was in power the vision around centres [was] more autonomous. There was an opportunity to get the funds that you needed to do this work. There was a recognition, there was an onus within government to support women's work, to support women as citizens in society. Now it's more about the balance

between, do we provide service to those citizens, or do we spend our time trying to get money in order to stay alive? (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

Having to fundraise contributed to burnout among some workers. Another issue stemmed from the increasingly competitive work environment characterized by more groups vying for funds from a smaller pool of scarce resources. This pressure put a strain on organizational relations and created divisions. Cindy Cowan commented on this competition and tension. She said:

. . .so the competition in the community sector around private fundraising is phenomenal, it is a huge pressure, when you have organizations that are vying for little pockets of money directly in competition, it creates a real sense of nastiness. . .we've got small community organizations that are trying to survive and fight for a little piece of the pie to try to serve great needs in their respective communities (Cindy Cowan, Nellies, Toronto, 2002).

Transken (1997:67) notes that when not for profit groups are forced to compete for community funds, working class and minority group women typically find themselves comparatively disadvantaged. Because it “takes money to make money”, raising funds involves having the money for advertising, labour, transportation and supplies (1997:67). Transken (1997:67) further argues these costs may be minimized if women have time, speak English, drive, and have access to a car, child care and technology. Marginalized women may lack access to these key resources (Transken, 1997:67) which impacts on their organizational ability to attract needed funds.

Project funding was another source of funding for community based groups. According to Agnew (1996:169), government agencies typically fund projects for one year, but also require a proposed long term plan, as one year proposals are not favourably reviewed. Most women characterized the endless pursuit of project funding and proposal

writing as an energy draining, administrative exercise. The programs project funding is expected to create are almost impossible to sustain due to the lack of financial resources. Part of the granting procedure instructs applicants to suggest how the program will continue once the project funding is spent and many community groups experience difficulty formulating these more long range objectives. A criminal justice worker observed:

[I]t puts more onus on the workers. We're constantly looking for funding and the funny thing about funding is when you chase after it, the one question they always ask is, 'and how do you expect to sustain this program after this funding has been depleted?' What do they expect us to do? Lots of programs I've seen start up, and they're great programs, but the funding runs out, and they can't get more and that's it, that's all. So it stops until the next round of funding comes out, and it's revamped and away and comes back out again. The question is on proposals to guide it. How do you expect to sustain it? (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Such funding can “fragment an organization and hinder a holistic approach to policy development” (Gelb and Lief Palley, 1982:49), not to mention, service delivery. For instance, project funding for a specific program tends to come in the form of “one shot deals”. Groups have to continually re-apply for funds, search for other forms of funding, and fundraise. One woman noted:

Proposals coming out for [project] funding tend to be one shot deals. Re-apply. Re-apply. Search for other funding. In the meantime, I'm searching for other funding, fundraising and searching for another funding body. I'm not the only one that's said that. I've heard other executive directors with the same comment. Where do they think we're gonna get the money for social programs? (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Applying for project funding also created more work for paid staff in feminist organizations. They had to prepare and submit proposal after proposal, and when and if proposals were successful, employees then had to work to develop and run a specific

program. Project funding was perceived by some interviewees as a make work project. Moreover, soliciting project funding failed to address the erosion of public monies and massive government cuts to feminist organization's core funding. A shelter manager spoke to this burden:

[The] thing is project funding really doesn't help us, because it means you have to run a project [which means], more work. We did that route for a while and that was just foolish, because it means you have to do all these extra projects. Shelters need more operating funding. We need more core funding. We are abysmally underfunded in our core funding. So projects don't help us, they just don't. I'm not saying I'm against projects, I still do them, but you can't look at them to address our core funding issues (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

Accepting and reliance on government funding created a sort of catch-22 situation for some feminist organizations. Accepting public funds provided groups with organizational support and facilitated their existence, but this "dependency" can also create problems for feminist organizations. Outside funding sources may distort an organization's goals, focus, priorities and resource allocation (Gelb and Lief Palley, 1982:42, 49). This is less of a concern for labour organizations than publicly funded anti-violence and anti-racist groups. Moreover, the move towards funding diversification was understood by some of the women in this study, as a time consuming but protective process. It increased the amount of organizational stress and work associated with the seemingly endless pursuit of grant applications. Still as Agnew (1996:167) has found, groups continue to apply based on women's need for services. And despite concerted efforts to diversify funding sources, chronic underfunding continued to be a serious problem for almost all of social service and community-based groups during the Harris years.

The Use of Insider Tactics

I try to work within the system because that's where the funding will come. It frustrates me no end because they keep changing the rules (Health and Disability Activist, Hamilton, 2002).

A number of scholars (Feree and Martin, 1995; Splater-Roth and Schreiber, 1995; Tyyska, 1998) have analyzed feminist's use of "insider politics" as a means to achieve "outsider goals". These tactics may involve couching feminist claims in the rhetoric of liberal individualism (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:118, 125) in an attempt to try and increase the awareness and visibility of feminist issues.

This strategy is clearly evidenced by a number of VAW organizations, most notably OAITH's staunch participation and involvement in the Arlene May-Randy Eyles and Kimberly Rogers public inquiries and organized labour's legal challenges to anti-worker legislation such as the erosion of the forty hour work week, employment equity legislation and changes to the Employment Standards Act.

My brief analysis of insider techniques reveals a somewhat increased level of "professionalization" in some not for profit, community-based feminist organizations. This professionalization is characterized by preparing solution driven proposals and offering solution based policies and practices. Joanne Green, Executive Director of Opportunity for Advancement, noted that feminists are cognizant of the problems they face, but that they also need to be more solution focused or solution driven. Feminists must brainstorm solutions. Providing alternative solutions to identifiable problems not only inspires people, but lends credibility to feminist analyses. She suggested:

We know what the problems are. It's offering solutions as well. Do you know how refreshing it is [when] one person steps forward and says 'you know what I

think we should do'? I mean there's something that lifts [you] right away. You want to get solutions from people. So you get your credible people lined up and deal with the solutions (Executive Director, Women's Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002).

When crafting these solutions publically, (Spalter –Roth and Shreiber, 1995:118), some women also spoke about “softening their feminist language”, toning down their feminist rhetoric or avoiding use of the “f word” in order to appeal to certain audiences and to negotiate interactions with participants (insiders) and politicians and or funders (outsiders). A Hamilton shelter manager admitted:

There have been times that I've tried to soften my feminist language so I can be more accessible to people, to help them get what we're saying. I don't really feel bad about that because sometimes you have to tailor it to the audience. In such an antifeminist environment, I had to find ways to communicate what was happening in a way people could hear, because people weren't hearing what was happening, because they were told that this wasn't true and that women aren't getting abused and all sorts of crazy stuff like that (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

By modifying their language, several women hoped they could make their messages more accessible. They avoided explicitly feminist language. Rather, they opted to use more “mainstream”, “less threatening” or “palatable” language as a way to gain legitimacy (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995). They tried to repackage their message(s) in “women friendly” or “women centred” ways, in a strategic effort to avoid the delegitimation of their issues and demands. To quote Spalter-Roth and Schreiber (1995:119), I would argue that “in a climate in which feminists are often portrayed as supporting the interests of a deviant elite, avoiding a feminist label was a survival tactic” and some of the women I interviewed as part of this study would likely agree. A criminal justice worker commented on her use of a “women centred” approach as she believed

“woman friendly” language was more likely to be heard and accepted. She explained:

I think our voices are going to get heard. I do think the majority of the population goes, ‘awe, feminism, ooh.’ It’s still the “f” word. Yesterday I did a presentation to a church group and I did it from a very woman-centered perspective and I said that’s what I would be doing, I’m going to be talking from a woman-centered perspective, but that’s the language I use. I don’t say ‘I’m talking from a feminist perspective’. I didn’t use the “f” word. It’s about trying to get the audience to hear what I have to say (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Likewise, Sherry Lewis, Executive Director of the Hamilton Native Women’s Shelter, noted how the word “feminist” is not readily accepted among members of the Aboriginal community. Borrowing from Newman (2011:220 citing Gilmore 2008:3) it could be suggested then that “feminist activism” may in fact exist and occur “in places we do not expect and among women who do not necessarily embrace the term but who [nonetheless] do the work of feminism.” While the Hamilton Native Women’s Shelter does not publicly describe or promote itself as an explicitly feminist organization, it does espouse a feminist analysis of violence against women, poverty and homelessness. Despite their internal feminist agenda, by avoiding affixing a feminist label to their public work, the Native Women’s Centre is able to frame the issue of violence, for example, in a way that resonates with Aboriginal people and enables the Centre to establish legitimacy within the Aboriginal community. This it seems, to use Spalter-Roth and Schreiber’s words (1995:118) is “intentional” and I would argue strategic on the part of the Native Women’s Shelter. As Lewis later explained:

We don’t call ourselves or promote ourselves as a feminist organization. But that is what we do. . .we promote feminist analyses of domestic violence, but we don’t say that. We use [words like] power and control but it’s not worded in the way that would be inflammatory to aboriginal people. We could not call ourselves feminist or nobody would let us into their meetings. I guess we’re doing a lot more behind-the-scenes work. . .it’s really welcoming to go to groups who are

talking about feminist issues, stand on the same ground and be able to understand the same concepts. Different terminology, mind you, but it was all very much the same (Executive Director, Native Women's Shelter, Hamilton, 2002).

Still Lewis and other women in community based groups remained committed to finding ways to articulate their issues from an intersectional feminist perspective. They attempted to make their messages focussed and clear by using familiar, non-inflammatory language. Beth Jordan commented: "We have to be better at framing the issues and contextualizing the issues for the average everyday person to understand, because sometimes our rhetoric just doesn't work. We start talking about intersectionality and marginalized women and they go, 'what's that?' We have to find ways to communicate to very diverse groups of women." Pam Cross noted that "there's a way in which you can say exactly what you want to say, but not offend the person to the extent that they don't want to talk to you again. And I think that's an important strategy to employ."

However, one of the problems with using what Spalter-Roth and Schreiber (1995:119) call "politically palatable language" is that it can "obscure relations of domination and subordination." Feminist efforts may not succeed in raising the consciousness of women their organizations seek to represent and empower (1995:119). Further, it may downplay the structural roots of social inequalities (1995:119). Another problem they identify is the potential cooptation of feminist language – or the shift in "public vocabulary" (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:119), government language or legal discourse (see Bashevkin, 1994:691 and Cossman 2002:186) appropriating progressive, feminist discourse as a means to recast neoliberal positions.

While women embedded in labour organizations and unions were quite open and

direct in their criticism of the Harris government, women in community organizations were more likely to critique government programs and policies at a systems level, rather than directing criticism at a particular government per se. Less apt to point a direct finger, but still attempting to be explicit, Angela Robertson commented on how Sistering worked to address the negative implications Harris' policies had on homeless women:

It's almost engaging in boardroom politics, nothing is said directly or confrontationally, it's implied and insinuated (laughing). Sistering is an organization that has been quite explicit about speaking to the policy changes that the Harris government has introduced and speaking to how the majority of those changes have negatively impacted the women we provide services for. We have been quite explicit about that, in speaking to the policy implications versus the Harris government (chuckle) (Executive Director, Homeless Women's Shelter, Toronto, 2002).

In fact, this was a common strategy. Many feminists avoided pointing fingers directly at government, but instead openly faulted government policy. As one woman put it "we don't point fingers and say 'it's because you did this', but government has put policies in place that have resulted in this. We didn't tackle government dead on, we tackled issues. We talked about gaps in service rather than pointing fingers at government." Another woman said it is better to "focus on who is being hurt as opposed who is doing the hurting because with this government, the minute you're critical of government you're thrown out the door. There's just no point, you're not going to get heard." So some feminist resistance purposely avoided voicing direct political attacks, emphasizing instead the negative impact of government policies.

Another 'insider strategy' involved undertaking research. For example, one woman active in the anti-violence sector talked about how she systematically began to collect newspaper articles and clippings that reported sexual assaults, women's deaths and

the erosion of social supports. She indicated this was “a very grassroots way to document the devastation.” The Cross Sectoral Group also researched government budgets. Based on those budgets, they developed realistic cost estimates to implement their proposed thirty nine emergency measures. Beth Jordan stated:

We researched every damn thing within an inch of its life. We knew how much money they had available and we looked at their budgets. We costed it out, how much we would need to run this many shelters. We knew how much it would cost to run this line province-wide. We knew what it would cost in legal aid to get women through the door and what was missing. We knew what the translation services would cost. We had strong, tight arguments and it felt really good. It felt like, they didn't quite know what to do. We started to make them scramble (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

In addition, Sistering, in “partnership” with women who have lived experience with poverty and homelessness, conducted a two year study entitled “Common Occurrence: The Impact of Homelessness on Women's Health” (2000) which looked specifically at the “hiddenness” of women's homelessness and the impact homelessness has on women's well-being. This project aimed to include the invisible homeless, women not typically counted, such as women living outside the shelter system in “impermanent living conditions”; women who “couch surf” or stay with friends or family (Sistering, 2000). Over 125 women were interviewed, in 12 languages, with an eye to identifying the barriers women encounter when attempting to access social supports bound by mainstream determinants of health and health care (Sistering, 2000). Angela Robertson, the Executive Director of Sistering maintained this “social reporting” not only validated feminists' organizational perspectives, but that the collection and use of empirical research added credibility to feminist claimsmakers positions. She stated:

I think the other strategy that many social service agencies are beginning to

undertake is 'social reporting'. We are doing our own research. We are conducting research. Because one of the things that we know we will always be challenged with is, 'you are only arguing that perspective because you want to maintain the organization's existence'. Now agencies are validating the positions they are arguing based on research and that adds credibility, that increases our credibility to the challenges that we are making (Executive Director, Homeless Women's Shelter, Toronto, 2002).

Developing “transparent” and “accountable” business management plans as strategies reflected some organizations becoming more conscious of the ins and outs of insider politics. “Putting things in writing” often necessitated creating a “paper trail” and some groups feared this would result in them being bogged down with paperwork. A shelter manager stated:

I don't believe shelters are at risk of closing. My next hunch is that we're going to be killed with paper work. In this sort of vice of accountability, we're going to be buried in paper work. We'll spend most of our time doing paper work to justify and outline our programs. I'm all for accountability and transparency, but we will be so occupied doing those things, that we can't do the advocacy pieces (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

Women located in all three sectors also talked about being media savvy and using the media strategically. Their narratives indicate that use of mainstream media may be best described as selective. For example, the executive director of METRAC noted the organization will comment at the drop of a hat as a means to keep popular discourse on violence against women issues alive in the public mind, whereas other groups prefer to maintain a lower profile and will only grant interviews to certain reporters on a case by case basis. An anti-violence educator noted that she often says “no comment” because she doesn't want to “feed somebody's agenda” and feminists in labour organizations occasionally commented on what they perceived to be the anti-union sentiment expressed in mainstream media.

“Public education” was another insider strategy employed by women organizing in all three sectors as a means to politicize members and participants. Some notable examples include union based worker to worker campaigns such as “Janitors for Justice”; anti-poverty campaigns such as “Pay the rent, feed the kids” campaigns, and “the 1% housing solution” on affordable housing. The OFL, CAW, CUPE and the USWA all focussed on worker education, on “on the job organizing” and “grassroots organizing” by making their educational programs more “learner centred”. The USWA’s “You and Your Union” is day long course designed to explain to members what the union is all about. It highlights the benefits of being in a union and helps members understand the importance of issues and political action. Union feminists spoke about the politicization of members through public education campaigns, and the politicization of women workers through workshops, courses and conferences. The women’s narratives conveyed the importance of finding ways to communicate issues in a way that resonated both with members and the general public. Public education was thus employed as a strategy to connect issues and to connect people. Carolyn Eagan, among others, commented that public education was used by the USWA to initiate political action:

We are trying to involve our members in political action to do what we can, whether it be health care or the privatization of electricity, or the privatization of water, which is [part of the] neoliberal agenda and so we try to connect these international questions and make it real for people that what’s happening to your health care system and your hydro is the same agenda that is creating terrible conditions for people around the world. So we try and make those connections for people (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

In this way, public education may be understood as a form of feminist consciousness raising. It also afforded feminists the means by which to reframe their advocacy (as

mentioned a common organizational goal) in a less threatening, more agreeable way. Analyses of feminists' use of these insider strategies attests to the diverse ways feminists have attempted to resist Harris' agenda. These tend to be more everyday strategies, strategies that reflect what feminists do. These practices take up women's time, energy, resources, impact service delivery and social interactions with clients, participants, and outsiders. As other scholars have suggested, in some instances adopting insider tactics reveals the resulting tension between feminists' use of insider techniques and outsider goals (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:115) or what a woman working in the anti-violence field as a shelter manager described as "the move away from some of that grass roots ability to look at the roots of abuse."

"Covert Resistance and Apparent Accommodation" (Mathews, 1995)

The Personal Narratives Group (1989:7) suggests that many women's narratives "unfold within the framework of an apparent acceptance of social norms and expectations but nevertheless describe strategies and activities that challenge those norms." "Apparent accommodation" and "covert resistance" are two such strategies described by Mathews (1995:298) that involve "adjusting practice so that it conforms or appears to conform to state rules." Mathews uses the modifier "apparent" to denote the inclusion of "surreptitious" resistance to "rules that may be occasional or routine" (1995:298). In this study, instances of apparent accommodation may be reflected in some social service and community groups retreat from political action and the increased focus on service provision (Mathews, 1995:294; see also Harder, 2003); the acquisition of government resources for limited, service directed activities; and more covert or the reframing of

organizational praxis, including political action and advocacy in terms of “public education”.

Eileen Morrow, the Executive Director of OAITH noted that “in the province of Ontario, they don’t want to hear the word advocacy, period. You can’t get funding for advocacy in this province at all. So the only way you could get it, would be to call it something else and hope that you can do some advocacy for women” (Eileen Morrow, Executive Director, OAITH, Toronto, 2002). A criminal justice worker commented that sometimes she feels like a “double agent”. While she is cognizant of potential cooptation, in order to get her voice heard, she will ride on the coat tails of the larger more mainstream umbrella organization that oversees her organization. She indicated:

There’s more [than one way] to get your voice heard. We really have to be smart about it. I almost feel like a double agent. I know for myself working here, if I can’t get my voice heard as a woman centered organization, then I will actually go with the [organization] group as a right wing organization, and I use that strategy in order to get our voice heard. I don’t always agree with that ‘cause I feel rather coopted (Criminal Justice Worker, GTA, 2002).

Apparent accommodation as a form of feminist resistance tends to be “less risky” e.g. less visible and high profile than direct or overt opposition, but it can create new sets of problems (Mathews, 1995:298-304). For example, one anti-racist activist observed:

...tension is always there, like how to do you get people to give you money when they don’t necessarily support [your] political agenda. So you sometimes have to downplay the political agenda and you have to be careful (Anti-racist activist, Hamilton, 2002).

Lastly, as Mathews (1995) notes, feminist’s use of covert resistance may be more common than these women’s narratives suggest. As one woman, who shall remain anonymous commented, “we do public education, which is my word for advocacy. That

you can delete, but we do *do* ‘public education’.” Like Mathews (1995) suggests, admitting to “bending the rules” to fit their own organizational goals and needs could so to speak, result in punitive resource withdrawal on the part of government funding bodies, which once again reflects the vulnerable fiscal position feminist organizations encountered in this neoliberal climate.

Summary: Coalition Building and Feminist Resistance

We tried to organize with other groups. We tried to maintain clarity around our analyses and to speak out. We tried to critique gender neutral services at the expense of the gender specific services. We’ve worked in coalition with the cross-sectoral anti-violence against women group which brought in other sectors. We wrote letters to the editor, everyday things. . .trying to work more in coalition and across sectors. Maintaining some of the strategies that we’ve always used is also really important, because when you’re being threatened, it is easy enough to not maintain those strategies, not rock the boat, not put forth your analyses or your position, not challenge the police and we’ve been really consistent about that. We haven’t backed away from that. But the reason that we haven’t backed away from that is, we speak as a group. We’ve tried to make sure that we’re speaking as a group, that as women’s services, that we are on the same page. And we’ve tried to make sure that if that something happens, we bring a gendered analyses to that policy (Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

Harris’ common sense revolution was not a feminist friendly project and as such it created tensions and anxieties on the part of those groups who struggled to maintain their organizational voices and mandates, and a sustained systemic critique of neoliberalism. As we saw in Chapter Four, my reading of these women’s narratives indicates that all groups and activists, regardless of organizational sector, theoretical, and or ideological slant, struggled to challenge Harris’ neoliberal agenda. Doing so often made them vulnerable, though for reasons previously explained, some groups and individuals were made more vulnerable than others and perhaps understandably so, more risk averse in terms of their actions and strategies of resistance. This was a hostile environment, one

not governed by feminists. And yet feminists took it on. Thus as Brodie (1995) notes, the larger political opportunity structure may shape and inform, but it does not wholly determine feminist organizational praxis.

My goal in this Chapter has been to focus on what I have termed narratives of feminist resistance. Feminist organizing during the Harris years was “far from demobilized” (Bashevkin, 1998:229). Despite, or, “in spite” of Harris’ numerous cutbacks and ideological attacks, feminist activists and organizations were to use Moody’s (1997) word, “resisters”. The women’s narratives indicate that feminist activists and organizations employed a number of different tactics to address organizational challenges and that activists situated in different sectors occasionally chose different tactics because different women bring different resources, experiences, and perspectives to their varied organizational contexts (Mathews, 1995:304). These organizations and activists did not capitulate or submit, rather they ventured and or were pressed into coalitions that ultimately preserved a critical feminist “voice” (admittedly, perhaps a homogenized voice), and offered a counter-discourse to Harris’s common sense revolution. However, an unintended, and I would argue positive consequence of this forced resistance, was the (re)discovery of the importance of coalition based opposition as a viable form of intersectional praxis among feminist groups and activists.

Based on my analyses, I would argue that the overarching narrative evident in these women’s stories is the renewed importance of coalition building and coalitional opposition in feminist circles. Coalition building, if you will, was the prevailing or “master” narrative concerning feminist resistance during the Harris years. Granted one

could read these women's stories only to glean that coalition building was at best understood as a defensive strategy imposed on feminist organizations. When under external attack, feminists bought into coalition building in order to maintain their internal action agendas and to alleviate organizational vulnerability. In my mind, however, and based on my own reflections of these stories of feminist resistance, that interpretation alone may represent an edited or condensed version of the stories of coalition building.

One could also argue that the groups and activists engaged in these strategic measures also ended up (re)learning more about the fundamental "solidarity" that existed and exists among feminist groups and their allies vis a vis their coming together across differences, "not as communities, but across communities", and that by working cross-sectorally in coalition this potential may be better realized and acted upon in the future. To be clear and for good reason (including those mentioned earlier), while some groups expressed that they felt "backed" or "forced" into coalitions or "partnerships", for others, being "forced" into coalition inadvertently enabled them to (re)discover some of the truths about feminist differences: to acknowledge the power, racial and class differences that do exist within and between feminist communities; to embrace understandings of difference without imposing notions of sameness; and the long standing challenges related to strategizing and organizing across those differences. Feminist organizations and activists certainly did not choose the environment they found themselves in during the Harris years, and some may not on their own accord have chosen to work in coalition. In fact, this may have been a strategy foisted upon some of them. It was a strategy borne out of necessity, not entirely of choice and yet in the process of participation, some of

those groups and activists involved were able to rediscover the feminist inspired organizational praxis behind much of what we may understand as contemporary feminist intersectional theorizing. This reading seems to fit well with the argument made by some social movement scholars, that the larger political opportunity structure shapes, but does not necessarily entirely determine, movement organization's activities and actions.

Feminist analyses of work, violence, racism and discrimination might very well have been lost if it were not for coalition based opposition. Working in coalition allowed for more structural explanations and policy demands to break through. Thus, it bears repeating, that as result of being backed into a corner, coalitional politics ensured that feminist analyses were not altogether lost. Working in coalition was a defensive form of feminist praxis that not only produced a coming together of anti-hegemonic feminist discourses, but offensively, it also enabled and supported a deeper structural critique of Harris' neoliberal project. We can see and hear these ideas reflected in the narratives of the women I interviewed and in the snippets and excerpts of their stories shared and analysed here.

Granted, this is by no means the only reading of these women's stories, nor perhaps the most informed analyses of feminist resistance, particularly given the numerous criticisms that have dogged coalition politics, pitfalls that as we have heard, were also, at times voiced by women in a number of organizational sectors. Certainly amidst the meta-narrative of coalition building there is to use Coulter's words, the "discursive and material" (Coulter, 2009) risk that some feminist voices will be lost, that others will dominate, and as result of conflict or compromise, some women's voices will

ultimately be diluted or watered down, if not outright homogenized. These are real concerns, particularly for organizations and activists intent on applying the principles of intersectionality and the women's stories speak to these ongoing difficulties. However, my sense is that when under attack, despite their theoretical and or ideological differences, attending to these matters represented the lesser of two evils, and that ensuring the existence of a feminist informed critique of patriarchal capitalism, violence, racism and discrimination was what was deemed to be of the utmost collective importance.

Further, these stories suggest that women were not "crushed by circumstance" (Aptheker, 1993:90). Rather, their narratives provide much evidence that neither feminist organizations nor feminist activists were complacent nor complicit during the Harris years (in conversation with Baines, 2005). Taken together, their narratives speak to organizational and activist agency, albeit at times, structurally constrained (Harder, 2003). In fact, their stories suggest and support the claim that women have often been at the fore opposing neoliberal promises (Brodie, 1996:7). These women's narratives stand in stark contrast to the "hegemonic discourse" of Harris' CSR, including the dominant discourses of privatization, commodification and depoliticization (see Fudge and Cossman, 2002). They challenge anti-equality, market based agendas. Further, they speak to the "resiliency" of feminist organizing and provide glimpses of feminist's oppositional relations vis a vis the neoliberal state (Harder, 2003).

The women's narratives indicate that feminists took to heart Bakker (1996) and Brodie's (1995, 1996) observation that economic restructuring is neither a gender neutral,

nor an inevitable process. As Brodie (1995; 1996) suggests, if we conceive of the emergence of neoliberalism and a new gender order as an “impositional” claim, then we can better understand how feminists strategically contested and did not go along uncritically with Harris’ privatization project. In other words, the women’s narratives that emerged in this study draw attention to the importance of remembering that “the underlying assumptions of the Harris government’s Common Sense Revolution are political constructs that are ‘subject to political contestation’” (Brodie 1995:27).

However, the women’s stories recounted here also suggest that “feminists are faced with the need to find ways of engaging in this ideological conflict at a time when our financial resources and political credibility are in jeopardy” (MacGregor, 1997:105-106). Like many of the women I interviewed, I would agree that strategies such as the CSVAWSG and The Days of Action were not simply to use Bashvekin’s words (1998:239) “reactive”, but also innovative and resourceful forms of feminist resistance, especially given the social context within which they were situated and evolved. But were they effective strategies? And for whom? What were feminist’s perceptions of the effectiveness of their strategies of resistance? Did their perceptions vary? Were some activists and or organizations more or less successful than others, and if so, why might that be the case? And how sustainable might these strategies be over the long term?

Having explored a number of strategies of feminist resistance, in *Chapter Six Small Victories” and “Partial Wins”*: *Narratives of Feminist Success*, I next seek to investigate the success of these strategies. In particular, I more closely examine how the recounting and sharing of these “feminist success stories” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby,

1999) serves to empower and inspire future feminist action and keeps the material and narrative reality of feminist informed social change alive.

CHAPTER SIX

“Small Victories” and “Partial Wins”: “Feminist Success Stories” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999)

Social movement scholars often admit it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of social movement organizations (Gelb and Palley, 1982:176). While social movement approaches have tended to emphasize the acquisition of new social, cultural or political spaces, the implementation of advantageous policy and large scale structural or societal changes as important aspects of success (Staggenborg, 1995; see also Gamson, 1975 cited by Staggenborg; Disney and Gelb, 2000), feminist theorists and researchers understandings of “feminist success” have often either “redefined” (Disney and Gelb, 2000), diverged, if not outright rejected, those of traditional social movement theorists.

My reading of the feminist literature and analyses of the women’s narratives gathered in this study leads me to suggest that these aforementioned definitions are not a good fit with the women’s stories, nor do they accurately reflect the women’s organizational praxis and day to day experiences. Feminist organizations and activists understandings of “feminist success” are often crafted in more fluid, subtle and often gradual terms. It also becomes clear to me that these women’s accounts reveal definitions of success that not only counter the dominant social movement discourse, but also the dominant discourses of success put forward under neoliberalism. How the women’s narratives characterize success, compared to those measures employed by government and various funding agencies (many of whom were not feminist, much less intersectional in terms of their approach (see again Coulter, 2009) were very different. And it was these

concrete and narrative differences, that I believe created difficulties for feminist organizations seeking to challenge neoliberalism during the Harris years.

I contend that these real and “discursive” struggles related to feminist success illustrate what Barbara Epstein (2002:121) views as the growing gap between the original vision and the present state of feminist activism. Epstein argues the more radical and visionary elements of feminist activism have narrowed in relation to its “actual tangible accomplishments” (2002:121). She suggests feminist victories are now “narrower than the intentions of the larger movement.” In other words, the breadth of feminist goals and demands have been limited “such that the final achievement [is] the least threatening element of the original set of demands...demands and results are not always the same thing” (2002:121-122). I would argue that many of the women’s narratives of success analyzed in this study reflect Epstein’s (2002) sense of “narrowed victory” (see also Disney and Gelb, 2000; Gelb, 1995).

In this Chapter, “”Small Victories” and “Partial Wins”: Feminist Success Stories” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999) I analyse the efficacy of feminist activism during the Harris years. My aim is to ground my analyses of feminist success in a close reading of the women’s narratives (remaining cognizant of the fact that my analyses reflect but one reading of these data, when in fact there may be several different ways of reading and interpreting these women’s stories). I begin by presenting narrative analyses that draw out different operational definitions of “feminist success”. These definitions emerged from the women’s reflections on their lived experiences in specific organizational and activist settings. I also suggest how these varied definitions coincide with the

intersectional theoretical framework previously outlined in Chapter Two. By some radical feminist accounts, feminist success may be related to maintaining a gender based analyses of violence against women in “tough times” (Bashvekin, 1998), when governments were perceived on the part of some anti-violence groups as wanting shelters closed. In other instances, feminist success may be reflected in a commitment to achieving equality in the public and private sphere for women as wives, mothers and as workers. Thus socialist feminists in union settings may equate success with challenging the male, corporate agenda (Skipton, 1997; MacGregor, 1997), whereas anti-racist activists may argue that success entails recognizing and challenging the “racist face” (Trickey, 1997) of Harris’ “commonsensical revolution”.

“Feminist Success Stories” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999): Narrative Themes

A number of important themes can be identified in the women’s narratives of feminist success. These include narratives of loss and failure, coupled with narratives of organizational survival and the preservation of oppositional or dissenting voices. There are also narratives of “small victories” and “partial wins”. I believe that these success stories must be recounted and shared primarily because, while these gains may appear to accomplish very little in the eyes of outsiders or resonate with out-group members, I am inclined to suggest (as have other scholars see for example Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999), that these women’s stories serve to empower and inspire present day and future feminist thought and action.

“We lost”

One emergent storyline related to assessing feminists efforts of resistance, is

grounded in what I have termed the “we lost” narrative. If we were to rely on purely quantifiable measures, the Harris years were not a time of feminist success per se. The Harris years were challenging. We know from the numerous stories of struggle analysed in Chapter Four that feminist organizations and activists were impacted by a number of very real setbacks or “losses”: no social housing being built in almost seven years; reduced social assistance rates; the elimination of employment equity; the dismantling of funding for second stage housing etc. Feminists, especially those organizing in the anti-violence and anti-racist sectors struggled to show outcome, impact or improvements, particularly in the eyes of the state or among funders. Their stories may be read as a failure to move forward on policy issues related to major equality measures. So what we hear loud and clear in the women’s stories is that there were undeniable, real, material losses during the Harris years. Many important things were lost, and these “we lost” stories document the devastation in women’s lives that many feminists believe occurred as a result.

And yet, the women’s stories may also be read to suggest that feminist organizations were not complicit with what was happening under neoliberalism and its promise of a better Ontario. All of the women’s narratives provide evidence to support the assertion that neither feminist organizations nor feminist activists were complacent or complicit during the Harris years (in conversation with Baines, 2005). In fact, they actively resisted and struggled to maintain a dissenting voice and an overarching counter-narrative that clearly differed from the dominant discourse of the day. I assert that the women’s narratives appear to “redefine” (Disney and Gelb, 2000) their successes in ways

that (re)acknowledge and contextualize major losses. Their narratives not only bear witness to the losses experienced during the Harris years, but their stories also reveal attempts to redefine feminist organizational success in their own terms, terms that emphasized a praxis oriented account that was more in line with their varied organizational realities and their day to day activities.

“We survived”

Without a doubt the women’s narratives expressed real losses, but they also included stories of survival. Amidst these narratives of loss were strands of what I have characterized as the “we survived” feminist success story. As noted by others, “success” was often framed in terms of “surviving” the Harris years. Many organizations and activists noted the importance of “holding their own” or “keeping the doors open” and a few took some solace in, at the very least, outlasting the Harris government. Some of the women’s stories speak to the importance attached to their attempts to soften the blow so to speak, or “tempering [the] harshest consequences” of Harris’ “transformation of governance” (Harder, 2003:160). While most “survival stories” acknowledge that the Harris government undermined feminist efficacy, some narratives liken success to “slowing him down” and this was a common theme interwoven in feminist’s survival stories.

“We kept our voice”

Embedded in the “we survived” storyline, is another glimmer of feminist success. Here I speak of narratives related to the issue of “voice” and in particular, the retention of feminist voices. True, there were also problematic issues related to “voice”, some of

which I mentioned in the previous chapters. However, the stories recounted to me in this study demonstrate that the preservation and articulation of dissenting voices was understood to be critical during the Harris years. Therefore, keeping one's "voice" was interpreted as a measure of success both on the part of organizations and activists, whose stories often stood in stark contrast to the dominant discourses of neoliberalism espoused by the state, media and various granting agencies. And in my mind, this success is crucial in terms of the maintenance of an overarching counter-narrative to Harris' CSR in particular and the neoliberal project in general.

"We had small wins" and "We gained"

Despite or perhaps "in spite" (MacKinnon et al., 2006:73) of these losses feminists sought to maintain their "voice", and, in turn, realized minor gains. The women's "we gained" stories included accounts of "small victories" or "partial wins" achieved during the Harris years. Defining an organizational strategy as successful was important in terms of empowering the women involved in making change and spurring on feminist organizational mobilization. To be a part of a successful coalition for example, carried with it a certain degree of momentum and afforded members some positive, all be they "narrow" (Epstein, 2002) feminist outcomes. These accomplishments were significant in light of the losses endured and what these women's stories make plain, is the importance feminist organizations and activists attached to those successes and that they openly credited themselves for these "wins".

But these "we gained" stories also embody contradictions about what it means to succeed in a neoliberal climate. The women's stories further speak to how those gains or

wins were (or were not fully) realized. Read in this way, their narratives, if not contradictory, were at the very least “multilayered” (Coulter, 2009), making their stories of success in my mind, to use the words of one woman, “bittersweet”.

“Fighting back is important to open spaces and create future opportunities”

My reading of these stories indicates for many feminists, especially grassroots and union activists, the “fight” was what mattered. Without the fight, the women sensed that they might have lost more and or they might have not known what else could have been lost had they not fought back. These women’s narratives reveal that fighting back was important in terms of individual politicization and empowerment, but also to use social movement parlance, in mobilization terms. Fighting back potentially opened new political, cultural and social spaces and identified strategies needed to ready organizations to make the most of any future opportunities. We can see snippets of feminist organizations successfully engaging in theoretically informed action (not just an intersectionally informed analysis) that ultimately involved an understanding of feminist success that was more aligned with activists’ experiences and one that laid the groundwork for furthering feminist organizing in the years to come.

Narrative Examples of Feminist Success

Nowhere are these narratives of feminist success more clear than in the women’s stories pertaining to The Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group (CSVAWSG) and the Days of Action (DOA). Socialist feminists active in unions and radical feminists engaged in anti-violence work maintained that their coalitional involvement in the CSVAWSG and the DOA was “successful” in that it facilitated

connections among different organizations, it encouraged groups and activists to rethink how they organized, particularly with respect to the interrelatedness of issues, and they believed that these two strategies successfully raised the level of political awareness and activism around feminist and social justice issues. Indeed, some women went as far as to suggest that these two strategies of resistance generated a level of politicization that ensured continued vigilance and sustained hope and dignity on the part of activists during the Harris years. While not all of organizations I studied were successful in terms of “uniformly” empowering their members, clearly “the ideal of empowerment [was] common to all organizations studied” (Sudbury, 1998:138). The importance of these “fight backs” and any related wins or gains, must be underscored. Fighting back was important not only for mobilization purposes, but also in terms of creating opportunities and potentially opening new spaces to situate feminist activism in the future.

Change is Possible

Feminist explanations and understandings of success differed not only from those of the dominant social movement discourse, but from those of the state and funding agents as well. These “material and discursive” (Coulter, 2009) differences posed a real problem for feminist organizations across the board. Still, the women’s narratives show how many feminists remained hopeful and optimistic that progressive social change was possible, especially in spite of a dominant, hegemonic narrative to the contrary. Most of all, their stories passionately demonstrate that while social change may be slow and or “incremental” (Gelb and Palley, 1982), “the potential for feminist change still exist[ed]” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:1) during the Harris years. And the possibility of

making change and the potential to succeed remains today.

Defining Feminist “Success”

Keeping Gelb and Palley’s (1982) idea of incremental success in mind (see Chapter Two), I rely on feminist’s reflections of their own experiences as organizational leaders and activists in order to understand how they came to define the meaning of “feminist success” in a particular social context. Some of the feminists I interviewed recognized that given the contemporary climate, outcome indicators of their programs and projects were important (Hare and Day-Corbiere, 1999 as cited by Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:330). However, other like-minded community based scholars and activists have also expressed frustration that the quantitative indicators and measures employed by governments and funding bodies “do not get at the nuances and complexities” (MacKinnon et al., 2006:2) of women’s everyday lives. Because many progressive feminist outcomes include personal growth, empowerment, increased self-confidence and self-esteem (Martin 1990) or personal confidence or hopefulness (Hare and Day Corbiere, 1999 as cited by Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:330), these “indicators are difficult to define” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:330). How for example, how does one measure increased self-esteem? How does one quantify personal change and or a sense of increased individual empowerment? I would argue that these so-called “quality of life” issues or what MacKinnon et al., (2006:70) term, issues of “social well-being” are much more subjective. Some feminist goals are just not measurable in such finite or quantifiable terms, rather, there is more of a margin of flexibility in terms of what success entails with respect to different feminist’s so called “specified deliverables” (in

conversation with Lenton, 2005), especially given the tight time constraints within which said deliverables are often expected to be met (Coulter, 2009:21)⁶³.

The meaning of success for the feminists who provide social programs and services for example, and for the women who participate in these programs, tends to differ from “the private sector performance-based standards” (Harder, 2003:17) that state agents and funding bodies might invoke in terms of evaluating project outcomes. Instead, success may be measured “by what an individual can contribute to the community and how ‘good’ that individual can become while walking this path called earth” (Hare and Day-Cobiere, 1999 as cited Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:330). In other words, “the process. . .does not fit into the neat and tidy parameters that funders often require in their quest for measurable outcomes. The broader benefit for individuals, families, and communities from even the slightest ‘movement’, is difficult to measure. . .much of this goes unnoticed as governments and funders are preoccupied with quantitative measures” (MacKinnon et al., 2006:71). As the inner city activists interviewed by MacKinnon et al., (2006:71) noted, “funders want to see the ‘miracle change’, and indicators and other measurement tools do not reflect the long hard work that is involved.” Further, “program evaluations and other means of measuring also don’t acknowledge that people come into the programs with strengths” (as cited by Mackinnon et al., 2006:71). This has led some scholars to suggest, there are aspects of social change that cannot be measured using economic indicators alone (Diener, 1997:194 as cited by MacKinnon et al., 2006:69).

My research speaks to these conceptual and operational debates surrounding

⁶³ Though of course it could be said that this is also true for most social movements, not just the women’s movement (in conversation with Storey, 2011).

feminist success. The comments of an executive director of a local women's centre were quite revealing in this regard. She noted the difficulty feminists working in social service settings experienced in producing the kinds of outcomes that governments, including the Harris government would be responsive to. Progressive outcomes may not be immediately self-evident and or not fully realized by government funders. She observed that positive change may occur more incrementally, and over the long term. She stated:

Results in the social service sector are not always concretely evident and that is one of the difficulties we're dealing with, we can't always show outcome. That was the trouble with the Harris government, they wanted to see outcomes which the human services, social services aren't able to produce. . .they're not measurable in concrete terms and sometimes the impact may be longer standing. You finish a program, you don't immediately change your whole life around, but the seeds have been sown, and you may be able to approach things differently. Our outcomes, we look at what women feel, where they feel they've made improvements or significant improvements. But I haven't devised a way to measure that. We're challenged to try and do that more; the government is requiring outcomes for our service. We have to show outcomes for the government funding they're providing, not just how many people took our program and how they liked it, but what kind of changes they've made as a result, which is a challenge (Executive Director, Women's Centre in GTA, 2002).

The executive director went on to suggest that during the Harris years, the value of women's programming shifted. It was "narrowed" on the part of granting agencies and government to primarily reflect concrete, quantifiable outcomes that were more reflective of the market driven values of commodification and individualism. This ideological shift to what some observers have referred to as "evidence-based policy" (see for example Young et al. 2002) had implications for feminist organizations, particularly feminists organizing in the anti-violence sector. These value differences were problematic and many feminists were critical of this value shift. This shift reflects how neoliberal discourse delegitimizes core feminist values of equality and social justice (Martin, 1990)

and the problems encountered on the part of feminist organizations given these value differences. She commented that feminist views tended to differ from those of the state and or funding agencies, which, as I noted earlier, reflects an overarching difference between feminist and neoliberal discourses:

We know the value of programs, but the value has shifted to outcome. 'Outcome', that's the key word. If you run an employment program and the outcome is to get people employed, you can count how many people will be employed after they finish the program. But in terms of self-esteem, if the program is to improve people's self-esteem, you can't measure it the same as somebody getting a job. You can make a tick there 'yes they're employed now or no they're not'. But self-esteem is more of an intangible thing. We deal with intangibles and that's why it is hard to fund programs, because the government wants concrete outcomes (Executive Director, Women's Centre in GTA, 2002).

What some of the women's narratives suggest is that feminists may have been and continue to be effective in meeting their goals and objectives, but perhaps in ways that are not generally or "traditionally" recognized as such by the powers that be, and as a result feminist success and progress may go "unnoticed" (MacKinnon et al., 2006) and their effectiveness unrecognized (Staggenborg, 1995). This is evident in feminist's discursive struggle to challenge the definition and measurement of organizational success solely in terms of market based, neoliberal rhetoric that demands concrete outcomes. Here I am apt to follow Janine Brodie (1995) who encourages us to continue to "evaluate dominant discourses as the biased and historically specific assertions of political agents, rather than accepting them as the natural order of things that is not contestable" (as cited by Cohen, 1997:13). This is particularly important in a sociopolitical climate where, according to Cohen (1997:13-14), some discourses may be "hegemonic, authorized, and officially sanctioned on the one hand" while others are "nonhegemonic, disqualified and

discounted” (citing Fraser, 1989:165). While the effectiveness of feminist activism may be circumscribed or “narrowed” (Epstein, 2002) by funding cutbacks and neoliberalism’s privatization mandate, the women’s narratives analyzed here suggest that “feminist success stories” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999) retain their importance in the micro context of feminist organizations and resonate among activists who actively continue to support women’s struggle for equality. In this way, these women’s narratives can be conceived of as “creative tools”, “tools [that] measure these changes” and “ensure that the evidence we provide of feminist success is strong enough to empower future feminist action and thought” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:320).

Feminists engaged in anti-violence work would likely argue that this narrowing trend noted by Epstein (2002) endangers women. The reduction of feminist and community based social supports has had an intense impact on the day to day lives of abused women. With fewer supports, women are pushed further into poverty and questionable living arrangements (Morrow et al., 2004; OAITH, 1998). Women who are struggling financially may be forced back into abusive relationships as a means of economic survival and are subjected to further violence (OAITH, 1998). OAITH found that shelter workers reported that “a significant number of women in Ontario are now making decisions to remain in, or return to abusive situations based primarily on barriers created by budget and service cuts” (OAITH 1996:27). Violence or the threat of violence against women increases women’s vulnerability in their families and their exploitation and subordination in society at large (Lightman and Baines, 1996:150). Hindering women’s ability to leave violent relationships, also informally sanctions men’s acts of

violence and reinforces women's marginalization (Lightman and Baines, 1996:150).

Anti-violence activists continued to struggle to attend to the most basic needs of women and children experiencing violence. They struggled to do the work, that to use Mathews' (1995:295-296) words, was not "'accountable' to the state". They strived to meet what Mathews (1995:295) among others see as women's most "immediate needs", including women's need for food, clothing, housing, child care, and employment. This "unaccountable" work was crucial for feminists organizing to eradicate violence against women and yet it was the kind of work that many feminist organizations are often not funded to do, but nonetheless strive to do (Mathews, 1995:295). According to Mathews (1995:295), this kind of work does not necessarily fit nicely into state sponsored funding categories. But many feminists doing anti-violence work in this study, as in Mathews' case (1995:295-296) insisted that only by attending to abused women's day to day needs could they then make good on the services for which they do receive some form of funding. This creates a potentially conflict ridden situation with respect to government funding formulas and contested ideas about what anti-violence work actually entails (Mathews, 1995:296).

It is on this front that feminists engaged in anti-violence organizations felt that they had only been marginally successful. For many women "everyday life can be a site of political struggle" (Essed 1996:97 as cited by Sudbury 1998:56; see also Flynn, 1998:145) which speaks to the "immediacy of their politics" (Sudbury, 1998:55) and some of these organization's primary goals. A shelter manager reflected on the day to day losses experienced by women during the Harris years and this sentiment is evident in

the ever present “we lost” narrative. She explained that many women and children found themselves worse off and often in dire circumstances. She further commented on the enormity of these losses:

The losses are huge and when I look back to our clients, it is worse for them now. So I don't know. Organizationally some successes, but when I look at the women and kids we're working with, it is much worse for them now. They don't have enough food. If they do have places to live, they're often not decent or they are barely decent living arrangements. They are struggling to find work or make ends meet on assistance. It is not good (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

She perceived the fact that her shelter was able to withstand a government that in her view was intent on “closing shelters down” altogether, as somewhat of a success. In this respect, her definition of success in terms of “organizational maintenance and survival” coincides with portions of Gelb and Disney's (2000) measure of feminist success. Success involved keeping small scale, non-profit organizations afloat and “keeping the doors open.” But outlasting a government that wanted shelters closed, was at best, a bittersweet measure of success. When it came to the state of her clients' day to day well-being, she expressed extreme failure and regret that many women and children were now in fact worse off. Women were hurting. She explained how “we lost” but “we survived” and the ambivalence of this state of affairs is evidenced in her narrative therein:

It is really hard, because if I look at the state of our clients, we have failed abysmally. Our clients are worse off than they were seven years ago. We are seeing more women coming in with more serious physical injuries. If I look at big measures like the state of our clients and the distress they're in, we have failed abysmally. If I look at the fact that we were dealing with a government that wanted to close our shelters and we're still here, well I guess that's good. I know I sound a bit cynical but it's really hard. . . Have we been successful? I think we survived. If that's the definition of success, then that's pretty sad. But we've survived (Shelter Manager, Hamilton, 2002).

Similarly, another anti-violence educator voiced the “we lost” but “we survived”

narrative. She acknowledged the difficulties associated with attempting to mediate the losses by way of an intersectional approach, given the ongoing struggle to maintain organizational survival:

You felt from day one, the work was gonna be de-politicized. The days of being able to vision and strategize and really believe that you could systematically work toward a more equitable society were just dashed. We had to make the complete shift of how do we hold onto what we've gained from being eroded, because right from day one, the erosion started with the slash to welfare payments. We see all the issues totally connected. You can't work on violence against women and not work on welfare reform or housing or subsidized daycare. And then we saw slashes to programs for immigrant women, no more funding to do anti-racism work. We went from how do we grow, to how do we survive (Anti-violence educator, 2002).

Drawing on the experiences of community-based activists, MacKinnon et al. (2006:73) have suggested “much of what they are able to do is *in spite* of public policies and programs that they view as inadequate at best and damaging at worst. While they can do their best to help individuals adapt, increase awareness and advocate for their ‘clients’, the reality is that housing is sorely lacking, social assistance income are inadequate, and access to good jobs, child care and training are limited, is largely out of their control. And, unless public policy shifts considerably to address these issues, improvements in the economic and social well-being of the people that they serve will remain marginal.” These activists experiences dovetail with the stories recounted to me by feminists engaged in anti-violence work. In other words, programming and services to address women’s most basic needs cannot be expected to alleviate larger social problems, rather activist and organizational efforts to address these “issues of social well-being” must be

accompanied by progressive change in the social policy arena in order for real gains to be made in women's day to day lives (MacKinnon et al., 2006:70).

While many anti-violence activists narratives suggested that their organizational efforts shifted from political to survival campaigns, they also serve as an effective “reminder that the struggle against economic inequality and social justice must be fought on many levels” (Naples, 1998:345). The imposition of a new “gender order” during the Harris years saw the neoliberal state shift support away from shelters and advocacy towards research and criminalization initiatives. Thus, some feminists felt that they had not succeeded in “shifting the balance of power” that accompanied this change in state forms; indeed, they were “not successful at all” (Executive Director Women's Employment Agency, Toronto, 2002) – snippets indicative again of the “we lost” story.

A crisis counsellor suggested that while anti-violence activists in her view have been effective in terms of their ability to support women, feminist attempts to address larger structural inequalities and to alter the imposition of a new “gender order” (Bakker, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002) have been relatively unsuccessful. With respect to this structural loss, she tentatively remarked:

I would say [we've been] effective (pause). I would say that [we've been] effective in continuing on the path to support women. What is not effective is that we are not able to focus on the larger picture (Crisis Counsellor, Toronto, 2002).

And the executive director of SACHA concurred. She believed the ability to elicit preventive change was lost:

We as an organization spend more and more time talking about the needs of women who have already been raped as opposed to talking about and agitating for those changes that will hopefully prevent rape from happening (Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

Neoliberal ideology rests on the assumption of a new “gender order” (Bakker, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002), one that reflects the shift of government policy away from structural issues and a move toward more micro “self-help solutions” (Brodie, 1995:62-63). This ideology simultaneously “degenderers” and “regenderers” women (Brodie, 1996). As mentioned, a number of scholars have described this process as the “intensification and erosion of gender” (Brodie 1994, 1995; Cossman 2002; Fudge and Cossman 2002; Haraway, 1991; Harder 2003,). Harris’ neoliberal strategy of depoliticization involved ridding a range of goods, services and issues from the political sphere (Fudge and Cossman, 2002:22). Given these conditions, feminist activists have in some respects “shifted from a sustained critique of the state to just trying to hold onto what remains of the welfare state support system” (Morrow et al., 2004:371). This reality is clearly evident in the women’s “we survived” narratives.

Many feminists spoke of success in terms of “holding their own” and standing, not losing their ground. Some feminists made a point of taking credit for not giving in and or limiting the concessions made during the Harris years. As one anti-violence activist put it, in addition to surviving the Harris years, there were also small gains made and these gains were important in fuelling further organizing:

Success for me would be that we outlast the ideology of this government, that we don’t lose ground in a climate of backlash. It’s been extremely difficult to move forward, not impossible, but difficult. And many of us have worked very hard to make sure we don’t go backwards. There’s been some progress, in spite of government. The fact that we have made some gains and we haven’t been thrown back, is a success. We hold ground minimally and try to keep inching forward (Executive Director and Anti-Violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

Here it is worth noting how elements of the “we survived” storyline helped keep the

possibility of making progressive change alive.

The executive director of OAITH, Eileen Morrow, suggested OAITH was successful in maintaining a similar “holding pattern”. While she admitted that OAITH often found itself in a losing position, she was also adamant that OAITH had been of the most vocal voices to speak out against Harris’ agenda – evidence of the “we kept our voice” narrative. She was proud of OAITH’s firm stance. She also articulated the “we lost” narrative, but couched within it was a thread of the “we kept our voice” or “we maintained our voice” narrative and that some of those losses served to spur further action:

I think we’re still in a losing position, but OAITH has been very successful in holding our own. And at the very beginning, when things were really bad, we were one of the strongest voices actually speaking in the media and publicly confronting the government. When they take your money, there’s not a helluva a lot more they can do to you, is there? So that was a mistake taking all our funding, because there was nothing more they could do to OAITH. We did speak out ‘cause we had nothing to lose (Eileen Morrow, OAITH, Toronto, 2002).

The Harris government attempted to remove the issue of violence against women from the political and public realm by silencing and defunding feminist organizations, including OAITH. The cutbacks to women’s groups and services put increased pressure on activists to narrow their focus on addressing women’s basic needs. Feminist activists struggled to meet these needs which limited the time and energy they had to devote to structural issues and strategic resistance. As a one socialist feminist commented, “it takes so much energy just to keep treading water” (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002). According to Morrow et al. (2004:371) “effectively feminists are forced to focus on narrow strategies at the expense of broader reforms that may further threaten hard won

state supports” (Morrow et al., 2004:371). Thus, Cindy Cowan of Nellie’s summed up her sense of feminist success in terms of doing anti-violence work as follows, “We’re still going. Our programs are still going...I don’t think we have found any solutions for dealing with the impact of the Harris cuts. What we’ve had is incredible determination to out survive him”, characteristic again of the “we survived” success story.

To be clear, it is not my intent to imply that feminists and feminist organizations are somehow different from other social movement organizations (SMOs) in this regard. Nor am I suggesting that feminist’s experiences are unique in this respect. Rather, I suspect that most social movements and social movement organizations experience similar difficulties when trying to meet the day to day needs of their members and to ensure their organizational survival. As a result, SMOs ability to provide large scale solutions to long standing structural issues may be compromised, tempered or “narrowed” given the realities of organizational maintenance in a less than supportive climate.

While the energies of women engaged in anti-violence work were (re)focused on meeting women’s most basic needs, union feminists often found themselves fighting for the same things over and over again. Medicare, child care, employment and equity issues for example, are historic wins almost all union feminists argued had to be continually and relentlessly defended. It is an ongoing struggle, as another woman remarked, “You never win any battle. You have to be vigilant about it. We would lose what we’ve already gained, if we weren’t vigilant about it.” Union feminists tended to contextualize these ongoing fight backs as part of organized labour’s historical struggles with management. Labour activist, Linda Tourney, co-chair of the Toronto Days of Action Committee,

believed that union feminist success was something difficult to quantify, but that women's participation in the fight back was meaningful. Fighting back made a difference, she indicated, because it would be hard to imagine what would have otherwise been lost. From a working class, socialist feminist perspective, her version of the "we survived" narrative included the observation that survival meant continuing to fight the ongoing fight, and that working class women's active participation in the fight (aside from whether the fight was successful or not) was of the utmost importance:

One of the things that's hard to measure, what did we lose, what did we gain? What did fighting mean? We don't know what we would have lost, if we hadn't fought. And in some sense, this is not any different than our entire history. If you look back over the history of the labour movement, it's been a long series of fighting over and over again for the same things. . . (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

Union feminists take on the "we survived" story speaks to a history of survival, given that one of Harris' major goals was to undercut the bargaining power of workers (Watson, 1997:134). As Watson (1997) notes, this was evidenced in the repeal of Bill 40 (the NDP amended Ontario Labour Relations Act) and the institution of Bill 7 (the Labour Relations Employment Statuses Law Amendment Act) in 1995 (Watson, 1997:134). Employment equity legislation was also revoked (Watson, 1997:134). Given this anti-labour, anti-equity climate, union feminists often related their accomplishments to success at the negotiating table as a result of collective bargaining. Local's victories were characterized as "really important and significant." For instance, a CUPE public service worker and union steward talked about the struggle her local engaged in to avoid making concessions at the bargaining table and the importance of protecting the local's seniority clause. She remarked:

...we've had major victories at the negotiating table. We really only made one concession, although it was a really big one, but they would have gutted everything our union has fought for over the last 20 years and we didn't allow that to happen. We got wage parity. We protected our seniority clause, which is the whole backbone of the union. If that was gone, we may as well fold up shop and leave town if we hadn't protected that. And that's what they wanted. The main thing they wanted was the seniority clause. They didn't get it (CUPE Socialist Feminist Activist, Hamilton, 2002).

To an extent, union feminists felt that they were able to somewhat lessen the impact of Harris' neoliberal privatizing strategies. Many talked about success in terms of "slowing Harris down", and, like anti-violence feminists, minimizing organizational concessions. However, unlike anti-violence activists, union feminists were apt to credit, in part, the Days of Action for slowing Harris down and getting him to back off. As Linda Tourney recalled "we survived" and made some gains ("we made some minor gains" narrative), particularly in terms of getting people, some of whom had not been previously involved, in mass protest as a form of direct action:

I think [the Days of Action] slowed him down. We'll never have proof of that. Harris came across as so cold, arrogant, uncaring, and unfeeling, but the Days of Action slowed that down a bit 'cause it did force some people to think. . .I mean there were people who were out there protesting for the first time. Many people came to one or more of the protests of the Days of Action for the first time and were amazed (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

This participation maybe interpreted not only as a means of survival and/or slowing Harris down, but also a win that bolstered direct action as a strategy of socialist feminist resistance.

Similarly, Peggy Nash of the CAW commented on how union feminists came to define what success meant in their own terms. In her view, success involved acknowledging that women's involvement in union organizing had the power to make a

difference. Fighting back had the potential to strengthen and solidify internal union structures and temper or “slow” the impact of government restructuring on working people. She believed this was something union women could be proud of. In addition to slowing them down, she noted how participation in protests or fight backs like the DOA had the potential to reaffirm or improve certain organizational structures (in this case, unions and committees). She argued that we must not to overlook the capacity building that occurs as part of these fight backs, regardless of outcome, because this capacity can then be used to rebound and to build upon in the future⁶⁴. Again, this capacity building possibility is positively interpreted as a gain. She said:

If all you do is slow them down, in this kind of situation, sometimes you have to give yourself credit for having done that. You know a slogan that we use in our union is, ‘fighting back makes a difference.’ If you don’t fight, you can’t win. It doesn’t mean you always win, but if you don’t fight, you can’t win. And clearly under this Conservative government, it has been one long fight back. A victory has been we got them to put the brakes on. We got them to back away from something. It’s tough to imagine right wing ideologues suddenly changing their stripes and becoming a pro-feminist government. You have to define what victory is. If victory is, you get them to restore some funding for anti-violence programs; I’d say that’s a victory. If you get them to admit there’s a problem in education, I would say o.k., let’s give ourselves some credit. That’s all you can do in this period is slow them down, ideally stop them and build your own capacity and maintain your structure. This too shall pass. And when it does, you have the ability to rebound (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

A CUPE public service worker agreed. While the fight back continued, she took immense pride in the work being done by union women to soften the blow of the changes that occurred as a result of Harris’ restructuring. She had faith in her union and in women’s committees’ ability to lessen the impact of these changes. She recalled:

⁶⁴ And this is a key question for today: what is the state of feminist organizations some ten years later? And one that as I note in following concluding chapter begs further research.

Harris made changes, but we were together as women and could lobby. How can you feel frustrated? We knew that CUPE was going to get the work done (laugh). We knew he took measures from the pay equity legislation. He gutted it, but we knew that the unions were going to get together and fight it and the struggle still continues in the 10th month on the 10th day in the year 2002. I don't think we have lost the fight. The women's committee continues to do the work, to make the changes not as severe as he intended it to be (CUPE Activist, Hamilton, 2002).

The women's narratives further suggest that feminist organizations and activists withstood the 'transformation of governance' in Harris' Ontario and that some activists and organizations were also strengthened by their experiences. That as a result of these fight backs, organizational strengths, supports and capacities were either identified or made stronger. Cheryl Hyde's (1995) research on feminist organizations and the rise of the New Right in the United States in the 1980's suggests that amidst external attacks, feminist organizations have been strengthened through engaging in the process of organized resistance. She argues some organizations have been effective in that they used the presence of the New Right to "extend an activist stance within their communities, a stance that also facilitates their survival" (1995:320). The women's narratives analysed here suggest that some feminists made the commitment to work harder, smarter and stronger. As a result of the Harris government, some feminist's relations with their allies were strengthened and this helped them hold their ground, which had potentially positive implications for future organizing.

The executive director of SACHA reflected on feminist resiliency when faced with assessing the huge losses. She noted the losses incurred, but also the "gains" made during this time period, gains that served to reinforce organizational structures and feminist intersectional organizational practices:

They've rolled back a lot of gains and it will take us a lot of time to regroup and recuperate some of those gains. And because women are women and feminists are feminists, in spite of them, I think in some ways we've gotten smarter and stronger. On a bad day I think this is horrible, but on a good day I think as a result of the Harris government, we've worked harder to identify our allies, and that has been really important in the long run. And we just held our ground the best we could. I wish sometimes we were louder. On the other hand, in many ways we have gotten stronger and smarter. They didn't get rid of us. They won't. They aren't going to get rid of feminists. Any time you have a government like the Harris government, some people just work harder (Vilma Rossi, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

Another anti-violence feminist, Beth Jordan agreed. She spoke about the positive outcomes attributed toward the implementation of an intersectional approach as noted in this “we gained” narrative. She suggested that the Harris years strengthened feminists resolve, a “gain” in terms of making inroads for instituting a more integrated intersectional approach to anti-violence work:

It's made us stronger. It's really shown us that we have to come together in coalition and committee and work together to take this on. We cannot allow the tactic of divide and conquer to work anymore. It's been too effective. I've recommitted to try and continue this work and other folks have as well (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Peggy Nash also commented on the noticeable expansion of socialist feminist organizing within the CAW as an inadvertent, but welcomed “gain”. She admitted that much work remains to be done, but that the sustained attack on organized labour during the Harris years (perhaps unintentionally) resulted in creating new spaces for women's political action on the left. She was optimistic about the CAW's ability to get more people involved in the electoral process. She remarked:

It is ironic in a way. I hadn't thought about it, but I see all women's structures internally as really stronger over the last decade in spite of, maybe because of this external attack. I see our women's organizing as really expanding. . . And I see these structures as growing, as legitimate, as having space and we have so many

women. I don't want to overstate it, because we have a lot of work to do. . . The right has created a tremendous potential for organizing in new ways on the left. . . I think this has created a potential for us to do new kinds of organizing. But I don't want to look at that through rose-coloured glasses, but. . . (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

Finally, feminists in all sectors were apt to conceive of success in terms of “small victories” and “partial wins”. While these victories may have been small or “narrowed”, they were nonetheless important. These gains served as a constant reminder that feminists have succeeded in moving or “inching” forward, however slowly. Beth Jordan, the executive director of the Assaulted Women’s Helpline, reflected on the importance of these victories and the role these “wins” played in supporting feminist’s ongoing struggle for systemic social change. She said:

We've been taking calls from all over the province for years without adequate resources. And now that we can, it's been incredible and that's a good thing. We've had small victories, but until we actually start to see doing what's right for all people, not just what's right for big business and the pursuit of the almighty dollar, we truly are not going to have the wins that have a long term a systemic impact on women. Direct service is not going to have a long term systemic impact on women's equality rights. The long term systemic impacts are social supports, access to affordable housing, universal childcare, a gendered analysis of violence. Those are the things that we have to continue to work towards. . . So these are minor victories (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women’s Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Likewise a union staff member commented on how most “minor victories” or “wins” are “partial”. She suggested that “you give something and you don’t always win, but you have to feel that at least, maybe, maybe you did win, but maybe it was a partial win. Most of all wins are partial” (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002). And another union activist noted how “partial wins” are noteworthy in the sense that they can have an unintended, positive impact on feminist organizational structures and praxis. She

observed:

Partial wins . . . when people define success as being able to win change, the winning of the change may not be for the people it was originally focused on. Sometimes the change is you or your organization and that's good. And partial success, there were several successes, but few and far between and behind the scenes (Carrol-Anne Seceviour, OFL, Toronto, 2002).

The value of these impacts on structures and praxis in relation to furthering future organizing should not be overlooked, nor should be they downplayed in this context. That is why, again I take issue with Staggenborg's (1995) earlier notion, that feminist success need be intentional. Some of the unintentional successes that occurred in this time frame reflect feminists learning by doing and not only the different definitions of, but diverse paths towards success.

An important pattern thus emerges from these women's narratives. While some women were unsure if they had any impact at all on government, others expressed feelings of failure and regret, especially given the toll the Harris years had on women's everyday lives. These stories are best reflected in what I have termed the "we lost" narrative. However some women committed to working harder and stronger. While many feminist activists generally conceived of the Harris years in a negative light, most argued that there were snippets of success to be had between 1995 and 2001. There were "small victories" and "partial wins". Most feminists were able to identify at least one positive accomplishment on the part of feminists between 1995 and 2001 and however hard those years had been, most were relieved to have outlasted the government – as evidenced in the "we survived" narrative. Thus, I would argue that feminist organizations and activists did more than hold their ground during the Harris years: there have been

some positive changes though largely at the local or micro level. Feminist resistance and success is apparent, but large scale, structural change remains elusive. Feminist attempts to eliminate violence against women, racism, discrimination and capitalist agendas have not been successful. The resonance with seemingly unsympathetic publics (including mainstream media, politicians and voters) has not been very wide. Nor in my view, have their attempts to convince the general public that the elimination of these social problems is in society's best interest. Rather, feminist organizations and activists intent on ensuring equality for all women have continued to challenge existing social inequalities and to provide an alternative view of the social world, even as the social order itself has been transformed over time.

The most widely cited gains relate to feminist resistance mounted within the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group (CSVAWSG) and the Days of Action. Recall from an earlier discussion in Chapter Five that in the wake of a number of violent murders of women at the hands of their abusive male (ex)partners during the summer of 2000, the CSVAWSG responded by amassing a large number of women's, community, labour, and social justice groups to resist Harris' "law and order agenda" and the neoliberal government's strategy of divide and conquer. The coalition successfully organized across the intersections of difference and diversity and across social issues and inequalities. Feminists of all stripes who participated in the group were quick to point to the group as a measure of a successful strategy. However, given the lack of sustainability of coalition work, some feminists also questioned the long term effectiveness of the strategy.

Successful resistance was also mounted by working class, socialist feminist participation in the Days of Action campaign. In particular, one of the Metro-Toronto co-chairs believed that this strategy was successful in that it (1) refocused attention on people's democratic right to participate in protest (2) raised an awareness around work and labour issues by opening and providing a forum for debate and discussion, created dialogue, initiated discourse and a deeper understanding of political and economic issues (3) provided a sense of hope and sustained activists, was reinvigorating and the (4) coalition brought labour and community groups together to build bridges across sectors and organizations and fostered links/liaisons between labour and community groups. But the strategy was also limited in the view of some working class women and labour activists, not because it failed to get the Harris government to resign, in fact that was never the intent. As one woman remarked "we never once thought that what we were going to shut down the government," but rather because it did not fully realize the potential of a province wide shut down. It did not bring to fruition an organized mass withdrawal of working class labour power. Nor did it provoke a large scale "political crises" that some union officials, women included, hoped would translate into greater electoral support for the NDP⁶⁵. Thus the effectiveness of these two specific strategies of feminist resistance is the focus of the following discussion of "feminist success stories" (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999).

⁶⁵As Storey (2011) has noted given the results of the most recent federal election (May 2011) it would be interesting to know if Quebec feminists take any credit for the success of the NDP (or the "orange crush" as it was termed) in their province.

**“Feminist Success Stories” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999):
The CSVAWSG**

The issue of violence against women was the central concern or “bridge issue” of the CSVAWSG (recall earlier discussions in Chapters Four and Five). Spearheaded by an anti-violence and community based coalition, the Cross Sectoral Violence Against Women Strategy Group mounted resistance to the Harris government’s funding and social service cuts. The coalition brought on board over 160 anti-violence organizations, union, community, and social justice groups with a vested interest in women’s equality issues. It was perceived to be successful on a number of fronts by women in different organizational sectors. An important question then is, did the strategy succeed in advancing feminists agendas and feminist goals?

Feminist activists in all sectors believed the strategy produced some positive feminist outcomes. As a “united front” the coalition exemplified feminist awareness of the importance of the motto “knowing thy strategy” and “know[ing] the other side’s strategy” (Bashevkin, 1998:242). Conservative governments and right wing politicians “can be very adept at using divide-and-conquer tactics to their advantage” (Bashevkin, 1998:242). By working together to bring a number of diverse groups and organizations on board, feminists involved in the CSVAWSG made a concerted attempt to avoid the “divide and conquer” tactic of the Harris government. The Harris government attempted to silence its critics and turn its critics against each other by defunding and undermining feminist advocacy. The coalition tried to not let this happen. The coalition, as various participants argued, was strengthened by the knowledge imparted by its diverse membership. They maintained the coalition captured this knowledge and used it to its

advantage. The strategy advocated mass based social and economic changes across race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, and as well organizational and regional lines. It was organized across the intersections of race, gender, and class. Documentary sources (see <http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>.) clearly suggest it reflected feminist organizations and activists attempt to rethink how they organize, particularly with respect to the ideas of difference, diversity and the interconnection of social inequalities in that it aimed for participant representation in three important arenas including: regional representation; representation from all key sectors including for example, health, education, and organized labour; and representation from immigrant, refugee and disabled communities where women often experience “multiple barriers to inclusion” (<http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>).

The coalition recognized the vulnerability of the government on the issue of violence against women and attempted to capitalize on it. A founding member of the coalition, Beth Jordan, observed:

[t]he cross-sectoral strategy is something that I am intensely proud to be a part of and I admire the women that came to that table. I've learned a lot. We've all learned a lot. The way we were able to work together across sectors, across constituencies, we're talking everything from French language services to First Nations communities. Women made some serious concessions to participate in this work. I think the whole strategy around finding the commonalities across our sectors is an excellent strategy and an excellent way to work and it's been very effective because it eliminates the divide and conquer crap that they've been so successful in doing. When they see a united front, they don't quite know what to do with that, and that's our strength. Its strength of knowledge, when you have that much knowledge at a table, you can make sound arguments. And that's where we had small victories (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

We may also see the value in reading the “lessons learned” (Strobel, 1995) or the

“learning” that occurred as a result of participating in coalition based opposition as a win in favour of groups working towards a more intersectional approach to feminist organizing. Granted coalition work is not entirely problematic, but in the climate of the day, learning through doing tied to the principles of intersectionality may too may be interpreted as a meaningful thread woven in the “we gained” narrative.

A number of “small victories” have been directly related to the coalition’s work and are concretely evidenced as part of the “we gained” narrative. Feminists in the anti-violence sector attributed: increased funding for shelter beds; a commitment of \$10 million dollars in new money for transitional support workers; program development for children who witness violence; and the Assaulted Women’s Helpline going province wide to provide service to women in over 150⁶⁶ languages to the concerted efforts of the CSAWSG (<http://www.awhl.org/about/mission-vision/>). In a sector that had experienced drastic funding cuts, new funding for shelter workers and programs was considered to be “important funding”. The coalition also attracted media attention, which according to participants, served to keep the issue of violence against women alive in the public mind. It succeeded in keeping the issue of violence against women “on the radar” so to speak. The coalition served to (re)politicize the issue of violence against women during the Harris years. Many of the women I spoke to believed that the coalition managed to effectively seize a moment in time when the people of Ontario were really focused on the murders of the summer of 2000. The coalition, according to founding member Eileen Morrow, “just kept the heat on them so that they had to do something.”

⁶⁶ Today the AWHL provides services in 154 languages, see <http://www.awhl.org/about/mission-vision/>

They believed the timing was right; the media were “hot”. There was a sense of urgency and momentum began to build.

Further, that the then two opposition leaders, Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty and NDP leader Howard Hampton signed on to the emergency measures document was also considered a success. Having brought the opposition leaders on board was no small feat and their endorsement represented an opportunity to build on the work of the coalition in the future. One of the organizing members remembered how the group displayed Hampton and McGuinty’s signatures on a placard, while noting no commitment from the Harris government. “All parties signed on to the principles of the piece - all except the Conservative government in power” (<http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>). These publicly made, political endorsements were perceived to be significant because they represented future commitments from party leaders to the deal with the issue of violence against women and, for example, to review welfare rates. Many feminists also believed that as result of the CSVAWSG they were better positioned to take future action in the arena of electoral process, and I would add on the policy front as well, particularly given their demands to restore social assistance rates in Ontario.

The executive director of METRAC, Pam Cross vividly recalled how the momentum generated by the coalition resulted in a number of notable wins. It also set the stage for future “gains”, reflective of the “building for the future” theme I noted at the outset of the Chapter:

. . .the cross-sectoral work was successful on a number of fronts. The media were really interested in what we were doing, so it allowed us to keep the issue of murdered women in front of the public, which is massively important because without a profound public understanding of this issue, nothing is ever going to

change. . . We were polite and professional, but we weren't going away. We were loud. We were well organized and we knew what we were talking about. We were able to back everything we said up with evidence. We had great financial information about what different things would cost and where they could get money from. So there were absolutely positive feminist outcomes from that. A huge increase in the number of shelter beds, the province-wide expansion of the assaulted women's helpline. I think at the time, the government thought they were buying us off, but it didn't work. We got a chunk of money to reproduce and widely distribute public education materials on violence against women. They had cut the funding to a number of women's centres and after our initial lobby around these 39 measures, we just kept being in their face, and we've been back a number of times for media conferences. They threatened, or they did pull the funding for a number of women's centres. We immediately went back to Queen's Park for a press conference. Funding was restored. There's a fairly lengthy list. I mean, the big ticket items, not at all. We asked for pre-Harris social assistance rates to be restored, of course, that didn't happen, but what we did get was a signed document by the Liberals or NDP saying that if they were in power, they would do that. Eventually there will be an election and it's possible that the Tories will lose. Whichever party wins, we have somewhere to start with them right off the bat, and you signed a document saying you'd increase social assistance levels by x %. Do it. It's been a really useful tool or strategy in more than one way 'cause we now have something that we can hold the other two parties accountable (Executive Director, METRAC, Toronto, 2002).

Service expansion and public endorsements were viewed as feminist successes and reflect the importance of creating future opportunities for further feminist activism. Having opposition party leaders sign on to the Strategy's declarations was meaningful because, if and when they were to form the future government, this public declaration was understood as a means of holding them accountable for raising the issues related to violence against women alongside other social justice issues (e.g. housing, welfare, childcare etc.) in the provincial legislature⁶⁷. Still these achievements fall short of the long list of demands originally outlined in the Group's 39 measure policy document and

⁶⁷ Whether Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Government has made good on these promises, I think still needs to be researched. I suspect that the McGuinty Liberal's may also be reluctant to move on some of the coalitions' "big ticket items" as evidenced in their not restoring welfare rates to pre-1995 levels. So more comparative data on the Harris and McGuinty years would likely contextualize the impact of these feminist successes.

again, I would argue reflect Epstein's (2002) notion of a "narrowed victory". The opposition parties appear to have signed onto some of the Group's "least threatening demands" (Epstein, 2002:121) and holding them politically accountable to these endorsements largely remains to be seen.

The success of the strategy was also tied to the fact that the coalition focused its efforts on a particular issue (violence against women), put together a strong policy document, and was cross sectoral in nature. All of the feminists who participated in the coalition believed that the group was successful because it was cross sectoral. The coalition brought diverse groups, from a number of organizational sectors on board and a number of different groups were involved in drafting the policy document. This document included a number of recommendations that addressed core issues that activists in a number of arenas could support and use. For example, it included recommendations related to housing and poverty, in order to illustrate how these issues impact women's experiences of abuse. Collectively developed by the group, the document required policy makers to think "beyond women's services" and to recognize the concrete needs of women in general (<http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>). It attempted to reinsert into social policy discussions, a feminist account of the structural conditions that contribute to women's vulnerability to abuse. It advocated a more holistic and comprehensive approach while recognizing the social and economic supports necessary for ending violence (<http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>). As a result, the group believed it had the power to impact public policy makers and inform policy discussions. The executive director of Nellie's, Cindy Cowan noted:

It was an excellent piece. It was effective because it was cross-sectoral. It brought in unions, it brought in everybody across the board, and to come together, sit around a table and try to work on a specific issue. . .it was because of the strength of the document. We had a good strong document we could agree upon, and we could take out and do particular strategies or actions that would force discussion, force people to start talking and it was a wonderful experience. . .[it was] the one strategy that has moved the government, that has moved and shifted public policy discussions. I don't know about other actions. That was why this was so invigorating, being involved in this, because it actually was a strategy (Cindy Cowan, Nellie's, Toronto, 2002).

The then executive director of SACHA, Vilma Rossi expressed similar feelings. She noted the profound impact that the emergency measures document had on bureaucrats she interacted with. Another “small win” was tied to the belief that the work of the coalition “moved people” or shifted their thinking:

I had never been involved in the development of that kind of document [cross sectoral emergency measures document] before. It was a brilliant strategy. Its brilliance was that it was cross sectoral, more than a hundred and sixty diverse groups signed on. . .We were successful in getting Howard Hampton and Dalton McGuinty to sign on to a declaration of commitment that they would implement emergency measures that would alleviate the situation for women in the province of Ontario. The Harris government did not sign on, but the nonetheless that was a really important a process, and it did end up with the Tory government taking some steps that we believe were as a direct result of Cross-sectoral Anti-violence Against Women Strategy and I've had conversations with bureaucrats in the government that said that that document shook them up (Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002).

According to Harder (2003:137) several factors are crucial when it comes to achieving success under neoliberalism. She argues these include access to resources, providing a needed service and a clear focus both of which she believes are important in order for feminists to maintain interest and support, complimented by the strategic versus universal deployment of radicality (2003:137). What these women's stories suggest is that their ability to come together as a united, diverse and knowledgeable group meant

that they had access to a pool of activists and volunteers who were committed to working collaboratively in coalition. The focus was clear-cut: what can be done collectively to help end violence against women. “The fact that a group was willing to organize and engage, and fight back across sectors was critical. We have more allies and are better placed to take action depending on what happens in terms of the next election” (Executive Director, SACHA, Hamilton, 2002). This sentiment echoes the idea that while to outsiders the coalition may appear to have accomplished little, for those involved, it provided a point of entry into the political realm and a collective opportunity to move the issue of violence against women forward come election time.

The coalition also helped solidify the idea that for feminists to be effective “we really have to look at how we do that, get into coalitions, build allegiances, so that we have more resources, and more capacity to respond” (Cindy Cowan, Nellie’s, Toronto, 2002). For many feminists, participation in the coalition was a personally and professionally rewarding experience. It was an invigorating and valuable learning experience. As Beth Jordan recalled it was an ideological victory as well, and this was perceived as a “win”:

Everybody worked really hard. There was a sense of urgency, that now was the time. The timing was good. The media was hot. We had our research ready. We had excellent strategists at the table. We all got caught up in the momentum of it and there was an energy which felt good for a change. To make them run a little bit, to throw them off balance. They may not have given us everything that we wanted, but they failed to poke holes in our strategy. They failed to poke holes in our requests and our demands, and they failed to tell us why they couldn’t do what we wanted them to do and why they shouldn’t. And for me, that’s a victory (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women’s Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

Moreover, the CSVAWSG’s focus on a particular issue, violence against women,

aided them in their challenge of Harris' law and order agenda. The group's "Emergency Measures" policy document (2000) was keenly aware that housing, social assistance and poverty were important in the fight to end violence against women. The issues were strategically related to eradicating violence which remained the collective focus. The coalition was also aided by the fact that timing and public sentiment were on their side, and, as such, the group was able to garner some public support as a result of its strategic stance. Given the shift in the socio-political climate, there was a recognition that strategic responses needed to move as well (Sudbury, 1998). In the words of one woman: "it's a different climate and things have shifted so dramatically, that the responses also have to shift dramatically (Cindy Cowan, Nellie's, Toronto, 2002).

This is not to suggest that the CSVAWSG succeeded in the larger sense. Eliminating violence against women is an ongoing issue. Much of the work of the coalition remained to be realized and there was a collective sense that many feminists were unsure about what was going to happen in the province. The Harris government was not seen to have moved on any of the "big ticket issues", rather many believed they moved on things that would not cost them a lot of money. For example, one activist noted how their success was limited in the sense that the government failed to repeal the cuts to social assistance. In this respect, the strategy did not succeed in terms of achieving large scale policy change, such as the restoration of welfare rates and funding for second stage housing. She maintained:

We've had limited success. What the government has done is adopt some of the steps and nothing that costs any money. They certainly have not repealed the cut back on welfare or anything like that, but we continue to press, that's what the group does. I think it's an effective way. It's certainly gotten some things, more

than anybody else probably has gotten out of the government on issues of violence against women. So that's effective (Feminist Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Other women concurred, while the coalition was successful on some fronts, the “wins” were not always in the areas feminists would have liked to have seen them. Still she noted, that as a result of the CSVAWSG, the government was forced to respond, which was interpreted as a “win”. She said:

They were falling all over themselves, trying to respond and there were some wins. Now the wins weren't in the places I would have liked to have seen them. There's been no change to social support. There's been no change to housing. There's been very little in terms of legal aid. But in terms of direct service, we got the shelters, we got the crisis line. We didn't get second stage housing. We got translation services in the north. Two women's centres that were on the chopping block were spared. So there were some wins and there continue to be wins, because we continue to meet. We pushed the strategy forward (Beth Jordan, Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Toronto, 2002).

These findings suggest that women and feminists in different organizational sectors often find themselves in a contradictory situation. As a result of their activism, modest progress may have been made, but numerous problems remain (MacKinnon et al., 2006:7). The losses due to “social policy by stealth” (Gray/Battle, 1990) meant that many Ontario women's day to day lives got harder. Social assistance rates were still low, the lack of affordable housing and social housing, the lack of access to quality child care spaces and child care subsidies and the end of employment equity continued to impact women's daily lives. While feminist organizational leaders engaged in anti-violence, anti-racist and labour unions maintained that outlasting the ideology of Harris government and surviving this harsh “transformation of governance” (Harder, 2003) reflected the determination and ability of feminist organizations to withstand major social policy changes, at the same time, recall from Chapter Four that many of the women I

interviewed also spoke about the long term impact the Harris years have had and will have on women's equality and the lack of necessary resources to address the immediacies of women's day to day condition. Even women in the anti-violence sector who felt that they had been marginally successful in terms of "keeping the [shelter] doors open" noted that that in many instances, the day to day lives of women had worsened as a result of the Harris years. For instance, anti-violence organizations continue to be overwhelmed by funding challenges, but they also managed to survive and are still helping women experiencing violence. Similarly, an anti-violence activist working with Aboriginal women in Manitoba suggested "funders just want to know how many women we are providing service to and the outcomes of that service. What they don't take into consideration is the broader effects of these women's healing. The changes that result for their children, their families and the broader community" (as cited by MacKinnon et al., 2006:71).

Another contradiction relates to the sustainability of the coalition as a successful strategy. According to Staggenborg (1986), there are obstacles involved in coalition maintenance (as cited by Arnold, 1995:277). One woman, who believed that the strategy was effective, also questioned its long term viability, largely because coalition work tends to involve great effort and commitment. As Cindy Cowan observed:

Trying to maintain a presence, even after the actions were done. . .we did this with some success, with some visible success in the [cross sectoral] campaign, but it remains to be seen. Are we going to be successful? It was a huge amount of work and a huge amount of commitment by a number of people, so it'll be interesting to see now whether or not we can take that and move with that, and do another kind of successful campaign. . .It's been difficult. During the Harris years, we saw some active resistance but then what happened afterwards? Groups have started, but they had no impact, no impact. . .the government pushes a crisis, the

community sector reacts and can't sustain. The community sector goes away and the people at the receiving end of the politics continue to get kicked in the head (Cindy Cowan, Nellie's, Toronto, 2002).

What Cowan's comments suggest, is that campaigns such as this are often difficult to sustain which is problematic in the sense that coalitional strategies, to use Ralph's (1997:178) words "do not define a strategy to win power as opposed to concessions." Still, almost all of the feminists in this study believed that the strategy did succeed in putting forth a proactive, feminist based agenda and due to the success of the emergency measures campaign, the group was formalized in March 2003 (<http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>). The group envisioned building a long term province wide cross sectoral network designed to share information, increase awareness and (re)politicize the issue of violence against women (<http://dawn.thot.net/csvaw/who.html>)

The majority of anti-violence feminist narratives tended to focus on the positives of coalition building – their narratives, aside from some of the aforementioned difficulties in finding "common ground", tended not to address the problems in maintaining coalitions, working across racial and class divides, and the sustainability or the short livedness of such coalitions. While the strategy made some progress and realized some positive feminist outcomes, numerous problems and challenges still exist. Organizing across the boundaries of race and class, for example, was largely not problematized in relation to the coalition. The women involved seemed to believe that their cross sectoral attempt at coalition building had been a success. Their stories reveal less about the role of racial and class tensions in women's coalitional organizing. Some of the existing literature suggests that transcending these boundaries remains an ongoing issue with

respect to women's organizing. Flynn (1998:145) notes that feminist alliances and coalitions will likely fail if they neglect to acknowledge the intersection of race and class in black women's lives and advance white, middle class women's causes at the expense of black women. For example, Sudbury's (1998:221) research on coalitions between black and white women's organizations shows that working in coalition may provide access to greater resources, information, networks, lobbying power and media attention, but she also offers a word of caution, namely that it would be naive to assume that "close working relationships or 'unity'" will necessarily be the end result.

The Days of Action – Opening Spaces to Further the Struggle

It depends on how you define success. A lot of people define success as Harris backing off, when in fact he never did or very rarely did. I say successful, because we generated a whole new level or a renewal in activism. It's a renewal that's going on (Carrol-Anne Seceviour, OFL, Toronto, 2002).

We did back off the government on some stuff. But I'll bet you we would not be where we are today, in terms of how much we have to regain, we would be much further back if we hadn't had the Days of Action (Linda Tourney, Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

As Naples (1998:8) suggests, feminist sociological analyses of women's activism are important in that they provide insight into women's politicization and engagement in historical struggles. Another feminist success story relates to feminist activists, especially union feminists participation in The Days of Action (DOA). The Days of Action were perceived on the part of union feminists as a successful, albeit limited strategy. The stories they shared with me are peppered with narratives of "wins", "losses" and of "opening spaces" that they believe created opportunities for situating future activism.

The DOA as an example of feminist resistance was successful in that it was a

strategy that represented a creative, militant response to the Harris government, one that expressed the will of rank and file union members. Many feminist activists believe they would have lost far more if it were not for the Days of Action. The narratives of working class women suggest that the DOA created a sense of enthusiasm; that it was a reinvigorating and an exciting time for the labour movement in Ontario. The DOA was a public display of working people's solidarity. As a collective strategy, it countered some activists' feelings of 'loneliness' and disconnectedness. The DOA made working people realize that they were not alone in the struggle against right wing corporate power. It fostered connections and relationships among those groups with a vested interest in social justice issues. In this respect, as Kim Moody (1997:20) writes "the spirit of unity in the streets [was] strong medicine."

As mentioned, a "renewal" in political activism and a sense of new energy were characteristic of union feminists' understanding of the success of the Days of Action. In their minds, the DOA served to politicize people and resulted in some important "gains", although perhaps not in ways labour studies scholars might generally assume. As a strategy it "woke people up" and or "fired people up", "the fact that they've been so blatant in their cutting, has actually made people wake up. And I think that's a good thing. And I am really encouraged by seeing groups come together" (GTA Steelworkers Activist, Toronto, 2002). Not only did the DOA politicize people on a personal level, but many union feminists felt that it increased the level of public awareness and political consciousness. People got involved in unions and workplaces, some for the first time, and the morale of organized labour improved (engaging and motivating supporters) can

be read as a win in the traditional sense.

In Chapter Five, I contended that on their own, direct action tactics may appear to achieve very little, when in fact, they may be successful in creating “new openings” (Rebick, 2003) for equality seeking groups to engage in more reformist or defensive tactics. Building on this argument, one could read the women’s narratives relating to the DOA in a similar fashion. I would be hard pressed to not mention, that in addition to the gains noted above, that the DOA was a successful strategy because (as the women’s narratives attest), it carved out or “opened up spaces”, e.g. political, organizational and social spaces for working class, socialist feminists to not only situate their resistance, but also “new openings” for the articulation and narration of gender and class based equality rights. In this way, one could argue the DOA opened social spaces and prompted a renewed interest in dialogues that challenged the dominant, neoliberal discourse, “we are all equal now” (Brodie, 2008).

This sense of increased awareness was evident in the narrative of Linda Tourney. As one of the co-chairs of the Metro Days of Action Committee, she recalled how the Days of Action sparked much public debate and discussion, generated a renewal in participatory democracy, and fostered a feeling of hope that helped union activists persevere during the Harris years. The DOA provided an opening for oppositional discourses to move beyond the confines of unions and the labour movement and into other arenas of everyday life. She said:

The Days of Action refocused on the rights of people to participate in ‘in the street democracy’. It raised the issue of what was happening with this government like never before. For a period of time, through the Days of Action, you couldn’t go into a coffee shop or a subway station or a bar or a work place without hearing

people talking about the Days of Action. Admittedly some people were saying 'oh what are they doing', but other people were challenging that. The point was, people were talking about it; they weren't sitting silently in their corner. They were arguing passionately about whether we had the right to do what we were doing or not; whether the Harris government was wrong; or whether the Harris government was right. The first stage to changing things is to open discourse on it. And it did that in a magnificent way. It was happening all over the city. And the third thing it did, was that it gave activists a sense of hope that they hadn't had. And I think that's what sustained them, that sustained many of our activists through the rest of Harris' reign (Linda Tournay, Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

She further believed that the coalitional nature of the Days of Action helped create “new openings” to build bridges between organized labour and community groups and that this was an important part of the process. It was a way of organizing that was new to many long-time labour activists and valuable lessons were learned as a result, especially the significance of establishing and maintaining ongoing connections with other like-minded groups positioned outside of the labour movement. This may also be interpreted as a “win” in light of the opportunities for future organizing:

It was done in coalition; it was the labour movement and community partners. It brought groups together that hadn't been together before. . . It was just a real lesson for those of us who'd never actually employed that form of organizing before. It was a wonderful response. We had a lot of learning that went on between unions and [community groups]. . . And some of those liaisons lasted well beyond, may be still going on (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

Another union staff member imparted similar views. She believed the Days of Action provided a successful model of coalition work given organized labour's history of struggle and confrontation with the state. The DOA not only represented the material basis of direct action, but it was also seen to carve out new “discursive spaces” (Cossman, 2002) and enhance dialogue among like-minded groups:

I think the Days of Action set the tone. They were an incredibly creative democratic populace, militant reaction to what the Harris government was doing in terms of walking all over equality rights, women's rights, everything progressive. It was an incredible model of a militant popular coalition. We shut down workplaces and because there had been zero dialogue up until now, if you can't sit down face to face and have a discussion, you're gonna express the will of your members somehow. It was expressed through the Days of Action. . . But it's been a history of confrontation (Peggy Nash, CAW, Toronto, 2002).

A number of the women involved in the Days of Action campaign observed how it successfully generated an enthusiasm on the part of insiders, or union members.

Carolyn Eagan, president of the USWA Local 8300 commented:

The Days of Action was successful. We connected with an awful lot of workers and we got a lot of participation. That's for sure. The success in the local campaign was very good. It created enthusiasm (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

Similarly, Linda Tourney explained how her involvement in the Days of Action served as a defining moment in her life as a long time labour activist:

It was exuberant (laugh). It's amazing and this has been an experience that's played over and over in my life, all the way through. What a good feeling it is to end up in a place with a group of like-minded people, all of whom have the same goal, even if they're so different in other ways. There's something about being with other like-minded people. You just don't feel alone any more. You feel like you're part of the bigger whole, and that's what kept happening through the Days of Action. It was so reinvigorating for all of us (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

And a CUPE healthcare worker commented:

It was exciting. It was really important to continue those kinds of links through flying squads, rank and file, labour organizing and community organizing. We have to continue to do that and that's a positive (Socialist Feminist and CUPE Healthcare Worker, Toronto, 2002).

However, a few union feminists also spoke about what they perceived to be the unrealized potential of the Days of Action, and how these newly emerging spaces,

openings or avenues of feminist resistance were to a certain extent, effectively closed off. Some, including Peggy Nash of the CAW, believed that the labour movement, together with other organizations had the potential to “provoke a political crises, which could have happened and didn’t.” Thus some women felt that the successfulness of the strategy was limited in that it did not follow through on the momentum and mobilization that it had cooperatively built. New openings facilitated by the DOA were not acted upon or there were opportunities that were perhaps wasted. Some women would have liked to have seen the strategy culminate in a provincial shut-down, and expressed misgivings that the process was stopped short. They were disappointed that the DOA did not result in a province-wide strike, whereby working people would en masse withdraw their labour for an entire work day. They attributed this to the decision on the part of union leaders who felt that the strategy was not generating greater electoral support for the NDP. The leadership, they suggested decided to refocus the efforts and resources of the labour movement and its allies in mounting an electoral challenge to defeat the Harris government. And some women felt that this was a mistake.

Carolyn Eagan, president of USWA Local 8300 recalled the groundswell of organizational support that emerged as a result of the fight back, but that this surge was not fully acted upon, and a prime opportunity to draw on the capacity being built was lost. New spaces were opened, but wasted:

[The Days of Action] was a lot of work, but it paid off. There was huge support from members and my own feeling is that we should have gone on. A momentum was really building. I had hoped that they would go on to a province-wide strike and Day of Action. The union leadership chose not to do that and I think that was unfortunate . . . they felt that the protest was not necessarily bringing greater support for the NDP. They thought we should build for the next election, try to

defeat them electorally. I think it was a mistake. If you've got a real momentum on the ground, that'll translate into electoral success as well, but if people are demobilized, if they don't have much hope for the future, if they don't think there's a possibility, they're not inspired to continue the activism, and they're less likely to be engaged and involved politically (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

Similarly, Linda Tourney reflected on labour movement leaders' unwillingness to act upon the momentum engendered by the DOA which she found troubling:

I don't think we carried it to the logical conclusion, which should have been a province-wide shut-down and it just never happened because certain players decided that this wasn't where they wanted to go. That reflects one of the ongoing tensions of the labour movement, between the two priorities of electing an NDP government and resisting the existing government. I've never quite understood why we couldn't do both, but nevertheless it really comes down to a question of resources. Some people were saying we can't afford to put resources into both so we should put it here. Other people were saying we should put it there. 'Cause it certainly is costly to put on a demonstration of that size. But not carrying it out to where it might have gone . . . I don't think that we would have gotten through 6 or 7 years of Harris without having done it (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

In this way, the DOA may be read as a strategy that was cut short and perhaps as a result of internal tensions within the labour movement itself did not result in a province wide shut-down. The opening and then closing of these social and political spaces could be interpreted as a wasted opportunity and in some cases, the union leadership was faulted for failing to capitalize on the momentum that was being generated on the part of the membership and their lack of will to move the action forward to its logical conclusion.

Writing about the Days of Action, James Turk (1997:175) notes that "the measure of success of the Days of Action is less what happens on the day than on what happens within that community afterwards in terms of working relationships among groups and group organizations and mobilizational capabilities and commitments." What these women's narratives also suggest then is, that as a strategy of resistance, the Days of

Action empowered activists by laying the groundwork to build allegiances and liaisons across issues and sectors and the possibility of building opportunities for organizing in the future. This they believed resulted in increased political activism and politicization among union and community based groups. The Days of Action also encouraged some socialist feminists to rethink how they engaged in organizational and activist practices and processes, and this re-examination facilitated the move away from single issue politics, making this fight back important for future organizing along more intersectional lines.

People learn and build political analysis through their involvement in issues and causes. The DOA opened spaces and provided individuals with on the ground opportunities for this learning to take place. As a result of their participation, people gain knowledge and grow. Reflecting on this learning process, one woman observed:

People learn political analysis as they go. People gain the political analysis after they've been involved in fighting a few causes and then start to put the global picture together. People come into movements and gain knowledge and grow as they participate. . . Those of us that have been old time activists learned a lot about organizing, and it was a learn as you go kind of experience. We learned new strategic and tactical skills. . . Others who came in as participants learned about issues, learned about other groups, learned that there were groups out there that they may not have known were out there, other people concerned about education, other people concerned about health care, other people concerned about the environment. Everybody learned (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

According to Nancy Naples (1998:346) “lessons learned” as a result of participation in feminist activism can engender broader struggles for social change. She also points out how “the challenge is to provide for the continuity of these lessons over time, especially during periods of conservative backlash” (Naples, 1998:346). The

women's narratives reveal that feminist involvement in the CSAVAW and the Days of Action were important because it created connections among organizations, facilitated linkages between issues and it encouraged groups to rethink how they organize. These two strategies raised the level of political awareness surrounding women's equality and social justice issues. The strategies reflect feminist attempts to take calls for inclusivity seriously and to bring feminist practice in line with recent theoretical developments.

But I think we also need to question to what extent the women's narratives effectively demonstrate these theoretical developments. With respect to the DOA for example, what prompted and/or why is it that these working class women's stories suggest that it was the union "leadership" or "certain players" that decided against a full scale, provincial shut down? Exactly who made that call? Who decided to pull the plug? Some of the women's narratives indicate that they thought the DOA should have been pushed forward to a province wide shut-down – so who called the shots? Certainly it wasn't the co-chair of the Metro Toronto Days of Action, or an active member of the USWA, or Peggy Nash of the CAW. Nor was it likely decided by the rank file, given the momentum these women suggest that had been building among rank and file workers. Did internal divides, power inequities, and or hierarchal gender relations with the labour movement itself, result in this shift in focus? What role did internal inequalities play in the process? Was it a case of gendered decision making or a lack of vision? Did this decision serve to reinforce the ideals of white, working class males? Would working class men involved in organized labour and the DOA necessarily make similar claims? Does this necessarily mean that the predominantly male leadership was unsympathetic to

these working women's concerns? Do these misgivings suggest that there may have been internal struggles between working class men and women, between union brothers and sisters? And lastly, it begs the question as to whether all union feminists necessarily wanted to see a province wide shut-down?

These questions seem to stem from the relationship between feminist goals and agendas and the DOA as a labour oriented strategy, but perhaps are also indicative of larger issues related to the historical relationship between unionism and feminism as documented by scholars like Sugiman (1993)⁶⁸. These issues may be related to what Peggy Nash (1998:1) views as women's involvement in "non-traditional activities" including union activities such as collective bargaining.

Further, what kind of lasting commitments emerged for feminists in community based groups as a result of the DOA? It seems to me that the DOA was still very much a labour oriented and labour driven, working class based project, which raises the question whether or not it succeeded in transgressing organizational, gendered and racial boundaries? Few, if any of the women active in other organizational sectors (including anti-violence, anti-racist and community based groups) mentioned having participated in the process. For activists and organizations positioned outside organized labour, evidence of participation and or the benefits organized feminism and anti-racism initiatives derived from this strategy are all but missing from their narrative accounts. Again this could have been as a result of the perceived riskiness of participating in such a so-called in your

⁶⁸ See for example Sugiman's (1993) historical study of women in the labour movement, "Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada 1937-1979 which documents the contradictory and "ambivalent relationship" between working class women and unions.

face, “radical” direct action tactic. That said, none that I recall, other than union feminists commented on the success of the DOA as a feminist strategy. Could these omissions possibly serve to reinforce the idea that labour organizations are still somewhat perceived to be protectionist, insular, isolationist and masculinist?

Union feminists, however, were self-critical in that they recognized that strategies of mass protest were not only difficult to sustain, but that they needed also to work on developing what one woman called “strategies of support.” She stated:

The problem is it is really hard to mobilize people to support something. With everything else that's going on in people's lives, a rally in support of something is a concept we haven't been able to wrap our minds around sufficiently to make it happen. We tend to be much better at protest than we are at supportive things. We're probably not very good at strategies of support yet (Labour Activist and Co-chair Toronto Days of Action, Toronto, 2002).

Still as Jennifer Gordon's (2005) research on organizing immigrant workers demonstrates, some strategies, including strategies such as the DOA “might be one way to jump-start and bolster collective action” (2005:296).

I am not entirely convinced that unions and community groups forged lasting allegiances as a result of the DOA. My sense is that during the Harris years, organized labour en masse for the first time, felt an increased need to engage other grassroots groups, but dare I say that their commitment and perhaps even the commitment of some socialist feminist unionists to community based feminist activism was rather short lived? And if the DOA did translate into any ongoing relationships, the women organizing in the other sectors that I interviewed neglected mentioning these new found friends and allies. I think at the end of day, the DOA did a good job of helping unions take care of their own but offered less by way of sustainable engagement with other community based groups, at

least among the feminist women involved in organizations who spoke with me. That is just my impression, I could be wrong, this is but my reading and interpretation of the stories the women recounted to me.

Granted, I may be being too hard on organized labour insofar as my problematizing labour's inability or unwillingness to move beyond its more traditional attitudes and actions (Storey, 2011). Part of my rationale in singling labour out for critique as I do, not only involves pointing out its shortfalls, but also recognizing the historical struggles of the labour movement and its ongoing attempts to be more accessible, inclusive and stronger as a result (Storey, 2011). Here again, Jennifer Gordon's recent work (2005) on sweatshops, immigrant worker centres and the making of political consciousness and Milkman et als. (2010) research on alliance and coalition work is insightful. While Milkman et als. (2010) "L.A. Model" speaks to the importance of labour partnering and partaking in community struggles to "facilitate mutual learning and synergy", Gordon's (2005) research highlights some of the issues surrounding immigrant worker centres relationships with traditional unions, issues that may parallel some of the unresolved tensions I sensed between feminists, unionists and organized labour.

According to Gordon (2005), one might readily assume there to be a certain affinity between these actors given their shared interests and concerns. But in actuality, relationships or collaborations may often be context specific and as such, the nature of these relationships remains unclear. She notes, "from the outside, unions and worker centres seem like an ideal match, and yet their collaborations have often been fraught

with tension. . . Context remains critically important; there is no blueprint for the relationship. In some settings, where the interests of both institutions overlap, there will be meaningful opportunities for unions and worker centers to work together on creative campaigns. In others, the support is more likely to be symbolic” (Gordon, 2005:289-290). And so it may be the case, that labour’s support of feminist resistance is too, at times, largely “symbolic”.

Lastly, in an effort to avoid being overly critical of labour, let me temper my analyses by sharing the following⁶⁹. It has come to my attention, that it also important to take stock of the apparent failings and shortcomings of other liberal and social justice movements in this respect as well. Here I mean to call out or hold other groups who were noticeably absent and or not part of these important struggles to account, including the environmental and peace movements for example - “Where were they?” so to speak (Storey, 2011). And how could these movements have also assisted labour with the development of those aforementioned “strategies of support” and or otherwise supported feminist resistance en masse?⁷⁰ Though I remain critical of neoliberalism’s penchant for accountability, I do want to ensure that social movements and organizations, above and beyond labour are “also called up on the political carpet for their shortcomings and failures” (Storey, 2011).

⁶⁹ These ideas were brought to my attention by Storey (2011). And Moore (in conversation 2012) has also pointed out the importance of understanding how various social movements may have not always supported each other’s efforts both past and present, including for example the somewhat tenuous relations exhibited between the environmental and labour movements in the United States.

⁷⁰ Where is “Occupy”? The Occupy Movement appears to share many longstanding feminist concerns, namely inequality. It might be interesting to know if feminist organizations have benefitted at all from this recent mobilization and or to follow more closely whether Occupy steps up as a feminist-friendly ally.

Feminist Social Change: “Opening Spaces” to Make Change Now and in the Future

Although feminist theorists and activists may disagree about the “preferred direction of social change”, they remain for the most part, agreed that change is in fact desirable (Nelson, 2010:425). Another reoccurring theme in the women’s narratives was the shared feeling about the potential for achieving progressive, proactive social change. The women’s narratives attest to the fact that a hostile political climate does not rule out the possibility of feminist organizing for social change. Women in all sectors remained committed to the idea that change was possible and a desired outcome. During the Harris years, feminists continued to challenge the imposition of a new gender, racial and class order and pressed for change. That being said, they were also keenly aware that social change was, and is, often a “slow” (Rebick, 2005:254) and “uneven” (Sugiman, 1993) process. Social change was characterized in the women’s narratives as something that takes time, “it doesn’t happen overnight”, “change takes a long time . . . It’s a slow process.” Change in many of the women’s narratives was perceived to be “incremental” (Gelb and Palley, 1982), or, to use the words of one woman, “partial”. Further, there was the sense that change was something that still had to be continuously fought for, not to be taken for granted, something made all the more clear as a result of the Harris years. Large scale, systemic change was often conceived of as a long term and continuous project. Thus, the feminists I interviewed it would seem, had to be prepared according to one woman, to be in it “for the long haul.”

Carolyn Eagan reflected on the collective strength of working people as a means to bring about genuine social change. She believed participation in organized fight backs

empowers and educates workers given the historic and constant struggle to achieve change. And it is through these “fight backs”, that new spaces or openings and the capacity (e.g. the individual empowerment and mobilization) necessary for making change slowly begins to emerge. The opening of political and social spaces that emerged vis a vis these “fight backs” retain their importance as socialist feminists continue to speak out and take action both now and in the future. She said:

You don't win every battle, that's for sure. Campaigns can take a long time, but the collective strength of working people as a whole can make change. I learned through the struggles in the pro-choice movement, people have the capacity to make change. You want to create a political environment where the ordinary person has the sense of their own strength, that they can be empowered through campaigns, through struggles, through fight-backs. . . A lot has been learned. We made mistakes, there's no doubt about it. We're up against a very, very tough enemy. But as time goes on, it is going to make a difference. It's the way we've won things in the past. . . You're not going to win all the time, and sometimes it'll take a long time, but I think it's the way to fight for change (Carolyn Eagan, USWA, Toronto, 2002).

Thus the women's narratives illustrate that not only were they committed to “making a difference”, but they recognized that “trying to make a difference takes time” (Andersen and Hill Collins, 2004:517). As Carrol-Anne Seceviour of the OFL remarked:

When you talk about implementing change, none of this stuff happens overnight. Not when you're going to change people. And quite frankly Harris coming into power didn't happen overnight. It took many years, so turning that around isn't going to happen overnight. . . I think that's part of the new wind that's going through, that people are starting to once again feel hope and to believe that something can be done (Carrol-Anne Seceviour, OFL, 2002).

And one could suggest that the tireless work being done by feminists in a number of organizational settings may have been partially responsible for maintaining this belief. This is part and parcel of what is often involved in the (re)making of feminist political consciousness (see for example Gordon, 2005 as noted by Storey, 2011).

The women's narratives also suggest that during the Harris years they have not become overly "cynical", nor have they "thrown in the towel" (Andersen and Hill Collins, 2004:517). Rather, the interviewees remained optimistic about their capacity to make a difference in women's lives. While feminists still believe they face numerous challenges, they also point out that progress has been made. The women's narratives conveyed that were hopeful that they could effect change in a positive way. As one woman explained, organizational survival may signal success in the minds of some scholars (see again Gamson, 1975; Disney and Gelb, 2000) and activists, but what feminists do with what they have learned as a result of these experiences is what will ward off complacency and potentially serve them well in the future:

The image that comes to my mind is kind of a slash and burn impact in terms of forestry. If you have a major forest fire, it kind of destroys everything in its path, but certain types of trees begin to grow and grow well in that environment. This has been a slash and burn government. My hope is that there are things that not only will survive, but will come out the other end even stronger because the 'enemy' has been more clearly defined. And maybe people will wake up from their complacency. One of my hopes is that we will end up a more politicized and a more organized society that will be better able to move forward when this government is gone. I don't know if that's overly optimistic or not, but that's the only thing that keeps me going (Executive Director, Anti-violence Educator, Toronto, 2002).

Other women also remained hopeful that change was and is possible:

I am hopeful. In the midst of all that doom and gloom, I really am hopeful because under the Harris government things have gotten so bad for people, some people have lost so much it's almost that there is nothing to do now but fight (Executive Director, Homeless Women's Shelter, Toronto, 2002).

People are again starting to believe they can make change. And I think with Harris gone. . .not that women and other groups haven't been fighting against Harris, but it's almost like a breath of air has come through, that there's hope. We've been under siege for seven years and there's a light at the end of the tunnel and it's not a train (Carrol-Anne Seceviour, OFL, Toronto, 2002).

Moreover, many women were also aware of how feminist issues and politics were transformed in the process of organizing for change (Ferree and Martin, 1995). Some of the women came to the realization that they themselves had been changed in the process. The women's narratives illustrate this reflexive process. Organizational and personal change were for the most part welcomed by feminists and were believed to have had a positive impact on feminist organizing. For instance, in their efforts to make change, the importance of organizing across the boundaries of gender, "race" and class has been acknowledged. This recognition has yet to be fully translated into practice. Lasting social change necessitates seeing the connections among people and involving people stratified by race, class and gender. This is imperative for bringing about long term change (Andersen and Hill Collins, 2004:517). A CUPE healthcare worker from Toronto commented on this transformation and the positive impact she believed it has had on feminist organizing:

[The] politics have transformed. But I also think the issues have. I think that's changing and transforming and women are finding the necessity to work with others, to integrate multiple issues and that's a very positive step (Socialist feminist and CUPE healthcare worker, Toronto, 2002).

Attempting to work across the boundaries of race, gender and class encourages feminists to rethink not only their theories, but their politics and praxis. In particular, it challenges feminists to take up the call to concretely attend to the intersections of social inequalities. This has been an important site of resistance within feminist organizing and generates a more inclusive conceptualization of feminist activism and notions of feminist praxis. "We have no doubt that the conventional narrative history of the contemporary

women's movement does not work. But what happens if we try to use our formulation to write a new one?" (Gluck et als., 1998:50). The women's narratives speak to the need to move beyond historical divides and to build bridges with like-minded groups. As one woman recalled:

The Harris years have forced us to rethink how we organize politically. How you take up issues, and how you make the links are crucial. I can't just do single issue politics. I just can't do it. And to do that is wrong. To me, it is just politically incorrect. Making the links and making key partnerships in the community and in labour, that's what has to be done in this time. I have seen an increase in people wanting to work with each other more, and letting go of some of the luggage, or the history or the baggage that came with the divisions. I've seen a lot more people willing to work in partnership now, as a result of the Harris years. That's a positive thing that has to continue even without the right wing in power. Should have been done a long time ago. I have to really refocus and put energies into political practice to fight on a whole number of issues (Socialist Feminist and CUPE Healthcare Worker, Toronto, 2002).

Another woman also commented on the importance of "making political consciousness" (see for example Gordon, 2005 as noted by Storey, 2011):

It probably was never their intent, but what they've actually caused is a higher consciousness . . . finally, people are actually waking up and the positive thing that has happened, not just in the steel workers, but in the labour movement in general, is that you see a lot more coalition stuff happening. You get unions working with other unions, unions working with community groups to try and take on issues of Medicare and privatization and youth. It seems like people are coming together as a block, and are taking on some of these issues which is a wonderful thing, rather than everybody fighting off in their own little corners (GTA Steelworkers Activist, Toronto, 2002).

Similarly, another woman spoke about how the Harris years have fostered "good change", that is, change in terms of how union feminists organize and mobilize. In particular, she noted how the Harris years served as was a wake-up call for organized labour to be less protectionist and more self-critical, which resulted in groups envisioning new ways of doing things or opportunities to encourage more reflective praxis:

We've had success in terms of political activism, a renewal, developing and expansion of community coalitions. Keep in mind that success isn't always getting the government to back down; it can also produce change and force us to look at new ways of organizing and mobilizing. What we did in the 70's and early 80's, doesn't necessarily work today. We're looking at new ways of organizing and mobilizing. Forcing the labour movement, to work more closely and jointly with broad based, community coalitions. . . And that takes debate and discussion and that's a good thing. We don't just stand in isolation and we'll call you if we need you kind of thing. Respect and honouring one another makes for a much broader view, so that's good for change. That's good change (Carrol-Anne Seceviour, OFL, Toronto, 2002).

Thus, these women's narratives can add to our understanding of historical change within the context of feminist organizing. Their narratives not only provide insight into feminist's ongoing struggle to make change, but illustrate how feminist agendas and politics are also transformed in the process, and transformed in a "good" way. As such, feminists may be better positioned to attend to the intersection of oppressions and continue to develop cross sectoral and coalitional strategies that enable them to work toward and achieve social change. And as I noted earlier, some scholars have already suggested, working through these processes may in fact be equally, if not more important than the actual outcome when it comes to effecting change (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:326).

Still it seems likely that tensions would also have arisen during and/or as a result of these attempts. Historically, for instance, gender has been a source of tension for the labour movement and race has been a source of tension for the women's movement (in conversation Sugiman, 2005) – but for the most part, aside from some indication of there being a slight generation gap and union women's misgivings about the breadth of the DOA, these tensions were not openly discussed or evident in the women's narratives.

Rather, their narratives tended to focus on the successful coming together of different groups. So do these women's stories effectively demonstrate feminist attempts to bring feminist practice in line with feminist theory? Or do they suggest that feminists have yet to really "walk the talk" so to speak, that is, what is happening at the level of theory has not yet been fully translated into practice? Are Black feminist theorists, women of colour, and anti-racist feminist calls to "theorize from the bottom up" still being lost among more "top down" based approaches? (Sudbury, 1998).

One must remember that these narratives reveal some women's understanding of what happened during the Harris years. They recount their version of the important events and issues. And as narrators engaged in the political project of storytelling (Roy, 1998), a researcher expects a certain amount of rhetoric in their accounts. My sense is that all the rhetoric around inclusivity, hasn't fully translated from theory into lasting practice, particularly vis a vis the experiences of racialized women. Gaps likely still exist, evidenced by the fact that many of their narratives are largely silent on the issue of "race" and diversity. Rather, following Sudbury (1998:228), my hunch is that women's "differences. . . are only just beginning to be incorporated into organizational strategies."

Summary

I would dare not say that he triumphed during his time, because we fought back...I laugh at some of the things that have happened to me as a result of my involvement [with CUPE]. I cry at some of the things that have happened. And I also give praise and thanks to God for being able to be a part of this (CUPE Women's Committee Activist, Hamilton, 2002).

According to Nelson (2010:425) feminist "'success' is an outcome that is not easily measured." Nelson (2010) goes on to suggest that given the most basic (e.g.

eradicating violence against women) and the complexity of feminist organizational goals (e.g. the development of a multifaceted anti-oppression framework), the harder it becomes for both insiders and outsiders to determine “what constitutes success and . . . whether it has been achieved” (2010:425). In this Chapter, I have analysed feminist’s reflections on the effectiveness of their “survival strategies” (Hyde, 1995), their ability to produce feminist outcomes and to realize feminist goals (Tyyska, 1998). The women’s narratives highlight feminist’s ongoing commitment to social change at a point in time, when many of us are according to Judy Rebeck (2003:xv) “programmed” to believe that people cannot effect change and efforts to do so are considered “foolish”. However as Rebeck (2003:xiv) aptly notes, the neoliberal project has not delivered on its promises of a more prosperous society. Not at all, and certainly not for all. This failure she argues, has created new spaces for feminists to situate their demands (2003:xiv). The women’s narratives analyzed here suggest that feminists continued to fight for change during the Harris years. And given the emergence of these “new openings” (Rebeck, 2003), there were “small victories” and “partial wins” to be had. But as Rebeck (2003:xv) also notes, “new strategies for achieving victory are urgently needed.”

Although feminist activism has been constrained by the emergence of neoliberalism, feminist strategies of resistance continue to have the potential to help sustain activist’s everyday pursuits and to a certain extent their organizational agendas. The women’s narratives illustrate that there are success stories to be told. These women’s stories contest and critique post-feminist analyses and demonstrate the tenacity of women’s groups and activists as they navigated Harris’ neoliberal terrain. Feminists

“struggles to do more than merely survive make this death warrant for feminist vitality and continuity seem premature” (Gelb, 1995:131). Rather, feminist success is evidenced in many women’s perceptions of the increased levels of public consciousness and politicization on the part of activists that developed during the Harris years. Whether the same can be said with respect to the consciousness of the general public is less encouraging.

Still contradictions exist. While feminist leaders claim small scale success in micro or individual contexts as a part of the “we survived”, “we maintained our voice”, “we gained” and “we created future opportunities” narratives, larger structural issues remain for the most unresolved. Participation in these strategies may fuel feminist activists’ own views of change, but whether the same can be said for women positioned outside of these organizational structures struggling to make ends meet, finding reliable child care and seeking safe, affordable housing, that feminists have made any inroads at all may be a tough sell. One might be so inclined to then question the significance of such strategies. Further, whether the successfulness of these feminist strategies resonated with the general public is another story. Feminist goals of empowerment and equality and attention to social justice issues did not appear to be visible on the public radar. Public sentiment did not appear to be that sympathetic to feminist perspectives and there was an obvious lack of political will exhibited on the part of the Harris government to engage with, much less entertain, feminist friendly solutions to sexism, racism, classism, poverty, discrimination and violence. It seems that feminist organizations failed to win over the public in large numbers during the Harris years, especially given Harris’ second

mandate (in conversation with Sugiman, 2005).

Having said that, I would also point out that even in more sympathetic times, I would venture a guess, that feminist organizations rarely garner an overwhelming degree of mainstream support. It just became ever more apparent during the Harris years that feminists were cast aside as “special interest groups” seeking special consideration and as draining money from the public purse. These strategies of resistance may have produced some small, positive outcomes for women’s organizations (e.g. organizational survival; future promises; restored funding), but less encouraging results for women in general. The cuts to welfare, child care and employment equity coupled with workfare and no social housing being built had a profound impact on low income and poor women. These losses often meant that women’s day to day life often got harder. As a result, there may be differences between feminists own personal views of “success” and the claims made to public audiences. This reflects Nelson’s (2010) earlier point about the difficulties related to measuring and determining feminist success.

Second, the women’s narratives may have resonated and raised awareness on the part of movement participants, but I am not certain that these successes moved the general public or “ordinary” Ontarions in the same way, especially given Harris’ winning a second term in office (in conversation with Sugiman, 2005). While these strategies may have (re)politicized and renewed commitment on the part of those activists already involved in social justice issues, this did not appear to be the case with the general public. Aside from a few labour leaders, none of the women’s organizations noted a surge in membership or having attracted large numbers of new recruits during the Harris years. In

fact, like Bashevkin (1998:7) found, they often mentioned the opposite, that organizations increasingly had smaller pools of activists to draw on and some long time activists even reported higher levels of burnout and fatigue. Failure to address these issues could potentially lead to long-term problems in terms of organizational viability, particularly in attracting what resource mobilization theorists would term, new recruits to social movement organizations. As one woman put it “a lot of us are talking about, who is going to step into these positions?” and this might raise concerns on the part of social movement scholars with a vested interest in building for future mobilizations.

The women I interviewed spoke about “small victories and partial wins” – which begs the question – successful for whom? Which organizations were more or less successful and why? The narrative data analysed here seem to suggest that labour organizations representing working class women appear to have been the most successful in maintaining economic security for their members, anti-violence and anti-racist groups appeared to struggle to meet the multiple, day to day demands of abused women and women of colour, in addition to ensuring their organizational survival.

So given these findings, these women’s stories raise the question posed by Naples (1998:329) – “what is it then that keeps feminists fighting despite minimal gains?” What the women’s narratives analyzed here have shown us is that feminist activists and organizations have not been complacent. These narratives serve as an ongoing reminder that feminists must be and are always vigilant. Feminists continue to struggle, they “can never relax” and they recognize the need to be smart about the ways that they strategize or “push back”. Feminists appeared to remain realistic in terms of their ability to produce

progressive outcomes and were not naïve about the political process. These women's stories remind us that while feminist political action may have been constrained during the Harris years, not all feminist initiatives were doomed. For some women, the Harris years strengthened feminist resolve. And despite dominant discourses to the contrary, that feminism is dead and or obsolete, feminist resistance remains critically important in ongoing attempts to carve out new social spaces to situate feminist struggle and feminist analyses. Their narratives confirm Lois Harder's (2003:9) findings that "from the perspective of progressive politics, it is a kind of 'we laughed, we cried' drama, but most importantly, it is a drama that is unresolved. The achievements of the struggle for social justice are notoriously and frustratingly unstable. But the struggle is never completely closed off, and certainly never finished" and as a result, the possibility of change exists too. These women's stories speak of what Beth Jordan refers to as "successful struggle in unsympathetic times" (http://www.ywcatoronto.org/womendistinction/2005/wod2005_justice.htm). And the "[l]essons learned in the process of fighting against state divestment; violence against women; homophobia; racial, ethnic and gender discrimination; and class oppression can fuel broader movements for social change. The challenge that remains is to provide for the continuity of these lessons over time, especially during periods of conservative backlash" (Naples, 1998:346).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion: Feminist Reflections – Lessons for Future Feminist Research

When I began this study, I set out “in search of the stories”⁷¹ (Epp, 1999:42) that would tell us something about feminist organizing during the Harris years (c. 1995-2001). As I anticipated and have detailed in the three previous data chapters, the women I interviewed had many stories to tell, including stories of feminist struggle, stories of feminist resistance and stories of feminist success. Granted, these may not be the only stories or perhaps even the most informed stories of feminist activism in neoliberal times. Nor do they as White (2010) and others remind us, reflect the experiences of all feminist activists or organizations. Admittedly, they are selective. In the end, they may be best understood as a collection of stories that represent but one set of reflexive readings and narrative interpretations, my own. And so it is not my intent in this concluding chapter to reiterate all of the stories I gathered in the course of this study, but rather to add a few final thoughts, to craft a bit of my own story in and around these women’s personal narratives with an eye to drawing out the implications and contributions of my current research and where we might go from here.

I will however, preface my closing remarks with the suggestion that one major storyline does bear repeating: While the rise of neoliberalism and its attendant governance structures and social policies may have differentially and unevenly impacted feminist activists and organizations equality seeking pursuits, it would be presumptuous

⁷¹ I indebted to Juanita Ross Epp (1999) whose piece “The University’s New Clothes: Morality Tales for Feminists in Modern Academe” tells the stories of “feminizing” her university and the issues that arose as her institution was “feminized. She frames her analyses in terms of stories and “the morals”, or what “we have learned” from those feminizing stories and I am applying and acknowledging her conceptual approach here in my conclusion.

and moreover inaccurate to assume that neoliberalism has wholly consumed feminism and its alternative vision of a more fair, democratic and just society. Therefore the stories that emerge from this study serve as both a constant and a critical reminder that women, and, in particular, women as feminists have often been at the fore of historical and present day struggles for equality (Hamilton, 2005; see also Brodie, 1996:7), social justice and social change. From these stories, it is my hope that we might also glean a “multitude of morals” (Epp, 1999:44) or “lessons learned” (Naples, 1998; Strobel, 1995) if you will, lessons we can then tuck and or take away with us to help shape and inform our compilation and narration of feminist stories in the future.

Lessons Learned: Stories of Struggle – Moral #1 “Feminists are not strangers to struggle”

I undertook this case study with three primary research questions in mind. My first objective was to document and understand the everyday struggles that differently located feminists in the GTA working in specific organizational contexts encountered during the Harris years. In short, I was interested in finding out what challenges feminist organizations and activists experienced during Harris’s tenure in political office. And there are a number of important lessons to be learned from these women’s stories of struggle that may in turn shape and inform the (re)telling of future stories.

A number of parallel story lines emerged from the women’s stories of struggle. As a result of this study we have learned that during the Harris years feminist activists and organizations faced an uphill battle to maintain their goals and agendas given the material and ideological erosion of women’s equality rights and the diminished role of the state as a mechanism by which social inequalities may be redressed. We have also

learned that the impact of Harris's neoliberal policy and policy changes (i.e. budget cuts; lack of daycare; affordable housing; anti-racism initiatives) was disproportionately shouldered by women and furthered inequality along the lines of gender, race and class, the effects of which were thought to be not only long lasting, but difficult to undo. Paradoxically, reduced funding and access to resources experienced on the part of feminist organizations, seemed to increase women's need for services (Harder, 2003:161).

In addition, while women's equality rights decreased and/or were eroded, women's paid and unpaid labour intensified, as more work was placed on women as activists, service providers and community based organizations to "pick up the pieces" following the introduction of Harris's "policy by stealth" (Harder, 2003:157; Gray/Battle, 1990). Moreover, women's labour not only intensified, but it was also delegitimized by a culture of meanspiritedness intent on institutionalizing "highly individualized solutions" (Cossman, 2002:169) to structured inequalities. As such, feminist organizations and activists struggled to maintain gendered, intersectional and structural analyses of social inequalities and social problems as the neoliberal state retreated from the realm of equity issues and in turn favoured the adoption of more individualized, privatized and market based solutions to age old social problems (Cossman, 2002:169; Morrow et al., 2004).

A brief overview of these stories of struggle reminds us feminist activists and organizations struggled to maintain a gendered analysis of violence against women, a gendered analysis of work, family, poverty, and racial inequality in an increasingly unequal and mean-spirited environment. In this hostile environment, women and women

as feminists laboured to close some of the gaps neoliberalism had gauged in the social safety net. They struggled to hold onto what remained of the welfare state model of governance and its emphasis on equity issues (see Morrow et al., 2004). The policy changes that ensued upon Harris's entry into office, were swift, severe and uneven in impact, the effects of which it is believed, will be felt for some time. The women's narratives recounted in this study suggest that feminist and feminist organizations struggled financially. Many endured fear and intimidation, and in some instances felt that their voices, (re)cast by neoliberals as dissenting voices, were either stifled or silenced. Many recalled how the government's attack on advocacy on the part of "special interest groups" created tensions between organizational service provision and political action on the part of service and community based groups. Further, they expressed the difficulties involved in maintaining feminist principles in the face of adversity. Their narratives also speak to their (in)ability to deal with difference and diversity and the ongoing struggle to organize inclusively.

Taken together then, one of the major lessons we have learned (Epp, 1994:44) from these stories of struggle is that "feminists are not strangers to struggle". Struggle is an overarching and recurring theme that emerges in this study. It constitutes a major storyline in the narratives of feminist organizing, and is evidenced both in the stories of activists and organizational representatives working in all three sectors. In this respect, this study offers somewhat of a new take on a rather classic theme and underscores the thematic importance of struggle as it relates to the history of feminist organizing.

Struggle may not be a “novel” (Siltanen and Doucet, 2008) theme in relation to feminist activism. However, we cannot help but notice that the backdrop or setting against which these stories of struggle take place has changed and so too have some of the central characters. In these women’s stories it is evident that the role of the welfare state, for example, has been diminished, while certain actors, individuals and the private sector have assumed a more active lead under the umbrella of neoliberalism. One might be apt to suggest that these stories of feminist struggle are not altogether new, which may be true, but in this instance, these struggles are played on a neoliberal stage, one that is set differently and this is worthy of note.

These women’s narratives demonstrate the struggles that feminist organizations and activists encountered when so called “special interest groups” challenge a dominant storyteller and offer alternative versions and interpretations of the impact of neoliberalism on women’s day to day lives. In addition to these stories of material struggle, this research points to important narrative struggles as well. I have interpreted these women’s narratives as a challenge to the dominant, androcentric, hegemonic discourses that informed Harris’s Common Sense Revolution. These stories challenged the “prevailing discourses” (Brodie, 1995) or dominant neoliberal discourses of privatization and stand in stark contrast to the gender neutral discourses of welfare state restructuring that resulted in the simultaneous “erosion and intensification of gender” (see for example Brodie, 1996; Fudge and Cossman, 2002; Haraway, 1991; Harder, 2003). By articulating dissenting voices, or counter-hegemonic narratives (The Personal Narratives Group, 1997), I am suggesting that these women’s stories present feminism as an emergent,

dynamic theoretical and political project that dialectically, both shapes and informs women's organizing for social change (Sugiman, 2003:52).

Lessons Learned: Stories of Resistance – Moral #2: “Neoliberalism may constrain, but it does not preclude feminist resistance, and so feminist resistance is not futile”

I was also interested in researching feminists' organizational responses, and identifying and analysing the strategies or processes differently located feminists employed in order to maintain and or further their organizational and activist agendas during the Harris years. A synopsis of these stories would fail to do justice to the complex issues resistance in this context presents for feminist activists and organizations. That said, from these women's stories we have learned that feminists engaged in numerous acts of resistance, that feminist praxis took various shapes and forms, and that diversity in resistance was an important aspect of feminist organizing in a neoliberal climate. Many of these acts and actions were grounded in cooperative, coalition based work that brought diverse groups of actors, especially women from various organizational sectors together. These narratives of feminist resistance represent what I and other scholars in both concrete and narratives terms, might consider a “counter-hegemonic response” (CCPA, 2007) or counter-narratives to Harris's brand of neoliberalism.

Resistance is a recurring and an underlying theme that is woven through all of the women's stories. Feminists in all sectors resisted the anti-feminist backlash that swept through the GTA. These women's stories vividly point out that feminist resistance was not futile, and that while Harris's brand of neoliberalism may have to use Sugiman's (1993) words, “limited”, it certainly did not “prevent” feminist agency. For example, funding cuts and fear of organizational survival may have made some anti-violence and

anti-racist groups less apt to engage in highly visible, overt, direct action tactics. It seems these strategies tended to be favoured more by socialist and working class feminists embedded in labour based organizations. But this fear did not necessarily paralyze these organizations, many still attempted to act and resist, but often chose to do so, en masse and in coalition with other like-minded groups as evidenced in the formation of the Cross Sectoral Group and the rise of the Days of Action.

Therefore we have also learned that feminists were not complicit during the Harris years. Far from. The women's narratives communicate that feminists resisted and contested Harris's neoliberal policies and practices, including those intent on squashing feminist advocacy and agency. While feminists employed a number of oppositional strategies, the two most notable, the CSVAW and the Days of Action were coalitional in nature and served to unite different groups and activists in the face of a common enemy. In many ways, feminists took to heart Brodie's (1995) observation that social and economic restructuring is not an inevitable process. For as Brodie suggests, if we conceive of the emergence of neoliberalism and a new gender order as an "impositional claim", then we can better understand how feminists strategically contested and did not go along uncritically with Harris' privatization project. In other words, the women's narratives highlight the importance of remembering that "the underlying assumptions of the Harris government's Common Sense Revolution are political constructs that are 'subject to political contestation'" (Brodie 1995:27 cited by MacGregor, 1997:105). However, the women's stories recounted here also suggest that "feminists are faced with

the need to find ways of engaging in this ideological conflict at a time when our financial resources and political credibility are in jeopardy” (MacGregor, 1997:105-106).

The women’s narratives attest to the “resiliency” (Harder, 2003) of feminist organizing in the GTA between 1995 and 2001 and their stories illustrate feminists’ strength and resolve to make change. Therefore one of the most obvious “morals” of these “survival stories” would be “neoliberalism may constrain, but it does not preclude feminist resistance, and so feminist resistance is not futile.” And this is an important lesson because it challenges the dominant neoliberal discourse of the day that tends to reinforce the notion that women and feminists, collectively and in their everyday lives and actions, even in difficult and challenging times retain the ability to be “active agents of change” (Rebick, 2005:xiv). Our ability to act, and the shape our actions take may be impacted and even constrained, but that does foreclose the possibility for collective action as exhibited on the part of the feminist activists and organizations I studied.

This finding is of value because it not only fosters a greater understanding of what feminist organizing during the Harris years has been able to accomplish (see Chapter Six), but how it is that differently located feminists have gone about organizing, and draws attention to what is often “not mentioned...how those changes happened” (Rebick, 2005:xiii). It lets us know more about how certain gains or outcomes came about and the diversity in process and praxis involved in achieving them. These narratives of resistance contribute to our knowledge of feminist praxis and shed light on how feminist social change (be it small or “incremental”, “slow” and “uneven”, painful and tiring) is made, even in neoliberal times.

Lessons Learned: “Feminist Success Stories” – Moral #3: “Small successes are important, as success is often slow and incremental”

Finally, in this study I sought to research the effectiveness of feminist’s strategies of resistance. I was interested in exploring how “successful” these actions or practices were in term of producing progressive “feminist outcomes” (Martin, 1990) and how feminists came to understand, interpret and or “redefine success” (Disney and Gelb, 2000) within their different organizational and activist circles. I examined feminists’ perceptions of their ability to successfully (re)negotiate Harris’ neoliberal agenda, their capacity to challenge dominant discourses and to maintain their organizational goals and mandates.

The women’s narratives in this study suggest that feminists continued to fight for social change and that feminist change may be, in Sugiman’s (1993) words, “uneven”, unintentional and or take unexpected forms. In their pursuit of change for example, some of the women were also changed themselves, as were their forms of praxis and though these changes were perhaps unanticipated on their part, they were often welcomed and still understood to be good change. Here again the *process* is understood to be as, if not, “more important than the outcome” (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999:326) in relation to the role that change plays in feminist success stories.

As a result we have learned that feminists experienced “small victories” and “partial wins” during the Harris years (see Chapter Six). My findings suggest while most of the feminists believe they did not succeed in overturning Harris’s privatization agenda, they all continued to resist and challenge the imposition of a new gender order. For some, the fact that they survived the Harris years, though small comfort, was in itself considered

a feminist success story. As part of their ongoing counter-hegemonic struggle, the women's narratives remind us that while feminist political action may be constrained in a hostile political opportunity structure, there are also oppositional strategies that enable and afford feminist's agency and the will to negotiate and engage with the neoliberal state in order to make positive change. The women in this study openly expressed feelings that progressive change is not only desirable, but that the potential for feminist organizations and activists to effect genuine social change is still possible. We have also learned that despite the numerous hurdles they have encountered, many activists remain optimistic and hopeful that change may come, but this not likely to occur not without a constant uphill battle.

There are numerous morals of these success stories. First, we have learned that "process and outcome are both important aspects of feminist success", while "others have suggested that process is always important, maybe even more important than outcome" (Blackford, Garceau and Kirby, 1999: 326). Second, we have learned that acknowledging "feminist success" is important, especially in relation to feminist's attempts to empower and mobilize further resistance. Third, we have learned that even small successes are important, for "small wins and partial victories are part of the process of making incremental change". Finally, paying more attention to how we go about making change may also be an important lesson imparted by these women's narratives. It may be the case that less emphasis needs be placed on deciding whether a particular tactic or strategy was successful (focusing on assessing what was achieved and accomplished as an end result), but rather what activists and organizations learned along the way, in the process of

“‘doing’ feminism” (Mitchell and Karaian, 2005) and how it is they come to do what they do. As Jennifer Gordon’s (2005) research on immigrant workers and the making of political consciousness shows, “[t]he lesson to draw from the Project, then, is not that what it did successfully should be replicated. It is that each context gives rise to a set of obstacles and opportunities, and that organizing in each context requires attention to them, both at the start and as they change over time” (Gordon, 2005:284). It is these lessons that may be really useful for feminist organizing in the future, though this may less of the case in the eyes of organizational or movement outsiders who as we have seen tend to rely and employ different definitions and measures of success.

Implications for Intersectional Feminist Theory and Practice

Lessons learned: theory doesn’t always obviously translate into practice but diversity of practice may bring out theory of intersectionality

Following White (2010:2), the personal narratives studied here are not just “*reflections of feminists experiences*” of the Harris years, they are also stories that to a feminist sociologist such as myself, “*link theory with action(s)*.” So what implications do these women’s narratives pose for feminist theory? What do these women’s narratives tell us about feminist practice? And what lessons may be learned from this research?

Theoretically, as stated in my introductory chapter, this study is situated within an intersectional feminist framework. And at the level of theory, feminism as a theoretical project seems to have embraced and responded (and responded positively I might add) to the basic premises of intersectional theorizing (Dudley, 2006). One could argue that

intersectionality has clearly moved, to borrow a phrase from bell hooks (1983), “from margin to centre” in the arena of mainstream feminist theory (Dudley, 2006:37)⁷².

This study, much like Dudley’s (2006) has demonstrated that feminist’s ideas related to intersectionality are not only evidenced in a number of documentary sources including feminist organizational policies, mission statements, and publications⁷³, but here these same principles are also echoed in the narrative accounts of a diverse group of feminist women. For example, recall that the women’s stories revealed that many of their organizations have adopted feminist, anti-racist or anti-oppressive mandates that recognize the interconnectedness or overlapping nature of social inequalities, including the stories of women of colour working in multicultural settings and in “an equality seeking, anti-racist, charitable organization dedicated to the social, political, and economic inclusion of refugee and immigrant women in a just and supportive Canadian society” (http://_____.on.ca/index.php?page=historyandmission) ; or that many of the women’s narratives characterize their organizations as being “multi-issued” that is, much like OFA they focus their efforts on alleviating women’s poverty and economic disadvantage *and* attend to a myriad of factors that contribute to women’s poverty such as being a single parent, disabled, or a member of a racialized group (<http://www.ofacan.com/about/>). Nor can we overlook the women’s stories that confirm for us in their own words that their organizations tend to be structured along non-hierarchical lines, or that they value that their organizations either have or continue to operate as modified

⁷² This was one of the major research questions explored by Dudley (2006), in her analysis of feminist organizational websites in the United States.

⁷³ As discussed in Chapter Three, for a brief overview see Appendices.

collectives to ensure that power and decision making is shared among staff, volunteers, members and clients. In fact, for the most part, one could argue that these women's narratives demonstrate what Dudley (2006:43) characterizes, as a collective commitment to feminist theories of intersectionality, though their organizational approaches may differ. However, an appreciation of intersectionality and inclusivity is more than an intellectual pursuit (Andersen and Hill Collins, 1995:7).

So can the same be said with respect to the reality of feminist organizing? Has feminist organizational praxis kept pace with the intersectional theoretical developments noted above? Or is there still somewhat of a disconnect or gap between theory and praxis⁷⁴? Feminists in this study were keenly aware of the importance of aligning their strategies of resistance and everyday praxis with the anti-oppressive and intersectional frameworks that so often guide and inform their day to day work. Following Dudley (2006:43), although there appears to be a commitment on the part of feminist activists and organizations to address intersectional inequalities expressed both in their personal narratives and or at the level of policy and procedure, (and in some instances it has been effectively "institutionalized" in organizational mission statements for example), on the basis of the narrative data gathered and analysed here, as Dudley suggests (2006) what seems less clear, is the extent to which, "confronting intersectionality has become a central tenet of feminist *organizing*" (Dudley, 2006:37, italics added), that is, "it is still difficult to make a direct connection between policy statements and supporting actions"

⁷⁴ Of course, I don't mean to suggest that intersectional theory is somehow lacking as a result, but rather that we consider the dialectical relationship between feminist theory and practice and how each of these elements might inform the other.

(2006:43). In both narrative and practical terms then, are feminists in fact “walking the talk” and moving beyond “single issue politics” or have the Harris years constrained their ability to do so?

As I noted early on, one of the concerns of this study has been to better understand how feminist activists and organizations might “do” intersectionality, that is, how feminist intersectional theory is translated into and reflected in intersectional praxis, or what intersectionality looks like in more concrete terms, on the ground (see Chapters One and Two). My reading of these women’s narratives leads me to suggest that there still appears to be a lack of clarity surrounding how and on what basis these ideas are directly translated into action or strategy (again see Dudley, 2006), that is, “what specific actions are being taken to confront intersectionality” (Dudley, 2006:43). Based on the women’s narratives, there is an obvious commitment to the principles of intersectionality i.e. “I can’t do single issue politics anymore”; but as one women suggested, “walking the talk” appears to be somewhat of an ongoing challenge for feminist organizing.

Moreover, this lack of clarity may be further complicated by the fact that the women’s narratives seem to echo another important issue raised by Dudley (2006), that what is understood to be or constitutes feminist intersectional practice may differ from one organization to another (Dudley, 2006:37)⁷⁵. As is the case in this study, to use

⁷⁵ See for example Sherry Lewis’ among others remarks in Chapter Four which highlight this idea: organizational approaches to feminism and intersectionality may differ along ideological and strategic lines as evidenced in the Hamilton Native Women’s Centre’s approach to addressing the interrelated issues of violence against women, homelessness and poverty. Following Newman (2011:225) then, it could be suggested when organizations with diverse perspectives do come together in coalition for example, that participants may be afforded opportunities to draw out interconnections between apparently disparate issues.

Dudley's term, the "application" of intersectionality may vary from organizational sector to sector (e.g. from women organizing in anti-racist, anti-violence and labour camps) such that "intersectionality is 'applied' or put into practice differently by different organizations" (2006:37). For example, while feminists working in all sectors collectively spoke quite vocally of the need to work cooperatively and in coalition, there was clearly a diversity in organizational and activist oppositional responses (regardless of the scale, size, viability, sustainability and or popularity of the strategy) evidenced in the women's survival stories and their narratives of resistance.

Recall for example (as discussed in Chapter Five), the array of strategies undertaken by feminists that ranged from direct action tactics (such as flying pickets) to "apparent accommodation" and "covert resistance" (e.g. taming feminist language) to public education, media campaigns and coalition work (namely the Days of Action, and the Cross Sectoral Group). The women's narratives might also be read to include those strategies that might not at first glance be explicitly positioned as "feminist" (or "intersectional" and or "activist" for that matter), because "the personal is not always *self-evidently* political" (White, 2010:2). It may then be the case that when feminist organizations are in abeyance, or that the strategies that feminists choose to engage when under threat or experiencing backlash, are what help them get through difficult times such that (in)action that does not readily appear to be overtly strategic, at least to organizational outsiders (e.g. funders, the general public) may in fact come to life should the opportune moment arrive, though this is unlikely to occur when organizations are themselves under attack. When feminist organizations are under attack, it may in fact be

a good strategy to be all over the place so to speak, that is, to partake in a variety of forms of resistance⁷⁶. Thus we should perhaps be (re)thinking along the lines of engaging what White (2010) terms a more “multipronged approach” to “problem-solving” (White, 2010:3).

So perhaps this lack of clarity or for lack of a better word, unity, surrounding different organizational and activist understandings or “the multiple and varied approaches” (Dudley, 2006:43) to intersectional practice is not *as* problematic as one might first assume. This may to use White’s words (2010:3), be a rather “narrow interpretation.” Feminist intersectional theorizing speaks to the diversity of women’s lived experiences and subjectivities, and puts forth an understanding of the connectedness of social inequalities (see Chapter Two), so for us to expect that it should steer or direct us towards an uniformity in terms of praxis or a “monolithic” form of feminist praxis (White, 2010:3) to be enacted by different organizations and activists operating in different sectors would be somewhat contradictory. By definition, it would seem that intersectional feminist praxis ought to be characterized in more “heterogeneous”, (Sudbury, 1998), inclusive and diverse terms as well.

Could it not be suggested then that the diversity of feminist praxis evidenced in the women’s narratives studied here, that is, the different strategies employed on the part of various feminist organizations, in organizational sectors, and or in activist circles is not understood to be a mere reflection of the ability or willingness on the part of feminists to put theory into practice, but rather it is this very diversity that helps to shed more light on

⁷⁶ in conversation with Moore (2011).

the notion of intersectionality itself – where intersectionality is understood to not just simply reside in ideological statements or organizational mandates, mission statements and goals, but also in a multiplicity of practices applied by differently located feminists in any number of organizational sectors? I might be inclined to suggest that the women’s narratives of resistance to a certain extent seem to capture this dialectic, that theory informs practice and practice in turn reflects theory, such that a diversity of practice brings to light the heart of intersectional theorizing – and this is clearly a dynamic process, an evolving storyline if you will.

In this respect, not only then does this research broaden our understanding of the concept of intersectionality, but acknowledging diverse forms of feminist praxis may also prompt us to consider and or actively work to bring together both pragmatic and more “creative” (Harder, 2003) or “vibrant” (Mitchell and Karaian, 2005) feminist responses in order to resist neoliberalism. Further, as I alluded to earlier, this research may necessitate a rethinking of our understandings of what it is we now believe constitutes feminist resistance in and of itself. What do we make of more subtle forms of resistance and or the various forms of practice enacted for example on the part of vulnerable or marginalized communities, who for solid historical reasons may be more risk averse? Resistance or activism as many scholars note, may be grounded in our everyday experiences (see for example again the works of Flynn 1998; Sudbury, 1998; White, 2010), and shaped in less overtly political ways, but in ways that still nourish and support ongoing forms of feminist resistance. As Scott (2008:164) observes, “[emphasizing] visible ‘public’ actions. . . neglects everyday practices that may bracket political protest.”

What of strategies that challenge conventional social movement understandings of what resistance entails, that speak to resistance as a “personal and a political” feminist project, vis a vis engagement in artistic, musical, cultural or virtual communities that often transcend the traditional forms of feminist action typified in academic and activist circles (Mitchell and Karaian, 2005; White, 2010)? Flynn (1998:145) notes that “for some black women the daily struggle of surviving in a racist, classist and sexist society is their method of activism” whereby women envision activism as “talking, writing an article, doing poetry, and perhaps getting involved, in perhaps, forums” (Flynn, 1998; White 2010)? With these critiques in mind, perhaps we should embrace the empowering possibilities characteristic of “third wave feminist practice” being carried out in the realms of cyberspace, among and within blogging communities, plays, skits, music, song, dance, artwork etc. (Mitchell and Karaian, 2005:66-69).⁷⁷ It is this line of thinking that also reminds us of “the need to re-examine our conceptualization of political activism” and “narrow definition[s] of political expression” (Sudbury, 1998:54).

Following Epp (1999:44) then “one of the most obvious morals” of these stories of feminist resistance might be: feminist theory does not necessarily effortlessly translate into practice, but diversity of praxis or different ways of being and doing feminism may

⁷⁷ I am not suggesting that anything and everything be considered feminist resistance, such that diversity results in the dilution and depoliticization of feminist efforts (see earlier discussion in Chapter Two), but rather that we as women and as feminists might benefit from a rethinking of conventional and or traditional forms of resistance, especially when organizations find themselves in difficult circumstances. For example, when groups appear to be in retreat, and for good reason, to avoid being squashed, that in itself may be a viable strategy or that when under attack, a good strategy may be a multitude of strategies, to be all over the place so to speak (in conversation with Moore, 2011 although Bashvekin (1998:243) makes a similar point). This also too fits with the aforementioned ideas related to the dialectics of intersectionality (in conversation with Moore, 2011) and Scott’s (2008:164) suggestion that many other forms of resistance, (i.e. “performative, cultural, discursive”) will remain unseen, if we continually associate “protest behavior with visible public events”.

in turn, reflect and shape our theories of intersectionality. And when it comes to “doing” intersectionality, feminist organizing as evidenced in the stories studied here, even in challenging times, is quite diverse. It is this diversity that I believe reflects and sustains the basic premises of intersectional theorizing.

In short, I certainly do not want to be overly critical or too hard on groups that are at the very least acknowledging these complex issues, those socially aware actors who are apt to be more receptive, self-critical and reflective than most, especially when compared to government agencies and or funding bodies. That is, it is not my intent to hold feminist activists and organizations to an impossible level of accountability or standards especially when other social groups and institutions increasingly write off and/or absolve themselves of any similar kind of responsibility or accountability when it comes to dealing with equity and intersectional issues. Rather I aim to affirm and support these various efforts of feminist resistance and strive to learn more from them about how feminists can move the discussion and the politics of intersectionality forward at a time when other actors (i.e. governments, funding agencies, the corporate sector) are more than content to drop the ball altogether, abandon equality seeking projects and exempt themselves of any social and or economic accountability. Feminists may be more in tune with the issues and politics of intersectionality than other social actors, but to assume that we have the ins and outs of intersectionality all figured out would be naïve, for feminist praxis, as narrated by the women who participated in this study, itself continues to evolve and is subject to change and to be changed over time.

Suggestions for Future Research: Stories to be Told

This project stimulates further research questions and suggests a number of avenues for future studies and stories that are either waiting or have yet to be fully told. First, this study raises the possibility of exploring not only the contradictions inherent within neoliberalism, but those that exist between neoliberalism and neo-conservatism. Previous research suggests feminist groups have benefited from a general mobilization against “the right” (Gelb and Hart, 1999) and I too have argued (see the discussion in Chapter Six) that in some instances, feminists in the GTA had small wins as a result of the organized resistance amassed during the Harris years. That said, future research may want to focus on drawing out some of the contradictions between neoliberalism and neo-conservatism (Cossman, 2002).

As I mentioned in Chapter One, Brenda Cossman (2002:176) notes while some scholars may use these terms interchangeably, upon closer examination, it would be interesting to see whether feminists may be able to somehow strategically take advantage of and or exploit any internal contradictions within the rubric of the so called ‘New Right’. Cossman’s (2002:190-200) work on gender and families for example, suggests that there are differences between these political philosophies and that these may result in conflict among privatizing strategies.

Consider for example the contradictions and differences evident with respect to the issue of child support legislation, in relation to family, divorce and child poverty (Cossman, 2002:191). Cossman argues that neoliberals tend to identify “irresponsible parents” or “deadbeat dads” as the main cause of child poverty following divorce. As

such they are apt to encourage stronger child support laws (2002:193). Holding parents accountable for their children's welfare and financial well-being would eradicate child poverty. Thus, the neoliberal solution to child poverty lies not in the public, but in the private sphere (Mossman, 1997 as cited by Cossman, 2002:193) of family. On the other hand, Cossman (2002:193) argues neo-conservative discourse attempts to solve the problem of child poverty by discouraging divorce altogether. It emphasizes strengthening the nuclear family by having fathers reassume their traditional gendered role as head of the household (Cossman, 2002:193-194). She believes that these ideological differences among right wing thinkers have created somewhat contradictory positions when it comes to child support legislation. For neoliberals addressing child poverty involves the enforcement of parental responsibilities, whereas for neo-conservatives it necessitates keeping the family intact (Cossman, 2002:194, 198).

These tensions and other contradictions remain for the most part unresolved and as such are worthy of further feminist research. By revealing the gaps or holes within these dominant discourses, Cossman (2002:180) believes feminists may be able to carve out more "discursive" (and to that I would add material and community based) spaces for locating their "oppositional strategies". As Cossman and Fudge (2002:415) conclude, "it is time to exploit the contradictions in privatization and to begin to develop a new vision and new strategies to achieve it". Then feminist researchers, myself included, may be better able to examine the different ways feminists react, respond and ultimately resist neoliberalism.

In addition to attending to these contradictions, we may want to examine more closely the dovetailing of neoliberal ideologies and policies and the resulting impact on feminist activism when set against the backdrop of an increasingly influential corporate sector (Skipton, 1997:25-26). Developing this particular storyline may involve questioning how, for example, corporations are strategically appropriating progressive feminist discourse in order to effectively recast persistent social problems in a different light (Skipton, 1997). How are the discourses and narratives of the corporate sector taking hold in non-profit, community based feminist organizations - including for example the intrusion of gender neutral language or the “rhetoric of liberal individualism” and the resulting characterization of women as workers and employees, but not mothers? Single parents not single mothers? Clients not abused women? “Domestic [or family] violence” not woman abuse? Organizations characterized as charities or service deliverers not advocacy groups? (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber, 1995:115-119).

It would also be interesting to know more about how feminist organizations operating in the non-profit, community or service sector are being transformed as a result of the restructuring process, transformed in such a way so that they may in fact begin to look more like the corporate or business based model espoused under neoliberalism. While it does not appear to be the case in much of the narrative data collected and analysed here, certainly the possibility exists such that some of the more problematic characteristics of neoliberalism may in turn, somewhat ironically find their way into the sphere of feminist organizations. Are feminist organizations being forced to become more bureaucratic and hierarchical (Acker, 1995)? Are organizations expected to be

financially self-sufficient? Are organizations constantly shifting and transforming themselves in the face of the sign of the time? If that were to be the case, holding feminist groups to a high degree of financial independence seems rather absurd given the huge tax payer bailouts and or economic handouts governments have recently disbursed in an effort to save the male dominated auto sector; U.S. based insurance companies, capitalist banks and wall street financiers. The financial woes of corporate actors have not been cast to use Sugiman's (1993) rationale as "antithetical" to the economic and political goals of neoliberalism, especially when the benefactors in these instances have largely been wealthy, white men (1993:214).

This research helps us understand what happened during the Harris years. It also provides insight into how we might continue the study of ongoing struggles. Other stories may centre on comparing feminist experiences of neoliberalism in different jurisdictions either at the provincial and or federal level⁷⁸. My research has focused on uncovering and analysing the "dialectical tensions" (Henry and Tator, 2010) evidenced in the narrative accounts of feminist organizing in the GTA during the Harris years (1995-2001).

Whether feminist activists and feminist organizations fared any better under Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty's provincial government (c. 2003-2013) would be of empirical

⁷⁸ Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper appears to be following suit. In an article entitled, "Harper government cuts funding to key feminist groups", Mullins (2010) reports that following the 2006 federal election, the Harper launched an attack on women's advocacy. The government cut funding to the Status of Women Program which effectively resulted in the closure of 12 out of 16 offices across the country. It also cancelled the Court Challenges Program and reneged on funding for universal daycare (<http://digitaljournal.com/article/291658#ixzz1twj5Dyk2>, accessed May 4, 2012). And if the renewed debates surrounding contraception, abortion and women's reproductive rights that took place during the 2012 American Republican leadership convention are any indication, struggle and protest are enduring feminist issues.

interest⁷⁹, especially in light of the recent economic down turn and global recession.

Other scholars have suggested we ought to anticipate new “problems” (see for example Gelb, 1995:134) as new tensions, limitations and contradictions (Porter, 2003:240-241) likely have and will continue to emerge. And if we were keen to develop a fuller, broader picture of how feminists have fared under neoliberalism in general and over time, we may want to venture one step further and seek out comparative analyses of feminists organizing in other jurisdictions, in Alberta and British Columbia for example, as both of these Canadian provinces have undergone similar “transformations of governance” in the last few decades.

Recall also from an earlier discussion (see Chapter Three), Reinharz’s (1992:256) suggestion that feminist researchers may experience difficulty in accessing diversified samples and I too wished that I could have conducted more interviews with differently located feminists. One can certainly then envision expanding the scope of the current study to include a greater range of feminist voices, including those of a more racially and geographically diverse group of women. Such diversity might enable us to draw out for example, class based differences among racialized (Nelson, 2009) feminists, and better address the realities of “gendered racism” and “racialized sexism” (Sudbury, 1998).

Examining the narrative accounts of not only urban, but rural women would enhance our understanding of the role geography may play in shaping women’s experiences of place, inequality and resistance to neoliberalism.

⁷⁹ See for example a recent article by Coulter (2009) “Women, Poverty Policy, and the Production of Neoliberal Politics in Ontario, Canada”. Still comparative analyses across jurisdictions i.e. a comparison of the neoliberal landscape of Dalton McGuinty’s Ontario and Gordon Campbell’s brand in BC would likely produce some similarities and differences that would be of interest to feminists and social justice activists alike.

It would also be important to consider the stories that this research project leaves untold, the stories of those women (and there were a few) who for whatever reason did not participate in my study and their ‘unspoken’ narratives. While few refused (by way of non-response), I suspect that time scarcity (see my discussion in Chapter Four) may have contributed to these women’s non-response. However, one could also surmise that perhaps these women either did not consider themselves or their resistance and activism as “feminist” (a definitional issue discussed not only earlier in this Chapter, but also in Chapters Two and Four), or that participation in my research project was not seen as being in their or their organization’s best interest. They may have seen little direct benefit tied to their involvement and or participation. I did not offer any form of compensation given the ethical dilemmas related to “forced participation” or participation without compensation (see discussion by Simpson/CRIAW, 2009:24). Or perhaps it was a case of my having neglected to clearly communicate what benefits may potentially be derived from participation. And so I would hope that future research and researchers, myself included, would attend to these issues when studying feminist stories in the future.

Lastly and relatedly, methodologically speaking, this study also draws attention to the need to continue to “apply an intersectional approach to research” (Simpson/CRIAW, 2009). Simpson (2009) argues this entails reviewing how researchers select, engage and involve participants in studies that are relevant to community perspectives, needs and development. Such an approach includes involving marginalized people and communities in the research process in ways that facilitate the sharing of skills and resources to the benefit of all participants (Simpson/CRIAW, 2009:23-24). Engaging

participants in research “requires making a commitment to thinking carefully about placing the experiences and perspectives of people with the least social, economic, and political power front and centre throughout the research process” (Morris and Bunjun, 2007:23 as cited by Simpson/CRIAW, 2009:23).

Keeping in mind the constraints that resources (time, money etc.) exact on the research process, I am keenly aware that there are numerous feminist stories that still need to be told, though perhaps there are those stories that cannot for a variety of reasons be recounted, analysed and told to and or by me. “That, however” to use Epp’s (1999) words “is another story” (and one that I discussed in some detail in Chapter Three). Taken together, I view these recommendations as constituting some of the potential subject matter of future stories of feminist organizing. And it is researching stories such as these that I believe are the “key to the telling feminism’s past, present, and future differently” (Hemmings, 2011).

Concluding Remarks: “Research as Resistance” (Brown and Strega, 2005)

research on activism is extremely important for feminists working toward a broadened political vision of women’s activism, and can help generate new strategies for coalition building. However, these studies may not answer specific questions activists have about the value of certain strategies for their particular political struggles. Yet these broad-based feminist historical and sociological analyses do shed new light on process of politicization, diversity, and continuity of political struggles over time (Naples, 1998:8).

I am resisting the temptation (as have others before me, see for example Marshall, 2000:153) to conclude with a quotation. Certainly I would be remiss to do so, and in closing, I will endeavour to add a few final words of my own as part of a call to action.

As I stated at the beginning, researching feminist activism is important to me. I would argue and likely find support amongst other feminist scholars that feminist sociological research in and of itself, constitutes a form of resistance (Brown and Strega, 2005). Feminist sociology is and remains for me, a measure of both academic and institutional resistance. This resistance is grounded in historical struggles that critique mainstream, androcentric sociological paradigms that for too long, neglected issues of gender, but of the ways in which gender intersected and increasingly intersects with race and class based inequalities. At present, it is equally important to me and for me as a feminist scholar, that I continue to struggle to draw attention to how it is that these intersections and inequalities are amplified and exploited under the rubric of neoliberalism. And so I see this research as contributing to the “larger historical record of women’s struggle” (Storey, 2011), women’s activism and feminist involvement in social justice and social change.

Further, I believe that my research on feminist activism and organizations during the Harris years contributes to our understanding of women’s organizing, an often overlooked aspect of social movement research. It highlights women’s resistance to the imposition of Harris’ neoliberal agenda. The women’s narratives studied here also challenge the idea that “feminism is dead” (Bashevkin, 1998). Rather, my research demonstrates how feminists have attempted to proactively respond to what new social movement scholars (i.e. Melucci, 1980; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1988; Kriesi, 1989; Pakulski, 1993 as cited by Macionis et al., 1997:606) would likely call “new sets of grievances” brought on by this “transformation of governance” (Harder, 2003). My focus

on feminist strategies and various forms of praxis highlights narratives of feminist resistance and contributes to our understandings of women's organizing for social change. And these women's narratives also demonstrate and affirm the practical importance of sharing "successful" change-oriented strategies to assist us all in the ongoing "fight back".

My reading of these women's stories makes clear feminist's struggles to keep equity issues related to feminism, work, racism and violence alive not only in feminist friendly circles, but in the political sphere and public mind as well. That being said, feminist organizations and activists remain vigilant, but perhaps constrained in their attempts to engage in tried and true as well as "alternative ways of organizing" (Porter, 2003:241) to address the gendered, racialized and class based tensions evident within the structured constraints characteristic of neoliberalism. Stories of feminist organizing in a neoliberal time also remind us of the ongoing challenges feminists face in finding new and inclusive ways to organize and the need to engage and develop effective strategies of resistance in order to "move forward", however slowly feminist inspired social change (see also Rebick, 2003).

Narrative analyses, including those documented and shared here, to use Henry and Tator's words (2010:xxv), enable us to explore the "dialectical tension" between the dominant discourses characteristic of the Harris regime and the "counter-narratives of opposition and resistance articulated" by feminist activists and organizations. Following Henry and Tator (2010:xxxiii) then, "one of the tools of social change is the power of the counter-narrative. The public documentation and sharing of stories and experiences. . .are

important not only as a research tool, but also, and more importantly, provide a powerful mechanism for mobilization and empowerment.”

Thus, I too remain committed to the idea that by researching, reading and interpreting narrative accounts such as these, we not only further theoretical and empirical analyses of structural inequalities and feminist critiques of neoliberalism, but we empower women, and women as feminists, to carve out new social and political spaces in which to situate our praxis, our diverse strategies of resistance if you will, that keep contemporary feminism (as a theoretical and political project) and its alternative vision of a more equitable, just and democratic society alive and well within our collective consciousness and our political reach. These stories, as they unfold, will add to the growing collection of stories “on, by and about” (Patai, 1991) women’s activism that inspire us to realize personal and political change.

Appendix A

TABLE ONE: BREAKDOWN OF SELECT ORGANIZATIONS BY TYPE INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY

Anti-violence Organizations	Labour Organizations	Anti-racist Organizations
METRAC (1) OAITH (1) SACHA (1) AWHL (1) Nellies (1) Sistering (1) unidentified shelters, public education and service organizations (2)	CUPE (3) OFL (1) CAW (2) OFA (1) USWA (2)	Native Women's Centre (1) Unidentified Immigrant Women's Centre (1) Multicultural Rape Crisis Centre (1) OCVMW (1)

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

Some of these questions have been reproduced and or adapted from Bashevkin (1998:259). * denotes questions reproduced and or adopted from Bashevkin (1998:259):

1. Can you please tell me a bit about your involvement in feminist activism? How many years have you been a feminist activist? In what fields or areas have you been the most active? (Bashevkin, 1998)*
2. Can you provide me with a brief overview of the Centre[/Organization/Group]? When and why was it founded? Can you please characterize the membership of the Centre? Size of the Centre? How many staff does your office employ? Annual budget? Major forms of funding? How is your organization structured? Is there a board of directors? How are decisions made? (Bashevkin, 1998)* (See also Disney and Gelb, 2000)
3. What is the Centre's view of feminism?
- 3a. What is the Centre's understanding of the state of feminism today?
4. What would the Centre say are the main problems facing feminists today?
5. "How would the Centre describe the [Harris years]? How did [the Harris years] impact your work as a [feminist] activist?" (Bashevkin, 1998)*
- 5a. What impact did the Harris years have on the women you help?
- 5b. What were the major problems the Centre encountered during the Harris years? Please identify these key problems and provide illustrative examples.
6. What types of processes did the centre employ to deal with these problems? For example: problem #1 and strategy, problem #2 and strategy etc. i.e. if government cutbacks were identified as a major problem, did you/your organization develop more diversified funding strategies and how were these strategies implemented.
- 6a. What kinds of new strategies did you have to develop to deal with these problems?
7. "What kinds of strategies did the Centre undertake to gain policy influence during the [Harris years]?" (Bashevkin, 1998)*
- 7a. What types of tactics were employed to sustain or maintain influence?

- 7b. Would the centre say that these strategies were different than those used when the [NDP - Bob Rae] government was in power? (Bashevkin, 1998)* [If so, how, please describe.]
- 7c. “In your estimation, how effective were these strategies in influencing policy? Would you say that they were successful in producing progressive feminist outcomes?” (Bashevkin, 1998)*
- 8. In your view, has the [Harris] government impacted public opinion between 1995-2001? If so, please describe your understanding of this impact on public consciousness.* Can you provide any examples? Implications for feminists? (Bashevkin, 1998)*
- 8a. What role do you believe the media (tv, newspaper, radio, internet) has played in relation to the public’s opinion of feminism?
- 8b. In your opinion, how has the Centre been represented by the media?
- 9. Overall, how would you characterize the Centre’s relationship vis a vis the Harris government?
- 10. “In short, what is your sense of the legacy of the [Harris years for feminists in the GTA]?” (Bashevkin, 1998)*

Appendix C

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS COLLECTED FROM VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

1. ASSAULTED WOMEN'S HELPLINE (AWHL)

Undated pamphlet. Assaulted Women's Helpline. A 24 helpline in the province of Ontario.

2. CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS (CAW, LOCAL 40)

Newsletter. Sisterline, December 2001.

Newsletter. Pride in Print, 2001.

Guide. March 8, 2002, International Women's Day Organizer's Tool Kit.

Manual. Session VI. Race, Gender and Class, March 1995.

3. CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS (CAW NATIONAL OFFICE)

CAW Women Activists Program, Discussion Leaders Manual, Week 1.

CAW Women Activists Program, Discussion Leaders Manual, Week 2.

CAW Paid Education Leave, Women Activists Program, June 28-July 3, 1998.

CAW Paid Education Leave, Women Activists Program, July 5-July 10, 1998.

Constitution of the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada, (CAW-Canada), Adopted at Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1997.

Report of Executive Board Trustees and National Secretary Treasurer, Jim O'Neil, CAW, January 1 to December 31, 2001.

The Guardian, Volume 50 - Edition No. 1, Windsor, Ontario, May 2002.

<http://www.CAW.ca/crisis1/index.asp>

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Appendix D

TABLE TWO: SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE MANDATES AND MISSION STATEMENTS OF SELECT FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY

Organizational Mandates, Structure, and Approximate Annual Budgets (2002)

Organization and Mandate	Organizational Structure
1. ANTI-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS	
<p>SACHA Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton and Area Est. 1975</p> <p>Mission Statement: “SACHA is a feminist, non-profit, community-based organization of women guided by anti-racist and anti-oppressive values. Understanding the dynamics of gender and power in sexual violence, our programs will: provide services to people who have experienced sexual violence at any point in their lives; work to end violence and oppression through education, advocacy, coalition-building, community partnerships and activism; work towards the equitable inclusion of all women. SACHA will challenge social and political structures and systems that contribute to the experience of violence, exploitation and oppression of all people.” (http://www.sacha.ca/our-centre)</p> <p>Approximate Annual Budget non-profit, \$450,000</p>	<p>non-hierarchical, ‘modified collective’; work collectively with management team; consensus based decision making</p>
<p>METRAC The Metropolitan Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children</p> <p>Est. 1982-1984</p> <p>About Us: “METRAC is a community based organization, not-for-profit organization based in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) that works to prevent and eliminate violence against diverse women and youth. We are committed to the right of women and youth to live free of violence and the threat of violence. Our work is informed by anti-oppression principles and we recognize that women and youth experience violence in different ways depending on factors such as their ethno-racial backgrounds, income levels, sexualities, gender identities, abilities and ages. We believe violence prevention measures must address the distinctive experiences of diverse individuals and communities. METRAC uses an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach. We work in partnership with individuals, community groups, organizations and services, governments, institutions, educators, urban planners and health and legal professionals.” (http://www.metrac.org/about/about.htm)</p>	<p>hierarchical, executive director>staff> members; diverse volunteer; board of directors</p>

Approximate Annual Budget non-profit, \$400,000, registered charity

OAITH

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses
Est. 1977

volunteer board of directors;
and regional representatives,
board operates as collective
decision making is made on
a democratic not collective basis;
one paid staff member

About Us: "OAITH is a provincial coalition founded by women's shelter advocates in 1977. Membership includes primarily first stage emergency shelters for abused women and their children as well as some second stage housing programs and community based women's service organizations. The Association works with member agencies to educate and promote change in all areas that abused women and their children identify as important to their freedom from violence. OAITH operates from an integrated, feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppression perspective on violence against women. We recognize that violence and abuse against women and children occurs as a result of unequal power and status of women and children in society. We also recognize that all racism and oppression of women is a form of violence."
(<http://www.oaith.ca/about-us/>)

Approximate Annual Budget non-profit, \$150,000

AWHL

Assaulted Women's Helpline
Est. 1985

modified hierarchy, co-directorship;
diverse, community based board of directors

Mission Statement: "To provide free, 24-hour, 7-day-a-week crisis counselling, emotional support, information, and referrals via telephone to women in up to 154 languages – completely anonymous and confidential."
(<http://www.awhl.org/about/mission-visinelliesnellieson/>)

Approximate Annual Budget \$1.6 million, non-profit, registered charity

Hamilton Women's Shelter
Est. early 1980's

Addresses violence against women issues and issues of women's homelessness by offering a range of services and programs

management hierarchy;
part of larger umbrella organization
organization; work based on a 'consultative
model'

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit

Nellies

Est. 1974

Mission Statement: "Our Mission is to operate programs and services for women and children who have and are experiencing oppressions such as violence, poverty and homelessness. Nellie's is a community based feminist organization which operates within an anti-racist, anti-oppression framework. We are committed to social change through education and advocacy to achieve social justice for all women and children."
(<http://www.nellies.org/about/mission-statement/>)

prior to 1998 operated as
a collective, present day
hierarchical, board>executive
director>staff>community >members

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit registered charity, \$1.5 million

Anti-violence Educational Organization
Est. 1978

Mission: “[Our] mission is to inform and educate the community about the issues of wife assault/woman abuse in order to decrease the incidence of physical, psychological, emotional and sexual violence against women and the effect that woman abuse has on children.”
 (http://www.peelregion.ca/health/sexual-assault/1.-more.htm)

Approximate Annual Budget, registered charity,
 \$600,00 to \$700,000

‘hands on’ volunteer board; non-profit,
 of directors; executive director,
 specialized staff team, not a
 collective but engage in collective
 decision making

2. ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZATIONS

HNWC
Hamilton Native Women’s Centre
Est. 1976

Mission Statement: “To provide assistance to Native families in the Hamilton area by identifying their needs, advocating on their behalf and establishing programs and services to meet their needs.”

(http://www.nativewomenscentre.com/page.aspx?menu=32&app=159&cat1=404&tp=2&lk=no)

Approximate Annual Budget, registered charity, \$300,000

executive director; non-profit,
 governed by seven
 member volunteer

GTA Immigrant Women’s Centre
Est. late 1980s

About: “an equality seeking, anti-racist, charitable organization dedicated to the social, political, and economic inclusion of refugee and immigrant women in a just and supportive Canadian society. The Centre is committed to enabling refugee and Immigrant women to discover and build their new futures through skills development and settlement support.”

(http://www.gtaimmigrantwomen.ca/index.php?page=historyand_mission)

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit, charitable

board of directors, executive director,
 staff, and volunteers organization

CVMN
Coalition of Visible Minority Women of Ontario
Est. 1986

Description: “The Coalition of Visible Minority women is a non-profit organization established in 1983. The Coalition acknowledges and affirms not only visible minority women, but also newcomers to Canada and their families, refugees, and youth as full participants and contributors to Canadian life. On their behalf, the Coalition engages in advocacy, lobbying, orientation, education, settlement and support services.”

(http://www.settlement.org/downloads/between_two_wordls.pdf)

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit

elected board of directors;
 committee and volunteer based
 organization

Rape Crisis Centre
Est. 1974

multicultural; diverse staff ; non-profit,
 and volunteer members; community based
 organization

Services and Mission Statement:

“[Organization] operates on principles of mutual respect and anti-oppression. We believe survivors of sexual violence are experts in their own healing. Together we work toward creating a thriving community, empowering survivors of all races, classes, ages, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities and spiritualities,. [We are] ia grassroots, women-run collective working towards a violence-free world by providing anti-oppressive, feminist peer support to survivors of sexual violence through support, education and activism.”
 (http://www._____.ca/toronto)

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit

Sistering
Est. 1981

hierarchical, executive;
 director>program managers>
 front line staff; managed by
 community based board of
 directors

Mission Statement: “Sistering is a women’s organization that offers practical and emotional support through programs which enables them to make greater control over their lives. Guided by the principles of Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression, Sistering works to change social conditions which endanger women’s welfare.”

(http://www.sistering.org/About_Us/About_Us.aspx)

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit, registered charity

3. LABOUR and WORK RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

OFA
Opportunity for Advancement
Est. 1973/1977

hierarchical, executive
 director>staff>committees>
 board of directors; work to
 maintain principles of
 feminist collective i.e democratic
 decision making

Description: “Opportunity for Advancement works with women in disadvantaged life situations. While poverty is an issue for almost all of the women, other factors create additional barriers to well-being and equal participation in society. These include being a sole support parent, being an immigrant or woman of colour, being disabled or chronically ill, or having experienced violence. The women we serve come to OFA from all cultures and with a wide diversity of history, experience and skill. They come to OFA open to an opportunity to learn to identify they things that they do well and to learn to take the steps they need to begin to achieve a better life for themselves and their families. They overcome tremendous obstacles often simply by being able to get to the program each day. Their strength and courage is a powerful reinforcement to other women struggling to find their way out of poverty, illness and fear of the future. Opportunity for Advancement has been a leader in the development of feminist group work models that address personal issues within a broader social context. Our approach recognizes both the strengths of individuals and the support that comes from the group process. Our programs enable participants to build self-esteem, reduce social isolation, explore the roots of problem situations, learn and share information and skills, and set new goals for themselves.”

(http://www.ofacan.com/about/)

Approximate Annual Budget, non-profit, \$600,000

CAW National Office

National Canadian Auto Workers

Est. 1985

Description: "The CAW is one of the largest private sector unions in the country... The CAW is not only dedicated to fighting for workers rights at the bargaining table it's equally committed to taking on economic, political and social issues that affect its members, and their families in the broader community." (<http://www.caw.ca/en/about-the-caw.htm>)

national executive; membership board; local unions; CAW council

Approximate Annual Budget, dues based ;revenue all funds, strike and CAW family, total \$77 302 100 for 2001.

CAW Local 40

Est. 1992

Who We Are: "The Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW) Local 40 is located in the City of Toronto. CAW Local 40 is comprised of fifteen different workplaces located throughout the city. We represent workers in sectors such as manufacturing, textile and garment, health care, hotel, protection services, office/ administration and in the automotive sector. CAW Local 40 currently has approximately 670 members." (<http://www.cawlocal.ca/40/who.asp>)

executive; local representatives

Approximate Annual Budget, dues based

USW Canada National Office

Est. 1942

About the United Steelworkers: "Making Lives Better for Workers. Members of the United Steelworkers work in every sector of Canada's economy in every kind of job. Steelworkers are women and men of every ethnic background working in every region of Canada." (<http://www.usw.ca/union/who/about>)

national director; three district directors (District 3 Western Canada and the territories; District 6 Ontario and Atlantic Canada; District 5 Quebec)

USWA

Local 8300, Toronto

executive; local membership meetings; decisions made by majority vote

Approximate Annual Budget, dues based, \$200,000

CUPE

Local 5167

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Est. 1990's, Hamilton, Ontario

About CUPE 5167: "We are a composite Local which consists of six units from DARTS Lodges (Macassa and Wentworth), Royal Botanical Gardens, Good Shepherd Centres (Women's Services), Hamilton International Airport and the City of Hamilton with both Outside and Inside working groups." (<http://cupe5167.org/About-CUPE-516>)

executive board; AGM; dues based highest legislative and policy forming body

OFL**Ontario Federation of Labour****Est. 1944**

Description: “The OFL is the province’s ‘house of labour’ and serves as an umbrella groups for working people and their unions...the OFL has grown to represent over one million Ontario workers belonging to more than 1500 locals from 54 affiliated unions, making it

Canada’s largest provincial labour federation. The OFL’s strong membership and militancy makes it a formidable political voice. The OFL pushes for legislative change in every area that affects people’s daily lives, including health, education, workplace safety, minimum wage and other employment standards, human rights, women’s rights, worker’s compensation, and pensions. It also makes regular presentations and submissions to the Ontario government and mounts internal and public awareness campaigns to mobilize the kind of political pressure that secures positive change for all workers – whether or not they belong to a union.”

(<http://ofl.ca/index/php/about/ofl/>)

Approximate Annual Budget, dues based

elected executive board composed of full time president, secretary treasurer, executive vice president and 29 vice presidents comprised of executive board and one delegate from each of the 45 Ontario labour councils

Appendix E

TABLE THREE: FEMINIST LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS INTERVIEWED IN THE GTA IN 2002

Interviewees

Name	Position and Place of Interview	Interview Date
Elaine Prescod	Executive Director, Ontario Coalition of Visible and Minority Women, Scarborough, ON	April 2, 2002
Sherry Lewis	Executive Director, Native Women's Shelter, Hamilton, ON	April 10, 2002
Vilma Rossi	Executive Director, Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton and Area (SACHA), Hamilton, ON	April 25, 2002
Pam Cross	Executive Director, Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), Toronto, ON	May 1, 2002
Cindy Cowan	Executive Director, Nellies, Toronto ON	May 6, 2002
Carolyn Egan	President, United Steelworkers Local 8300 Toronto, ON	May 9, 2002
Eileen Morrow	Executive Director, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, (OAITH), Toronto, ON	May 16, 2002
Peggy Nash	National Secretary, Canadian Auto Workers National Office (CAW), Toronto, ON	May 22, 2002
Carol Anne Sceviour	Director of Human Rights, Women/Gay & Lesbian Issues, Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), Toronto, ON	June 3, 2002
Jenny Ahn	President, Canadian Auto Workers (CAW Local 40), Toronto, ON	June 5, 2002

Linda Tourney	Past President, Labour Council of Toronto and York Region, Toronto, ON, Co-Chair Metro Days of Action	June 12, 2002
Laurel Smith	Peace activist, Toronto, ON	September 17, 2002
Beth Jordan	Executive Director, Assaulted Women's Helpline (AWHL), Toronto, ON	September 18, 2002
Joanne Green	Executive Director, Opportunity for Advancement (OFA), Toronto, ON	October 1, 2002
Geneva Neale	Canadian Union of Public Employees, (CUPE Local 5167), Women's Committee Member	October 11, 2002
Anna Willats	Feminist Activist, Toronto, ON	October 18, 2002
Mrytle Grieve	Program Manager, Community Link Hamilton, ON	October 23, 2002
Angela Robertson	Executive Director, Sistering, Toronto, ON	November 4, 2002
Marlene Gow	United Steelworkers Association (USWA), District 6, Education Coordinator, National Office, Toronto, ON	November 5, 2002
Pseudonyms		
Executive Director	GTA Immigrant Women's Centre	April 16, 2002
Executive Director	GTA Halfway House for Federally Sentenced Women	May 14, 2002
Executive Director	GTA Women's Centre	May 30, 2002
Crisis Counsellor	GTA Culturally Diverse Rape Crisis Centre	June 10, 2002

Union Steward, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)	Hamilton, ON	June 22, 2002
Shelter Manager	Hamilton, ON	September 24, 2002
Anti-racist Peace Activist	Hamilton, ON	September 26, 2002
Healthcare researcher/feminist activist, Toronto, ON		September 27, 2002
Feminist Activist	Hamilton, ON	October 8, 2002
Community Health Activist/street nurse/ homeless advocate	Toronto, ON	October 9, 2002
Older women's advocate	Hamilton, ON	November 1, 2002
Disability Advocate	Hamilton, ON	October 22, 2002
Socialist feminist activist Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE),	Toronto, ON	October 29, 2002
Executive Director/ Anti-violence Educator	Toronto, ON	November 8, 2002

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