

NEGOTIATING A NEOLIBERAL FUNDING REGIME:
FEMINIST SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AND STATE FUNDING

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines shifts in state funding for feminist service organizations in Canada. Specifically, it focuses on the implications of a neoliberal funding regime for these organizations. I argue that feminist service organizations should be understood as both social movement and nonprofit organizations. Examining their connections to both the nonprofit sector and the feminist movement provides deeper insight into the ways feminist service organizations' are impacted by changes to funding. I contend that because of their dual positioning, feminist service organizations experience a neoliberal funding regime in multiple and complex ways. Under neoliberalism, nonprofit organizations have experienced cuts to core funding, an increase in short-term project based funding and a strict accountability regime. The democratic function of the nonprofit sector is no longer recognized as legitimate. This has been especially significant for feminist service organizations because their role as advocates for women was historically acknowledged by provincial and federal governments in Canada. However, this work has become increasingly stigmatized.

I undertook a comparative analysis of two feminist service organizations in Ontario, Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton, to explore how these organizations experience a neoliberal funding regime. In particular, I considered how the funding relationship affects daily organizational work, advocacy and anti-racist, anti-oppressive (ARAO) practice. I also examined how feminist service organizations respond to the challenges posed by their political and funding climate. In addition to my research with these organizations, I examined policy documents produced by Status of Women Canada (SWC) and the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), as well as the provincial and federal Public Accounts. This allowed me to analyse shifts in approaches to the nonprofit sector and government priorities.

My research indicates that there is a shrinking space for social justice work. In particular, it is increasingly difficult for organizations to advocate, build community and engage in the more radical aspects of an ARAO framework. Despite this, my findings indicate that feminist service organizations can find ways to negotiate the challenges in their environments.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Neoliberalism, State Funding & Feminist Organizations in Canada

In September of 2006, the newly elected Harper Conservative government announced sweeping changes to Status of Women Canada (SWC), the central federal government organization responsible for gender equality work. Changes included significant revisions to the mandate, the closure of 12 of 16 regional offices and funding cuts of \$5 million over two years. Furthermore, funding eligibility was altered for nonprofit organizations accessing funds through the Women's Program, with organizations no longer eligible to receive funds for advocacy or research (FAFIA 2008; Knight & Rodgers 2012). Bev Oda, who at the time was the Minister for the Status of Women, justified the changes by speaking about eliminating "inefficiencies". She asserted that the closures of regional offices would save money on "unnecessary" rent and bills which could be better used elsewhere. Additionally, Oda declared "We don't need to separate the men from the women in this country... This government as a whole is responsible to develop policies and programs that address the needs of both men and women" ("Tories Shutting Status of Women Offices" 2006). In response to criticism from the opposition, she said "I'm very surprised that the opposition would say, 'Put money back in inefficiencies' when you can find inefficiencies and streamline the operations" (ibid). Her comments reflected the view that gender equality work is no longer necessary in Canada and that investing in this work is a wasteful use of state resources.

Women's organizations and feminists throughout the country reacted to the changes to SWC, clearly viewing the funding cuts, closures and revisions as an attack on gender equality work. Demonstrations took place across the country to protest the weakening of SWC. At one

protest held in Ottawa on December 10th 2006, the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) presented a declaration which demanded that the Harper government renew Canada's commitment to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Carastathis 2007). The changes made to SWC were framed in the declaration as a failure to uphold gender equality commitments and as a clear effort to dismantle feminist organizations in Canada. Indeed, a number of organizations which had received SWC funding for decades experienced funding cuts (see Public Service Alliance of Canada 2010).

It was in this context that my doctoral project was conceived. The majority of organizations which were directly impacted by SWC funding cuts were large organizations focused on research or advocacy. However, I was interested in understanding how feminist service organizations – which are often smaller and engage in both service provision and advocacy – experience a political and funding climate marked by conservative social values and neoliberal policy approaches¹. In particular, I wanted to explore how feminist service organizations retain their social movement roots in an increasingly restrictive funding regime. Given these concerns, I began my project with three questions:

1. How does the funding relationship influence the work being done in women's organizations? For example, do revisions to SWC funding guidelines affect the balance between service provision and advocacy? Do programmes and services change due to pressures from funding agencies?
2. a) How does an anti-racist, anti-oppressive (ARAO) analysis shape the work of the organizations in question? b) How is this work supported, managed or resisted by state funding agencies?

¹ Neoliberalism is an ideology which values the “free” market and individualism. It promotes state withdrawal from service delivery, decreases in taxes and privatization (Bezanson & Luxton 2006; Cohen & Pulkingham 2009; Smith 2005). Neoliberalism is discussed in more depth in Chapter Three.

3. How do the organizations in question negotiate the funding relationship in order to maintain control over the work of their organizations?

Because of the complex funding landscape that feminist service organizations operate in, and because the restructuring of SWC represents only one - albeit significant - moment in a long history of insecurity for women's organizations in Canada (see Rodgers & Knight 2011), it is necessary to explore how feminist service organizations experience and respond to the broader neoliberal funding regime. This dissertation conceptualizes feminist service organizations as simultaneously positioned as a part of the nonprofit sector and as social movement organizations. The funding challenges they face are understood in this context. Neoliberal restructuring has affected the nonprofit sector as a whole. However, this dissertation demonstrates that because feminist service organizations are connected to both the nonprofit sector and feminist organizing, they experience funding challenges on multiple fronts.

Methodology

My study was guided by feminist principles which emphasize the need to connect feminist research and praxis (Fonow & Cook 2005; Brooks & Hesse Biber 2007; Harding & Noberg 2005; Taylor 1998). This informed the focus of my research, as well as my methodological approach. As a feminist researcher interested in social movements and social justice, I am deeply concerned with understanding feminist organizing. Given the challenges facing feminist organizations under neoliberalism, it is important to study how organizations on the ground experience and respond to a neoliberal funding climate. In order to study the relationship between state funding and feminist service provision, I undertook a comparative analysis of two feminist service organizations. Additionally, I engaged in a close reading of

policy documents including the Public Accounts and documents produced by Status of Women Canada and the Ontario Women's Directorate.

Analysis of Policy Documents

I undertook an analysis of policy documents to gain a better understanding of the political context feminist organizations operate in. Policy documents examined included Status of Women Canada Reports on Plans and Priorities (2001-2011), the Ontario Women's Directorate's *Blueprint for Equality* (1984) and the Ontario Women's Directorate's Year End/Business Reports (1989/1990, 1990-1991, 1998-1999). Additionally, I examined the federal Public Accounts for SWC (2004-2010) and spending on women's organizations listed in the Ontario Public Accounts (1989-1990, 1994-1995, 2001-2002, 2011-2012)². My application of this particular method is influenced by institutional ethnography's use of documents to investigate the 'relations of ruling' (Naples 2003; Ng 1988). As Ng (1988) argues, documents play a significant role in the coordination of state activities and ensure its reproduction. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the functions of state documents. Analysing policy documents for my research provided me with an understanding of shifts in funding expectations and government priorities, allowing me to examine how changes were framed and rationalized.

Qualitative Analysis of Two Feminist Service Organizations

To investigate my research questions, I also undertook a comparative analysis of two feminist service organizations in Ontario, Elizabeth Fry Toronto (E-Fry Toronto) and Interval House Hamilton. Interval House Hamilton provides support and advocacy to women who have

² Dates for documents examined were selected based on historical shifts. For example, the 1990s were a period of significant change for the Ontario Women's Directorate which was reflected in the Year End/Business Reports.

experienced or are experiencing violence. The organization operates a shelter, offers counselling and a variety of programs, and provides legal advocacy for women. E-Fry Toronto serves women “...who are, have been or are at risk of being in conflict with the criminal justice system” (Elizabeth Fry Toronto n.d.). E-Fry Toronto offers programming and counselling services, engages in community outreach and education, and also operates a transitional residence. These organizations were selected based on their feminist histories, their use of anti-racist, anti-oppressive frameworks, and because they provide services and have equality seeking mandates.

Between July 2011 and November 2011, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with women at each organization for a total of twenty interviews. At E-Fry Toronto, I spoke with women in a variety of roles at the organization including front-line workers, managers and volunteers who sat on the Board of Directors. At Interval House Hamilton, I spoke with front-line workers, managers, two women historically involved in the Women’s Centre³, as well as one volunteer involved in providing services to women in the community. Women at both organizations came from diverse experiences. For example, some of the women I interviewed mentioned using the organizations’ services in the past, some identified as working class or as having working class roots, others (specifically board members) tended to work in high status professions. Women at E-Fry Toronto represented a diversity of races and ethnicities and a number of women mentioned this in interviews when discussing the ARAO work of the organization. Women whom I interviewed at Interval House Hamilton did not represent the same racial and ethnic diversity. Some interviewees did mention a lack of representation of women of colour in their organizations, attributing this to various factors including the presence of community specific women’s organizations in the city, as well as the need for the organization to continue improving its community outreach.

³ The Women’s Centre is now a program of Interval House Hamilton. This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

Research participants at both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton were asked about their roles and interest in working or volunteering at the organization, as well as about the organization's history and role in the community. I also asked participants to reflect on the organization's ARAO work, inclusivity and the organization's feminist or women centred⁴ approach. Additionally, I inquired about whether, and if so, how funding agencies influence organizational work, as well as about participant's perceptions of the funding and political climate. Because management has a better sense of the breakdown of organizational funding, I did not ask front-line staff or volunteers specific questions about their organization's funding⁵. At the conclusion of each interview, I asked participants if there was anything they wanted to add to their comments or if there was anything else I should have asked.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I also examined organizational literature including pamphlets, newsletters, websites and anti-racist and anti-oppressive (ARAO) policies. In particular, I focused on organizational missions, visions and guiding principles, as well as descriptions of the organizations' ARAO frameworks, feminism or women-centred approaches and discussions of equality or advocacy. Analyzing these documents allowed me to see how E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton conceptualize their work in the community and frame their work to the broader public.

Ethical Considerations

Many feminist researchers have emphasized the importance of locating oneself in one's research (Lykes & Coquillon 2007; Naples 2003). Our social position, role in the community and

⁴ E-Fry Toronto describes itself as a women-centred organization. This is discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵ When I began interviewing, I did ask all interviewees about organizational funding. However, those in front-line positions often recommended that I speak to management for more information. After this happened more than once, I made the decision to omit this question from interviews with front-line workers.

personal politics shape the questions we ask, our experiences in the field and our interpretation of the research (Naples 2003). Therefore, in my work, I was conscious of how my race, gender and class background shaped the research. I was also aware of the ways my feminist identity, experience with feminist service organizations and my role as an academic affected how my research participants related to me. For example, interviewing in my own community, Hamilton, was a different experience than interviewing in Toronto. Some of my research participants recognized me from my work in the feminist community. Many who did not recognize me but who knew I resided in Hamilton would ask me if I knew about particular organizations or community politics. This had varying impacts on the interview dynamics. In some cases, my volunteer work in the community located me as an insider and helped me establish rapport with research participants. In other cases, I could sense that I was viewed as an outsider because of tensions between organizations in the women's community. However, in all cases, my identification as a feminist seemed to facilitate the interview process in that women appeared to speak with ease about issues of gender inequality and the broader political climate. Unsurprisingly, my role as researcher located me as an outsider, at times presenting uncomfortable dynamics. For instance, during the interviews, some women would ask me for my expert opinion on the issues that I was asking them to speak to. At other times, I could sense that my motives and presence did not go unquestioned.

A key characteristic of feminist research is the acknowledgement that complex power relations are embedded in the research process. Many feminist researchers aim to minimize power inequities between themselves and their participants (Harding & Norberg 2005; Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton 2001). One strategy for doing so is recognizing the importance of reciprocity in the research relationship. Reciprocity involves considering what a researcher takes

from those s/he studies and involves ongoing negotiations about issues of space, voice and authority (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton 2001). Because, as a researcher, I have control over the design of the study and the interpretation and dissemination of the results, there is a power differential between myself and my research participants. To minimize some of the tensions this can produce, I offered research participants the opportunity to review and comment on their interview transcripts. This approach was intended to indicate respect for participants' rights to privacy and control over their words and information. However, very few women indicated a desire to review their transcripts and those who did only mentioned minor issues⁶. Because the women who participated in my research are already overworked, it is not surprising that very few took the time to read their transcripts and provide feedback. However, providing participants with access to their data was important to me as a feminist researcher and I would replicate this method in the future.

Another important ethical consideration in my work involved the identification of the organizations in the study⁷. Recognizing that organizations would have concerns about how they were represented in the research and the potential consequences of participating in my study, I spoke with management at both organizations about how they would like the organizations to be identified. I informed organizations that if they would like to remain unnamed in the study, I would respect that. However, I did feel that the distinct histories of the organizations deserved recognition as well. After discussing the research and initial results, both organizations agreed to be identified in the research. One individual articulated the concern that if the organizations were identified, challenges could be interpreted as solely affecting the organizations in this study. However, as my dissertation demonstrates, the challenges these organizations face are the result

⁶ Specifically, two women noted that they said "um" too much. I had to reassure them that this is common in interviews and that I would likely not include filler words in the write up on the data.

⁷ Participants are of course not identified and all participants have been assigned pseudonyms.

of a particular policy approach and impact organizations across the nonprofit sector. Concerns were also expressed about whether specific funding agencies would be named as particularly problematic; however, in interviews women were careful to speak generally about funders and framed issues as a part of a larger trend in the broader funding climate. Therefore, I was able to address this concern to the satisfaction of the individual who expressed it. Thus, I have chosen to identify the organizations in the study; however, I accept sole responsibility for the interpretation of the data.

Finally, as a feminist researcher, I am committed to creating research that contributes to social justice and which can be useful for those engaging in this work ‘on the ground’. In addition to providing the opportunity to review interview transcripts, I have also offered to share the results of my work with the organizations. While engaged in the writing process, I did share some of the results with E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton to provide a sense of how their organizations and the funding climate are discussed in my dissertation⁸. Upon the conclusion of my dissertation, I will contact the organizations again to distribute the results in an accessible format. Both organizations have indicated an interest in learning more about the research results.

Dissertation Argument and Structure

This dissertation identifies the organization in this study as feminist service providers and, thus, as both social movement and nonprofit organizations. I argue that this dual positioning results in organizations experiencing neoliberal restructuring in multiple and complex ways. For feminist services organizations reliant on state funding, neoliberalism has meant reductions in

⁸ I provided the organizations with a conference paper I had recently presented and the corresponding PowerPoint presentation.

funding (in particular, core funding), an increase in short-term project funding and a stringent accountability regime. Furthermore, feminist organizations' role as advocates for women is no longer considered a legitimate focus. To understand how a neoliberal funding climate affects E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton, I consider the impact on organizational daily work, advocacy and ARAO practice. My findings indicate a shrinking space for social justice work. In particular, efforts to advocate, to build community and to engage in some of the more radical goals of ARAO work are undermined in a neoliberal funding and political climate. However, my dissertation also recognizes that feminist organizations do respond to – and at times, even resist – pressures introduced in a neoliberal funding regime.

In chapter two, I explore what it means for feminist service organizations to be defined as both social movement organizations and as a part of the broader nonprofit sector. I examine the literature on feminist organizations, considering characteristics which, I argue, define an organization as feminist. I also discuss why it is important to locate feminist service organizations as nonprofit organizations because this can provide us with a better understanding of their relations to the state, and specifically, to state funding. This chapter also explores debates about feminist engagement with the state, discussing some of the contradictions and challenges which arise for state funded feminist organizations. I contend that viewing state funded feminist organizations as coopted is too simple. Instead, I argue that we must recognize a continuum of possible relations and acknowledge that organizations often negotiate the challenges associated with accepting state funding.

Chapter three moves beyond theoretical discussions of feminist organizations and the state to focus specifically on the Canadian context. I examine what the shift to neoliberalism has meant for the nonprofit sector in Canada and how this has affected women's organizations in

particular. Because women's organizations in Canada were historically recognized by the state as both service providers and advocates for women, I assert that it is necessary to understand how neoliberal approaches affect both service provision and social justice work. The chapter concludes by considering the creation and subsequent dismantling of state machinery specifically created to support women's equality, as well as the consequences this has had for women's organizations in Canada.

E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton are introduced in detail in chapter four. The chapter describes the organizations' histories, values and social justice goals. I discuss the organizations' services, programs and connections to coalitions. Additionally, I explore their foundational histories and commitment to women's equality. I examine the organizations' application of a gender analysis, focus on empowerment and social justice goals. Although neither organization openly identified as feminist at the time of this study, I argue that they can be defined as such. My dissertation shows that this shapes their experience of funding changes and the political climate.

Chapters five and six explore in depth the ways a neoliberal funding regime affect organizational work, advocacy and ARAO practice at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton. Chapter five examines challenges associated with applying for and maintaining funding, including reporting, overwork and staffing issues. I describe these challenges as both new and ongoing, arguing that although some of these difficulties were present prior to the rise of neoliberalism, a neoliberal funding climate has exacerbated pressures for organizations. In addition to discussing the challenges organizations face, I also examine how organizations respond to and negotiate a neoliberal funding climate, discussing strategies E-Fry Toronto and

Interval House Hamilton use to cope with and resist daily challenges presented by a neoliberal funding regime.

In chapter six, I focus on the influence state funding has over advocacy and ARAO practice. In this dissertation, I argue that a commitment to social justice is a defining feature of feminist organizations. Therefore, studying how neoliberalism has affected organizations' ability to engage in this work is necessary to understand how (and if) feminist organizations are able to retain their social movement roots in the face of a neoliberal funding and political climate. Chapter six begins by discussing the core tenets of ARAO, a social justice framework applied by both Interval House Hamilton and E-Fry Toronto. I then examine how E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton interpret and articulate ARAO in their own work. I discuss interview data which reveals that state funders appear to support some aspects of ARAO work, including efforts to create more inclusive and accessible services and organizations. However, my data also demonstrates that the more radical aspects of ARAO are undermined by the funding climate. Specifically, organizations' efforts to build community and to engage in social justice advocacy are made more difficult under neoliberalism. Despite this, women I interviewed discussed strategies they use to continue with this work. This chapter concludes by questioning the sustainability of these tactics when spaces for social justice work are rapidly shrinking under neoliberalism.

Chapter seven concludes the dissertation by highlighting key themes and findings that emerged from the research. Additionally, this chapter reimagines the funding relationship and argues that a thriving nonprofit sector is a significant characteristic of a democratic society. Thus, despite the issues and dilemmas which arise for organizations which accept state funding, I contend that it is important not abandon this model entirely. To do so would be to accept the

state's withdrawal from its responsibility for gender equality and social reproduction. The chapter concludes by discussing some of the limitations of the study, as well as future directions for research.

Conclusion

This dissertation explores the implications of a neoliberal funding regime for feminist service organizations, as well as the nonprofit sector more broadly. It does so by closely examining how two Ontario feminist service organizations experience and negotiate challenges in the funding climate. Bridging research on social movements and the nonprofit sector, this dissertation advances understandings of the complex environments feminist service organizations navigate in their efforts to provide services to their communities and continue to fight for social justice.

Chapter Two

Feminist Organizations & The State

This chapter theorizes relationships between feminist service organizations and the state. In particular, it examines the implications of a funding relationship. My discussion conceptualizes feminist service organizations as both social movement and nonprofit organizations. After first discussing feminist organizations' social movement roots, I consider the specific characteristics which I argue define these organizations as feminist. Next, I explore feminist service organizations' links to the nonprofit sector. Identifying feminist service organizations as part of the nonprofit sector highlights some common challenges facing community organizations as governments restructure and embrace neoliberal modes of governing. The second section of this chapter explores some of the distinct dilemmas which arise for feminist service organizations when they accept state resources and it explores debates about feminist organizations' engagement with state institutions.

Understanding feminist service organizations as both social movement and nonprofit organizations allows for a complex and nuanced analysis of their relationships with state funding bodies. In particular, it highlights their double vulnerability in a neoliberal political and funding climate. I argue that feminist service organizations experience changes to the funding climate on multiple fronts due to their social movement roots and their connection to the nonprofit sector. However, this chapter also argues that organizations can respond to and resist pressures presented in their environments and my discussion moves beyond analyses which frame funded organizations as necessarily co-opted and depoliticized.

Theorizing Feminist Organizations

In general, feminist organizations remain under-theorized. This is particularly true in Canada where attempts to theorize feminist organizations have been limited. Amongst Canadian scholars studying women's activism within women's organizations, the focus has been on large national organizations (Nadeau 2009; Rodgers & Knight 2011; Vickers, Rankin & Appelle 1993), the internal dynamics of women's organizations (English 2006; English 2007; Srivastava 2005) and organizations' engagement with political structures and policy (Briskin & Eliasson eds. 1999). A small body of literature also examines conservative and anti-feminist women's organizations, problematizing the connection between feminism and women's organizing (Anderson & Langford 2001; Erwin 1993; Erwin 1990; Steuter 1992). Broadly speaking, research on local feminist service organizations has remained peripheral in discussions of women's organizing in Canada⁹ and existing literature has not taken up definitional issues. Instead, much of this literature has tended to implicitly assume and ascribe feminist identity onto women's organizations.

This overall lack of attention to theorizing feminist organizations in Canada is surprising and can obscure an analysis of feminist organizing. It is important to theorize feminist organizations for a number of reasons when studying feminist activism. Firstly, it is necessary to understand what defines an organization as "feminist" in order to differentiate these organizations from conservative, anti-feminist and apolitical women's organizations. Secondly, the label "feminist" contains multiple meanings and, in certain contexts, is considered contentious. Therefore, it is necessary to develop better frameworks to understand different ways of organizing around gender equality. Finally, theorizing feminist organizations more

⁹ There are of course some exceptions to this including Janovicek's (2007) exploration of battered women's shelters in Northern Ontario and Beres, Crow and Gottell's (2009) survey of Canadian sexual assault and rape crisis centres.

consciously draws attention to their social movement roots and their connections to social justice work and organizing.

Social movements can be understood as organized campaigns which seek to create or prevent social change. They do so by working to transform social and political values, as well as institutions in society (Smith 2005). Della Porta and Diani (2006: 20-22) characterize social movements as distinct social processes of collective action. They argue that social movements involve dense social networks, shared collective identities and conflict with clearly defined opponents (ibid: 20-22). Their definition allows for a broad understanding of social movements because it can be applied to movements from a spectrum of political perspectives. Furthermore, della Porta and Diani (2006) highlight important relations between members of social movements, as well as with power structures. Tilly and Tarrow (2007: 4) define a social movement as "...a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions and solidarities that sustain these activities". In other words, they contend that social movements involve collectives of people who organize to make claims upon those with power. Importantly, Tilly and Tarrow (2007) emphasize the political nature of social movements and other forms of collective action.

Some make a distinction between social movements and political movements. Political movements engage in action "...intended to break the limits of the established political system" (Chesters & Welsh 2011: 134). They push for inclusion in decision making processes, work to expose and challenge dominant interests in the political system and seek to "...open up new channels for the expression of previously excluded demands" (ibid: 135). This typology can certainly encompass some of the demands of the feminist movement; however, the goals of feminist organizing extend beyond these demands. In her discussion of social movements, Smith

(2005: 35) observes that "...state policy alone cannot effect changes in social behaviour" and she notes that, because of this, social movements often pursue diverse strategies in their efforts to make social change. This has certainly been the case for the feminist movement. Thus, this dissertation identifies the feminist movement as a social movement and conceptualizes social movements as necessarily political.

Generally, feminist research has understood social movements to be inherently political and has also drawn attention to their gendered dynamics. Social movement processes, collective identities and political opportunities are shaped by gender (Taylor & Whittier 1998; Taylor 1999). Additionally, feminist social movement research is informed by analyses which explore how gender intersects with race, class, nationality and sexuality (ibid: 623). These insights have emerged from research with a diversity of social movements; however, they are particularly true in movements which are organized around gendered identities and interests and which seek to challenge and alter existing gender orders.

This project is particularly interested in the relationship between social movements and social movement organizations (SMOs). SMOs can be understood as a "formally organized component of a broader social movement" (Chesters & Welsh 2011). SMOs identify with the goals and collective identity of the broader social movement; however, they can develop their own goals and organizing strategies (ibid: 153). Furthermore, they are not static and change over time in response to internal dynamics and their external environments (Andrews 2002; Reger 2002; Whittier 2002). SMOs play an important role in social movement activity. They provide space for activists, produce resources for movements and they have the potential to extend beyond the individual involvement of their members, facilitating the continuation of social movement goals and activities (Ferree & Martin 1995; Stromquist 2007; Vickers, Rankin &

Appelle 1993). In their discussion of feminist organizations, Ferree and Martin (1995: 7) contend that these organizations have a reciprocal and dynamic relationship with women's movement and argue that "...although social movements cannot be reduced to their formal organizations, such institutions are vital". Others (Stromquist 2007; English 2006) have drawn attention to the important learning and education work which happens within feminist organizations. These structures provide a space for consciousness raising, allowing members to develop and share new understandings about the world. Stromquist (2007: 28) asserts that organizations are important for social movements because they provide spaces for members to both imagine and work towards the achievement of long-term, transformational goals.

Feminist Organizations: Defining Characteristics

Given the potential significance of organizations to social movements, it is important to be able to identify feminist organizations and to explore their relationship to women's organizing more broadly. Some discussions of feminist organizations have focused on structural issues. For example, they have examined the range of feminist structures, examining collectives and democratic decision-making processes, as well as the role of feminist bureaucracies (Bordt 1997; Gornick, Burt & Pittman 1985; Ristock 1987; Thomas 1999)¹⁰. In her discussion of feminist organizations, Martin (1990) argues that an uneven emphasis on structure to the exclusion of other characteristics and issues provides a limited view of feminist organizations. Martin (1990) encourages scholars to recognize the broad diversity of feminist organizations and she argues that even the most seemingly mainstream, institutionalized feminist organization helps "...to perpetuate the women's movement through, at the very least, exploiting the institutional

¹⁰ For further discussion of organizational forms see Adamson, Briskin & McPhail (1988). Also see English (2007) and Freeman (n.d.) for critiques of flat structures.

environment of scarce resources” (ibid: 183). She warns that few feminist organizations represent a “pure or ideal type” and that scholars must expand their visions of what feminist organizations look like.

Generally, Martin (1990: 184) defines feminist organizations as “pro-women, political and socially transformational”. However, she also develops several broad criteria which she argues can be applied to identify feminist organizations. She asserts that an organization is feminist if it fulfills at least one of five key criteria. The organization will a) operate using a feminist ideology b) be guided by feminist values c) have feminist goals d) produce feminist outcomes e) or will have foundational ties to the women’s movement. Firstly, Martin (1990: 189-90) identifies feminist ideology as consisting of the belief that women are oppressed as a group and that this oppression manifests itself in social relations, as well as political and economic structures. Further, she discusses feminist values as springing from women’s everyday lived experiences, naming the primacy of interpersonal relationships, empowerment and the promotion of increased knowledge, skills and political awareness as a few central feminist values. Feminist goals are what Martin (1990: 193) labels “action agendas” and she contends that feminist organizations often have a variety of goals from transforming their individual members, to providing services to women, to advancing women’s status in the broader society. Feminist outcomes are the realization of these goals and can include anything from empowering members to learn new skills to making changes at a policy level. Finally, Martin (1990) contends that feminist organizations are identifiable based on their founding circumstances. If an organization’s roots can be traced back to the feminist movement, then it is likely feminist in nature because, as Martin (1990) argues, founding circumstances influence an organization’s form, as well as its character and practices.

While Martin's (1990) discussion acknowledges the diversity and breadth of feminist organizations, the criteria she sets out are overly broad and leave some questions about the nature of feminist organizations unanswered. For instance, Martin (1990) identifies feminist goals as a distinguishing feature; however, she admits that organizations often have multiple and conflicting goals. Therefore, identifying a goal as 'feminist' in itself is a difficult task as there is no clear consensus even within feminist organizations. Furthermore, when speaking about feminist outcomes, Martin (1990: 194) cautions that it can be difficult to measure the influence feminist organizations have had on the realization of particular goals¹¹, leaving this criterion a difficult one to research.

Kravetz's (2004) analysis of five feminist service organizations offers a more concrete discussion of feminism and women's organizations. During her research, she noted that there were conflicting ideas within the organizations about what it meant to be feminist. However, she was able to identify some common core principles¹². An important theme for many of the service providers she spoke with was "women helping women". This principle extends beyond the goal of creating organizations that benefit women in the community but also "...symbolize[d] women's taking power and the belief that women can and should help one another create social change on behalf of women as a group" (ibid: 50). Although this was a dominant value, how this principle was interpreted and practiced differed amongst the organizations she studied. For example, this could mean that an organization was strictly women-only or simply that women were the dominant force within the organization¹³. Another defining feature that Kravetz (2004) identifies is the common understanding that gender inequality is the source of women's

¹¹ Martin (1990: 194) uses the example of women's increased representation in political parties.

¹² Even so, Kravetz (2004) notes that there were still differences in how these shared principles were interpreted and applied at the organizational level.

¹³ The role of men in feminist organizations is discussed in more detail below.

problems. While individuals differed in their opinions as to whether gender inequality was the root of women's oppression - with some applying an intersectional analysis - a focus on this inequality "...provided the foundation for addressing needs, establishing goals, and determining the nature of their programs and services" (ibid: 53). Organizations and their members were also dedicated to promoting both individual and social change for women. They saw these transformations as happening through a variety of strategies including helping women with the "tangible", everyday experiences of gender inequality, challenging traditional policies and practices within social services to create more appropriate and humane services for women, as well as addressing community attitudes and public policy (ibid: 54-55).

Despite the diversity and variety of feminist organizations, empowerment and organizing around gender equality are consistent themes throughout the literature. Kravetz (2004) found that the organizations she studied worked to empower the women accessing their services through consciousness-raising, self-help and "sisterhood". Participants talked about the importance of consciousness-raising to empowerment. By linking the personal and the political and applying a gender analysis to understand their society, consciousness-raising was identified as a powerful tool for allowing women to take control of their lives and make change in the world. Kravetz (2004) also notes that many of the members of the organizations were empowered through the service work itself, as well as the structure of the work environment. She found that "Through their participation in service work, women attain new understandings of female oppression and can act to challenge misogynist public policies, to transform community attitudes...and to empower other women" (ibid: 64). Additionally, the organizations in her study embraced more democratic forms of decision making and encouraged all members to advance

their skills and knowledge¹⁴. Finally, while few participants used the terminology of “sisterhood”, there was a sense of the collective experience of womanhood expressed throughout the interviews¹⁵.

Stromquist (2007) also emphasizes empowerment and gender equality as important goals for feminist organizations. In her discussion of feminist organizations in Latin America, she identifies several important functions which qualify an organization as feminist. First, she tells us that a feminist organization is a physical space where women can meet away from their daily experiences. This often leads to the creation of new forms of solidarity. She also conceptualizes a feminist organization as an intellectual space where members are able to question the status quo of their society and where new ideas can be produced and disseminated. Stromquist (2007) further emphasizes that feminist organizations provide a space for community building around common values and beliefs and that this community then generates knowledge which challenges traditional power structures and empowers the organization’s members. By organizing around their gendered interests, women in these organizations are empowered through a shared sense of community and knowledge creation which is then used to “...defy existing power and to create their own power” (ibid: 3).

Despite some general consensus within the literature about characteristics which define an organization as feminist, applying the label “feminist” to organizations is not a straightforward task. This can be attributed in part to not only the variety of feminist organizations operating but also to their ability to adapt and change within their surrounding environments. Feminist organizations are continually evolving in response to their social, political and cultural contexts. Additionally, these changes can be attributed to evolutions in feminist thinking,

¹⁴ Also see English (2006) for a discussion of learning and skills development in feminist organizations.

¹⁵ Many recognized the limits of this concept and emphasized the need to move beyond their own individual experiences and acknowledge differences amongst women (Kravetz 2004).

changes in leadership and, in the case of service organizations, the needs of the communities accessing these agencies (Durán 2007; Ferree & Martin 1995; Maier 2008). Furthermore, the label “feminist” is often challenged from both within and outside of organizations.

Maier (2008) explores some of the tensions around this label, asking whether rape crisis centres can still be framed as feminist organizations. Conducting interviews with members of six rape crisis centres and programs¹⁶ operating in the Eastern U.S., Maier (2008) analyzes how they have transformed over time. Generally, she defines feminist organizations as “pro-women” organizations which seek to link social problems to “women’s subordinate relationship to men” (ibid: 83). However, she recognizes the differences amongst these groups and her focus is on how their feminist identity shifts over time. According to Maier (2008) American rape crisis centres which emerged from women’s organizing were feminist in nature, women-led and advocated for gender equality in order to eradicate sexual and other forms of gendered violence. They were often collectively-run and adopted a confrontational stance with external structures such as the police and hospital systems. Maier (2008) also argues that they often refused to accept state resources, determined to remain grassroots and able to challenge mainstream institutions (also see Martin 2005; Matthews 1994).

However, U.S. rape crisis centres have made significant changes in how they organize and relate to other organizations. For example, many now accept some state funding and are more likely to collaborate with other organizations involved in rape work. They have also had to work to become more inclusive in response to criticisms from their communities and the broader women’s movement (Maier 2008; Martin 2005; Matthews 1994). Furthermore, some rape crisis centres no longer identify openly as feminist organizations for a variety of reasons. Maier’s

¹⁶ Maier (2008: 86) distinguishes between programs and centres, telling us that rape crisis programs are situated within in larger social service agencies whereas centres are independent organizations.

(2008) research questions how these organizational changes relate to a movement away from identifying organizations as feminist. In the interviews she conducted, many of the organizational leadership described their organizations or programs as feminist; however, they often downplayed this identification as well or talked about how the organization was not publicly framed in this way despite its feminist values. In general, many of the women Maier (2008) spoke with were hesitant to discuss feminism and often clarified what they meant by “feminist”. Some were unsure of whether their organizations could “count” as feminist if men had a role in the work or if the organization did not seem “radical” enough. Despite some hesitation and even confusion about feminist identity, directors and advocates at these agencies “...on the whole embraced feminist principles even if they were leery of the word itself” (ibid: 96)¹⁷.

Therefore, although Maier (2008) accepts that some organizations may reject a feminist label because they have been coopted by mainstream institutions, her discussion draws attention to the multitude of complex reasons for this overall shift in language. For instance, she notes that there are dangers associated with identifying as feminist for both individuals and organizations. A number of the advocates whom Maier (2008) interviewed spoke about the negative connotations associated with the label “feminist” including community perceptions of feminists as “male bashers”, “radicals”, “femi-Nazis” and “lesbians” and the perception that the women’s movement was a white women’s movement (ibid: 92). Although some of these same women did identify as feminist and the majority of women affirmed feminist values, it is evident that feminist backlash had an impact on how feminist identity was constructed and understood by

¹⁷ For example, the majority of advocates articulated a feminist understanding of sexual violence and talked about the importance of equality between men and women (ibid: 92).

some of the research participants¹⁸. These findings also highlight the reality that it is possible for there to be conflicting ideas within an organization about what it means to be feminist (Maier 2008; also see English 2006; Reger 2002).

Additionally, directors and advocates provided a variety of reasons for not advertising the organizations as feminist. Directors mentioned that they did not want to turn away volunteers and noted that not all of their members identified as feminist. They also spoke about the dangers this label posed when applying for funding, articulating a view that this identification posed real harm to their organization's ability to continue providing services in their community. Advocates and directors were also concerned that publicly identifying as feminist had the potential to act as a barrier to victims looking to access their services – particularly male survivors of sexual violence in their communities (Maier 2008).

Overall, Maier's (2008) research found that understandings of what it means to be a feminist organization are changing. The emerging definitions she identifies include collaboration with other institutions serving victims, incorporating men as volunteers and opening up their services to men. She also notes that more confrontational tactics, such as protest, have largely been replaced by public education and community awareness work¹⁹. Maier (2008) argues that although some individuals and organizations may not adopt a feminist identity, this does not necessarily mean they are not feminist in practice. However, she also cautions that by not openly embracing this label or identifying their organizational goals as feminist, organizations may produce confusion within their spaces about the nature of their work. This, in turn, could

¹⁸ Maier (2008: 93-94) notes that the majority of advocates she spoke with (60%) self-identified as feminist; however, she also found that a significant minority (15%) did not identify as such. Those that did not adopt this identity did so because they did not see themselves as radical or activists (54%), they discussed the negative connotations associated with the label (15%) or considered themselves more "neutral" (31%).

¹⁹ Again she warns that this can indicate a movement away from a commitment to social change for some organizations (ibid: 96).

possibly lead to a changed focus. Thus, Maier (2008: 97) contends that, in addition to clarifying how men fit into their organizations, rape crisis centres and programs "...need to evaluate if and how they fit in with a larger feminist movement and/or antirape movement". This re-evaluation includes considering whether they want to have a role in challenging rape culture – in other words, whether they will continue to act as agents for social justice.

Maier's (2008) discussion highlights how both internal and external factors influence whether an organization will classify itself as a feminist organization. Others (Lightfoot 2011; Ouellett 2002; Suseri 2000; Yee 2011) have focused on the uneasy relationship some communities of women have with the label "feminist". For example, Lightfoot (2011), Yee (2011) and Sunseri (2000) discuss the relationship Aboriginal women have with feminism. Reflecting on the mainstream usage and representation of feminism, Yee (2011:13) asserts "I'm at a point in my activism where in many spaces I no longer feel comfortable just saying that I'm a feminist, full-stop, without adding a few words before or after...", indicating that she feels the need to clarify what this label represents to her. Lightfoot (2011) argues that issues which Aboriginal women view as urgent are often ignored or marginalized within the feminist movement. However, she also contends that the values promoted by feminism are a part of Aboriginal communities despite the negative meanings which are sometimes associated with the feminist label, asserting "...we have feminism in our lives as indigenous people, it just is not always referred to as such" (Lightfoot 2011: 107). Similarly, Sunseri (2000) discusses a tension between feminist activism and Aboriginal liberation struggles. However, she acknowledges that the feminist movement has responded to challenges from women of colour around issues of race and she argues that

If we could all come to understand feminism as a theory and movement that wants to fight all forms of oppression, including racism and colonialism, then we could see it as a struggle for unity

among all oppressed women and men. It is this meaning of feminism that I accept; that allows me to call myself “feminist” without reservation (ibid: pg).

Yee (2011), Lightfoot (2011) and Sunseri’s (2000) discussions articulate a disconnect with some forms of feminist organizing and with particular conceptions of feminism. However, they identify with anti-oppressive and intersectional feminist analyses.

Although some choose to identify with feminist politics and to challenge mainstream definitions despite the tensions associated with the feminist movement, others (for example see Ouellett 2002) reject the feminist label and argue for their own distinct organizing strategies and spaces. For instance, Ouellett (2002) claims that Aboriginal women’s values and worldviews conflict with feminist goals and values. Because of this, she argues that Aboriginal women require their own organizations and organizing strategies. Springer (2005) discusses the history of the complex relationship black women in the U.S. have with the American women’s movement. She notes that many have argued that, in general, black women avoided the feminist movement because of racism within the movement and because of the primacy of the civil rights struggle. However, Springer (2005) warns against over-generalizing and contends that black women played significant roles in mainstream and radical feminist organizing, participating in the movement in a diversity of ways including through the creation of black feminist organizations. Commenting on the important role these organizations played in pushing for expanded definitions of women’s liberation, Springer (2005: 90) notes that there was a “...constant negotiation between separatism from and coalitions with white feminists and black liberation activists and organizations”. Similar dilemmas arose for anti-racist feminists in the Canadian context who questioned whether it was more effective to organize within their own communities, rather than to struggle for representation in the broader feminist movement (for example, see Robertson 2001).

Recognizing experiences of marginalization within the feminist movement and acknowledging the reasons why some do not identify with the feminist label is important. However, simultaneously, overemphasizing this point can render invisible the broad spectrum of feminist activism. Rejecting the premise that the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s predominantly represented middle class interests, Luxton (2001: 64) argues that "...such beliefs are part of a larger pattern in which both working-class women and their organizing efforts, and left-wing or socialist feminism, get written out of, or 'hidden from history'". Similarly, others (for example, see Nadeau 2009; Springer 2005; Thompson 2002) have shown how hegemonic narratives about the women's movement obscure the history of feminist organizing by women of colour. Enke (2007) argues against a monolithic view of feminist activism and she explores spaces of feminist engagement which did not always embrace a feminist label. Writing about feminism in Detroit, Chicago and Minneapolis, Enke (2007: 254) contends that

...the history of feminism is a history not just of established institutions that bore the name 'feminist'...Feminism in fact was constituted through the historical connections between different sorts of spaces, and between people who eagerly identified as feminist, people who uncomfortably identified as feminist and, people who disavowed political identification altogether.

Her work encourages us to look beyond feminist identification in order to explore the diversity of activism which contributes to the feminist movement (ibid).

Conceptualizing Feminist Organizations in this Study

There are a number of reasons why organizations may choose to avoid publicly identifying as feminist, including internal differences, an attempt to appear inclusive to service users, tensions with mainstream feminism and pressures from the political and funding context. Furthermore, feminist organizations can be difficult to classify due to the wide range of feminist organizations operating. However, despite this ambiguity, identifying some common

characteristics enables an analysis of relationships between feminist organizations and feminist movements.

Recognizing the challenges associated with identifying feminist organizations, as well as the dynamic nature of these organizations, this dissertation develops several criteria to help frame its analysis. In this study, feminist organizations are understood to a) apply a gender analysis b) have a focus on empowerment and c) work towards social justice and equality. Firstly, a gender analysis entails looking at gender relations in society through an examination of social, political and economic structures. Feminist organizations' have traditionally been guided by the understanding that women experience gender inequality and oppression. Furthermore, feminist organizations seek to challenge traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity (Kravetz 2004; Maier 2008; Martin 1990; Stromquist 2007). In the literature, feminist organizations are often described as “pro-women” because they are the product of women’s organizing around their collective, gendered interests (Martin 1990; Maier 2008). While for the most part this remains true, this meaning is also shifting over time. As feminist organizations begin to expand services to men and to open up roles within their agencies for men, this meaning becomes contested from within (for instance, see Maier 2008). Additionally, the rise of allied and pro-feminist men’s groups also creates new opportunities for action²⁰. Women’s organizations have also been challenged around the issue of transgender identity, forcing them to re-evaluate the boundaries and meanings of women only spaces (Cattapan 2008; Enke 2007). However, although these issues represent shifts in how feminist organizations have traditionally defined themselves, the application of a gender analysis remains a central defining feature.

²⁰ For example, initiatives such as The White Ribbon Campaign (which began in Canada but has spread internationally), as well as organizations such as the National Organization for Men against Sexism and Men Can Stop Rape in the U.S., represent efforts by men to challenge sexist oppression.

A focus on empowerment is also a common characteristic for feminist organizations. Feminist organizations are envisioned as educational and community-building spaces. Empowerment in feminist organizations is often conceptualized as helping members gain control of their lives through a combination of consciousness-raising, skills development and community building (English 2006; Kravetz 2004; Stromquist 2007). Although this ideal may not always translate into practice or be experienced by all members of an organization, I argue that the principle of empowerment remains a central value and goal for feminist organizations.

Finally, in order for an organization to be understood as feminist, I contend that it is their commitment to challenging and changing oppressive systems and structures that defines them as such. While a gender analysis and an emphasis on empowerment are important characteristics for feminist organizations, it is their dedication to social justice work which characterizes women's organizations as feminist in nature. Therefore, feminist organizations are conceptualized in this study as connected to feminist movements and organizing more broadly. Ferree and Martin (1995: 13) poignantly articulate this view in their definition of feminist organizations "...as the places in which and the means through which the work of the women's movement is done". It is not enough, then, to simply understand women's experiences as gendered, nor to work towards empowerment of individual members and/or service users. In order for an organization to be characterized as feminist, it must work towards social justice goals. In other words, feminist organizations can be differentiated from anti-feminist and politically neutral women's organizations by their connection to social movements engaging in social justice work²¹, and particularly by their relationship with the feminist movement.

²¹ In this dissertation, social justice work is understood to entail seeking the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. This work also strives to rectify the damage caused by oppressive structures.

How does this framework apply to feminist service organizations? Feminist service organizations experience tension due to their dual roles as service providers and social movement organizations. Feminist organizations which do not provide services do not have to navigate the same tensions. For example, they do not have to be concerned about alienating service users by publicly identifying as feminist. Additionally, funding cuts are experienced differently by organizations which do not provide front-line services. In order to better understand how feminist service organizations are situated and experience their political climate, this dissertation locates feminist service organizations as not only social movement organizations, but as connected to the nonprofit sector as well. Theorizing feminist service organizations in this way allows for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges they face. As Masson (2012: 80) contends "...the fate of women's groups' funding is closely linked to that of the community sector as a whole...", making the need to better understand and contextualize relationships between state institutions and the nonprofit sector necessary.

The Nonprofit Sector: Shifting Relations Under Neoliberalism

The nonprofit sector²² is difficult to define as it is both broad and diverse, consisting of a vast array of organizations and associations (Boris 2006; Hall & Banting 2000; Shields and Evans 1998, 89; Wolch 1990, 8-9). Generally, nonprofit organizations operate under a social mission, are not-for-profit and depend heavily on external funding sources and voluntary labour. Values typically associated with the sector include altruism, co-operation, reciprocity and

²² Alternative terms for the nonprofit (or non-profit) sector include the voluntary sector or organizations, the independent sector, the not-for-profit section, community organizations/groups and the non-governmental sector or organizations (Boris 2006; Hall & Banting 2000). Hall and Banting (2000: 4-5) tell us that differences in language can be traced to particular academic disciplines. For instance, sociology has tended to speak of the "voluntary sector" in order to highlight donations of time and money; whereas, the terms "third sector" and "independent sector" have their roots in political science which attempts to trace relationships between the various sectors.

equality (Shields & Evans 1998: 89). The International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO) identifies five key central characteristics that organizations should encompass in order to be included in this categorization. They cannot generate or distribute profit, must be organized and somewhat permanent, are separate from government, are self-governing and must engage a significant degree of voluntary participation (Hall & Banting 2000: 6-7). Finally, the nonprofit sector is often conceptualized as occupying a space between the market and government; however, this distinction can be blurry at times (Hall & Banting 2000 4-5; Shields & Evans 1998: 89)²³.

Given the diversity of organizations that can be defined as such, distinctions are often made between types of nonprofit organizations. There is some debate about how to go about categorizing organizations²⁴. For example, Revenue Canada divides the sector into fourteen types²⁵. Their classification is based on organizations' stated purpose, with places of worship and social services being the most dominant categories (Hall & Banting 2000). In the U.S. context, the National Center for Charitable Statistics divides the sector into nine categories (Boris 2006: 8) and, internationally, the ICNPO classifies organizations based on their primary type of good or service provided, recognizing twelve activity groups (Hall & Banting 2000: 7-8). Shields and Evans (1998: 90) focus on four types of nonprofit organizations including funding agencies such as the United Way, member serving associations, public benefit organizations and religious groups. The number of alternative approaches to categorizing the sector indicates the challenges associated with distinguishing types of voluntary organizations; however, this also highlights the

²³ For instance, hospitals and universities are institutions classified as "nonprofit"; however, they are heavily influenced by government and do not rely on volunteers; thus, they tread a line between the public and nonprofit sector (Hall & Banting 2000: 6).

²⁴ This is particularly difficult given that many of the boundaries that are drawn in the literature are, in reality, fuzzy and permeable (Hall & Banting 2000: 5-7).

²⁵ Their information is based on registered charities in Canada; therefore, it does not necessarily provide a complete picture of the sector as a whole (Hall & Banting 2000: 11).

need to recognize a variety of social purposes, modes of operating and historical and cultural contexts.

Historically, nonprofit organizations have been involved in the delivery of social, health, educational, economic, cultural, research, financial and advocacy services to their communities (Boris 2006; Shields & Evans 1998: 89). However, with the decline of the welfare state, the relationship between the nonprofit sector and the state is being redefined (Brock & Banting 2001; Gibson et al. 2007; Phillips & Levasseur 2004; Shields & Evans 1998; Wolch 1990). In order to reduce the costs associated with service provision, shrink the size of the state, and improve efficiency, governments have brought nonprofit organizations under increased scrutiny and have reduced their financial support for the sector (Gibson et al. 2007; Phillips & Graham 2000; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). Furthermore, the terms of funding contracts are changing, presenting new challenges for nonprofit organizations. States are demanding increased accountability from the sector while at the same time altering the nature of funding provided. This is, of course, compounded with the reality of growing demands for services from the public (Brock & Banting 2001; Gibson et al. 2007; Phillips & Graham 2000; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). Thus, while nonprofit organizations continually take on more of the responsibility for service provision while receiving limited government support, their power and autonomy is further constrained under neoliberal modes of governing (Phillips & Levasseur 2004; also see Jenson & Phillips 1996).

In her analysis of the relationship between the nonprofit sector and the state, Wolch (1990) develops the concept of the ‘shadow state’ to theorize the increasing responsibility that nonprofit organizations have taken on for service provision²⁶. Wolch (1990) contends that the

²⁶ Wolch’s (1990) understanding of the nonprofit sector is informed by a particular historical context – that of the shift from the welfare state to neoliberalism in the U.S and Britain. She draws attention to particular changes facing

state and the nonprofit sector have a historical institutional interdependence which both enables and constrains voluntary action²⁷. Although nonprofit organizations reap some benefits through their connections to the state, she argues that the increasing reliance on state funding has "...been accompanied by deepening penetration by the state into voluntary group organization, management and goals" (ibid: 15). This has resulted in the creation of the shadow state which is composed of organizations which are not officially incorporated into the state, yet perform welfare state functions. These organizations are subsidized and regulated by the state, and as the voluntary sector takes on a larger role in service provision, the state's influence over its activities grows (ibid: 210). Moreover, Wolch (1990) argues that as nonprofit organizations fill the gaps in service provision, their work legitimizes the state by ensuring a quality of life in communities and encouraging free association. This can work to divert demands for more radical social change (also see Wolch 1999; Mitchell 2001). However, because of the potential of the nonprofit sector to organize the public against the state, it is in the state's interests to "...circumscribe voluntarism and to incorporate voluntary groups within the state apparatus" (ibid: 32).

Therefore, Wolch (1990) warns that as nonprofit organizations become a part of the shadow state, they forfeit their autonomy and face a myriad of interrelated dilemmas. Considering nonprofit organizations' dependency on state funding, Wolch (1990: 215) questions whether organizations are able to be critical of state policy when their prosperity and continuation is tied to their relationship to state resources. Furthermore, the growing emphasis on service provision can limit the range of activities organizations engage in to fulfill their missions. In turn, organizational missions can be undermined and overtaken by state policies and

the sector under a specific political and economic mode of governing and emphasizes the importance of contextualizing these relationships.

²⁷ While she highlights this interdependence, Wolch (1990, 1999) also cautions against viewing this interdependence as consisting of equal partners.

priorities influenced by dominant economic and social interests²⁸. Wolch (1990: 216) also questions the compatibility of extreme interpretations of the values of efficiency and accountability with some of the important principles of the sector, namely innovation, flexibility and participation. This can affect the diversity within the sector as well because smaller organizations will find it harder to thrive in these circumstances (ibid: 216).

Wolch (1990) views these challenges to the sector as particularly dangerous because she sees the nonprofit sector as playing a critical role in the creation of progressive social change²⁹. In particular, she argues that the nonprofit sector plays four pivotal roles in society. First, nonprofit organizations can respond to service users' dissatisfaction with state provided services and act as an alternative source of service provision. They also often work to empower service users and can organize communities around shared problems and objectives. Importantly, nonprofit organizations have been linked to broader movements for social justice. Voluntary initiatives can also produce more humane and innovative ways of organizing productive and social reproductive labour. Wolch (1990: 220) notes that this can be especially significant in communities coping with deindustrialization and entrenched poverty. Finally, Wolch (1990: 221) argues that the most fundamental progressive aspect of the sector is the potential for nonprofit organizations to limit the repressive dynamics of the modern Western capitalist state³⁰. She views nonprofit organizations as an important source of advocacy³¹ and contends that their

²⁸ For instance, Wolch (1990: 206) hypothesizes that the state will demand that nonprofit organization plan reactively to new state policies and priorities, rather than allowing them to develop plans proactively based on their own goals and objectives.

²⁹ According to Wolch (1990: 218-219), progressive social change includes changes which "...expand individual life chances, redress historical social and geographic inequities in well-being, and minimize the political and economic domination of some individuals and groups at the expense of others".

³⁰ In a later analysis, Wolch (1999) connects these tendencies to broader global forces which work to undermine the autonomy of the state.

³¹ Wolch (1990: 24) concedes that nonprofit organizations' potential for this rests upon a continuum and she tells us that the services and goods produced by the voluntary sector are "...characterized by varying degrees of commodification, advocacy content, and participation" (ibid: 24).

ability to make demands for state accountability and responsiveness must be protected. However, with the emergence of the shadow state, organizations' potential for these types of activities becomes severely limited. Thus, Wolch (1990; 1999) argues against partnerships with state funding bodies and instead calls for transformation of the sector into a space of resistance.

Wolch's (1990) concept of the shadow state highlights the challenges facing nonprofit organizations as governments adopt neoliberal modes of governing. In particular, her analysis critiques the influence state institutions can have upon nonprofit organizations and highlights the role that the sector plays in facilitating access to civil society. Furthermore, her work interrogates the broader implication of the shadow state on democracy (Trudeau 2008: 672). However, Wolch's (1990) analysis fails to account for the greater complexities of state-nonprofit sector relations. While it is important to acknowledge the asymmetrical distribution of power between the state and nonprofit organizations, as well as the influence this can have over the work being done in the sector, others have shown that a continuum of relations is possible (Brock 2010; Trudeau 2008; Young 2006).

Drawing attention to a number of contradictory findings about state-nonprofit relations, Trudeau (2008) argues that scholars must adopt a relational view of the shadow state and acknowledge the multiple directionalities of these interactions. He conceptualizes nonprofit organizations as located on a continuum. On one end of the continuum, state institutions exercise extensive influence over particular voluntary organizations. These organizations operate under a series of obligations and constraints put in place by state funding agencies. On the other end of the continuum, organizations keep the state at a deliberate distance, only engaging with government agencies in a limited way. In the middle of the continuum are organizations which strategically navigate opportunities and negotiate the rules imposed by state funding agencies

(ibid: 674-675). Additionally, Trudeau (2008) argues that nonprofit organizations can at times influence state agendas and he highlights the co-constitutive nature of these relations³².

Therefore, although he recognizes the constraints groups can encounter in their relationships with state funding agencies, he emphasizes that their transformation into shadow state organizations is only one possible outcome³³. Whereas Wolch (1990) views the nonprofit sector as essentially coopted in a funding relationship with government, Trudeau's (2008) analysis moves beyond this by acknowledging the strategic choices organizations make under neoliberalism.

Brock (2010) also uses the notion of a continuum in her comparative analysis of government-nonprofit sector relations in Canada, England and the United States. She contends that conceptions of state-nonprofit sector relations as "...conflictual, competitive and unequal" do not aid scholars attempting to understand the greater complexity of these linkages (ibid: 2). Instead, she theorizes these relationships as ranging on a continuum between the state as an enabler and the state as an enforcer. Governments as enablers facilitate nonprofit participation in the policy process and respect organizational autonomy. The ideal form of this type is a partnership of two equal parties. At the other extreme, governments which act as enforcers set standards of behaviour and enact penalties for organizations which fail to comply with these standards. This type is marked by drastically unequal relations, with the state playing an active role in policing the sector and defining the context in which organizations operate (ibid: 3). However, Brock (2010) points out that between these two extremes are a broad range of actions which governments engage in simultaneously, producing contradictory relations. Relationships

³² Trudeau (2008: 675) notes that this is possible because the state seeks legitimation and, thus, must make public policy relevant to citizens' lives on some level.

³³ Importantly, he reminds us that nonprofit organizations must satisfy multiple stakeholders including the social groups they represent and must negotiate diverse and multiple expectations (Trudeau 2008; also see Phillips & Graham 2000).

between state bodies and nonprofit organizations cannot be neatly defined then, as they can often be classified under multiple categories at any given time (ibid: 5).

Gender, Neoliberal Restructuring & the Nonprofit Sector

The literature on the nonprofit sector can contribute to an analysis of feminist service organizations because it challenges the perception of nonprofit service provision as apolitical. Furthermore, its examination of how restructuring impacts community organizations is helpful when seeking to understand how feminist service organizations experience shifts in funding. However, much of this literature fails to incorporate a gender analysis which is essential when seeking to understand how the nonprofit sector has been restructured. Feminist political economists have shown how neoliberal policies have disproportionately affected women as both service users, as well as paid and unpaid workers (Bezanson & Luxton 2006; Brodie & Bakker 2007). Under the Keynesian welfare state, governments managed the tensions implicit in the relationship between social reproduction³⁴ and production to some extent; however, with the shift to neoliberal modes of governing, the state has largely withdrawn from this role and has downloaded these responsibilities onto communities and families. Implicit in this withdrawal is the assumption that women, in particular, can intensify their caring labour to compensate for this loss (Baines 2004; Benzanson 2006; Cameron 2006; Cohen & Pulkingham 2009; Luxton 2006). Although the citizen is framed as genderless, this only hides the gendered nature of social reproduction and renders invisible the disproportionate impact social spending cuts have on women (Bezanson 2006; also see Brodie 1995).

³⁴ Social reproduction involves the daily work involved in "...maintaining and reproducing people and their labour power..." (Bezanson 2006: 26). It is commonly used to describe activities traditionally expected of women in the home; however, feminist political economists move beyond this simplification and stress the interdependent processes of production and social reproduction, and the contradictions inherent in this relationship (Cameron 2006; Luxton 2006).

This can be seen clearly when examining the nonprofit sector, particularly when studying community and social services which are a domain of feminized labour³⁵. Furthermore, although the nonprofit sector as a whole is facing growing demands related to service provision while also experiencing an increasingly regulatory and meagre funding climate, women's organizations are especially marginalized by these changes. Meinhard and Foster (2003) surveyed the Executive Directors at 351 Canadian women's organizations³⁶ and discovered that their experiences of policy changes differed from those of gender neutral organizations. They argue that this is because women's organizations tend to be "...chronically underfunded, understaffed and marginal to mainstream economic and social development" (ibid: 371). Additionally, because women's organizations often focus their work on marginalized populations and issues, experiment with alternative structures and lack the capacity to fundraise in any significant way, they are less likely to successfully attract prestigious private funding. This renders them more dependent on government funding sources and subsequently, more vulnerable to changes in the funding climate (ibid).

Meinhard and Foster (2003) also found that compared to organizations that do not provide gender specific services, women's organizations are more likely to be involved in political work and are more critical of social and political changes including the downloading of services onto community organizations and the growing poverty gap. Their findings suggest then that, not only are women's organizations more likely to experience increasing demands for services and cuts to funding more significantly, their politics also make them more vulnerable in

³⁵ For example, in Ontario, 78% of employees in community and social services are women (Employment Ontario 2013). Voluntary labour in this sector is also overwhelmingly female dominated (Rice & Prince 2013: 281, Drevland 2007: 151).

³⁶ They define women's organizations as those which consist of a female executive director and a board which is, at minimal, two-thirds female. Only about half of the organizations they surveyed identified as feminist and Meinhard and Foster (2003) differentiated between organizations that were affiliated with NAC and those that were not. Their results indicate that organizations that identify as feminist experience policy changes more significantly.

the current political climate (ibid). In other words, it is their social movement roots which exacerbate their experiences of state restructuring.

This is especially clear when considering the rise of populist discourse and other forms of anti-feminist backlash. Civil society groups which have attempted to combat shifts in social policy have been labeled as representing “special interests” and their efforts to curtail the impacts of neoliberalism have been delegitimized as a result (Brodie 1995; Brodie & Bakker 2007; Jenson 2008; Jenson & Phillips 1996; Sawyer 2008, Smith 2005). Feminist organizations in particular have been targeted as unrepresentative of women as a group (Sawyer 2008; also see Durán 2007; English 2007; Rebick 2005). Sawyer (2008) links the discourse of “special interests” in Canada and Australia to the rise of neoliberalism and shows how it is employed to delegitimize community groups’ advocacy. In her discussion of the Canadian context, she demonstrates how the dominance of populist discourse led to funding cuts for nonprofits, an increased scrutiny on their activities and the stigmatization of their roles as social advocates. The change in relationships between nonprofits and government was in direct contrast to the approach taken following the post-war period. Prior to this, nonprofits had been framed as having an important role in the policy process and state funding was intended to facilitate their involvement (ibid). However, as neoliberal policies began to be implemented, this role was increasingly seen as both unnecessary and illegitimate. Equality seeking groups were framed as unrepresentative of the majority of citizens and feminist organizations in particular were no longer viewed as representing women’s collective interests. Sawyer (2008: 138) argues that “The same us versus them frame that makes feminists part of the elite renders invisible the very real gender, class and race inequalities that continue to be important”. Additionally, she contends that

framing equality seeking groups in this manner intentionally distracts the public from the increasing inequalities caused by neoliberal policies (ibid: 138).

Feminist service organizations' relationships with state institutions are multi-layered given their positioning as both nonprofit and social movement organizations. Recognizing this enables an examination of the complexity of their ties to the state – and in particular, state funding agencies – because it allows for a contextualized examination these relationships. Feminists have long grappled with the dilemmas posed by state-social movement relationships, questioning the implications which follow from engagement with the state.

Feminist Organizations' Relationships to State Institutions

The state remains an important site of inquiry for feminist theory. Brown (1995) argues that the modern state has achieved an “...unparalleled prominence – political, economic, social and cultural – in millions of women’s lives”, making an analysis of it necessary. Furthermore, equality-seeking groups continue to view the state as an arena where demands for social justice can be articulated and fought for (Kim-Puri 2005; Abu-Laban 2008). Any feminist analysis of the state must be cognizant of particular historical, cultural, political and economic contexts in order to understand how policy regimes shape women’s experiences of state institutions. Additionally, attention must be paid to the fluid and contradictory nature of the state. For example, Kim-Puri (2005: 138) conceptualizes the state as a “...fragmented set of institutions with complex and uneven relationships” and she asserts that this incoherence works to disguise the power of the state (ibid: 138). In her historical study of women’s experiences with unemployment insurance in Canada, Porter (2003: 19) highlights the “...historical dynamic of capitalist accumulation and political economic development”, arguing that the tensions and

contradictions which emerge can create opportunities for social change. Her framework is helpful in that it recognizes the complex and contradictory powers of the state, while also imagining spaces for social change via various social actors and forces³⁷. Exploring the relationship between the state and feminist organizations in Canada³⁸, this dissertation is attuned to contradictions within the state, as well as the potential for social change.

A relationship with the state is unavoidable for feminist activists because the demands feminist movements make are often inexorably connected to it (Chappell 2002; also see Connell 1990). This is certainly true for feminist service organizations which act as advocates for women and, through doing so, are forced to interact with various state institutions. These organizations also provide alternatives to mainstream services and are in many cases dependent on state funding for their existence³⁹. Although relationships with the state are difficult to avoid, they are not unproblematic. Institutionalization, increasing professionalization within organizations, an emphasis on service provision over advocacy and the watering down of social movement goals are commonly cited dilemmas for feminist organizations. My discussion focuses, in particular, on the implications of an on-going funding relationship with state funding bodies.

Resources and opportunities tend to follow from developing stable ties to government; however, these are also accompanied by limitations and constraints (Schmitt and Martin 1999; 367). Becoming institutionalized can result in organizations becoming placated or neutralized through their relationships with the state (Maxwell 2009: 53; Bumiller 2008; also see Mosley 2011). At times, organizations also risk having their agenda coopted for the purposes of the very

³⁷ For instance, in her analysis, she demonstrates how changes in Canada's political economy resulted in contradictions to the social fabric. Women were then able to take advantage of these contradictions, advancing their collective interests (Porter 2003).

³⁸ In this section, I speak of the state at a theoretical level. In the following chapter, I discuss the particular relationship between feminist organizations and state funders in Canada in more depth, taking into account the particular context shaping these relations.

³⁹ This has historically been the case for women's organizations in Canada (Bakker & Brodie 2007; Rodgers & Knight 2011).

structures they are organizing against. In her analysis of the feminist anti-violence movement in the U.S., Bumiller (2008) warns us about the dangers of too close of a relationship with the state. She shows how calls from feminists for the state to address violence against women and sexual assault resulted in "...an implicit and explicit reliance on the coercive power of government to ensure women's safety" (ibid: 2)⁴⁰. Bumiller (2008) argues that, however unintentionally, the frames that feminists have used to resist and draw attention to violence against women have become incorporated in a regulatory and oppressive criminal justice apparatus. This is particularly problematic given systemic racism and classism in the U.S. criminal justice system which results in the targeting and incarceration of poor black and brown men. Therefore, according to Bumiller (2008), too close of a relationship with oppressive state institutions has resulted in the appropriation of the goals of the feminist anti-violence movement and has made feminists complicit in an oppressive criminal justice system.

Threats of cooptation make many feminists wary of the strings attached to resources and some argue that feminist organizations should avoid a funding relationship with the state altogether (Durán 2007; Durazo 2007). Durazo (2007), for instance, warns against accepting state funding, and argues that this leads to the "social servicization" of the anti-violence movement. She contends that, because funding agencies favour service provision over public education initiatives, violence against women is viewed as "...more and more a behavioral, criminal, and medical phenomenon, rather than a social justice issue" (ibid: 117)⁴¹. These individualized approaches to violence against women do not take into account larger structural

⁴⁰ Brown (1995) also warns against calls for protection from a state which is identified with, and perpetuates, systems of male dominance, classism and white supremacy. She cautions that "...the heavy price of institutionalized protection is always a measure of dependence and agreement to abide by the protectors rules" (ibid: 169).

⁴¹ Markowitz and Tice (2002: 948-949) also tell us that in their efforts to be accepted as experts, anti-violence activists have adopted therapeutic ways of speaking about the issues.

issues and fail to address violence against women in any effective way⁴². Ng (1988) also questions the implications of accepting state funding. In her study of a community employment agency for immigrant women, she documents an agency's transformation from a community organization, focused on providing services and advocacy for immigrant women, into an agent of the state. While the original mission of the agency was to advance the social status of immigrant women through providing employment support, Ng (1988) found that via the funding relationship the agency ultimately reinforced racialized class hierarchies by funneling immigrant women into low paying positions. Therefore, through promoting service provision as separate from and more important than advocacy work, funding agencies pose a very real threat to feminist organizations' social justice goals.

The pressure for feminist organizations to "professionalize" also leads to a variety of additional internal challenges (English 2007; Kravetz 2004; Markowitz & Tice 2002). In their comparative analysis of American and Latin American women's organizations, Markowitz and Tice (2002) found that funding agencies' demands for organizations to adopt technocratic expertise placed a further burden on workers. The authors link the need to develop these skills with donors' high expectations around accountability. For example, in order to be eligible for funding, organizations are expected to be experts in proposal development, accounting and evaluation tools, as well as quantitative program assessment (ibid: 948; also see Kravetz 2004; Gibson, O'Donnell & Rideout 2007). The emphasis on these areas has the potential to detract from other types of work more closely linked to the original mission of the organization (ibid: also see Ng 1988).

⁴² Additionally, like Bumiller (2008), Durazo (2007) is critical of relationships with institutions that are embedded with histories of racism, arguing that these linkages will only lead to the further victimizations of women of colour.

Furthermore, Markowitz and Tice (2002) warn that this can lead to the development of internal hierarchies within organizations. Professionalization of an organization is often accompanied by changes to the make-up of staff and volunteers because credentials and higher levels of education become desirable to the organization. Matthews (1995: xiii) remarks that early in the U.S. anti-rape movement, activists argued that any woman could develop these skills and provide this care. However, as those doing the work sought to legitimize their skills and knowledge, organizations became more professionalized. In her research with ten feminist organizations in rural Canada, English (2007) found that state funding – and the resulting professionalization – contributed to tensions between workers. In particular, the funding structure which worked on a project-by-project basis, created internal conflict over workload. These tensions can reproduce hierarchies based on race and class found in the broader society, contradicting the feminist values of the organization (Markowitz & Tice 2002: 950-951). Moreover, Markowitz and Tice (2002: 951) caution that professional workers in feminist organizations have a personal stake in maintaining funding and thus, are less likely to take risks. They argue that this “...willingness to work within externally imposed parameters has been naturalized both by professional and organizational pressures and, currently, by neoliberal hegemonic discourses that have the effect of constraining the range of possible responses to inequality and oppression” (ibid: 951). While they recognize the very real reasons for accepting funding from external sources, the authors contend that accepting this funding does not “...necessarily promote the best politics” (ibid: 949).

Although there are many risks associated with developing stable ties to state institutions, some scholars have shown that feminist organizations are aware of these dangers and have responded to institutionalization in a variety of ways. They argue that developing these

relationships does not necessarily lead to the cooptation of movement goals (English 2007; Kravetz 2004; Martin 2005; Matthews 1994; Schmitt and Martin 1999). Schmitt and Martin (1999) focus on some of the benefits that becoming institutionalized can bestow. For instance, they assert that it can provide a home base for activists and ensure that an organization has both the labour power and the legitimacy to advocate for social justice. Because of this, institutionalized organizations are able to work for social change using strategies that might not otherwise be open to them. In their discussion of a California Rape Crisis Centre (RCC), Schmitt and Martin (1999) highlight the diversity of tactics an institutionalized feminist organization employed. These tactics included discursive politics (engaging in narrative forms of mobilization such as story-telling), as well as what they refer to as occupying and indoctrinating mainstream institutions. This strategy consists of actions such as assisting society through the provision of particular services⁴³, the drafting of legislation and the appropriation of mainstream resources through their relationships with conventional media sources. While the organization was forced to tread carefully at times, through mobilizing unobtrusively it was able to build relationships with mainstream institutions and create change in ways that would have been closed to more radical organizations.

Recognizing the conservatizing influence of state funding agencies over the anti-rape movement, Matthew's (1994) comparative study of six feminist anti-rape organizations also highlights a variety of complex acts of resistance to these pressures. Because of this, she argues that rape crisis work is a "contested terrain between different factions in the movement and the state" (ibid: 150). Importantly, she reminds us that relationships with state funding agencies can range from being relatively cooperative at times to adversarial. Additionally, these relationships

⁴³ For example, providing services such as consultations and programming for local hospitals, police stations, government officials etc.

are not static and can change over time. Her analysis demonstrates that organizations make tactical choices when confronted with demands that may conflict with their mission, goals and practices (Matthews 1995). In particular, she identifies three common strategies: overt opposition, apparent accommodation and active engagement. Organizations which choose overt opposition do so knowing that there will likely be consequences to their funding. Appearing to conform to the rules, rape crisis centres which engage in apparent accommodation covertly resist the demands imposed upon them. This strategy is common and involves "...creatively bend[ing] the rules to fit the needs of the organization" (1995: 301)⁴⁴. Finally, active engagement with funding agencies involves attempts to make change at the policy level and organizations must build relationships with political actors and bureaucrats in their efforts to do so (1995: 301-4). Matthews' (1995) research adds an important dimension to understandings of state-social movement relations because it acknowledges the complexity and fluid nature of these connections. Although the state works to neutralize the political nature of feminist work, organizations can resist these efforts in a multitude of ways.

Additionally, the state funding relationship often contains implicit contradictions which require further analysis. Matthews (1994) found that ties to state funding had a conservatizing effect on organizations; however, state funding also helped to advance "...one of the more progressive goals of the movement, to become multiracial and multicultural, and to expand services to all women..." (ibid: 128). Funding provided by the state led to the creation of a number of anti-rape organizations which were both led by and served women of colour. These organizations tended to be more bureaucratic in nature⁴⁵ because, unlike other anti-rape

⁴⁴ English (2007) also found this to be a common act of resistance to state imposed regulations and structures. For example, one organization appeared to comply with government demands around organizational structure; however, continued to make decisions based on a consensus model.

⁴⁵ This did not go uncontested by the organizations in question (Matthews 1994).

organizations in the area, they were not grassroots initiatives. However, their establishment simultaneously had the effect of creating a more diverse and representative movement, as well as ensuring a broader reach for rape crisis services. Observing this contradiction, Matthews (1994: 148) writes that “Whether states coopt or facilitate social movements is historically contingent on particular political forces...” and her research indicates that it is possible for these processes to overlap. Das Gupta (2007) also highlights the complexities inherent in relationships with state institutions in her analysis of immigrant women’s organizing in Canada. Focusing on immigrant women’s organizations in Ontario, she argues that in a particular historical moment, these groups were able to have some influence on public policy through their connections with state funding agencies. However, with the election of a conservative, anti-equity government in Ontario, many of these same organizations were excluded from the consultation process and defunded.

Masson’s (2012) discussion of women’s organizations in Quebec also emphasizes the need to examine particular contexts when analyzing state-social movement relations and state funding. She argues that the experience of Quebec women’s organizations “...breaks with the seeming unanimity of Canadian stories about the demise of state funding under neoliberalism” (ibid: 79). This is because of contradictory approaches to state funding at the federal and provincial levels. Whereas at the federal level, Canadian governments have adopted neoliberal funding practices⁴⁶, at the provincial level in Quebec some state funders continue to grant core funding to women’s groups and to encourage some participation in advocacy. However, Masson (2012) cautions that it is overly simplistic to view Quebec women’s organizations as an exceptional case which defies the conventional narrative of women’s organizations in Canada. Instead she points to differing approaches to the funding relationship even at the provincial level and her discussion argues for “...a better appreciation of the possibilities offered by a potentially

⁴⁶ This is discussed further in chapter three.

fragmented state apparatus...” (ibid: 98). Matthews (1994), Das Gupta (2007) and Masson’s (2012) discussions demonstrate that any analysis of state funding relationships must be attuned to broader political, social and historical contexts which facilitate or constrain political opportunities.

The relationship between service provision and social action also demands a more complex understanding. The literature often frames the emphasis on service provision as externally mandated. However, feminist service organizations have long struggled with the challenge of balancing service provision and social change goals. For example, blending political and service work was an essential aspect of the anti-rape movement from its inception; thus, the tension was always present given the orientation of these organizations (Matthews 1994: 150). Furthermore, understandings of service provision as fundamentally apolitical contradict the experiences of feminist service providers and ignore the history and goals of feminist service provision.

In her research with five feminist service agencies, Kravetz (2004) found that organizations actively promoted both individual and social change. Because gender inequality was viewed as the source of individual women’s problems, feminists working in these organizations recognized the limits of their work at the individual level and saw long-term changes for individual women as necessitating “...meaningful social change for all women” (ibid: 117). Furthermore, through their front-line work with individual women, workers’ awareness of the need for changes to mainstream agencies, community attitudes and social policy was continually affirmed and strengthened. This dual emphasis on service provision and advocacy “... assured a commitment to social change goals informed by the everyday experiences of women...” and “...direct knowledge of the political realities that constrained the

magnitude of the change they could accomplish affirmed the necessity of and informed their work with individual women” (ibid: 143). Front line workers Kravetz (2004) spoke with viewed service provision and advocacy as co-constitutive. Despite pressures from external sources and the inherent tension present in the relationship between service provision and advocacy, many feminist organizations continue find ways to provide politicized services to their communities.

Developing stable ties to state bodies and other mainstream institutions certainly implies very real dilemmas. Feminist organizations risk the cooptation of their message, complicity in oppressive structures and are often limited in the types and amount of advocacy they can engage in. However, while these threats are certainly present, the everyday reality of feminist service provision means that many organizations still choose to accept state resources. Indeed, some argue that the state has a responsibility to support civil society groups and organizations which provide important services in their communities (Reinelt 1995). While some scholars maintain that accepting state funding promotes questionable politics (Bumiller 2008; Durazo 2007; Markowitz & Tice 2002), others highlight the many ways that feminist service providers continue to resist, strategize and organize in spite of these challenges (English 2007; Kravetz 2004; Matthews 1995; Matthews 1994; Schmitt & Martin 1999). They conceptualize feminist organizations’ relationships with state institutions as fluid and draw our attention to the variety of relations possible.

A Framework for Analyzing Feminist Service Organizations’ Ties to the State

Studying feminist service organizations as both social movement and nonprofit organizations reveals the complex relationships these organizations have with the state. By emphasizing their dual roles as service providers and as equality seeking organizations, this

framework demonstrates how feminist service organizations' dual positioning intensifies their experiences of state restructuring, impacting them in multiple ways.

Locating the state in a particular historical, political and cultural context, this dissertation explores how the adoption of a particular mode of governing in Canada – neoliberalism – alters governments' relationships with the nonprofit sector and with civil society organizations. It does so by focusing on Canadian feminist service organizations' relationships with state funding agencies and questions how feminist organizations have responded to a neoliberal political and funding climate. The decline of the welfare state has meant that nonprofit organizations in general have seen an increase in needs, a decrease in support and have faced greater scrutiny over their activities. This has been particularly true for feminist service organizations.

My discussion explores how feminist service organizations respond to changes in their political landscape and it is guided by the understanding that the actions feminist service organizations take rest upon a continuum of possible strategies. I focus on their capacity to engage in social justice work in a political climate and funding regime shaped by neoliberalism. Specifically, I consider how state funding relationships influence advocacy and the adoption of anti-racist, anti-oppressive frameworks in feminist organizations attempting to create more inclusive spaces and challenge oppressive structures in Canadian society. Furthermore, I conceptualize the current political and funding climate for nonprofits – and specifically women's organizations - as both a struggle over the provision of care work, and as a response to the progressive potential of the nonprofit sector (see Wolch 1990). Nonprofit organizations, in general then, are not discussed as necessarily apolitical actors. My focus on feminist service organizations illustrates the complexity of the work done in the sector and examines the implications for organizations which are located as both social movement and nonprofit

organizations. Feminist service organizations offer an informative case for understanding how shifts to neoliberalism affect nonprofit organizations' abilities to both provide services to their communities and to continue to advocate for social justice. My study recognizes that organizations have the potential to respond to these restrictions in a variety of ways and I explore how feminist service organizations adapt to new challenges introduced through the funding relationship. In the following chapter, I examine the Canadian funding climate in more depth, considering how feminist service organizations' location as social movement and nonprofit organizations structures their relationship to provincial and federal state funding agencies.

Chapter Three

Changes to State Funding: The Canadian Context

The challenges facing feminist service organizations in Canada are the result of important historical, political and economic changes brought about by the shift to neoliberalism. In this chapter, I contextualize the relationship between Canadian feminist service organizations and state funding bodies by examining how the voluntary sector in general – and women’s organizations in particular – are affected by state restructuring. This analysis demands that we consider how the dual roles that feminist service organizations play structure their relationships with state funding agencies. Women’s organizations in Canada have historically been funded as both service providers and as civil society organizations⁴⁷ working to advance social equality. This has created a situation wherein work which previously held a degree of legitimacy with state funders has become increasingly stigmatized. Recent shifts in the political climate and the funding regime have brought women’s organization under increased scrutiny⁴⁸.

This chapter begins by outlining how the historical decline of the Keynesian welfare state in Canada has changed the funding relationship with the nonprofit sector. I focus in particular on reductions in funding, new expectations around accountability and the shift to project funding.

The adoption of neoliberal modes of governing has redefined how the state approaches the

⁴⁷ This chapter uses the language of civil society (rather than social movements) in part because this terminology is common in the political science literature on which this discussion relies. However, this broader concept is also perhaps more reflective of how the Canadian state has historically related to women’s organizations. While “civil society” is a somewhat ambiguous and contested term in the literature, in this dissertation it is understood to encompass the nonprofit sector, as well as informal networks that encourage civic engagement. See Rice and Prince (2013: 251-254) for a discussion of this concept.

⁴⁸ In this chapter, I discuss the ways neoliberal restructuring and changes to the funding regime have affected the relationship between the nonprofit sector and the state, with particular attention to the status of women’s organizations in the country. However, it should be noted that this relationship is context specific and, thus, can vary at provincial/territorial and local levels. For example, Masson (2012) highlights the differing experience of Quebec’s women’s organizations which continue to receive core funding from some provincial programs and to be framed as civil society organizations. Recognizing the importance of context, this chapter discusses changes to women’s policy machinery at the federal level, as well as in Ontario.

nonprofit sector, as well as civil society in general. Therefore, not only is it important to understand how state restructuring has impacted feminist service organizations as service providers, their role as social justice organizations must also be taken into account. In Canada, this dual role has been recognized through the creation of state machinery specifically designed to support work around women's equality. Therefore, after discussing the creation of women's infrastructure within the state, this chapter shows how the legitimacy and position of women's policy machinery was rapidly undermined. The declining influence of women's policy structures, in turn, has had real consequences for women's organizations throughout the country.

Decline of the Canadian Welfare State and Changes to the Funding Relationship

In welfare states, governments are considered responsible for "...financing, organizing and delivering varying levels and forms of health care, housing, education, income support and social services" (Rice & Prince 2013: 60). Social services in Canada have traditionally been delivered to the public through a combination of public sector and non-profit initiatives. Both provincial and federal governments have tended to contract out these services to nonprofit organizations; however, reliance on the sector for social service delivery has dramatically increased over the years while the power of the sector has simultaneously decreased. Through the 1960s to the 1980s, government support for non-profits expanded both in terms of funding and interest in the sector (Rice & Prince 2013). However, since the 1980s, the relationship between the nonprofit sector and government has altered significantly (Gibson et al. 2007; Meinhard & Foster 2003; Rice & Prince 2013).

Changes to the nonprofit sector have been brought about by both public sector restructuring and socio-economic changes associated with globalization and neoliberalism

(Richmond & Shields 2004). Neoliberal ideology is marked by a belief in the supremacy of the ‘free’ market (Bezanson & Luxton 2006) and it embraces values of individualism, commodification and marketization (Smith 2005). Furthermore, neoliberalism seeks to extend market rationality to all sectors of human life, including the political sphere (Brown 2005). This involves the transformation of citizens into customers and “...the commodification of public goods” (Shields & Evans 1998: 56). At a policy level, neoliberalism promotes a decrease in taxation, a withdrawal of the state from service delivery and the deregulation of the market (Bezanson & Luxton 2006; Cohen & Pulkingham 2009; Shields & Evans 1998; Smith 2005). These policy approaches have a direct effect on the relationship between the state and the nonprofit sector.

In the Canadian context, neoliberal values resonated, in part, because of a discourse which argued that government needed to be “reinvented” (Shields & Evans 1998; Shields & Richmond 2004). Following the oil crisis of the 1970s, governments faced constraints on their spending while, at the same time, the need for welfare state services increased. Because Keynesian stabilization strategies were unable to effectively respond to this situation, there was an increasing disillusionment with governments and the state began to be framed as part of the problem, rather than as part of the solution (Shields & Evans 1998). This led to a call to transform the role of government in Canadian society and “...the New Right, which offered an intellectually forceful critique of the Keynesian welfare state, became ascendant and counterposed its values of economic liberalism, individualism and inequality to those associated with the post-war social contract of collectivism, social rights and equality” (ibid: 54). The New Right successfully argued that the welfare state had resulted in politicians and bureaucrats who were overly powerful and unaccountable to the public and who had allowed the mismanagement

of public funds. Furthermore, the welfare state was discussed as failing to offer solutions to social problems and as unnecessarily politicizing social issues and programs. This discourse framed neoliberal governance as a viable alternative which would result in a more efficient and effective state (ibid: 54-56).

By the mid-1980s, as governments embraced neoliberalism, they began to radically restructure and downsize social programs and services. This restructuring involved cuts to funding and the application of New Public Management (NPM) principles to social and public services (Baines 2004: 268). NPM is a type of public sector management which advocates for the increasing use of contracting out and emphasizes the need to attain accountability and efficiency through set targets, performance results and ongoing evaluation (Baines 2004: 274; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). The use of NPM aims to slow down or reverse government spending, encourage the privatization of services and increase the use of information technology in the creation and delivery of public services (Shields & Evans 1998: 72-73). Shields and Evans (1998: 72) suggest that we should think of NPM as "...software for the reprogramming of the administrative state", facilitating the movement away from Keynesianism. Although it is important to note that the Canadian government did not embrace NPM in the same way as other states (for example, the United Kingdom), it did increase its contracting-out of service provision and altered its approach towards the voluntary sector based on the business-like values advanced by NPM . In particular, the Canadian state has adopted a very stringent accountability regime, reduced government funding for the sector and has changed the conditions of funding for nonprofit organizations (Phillips & Levasseur 2004).

According to Richmond and Shields (2004) approximately 60% of all funding that the Canadian nonprofit sector receives originates from government sources (also see Meinhard &

Foster 2003). Social service nonprofits are particularly reliant on government funding agencies (Richmond & Shields 2004: 56) and due to their marginalized position within the nonprofit sector, women's organizations are even more vulnerable to withdrawals of government resources (Meinhard & Foster 2003). Overall, because of this high level of dependency, even modest cuts to funding have substantial impacts on the stability of the sector as a whole⁴⁹. Therefore, as governments engage in a process of downsizing, this has resulted in significant cuts to funding for voluntary organizations and has left the sector in a state of crisis as it attempts to meet increases in need with limited resources (Shields & Evans 1998: 94-95; Richmond & Shields 2004).

However, it is not only the reduction in funding which has affected the nonprofit sector negatively; the nature of funding mechanisms has been changed as well. Under NPM, an increase in the use of short-term contracts has meant that funding agencies now increasingly provide project funding rather than core funding. Core funding previously provided for the everyday operations of an organization in addition to supporting projects. Furthermore, governments provided core funding to organizations "...with the understanding that nonprofits would use some of these resources to represent disadvantaged constituencies in the policy process" (Shields & Evans 1998: 101). In contrast, project funding focuses on specific program costs and requires evidence of measurable outcomes. It is specifically provided in order to purchase particular, defined services and is not intended to ensure or support the sustainability of an organization. The advocacy role which was formerly subsidized to an extent through core funding is also increasingly viewed as ineligible for funds (Canada 2005; Phillips & Levasseur 2004; Richmond & Shields 2004). Additionally, project funding is short-term which keeps

⁴⁹ For example, the organizations studied by Richmond and Shields (2004: 56-57) reported that funding cuts have meant income instability and vulnerability, as well as a reduction in organizational effectiveness due to the struggle to maintain adequate levels of funding to ensure continued operations.

organizations insecure and in constant search of resources (Canada 2005). Part of the logic guiding this model is that, by deliberately underfunding voluntary organizations, the public has the ability to choose which groups to support with their private donations. Therefore, project funding is preferred by state funders because it is believed to control many of the alleged inefficiencies of non-profit service provision (Richmond & Shields 2004: 56).

Although project funding is now favoured by government, it presents a myriad of challenges for community organizations. As core funding becomes more difficult to secure, organizations struggle to find alternative ways to cover the everyday organizational costs. For instance, the organizations Gibson et al. (2007) studied were faced with cash flow problems, making it difficult to sustain programming or to meet payroll. These financial issues had a real impact on service delivery and on the workers themselves. The trend towards project funding has forced community organizations to use flexible staffing strategies, including a reliance on temporary, contract and casual labour. Furthermore, the overall thin staffing of organizations has been a contributing factor to the increasing intensification of work (Baines 2004). In general, there is little stability in terms of the ability to either meet community needs through consistent programming or to ensure secure employment for workers (Baines 2004; Canada 2005: 10; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). Thus, the shift to project funding has had a “human toll” because organizations are faced with staff burn out, loss of capacity and a reduced ability to reliably provide services to the populations they serve (Canada 2005: 10).

Another common challenge for nonprofit organizations presented by the neoliberal funding regime is the need to continuously apply for funding. Grant writing requires a significant amount of time, resources and expertise, especially given the reality that the success rate for applications is quite low (Gibson et al. 2007: 8; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). This, in turn, has

also changed the nature of the work being done as frontline workers are forced to engage more and more in administrative tasks which leaves little time to focus on day-to-day issues, long-term planning or some of the deeper caring and altruistic activities associated with the sector (Baines 2004; Gibson et al. 2007). Reductions in government funding, in particular core funding, have also produced a climate of competition within the nonprofit sector. In addition to being in competition with each other for government funding, organizations must also compete for partners and charitable dollars in order to fill funding gaps. Smaller organizations, which often have limited fundraising budgets, are particularly vulnerable in this environment (Gibson et al. 2007: 15-16; Richmond & Shields 2004; Shields & Evans 1998).

Accompanying these changes to funding, a strict accountability regime characterizes the state's relations with the voluntary sector. Phillips and Graham (2001: 152) define an accountability regime as "...the formal and informal arrangements by which voluntary and intermediary organizations, funders, governments, and the public function together to be able to make and enforce policies and practices concerning accountability". Included in an accountability regime are, not only sets of rules and regulations, but also norms, cultures and expectations created by the relationships between the various parties. Nonprofit organizations must be accountable in terms of their politics, finances, processes and programming, and they are accountable to a variety of stakeholders including the public, funding agencies, umbrella and partner organizations, governments and the communities they are a part of and serve (Phillips & Graham 2001: 152; Richmond & Shields 2004; Trudeau 2007). Furthermore, a variety of types of accountability function often simultaneously in the nonprofit sector; however, the three most common are funder dominated, accreditation based and self-regulating. Because of the importance of funding for nonprofit organizations – particularly for those providing social and

health services – funder-dominated accountability regimes play a dominant role (Phillips & Graham 2001).

Accountability is considered a necessary part of the funding relationship; however, how governments exercise this can differ significantly. Some approaches to accountability allow for learning and improvement and can function to ensure that public resources adhere to the law and reflect public service values and policy. However, more narrow interpretations of accountability focus solely on controlling abuse and misuse of public funds. The current accountability regime, introduced under NPM, applies this limited understanding of accountability. Because of this, it is rule based and focuses on control over funded projects (Phillips & Levasseur 2004).

Expectations around reporting have greatly increased which has inflicted real burdens on organizations in terms of both financial and human resource costs, especially when one takes into account that levels of funding have decreased despite heightened reporting demands from funding agencies. Additionally, nonprofit organizations are required to demonstrate measurable outcomes. This often includes tracking service users and keeping records of outcomes in order to provide evidence about the success of a project (Gibson et al. 2004: 6).

There are a number of significant consequences that emerge from these changes. For example, Phillips and Levasseur (2004) found that the emphasis on outcome measurement stifles innovation, risk taking and creativity. Because outcomes must be defined before a project is underway, there is considerable risk in being perceived as not delivering on these. Furthermore, government funding agencies tend to prefer projects which can be “...conceptualized, completed and evaluated, usually in the space of a fiscal year” and are reluctant to fund projects that might be linked to intangible goals such as building networks or assessing community needs (Phillips & Levasseur 2004: 459). This has the effect of limiting the scope and diversity of work being

done by nonprofit organizations. In particular, there is a sense that projects aimed at facilitating social change or prevention are not possible under the current funding regime because it is difficult to measure the long-term outcomes, particularly when projects must be completed and assessed in such a short time frame (ibid: 462). Therefore, advocacy has not only been actively delegitimized, the conditions of funding create new challenges for nonprofit organizations seeking to link their work to broader social change goals.

The accountability regime exercised under neoliberalism has also created real costs for nonprofit organizations (Phillips & Levasseur 2004; Richmond & Shields 2004). In a study conducted as part of the Voluntary Sector Initiative, it was estimated that the expectations created by the current accountability regime can cost an organization as much as twenty per cent of the value of an awarded contract. These costs are rarely taken into account in the contract itself (Richmond & Shields 2004: 59). Furthermore, requirements around evaluation have the effect of reducing the ability of organizations to provide quality services to their communities because of the significant amount of resources which are directed towards maintaining and reporting on funding. Although there is an increased emphasis on accountability, financial accountability to government funding agencies has increasingly taken precedence over nonprofit organizations' accountability to their communities (Richmond & Shields 2004; also see Phillips & Levasseur 2004). Overall, Phillips and Levasseur (2004) suggest that this kind of accountability regime tends to reduce the transparency of funding arrangements, while at the same time further eroding the relationship between government and the nonprofit sector.

Glimpses of Change?

Some have argued that the funding regime is in a state of transition, drawing attention to hopeful developments in the relationship between the Canadian government and the nonprofit sector (Brock 2010; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). Phillips and Levasseur (2004) explore contradictory trends in the federal government's approach towards the sector. While under NPM contracting is used in order to ensure a measure of control over services being subsidized by the state, Phillips and Levasseur (2004) also discuss movement towards a governance approach. They suggest that governments have come to realize that "...most of today's complex policy problems cannot be solved by governments alone" and this understanding has led to a greater push for collaboration (2004: 466). Recognizing that the state's relationship with the nonprofit sector was weak, the Liberal federal government created a number of framework agreements with a variety of sectors and partners in their attempts to develop partnerships (Phillips & Levasseur 2004; also see Rice & Prince 2013). In the early 2000s, the Liberals attempted to strengthen its relationship with the nonprofit sector by entering into one such agreement, the Government-Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI). The VSI was a five year initiative and some of its central goals were to improve the capacity of nonprofit organizations, enhance communication between government and the nonprofit sector and promote both voluntarism and the sector itself. Both parties recognized that the relationship between government and nonprofit organizations was in need of repair after a series of funding cuts, the attack on nonprofits as "special interests" and a lack of mechanisms necessary to facilitate the participation of the sector in the policy process (Brock 2010; Phillips & Levasseur 2004).

The VSI outlined a number of broad commitments and principles. In 2002, the Code of Good Practice for Funding and the Code of Good Practice for Policy Dialogue⁵⁰ followed from this initiative. The Code of Good Practice for Funding outlines the types of funding organizations can receive and describes activities which are eligible for funding. It also contains a discussion of accountability which emphasizes learning and flexibility. Furthermore, the code recognizes the need for stability and recommends that the federal government employ multi-year funding arrangements, rather than focusing on project funding (Phillips & Levasseur 2004: 468). The Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue is meant to enhance communication between the nonprofit sector and government. It recommends the increased participation of the voluntary sector in the creation of public policy and advocates for the use of resources to facilitate the inclusion of nonprofit organizations in policy discussions. The policy tools that developed out of the VSI acknowledge the important work and expertise of the nonprofit sector and they seek to create a more collaborative relationship between nonprofit organizations and the Canadian state through encouraging an exchange of knowledge and expertise (Phillips & Levasseur 2004).

Despite these positive recommendations, the overall influence of the VSI has been minimal and it has not succeeded in significantly shifting the funding climate. Brock (2010) argues that the VSI did have some successes. She contends that it was able to promote the nonprofit sector and resulted in the generation of a significant amount of research on nonprofit organizations and the sector as a whole. She also claims that the sector was able to develop a more organized identity in spite of its breadth and diversity and has become more vocal in the policy process. However, she recognizes that the VSI was not as successful at altering the regulatory relationship between nonprofit organizations and the state as some had hoped (Brock 2010).

⁵⁰ To see these documents visit: <http://www.vsi-isbc.org/eng/policy/index.cfm>

Although the machinery was in place to implement the recommendations and agreements outlined in the Code of Good Practice for Funding and the Code of Good Practice for Policy Dialogue, there has been little change in the relationship between the nonprofit sector and the Canadian government (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2010; Phillips & Levasseur 2004). In 2009, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) conducted an impact evaluation of the VSI. It found that this initiative had resulted in only minor improvements in the relationship between government and the nonprofit sector. Any improvements which had been made were short lived due to issues such as "...expectations around accountability, high turnover in staff and changes in priorities in the federal government" (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2010). Moreover, the report discovered that there was little awareness within the sector of the Code of Good Practice for Funding and the Code of Good Practice for Policy Dialogue and asserted that it was difficult to engage such a large and heterogeneous sector. Finally, the report recommended that future, similar initiatives should clearly define the roles of the parties in advance and that government should clarify whether it is engaging the sector "...as a provider of goods and services or as the builder of civil society and social capital" (ibid)⁵¹. It is evident then that some of the very issues which created a challenging environment for nonprofit organizations in the first place - and were part of the incentive for the VSI initially - are the factors which ensured its failure. For example, while the initiative and the products of the initiative treated the sector as collaborators in the policy process, this had little effect on how government actually relates to nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, this relationship continues to be hindered by the very funding and accountability regime the VSI sought to transform.

⁵¹ Note that this is an either/or statement. The idea that governments can engage the sector as both a provider of services and as an important component of civil society is considered to be unfeasible.

The nonprofit sector's influence has greatly diminished over the past three decades. Although there have been some efforts to rectify this, changes in government and a lack of commitment to improving the state's relationship with the sector has meant that these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Nonprofit organizations continue to be viewed as "...noble sources of giving and helping, rather than also as important partners in policy making and governance and as essential sites of political advocacy and social citizenship" (Rice & Prince 2013: 287). Moreover, nonprofit organizations continue to be confronted with a funding climate where funding is both insecure and insufficient, and where they are subjected to a strict, regulatory accountability regime. This presents many challenges including the intensification of labour, competition within the sector and changes to the nature of the work being done at the organizational level. Nonprofit organizations' contributions to their communities, as well as broader civil society, are undermined and undervalued in a neoliberal context. This picture is further complicated for feminist service organizations in Canada. While they can be classified as part of the nonprofit sector, providing many important services within their communities, their roles as advocates for women have also historically been recognized by Canadian governments. This is most evident when one considers the policy machinery which was created to advance women's equality and support grassroots women's organizations.

The Rise and Decline of State Feminism in Canada⁵²

During a particular period of time in Canada, a limited space existed to accommodate marginalized voices within the state. The creation of women's policy machinery can be seen as a part of this history; however, gendered interests came to be incorporated quite late and different

⁵² State feminism refers to the existences of structures within government which are focused on advancing women's status and rights (Rankin & Vickers 2001: 6).

models of representation were created to include women's interests within the state (Findlay 2008: 172-173). During the 1960s, women's organizations in English-speaking and French-speaking Canada mobilized to demand a royal commission to investigate women's issues. The federal government of the day responded to these demands and appointed a Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) (Chappell 2002; Rebick 2005). From 1967 through 1970, the seven commissioners for the RCSW travelled around the country, gathering research and holding public meetings with women and women's organizations. Their final report made 167 recommendations to advance the status of women in Canada (see Bird 1970). Although many argue that there were limitations to this process and the final document, the recommendations that came out of the RCSW became a rallying point for the women's movement (Bergqvist & Findlay 1999; Chappell 2002; Rebick 2005). Significantly, this led to the creation of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), a coalition of women's organizations, which monitored and pressed for the implementation of the recommendations the report had made (Rodgers & Knight 2011: 572; Rebick 2005) The report's recommendations covered issues such as the economy, family, education, childcare, poverty, immigration, citizenship and criminal law (Bird 1970). A central focus was on women's participation in democratic life which led to "...the elaboration of a network of women's policy machinery within the federal government" (Bakker & Brodie 2007: 31)⁵³.

Following a recommendation from the RCSW, in 1971 the Office of the Coordinator for the Status of Women was created to implement and monitor the adoption of the report's 167 recommendations. Originally located in the Privy Council, the office was moved in 1976 and became what is now Status of Women Canada (Chappell 2002; Rankin & Vickers 2001). This

⁵³ However, it is important to note that the Women's Bureau, located within the department of labour, had been in existence since 1954 and had undertaken important work around equal pay and maternity legislation (Bakker & Brodie 2007; Rankin & Vickers 2001).

move served to weaken SWC which was "...expected to act as the central coordinating agency within a system of women's policy machinery that spanned the Canadian civil service" (Chappell 2002: 93). However, without a centralized position, it was unable to develop close ties with other departments, challenging its ability to effectively carry out its role as an advisor on, and coordinator of, women's policy (Chappell 2002: 94). The RCSW had also recommended the creation of an advisory council and, in 1973, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) was established with a mandate to advise government on issues of interest to women in Canada. Unfortunately, the CACSW was considered ineffective very early on. Against RCSW recommendations, the CACSW was established through an order-in-council, rather than through legislation, which failed to invest it with any real authority given that its existence depended on the will of the government in power. Moreover, it reported to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women rather than directly to parliament itself, further limiting its influence (Chappell 2002; Rankin & Vickers 2001).

In 1974, the Women's Program was created with a mandate to develop a society "...in which the full potential of women as citizens is recognized and utilized" (quoted in Bakker & Brodie 2007: 31). Located in the Citizenship branch of the Secretary of State, the Women's Program provided funding and resources to women's groups working to advance the status of women. During this time period, government funding for civil society organizations was common practice and was regarded as a legitimate use of public resources. It was generally accepted that it was important to facilitate the inclusion of marginalized voices in the policy process in order to ensure that government was seen as being responsive to community needs (Bakker & Brodie 2007; Findlay 2008; Smith 2005)⁵⁴. In its early years, the Women's Program

⁵⁴ Additionally, Smith (2005: 139) contends that the policy of funding community organizations stemmed from state-building initiatives and was intended to encourage a "...sense of national identity and citizenship". Chappell

was predominantly staffed by femocrats who were committed to supporting grassroots feminist organizations. However, over time, "...it was unable to maintain its 'radical intent', instead shifting its focus away from direct consultation with grassroots feminist organizations towards funding national and status of women's groups who fit more neatly within the government's equal opportunity agenda" (Chappell 2002: 92; also see Bergqvist & Findlay 1999). Nonetheless, the funding made available through the Women's Program facilitated the growth of a diversity of national and grassroots women's organizations which provided services⁵⁵ and public education, generated critical research and actively lobbied government (Bakker & Brodie 2007: 31).

The creation of women's policy machinery at a federal level led to similar developments within the provinces and territories. By the 1980s, most had developed mechanisms for policy advice on women's issues (Bakker & Brodie 2007: 32). In Ontario, the provincial government established the Ontario Council on the Status of Women in 1974 which later successfully advocated for the creation of the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) (Findlay 2008: Bakker & Brodie 2007: 33). Established in 1983, the OWD was intended to take over some of the functions of the Women's Bureau in the Ministry of Labour and the Women's Crown Employees Office, in addition to being responsible for policy and research on issues related to women. The directorate's areas of focus included affirmative action, child care, family violence, employment, income support and justice (Findlay 2008: 263). Five objectives were developed to guide the

(2002: 165) also suggests that this strategy was meant to ensure that particular groups nurtured ties with the federal government, rather than focusing their efforts on the provincial level. Under the Trudeau Liberal government, this approach was further strengthened because it was viewed as a way to advance a vision of national unity and diffuse Quebec nationalism (Chappell 2002; Smith 2005).

⁵⁵ Although the Women's Program traditionally does not provide funds for direct service provision (as this is seen to be the jurisdiction of the provinces), in the past it has provided funds for lobbying the provinces on matters related to direct service provision (Chappell 2002: 166). Organizations can receive funding from the Women's Program for services if the proposed project aims to "...test new approaches to service delivery or to carry out feasibility studies or other strategies to improve the delivery of services to women" (Women's Program Information Guide). Furthermore, the current government's emphasis on "direct support to Canadian women" (For example, see Status of Women Canada 2008: 1) indicates a shifting understanding of the types of work eligible for funding.

work of the directorate. These objectives defined the OWD's work as 1) identifying women's issues and priorities 2) analysing and evaluating existing and proposed legislation, policies and programs for the impact on women 3) developing and coordinating policy and program initiatives benefitting women 4) encouraging and acting as a resource to public and private sector groups implementing programs benefitting women and 5) informing the public about women's issues (Ontario Women's Directorate 1984: 10). Although the OWD provided some grant money to women's organizations in the beginning, the objectives demonstrate that it had not been created to fulfill a program role. Under the NDP government; however, its role as an administrator of funding was expanded. Despite this, its position within the bureaucracy was relatively marginalized. The OWD had been created as a central agency and had no direct program responsibilities. Instead, it was expected to work laterally with all government departments and ministries which was challenging given its relatively marginalized position in the bureaucracy (Findlay 2008).

Through the RCSW, women's groups were able to successfully lobby for the creation of women's policy machinery within the Canadian state and at the provincial level. When initially implemented, this infrastructure did hold some promise to advance gender equality within the state and to provide support for women's organizations on the ground. According to Bakker and Brodie (2007), the relatively strong position of women's policy machinery was due to several factors. Many of the gender units were centrally located initially and, therefore, were able to assess and monitor the gendered impacts of policies across government. In addition to this, they drew authority from the recent Royal Commission report and were further supported by their relationships to the Privy Council and cabinet at the federal level and the office of the premier and the executive council at the provincial level. Furthermore, the goals of state feminism were

also generally compatible with the government's ideals regarding citizenship equality and inclusiveness. Finally, the connection between these structures and the increasingly vocal women's movement provided additional strength and credibility (Bakker & Brodie 2007: 33-34).

However, the influence of state feminism in Canada was short-lived and women's policy structures continue to be undermined and challenged. At the federal level, there have been a number of significant shifts which have weakened women's policy machinery. As previously discussed, the CACSW had been created with several implicit structural flaws which limited its overall impact. The council did produce important research on issues of concern to Canadian women; however, its role as an advocate was continually questioned (Chappell 2002: 95). In addition to its marginalized position within the bureaucracy, it also had a very limited relationship with women's organizations. In the beginning it had been headed by leaders of major women's groups; however, government did not continue with this practice which undermined any link between the CACSW and the broader women's movement (Rankin & Vickers 2001: 7-8). Furthermore, many believed that individuals who were perceived as being overtly feminist were unwelcome on the council. In 1995, the CACSW was finally closed with some of its functions being transferred to SWC (Chappell 2002; Findlay 2008). Chappell (2002: 95) notes that women's organizations had little reaction to this closure, perhaps because they too viewed the council as an ineffective body.

In contrast, a series of changes to both SWC and the Women's Program have had a deeper impact on women's organizations and organizing in the country. From the mid-1980s onwards, women's infrastructure came "...under attack from a number of political and ideological forces" (Rodgers & Knight 2011: 572). This resulted in significant cuts to funding for these structures. For instance, between 1987 and 1990, the Women's Program experienced an

approximately 30% reduction in funding and funding continued to be slashed throughout the 1990s (Bakker & Brodie 2007: 35; also see Rodgers & Knight 2011). Accompanying these cutbacks, the institutional position of the Women's Program was further eroded in 1993 when the Secretary of State was restructured, with the Women's Program being transferred to Human Resources Development. The Women's Program did not fit well into the department, however, which led to its move to SWC only two years later (Chappell 2002: 94). Chappell (2002: 94-95) argues that this move was beneficial in some ways to SWC because it created more of a connection between the department and women's organizations; however, it had a detrimental effect on the Women's Program due to SWC's overall peripheral location.

Women's organizations began to directly experience changes to the Women's Program. In 1998, the Women's Program shifted from core to project funding. This change was justified through the claim that reducing core funding would produce opportunities for new groups and would allow program resources to be distributed more equitably to all eligible organizations. Prior to this, Women's Program funding had been divided evenly between core funding and project funding. This change was followed by the introduction of a Results Based Management and Accountability Framework in 2003 (Canada 2005: 5). This framework identifies the short-term, intermediate and long-term results expected from the program. Additionally, it sets out new expectations for organizations applying for funding. In order to receive funding from the program, women's groups must clearly articulate "...realistic objectives, strategies to achieve results, expected outcomes and an evaluation plan that is appropriate for the initiative" (ibid: 6). These changes indicate that the overarching philosophy of NPM had infiltrated the Women's Program prior to the election of a Conservative government in 2006. A 2005 report by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women noted that the challenges created by the current

approach to funding resulted in the closure of many equality seeking organizations across the country (Canada 2005: 10).

Thus, prior to the radical restructuring of SWC in 2006, the position of women's machinery in Canada, as well as women's organizations throughout the country, had already been significantly weakened. As Rodgers and Knight assert (2011: 573), "The 2006 assault on the movement... was the pinnacle, but only the most recent effort, to undermine institutionalized feminism and the women's movement in Canada". Arguing that women's equality has largely been achieved throughout the country⁵⁶, the Conservative government made a number of significant changes to the Women's Program and SWC. In addition to removal of the word "equality" from the mandate of SWC⁵⁷, the government also closed 12 of 16 regional offices in an effort to rationalize any overlap in state functions⁵⁸. Revisions were also made to the funding guidelines for the Women's Program. Organizations are no longer eligible for funding for research, lobbying or domestic advocacy. Changes to the eligibility requirements have resulted in the loss of funding to a significant number of women's organizations which historically received support from the Women's Program⁵⁹. For profit organizations can now also receive funding from the program which formerly provided support only to community organizations (FAFIA

⁵⁶ Statements such as "The overall situation for most women and girls has improved in Canada..." (Status of Women Canada 2008: 7) and "...we have made commendable progress in advancing the status of women" (Status of Women Canada 2011: 1) reflect the belief that women have achieved equality in Canada. These statements are usually followed by an acknowledgement that "equality gaps" still exist; however, these gaps are imagined to prevail primarily in marginalized communities (For example, see Status of Women Canada 2011: 1).

⁵⁷ The word "equality" was later reincorporated into the mandate of the Women's Program mandate (see Status of Women Canada 2009: 10). No doubt this was in response to the very vocal outcry from women's organizations across the country.

⁵⁸ Findlay (2008: 195-6) is critical of this reasoning because it "...assumes that all women's policy machinery performs the same function, simply because it deals with women, and therefore can be amalgamated".

⁵⁹ For example, some of the groups which have since had their funding discontinued include the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, The New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity, le Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT) and The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodations (Public Service Alliance of Canada 2010). Sisters in Spirit, an initiative which is internationally renowned for its work around violence against Aboriginal women was also denied a funding renewal after receiving 5 years of SWC support (Barrera 2010).

2008). This change has not only increased the competition for funding, it is also a reflection of a transformed vision of the program. In addition to supporting equality work on the ground, one of the original incentives behind the creation of the Women's Program, as well as other women's policy machinery, was to create a link between government and women's organizations in order to facilitate women's participation in the policy process. However, it is clear that this is no longer a central – or even periphery – goal. In sum, although SWC is still in place, it is clear that "... its *purpose* has been called into question" (Knight & Rodgers 2012: 272).

At the provincial level in Ontario, state feminism also quickly came under attack. Findlay (2008) discusses the ways that neoliberal restructuring affected the influence and position of women's policy machinery in the Ontario. After its election in 1995, the Harris Conservative government introduced NPM in an effort to reduce the size of government and limit the influence of the public sector and community. Findlay's (2008) research found that, under this government, the OWD became increasingly marginalized and experienced significant reductions to both its budget and its human resources. Furthermore, although "One of the main functions of the OWD historically was to act as an advocacy agency for women's policy", this was considered illegitimate under NPM (ibid: 294)⁶⁰. Consultation with women's community groups was also significantly reduced during this time period and what consultation did occur was conducted in a limited way with a particular definition of who counted as 'community'. For example, one of Findlay's (2008: 314-315) interviewees described an initiative around economic security for women wherein the 'community' consulted consisted of high powered, executive women rather than grassroots women's organizations. Another significant change made to the

⁶⁰ This shift in thinking about the role of the OWD can be clearly observed when analyzing the OWD's Year-End Reports/Business Plans. For example, while in the 1980s, the directorate's role as an advocate for women is clearly described and even celebrated (Ontario Women's Directorate 1989/1990), in later years the directorate's work is described in much more narrow terms (see Ontario Women's Directorate 1997/1998 and Ontario Women's Directorate 1998/1999).

OWD during this time period was the narrowing of focus. Formerly, the directorate addressed a broad range of issues relating to women; however, it now focuses only on violence against women and economic security (Bakker & Brodie 2007: 33). Moreover, under the Harris Conservative government, the OWD became focused on outcome measurement, introducing new accountability practices, reviewing existing projects and entering into cross-sectoral partnerships “to *maximize* client service” and develop “...new, innovative, *solution-based* projects” (Ontario Women’s Directorate 1998/1999: 3, emphasis mine). Changes made after the introduction of NPM, including the deligitimization of advocacy, the narrowing of issues addressed and a focus on accountability, continue to resonate and have altered the directorate’s work.

Women’s Organizations and State Funding in the Era of Neoliberalism

This chapter has contextualized the political and funding climate the organizations in my study face through an exploration of how the state has changed its approach to both the nonprofit sector and to women’s organizations in particular. Changes at both the federal and provincial levels have resulted in new challenges and limited resources for feminist service organizations in Ontario. This chapter has argued that it is necessary to recognize the dual role that feminist service organizations fulfill as both social justice organizations and as a part of the nonprofit sector. Faced with neoliberal restructuring on multiple fronts, their ability to receive and sustain funding for their work is increasingly limited. As a part of the nonprofit sector, they confront many of the same challenges other social service nonprofit organizations face, struggling to provide services and advocate on behalf of their communities in an increasingly regulatory funding regime. Their formerly acknowledged role as civil society organizations has also been challenged under neoliberalism. The erosion of women’s policy machinery at both the federal

and provincial levels has signalled the decreasing legitimacy of gender equality work historically recognized (albeit in a limited way) by the state. In this context, feminist service organizations are particularly vulnerable to shifts in the funding climate due to attacks on both the nonprofit sector and the feminist movement in Canada.

In order to understand the impact neoliberal policy has on the feminist movement, studies of local organizations are needed in addition to research on larger national organizations. This dissertation examines how two local feminist service organizations experience these changes. In the following chapters, I provide a history of the organizations in my study and discuss their feminist values and goals. I then consider how neoliberal funding practices shape their organizational work, including discussion of their daily operations, advocacy and ARAO practice. I also explore the ways they cope with and resist a neoliberal funding and political climate in their efforts to remain committed to their social movement roots.

Chapter Four

“A Passion for Women’s Equality”: Feminist Foundations & Values at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton

Before examining how a neoliberal funding regime impacts E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton, it is necessary to first take a closer look at the organizations in question. This chapter examines the organizations’ histories and describes their services, values and social justice goals. My discussion highlights their social movement roots through an exploration of the organizations’ foundational histories and focus on women’s equality. Although both organizations did not openly identify as feminist at the time of this study, this chapter argues that because the organizations emerged from women’s organizing, apply a gender analysis, focus on empowerment and work towards social justice goals, they can be understood as feminist in nature. This, it will be demonstrated throughout this dissertation, shapes their experiences of the political landscape due to their positioning as both social movement and nonprofit organizations. After first discussing the organizations’ histories, I provide information about their services and connections to feminist coalitions. I then explore organizational values which emerged in my research, as well as the issue of feminist identity.

The Toronto Elizabeth Fry Society: An Introduction

The Elizabeth Fry Society first emerged in 1939 in Vancouver, with a mission to provide services to women in conflict with the law and to influence public opinion about the correctional system and women who enter into it (Avis 2002; Stewart 1993). Women volunteers in BC had been engaging in this work since the early 1900s⁶¹ and forming a society was a logical outcome

⁶¹ Undoubtedly, this work came from an approach of charitable giving which was paternalistic and wrought with classist, as well as colonialist, assumptions and implications (see Stewart 1993).

of this. One of the central reforms that women in BC had been advocating for had been the separation of male and female prisoners into their own facilities. After many years of advocacy, these efforts were successful. With the province's promise to build Oakalla – the first all-female prison in BC – women who had been organizing around penal reform for over 25 years formed a women's auxiliary to continue this work (Stewart 1993). They chose to name their organization after Elizabeth Fry, a Quaker woman, who had fought to reform the prison system in Britain during the 1800s after seeing the dismal conditions of the facilities and the treatment of prisoners. In particular, Elizabeth Fry drew attention to the general neglect of women (and their children) who had been abandoned in the system, often because of poverty. Fry argued for a separation of female and male prisoners on the basis of morality and dignity⁶², as well as the separation of different types of criminals⁶³. She also advocated for paid work and education for female prisoners and she began to arrange visits with the women (Avis 2002; Stewart 1993).

Much of the early work of the women who formed the original Elizabeth Fry Society reflected similar values and goals, making Fry an appropriate namesake for their organization. Working with an understanding that women deserve different, yet equal treatment, the Vancouver Elizabeth Fry Society was committed to providing education and rehabilitation for women in prison. They visited female prisoners, created instructional classes, provided entertainment for the women, and arranged for religious instruction. They, along with the John Howard Society, actively advocated for an approach to the penal system as one of reform rather than punishment and argued that the rehabilitation of criminals was the collective responsibility of the community (Stewart 1993).

⁶² During her prison visits, Fry witnessed women engaging in sex work. Prisoners at that time were expected to pay for their own keep (blankets, food and buckets for waste). Women, who were often impoverished prior to entering the prison system, frequently had no other way to obtain these basic necessities (Stewart 1993: 6-8).

⁶³ For example, she argued that violent criminals should be separated from those who had committed lesser crimes, first time offenders from those who had been in and out of prison etc. (Stewart 1993).

Throughout the years, Elizabeth Fry Societies began to spring up throughout Canada where there was need. In 1949, the Kingston Elizabeth Fry was founded with the urging of Kingston's Prison for Women's psychiatrist and with the support of the Vancouver Elizabeth Fry Society (Avis 2002: 57). Three years later, encouraged by Agnes MacPhail, Member of Parliament, feminist and advocate of penal reform, nine women from the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto formed a similar society (Steward 1993; Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2002; Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2012). The organization was dedicated to providing after-care for women in conflict with the law and also lobbied government around issues such as psychiatric care and capital punishment (Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2002). Its goals were to "...address the needs of women who become involved in the justice system through direct services, social action and public education" (Darlene Lawson quoted in Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2002).

The Toronto Elizabeth Fry Society (E-Fry Toronto) has expanded throughout the years, changed locations to accommodate more women and its work has become increasingly complex. For example, the organization now actively provides outreach to populations seen to be disproportionately in need of their services, including newcomer women, aboriginal women and women who engage in sex work. E-Fry Toronto provides support for women at the Vanier Centre for Women, the Grand Valley Institute in Kitchener and Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay⁶⁴. The organization also operates a shelter in their facility and has broadened the range of services it provides. Services offered include individual and group counselling, crisis intervention, release planning, referrals and community education (Elizabeth Fry Toronto n.d.). The organization has a number of community programs including parenting and anger management programs, a "Healing from Abuse" group and a Partner Abuse Response (PAR)

⁶⁴ Services at the Grand Valley Institute and Central East Correctional Centre are provided for women who will be residing in E-Fry Toronto's transitional residence upon release.

Program for women who have been charged in domestic violence situations⁶⁵. E-Fry Toronto receives funding from a variety of sources including government funding from the municipal, provincial and federal levels, as well as from the United Way and private donations, foundations and bequests⁶⁶ (Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2012: 12-13).

In addition to working closely with the John Howard Society around penal reform, the organization is also a member of both the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) and the Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies of Ontario (CEFSO) – coalitions which work towards women’s equality and advocate for policy reforms for criminalized women. CEFSO was established in 1952 when Elizabeth Fry Societies in Ontario began meeting informally. It later received charitable status in 1985. The council consists of the Executive Director and a board member from each of the nine Ontario Elizabeth Fry Societies in the province, with a goal to facilitate communication between the organizations “...to identify issues for concerted action” (CEFSO 2012) . CEFSO

...believes there must be fair and equitable treatment of women who are, who have been, or who may be at risk of coming into conflict with the law, that the community has a responsibility to be active in the criminal justice system, and that the role of the voluntary sector is vital to the effective realization of these goals (CEFSO, n.d.).

The council monitors the conditions of federal and provincial prisons by visiting jails and through direct contact with women who have been sentenced and they advocate for improvements to prison conditions. CEFSO also engages in public education about criminalized women. Additionally, the council recommends law and policy reforms, advocating for gender-specific and effective services for women in the criminal justice system (ibid; CEFSO 2012).

⁶⁵ The need for this program has increased since the introduction of mandatory charges and the number of dual arrests in domestic violence cases.

⁶⁶ Funders include the City of Toronto, Correctional Service Canada, Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Ministry of the Attorney General, Status of Women Canada, the National Crime Prevention Strategy and the Public Health Agency of Canada. I discuss both organizations funding in more detail in the following chapter.

CAEFS is made up of 24 member societies from across the country. The association began in 1969 and became incorporated in 1978. According to CAEFS' mission statement, the association "...exists to ensure substantive equality in the delivery and development of services and programs through public education, research, legislative and administrative reform, regionally, nationally and internationally" (CAEFS n.d.). Developed by member organizations, the association lists a number of principles and goals which guide CAEFS' work. The association's principles include the assertion that women's rights are human rights, that women are entitled to substantive equality and that criminalized women should not be imprisoned. CAEFS contends that all efforts should be made to prevent women from being incarcerated (ibid). The association works to promote decarceration for women and to reduce the numbers of women who are criminalized and imprisoned in Canada. Additionally, CAEF aims to expand "...the availability of community-based, publicly funded social service, health and educational resources available for marginalized, victimized, criminalized and imprisoned women" (ibid). Included in the association's goals is the aspiration to increase collaborations between Elizabeth Fry Societies and other women's organizations working around issues of "...poverty, racism and other forms of oppression" (ibid). In interviews with E-Fry Toronto staff and volunteers, both CAEF and CEFSO were described as the "advocacy arm", "advocacy base" or the "collective voice" of Elizabeth Fry Societies. Although some tensions within the coalitions were cited⁶⁷, having a larger group to focus on some of the broader policy level issues was discussed as helpful, especially given the restrictions on advocacy for smaller, community-based organizations.

⁶⁷ In particular, differences in politics around running halfway houses and decriminalization of sex work were mentioned.

Interval House of Hamilton and the Women's Centre: An Introduction

In the early 1970s, as feminist began to identify and understand violence against women as a pressing social problem, the need for safety and shelter for women escaping violence became clear. Feminists also realized that women would need more than this basic service to live independently and subsequently developed programs to help women transition and start over. The first transition houses in Canada were established in 1972 in Toronto and Vancouver⁶⁸. The number of women's shelters increased dramatically throughout the 1970s and 1980s and by 1987, 264 transition houses were operating throughout the country (Janovicek 2007).

Interval House of Hamilton and the Women's Centre's beginnings are reflective of and represent this history of grassroots, feminist organizing. Interval House Hamilton was first conceived of in 1982 when a group of eight women came together to discuss violence against women in their community (Newman 2011). According to Jane⁶⁹, Interval House's founders were "...very left, left, left, left women in the community", committed to social change. They envisioned a non-faith based shelter for women escaping domestic violence. In 1986, Interval House officially opened in East Hamilton and could accommodate up to 30 women and children in shared sleeping quarters (Newman 2011). From its early beginnings, Interval House of Hamilton was intended to be more than just a shelter however. In addition to acting as a safe place for women and their children, Interval House – along with sister organizations⁷⁰ in the city – actively challenged mainstream systems around issues of violence against women. Jane described the women's community in those years as "...a system that would protect women, that

⁶⁸ In communities where transition houses did not yet exist, women's centres often filled this gap in services with activists and workers opening up their homes to women and children in need of a safe place (Janovicek 2007).

⁶⁹ Research participants' names have been altered in order to protect their confidentiality.

⁷⁰ Interval House, along with the Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton and Area (SACHA) and the Women's Centre, were the central organizations in the area involved in holding these systems to account.

wouldn't back down around systems' excuses around women and... [they] were willing to make that public, willing to push the system and push it and push it and not give up".

According to one of my research participants because of Interval House's politics, internal factions and reputation in the community, the agency was the first shelter in Ontario to have both an internal and external review conducted. This review was funded by the provincial government and was highly critical of the shelter's position in the community, as well as its accessibility and the quality of the services provided (Davy July 1993). Following this review and the controversial firing of two outspoken staff members (Davy Jan 1993; Davy July 1993), the organization went through a period of time during which it became more focused on its service provision and largely withdrew from political action⁷¹.

In 1999 the organization received a 2.6 million dollar grant from the provincial government to relocate to its present location, a larger facility on the Hamilton Mountain (Newman 2011). In contrast to its former location, the facility has separate rooms for residents with en-suite washrooms. The shelter is used by approximately 200 women each year, with thousands more accessing the organization for referrals and other services including safety planning, community outreach and counselling (Newman 2011; Interval House of Hamilton n.d.). The organization has also expanded through the creation of new services and programs. In 2009, Interval House merged with the Women's Centre and shortly afterwards, opened up another Women's Centre, The Flamborough Women's Resource Centre, in the rural area of Waterdown⁷². Additionally, Jared's Place: Legal Advocacy and Resource Centre for Women⁷³ -

⁷¹ This more conservative period of history for Interval House was referenced in two interviews in particular and was discussed as a departure from the feminist origins of the organization.

⁷² The Women's Centres are considered "programs of Interval House".

⁷³ Jared's Place is named in memory of Jared Osidacz, a boy who was killed by his father during an unsupervised, court ordered visit in 2006. His mother, Julie Craven, worked with Interval House and the Women's Centre to establish a program which would assist women experiencing violence, as well as fight for systemic change (Interval House website; Marion 2010).

an expansion of the former legal advocate program begun in 1990 - was established in 2010 and operates out of the Women's Centre (Interval House of Hamilton n.d.). Interval House Hamilton currently receives the bulk of its funding through the Ministry of Community and Social Services; however, it also receives funding from the City of Hamilton, the Ontario Women's Directorate and a combination of donors, grants and foundations (Interval House of Hamilton 2011: 5). Funding received through the Ontario Women's Directorate supports the programs at the Women's Centre.

The Women's Centre is one of the oldest feminist agencies in the city. When I asked women to talk about the history of the Women's Centre, many of them described the organization as "grassroots" and speculated that it was originally unfunded and run entirely by volunteers. However, after speaking with one of the organization's founders, it became clear that this was not the case. In actuality, the Women's Centre was started up with a small grant through the Secretary of State. Although it was entirely volunteer-run for a short period following the end of this grant, the Women's Centre has historically received community and government grants to remain operational.

In its early years the Women's Centre was dubbed the Women's Information and Counselling Centre. It provided counselling, employment help, education and community outreach services. Some additional activities described to me included book clubs and poetry nights, writing groups, music nights, household repair and mechanic courses⁷⁴. The centre would also bring in authors and politicians to speak. Lydia, who remembers the centre during its early years, described it as primarily a place where women could come together, speak about their concerns and feel heard. In her words, the centre "...was a place for us to get together and be

⁷⁴ For example, one woman remembered a session on "How to change your tire".

brave”. Therefore, in addition to providing much needed services to women, the Women’s Centre was also a cultural and political space for women in Hamilton.

Over the years, however, the Women’s Centre faced financial challenges. For many years, their primary source of funding was a small grant from the Ontario Women’s Directorate. It became increasingly difficult to play the same kind of role in the community, as well as provide quality services. In an attempt to remain sustainable, the organization engaged in intensive fundraising efforts and also charged a fee for many of its programs and workshops. This fee was a major deterrent to many women in the community. The Women’s Centre was also unable to keep an Executive Director for any length of time and was about to become “...null and void” as one participant phrased it. Seeing that the organization was in danger of closing, Interval House approached the Women’s Centre with the idea to amalgamate. After considering the benefits to this idea, the Women’s Centre received offers from the YWCA, the Sexual Assault Centre and Interval House to amalgamate. In the end, the organization decided that they would become a part of Interval House and presently function as one of the organization’s programs. The Women’s Centre is now stronger as it has gained stability and support with its merger to Interval House. It no longer has to charge for its services and provides a variety of programs in addition to its employment and counselling services.

Programs and services offered by the Women’s Centre include individual and group counselling, computer training, peer support, court support and advocacy, as well as groups focused on a range of topics including self-esteem, anger, employment, parenting and wellness. Interval House provides emergency shelter for women experiencing violence, operates a 24 hour crisis line and engages in community outreach. Workers at Interval House can also assist women with safety planning, housing and can offer threat assessment/risk management. Interval House

can also connect women to a network of community supports and help women navigate various systems including the legal system and child welfare.

Interval House is a member of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). This coalition was established in 1977 and includes both 1st stage emergency shelters for abused women and children and some second stage housing programs and women's service organizations. Originally made up of only 10 women's shelters, the number of member organizations increased dramatically through the 1980s due to an expanding network of women's emergency shelters and the emergence of 2nd stage transition housing for women⁷⁵ (OAITH n.d.). OAITH describes its commitments as "...removing barriers to equality for all women and children", working to ensure that the voices and experiences of all abused women are represented in social change efforts, offering training to OAITH member organizations, increasing member organizations awareness through "...education, public advocacy and empowerment", assisting shelters to provide support and services to women, and working with "...equality-seeking allies...to end all forms of violence and oppression of women" (ibid). Some examples of this work include advocating for stable funding for women's shelters as they began expanding across the province, public education work on "wife assault" and the development of a priority policy for social housing for women and children escaping violence. OAITH also created specific policies and resources for member organizations, including a policy development guide and an anti-racism/anti-oppression policy⁷⁶ (ibid). In sum, the coalition's role is to both support member organization's capacity to provide services, as well as to advocate for social justice.

⁷⁵ According to OAITH, by the 1990s there were over 95 women's shelters throughout the province (OAITH n.d.).

⁷⁶ This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Feminist Identity, Values and Goals

As discussed in Chapter 2, a number of factors can influence an organization's decision to identify as feminist or not. Both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton do not publicly identify as feminist. This is in spite of foundational histories which reflect feminist beginnings, a history of using this label, as well as missions and vision statements that reflect feminist values and goals⁷⁷. Acknowledging that the organizations' decisions to not adopt this label are shaped by their internal and external environments, I argue that both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton are indeed feminist organizations. They can be categorized as such because they identify empowerment as an organizational goal, apply gender analyses and work towards broader social justice.

Originally developed as an organization by and for women in Toronto, E-Fry Toronto began actively engaging with feminist thinking in the 1980s. Recalling the organization's development of a feminist analysis, Darlene Lawson (2002), a former executive director of E-Fry Toronto, writes that this shift "...prompted exciting discussions and new directions in philosophy and programming" through applying a gender analysis to women's lives with a focus on how gender intersects with "...class, race, cultural influences, violence and sexuality" (ibid: 2002). However, the Toronto Elizabeth Fry Society presently identifies as "women-centered"⁷⁸, rather than "feminist". This was clarified for me when I first contacted the organization about participating in my study. I was informed that E-Fry Toronto avoids the language of feminism for (at least) two reasons. Firstly, because not all service users identify in this way, the organization avoids this label in order to be more accessible to the women it serves. Secondly,

⁷⁷ Again I recognize that labeling values and goals as feminist can be difficult given conflict and disagreements among feminists regarding issues and approaches. However, as argued in Chapter 4, some general characteristics can be used to define an organization as feminist.

⁷⁸ Discussed in more detail below.

the organization is actively attempting to reach out to the business community and this word can act as a barrier for them in the community. However, it is clear that there is some internal tension over this. For instance, one participant told me "...you don't see the word "feminism" in any of our literature, some of us...may or may not have an issue with that. We've been told we're women-centred...". A number of women I spoke with told me they had been attracted to the organization because they themselves were feminist and/or because they specifically wanted to work with women around issues of women's equality. Thus, the decision to avoid labelling the organization "feminist" is one that appears to be made strategically and is not necessarily accepted by all members of the organization.

Both the Women's Centre and the Interval House of Hamilton were historically recognized as feminist organizations and identified as such. However, in recent years this word has disappeared from the formal literature and website. Instead Interval House is described as a "...women's equality seeking non-profit agency serving women" (Interval House of Hamilton n.d.) although informally it still has a reputation within the community as a feminist organization. I was provided with multiple reasons for the disappearance of the word 'feminist' from the mission. According to one participant the board had decided that this descriptor was "too vague and they felt it would not resonate with all women's communities". Because the board felt this language might turn away "diverse women", the organization has instead opted for specific language about women's equality and empowerment.

A number of women I interviewed described Interval House as feminist⁷⁹ or discussed the organization's mandate to work for equality for women. For example, Alice summed up her discussion of the evolution of the Women's Centre by saying "I'd just say we're a really good feminist organization". Charlotte talked about how when she began at Interval House, the

⁷⁹ This was particularly evident with women I interviewed at the Women's Centre.

organization still identified as feminist in the documents. It was this word that attracted her to the job posting. Although this language is no longer used, she told me that the Interval House guiding values⁸⁰ still reflect feminist principles which align with her own politics, making it a desirable place for her to continue working. Speaking of her initial draw to the organization, she explained

...it was a feminist organization which ironically we don't actually have that in our mission statement or anything anymore...it was taken out but it was replaced by all of these what we call Interval House Values, and all of the values are feminist philosophies right...

In another interview, Emily talked about how she loved working at Interval House because of "...how women focused it is, [it's] about meeting her where *she's* at", reflecting a feminist approach to service-provision⁸¹ which places value on personal experience and views women as the experts of their own lives. Thus, although the label is no longer used, the organization continues to identify with and associate itself with feminist values and goals. It also continues to be described as a feminist organization by some members of the organization.

Feminist values and goals were expressed throughout my interviews with members of Interval House Hamilton and E-Fry Toronto. They are also reflected in organizational literature, including vision statements, pamphlets and organizational policies. In particular, empowerment, a gender analysis and social justice goals continue to define organizational work at both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton.

Empowerment is listed as one of the seven Interval House values⁸². It is described as a commitment to "an informed participatory decision making process", as well as respect and support for clients' decisions and choices (Interval House of Hamilton n.d.). This commitment

⁸⁰ Discussed in more detail below.

⁸¹ See Kravetz (2004) for a discussion consciousness-raising and feminist approaches to service provision.

⁸² Interval House's values are listed as health and safety, responsible and professional service, empowerment, diversity, anti-racism/anti-oppression, effective and responsive communication, confidentiality and privacy.

was clearly articulated in a number of interviews. Emily felt that Interval House is a leader in the area for the way the organization supports women. She told me “It’s not about our goal for her...it’s about where she is and meeting her where she is”. Similarly, Rachel discussed the organization’s “feminist approach to service provision” which meant “meeting a woman where she is at” and she described the Women’s Centre’s services as non-judgemental and client-directed. Charlotte emphasized, however, that the Women’s Centre’s role went beyond providing services and supporting women who are experiencing abuse⁸³, celebrating women’s stories, skills and strengths. She described the centre’s role as removing barriers for women, telling me:

...it’s not just about abuse...we also celebrate women as well...and we’re not here to *fix* women either, right? We are here to...what’s the word I’m looking for...sort of remove those barriers. Because I think that women have skills and abilities, that they can do things, *amazing* things, that women are so *amazing* but it is all of the things that get put on top of us, that restrict us...

Similarly, Diane described individual advocacy as “...empowering women to understand what their rights are, what they can expect from the world, what they *shouldn’t* have to take from the world”. In general, women I spoke with characterized empowerment as an important organizational value and goal.

E-Fry Toronto also considers empowerment to be core value⁸⁴ and organizational goal. This is evident in their vision statement which reads “A society that ensures all women have the dignity and capacity to make informed choices about their lives and avoid conflict with the law” (Elizabeth Fry Toronto n.d.). This value was also expressed throughout interviews with volunteers and staff. Discussing what first attracted her to the organization, Nicole talked about an approach to service provision which “...empowers the client base to achieve things they want

⁸³ Although the Women’s Centre does provide services around abuse, she felt that this role was in large part the responsibility of Interval House (the shelter itself), whereas the Women’s Centre’s services were meant to extend beyond this.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Fry Toronto identifies the following goals as central to their work: agency, dignity, diversity, innovation and resilience.

to achieve in their lives”. Speaking about the variety of services E-Fry Toronto offers, Maria talked about combatting issues of low self-worth and lack of choice, telling me that “...in some cases empowerment is just about a state of mind, in other cases it’s *really* about core skill sets”. She envisioned part of the organization’s work as helping women improve those skill sets, providing women with greater choices in the hopes that this would enable them to avoid further contact with the criminal justice system. In another interview, Liz summed up the women-centred, anti-racist, anti-oppressive approach by asserting “It is just about empowerment I think”. Her interpretation is in line with the formal description of the organization’s women-centred approach which proposes to “...ensure all women and girls receive services and support that respects their social, economic, physical and cultural realities and is based on the assumption that women know their own realities best”. Like Interval House, E-Fry Toronto aims to empower the women who access their agency by valuing women’s experiences and individual goals. Both organizations articulate an understanding that society limits women’s choices, as well as their abilities to live free and fulfilling lives. Viewing their roles as opening up options and spaces for women, E-Fry Toronto and Interval House position empowerment as both a core organizational value and a goal.

Originating out of women’s organizing, both organizations continue to position their work around women’s lived experiences. The application of a gender analysis remains a defining feature, continuing to motivate and direct the organizations’ work. Women at E-Fry Toronto spoke about the challenges associated with working with criminalized women. For instance, many discussed the stigma that criminalized women face due to preconceived and gendered notions of what it means to be a ‘criminal’. Liz articulated this challenge by saying “There is always sort of, I think, an additional stigma when a woman is a criminal because it’s such an

unusual – it seems to a lot of people in society – as an unusual role for women to take on”. Commenting on the invisibility of criminalized women’s issues, Sophie speculated that this could be explained, in part, by the reality that “...in people’s heads it’s kind of a male issue right?”. Jenna spoke of the need to consider the “woman’s point of view”, discussing particular gendered issues that arise for incarcerated women, including employment, health care, pregnancy and access to children. For E-Fry Toronto the marginality and invisibility of women in the criminal system ensures that gender remains a significant focus. This focus remains central even when taking into account the multiplicity of women’s social locations and experiences. For example, the organization’s new anti-racism, anti-oppression policy continues to place gender at the centre of its analysis, offering this explanation for doing so:

Women in the criminal justice system encounter systems, structures, policies and programs designed for and by men. Their unique needs are viewed as an afterthought if at all. Criminalized women have specific considerations separate from men. As a result our work must be gender responsive in that we must respond to the realities of women’s lives taking into account their individual strengths, challenges and wishes (Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2011b).

Therefore, because E-Fry Toronto’s work is informed by criminalized women’s experiences, gender continues to be recognized as an important organizing system in society.

Similarly, Interval House’s work, in particular the organization’s work around violence against women, necessitates a gendered lens. Workers discussed women’s increased vulnerability to violence, as well as the systemic barriers they face in their lives. Speaking about women’s experiences of violence, Alice asked “...how many men have to look behind them when they walk down the street at night? How many men have to be concerned about where they park when it’s dark in the winter?”. She also described Canadian society as one in which “...women still aren’t valued enough”. Diane argued for the continued need for gender specific services because “...men don’t experience these types of problems out in society because they’re

men”. Therefore, she contended that because women experience oppression and violence as a gender, there is a need for services which are geared towards their specific needs. This gender analysis further led some women to argue for the inclusion of men in a limited way in the organization and in the broader feminist movement. For example, Gail felt strongly that men had a role to play at Interval House because “...men need to also end violence against women and show other men that they can participate”. Alice also believed that men’s role in anti-violence work had to expand, telling me that “They are part of the problem but they are also a part of the solution”. However, she admitted that including men represented a major challenge for the movement because of a patriarchal society, as well as resistance to their inclusion from within the women’s movement.

A continuing commitment to social justice work was also articulated throughout the interviews and is described in organizational literature. Both organizations envision a society where women have choices, dignity and freedom. While their emphasis is slightly different, both vision statements reflect a common concern with women’s lack of options and inequality in their current society. For instance, E-Fry Toronto’s vision statement discusses the freedom to make informed choices and avoid conflict with the law, whereas Interval House’s talks about women’s rights to live lives free of violence. Furthermore, Interval House and E-Fry Toronto have anti-racist, anti-oppressive policies which acknowledge and name oppressive structures. Not only do these policies address organizational issues including worker-service user relationships and diversity among staff and volunteers, they also discuss the organizations’ participation in social justice work in the broader community. For instance, E-Fry Toronto’s policy describes the organization’s role in removing barriers for women and commits to working with networks, coalitions and community initiatives to eliminate oppressive practices and

structures. The ARAO policy used by Interval House Hamilton⁸⁵ discusses the need to remain connected to the community and contends that social action is a necessary part of anti-violence work.

A number of women I interviewed also spoke about how the organization's work relating to women's equality and social justice drew them to the agency. For example, Nora told me that she was attracted to volunteer at E-Fry Toronto because it is a feminist organization but then corrected herself by saying that it is "...not a feminist organization but it *acts for the rights of women*" (emphasis mine). Nicole was interested in working at E-Fry Toronto because she "...liked the philosophy of the organization in terms of its social justice work and working with marginalized populations". Similarly, Jordan talked about being attracted to the organization because of needs in the community and her own feminist politics, telling me

I was interested in justice and social justice issues, not so much the lock and key kind of stuff, law and order...but more working with people at risk of conflict or marginalized people. I've always considered myself a strong feminist and have always believed in the work that E-Fry does and feel that it's essential work to our communities. We're really the only agency that specializes with what we do in working with women in conflict.

Women at Interval House also spoke about their organization's social justice work. Rachel felt that Interval House and the Women's Centre draws in people who share similar values. When I asked her to clarify what she meant by this, she told me that the organization attracts people who have a "...passion for women's equality and justice for women". Discussing the organization's work in the community, Gail spoke about the need for Interval House to defend women's rights, emphasizing the importance of "... that strong voice and advocacy and support for women's rights". Organizational mandates and literature, as well as women's discussions of their organization's work, indicate a continuing commitment to social justice efforts. This commitment, combined with a gender analysis and work around empowerment, can be used to

⁸⁵ Interval House Hamilton uses a policy developed by OAITH. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

define both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton as feminist, despite their lack of formal identification as such.

Conclusion

Both Interval House Hamilton and E-Fry Toronto are organizations which were created by women, for women with goals to provide support for women and improve women's status in society. Although neither organization currently identifies as feminist, this chapter has argued that Interval House Hamilton and E-Fry Toronto can be conceptualized as feminist organizations. By taking a closer look at their histories, the organizations' feminist roots and connections to women's organizing becomes clear. Furthermore, both organizations have goals related to empowerment and they utilize a gender analysis. A continuing commitment to social justice work is also evident in the organizations' vision statements, as well as their ARAO policies. Interviews with women at both organizations reflected a continuing concern with social justice efforts among staff and volunteers as well.

However, while a commitment to social justice is apparent at Interval House and E-Fry Toronto, the ability to engage in socially transformative work is arguably the most difficult challenge the organizations face. The following two chapters will explore the ways that the political climate and a neoliberal funding regime affect daily work and social justice efforts at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton. After first examining the ways funding requirements have restructured work at these organizations, I explore the implications for advocacy and ARAO work.

Chapter Five

State Funding & Front Line Service Provision: Exploring Implications for Organizational Work

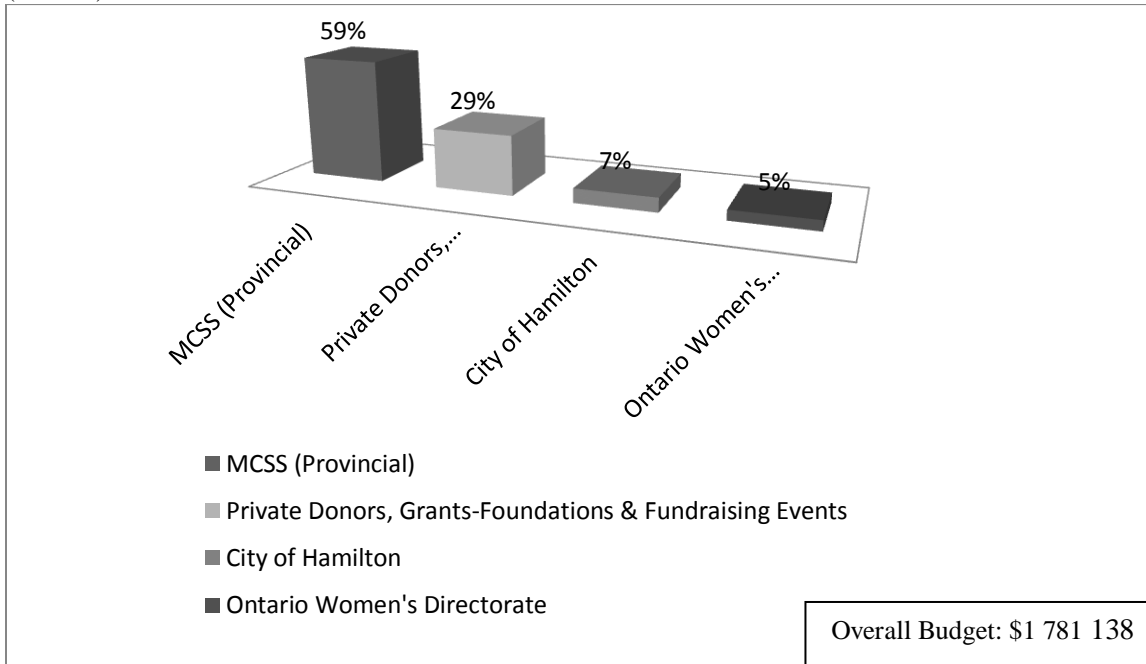
The funding climate for nonprofits in Canada has a number of direct implications for daily organizational work. This chapter explores how Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton experience and negotiate the many challenges associated with state funding in their day-to-day operations. In particular, I consider the difficulties related to applying for and maintaining adequate funding, as well as issues associated with reporting, overwork and staffing. Although accepting state funding has historically presented dilemmas for feminist organizations, my discussion reveals new challenges and pressures presented by the shift to neoliberalism. Because of this, organizations have had to develop particular responses to this climate in order to adapt and survive. Thus, the final section of this chapter considers a number of strategies organizations engage in to both cope with and, at times, resist the demands presented by state funding under neoliberalism. My analysis draws attention to the complexity of the funding relationship by considering the daily struggles that organizations must face because of changes to the funding regime, while also illustrating the ways in which organizations respond to these pressures. Although advocacy and anti-racist, anti-oppressive (ARAO) work is intimately connected to the daily operations of these organizations, the following chapter will focus on some of the distinct challenges related to this work.

Organizational Funding: A Closer Look

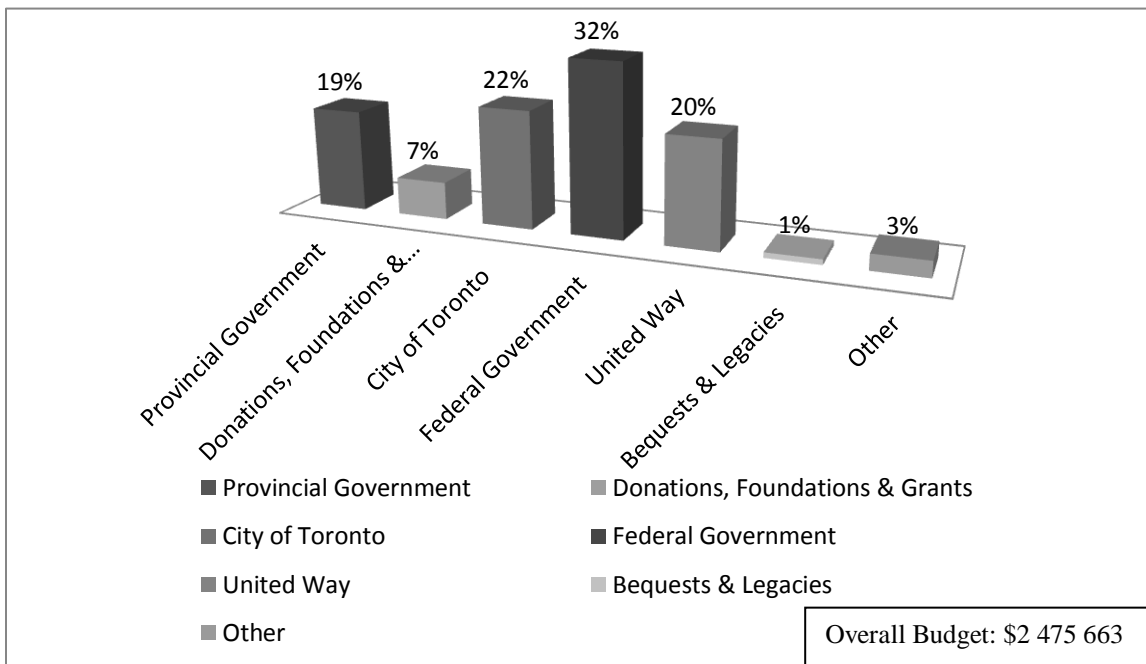
Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton receive funding from a variety of sources, including provincial, municipal and federal sources, as well as foundations and bequests. Additionally, each organization supplements this funding with fundraising activities in

their local communities. The charts below illustrate the breakdown of Elizabeth Fry Toronto’s and Interval House Hamilton’s funding, highlighting the range of funding sources the organizations draw on.

A Breakdown of Organizational Funding – 2010-2011
(Table 1)



(Source - Interval House Hamilton 2010/2011 Annual Report)



(Source - Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2010/2011 Annual Report)

As represented above, Interval House Hamilton predominantly relies on the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). In addition to this, however, the organization also receives funding from the City of Hamilton, the Ontario Women's Directorate and from a combination of donors, grants and foundations (Interval House of Hamilton 2011: 5).

Throughout the year, the agency holds a number of large fundraising campaigns including an annual gala, golf tournament, the House Full of Hope Campaign and the Ruby Slippers Men's Walk⁸⁶. Interval House Hamilton must raise over three hundred thousand dollars in their community each year to remain operational.

Elizabeth Fry Toronto's funding strategy differs from Interval House Hamilton's as evident from the charts above⁸⁷. They receive funding from a wide diversity of sources including municipal, provincial and federal funding agencies, the United Way, private donations, foundations and bequests. More specifically, at the time of this research, funding agencies providing resources to E-Fry Toronto included the City of Toronto, Correctional Service Canada, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ministry of the Attorney General, Status of Women Canada, the National Crime Prevention Strategy and the Public Health Agency of Canada (Elizabeth Fry Toronto 2011a)⁸⁸. Although Interval House Hamilton and Elizabeth Fry Toronto engage in different funding arrangements to ensure that their organizations remain viable, their experiences of the funding climate reveal similar challenges. Furthermore, the strategies they engage in are a clear response to changes made to the funding relationship under neoliberalism.

⁸⁶ The House Full of Hope Campaign is a raffle. Community members buy tickets in the hopes of winning a number of large prizes. The Ruby Slippers Men's Walk, similar to the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes Campaign, encourages men to participate in ending violence against women in their community through raising funds for the Flamborough Women's Resource Centre (a program of Interval House Hamilton).

⁸⁷ This will be discussed in more detail below.

⁸⁸ For the most recent financial information for these organizations, visit: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/lstngs/menu-eng.html>. For the year 2014, neither organizations' budgets altered significantly.

The Times They are A-Changin’?: Ongoing and New Challenges

Maintaining adequate funding has long represented a challenge for women’s organizations; however, shifts in the funding climate have also introduced new issues. In particular, the shift from core to project funding, combined with ongoing cuts to funding and a strict accountability regime, have a real impact on daily organizational practices. In many ways Elizabeth Fry Society and Interval House Hamilton represent success stories in that they have been able to sustain their organizations through changes to the funding regime. However, they continue to operate in an environment which presents ongoing challenges to their work and threats to their organizations’ survival.

At both organizations, women I interviewed identified a climate of uncertainty associated with funding cutbacks and project-based funding. Some women discussed this as an issue which is not new for the sector and for women’s organizations specifically. For example, when I asked Jordan about organizational funding, she replied “...there’s not a lot of funding around. There’s not a lot of available funding. Funding has always been something Elizabeth Fry has struggled with”. For women at Interval House Hamilton, the issue of cuts to funding was also considered to be an ongoing challenge. When I asked about how funding affects the organization, women immediately referenced the amalgamation of the Women’s Centre with Interval House. Speaking of this move as necessary to preserve the centre, women located this history as a part of a broader context in which women’s organizations have struggled to survive. Reflecting on the experiences of the Women’s Centre, Shirley told me,

...we were running on a shoe-string prior to amalgamation. I mean we were literally just hanging on. If you knew what our income was and we were still operating, it was amazing. Um so yeah, there definitely was an impact and I know that there were other women’s centres that closed down because...we were seeing and we were told that... our services were not necessary, were redundant, were a duplication of services.

Jane also talked about how women's centres are disappearing around the province, telling me that in most communities they "...are not even heard of anymore". She recognized that feminist organizations in general have felt the impact of funding cuts; however, she argued that women's centres are the most at risk of losing government funding. Jane believed that this is in part due to the small nature of women's centres which have not fared as well as other community organizations in the sector. However, she also contended that women's centres tend to be more radical than other types of women's organizations, making them especially vulnerable to funding cuts.

Although many women discussed funding as an issue which has historically been a challenge for their organizations, some perceived an increase in threats to funding. These concerns were intimately connected to changes in the political climate. Jane spoke about the growing conservatism in the country and province, telling me,

...and Harper, at the federal level, is talking about cuts everywhere right? So that's your federal system. And if we get...our Conservative government in Ontario – which some people think is going to happen – they're *anti-shelter*, they're *anti-rape crisis centre*, they're *anti-women*... so those are all fundable services.

Charlotte also defined the current political climate as conservative and articulated concerns that "...every time it's a conservative political climate then there's no funding for women's services, for women's issues". Similarly, Bridget argued that "...anytime the Conservative government comes in, it's always the social services stuff that gets cut. And it seems to be women's organizations that feel it the hardest". In general, when I asked about funding cuts, women articulated a real sense of fear and vulnerability about their organizations' stability and about community services more broadly.

In particular, women at Elizabeth Fry Toronto speculated that the anticipated passage of Bill C-10⁸⁹ (often dubbed the omnibus crime bill) would bring about shifts in funding priorities. For instance, Jordan articulated a fear that "...they're going to filter that money they're putting into community corrections – which is part of what we do – back into building jails and prisons". Liz also spoke about how she felt money would be shifted away from services like those Elizabeth Fry provide, saying "I mean the cutbacks that will end up probably happening...the problem with things like the omnibus bill is that, you know, getting tough on crime, we talk about the costs of building new prisons....but somehow the costly administration of criminal justice is somehow swept under the rug". Of course, one of the anticipated consequences of Bill C-10 would be an increase in need from the community for the organization. As Jordan articulated "...the more people they're putting into that system, the more that are coming out and so that would actually *increase* the work we have to do on less resources (sic)".

The sense of vulnerability articulated in the interviews is directly related to the nature of the work their organizations do. Although women often situated funding cuts in a broader context affecting all community organizations, they perceive their organizations as experiencing the effects of funding cuts to a greater degree. A number of women voiced concerns that women's issues are not considered a priority by politicians, something that, in turn, influences organizational funding. For example, Jenna told me "...you see the current political climate doesn't put women as a priority and that impacts the organizations because then funding is diverted to sort of those other priority areas...but the programs and policies to support sort of women centered services and programs is cut". Speaking about the lack of stability shelters

⁸⁹ Bill C-10 was passed in 2012 and is formally referred to as The Safe Streets and Communities Act. The act will radically restructure the Canadian criminal justice system. It will impose stricter sentencing which will, in turn, lead to the expansion of the prison system (for more information see Barnett, Dupuis et al. 2012; Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies & The John Howard Society 2012; The John Howard Society of Canada 2012).

operate under, Emily could not understand why places like Interval House Hamilton had to struggle so much to survive. She told me "...funding is just so *shaky*...even though there is such a community cry for these services....it's not a luxury, it's something that's needed as a support and I think it should be considered a necessity like anything else in the community". In general, women's comments reflected the very real marginalization of women's organizations overall (see for instance Meinhard & Foster 2003). Nicole recognized that "Women's organizations and groups of women aren't funded to the same degree that men's groups are". However, she believed that in the criminal justice field this is also "...largely a function of size...So John Howard Ontario...would be much better funded but they're also serving a huge number of men, in theory anyways".

Women at Elizabeth Fry Toronto feel doubly challenged as both a women's organization and as an organization which provides services to a criminalized population. In addition to the challenges associated with being a women's organization, they viewed themselves as working against both a stigma about women in conflict with the law and an invisibility around criminalized women's issues. When I asked Margaret if women's organizations are affected by changes to funding, she replied "...considering the population that we service, there are funding challenges there, that's for sure". She later elaborated, reflecting that "...people are still kind of concerned that women can potentially be involved in the criminal justice system...be in conflict with the law". Jordan also talked about this stigma, arguing that "People just don't want to fund criminalized women". Similarly, Liz spoke to the invisibility of criminalized women and the impact this has on the organization's resources, saying "...women are a smaller portion of that population so people sort of don't think of women...so I think that's a struggle to have a voice and articulate that women are still affected by changes in policy...that women still need

funding”. Because of the marginalized status of the women they work with, women at Elizabeth Fry Toronto believed that funding was particularly difficult for their organization to obtain.

The invisibility of criminalized women’s needs combined with the stigma associated with women in conflict with the law also presented challenges when applying for funding. For example, Nora talked about a grant that the organization had not received because the funding agency had not understood how criminalized women fit into their mandate (poverty). To Nora, the link between criminalization and poverty was very clear and she expressed frustration that the funders were not able to make the same connection. She told me “...I find that what we do, sometimes people don’t understand. And that really affects how we deliver our services so even though there’s a lot more we would like to do, it’s very limited because the understanding of what it is we do is very limited”. Margaret spoke of the issues associated with applying for funding and fundraising because the organization has to be effective in “...making people understand what our mission is and what the challenges are for the women that we serve”. She went on to say “...sometimes we have to be able to quickly get people’s attention on what it is that we do because people assume a lot of things right away” and she discussed the organization’s work educating potential funders and donors about the complex issues relating to criminalized women’s experiences. For example, she talked about sharing information about mental health and the prison system.

Both organizations found that the continuous need to apply for funding creates challenges for their organizations. Women discussed how funding agencies influence the types of work organizations can engage in. As others have noted, although there is some room for creativity and innovation in the application process, organizations are not as likely to take risks given their need for funding and the competitive environment fostered by a neoliberal funding regime

(Phillips & Levasseur 2004; Richmond & Shields 2004). For example, Nora told me “You can present a proposal...that’s where your creativity can kick in – but again, you also want funding at the end of the day. You don’t want to come out with this way out here idea – which may be the best idea out there – but not something they want to hear”. Margaret described this process in the following way: “...basically, you have to fit into...different funding schemes out there...so it does affect...When it comes to programming, you have to be able to find, to match the interest...find a funder who does have an interest in that specific area...”. Another participant talked about “tweak[ing] whatever you’re doing to fit that mold”. Reflecting on the vulnerability of smaller organizations, Charlotte discussed how difficult it is to maintain funding when organizations have to identify and “go with funding that fits”. Relatedly, women talked about the growing pressures from funding agencies to collaborate. For example, several women mentioned that their organizations had been told by funders that they needed to collaborate with other organizations in order to be considered for specific grants. Although, in theory, collaboration sounds like a positive development for organizations, the pressure from funding agencies for community organizations to collaborate can produce tensions between organizations⁹⁰. Participants explained this new trend as a part of a funding environment which provides limited resources, emphasizes a culture of fiscal accountability and creates competition between community organizations.

Pressures to conform to funding agencies’ expectations are intensified by the shift from core to project based funding because this shift has significantly undermined organizational stability. In addition to creating a context in which organizations must continually seek out and apply for funding, the shift to project based funding also has implications for the consistency of service provision and for staff workload and employment security (also see Baines 2004; Canada

⁹⁰ I discuss some of the issues associated with this in more detail in the following chapter.

2005; Gibson et al. 2007; Phillips & Levasseur 2004; Richmond & Shields 2004). Maria spoke extensively about the movement towards project based funding and the challenges this presents for service delivery. According to her, Elizabeth Fry Toronto was working hard to ensure consistency of programming despite the insecurity presented by project based funding. She described this challenge in the following way: "...what we've been trying to do is to get a really good sense of how we can better manage the programs to have continuity. Because they are funded but they are often just funded as a program." A number of women talked about their organizations' inability to ensure the continuation of particular programs. For example, Gail spoke of a highly successful project which provided support to women escaping violence. Although the project demonstrated positive outcomes and was recognized as a strong program in the community, its funding was not continued past the first grant. Consequently, the community lost an important service provided by Interval House Hamilton due to a lack of funding. This relates to a bias in project based funding; organizations are under pressure to continuously create and deliver new projects (Phillips & Levasseur 2004). Similarly, Charlotte spoke about restrictions associated with project based funding, telling me "...we have to be creative in order to meet the needs of women. So when women say 'We love your self-esteem group, can't it be longer?', we're like, we can't make it longer because of the funders". Overall, project funding is seen as limiting the work that organizations can engage in and not allowing them the flexibility to meet their communities' needs.

Project based funding has several significant consequences for staffing at the organizations as well. Securing funding for staff positions is a major challenge which has direct implications for service delivery. As one participant told me "...funders are interested mostly, really in programming. So another challenge is to find money for salaries, for office space, for

simple operational monies... Funders really want to make sure the funds go directly to the women but, I mean you have to carry out the service in *some way*". Another woman described this challenge in the following way: "...funding is hard to get for staff to support the programs...to have enough staff to actually implement it". Staff discussed how the new funding regime affects their working hours. For example, one participant described how starved her department is for resources. Due to the limitations of the budget, at the time of the interview her department consisted of herself and one other staff person. In order to ensure that their service is available throughout the week, the two women developed a schedule wherein they rarely saw one another. She explained: "...we work opposite ends of the week...So we've stretched ourselves out during the week...". The shift to project based funding, then, makes it more difficult for organizations to deliver programming and forces workers to "stretch" themselves out to ensure that the needs of their service users are met.

Women clearly articulated the ways in which project based funding shapes their experiences as workers. For example, Jordan observed an increase in the number of extremely short term⁹¹ contract positions at Elizabeth Fry Toronto. Noting that she was the last "full-time" employee hired (even though she only worked four days a week) she argued that,

...we're seeing *a lot* of contract positions, casual positions being created because there isn't *sustainable* funding. So we're not actually able to create meaningful employment through the funds that we are getting. So that impacts programming, organizationally and job security right?

Speaking from her perspective as a manager, one participant also discussed the trend towards short-term contracts. She described some of the challenges funding presents in the following way:

It's limiting, right? I mean you're relying on 'Are we going to be funded again?' It's, you know, hiring somebody for funding that you've got for one year or two years in a temporary position. Because

⁹¹ Specifically, she spoke about six month contracts.

funding is limited, it is extremely difficult for staff retention, extremely difficult for a professional to be retained at the organization and work towards whatever, you know, as a professional.

Maria aptly linked the shift to project based funding and the challenges this presented for staffing to a culture of accountability, asserting "...it's easier to understand a program than it is to understand general funding 'cause otherwise it's 'Why is that person there? What are they doing? Why am I paying for that?'. Where if you say 'Well, this person is providing the hours to this particular program and this is the outcome of the program'. So everything is outcome based".

Indeed, while funding was viewed as an ongoing issue for the organizations in my study, the changes introduced under New Public Management (NPM)⁹² – in particular the use of short term contracts and an increasingly stringent accountability regime – were discussed as perpetuating some of the most difficult challenges for the organizations' daily work. Many women observed that demands around reporting had increased over the years for non-profit organizations in general. Jenna discussed a growing push for non-profits to demonstrate outcomes, arguing that "...the funding climate has moved in the direction of sort of requiring results and being very specific something about the outcomes that are desired by the funders". Shirley described reporting as becoming "...more detailed, it's becoming much more work". Another participant argued that funding agencies increasingly want to know "...more and more information". In particular, she spoke of a granting agency which had made changes to their reporting system: "...it is *so* intricate and *time consuming* that it's unbelievable. And there's no extra money for that right? So we're going to change our reporting system and then, you know, you just have to *fit it in*, you know, with everything else". Several women referenced the eHealth

⁹² See Chapter Three for a detailed discussion of NPM.

scandal⁹³, arguing that recent increased pushes for accountability are a product of – at least at the provincial level – politicians’ attempts to rectify past mistakes.

The work associated with reporting is a source of stress and frustration at both organizations. Many women wondered about the efficiency of the systems in place and about the impact this has on their organizations’ goals. Reporting was discussed as taking workers away from important work in the community. For example, Jo described funding contracts in the following way: “...when you have an agreement with a funder, there’s like...60% of it is paperwork...”. Gail expressed similar concerns, saying “...almost at times, when you’re getting those reports done, it feels like you’re spending more time on stats and on making your reports...it’s almost like you’re spending equal time doing that part as you are delivering the service”. Nicole reflected on the challenge of juggling multiple tasks, telling me “it’s hard because you’re doing your service, you’re trying to do the reports, you know, you’re trying to do all those pieces...”. Diversification of funding sources has only intensified this challenge because funding agencies are demanding increasing amounts of information but also do not coordinate with each other, even when they are at the same level of government. For instance, one manager recalled that her organization had to report to multiple funding agencies about whether any of its workers earned more than \$100 000 even though no one at the organization makes that amount of money. She expressed surprise that the provincial government had not developed a simple database so that organizations can submit this information once, instead of having to report this information multiple times. She argued that this would be more efficient for nonprofit organizations, as well as for government.

⁹³ eHealth Ontario was publicly reported as having misspent over \$1 billion in “untendered contracts to consultants” (McCarter 2009: 6). This scandal led to the resignation of several high ranking individuals including then Health Minister, David Caplan, and the agency’s CEO and the Chair of the board of directors (McCarter 2009; “EHealth Scandal a 1B waste: Auditor”, 2009, Oct. 7th).

Similar to Phillips and Levasseur's (2004) findings, workers accepted a need for accountability in a funding relationship. Their grievances lay with reporting processes, funders' limited definitions of accountability and what they believe are inefficiencies in how accountability is assessed. A number of women in management positions took pride in their ability to operate their agencies "efficiently" and effectively. Because of this, they expressed frustration with the unnecessarily burdensome reporting structures. One woman described a funding agency which changed its reporting process months after awarding a grant. This created additional work for the organization because workers then had to go back and alter the way they had been collecting statistics for their reports. Another participant observed that reporting processes could be more "sensible". She made reference to a granting agency which demanded an unnecessary amount of detail in the work plan, including photos of areas throughout the building⁹⁴. She remarked that "...having a work plan with that amount of detail doesn't benefit anybody" and she argued that funders should carefully evaluate what kinds of information they really require in order to "...trust that the work is being done". Reporting processes in general are viewed as having a contradictory effect overall. While organizations are expected to run at maximum efficiency, their work is often interrupted by reporting expectations from funders.

Several women acknowledged that funding agencies need to have some control over how funding is used. Charlotte remarked that "...I get that they want to know that we're doing what we say that we're doing and that they're funding what they say they're funding"; however, she argued that funders' methods for evaluating accountability are flawed. For instance, she observed that statistics – a dominant approach used by funders to evaluate organizations – do not capture all of the work the organization does. Reflecting on the number of women who had come through the door of her organization in the past year, she commented,

⁹⁴ In this example, funding was related to infrastructure repairs.

...and these are women that we're collecting her information. These are not drop-in women, these are not the women calling on the phone, they're not the women coming to the drop-in on Fridays...you can only capture 'new' women...so with one woman you could be doing like fifteen hundred things for her but she only counts as one statistic.

Instead, she spoke of alternative techniques for measuring the effectiveness of organizational work. As an example, she made reference to a funding agency which conducted focus groups with the organization's service users one year. Nora conceptualized accountability as an important component of the funding relationship as well; however, she argued that "...it should be a partnership as opposed to a reporting hierarchy". Like Charlotte, she also believed that funding agencies should spend some time getting to know organizations' work rather than evaluating organizations against narrowly defined criteria. Nora envisioned funding agencies visiting community organizations in order to get a better sense of the work being done on the ground. She argued that this would allow funding agencies to better understand an organization's impact, as well as potential opportunities to strengthen an organization's capacity.

Additionally, participants often conceptualized accountability in broad terms, moving beyond funding agencies' emphasis on fiscal accountability. As Richmond and Shields (2004: 59) demonstrate, governments and funding agencies tend to conflate public and administrative accountability, exercising a limited understanding of what a funding relationship entails. However, in interviews, a number of women expressed an understanding of accountability which recognized multiple relationships and responsibilities. Describing funding agencies' approach to reporting, one participant critically observed that "...they have all these nice accountability measures that they put on you...which aren't really accountability measures at all...". Gail discussed a number of relationships which require accountability, telling me "...certainly we are accountable to funders...we are accountable to each other, we are certainly accountable to our clients and we're also accountable to our funders. And we need to be responsible in everything

we do with respect to that...”. Similarly, Jenna described a manager’s approach to funding in the following way: “...she’s very honest about sort of ensuring the programs are meeting the needs of the funder but also meeting the needs of her organization, ‘cause that’s why she’s employed...she’s there to ensure those women are served”. Accountability to multiple parties – to their communities, to fellow workers, in addition to funding agencies – was discussed as a priority for the organizations. Despite this, the demands of funding contracts often put organizations in positions wherein they are under pressure to prioritize their relationships with funding agencies over their responsibilities to other groups.

Responding to Funding Pressures

Changes made to the funding relationship – including funding cutbacks, the shift to project based funding and stricter rules around accountability – have a clear impact on organizational work. The organizations in my study engage in a number of strategies to respond to the challenges presented by the funding climate. In particular, interview participants discussed the need to increase their own contributions to their organizations in order to ensure quality service provision. Organizations have also diversified their funding sources and work to develop their relationships with funding agencies.

Predictably, one of the central ways that workers coped with a variety of the challenges discussed above was to further increase their own labour. In her study of social workers’ experiences of neoliberal restructuring, Baines (2004) found that workers resisted changes introduced under NPM by increasing their own labour to fill “caring gaps”. Similarly, women I interviewed discussed the need to “stretch” themselves out. For example, in addition to strategically managing shifts with her co-worker to provide services throughout the week, one

woman also talked about “wearing many hats”: “...we’re the in-house, we’re the out-of-house, you know, for the outreach programs. We’re also the presenters. Basically that’s what it is. We have to wear many different hats within the organization.” Jenna reflected that a lack of financial resources for women’s organizations in general meant that “...it’s left to volunteers and unpaid staff...” to make sure that services are provided despite a lack of financial resources⁹⁵. When I asked Charlotte how her organization met the challenges associated with funding, she replied “...sometimes it’s on the backs of our workers because we’re passionate about what we do”. However, Charlotte’s comments went beyond discussing workers’ unpaid labour and she even noted that many of the furnishings in the organization’s space were provided by staff and volunteers. She remarked: “...we don’t have funding for capital expenses right so we can’t buy new furniture...you don’t get money for those kinds of things, so we bring in our lamps that we are no longer using in our homes, we bring in the pictures from our homes...”. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that workers absorb the costs of neoliberalism, compensating for gaps in funding by juggling multiple tasks and going beyond their paid responsibilities.

Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton are beginning to shift tactics with regards to their funding strategies as well. Although women’s organizations in general tend to be more dependent on government funding than non-profits which do not provide gender-specific services and advocacy are (Meinhard & Foster 2003), the organizations in my study are seeking out alternative funding options in order to survive in a challenging funding environment. In recent years, both organizations have pursued diverse funding sources including a range of government agencies, community foundations and fundraising opportunities. Admittedly, this has the effect of creating more work; however, it also helps the organizations ensure some

⁹⁵ She also reflected that at times this was simply not possible which meant that organizations are forced to cut programs and services due to a lack of funding.

stability and, in some cases, allows them to engage in types of work which might not be possible otherwise.

Many women – particularly at Elizabeth Fry Toronto – mentioned the need to consider alternative funding sources. Margaret explained that “...we do get government funding but that certainly is not enough and doesn’t cover all the programming. We just have to be very, very flexible and we spend a lot of time researching foundations and applying wherever possible to get funding...you have to have a diverse funding base”. Sophie felt very strongly that “...for the organization to be strong, we need to rely on outside funding” and spoke about how the organization actively seeks out “...new sources of funding”. Maria discussed a need to not only diversify the organization’s funding base, but to also think strategically about the timing between grants. She described the process in the following way:

...funding and even programming is all about layers. So when this layer skims off this side, you’ve got another layer coming in underneath to fill it. So even if you have diverse funders, you try to stagger them...if you stagger them than you’re not going to run into a situation where 70% of your dollars are coming from [one funding source] and they’re not going to give you money anymore.

Women’s discussions revealed a strategy which is reflective of the movement away from core funding. Diversifying organizational funding is viewed as providing some stability for the organization and many women were wary of depending too heavily on any one funding source given the political and funding climate their organization is operating in.

Interval House Hamilton has not pursued this strategy in quite the same way; however, some workers discussed the need to apply for more grants and, more specifically, a number of women commented on the need to fundraise in their community. For example, Ruth commented “I think we have to struggle a little harder to get our money in the fundraising perspective, and even with the government...we have to apply for more grants out there and I think we have to be

more diversified”. As mentioned above, the organization engages in a number of fundraising campaigns throughout the year and raises over three hundred thousand dollars annually in order to sustain itself. Although fundraising has its limitations⁹⁶, a couple of women also discussed the flexibility it allows the organization. Rachel spoke about private funders who held fundraisers for the organizations. She expressed a sentiment that there would always be those in the community that would “go to bat” for Interval House and the Women’s Centre no matter the broader funding climate because they share similar values with the organization. Jane noted that the legal advocate program is completely supported through fundraising efforts. She argued that the legal advocate program is not something the organization is ever willing to give up because this program allows the organization to connect advocacy and service provision and she asserted “...we are committed to a legal advocate program, whether or not we get funding for one”. Therefore, the organization does not rely on government grants for this program and instead raises funds for it within the community⁹⁷. Women at Elizabeth Fry Toronto also discussed fundraising efforts. However, overall many felt that this was challenging for their organization due to the stigma associated with the women they serve.

Another theme which emerged in the interviews was the importance of building and maintaining working relationships with funding agencies. This involves two central strategies: demonstrating a commitment to the reporting relationship and openly communicating with funding agencies about issues related to funding⁹⁸. A number of women I spoke with took pride

⁹⁶ For example, it entails significant organizational resources and puts organizations in competition with each other.

⁹⁷ They do at times apply for grants to expand the service; however, this only supplements the funding for the program.

⁹⁸ These strategies are largely undertaken at the management level. As others (English 2007; Kravetz 2004; Markowitz & Tice 2002) have noted, organizations which engage in funding relationships become increasingly professionalized, placing importance on technocratic skills, credentials and formal education. Certainly, the types of work associated with applying for and maintaining funding do take some workers away from the front-line. However, while women I spoke with recognized issues with funding processes and the associated work this entails,

in their ability to demonstrate accountability to funding agencies. When I asked Gail about the relationship Interval House has with their funding agencies, she replied "...the biggest thing to that answer is being accountable and responsible from the beginning until that funding source is done". Another woman described the tensions implicit in relationships with funding agencies given the power funders have over community organizations. However, despite these tensions she informed me "...they like us because we always have our reports in on time, we always make sure that we meet things so they can't complain about any of those things...They think of us as a very reliable agency so when they give us money, they trust we will do what we say". An important part of this strategy involves actively communicating with funders. If the organization is not able to meet set targets, she told me it is important to "...explain it so it's not like fake it. If I say I'm going to see 200 women and I see 100, I explain the reasons why". Similarly, Jo discussed "calling up" funding agencies with any questions about the reporting process to ensure that she includes every necessary element in her reports. The organizations strategically respond to challenges in the funding climate by demonstrating their ability to achieve outcomes, submitting reports on time and by keeping the lines of communication open with funding agencies.

Management at these organizations also communicate with funders about issues related to the funding relationship including reporting procedures, allocations of money and contracts. Although many participants recognized community organizations' inherently unequal position in the funding relationship, they maintained that it is necessary to build and maintain relationships with funding agencies in order to have some influence over the conditions of funding. For example, when discussing a lack of sufficient funding for one of the organization's programs, Jo

no one framed professionalization as problematic in itself. In fact, a few women made it clear that the education and expertise of their organizations' workers is a strength which is often overlooked in feminist/women's organizations.

commented "...we just keep that communication open and say 'You know, we'd probably run a lot more *efficiently* if we have more money...". Nicole argued that "...if you have good relationships – if you can establish them – then you can figure out what's happening easier and ideally make changes...". By maintaining communication with funding agencies and developing mutual respect, Nicole felt that organizations could gain some influence. She also reflected that organizations need to be "...very proactive..." about the terms of funding contracts to ensure that the deliverables make sense in relation to the organization's work. Several women talked about debriefing with funding agencies after having funding requests denied. They framed this tactic as an important strategy to educate funders about the work their organization does. For example, Jenna described following up with funders after a proposal had been rejected in order to better understand why the organization had not received funding. She explained that the organization also viewed "...it as an opportunity to do a bit more education and awareness because many times when the organization doesn't get the funding, it's that the issue doesn't resonate". This strategy was evident predominantly at Elizabeth Fry Toronto; however, at both organizations women discussed the need to build and sustain working relationships with funding agencies.

Conclusion

My interviews with women at Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton revealed the various ways that a neoliberal funding regime restructures organizational work. Although some funding issues in interviews were discussed as ongoing challenges for women's organizations, participants described the intensification of these challenges, as well as new pressures introduced by the funding regime. The movement to NPM has introduced a series of changes to funding including a withdrawal of state funding for the nonprofit sector generally, an

increase in project based funding and a strict accountability regime. These changes have direct implications for day-to-day work including undermining organizational stability and the intensification of labour. Additionally, this funding regime has the effect of limiting creativity. It also interrupts service provision and has fostered a climate of fear and uncertainty amongst management, staff and volunteers.

The organizations in this study responded to these pressures in a number of ways. Workers discussed increasing their own contributions to their organizations to fill gaps left by insufficient funding. Organizations have also diversified their funding sources in response to the instability introduced under neoliberalism. Additionally, organizations focus on their relationships with funding agencies and communicate with funders regarding issues related to the funding relationship in an effort to make changes. Strategies used by E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton can be understood to fall upon a continuum, with some of the strategies used challenging neoliberal ideology and funding practices, and others simply helping the organizations cope with pressures in the funding climate. For instance, neoliberalism's assumption that communities, and particularly women, will increase their caring labour in a context of neoliberal restructuring was reflected in my interviews with women. This allowed workers to ensure that the needs of their communities are met; however, it should be understood as a way of coping with decreasing state support. Similarly, although diversifying funding sources provides some stability in a context of diminishing public resources and the disappearance of core funding, this tactic also connects with neoliberal visions of the nonprofit sector. As discussed in Chapter 3, the movement to project funding has been justified as a way to control the supposed inefficiencies of the sector. According to neoliberal ideology, project funding allows the public to direct private donations to organizations thought worthy of support.

Therefore, while the organizations in this study have chosen to diversify their funding sources in order to remain sustainable, this strategy is also a way of coping with a neoliberal funding regime. It does little to challenge neoliberal ideology and policy.

In contrast, I would argue that the organizations' focus on the reporting relationship indicates creative resistance to this funding climate. By meeting outcomes, submitting reports on time and keeping the lines of communication open with funding agencies, organizations are able to navigate the challenges of a stringent accountability regime. While their acceptance of the need to be accountable may seem to indicate an internalization of neoliberal ideology, I contend that their actions show evidence of resistance to a climate which frames nonprofits – and in particular women's organizations – as inefficient and ineffective. Women I interviewed spoke with pride of their organizations' reporting skills and they provided sophisticated understandings of accountability, refusing to accept limited definitions of this concept.

Given the significant influence funding has on organizations' daily operations, it is important to consider the implications for social movement goals. The political climate in Canada has stigmatized social justice work and the conditions of funding make this work increasingly difficult. Women whom I interviewed certainly perceived this in their political environment and discussed how this impacts their organizations. In the following chapter, I explore challenges to organizations' social justice work. In particular, I examine how threats in the political and funding climate affect Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton's anti-racist, anti-oppressive work, as well as their ability to engage in advocacy. Furthermore, I consider how the women who work at these organizations seek to meet these challenges.

Chapter Six

Negotiating Contradictions: State Funding, Advocacy & ARAO Work

Changes to the funding regime under neoliberalism have had an impact across the nonprofit sector. Interview participants at Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton discussed how these changes had resulted in an increased vulnerability for their organizations. This perception which was articulated in interviews is the product of a political environment which has delegitimized social justice work. Because both of the organizations that I studied have mandates which extend beyond a charitable model of service provision and seek to create meaningful social change in women's lives, women I spoke with thought that their organizations face additional threats in their political environment. I sought to understand how a neoliberal funding regime affects organizations' broader social movement goals. In particular, I explored the influence state funding has over the adoption and implementation of anti-racist, anti-oppressive (ARAO) frameworks.

In this chapter, I begin by discussing some of the central ideas which guide ARAO practice and I examine how ARAO is conceptualized by Elizabeth Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton. I then consider barriers facing this daily practice and efforts to engage in advocacy and community building. In general, my interviews revealed that state funding agencies have a seemingly contradictory influence on the organizations' efforts to become more inclusive, create accessible services, engage in community building and challenge oppressive structures. Although organizations are encouraged to make efforts to diversify their organizations and expand their community outreach, their ability to build community and create macro change is limited by their relationships with state funding agencies. However, women I spoke with also

highlighted a number of strategies they engage in to continue to work towards their organizations' social movement goals.

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppressive Frameworks: Theoretical Understandings

Emerging from grassroots movements and social work practice, ARAO is a framework which draws from a number of social justice approaches⁹⁹ including feminist and anti-racist theories (Baines 2011a; Barnoff & Moffatt 2007; Yee & Wagner 2013). During the 1970s anti-racist activists challenged racism in Canadian society, critiquing issues like racism in policing, immigration policy and racism within the feminist movement (Dua 1999). Anti-racist work gained some legitimacy in social service nonprofit organizations. Indeed, Barnoff (2001) notes that in the 1990s and early 2000s, some funders (ex. Toronto's United Ways) expected funded organizations to follow anti-racist principles. Recognition of multiple forms of oppression and the need to address intersectionality led some organizations to develop anti-oppressive frameworks in an effort to address integrated systems of oppression. Some organizations now use the language of anti-oppression for these reasons; however, others (including E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton) continue to reference back to the early development of this framework by maintaining the language of anti-racism within their approaches.

Anti-oppressive work is now common in the social service sector. Anti-oppressive frameworks are characterized by values of inclusion, equity and social justice, and attempt to explain both "...how power works to oppress and marginalize people, as well as how power can be used to liberate and empower them..." (Baines 2011b: 26). ARAO applies a structural

⁹⁹ Social justice approaches fight for the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities and seek to redress harms perpetuated by social, political and economic structures. There are many approaches to achieving these aims, with ARAO being one. Throughout this chapter I speak about both "social justice" and "ARAO"; however, it should be understood that social justice is a very broad term whereas ARAO is a specific approach.

analysis to power relations and envisions a world free from systems of "...domination and privilege" (Barnoff & Moffatt 2007: 57). "Personal problems" are conceptualized as resulting from structural issues, thus requiring structural level change "...through an approach that provides immediate care to those who experience systemic injury and advances larger change towards social justice" (Barnoff, George & Coleman 2006: 42). The application of ARAO at an organizational level presents many challenges for organizations. This is particularly true for those with close connections to state institutions or for organizations which are not set up structurally to support this kind of a framework (Baines 2011a; Barnoff 2011).

In many ways, feminist organizations and movements have been at the forefront of theorizing and practicing ARAO (Barnoff & Moffatt 2007). This has largely been because of tensions within women's movements regarding difference and equity. Feminist organizations faced critiques from those who experienced exclusion and discrimination within the mainstream feminist movement including racialized women, working class women, women living with disabilities and Aboriginal women (Barnoff 2001). Because of this many feminist organizations have worked to build more inclusive organizations and spaces. Some researchers have noted a number of internal challenges that confront organizations seeking to apply this kind of analysis to their work. For instance, Srivastava (2005) examines the emotional and moral regulation of anti-racist work in feminist organizations. She argues that individualized applications of anti-racism, common in the organizations that she studied, are flawed and ineffective. Barnoff and Moffatt (2007) consider the tensions inherent in the application of anti-oppressive frameworks. In particular, they note that some of the women they interviewed felt that such an all-encompassing framework can render invisible specific forms of oppression. Both Srivastava

(2005) and Barnoff and Moffatt (2007) caution against individualized approaches to ARAO work.

In order for an organization to successfully integrate an anti-oppressive framework, Barnoff (2011) argues that it must ensure the saturation of this framework at multiple levels of the organization. First, the organization must increase the diversity of its members in a meaningful way in order to be representative of the communities it is a part of. It is also necessary to develop and implement anti-oppressive policies. This refers to the creation of specific anti-oppressive policies; however, existing organizational policies must also be updated to support the anti-oppressive goals of the organization. This can include changing the organization's mandate in a way that reflect anti-oppressive values and goals, as well as making changes to hiring policies to encourage greater equity. Additionally, the organization must engage in effective anti-oppressive education and training and work to foster an organizational culture which embraces anti-oppressive practice. Finally - and importantly given the transformative vision of anti-oppressive theory - the organization, and individuals within the organization, must engage in social action (ibid). Both of the organizations that I studied engaged in these tactics, however, as my discussion will show, each organization focused its energies differently.

Interval House Hamilton uses an ARAO policy manual developed by the Ontario Coalition of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH). The ARAO framework developed in this manual is built around the core tenet that "...privilege and oppression exist within society, resulting in unequal access to power" (OAITH 2010: 14). It acknowledges the complexity and diversity of women's social locations, asserting that while women accessing services have all encountered sexism in their lives, experiences of this form of oppression "...will differ

depending on their experiences with other forms of oppression” (ibid: 18). Thus, the policy manual conceptualizes various forms of oppression as interconnected. Oppression is also understood to be a systemic problem and is discussed at both micro and macro levels. For example, the manual describes oppression at the micro level as discrimination perpetuated by individuals. The macro level is discussed as oppression embedded in various institutions including government, education, the courts, health care and non-profit organizations. The manual explains that it is this macro level which results in differences in power for marginalized groups (ibid: 14-15). OAITH’s ARAO framework expresses a commitment to “...working toward eradicating all forms of oppression so that people can live their lives in the true meaning of dignity and self-worth” (ibid: 5). It frames social action as a necessary part of ARAO work, encouraging service providers to involve their communities in the struggle for social justice.

Empowerment and self-reflection are significant and related themes throughout the policy manual. For instance, feminist anti-violence workers are urged to be self-reflective about their own privilege, their roles as support persons and advocates, as well as about systemic power relations and structures. Discussing the process of self-reflection, the policy reads,

The growth that can occur within us as feminist anti-violence workers is important in that it increases our effectiveness in supporting women and children, and this growth can be both liberating and transformational. This individual growth can ignite our commitment to achieving change at a larger level by challenging the systems and institutions that continue to perpetuate oppression (OAITH 2010: 11).

Therefore, self-reflection is envisioned as an empowering, if sometimes uncomfortable, process. It is seen as a process which will transform the individual worker, as well as strengthen her ability to provide support to service-users and to work towards social justice.

Empowerment is also discussed as an ideal component of the relationship between the support worker and the woman accessing services. The policy manual was written as a training tool and it includes a series of reflective activities which present scenarios for readers to

consider. Throughout these scenarios, workers are reminded that their roles are to “...support a woman in whatever decisions she makes” (OAITH 2010: 20), to consider what approaches would facilitate “feelings of empowerment” (ibid: 24) and to recognize that women “...know their realities best” (ibid: 47). The policy recommends that women should be consulted to ensure that services and programs are appropriate and effective. It also asserts that working from a feminist, anti-oppressive perspective means recognizing women accessing services as allies in the struggle for social justice and including them in initiatives when possible¹⁰⁰. Workers are encouraged to listen to the women they work with and the communities that they are a part of in a meaningful way. While OAITH’s ARAO framework highlights issues of domination and abuse of power, it also “...recognizes the possibility and power of empowerment”, stating that “...while power can be used to create oppression, it can be used to create liberation” (ibid: 46). Thus, empowerment is framed as an essential process in ARAO work which creates the conditions for social justice.

When I asked interview participants at Interval House Hamilton to describe their organization’s ARAO framework, they discussed many of the same themes highlighted in the OAITH ARAO policy manual. For example, Charlotte’s response focused on issues of intersectionality and self-reflection. Her discussion touched on issues of race, culture, gender, ability, class and level of education. She also spoke the actual practice of ARAO and talked about the importance of being conscious of the language used, where services are promoted and equity in hiring practices. Charlotte also described the importance of self-reflection, saying that ARAO work “...means coming from a non-judgemental viewpoint. It means that we are constantly trying to challenge ourselves, to look if we are doing the best service we can”. She

¹⁰⁰ The policy recognizes that women accessing services may not always be in a position to engage in broader social justice work.

contended that ARAO involves an ongoing learning process and that it entails listening to others who might have critiques of the organization's work, telling me that "...the minute we say 'we're good, we're done now', then we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing". Rachel discussed a number of interrelated issues including diversity¹⁰¹, staff inclusivity and self-reflection. Like Charlotte, she emphasized the importance of listening, telling me that ARAO "...can also mean just being willing to hear what we need to do to change to make our services more accommodating". Shirley's answer revealed concerns about the power relation between workers and the women accessing services at the organization. She discussed ARAO work in the following way:

I don't have any more power than anybody else. So when a woman comes in here...she's the expert in her life, not me. I may have knowledge and information but I'm not the boss...we meet together; we walk together on the path. So anti-racist, anti-oppressive to me means that I use a language that doesn't...isn't laden in barriers...I try extremely hard to meet her exactly where she is and let her lead the way...

Shirley's comment reflected concerns with differences in class status and educational background and the ways that these potential differences in power could affect the relationship between herself and the women she works with¹⁰². Jane also spoke of differences in power. She rejected what she referred to as a "hierarchy of oppressions"¹⁰³, arguing that "finger pointing" was unhelpful. Instead she talked about the complexity of issues of power, oppression and privilege. She discussed accountability for one's words and actions and described her approach as being about community building. Her discussion linked community building with the social

¹⁰¹ Bannerji (2000) discusses the use of the term "diversity" in the Canadian context as one which is used from above to define and manage racialized and colonized peoples. According to her, the language of diversity hides power relations and lacks a class analysis. My research participants tended to use this terminology in a more comprehensive way to discuss various experiences and social locations including class background, education, sexuality, experience with the organization (ex. to discuss the inclusion of former service users among staff), as well as representation from different racialized and ethnic communities. This is discussed further in the conclusion.

¹⁰² Although Shirley's comment reflects these concerns, she also talked about providing services to women from all class backgrounds and spoke of the way violence against women affects women across various social locations.

¹⁰³ The term "hierarchy of oppressions" refers to competition between groups for acknowledgement of the primacy of particular forms of oppression (Barnoff & Moffatt 2007: 59).

justice goals of her organization and the broader feminist movement. In general, while women's answers to my question about ARAO varied in focus, their responses indicated a strong understanding of the core themes of OAITH's ARAO policy.

E-Fry Toronto developed an anti-racism policy in the 1990s; however, according to women I spoke with, this policy was never fully taken up. When I began interviewing at the organization, E-Fry Toronto was in the process of finalizing a new "Gender Responsive Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Policy". The policy has several components including an analytical framework, a definitions section, complaints mechanisms and the policy itself which contains a specific associated Trans and Intersex Access policy, as well as a section on accessibility standards. The analytical framework for this policy begins by stating that the organization "...values the varying dimensions of diversity of its human resources and the communities it serves" while also recognizing that oppression creates a "...lack of access and inclusion for traditionally marginalized communities and stakeholders" (E-Fry Toronto 2011). Oppression is conceptualized as systemic and as occurring historically along "...dimensions of diversity", creating barriers to participation in various social and economic institutions for particular groups in society (ibid). The framework also discusses oppression as embedded in Canadian culture and social institutions to such an extent that it is often invisible. Furthermore, it recognizes intersectionality and acknowledges that people can have varying levels of privilege and power in their lives. Because of the multifaceted nature of power and oppression, the framework asserts that one form of oppression cannot be "...addressed in isolation" (ibid). However, due to the nature of the work and the populations they serve, E-Fry Toronto's ARAO framework gives gender a primary place in its analysis, taking into account the complexity of women's identities and lives. This represents some of the tensions implicit in anti-oppressive work. ARAO

frameworks apply the concept of intersectionality, envisioning a multiplicity of oppressive structures operating simultaneously. However, E-Fry Toronto has chosen to recognize the complex ways power works while also privileging a particular social category - gender - due to the focus of their work¹⁰⁴.

Both the policy framework and the policy itself have a strong focus on practice. In these documents, E-Fry Toronto sets out specific goals and commitments to guide the organization's work. For example, the framework emphasizes both empowerment and inclusion as important aims in the organization's work. After discussing the importance of the principles of inclusion, the framework continues on to describe what inclusion looks like at an organizational level. It reads: "This process at Elizabeth Fry Toronto includes the active and meaningful involvement of people who are reflective of diverse groups to purposefully define and shape the culture within which people are included" (E-Fry Toronto 2011). The framework contends that central to ARAO work is learning to recognize and acknowledge oppressive behaviours and the practice of validating the experience of those who are typically silenced in society.

The policy statement declares a commitment to "...make every effort to see that our structures, systems, and policies promote equal access for all women" (ibid: 1). It then lists concrete examples of the ways in which the organization will work towards this goal. Included in this extensive list are aspirations to ensure that volunteers and staff are reflective of the community, to examine and improve practices, policies, protocols and services periodically and to provide ARAO training for staff, volunteers and service users. It also highlights the need to facilitate the participation of marginalized groups of women including women with disabilities,

¹⁰⁴ See Barnoff & Moffatt (2007) for further discussion of the tensions involved in AO practice.

GLBTTIQQ women and immigrant, refugee and non-status women¹⁰⁵. Similar to OAITH's policy, it also discusses the importance of self-reflection for staff and volunteers. Additionally, broader advocacy goals are listed, including solidarity with Aboriginal people around systemic issues in the criminal justice system, advocating for the removal of barriers from various institutions for marginalized groups and "Supporting other work including networks, coalitions and community initiatives that are committed to the elimination of oppression" (ibid: 2). Overall, E-Fry Toronto's ARAO policy is very comprehensive, discussing issues of oppression, power, inclusion and providing recommendations about the implementation of the policy at an organizational level.

However, in interviews women provided mixed interpretations of this policy with some articulating quite sophisticated understandings of ARAO while others expressed a lack of confidence in their knowledge of the framework. When I asked Nicole to explain ARAO, she summarized the framework by saying that that it's "...just an acknowledgement that the world we live in is diverse, that people come from diverse experiences...it's about power, and talks about the limits of that power". She spoke of equality and safety for workers and service-users, creating an inclusive workplace and differences in privilege and power. When discussing intersectionality, she reflected on the importance of context, talking about how an individual might have privilege in one space but may be marginalized elsewhere. Jordan described ARAO work as involving active processes which require people to be willing to engage with and learn from each other. She spoke about accepting and honouring other people's differences and

¹⁰⁵ The Trans and Intersex Access policy and the Accessibility Standards section offer practical solutions to possible barriers. The Trans and Intersex Access policy offers "Guidelines for Behaviour", providing recommendations about use of pronouns and confidentiality. The Accessibility Standard section includes a list of possible barriers and solutions the organization can use to minimize barriers for women with disabilities.

reflecting on one's own power, telling me "...it goes back to our own cultural competency, you know. What's internalized for us in terms of oppression? What's internalized for other people? As well as understanding your own position, status in society and your privileges". Her discussion encompassed issues of diversity, self-reflection, differences in power and she conceptualized ARAO as an evolving process.

In contrast, some of the women I spoke with appeared unsure of themselves when I first asked them about their organization's ARAO framework. Despite this, their answers often touched on important components of ARAO including diversity, intersectionality, empowerment, inclusion and power. For example, when asked about the ARAO framework, Bridget told me that the organization was working on the policy and that she was unable to speak to my question because she had not been involved in the development of the policy. However, when I later inquired about the ways in which a women-centred, ARAO approach influenced service provision and programming, Bridget replied:

I mean oppression, it's so big right? We all have our own biases, and our own stereotypes... we can say that we don't but we do sometimes and I guess it's just really trying to be aware of the women we're working with, really trying hard not to put them in a box, having them make their own choices, listening and actually validating their own stories of oppression and understanding how that makes them feel.

Although she had initially expressed an inability to speak about the ARAO framework, later in the interview she was able to speak to how this perspective informs service delivery and touched on a number of key aspects of the policy. Similarly, Sophie was hesitant in her response to my question at first; however, she then discussed ARAO in terms of inclusivity and empowerment. Describing E-Fry Toronto's work, she told me "...we don't want to be another system barrier, another structural barrier for the women that we're helping so for me that's anti-oppressive". At times, women provided me with brief responses to my question about ARAO or articulated a lack of knowledge about the framework. However, when I asked more general questions about

inclusivity or about the organization's work, women spoke with passion about providing accessible services, "opening the door" for people, empowering women and the "diversity" they saw reflected at all levels of E-Fry Toronto. Their inability to speak with confidence about the framework was, in part, a reflection of the newness of the policy and their knowledge of the policy itself, not with the issues that the policy was designed to address. Furthermore, their familiarity with key values and goals associated with ARAO also suggests that this kind of work was happening at the organization prior to the development and implementation of an official policy. All of the women I spoke with saw a need for the ARAO framework and policy. They viewed it as particularly important to their organization given its work with some of the most marginalized women in Canada.

Women at both organizations expressed a commitment to ARAO practice. However, it is important to note that very few of the women I spoke with linked their discussions of ARAO with macro level advocacy despite this emphasis in both organizations' policies. Although many discussed advocacy as necessary (if dangerous for their organizations), these comments were often removed from their discussions of ARAO work. This is significant given the social justice intent articulated in ARAO frameworks and policies. ARAO frameworks link micro and macro level change (Barnoff 2011; also see OAITH 2010); however, in their discussions of this work in their own organizations, many of the women I spoke with focused on the micro level.

ARAO Practice and State Funding

Daily Challenges

The application of an ARAO framework at an organizational level is challenging, in part, due to the complexity of the work. ARAO practice involves working to create an organization

that is representative of the communities it serves, creating appropriate policies, engaging in intensive training and education, transforming organizational culture and demonstrating a commitment to social justice (Barnoff 2011; also see Dominelli 2002). Although challenges to this type of work come from a variety of sources, my interest was in understanding how state funding influences ARAO work. My conversations with women at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton revealed that state funders have a seemingly contradictory influence over the application of ARAO frameworks at these organizations. At times funders seem to encourage particular goals associated with ARAO; however, state funding processes also undermine some of the deeper aspirations of the framework, including attempts to build community and to engage in broader social justice work.

At both organizations, women spoke of ways in which state funding agencies appear to support some aspects of ARAO work. In particular, some noted that grants are often targeted towards programs for specific groups of women. Indeed, government funders often include a focus on marginalized populations in their description of activities that they fund. For instance, while the Ontario Women's Directorate's explanation of their grants program describes funds as helping organizations with costs associated with programs and services which support "women's safety" and "economic independence", the directorate also sets aside funding for Aboriginal women and "at-risk" women (Ontario Women's Directorate n.d.). These focuses are not new. As early as 1984 the OWD identified a need to support programs for certain groups of women thought of as the most vulnerable in the province (Ontario Women's Directorate 1984: 25). Similarly, Status of Women Canada also identifies particular groups of women as the most marginalized in Canadian society and, therefore, as deserving of attention. For example, in the Minister's Message in the 2010-2011 Report on Plans and Priorities, then Minister Helena

Guergis articulates this focus as “closing the gender equality gaps” and “addressing the unique challenges women face, particularly those in marginalized situations” (Status of Women Canada 2010: 1). The report states that “...gender equality gaps do remain in key areas and among certain groups of women in Canada” (ibid: 7) and while target groups are not specifically identified as a focus of SWC’s activities, Aboriginal women are repeatedly mentioned as the most disadvantaged women in the country (ibid).

In my interviews at E-Fry, some women talked about funding agencies’ focus on particular groups of women¹⁰⁶. Bridget mentioned targeted funding in a rather neutral way, telling me that “...sometimes funders will say ‘we will give you money but you need to serve this profile of women, you need to serve this many women...’”. However, she had also earlier noted E-Fry Toronto’s community outreach efforts, including programs for newcomer women and sex workers, as well as women mandated to participate in particular programs. She discussed the organizations’ role in the community as providing programming for criminalized women in a way that is tailored to women’s specific needs and barriers. Bridget did not explicitly discuss targeted funding as supporting organizational goals dealing with representation and diversity; however, this link was implicit in her discussion. Other women at E-Fry Toronto connected these issues more clearly. For example, Maria discussed the organization’s effort to ensure diversity at all levels of the organization and she asserted that “...even our funders want us to do that...they want us to be able to link...to prove that we are intimate with the communities that we serve”.

When I asked her how she saw funders encouraging work around diversity, Maria told me that

¹⁰⁶ This theme did not come up in the same way in interviews at Interval House Hamilton. This may be, in part, because the organization has not diversified its funding base to the same degree that E-Fry Toronto has and; therefore, has not had the same experiences applying for grants. However, the issue of representation within the organization was also not a dominant theme in the interviews at Interval House. Some women did mention that they did feel that their organization was not as diverse as it could be; however, they did not believe that this was due to a lack of commitment to ARAO. Instead some speculated that this could be because of community specific organizations in the city (ex. Hamilton has both an Aboriginal women’s centre and an immigrant women’s centre). Others thought that this is because their organization needs to continue doing outreach work in the city.

funding agencies expected organizations to report on the diversity of the staff, the client base and particular programs targeted towards certain groups of women.

Sophie also noted a relationship between organizational goals around representation and funding. However, her comments reflected some concerns about how this affects the organization's ability to expand their services and support organizational diversity. Like other women at E-Fry Toronto, she mentioned the organization's focus on increasing the representation of Aboriginal women within the organization and providing relevant services. However, she also noted that funding could potentially limit these efforts if funders did not identify the same priorities. Like Sophie, Liz also argued that funding presents challenges for the organization's goals around organizational diversity and outreach, saying

...the more populations you target and try and provide programming for, like population specific programming...it's a matter of keeping that money coming to fund the programming....your budget is your bottom line so if you don't have the money, you can't serve the women and the larger groups of women you want to service, and specific programs for those groups of women...if you don't have the money, you can't do it.

Liz's comment reflects the instability of the funding climate which funds projects with no promise of renewal. Furthermore, it also suggests that the organization feels some pressure to provide services to bigger groups of women in a targeted manner. Although, this may be partially in response to the needs of the surrounding communities, trends in government funding (specifically, targeted funding for communities framed as most in need) also indicate that this is in response to calls for funding proposals. Funding agencies were described in interviews as having a direct influence over efforts to create a more inclusive organization which is representative of surrounding communities. However, although some women view this as a positive development, others expressed doubts about the constraints that this could potentially place on the organization's work.

Several women at both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton observed contradictory messages about organizational accessibility. Specifically, they discussed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act¹⁰⁷ (AODA) and issues around multi-lingual service provision. Speaking about new accessibility legislation, a number of women noted that this focus connected with their organizations' inclusivity goals. For instance, one participant discussed several demands made by funding agencies and specifically referenced AODA in her comments:

...I have mixed feelings because sometimes I don't think it's a bad thing that they push certain ideas....the difficulty is the urgency of the request. So the Accessibility for Ontarians isn't a bad idea. I think the difficulty is for charities, they don't have a lot of discretionary – or a meagre overhead income to be able to meet some of those criteria.

Both Jane and Charlotte voiced similar sentiments about funders' expectations around accessibility. Although Jane expressed support for the goals associated with AODA and with offering bilingual services¹⁰⁸, she was frustrated with the lack of support for organizations to provide more accessible services. She told me “All those things cost money right? I'm all for them, I'm *so* all for them...but they cost money. No money. But they set targets for us and they threatened us: ‘You don't meet these, we will potentially not think about you as a favourable agency to fund’”. Charlotte articulated some of the challenges associated with providing accessible services for small organizations, reflecting:

...again your services have to be accessible. Absolutely, absolutely... but no funding, right? So where does that come from? We have to swallow up the cost which then decreases our service, decreases our effectiveness, efficiency... What I'm...I'm not saying that we shouldn't be moving towards that...I'm saying that we should be *funded* to assist us, especially in smaller organizations...

¹⁰⁷ Passed in 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was created to implement and enforce accessible standards across the province. For more information, see http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm.

¹⁰⁸ Hamilton had recently been designated as a French language service area, placing the organization under pressure to ensure bilingual service provision.

While these women acknowledged seemingly progressive goals and expectations by government funders, their comments also reflect ambivalence about the commitment funding agencies really have to accessibility. Organizations were under pressure to meet targets; however, the quotes above suggest that these targets were unrealistic given a lack of organizational resources and limited timeframes. However, as Charlotte indicated, organizations have little choice but to implement the changes despite their limited resources¹⁰⁹.

Inadequate funding was cited in some interviews as having a direct influence on ARAO work. This was especially the case when women discussed barriers to creating inclusive services. For instance, several women talked about the challenges associated with language interpretation. Diane referred to hiring an interpreter as a “big process” which creates delays in service delivery. Rachel mentioned how expensive it is to hire an interpreter because there is no specific funding set aside for these costs. Reflecting on the difficulties involved with language translation, she told me “...to approach government and them say ‘That’s on you, you have to do it, you have to be accessible’ but there’s no money to be accessible. I mean we don’t have a choice, we’re going to find that money and offer that service but I don’t know where it’s coming from”. Emily brought forward similar concerns about the direct costs associated with offering inclusive services. In addition to mentioning difficulties with multi-lingual service provision, she also spoke about issues around food in the shelter setting. Although Emily noted that Interval House Hamilton was able to accommodate religious dietary needs and restrictions, she still felt that the organization was limited in what it was able to offer. She explained:

...food is a piece of culture too and a sense of home...we don’t have the funding or support to really...like some children¹¹⁰ are like ‘I can’t eat this’ and that really upsets me...I wish we had the funding where at least

¹⁰⁹ Both organizations did apply and receive infrastructure grants to make their buildings more accessible. This can be seen as an example of diversifying funding sources in response to challenges in the funding climate.

¹¹⁰ Although this is an issue for both women and children staying at the shelter, Emily pointed out that children are usually already difficult to feed and will often refuse to eat food which does not appeal to them.

something was the same...I wish it could be more inclusive in that sense.

Initially, Emily thought that I might consider this example a “small scale” concern. However, she argued that this had a profound effect on women’s and children’s experience of the shelter, presenting challenges for the organization in its attempts to create inclusive services for women from a variety of cultural groups.

Gaps in funding do not simply impact ARAO practice in the form of services and programming, they also negatively affect the learning necessary for ARAO work. Women discussed the importance of ongoing ARAO training, including engaging with the theoretical framework, learning about communities they provide services for and developing new skills to better meet the needs of women accessing their organization. Because E-Fry Toronto was working towards implementing its new gender responsive ARAO policy, the organization was engaged in extensive training for staff and volunteers. This training was already complicated by the realities of E-Fry’s efforts to create a representative workplace because, as one woman explained “...you have people who have touched on anti-racism, anti-oppression training in school...some people haven’t...some people haven’t gone to school because class is an element in diversity”. Therefore, class privilege – or lack thereof – means that people come to this framework with differing levels of training and experience, making training especially important. Of course, this training requires significant time and resources. Nicole discussed the organization’s use of consultants in the development of the policy, as well as during training. She described this process:

It’s a lot of work, I think, to do it properly and it involves a great deal of commitment from everybody within the organization and you do need help to do it. I mean there’s people that that’s their area of expertise... one of the challenges is about not having enough resources to train, like to train probably 50 regular people who come here regularly in terms of volunteers...and then our casual staff and not being able to afford to do that.

Although the organization developed a strong policy, it took considerable time to do so and the process was expensive. Furthermore, integrating comprehensive training at all levels of the organization was difficult given the time and resources required.

Many women at Interval House Hamilton also discussed the need for ongoing ARAO training. One participant, in particular, drew attention to some of the challenges associated with this training. She described the extensive learning involved, telling me "...we do a lot of staff training so things like mental health training, we did positive space training...so we do it formally and then it's sort of expected that we keep that up ourselves. It's not just a one-time training that we do...". Interestingly, this participant observed that women were at times resistant to this work. She felt that this was, in part, because people are sometimes wary of change; however, she also explained this resistance as a product of overwork. As an example, she talked about an internal committee which seeks to educate workers about diverse communities and community events in the area. Even though the training opportunities provided by this committee might benefit staff in their daily work with service users, she noted that some had expressed frustration with the work required because it extends beyond their job responsibilities. Thus, while the education component is considered to be necessary for an organization to successfully integrate ARAO (Barnoff 2011) and was expressed as such by women I interviewed, the conditions of funding appear to place constraints on the training piece. Organizations have limited resources to devote to this work and related issues of overwork have produced some resistance to ARAO training¹¹¹. Although both organizations' ARAO policy frameworks express

¹¹¹ Certainly, this may not be the only source of resistance to training. For instance, Barnoff, George and Coleman (2006) spoke about how lack of resources could be used to disguise genuine resistance to ARAO work by individuals. However, the observation about the ways lack of resources and overwork impact learning are factors which should be seriously considered when studying barriers to ARAO practice.

a commitment to empowerment for both service users and workers, these goals are undermined by the everyday realities of a neoliberal funding regime.

Community Building, Advocacy & Institutionalization

Many of the issues discussed above reflect concerns with creating more inclusive organizations. However, ARAO is not only about creating accessible and inclusive organizations. Although this is an important goal in itself, for an organization to be truly anti-racist and anti-oppressive, it must challenge structural oppression in the broader society as well (Barnoff 2011). This has long been a goal for feminist organizations in general and, as I have argued, is what keeps them connected to their social movement roots. However, a neoliberal funding and political climate has made it more difficult for feminist service organizations to engage in this work. This reality was evident in my interviews at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton when women discussed community building, advocacy and institutionalization.

Tensions produced by the funding regime were clearly represented in women's discussions of community. In addition to having leaner resources available to facilitate community relationships, organizations' efforts to develop connections with other nonprofits are at times made more difficult under a neoliberal funding regime. A climate of scarce funding has resulted in competition between organizations, undermining some of the community building which is important to social justice work¹¹². In interviews, some women discussed how this competitive climate disadvantaged women's organizations in comparison to organizations that do not provide gender-specific services. However, others also spoke about tensions between organizations providing gender-specific services. A number of women at Interval House

¹¹² While competition for funding certainly affects organizations' service provision and daily operations, I have chosen to focus on this theme in this chapter because of the implications a competitive funding environment has for social justice work and, in particular, social justice work which is anti-racist and anti-oppressive.

Hamilton referred to larger organizations in the community which received substantial sources of funding. Their discussions reflected awareness that the negative feelings between organizations are a product of the political climate; however, the organization's inability to secure the same type of funding left some women feeling like their organizations' work is undervalued and unrecognized in comparison with other groups in the area.

Gail, for instance, discussed her frustrations with organizations being granted monies to start new projects while organizations which had successfully offered similar services for many years were overlooked. In particular, she noted that organizations which had never provided violence against women (VAW) services in the past were applying for and receiving money for VAW work. She argued that when a program has "...been proven and evaluated over and over again, where there's been quality and professional standards delivered, it shouldn't be a competition", contending that the current process raises questions about "fairness". Another woman described "lots of competition" and what she feared was "empire building" by larger organizations. Because of this, she felt that it was difficult for women's organizations in the community to work together, commenting that when women's groups met "...instead of collaboration, lots of times it's just this banging of heads together". Charlotte also described how competition for grants strains relations between community organizations. Reflecting on pressures from funding agencies for organizations to partner, she remarked:

We have different ways of going about an issue right?...but we're told you have to collaborate in order to obtain this goal...or we're only going to give this funding to one organization...so that creates competition, it creates tension amongst the women's community...it's the perfect way to divide and conquer.

Charlotte viewed the climate created by competition for funding as a divisive tactic which made women's organizations less effective politically.

In contrast to Charlotte's discussion of forced partnerships and competition between organizations, another woman described an example wherein community organizations' efforts to work together were actively discouraged by a funding agency. Interval House Hamilton had obtained a grant to provide services to diverse communities in the region. The organization intended to share the grant with partner organizations¹¹³; however, the funding agency was very resistant to this idea, expressing concerns about accountability. The participant said that one bureaucrat who worked for the funding agency recommended that instead of sharing the grant with the local Aboriginal women's organization, Interval House Hamilton should simply hire an Aboriginal woman to provide Aboriginal service. She told me:

...that's not Aboriginal service, that's not ok. [They] are asking the Aboriginal community to share their knowledge of their community, not pay them, but pay a non-Aboriginal service...by hiring Interval House Hamilton when we already have an Aboriginal agency in the community

This participant believed that ARAO entails building community in order to work for social justice; therefore, she regarded this example as an effort by state funders to deter this work by intervening in relations between community organizations. Whether women I interviewed viewed these examples as deliberate strategies or not, it was clear from their discussions that the current funding environment can subvert community relations. This, in turn, can affect social justice work in that it can negate opportunities for alliances or render already existing alliances and coalitions ineffective.

The neoliberal funding regime also influences organizations' abilities to engage in social justice work by delegitimizing particular kinds of advocacy. When I asked about their organizations' engagement with advocacy, most women began by asserting that there were limits

¹¹³ The rationale was that partner organizations would offer their services and expertise to women who felt more comfortable receiving services from organizations associated with their own communities. Women would then have access to the shelter services from Interval House Hamilton but would also be able to connect with other relevant community organizations for particular services (ex. counselling) as well.

on the amount and types of advocacy possible because of their organizations' funding relationships. Nicole explained "...there's only so much advocacy we're entitled to engage in because we're a charity". Other women simply told me that organizations cannot receive funding for advocacy. For example, Jordan described advocacy as the "invisible work" that organizations do because "funders don't fund that", explaining that "They're gonna pay for the program that I run but not all the other little pieces that I help a woman with". Margaret informed me that "...many funders, they just *do not* fund anything that has to do with advocacy". However, she also clarified her comments by saying "...that also depends on how you see advocacy...", telling me that while direct lobbying was definitely not allowed, there are other types of advocacy that are possible. When I questioned participants about the types of advocacy that are acceptable, some women expressed similar views to Margaret's. They reflected that while activities like rallies and lobbying are dangerous for nonprofit organizations, other forms of advocacy including public education and individual advocacy for service users are permitted. In contrast, however, others still felt that even more "acceptable" forms of advocacy could potentially endanger their organization's funding base.

Neoliberal messages about activism had been internalized by a few of the women I interviewed. For instance, Nora told me that "...you can advocate all you want...*politically correct advocacy* is ok but I don't see us engaging in anything other than that. No 70s rallies of any sort..." (emphasis mine). Nora viewed particular advocacy strategies as outdated and she believed that organizations were risking their funding to engage in these types of activities. Maria told me that funding is not usually granted for advocacy and she expressed support for this, saying that the message from funders was 'I don't want you using my money to put yourself on a soapbox'. She was critical of organizations which critiqued government while receiving

government funding, characterizing this as “biting the hand that feeds you”. Instead Maria argued that nonprofits should engage in “positive” advocacy and suggested building relationships with both government and the private sector. Although these perspectives were expressed by a minority of participants, they are significant because they represent the deligitimization of social justice advocacy as an acceptable means for nonprofit organizations to engage in Canadian society. Additionally, although the majority women I interviewed still view their organizations as advocates for women, they are aware that more visible forms of social justice advocacy are not welcome in the current political climate.

The knowledge that particular organizations and projects had experienced funding cuts because of their roles as advocates informed participants’ perceptions of the spaces available for social justice work. One participant referred to the Sisters in Spirit campaign which had recently had their funding discontinued. She mused “...they’ve now lost all their funding and all their funding went to police services. And I think probably because they were having a voice and that was too scary for the federal government”. Some women spoke about the changes made to SWC although they were often unclear about the details. A few thought that SWC no longer exists while others discussed the impact of the agency’s reduced influence. Jane recalled SWC enabling women’s organizations’ advocacy work by providing funding and producing strong research:

...Status of Women Canada used to allow for advocacy groups to actually apply based on advocacy, like change right? And that’s what Status of Women Canada was so great for...You got some really great feminist papers out of it, especially around gender analysis, around women’s economic wellbeing or not...That kind of stuff. And that’s good stuff to change policy right. And also, they used to fund your provincial associations like OAITH. Well now they’ve made it...well especially the first year that Harper came in – he basically – well he cut. He cut all advocacy. He cut NAWL...and won’t fund them because they’re advocacy...because they argued against the government. And he cut the program around court challenges.

Jane’s discussion connected recent changes to SWC with conservative politics and she suggested that these changes impacted feminist organizations and their ability to effectively work for social

justice. Jenna also discussed the diminishing influence of women's policy machinery, specifically speaking about the OWD and SWC. She reflected, "You don't really hear about them anymore, like where are they on the political spectrum? Like what is their role in sort of supporting different initiatives and causes to support women? You don't hear them anymore. They're sort of silenced". As a researcher, I was surprised by how many women seemed to have little to no knowledge of women's policy agencies or thought that SWC had been completely dismantled¹¹⁴. However, Jenna's comments provided insight into the reason for this. Given their declining influence – and the silence which Jenna observed – it is not surprising that women were often uncertain about the roles SWC and OWD play in supporting women's organizations on the ground and facilitating social justice work.

Another important theme which emerged from some interviews was the relationship with state funders and the question of institutionalization. Speaking about her initial hesitations about working within the shelter system, one woman talked about how women's shelters tend to be more conservative in their politics than other types of feminist organizations. She reflected that the shelter system was never meant to be a "longstanding system" and she worried that shelters are in fact a form of "institutionalizing" women. Although she was proud of the service provision and advocacy Interval House Hamilton provides, she also discussed the tensions associated with receiving state funding for the work, articulating some of the dilemmas in the following way: "...if you are just providing the service without the political action that needs to be attached to it, then it's no longer a movement, so that's frightening in a lot of ways...because as soon as you take that money you become part and parcel of that system...". This participant maintained that social justice work is still possible for state funded organizations; however, she also

¹¹⁴ Women who were more involved in the funding process (usually management) were an exception to this although some were unclear about changes made to SWC.

acknowledged the constraints imposed on some of the more radical work. For example, she talked about advocacy around structural issues with the family court systems, violence against women, pay inequity and the feminization of poverty. Although she argued that the organization worked to speak up on these issues, being too vocal could also endanger the organization.

Issues of institutionalization emerged in some of my interviews with women at E-Fry Toronto as well. A number of women discussed the power issues associated with offering services to criminalized women and the challenges this presents for ARAO work. For example, Nicole discussed the importance of including recognition of differences in power in the new ARAO policy, saying,

I think it's really important that the policy acknowledges that as professional staff providing a service – especially for us because we can write a letter or not that can send a person back to jail – that we have to recognize as service providers, we have *enormous* power over our client groups.

Additionally, she talked about how difficult and unrealistic it is for service workers to loudly challenge the prison system when they need to access these institutions in order to support criminalized women. Both Jordan and Jo spoke about the tensions inherent in providing mandated programming. Jo mentioned that providing mandated programs in an anti-oppressive way can be “tricky” because workers have to document and report on women’s attendance at program sessions to probation officers. Similarly, Jordan discussed how the shift to offering mandated programming was “...a bit of a struggle to reconcile” with the organization’s mission and mandate. She noted that providing mandated programming is “...conflicting for [E-Fry Toronto] and how we would like to do the work”. However, she asserted that the organization also recognized that “...options need to be there for women, access to programming and services need to be there for women and who better to provide that than E-Fry”. Thus, women were not blind to the limitations placed on the types of advocacy their organizations could engage in while

receiving state funding. However, despite the difficulties they identified, they still found it worthwhile to negotiate these tensions in order to provide compassionate and anti-oppressive services and advocacy for women.

Negotiating Challenges to ARAO Work and Advocacy

Women at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton discussed thoughtful and creative strategies they employed to ensure that ARAO is put into practice and that they continued to advocate for women. For example, striving to reduce power imbalances within their organization, as well as become representative of the communities they serve, E-Fry Toronto actively hires women who have used their services in the past. This is viewed as an important strategy for creating an accessible organization, challenging existing inequities in Canadian society and ensuring that voices from a wide range of experiences are represented at the agency. In another attempt to break down power differences between staff and the women accessing services, the Women's Centre of Interval House Hamilton developed a knitting circle. Recognizing that power differences did not disappear completely, one woman described the purpose of this activity in this way: "It's a skill set that I don't have and so it puts me on the same playing field as the women who come and use our services...I'm not saying it's getting rid of it because I know there's a power imbalance, but going into this one pass, we're on the same sort of level". The organization also used this initiative to organize a social action important to all of the women associated with the organization, violence against women. Specifically, they developed a knitting project to include in the December 6th memorial at Hamilton's City Hall in order to draw renewed attention to the memorial and the organization's December 6th event. Through this one activity, the organization not only worked to challenge power differences

between service users and staff, they also drew attention to inequities within the broader society. Additionally, as Diane told me, this action was also a way to include women in feminist activism who typically did not participate or identify as feminist.

A number of participants spoke about having to be “creative” in how they define their work. Women discussed various forms of advocacy, expanding definitions to include activities like public education, prevention work and individual advocacy for service users. For example, Rachel described different “levels” of advocacy ranging from working with individual women, to connecting with the community, to advocating at the policy level. This is consistent with the organization’s policy which links micro and macro level advocacy. Some women also contended that there are ways to go about advocacy outside of formal structures, for example, through an organizations’ volunteer base, community networks or through committee work. One participant discussed the example of social networking and described this as an opportunity to “become a voice” and connect with other women’s groups both locally and globally.

Organizations prioritize their work with other community groups. Although developing relationships with other organizations within their communities is challenging for a number of reasons, these relationships are also considered to be absolutely vital. For instance, Interval House Hamilton partners with other community organizations to ensure a wide-range of programs. In one case, the Women’s Centre provided the space for a support group and another organization provided the facilitators. This tactic allows the organization to expand their services to specific communities and to build relationships with other organizations in the area. The amalgamation of the Women’s Centre with Interval House Hamilton is also an important example of this strategy. The decision to amalgamate was described to me as a way to sustain feminist services and advocacy in the community. For example, one woman told me that “...if

the Women's Centre dies, there's no non-faith based, feminist women's counselling in the city of Hamilton"¹¹⁵ and reflected that the amalgamation meant that "...it's not going to die now".

Another participant also spoke about how the Women's Centre would have been "null and void" if not for the amalgamation. She argued that Interval House Hamilton had kept "...the integrity of the Women's Centre", emphasizing the importance of this to the community and, on a personal level, to herself as a feminist.

Building relationships with other community organizations can facilitate advocacy work which might not be possible otherwise. Organizations' relationships with provincial and federal coalitions are considered necessary in order to continue with some of the broader political work which is difficult for service oriented agencies. Nicole discussed Elizabeth Fry Toronto's relationship to the national coalition of Elizabeth Fry Societies, telling me "...there's pieces we *have* to do, we have to deliver on so having an agency that can do strictly advocacy work, media work and communications pieces has been quite useful". Building community ties is framed as an important way to resist some of the challenges posed by the funding climate. However, this strategy also highlights threats posed by the political and funding context because many of these coalitions have historically depended on funding from the Women's Program.

Conclusion

My research found that changes to the funding regime do, in fact, have an impact on ARAO work and advocacy in feminist service organizations. However, this impact is not always clearly restrictive. At times, state funding agencies appear to support some of the progressive goals associated with ARAO work, specifically by seeming to encourage organizations' efforts

¹¹⁵ This participant clarified that there are feminist counselling services dealing with particular issues (specifically sexual violence) in the community; however, she asserted the Women's Centre's counselling fills a gap because "...women need something broader for themselves".

to create accessible spaces, engage in community outreach and expand the diversity of their organizations. Women's discussions suggest, however, that funders' support for this work is often little more than superficial and interview participants questioned the motives and commitment funding agencies had to equity work. Furthermore, while funders sometimes facilitated organizations' efforts to provide accessible services and expand their services to specific communities, some of the more radical aspects of ARAO work are undermined by the funding relationship. For example, attempts to build community and to engage in social justice advocacy are made more difficult in a neoliberal funding regime

Although this may appear to be a contradiction on the surface, this approach to the nonprofit sector, and women's organizations specifically, makes sense when one takes a closer look at the ideology governing a liberal democratic state. Bannerji (2000) illustrates how this ideology functions in the Canadian context, examining the policy of multiculturalism and the discourse of diversity. State initiated multiculturalism in Canada understands difference as a problem to be managed. "Diversity" is divested of historical context, as well as political meaning and potential. This language becomes merely descriptive, obscuring "...any understanding of difference as constructions of power" and rendering social relations invisible (ibid: 548). Social movements are not immune to the depoliticizing power of this discourse and Bannerji (2000) discusses how problems of social justice can be reduced to questions of cultural difference. Furthermore, she notes that for nonprofit organizations "...being effective with funding proposals means translating our needs and concerns into the discourses of multiculturalism...otherwise, our funders or the state do not hear us" (ibid: 550).

Arat-Koç's (2012) discussion of policy discourse in Canada highlights the contradictory ways this discourse frames different groups of women. Neoliberal policy discourse

simultaneously renders invisible gender issues for white, Canadian born women by arguing that they have achieved equality while making racialized and immigrant women “hyper-visible” through a discourse which blames “culture” for ongoing gender inequality. Arat-Koç (2012: 9) notes that “...the hyper-visibility of ‘other’ women helps *normalize* and *naturalize* the gender order in the larger society”. Furthermore, she argues that this discourse is applied instrumentally to specific issues around gender inequality while remaining silent about others. For example, although there has been a focus on patriarchal relations in racialized families and communities, “...gender as a structural problem related to social, economic and political structures in contemporary Canada” has been ignored (ibid: 9). Instead, this discourse treats gender inequality as “cultural baggage” brought to Canada by “outsiders”. Arat-Koç (2012) warns that this discourse is divisive and has the potential to undermine, not only the gains achieved by women’s movements in Canada, but also current feminist organizing.

It is important to recognize the power dominant discourses about diversity have. My participants tended to think about organizational diversity and representation in more political ways, discussing goals related to expanding services to better respond to community needs and the equitable distribution of power within the organization. However, state support for this work must be understood in a context shaped by neoliberal ideology and Canada’s approach to multiculturalism. For example, no matter the progressive goals of an organization, funding targeted at particular groups of women is premised on assumptions about culture, diversity, class and the root causes of inequality. In neoliberal Canada, inequality is framed as “un-Canadian” and social problems are reduced to issues of individual responsibility and failure. Nonprofit organizations must balance a difficult tension when using the language of the state while also continuing to challenge oppressive structures and strive for social justice.

In general, the women I spoke with were aware that their work required strategically managing the tensions associated with accepting state funding. Despite the many challenges they face, women working at these organizations continue to find ways to engage with their organizations' ARAO frameworks and to advocate for social justice. In her discussion of social workers and activism under neoliberalism, Ross (2011) argues for an understanding of activism which discards traditional divisions between front-line (micro) and policy level (macro) activism and acknowledges the need for a continuum of resistance. According to her, this will deepen anti-oppressive practice and she writes "We live in important and shifting times, and we need to find multiple ways to build radical, transformative change in order to resist the radical dismantling of social welfare" (ibid: 251). She conceptualizes activism as a "broad, big tent" of possible actions and strategies that social workers can employ to challenge neoliberal policies. Ross (2011) argues that workers must seek out opportunities to connect with others pursuing social justice and to be cognizant of the types of resistance work possible in any given context.

Ross' (2011) analysis connects well with my discussions with women at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton. Workers at these organizations continued to express commitment to social justice work in the face of the many challenges presented by a neoliberal political and funding climate. Many acknowledged the tensions inherent in the funding relationship and they spoke of the need to be "creative" and "flexible" in their work. However, it is also true that interviewees expressed concern about what they saw as an increasingly conservative political climate and shrinking spaces for social justice work. Their experiences of, and responses to, a neoliberal funding regime raise questions about the sustainability of this model and the ongoing implications for social justice work.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This dissertation has argued that feminist service organizations' experiences of a neoliberal funding regime are intensified by their dual positioning as both nonprofit and social movement organizations. Through a comparative analysis of two feminist service organizations, I explored how changes to state funding have impacted daily organizational work, ARAO practice and advocacy. Furthermore, this dissertation has demonstrated that the organizations respond to challenges in their political and funding climates in a variety of complex ways. At times, their responses can be seen as coping strategies, allowing them to continue to provide feminist services to their communities in the face of neoliberalism. However, the organizations in this study also found ways to resist pressures to neutralize their work, remaining committed to their social movement mandates. Despite this, it was evident from my research that there is a shrinking space for social justice work in a neoliberal context, making it increasingly difficult for feminist service organizations to engage in the more radical aspects of their work.

This chapter highlights central themes and finding from my research. I then explore how the funding relationship could be restructured to support the democratic function of the nonprofit sector. Although this dissertation acknowledges the dilemmas associated with accepting state resources, I argue that it is important not to abandon the idea of state funding. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of some limitations of the study, envisioning future directions for research.

Feminist Service Organizations: Nonprofit and Social Movement Organizations

Feminist service organizations are dually positioned as nonprofit and social movement organizations. This dissertation has demonstrated the ways this complicates and intensifies feminist service organizations' experiences of neoliberalism. The nonprofit sector in general faces increased expectations around service delivery and accountability, and operates in a climate of scarce resources (Gibson et al. 2007; Richmond & Shields 2004). Women's organizations are already marginalized within the sector, making them particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of this climate. For example, women's organizations are more likely to be affected by reductions in state funding and the nature of their work brings them under greater scrutiny (Meinhard & Foster 2003).

It is important to note that the ramifications of neoliberal policies for nonprofit organizations extend beyond issues of survival. Nonprofit organizations are not simply service providers. Like Wolch (1990), I contend that the sector has incredible 'progressive potential'. The nonprofit sector can mobilize communities around social justice issues and can act as an important source of advocacy (ibid). However, neoliberal ideology and policies work to undermine the democratic function of the sector. The stigmatization of social justice advocacy in Canada is a clear example of this. The delegitimization of this work even extends to prevention work, a form of advocacy one of my participants labelled "safe". In a recent example, when renewing its nonprofit status, Oxfam Canada was informed by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) that one of Oxfam's stated aims, preventing poverty, was not a legitimate goal. The rationale was that because this work can potentially benefit people who are not already poor, it does not align with the charitable status of the organization. In response to the CRA's critique, the organization changed its mission statement, eliminating references to prevention. Instead, the

statement now discusses “alleviating” poverty (“Preventing poverty’ not a valid goal for tax purposes, CRA tells Oxfam Canada” 2014).

Although the organization has stated that the change to the mission statement will not alter its work, Oxfam Canada’s experience is another example of the ways particular types of advocacy are framed as inappropriate activities for nonprofits. Furthermore, this example highlights yet another way nonprofit organizations’ work is monitored. Not only are nonprofit organizations scrutinized by funding agencies when applying for and receiving government funding, their ability to receive indirect funding in the form of charitable donations is dependent on their charitable status. This was an issue which came up very minimally in interviews at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton. Although several participants noted that their ability to engage in advocacy was limited due to their organization’s charitable status, the concerns expressed focused primarily on how funding agencies would perceive the organizations’ work. The close monitoring of nonprofit organizations’ charitable status in regards to their advocacy work – and the broad use of the term advocacy – is a relatively new focus. It further contributes to what some have called an “advocacy chill” in Canada (See “Preventing poverty’ not a valid goal for tax purposes, CRA tells Oxfam Canada” 2014).

The increased surveillance of nonprofit organizations’ advocacy activities is significant for the sector as a whole; however, it is particularly so for feminist service organizations due to their connections to feminist organizing. Feminist service organizations originated out of feminist movements in response to needs for services which previously did not exist for women. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, in order for an organization to be defined as feminist, it must engage in social justice work. Thus, although feminist service organizations provide important services to their communities, they have social justice mandates as well. This dual role was

previously recognized by the Canadian state as evident by the women's policy machinery, created in part to support women's organizations' gender equality work on the ground. Under neoliberalism, the need for gender equality work is no longer recognized and women's organizations have been framed as "special interests" (Sawer 2008). This has also led to the dismantling and weakening of women's policy machinery (Brodie & Bakker 2007).

Feminist service organizations experience these changes on multiple levels, as both a part of the nonprofit sector and as social movement organizations. The women whom I interviewed at E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton expressed a perception that they face greater challenges in their funding and political climates because of the nature of their organization's work. My research revealed the ways in which organizational work has been restructured under neoliberalism due to the shift to short-term project funding and a climate of funding insecurity. Additionally, organizations experience intensified pressures from funding agencies to demonstrate accountability and efficiency. It was evident from my interviews that the delegitimization of social justice work has affected both E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton's ability to engage in advocacy and ARAO practice. Women discussed limitations on advocacy and some mentioned particular organizations which had lost their funding because of their social justice work. A neoliberal funding regime has also created increased competition between community organizations, undermining efforts to build community. Furthermore, the weakening of women's policy machinery at the provincial and federal levels appears to have had an indirect impact on the organizations in this study. A number of women expressed confusion about the role of these policy bodies and some thought that SWC had been completely dismantled. I would argue that the reduced roles and visibility of SWC and the OWD are

recognized as the delegitimization of gender equality work in Canada and that this contributes to a climate of fear amongst women's organizations.

It is clear that it is necessary to examine feminist service organizations' ties to both the nonprofit sector and feminist organizing to understand their relationships with state funding bodies. Doing so enables an analysis of the multiple and complex pressures they face under neoliberalism. This dissertation has shown the ways this dual positioning exacerbates feminist service organizations' experiences of a neoliberal funding regime.

Social Reproduction, Neoliberalism and the Nonprofit Sector

Neoliberalism has led to the state's withdrawal from responsibilities for social reproduction formerly accepted by the state. This is evident when examining the state's relationship with the nonprofit sector. Although the nonprofit sector has historically played a prominent role in service provision in Canada, nonprofit organizations are now expected to do more with fewer resources. Funding agencies demand that organizations demonstrate greater efficiency and deliver measurable outcomes. However, the human costs of this approach to the funding relationships are not taken into account.

The assumption that the nonprofit sector will meet increased community needs despite a lack of adequate resources is a gendered one. Women are affected by social spending cuts to a greater degree as both service users and service providers (Bezanson & Luxton 2006; Brodie & Bakker 2007). The nonprofit sector is predominantly staffed by women and the majority of volunteers in the sector are female as well (Rice & Prince 2013; Drevland 2007). Thus, a reliance on the nonprofit sector is largely a reliance on women's underpaid, and at times unpaid, labour. This was reflected in my research with Interval House Hamilton and E-Fry Toronto. Women

reported an increase in short-term contract positions, with one interviewee mentioning contracts as short as six months. A neoliberal funding regime makes it difficult – if not impossible – for nonprofit organizations to create meaningful and sustainable employment. The result is a precarious workforce. Not only does this impact those working in the sector, it can also affect organizations’ abilities to provide consistent and quality services and programming. Some women described taking on additional work or “stretching” themselves out to ensure that community needs are met. This reality aligns with the neoliberal assumption that women will increase their own caring labour to make up for the state’s withdrawal from this work. Ultimately, this model is unsustainable. It undermines the value of the work done in the sector and allows the state to deny responsibility for social reproduction.

Feminist Service Organizations: Responding to a Neoliberal Funding Regime

Ties to state funding create many dilemmas for feminist organizations. However, this dissertation has argued against claims that state funded organizations are necessarily coopted and unable to engage in social justice work. Instead, it has shown that organizations are capable of navigating the challenges that accompany relationships with state funding agencies. Although the two organizations in my study encountered new and ongoing pressures in a neoliberal funding regime, they developed responses that allowed them to continue with their work. For example, organizations diversified their funding sources, became experts in reporting while also conceptualizing accountability in broad terms and they worked to maintain strong relationships with their funding agencies. They also found creative ways to engage in and define their social justice work, built relationships with other community organizations and participated in

provincial and federal coalitions. Some of these responses indicate resistance to neoliberal ideology and practices, whereas others simply allow the organizations to survive.

A failure to recognize the diversity of ways that organizations respond to neoliberalism is a refusal to acknowledge their agency. The organizations in this study were able to assess the dangers in their political climate and chose strategies based on their experiences of this climate. These strategies are best understood as falling upon a continuum of possible tactics. Moreover, any analysis of feminist service organizations' relationships with state funding agencies must take context into account and acknowledge the fluid and shifting nature of these relations. While some strategies may be successful in a particular place or historic moment, they may be less so in another. Indeed, although some of the tactics chosen by E-Fry Toronto and Interval House Hamilton have allowed them to continue with their work, the long-term sustainability of these choices is not guaranteed. For example, depending on larger coalitions to undertake the majority of the broader based advocacy has allowed organizations to remain focused on their daily work. However, these coalitions have come under greater scrutiny and face threats to their funding base, making their futures uncertain. It is clear that social justice work is more difficult under neoliberalism. Therefore, feminist service organizations will have to continue to think creatively about ways to resist the challenges presented by a neoliberal funding regime.

Reimagining the Funding Relationship

My research demonstrates how feminist service organizations are impacted by a neoliberal funding regime. The organizations in this study operate in a competitive funding climate where they are subject to strict reporting expectations and are expected to demonstrate that they are efficient and effective. Short-term project funding intensifies the work associated

with applying for grants and keeps organizations insecure. Additionally, advocacy is considered illegitimate. Although organizations find ways to survive and, at times, resist, overall the funding situation for nonprofit organizations looks bleak. In response to this funding climate, some organizations have diversified their funding sources to avoid depending on state funding which appears insecure and unreliable. However, despite the many challenges associated with a neoliberal funding regime, I contend that it is dangerous to abandon a model of state funding completely. To do so would be to accept the neoliberal assumption that the state bears no responsibility for social reproduction. Instead of abandoning state funding, it is necessary to reimagine the funding relationship.

Essential to this reimagining is a recognition of the nonprofit sector's democratic function. In a particular historical moment in Canada, the state did recognize these organizations as a part of the broader civil society (Findlay 2008; Smith 2005). The creation of women's policy machinery which, in part, was developed to support women's organizations on the ground is evidence of this. However, while remnants of this model remain¹¹⁶, nonprofit organizations are mostly treated as service providers that must be carefully monitored by the state. This approach assumes that nonprofit organizations cannot be trusted with public resources and it fails to acknowledge the importance of the work done by the sector. Although the VSI was largely unsuccessful, it encouraged government to develop a more collaborative relationship with the nonprofit sector and it recommended the increased participation of nonprofit organizations in the creation of public policy (see Phillips & Levasseur 2004). It was an important initiative because it provided an alternative model for government-nonprofit relations.

¹¹⁶ See Masson (2012) for a discussion of different approaches to nonprofit organizations and the funding relationship in Quebec.

However, if nonprofit organizations are to meaningfully participate in the democratic process, they must have the capacity to do so. The conditions of funding created by neoliberal policies limit their ability to participate. Reinstating a combination of core and project funding would provide nonprofit organizations with the stability they need to engage in the policy process and would also permit them to work towards longer-term goals. Although a funding model which relies heavily on project funding is flawed, project funding in itself is not problematic. When combined with core funding, project funding can allow organizations to assess community needs for new programming or services, and can foster innovation. Therefore, a funding model which incorporates both approaches to funding is necessary.

Additionally, if government is to rebuild its relationship with the nonprofit sector, the accountability regime in place under neoliberalism needs to be restructured. My interview participants accepted a need for accountability in the funding relationship. However, they envisioned accountability in broad terms and emphasized their accountability to multiple stakeholders, including their communities, service users, staff and volunteers, as well as funding agencies. They also spoke about alternative methods to more accurately measure outcomes, reflecting that statistics alone provide limited understandings of organizational work. Phillips and Levasseur (2004) also discuss accountability regimes which allow for learning and improvement, indicating that the regime in place under neoliberalism is only one possible model. In order to create a more effective and collaborative relationship between the nonprofit sector and the state, state funding agencies must expand their conceptions of accountability and move away from an accountability regime that is rule-based and premised on the assumption that nonprofit organizations must be controlled.

The nonprofit sector plays a vital role in the delivery of services to the public. However, its role extends beyond this. A thriving nonprofit sector is an essential component of a democratic society. Instead of expecting nonprofit organizations to simply function as contracted service providers, governments can choose to support the nonprofit sector's democratic role by improving the funding relationship.

Limitations of the Research and Future Directions

My research investigated how two feminist service organizations in Ontario experience and respond to a neoliberal funding regime. While I argue that their experiences reflect broad trends facing feminist organizations in Canada, as well as the nonprofit sector more generally, additional studies with organizations working on the ground are needed. This research can further contribute to knowledge about state funding, feminist organizations, social movements and the nonprofit sector. Studying organizations situated in different contexts would enable analyses of alternative models and approaches, as well as help identify contradictory practices within the state. Additionally, interviews with state bureaucrats could provide further insight into the ideology that shapes the funding regime.

The issue of charitable status did not emerge in my research in a significant way. However, the experience of Oxfam Canada, as well as other nonprofit organizations that have come under scrutiny for their political activities (see "'Preventing poverty' not a valid goal for tax purposes, CRA tells Oxfam Canada" 2014), highlights another area for future research. Understanding how charitable status can affect the democratic role of the nonprofit sector is a critical area of concern. Research which examines how the criterion for charitable status has

changed over the last fifty years is required to assess the potential implications this has for social justice work.

The relationship between service organizations, coalitions and the state also requires further investigation. My research revealed a contradiction introduced under the neoliberal funding regime in Canada. State funding agencies push community organizations to engage in partnerships in order to receive funding. However, these partnerships are often difficult and uneven, creating tension between organizations. Simultaneously, the neoliberal funding climate creates competition between organizations and delegitimizes social justice work. My research participants spoke about the ways feminist service organizations depend on coalitions to engage in social justice work and their discussions also highlighted the radical potential of these relationships to build community across difference. Examining how a neoliberal funding regime affects existing feminist coalitions in Canada can deepen our analyses of state-social movement relations.

Conclusion

To conclude, this dissertation has situated feminist service organizations as both nonprofit and social movement organizations. It has argued that conceptualizing feminist service organizations in this way provides a more nuanced account of their experiences of state funding. Studying two feminist service organizations in Ontario, my research demonstrated how challenges associated with a neoliberal funding regime affect organizational work, as well as organizations' abilities to engage in ARAO practice and social justice advocacy work. My analysis also acknowledged the multiple tactics organizations employ to continue with their work. Scholars must continue to interrogate the spaces available for social justice work in

neoliberal contexts. This research can identify political opportunities and advance knowledge about the complex dynamics of state-social movement relations.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Study Name: State Funding, Feminist Organizations and Anti-Oppression Work

Researcher: *Lisa Mae Boucher*
PhD Student, Women's Studies, York University

Purpose of the Research: This study investigates the current funding climate for feminist organizations in Canada. In particular, this research seeks to understand how recent changes to Status of Women Canada (SWC) have affected the ability of feminist organizations to engage in advocacy and in anti-racist/anti-oppressive work.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You are being asked to participate in 1-2 interviews, approximately ½ hour-1 hour in length. You will be asked to reflect on the funding relationship between feminist organizations and the Canadian state. You will also be asked to discuss the influence that this has on organizations' advocacy and anti-oppression work. After the initial interview, you may be contacted by the researcher for clarification or for a follow up interview.

Risks and Discomforts: We do not foresee any risks from your participation in the research; however, it is possible that during the interview process you may become upset or uncomfortable. Please be aware that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Inform the investigator if you do not wish to answer a particular question and she will respect your wish to move on. Additionally, you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time and there will be no penalty if you do.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: While you will not be financially compensated for volunteering in this research, participating in this study will allow you to share your thoughts about an important issue in Canadian society. This study also opens up further dialogue about what an effective funding relationship between voluntary organizations and state funding agencies would look like. Finally, the study seeks to highlight the experiences of Canadian feminist organizations and the challenges they face in their work.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Pseudonyms will be used in all publications associated with this research. During the interviews, the researcher will take notes and, with your permission, will use an audio recorder. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only the researcher will have access to this information. Data will be stored in this manner for the duration of the writing and research process. After this time, data will be destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Graduate Supervisor - Dr. Barbara Cameron. You may also contact my Graduate Program - <Women’s Studies, Founders College 206G, 4700 Keele St. Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Phone: (416) 650-8143>. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University’s Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in the study “State Funding, Feminist Organizations and Anti-Oppression Work” conducted by Lisa Mae Boucher. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____
Participant

Date _____

Signature _____
Principal Investigator

Date _____