**Suturing the Theoretical and the Empirical:
Social Movement Theory and Women's Movements in Canada**

by

Anna Forster, B.A. (Hons)

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of the requirements for the degree of

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**“Suturing the Theoretical and the Empirical:
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**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

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Abstract

This thesis advocates using social movement theory as a conceptual framework for studying women's movements in Canada. It demonstrates the empirical nature of scholars' approaches to these movements, and the need for a theoretical framework to account for movements' retrenchment in the last decade. It takes the analytical topics and themes from women's movements in Canada literature published between 1985 and 1995, and from status-of-Canadian-women scholarship published between 1990 and the present, to tailor the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory to the study of women's movements in Canada. My thesis is that a social movements theory framework, customized to account for this particular case, provides the conceptual tools for analyzing empirical changes in women's movements in Canada. This thesis thus addresses women's movements' retrenchment in both the empirical world and the academic literature.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Case	15
Introduction	15
From Writing About Women's Movements in Canada...	19
...To Writing About Women	29
Conclusion	40
Chapter Two: Resource Mobilization Theory and the Political Process Model	42
Introduction	42
Resource Mobilization Theory	44
Political Process Theory	49
Conclusion	56
Chapter Three: New Social Movement Theory	58
Introduction	58
Laclau and Mouffe's Unsutured Social (World)	61
Castells: Identity in the Information Age	68
Touraine and Melucci: Towards a New Sociology of Social Movements	79
Conclusion	90
Chapter Four: A Social Movements Framework for Studying Women's Movements in Canada	92
Introduction	92
Towards a Conceptual Framework for Studying Women's Movements in Canada	96
The Resource Mobilization Paradigm Tailored	97
New Social Movement Theory Modified	107
Limitations of and Possibilities for this Theoretical Framework	122
Conclusion	123
Conclusion	125
Bibliography	128

Introduction

In the early 1990s, federally-focused, pan-Canadian women's movements in Canada were strong and highly visible. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women's (NAC) successful campaign against the Charlottetown Accord, and President Judy Rebick's status as a key player in Canadian constitutional politics, as well as in politics at large in Canada, testified to feminist movements' ability to make their collective voices heard. NAC's pivotal role in the Charlottetown negotiations was, in many ways, the culmination of women's movements' active participation in Canadian public life in the 25 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) was struck in 1967. As the 1990s unfolded, women's movements appeared to be a permanent fixture of the political landscape.

By 1995, however, federally-focused women's movements in Canada were in retrenchment. Their public visibility and influence seemed to have vanished almost overnight. Concurrently, a number of related changes began to restructure the social, political and economic spheres in Canada, as elsewhere in the Western world. These shifts included the redrawing of boundaries between the public and the private, the rise of neoliberalism and the globalization of production, the rise of market over state regulation, changes in state form, and the decline of the Keynesian welfare state in Canada (Teeple 1995; Brodie 1995; Drache and Gertler 1991; Harvey 1989). Women, especially poor and non-white women, were disproportionately affected by such transformations, as their status in various areas continued to plummet as the state withdrew from its social welfare responsibilities.

These empirical shifts have been mirrored in the literature on women's movements and on women in Canada. Since the early 1990s, there has been a considerable decline in scholarship which directly addresses federally-focused women's movements in Canada. In particular, the scholarship which provided an overarching or macro-level analysis of women's movements has ebbed substantially. The one notable exception to this trend is Janine Brodie's *Politics on the Margins: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement* (1995), which links the marginalization of feminist politics to economic and political restructuring. Although astute and prescient, this work is one of the few sources that addresses the retrenchment of federally-focused movements in a comprehensive way. Concomitant with the decline of writing on women's *movements* in Canada, literature about the (declining) status of Canadian *women* has grown markedly, reflecting the importance and influence of the gendered social, political and economic changes that are restructuring Canada.

What has happened to this literature on women's movements in Canada since the early 1990s? Why did most scholars abandon macro-level analysis of federally-focused women's movements at just the moment when movements themselves were experiencing substantial and detrimental change? How is the rise of a body of work dedicated to understanding the effects of recent social, political and economic changes on *women* in Canada related to the decline of scholarly writing on *women's movements*?

This thesis addresses these questions. It takes federally-focused women's movements in Canada, especially since the early 1990s, as its central problematic. The lack of recent literature on women's movements writ large indicates both an empirical and a

theoretical gap in the scholarship. My thesis seeks to begin filling this theoretical gap by customizing social movement theory to produce a conceptual framework specific to studying women's movements in Canada, thus arguing for the use of movement theory as an appropriate and productive conceptual framework for this case. It does not address the absence of empirical work on recent changes in these women's movements by presenting an *empirical* account of the retrenchment of movements in the last decade, nor does it provide a theoretical *explanation* for these changes. The lack of recent empirical work on federally-focused movements' retrenchment makes such a theoretical application to the case impossible. Instead, my thesis is that a social movement theory framework, tailored to account for this particular case, will provide the conceptual tools for studying empirical changes in women's movements in Canada. In this sense, my research also addresses the empirical gap in the women's movements literature, albeit in an indirect way.

In identifying a break in the empirical work on women's movements in Canada, I am not positing that there has been no empirical work at all on women's political activism since the early 1990s. In fact, the decline of scholarship which addressed federally-focused movements in an overarching (and empirical) manner seems to have led to an increase in empirical, micro-level accounts of some women's movements. The literature that I survey in the second part of Chapter Two on identities provides examples of this type of work, which both documents the rise of narrower identity-based politics, and responds to this change by focusing on the effects of neoliberalism and restructuring on different (identity) groups of women in Canada.

To tailor social movement theory for studying women's movements in Canada, I use,

first, the topics and themes which emerge from women's movements literature between 1985 and 1995, at which point this literature effectively ceases, and, second, the issues which preoccupy scholars of recent social, political and economic changes and their effects on Canadian women. As I outline, these two bodies of scholarship bridge the empirical gap between the theory and the case. The lack of adequate empirical accounts of the transformations in federally-focused women's movements in Canada since the early 1990s means that I cannot simply apply social movement theory to movements' retrenchment to generate an explanation for movements' loss of public visibility and influence. For the theory to be able to present meaningful insight into the case, it must be tailored. The above-mentioned literatures furnish the necessary details about movements to make the theory productive conceptually and, hopefully, empirically.

There is analytical significance in the coincidence of the retrenchment of both federally-focused women's movements in Canada themselves and academic writing about them. Their concurrent declines suggest that the women's movements literature had limited theoretical resources for coping with changes in the movements themselves. When women's movements in Canada were strong and highly visible, there was an abundance of empirical data to ground analysis. I propose that *because* there has never been an adequate theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada, their retrenchment prompted a similar and related decline in writing about movements. The theoretical framework I advocate provides the resources for understanding women's movements both before and after the early 1990s.

In the last decade, scholarship which addresses the effects of social, political and

economic changes on women in Canada has grown markedly. The appearance in the literature of women, rather than movements, as the central analytical category is perhaps a natural consequence of an insufficiently theoretical approach to studying women's movements, as mentioned above. In this sense, the "status of Canadian women" literature can be considered to be continuous with movements' literature, dealing with similar concerns but through a different lens. Understood differently, this literature represents not so much a direct shift *from* academic writing about movements *to* work on women, but instead provides an inventory of the empirical changes which have occurred in Canada in the last decade. The fact that scholars have retained an emphasis on women indicates a strong and ongoing commitment to feminism, and implies that there is potential for the renewal of women's movements literature. In either explanation, the topics that characterize the status-of-women literature are relevant to customizing a theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada because they identify and explore the same empirical context in which movements retrenched. They thus provide key modifications to social movement theory to tailor it for studying women's movements.

I take social movement theory as the conceptual framework I advocate for studying women's movements in Canada in this thesis because these movements, despite the fact that they are *social movements*, have never received a comprehensive treatment as movements, either theoretically or empirically. This may be because social movement theory itself lacks the ability to accommodate gender, thus incorporating both an androcentric bias and a gender absence. Understandably, feminist scholars might be reluctant to study social movements expressly seeking women's equality and inclusion in such a theoretical context. Kuumba

(2001) argues that the foundational nature of gender as “a basic organizing principle in human society” makes it an important component of studying social movements, which “have the potential to reproduce as well as transform gender inequalities, structures, and belief systems” (2). She advocates the use of a “gender lens” through which to consider social movements themselves, the study of social movements, and men’s and women’s experiences in and of social movements. Kuumba’s gender analysis of social movement theory is unique in tackling the absence of gender in social movement studies and theory head on. Yet, given the importance of gender as a determinant of people’s social lives, movement theorists ignore it at their peril. While I recognize that this is a large gap, and a new area of research, the problem of the lack of a gender component in social movement theory is beyond the scope of this thesis, and I leave it for further empirical and theoretical work.

Women’s movements scholars may also have shied away from social movement theory because of its positions on the state. As becomes evident in Chapter Four, the resource mobilization paradigm and the New Social Movement literature lack a comprehensive theorization of the critical role the state can play in movements’ existence and development. Both Resource Mobilization Theory and the political process model, the latter with the exception of Tilly (1978), identify the importance of the institutional context in which movements operate, but fail to see that, much more often than not, this context is dominated by the state. New Social Movement theorists contend that the (nation-)state, on the wane, no longer exercises significant power, and, as a result, (new) movements do not orient themselves in relation to the state anymore. Instead, they look beyond it to carve out

new cultures, and new cultural forms and spaces.

Neither the Canadian state nor social movements in Canada have responded to neoliberalism and globalization as New Social Movement theory predicts. As I note in Chapter Four, the Canadian state seemed to have increased, rather than decreased, its power in the last decade. Scholars of women's movements in Canada may have been unwilling to subordinate the state in their analyses of women's movements, given the critical empirical role it has played in movements' origins, development and, perhaps, retrenchment. In other words, the *Canadian* context of the case considered here might also have contributed to feminist scholars' primary interest in documenting the case empirically, rather than using social movement theory to conceptualize it.

These are not disparities to be taken lightly. The lack of a "gender lens" – and, indeed, of virtually any conceptual consideration of gender at all – in social movement theory is more than a simple oversight. In fact, it points to the very necessity of the work that women's movements and those who write about them do. Further, for women's movements in Canada, the state has formed perhaps the most important determinant of their organizational forms and political successes and failures, and must be considered as such in an adequate theoretical framework for their study. While I recognize these shortcomings in social movement theory, it nevertheless forms, with modifications, an appropriate conceptual framework to study women's movements in Canada. Chapter Four deals substantially with the problem of the state, proposing various ways that movement theory can be adapted to accommodate the importance of the state in both movements and literature about movements.

The two major strands of social movement theory I use, the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory, both correspond to and complement the topics which emerge from the women's movements literature and the status-of-women literature. When synthesized, the topics and themes from these trajectories of scholarship both dovetail with and, occasionally, challenge movement theory, creating a conceptual social movement framework tailored to studying women's movements in Canada. The resource mobilization paradigm, which includes Resource Mobilization Theory and the political process approach, focuses on organizational details and the processes by which social movements mobilize resources for collective action. Its primary concerns coincide well with the major considerations of women's movements' scholars writing between 1985 and 1995. New Social Movement theory, on the other hand, understands movements since the 1970s to be new responses to an altered social, political, cultural and economic world. The contemporary status-of-Canadian-women literature highlights the particularities of how the world has changed in Canada, providing both a complementary and contrasting picture to social movement theory of the relationship between movements and a redefined global socio-political climate. This correspondence between social movement theory and scholarship on women's movements and women in Canada, while not always perfect, suggests that a theoretical movements analysis is perhaps precisely what has been missing from writing about women's movements in Canada. Its addition has the potential to revitalize this literature and allow it to account (theoretically) for movements' retrenchment.

In this thesis, I do not supply detailed critiques of the resource mobilization paradigm or New Social Movement theory, beyond those which derive from meshing the analytical

themes in studies of Canadian women's movements and women, and social movement theory itself. Instead, I outline the *particular* results of applying the topics from scholarship on women's movements and women in Canada to social movement theory, rather than attempting to adjudicate between critical accounts of resource mobilization or New Social Movement theories. To put it another way, I am interested more in production (of a customized theoretical framework) than in destruction (through critique).

I have chosen to address the problematic of the recent retrenchment of women's movements in Canada theoretically rather than empirically because I believe that a theoretical approach is as valuable as an empirical one for studying and understanding empirical phenomena. If one of the things that theory does is help explain the empirical, it makes sense to begin from a theoretical framework in studying empirical events and processes. This approach assumes that the relationship between the theoretical and the empirical is a dialectical one. In the case of women's movements in Canada addressed here, the empirical themes and topics in the literatures on movements and on women combine with social movement theory to produce a theoretical framework which addresses the particularities of the case. Without empirical input, albeit from secondary sources (which, given the recent dearth of empirical work on women's movements in Canada, is the only way to tailor movement theory), the theory is unable to offer insight specific enough to be helpful and productive. Without a theoretical framework, scholars of women's movements have no way to talk about movements' empirical retrenchment.

In a broader sense, I am contending that theory need not proceed *from* empirical data. While it cannot function without or outside of empirical input, theory is a necessary part of

studying, understanding and explaining the empirical world. It offers valuable ways to think, and think about, social and political phenomena, and serves as an effective set of tools to help navigate the complexities of the empirical world. As this thesis shows, the study of women's movements in Canada *needs* a theoretical framework. It need not necessarily be grounded in a social movements perspective, nor is the version of social movement theory I present here the only possible variation for studying women's movements. However, empirical work on movements since their decline in public visibility and influence in the mid-1990s requires a theoretical component to proceed.

The major contribution of this project is the customization of a social movements theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada – something which, I contend, the literature on movements has always lacked. By advocating for a conceptual framework that can accommodate women's movements' retrenchment in the mid-1990s, this thesis has the potential to reignite the scholarship on women's movements in Canada by guiding empirical work on how social, political and economic changes in the last decade have affected movements. Further, it contributes to social movement theory by demonstrating the resource mobilization paradigm's and New Social Movement theory's comprehensiveness, and amenability to adaptation. As becomes evident when I bring the topics from the literatures and the theory together, for the purposes of a theoretical framework specific to studying women's movements in Canada, the state is undertheorized in the resource mobilization approach, and given insufficient analytical weight in social movement theory. Thus, this project also identifies potential additions to movement theory for studying and understanding state-focused social movements, such as women's

movements in Canada.

This undertaking, however, is limited by its beginnings in theory. Despite the dialectical relationship between the theoretical and the empirical, or perhaps because of it, theory need not be underpinned by empirical details. As a result, this project is necessarily compromised by the dearth of empirical work on federally-focused women's movements since the early 1990s. Particularly, its initial usefulness is limited by the fact that the topics from the status-of-women literature which I use to tailor social movement theory are not *about* social movements, and this leads to an unavoidable ambiguity in parts of the conceptual framework I develop.

Throughout this thesis, I talk about women's movements in the plural, except where individual authors refer to *the* women's movement in Canada. Canadian women's organizing for social and political change has been diverse, multiple and heterogenous, and the notion of a singular and unified movement is both empirically erroneous and analytically inadequate. This notwithstanding, it is beyond the scope of my thesis to offer a critique of the scholarship which assumes the notion of one comprehensive movement is sufficient for conceptualizing and understanding women's movement activity in Canada. Further, this thesis does not deal with women's movements in Quebec, as they have followed a different trajectory related to negotiations with the provincial state, particularly vis-à-vis Québécois nationalism (Black 1993:162-3). I am interested here in federally-focused movements in English-speaking Canada, for their visibility and influence on the national stage were greatest and seem have dropped most dramatically since the early 1990s.

Finally, the project advanced in this thesis has political, as well as academic,

relevance. In identifying the necessity of a theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada, it flags the significance of the relatively new absence on the national stage of federally-focused movements. While I do not document them here, the effects of women's movements' retrenchment have been profound. The virtual disappearance of a feminist discourse in Canada might indicate that women's equality has been achieved and women's movements have become obsolete – yet this is clearly not the case, and, in fact, the opposite appears to be true, as exemplified in much of the literature I outline in Chapter One. Without women's movements to take up so-called “women's issues,” as well as the gendered elements of all social, political and cultural phenomena, Canadian women have little chance of genuine substantive equality in the future. The tools for analyzing women's movements in Canada that my thesis presents can contribute, with further study, to understanding how movements have been written out of politics in Canada.

This thesis proceeds in the following manner. Chapter One addresses both scholarship on women's movements in Canada, from the late 1980s to 1995, and the literature which deals with social, political and economic restructuring's impact on the status of Canadian women, from the early 1990s to the present. I identify analytical themes and topics which characterize each body of work, and represent the central concerns of scholars of movements and women. The topics that emerge from the academic treatments of women's movements in Canada include: noting how movements have developed, especially the role of the state in relation to movements in this process; conceptualizing the state in relation to movements; assessing movements' (long-term) relationship to the Canadian state; and, to a lesser extent, documenting the organizational development of movements. Recent

literature on Canadian women reflects a preoccupation with issues of welfare state restructuring, public policy, citizenship, women and official politics, and identities.

In Chapters Two and Three, I summarize the resource mobilization approach, which includes Resource Mobilization Theory and political process theory, and New Social Movement theory, respectively, noting the central insights which derive from both theoretical traditions. These chapters provide an outline of the theoretical social movements framework that I advocate using for the study of women's movements in Canada.

Chapter Four brings the topics and themes from scholarship about women's movements and women in Canada to the social movement theory, presenting a tailored conceptual movements framework for the study of women's movements in Canada. I bring the topics from the literature *to* the central tenets of the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory, suggesting ways to modify each that accommodate the major concerns of women's movements literature and status-of-women scholarship. This chapter concludes with an exploration of the possibilities and limitations for the modified conceptual framework I have outlined, proposing that, while compromised by a number of absences in both the theory and the topics from scholarship about women's movements and women in Canada, a social movements framework thus specified is a valuable addition to the women's movements literature, especially for providing a guide for future empirical work.

In the general conclusion of this thesis, I summarize my project and comment on the issues it raises for the relationship between the theoretical and the empirical. I conclude that, in advocating a social movement theory framework for studying women's movements in Canada, and in customizing it for this case, this thesis provides one avenue for

understanding movements' empirical retrenchment.

Chapter One: The Case

Introduction

This chapter surveys two bodies of work: first, literature published between the late 1980s and 1995 concerning federally-focused women's movements in English-speaking Canada, and second, scholarship appearing between the early 1990s and the present that deals with the effects of recent social, political and economic changes on Canadian women's (declining) status. The analytical topics in the women's movements literature provide key content for customizing social movement theory, as I show in Chapter Four. The overview of this literature also demonstrates that women's movements scholars have been interested mainly in describing movements empirically, rather than in considering them theoretically.

As I document, this literature on movements is characterized by attention to movements' relationships with the state. The scholarship deals primarily with uncovering and conceptualizing the emergence of second wave women's movements, and understanding how these beginnings influence movements' subsequent development, especially in relation to the Canadian state. It evaluates the state as a predominantly negative, often contradictory, but sometimes positive determining force for movements, and suggests nuanced and complex conceptions of the state. A secondary subject in the literature surveyed is organizational growth in movements.

My overview of the more recent status-of-women literature serves to identify empirical shifts which have occurred, particularly as they have been manifested in the Canadian context, and to note how these changes have induced a shift in the literature from talking about women's *movements* to talking about *women*. This work also provides

subjects with which to then tailor social movement theory for studying women's movements in Canada. However, because this literature does not address women's movements in Canada directly, it cannot contribute to modifying social movement theory in as specific a way as does the women's movements scholarship.

The topics which preoccupy this literature include welfare state restructuring, public policy, citizenship, women and official politics, and identities. The major overlap between the status-of-women literature and social movement theory occurs in the (general) area of (empirical) change, which both bodies of work emphasize; I explore this correspondence in Chapter Four. Further, status-of-women scholars have also generally not sought out theoretical explanations, and rely on observed phenomena to account for how Canadian women have been situated socially, politically and economically in the context of a neoliberal, globalizing environment. In identifying the host of empirical shifts which now define Canada, as well as other Western nations, this work locates the determinants of women's status firmly in the empirical world, *and analyzes them as such*.

The body of work that I have termed status-of-women literature focuses on topics which did not, until about 1990, receive substantial or comprehensive treatment in the academic literature. This work responds to neoliberalism, globalization and changes in state form, all of which, in shifting the empirical terrain, have also wrestled the focus of academic work away from talking about women's movements to an interest in the newly emerging effects of these dramatic changes. As I discuss below, the exception to this trend is attention by scholars to women and official politics – a long-standing concern for liberal feminists, but one which, in this new context, is pushed by a *return* to, and a return to understanding,

women's engagement with the state.

The literature I survey on women's movements in Canada is limited to that which takes *movements* as its primary subject, or one of its primary subjects. Many scholars have written about the development of women's policy machinery in the state, or the Women's State (Burt 1997; Sawer 1996; Geller-Schwartz 1995; Pal 1993), charting its course from the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1971 through restructuring of the 1990s. Others focus on women's organizations and groups (such as Burt 1995). Few of these accounts, however, connect the evolution of women's policy machinery to women's movements, or women's groups to movements, and so, for my purposes, do not qualify as scholarship *about* women's movements. Thus, the work that deals directly with women's movements from the late 1980s to the early 1990s is, in fact, fairly narrow – perhaps another indication that women's movements in Canada have been undertheorized, with the result that their treatment in the scholarly literature has suffered for want of conceptual frameworks with which to consider them.

The empirical shifts identified in this chapter, as well as the breadth and depth of empirical work on both women's movements and women in Canada, demonstrate the appropriateness of a turn to theory at this time. Women's movements scholars have been unable to account for movements' retrenchment because they lacked the theoretical framework to do so, and thus movements literature has declined dramatically. The paucity of empirical detail about movements after the early 1990s – *because movements themselves had become inactive* – left empirically-oriented scholars with limited subject matter. To put it (too) plainly, the effective cessation of movements' activity, coupled with the absence of a

satisfactory theoretical framework, hastened the concurrent disappearance of movements from the literature.

Empirically, women's movements' retrenchment after their pivotal role in the Charlottetown Accord negotiations can be attributed largely to a series of government funding cuts to both the Women's State and, as a result, to the non-governmental women's groups that made up women's movements in Canada (Jenson and Phillips 1996: 120-3). Movements' long-term, close, although not always happy, relationship with the federal state made them particularly susceptible to such funding cuts, and left them lacking the ability to garner resources outside of the state (Bush 2001: 63-8). The empirical evaporation of federally-focused movements in Canada with a strong national presence left scholars working in a tradition of empirical documentation with little to write about. This is not to suggest that movements literature has never been analytical – quite the opposite, in fact, as the survey below indicates – but rather simply that its strong focus on describing and considering *what happened* precluded its ability to explain movements' slip from presence to absence.

In advocating for social movement theory as a good and productive theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada, I am arguing that such a framework can provide the conceptual tools to account for – or, at least, to provide one explanation for – movements' empirical retrenchment in the early 1990s. Chapter Four adapts the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory using the themes and topics which emerge from women's movements literature and, to a lesser degree, from the status-of-women scholarship. Bringing this case to movement theory also allows a (particular)

critique of the theory, especially from the perspective of studying state-focused women's movements.

From Writing about Women's Movements in Canada...

As a result of their development around and out of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), second-wave women's movements in Canada have a long history of engagement with the federal state, and, not surprisingly, movements' changing relationship to the Canadian government has been the primary focus for scholars of these movements. Their work is oriented around understanding how movements have emerged and developed, how the state is conceptualized in relation to movements, movements' relationship to the state, and, less extensively, movements' organizational development. The literature surveyed below takes a predominantly empirical approach – with the exception of the work on theorizing the state in terms of movements – seeking explanations for the (changing) status of women's movements in Canada from (shifting) contextual factors.

In the women's movements literature, movements' origins have tended to be defined and considered in relation to the Canadian state. Some scholars suggest that the second wave began with agitation in the mid-1960s for a Royal Commission on women's status, and that the RCSW was a major determinant of movements' subsequent trajectories (Brodie 1995: 41-2; Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988: 39-42). They have also shown an interest in uncovering the events which led to the striking of the Royal Commission in 1967, and outlining the consequences of its 1970 Report for women's movements in Canada (Findlay 1987: 33-7, 1988: 5; Begin 1992).

Those who study women's movements in Canada have also sought to identify the beginnings of second-wave movements in terms of the distinction between institutional feminism and grassroots feminism. Scholars have traced how liberal feminism became the "public face" (Findlay 1988: 7) of women's movements, and grassroots feminist groups found themselves marginalized in the aftermath of the Royal Commission. Brodie observes that the RCSW, "coming as it did in the early years of the second wave, served to strengthen the liberal feminist position," (1995: 43) at the expense of grassroots movements. In *Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada* (1988), Adamson, Briskin and McPhail choose to chronicle the history of grassroots women's movements, arguing that movements' second-wave origins were rooted in the social and political changes of the early 1960s, and that grassroots movements were genuinely new, compared with institutionalized feminism which retained strong ties to first-wave women's groups (42). Black (1993) also notes the development of two different streams of women's movements in Canada, suggesting that "[i]n general, it makes sense to date the second wave of feminism from the appearance of new women's organizations in the 1960s," (156) rather than from demands for a Royal Commission.

Along with an attention to the distinction between liberal/institutional and grassroots movements, this literature is also characterized by an interest in the composition, particularly of class, of the women who were represented by and in the Canadian government. As Adamson, Briskin and McPhail explain, "the first calls for a royal commission came from women involved in established women's organizations. They had previously lobbied governments, often successfully, and believed in the state as an agent of change" (1988: 51).

The women who fought for and got the Royal Commission were not representative of all women or all feminists, particularly not grassroots feminists, but rather exemplified a narrow (usually white, middle-class, well-educated) category of women who had particular goals for women's movements (Findlay 1988: 5; 1987: 35). The public "liberalization" of women's movements in Canada was achieved mainly through the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), until 1972 the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women, which, in the 1970s, largely incorporated previously existing first-wave groups rather than the new grassroots organizations (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 1988: 51-3; Findlay 1988: 5).

This attention to inclusions and exclusions, grassroots and institutionalized women's movements, indicates among scholars of women's movements in Canada an analytical interest in how movements emerged and developed, especially in relation to the state. Their narratives evidence an important concern with understanding women's movements in their plurality and diversity, but also with providing explanations for the "liberalization" of movements in Canada – or how one movement acquired more political capital than others. While, as many writers note, the Royal Commission was clearly a watershed event for women's movements, the persistent focus on uncovering other roots of the movements and distinguishing amongst the women involved shows a notable commitment to complexifying this analysis.

Scholars have paid most attention to women's movements' relationships with the Canadian state in movements literature, studying the impact of the state on women's movements and the influence of movements on the state. They trace how movements have

often had a contradictory relationship to the Canadian state, some (Findlay 1987, 1988) presenting it more negatively than others (Vickers, Rankin and Appelle 1993), and argue for understanding the state not as unified, coherent or monolithic, but rather as hegemonic and sometimes conflicting. The turn to the theoretical for making sense of the state for women's movements is a notable departure from the predominantly empirical approach that typifies scholarship on women's movements in Canada. It seems to indicate the importance and complexity of the relationship between movements and the state, and scholars' commitment and desire to understand this interaction. This interest in theory for understanding the state vis-a-vis women's movements does not, however, represent or stand in for a comprehensive theoretical approach to studying women's movements in Canada in their entirety.

According to Findlay, the Canadian state "organize[s] a unity of interests among the dominant groups and disorganize[s] potential challenges to this unity," (1987: 32) such as women's movements. She contends that women's interests have been incorporated (unequally) into the "unequal structure of representation," (Mahon 1977: 165-98) such that the state controls how women and movements are represented in the policy-making process. For Findlay, while the state's power is hegemonic, rather than monolithic, the Canadian state has used this power to establish a particular form of representation which disadvantages women and women's movements. Vickers, Rankin and Appelle (1993) share a similar understanding to Findlay's of the relationship between the state and women's movements, although in their formulation the impact of the state on movements has been both greater and more positive (8, 18). In arguing that women's movements must be institutionalized to meet women's equality demands over several more generations, they insist that movements in

Canada have been able to influence (official) politics, and thus the Canadian state has been open to such interventions. They also reject

the vision of the Canadian state as a monolithic and unremittingly patriarchal oppressor...since this view is not sustainable in light of the Canadian state's actual record of positive changes for women. Our analysis is based on a view of the state as a set of institutions that are often not fully consistent in their direction, partly because the government's ability to affect the behaviour of state institutions varies over time and partly because there is a competition within and among state institutions that complicates the implementation of a government's overall plans. (61)

In the same vein, Brodie (1995) advances a view of the state as a historically specific cultural form. She agrees with Vickers, Rankin and Appelle that the “tendency to view societal institutions [such as states] as ‘reified monoliths’ which perpetually victimize women has lost much of its force in the recent years” (26). Instead, Brodie writes that “feminists can view the state as a complex, historical and cultural form,” (27) a move that allows the following approach for understanding states’ changing relationships with women’s movements and women: “[t]he concepts of discourse and of the state as an historical cultural form...invite us to investigate how states and political identities have been ‘stated’ by different states and how these particular social constructions enforce relations of domination and political conflict” (28). Such an understanding of the state implies a particular relationship between women’s movements and government; it means that the current neoliberal state, and its concomitant restructuring processes, have “put the second wave of the Canadian women’s movement on the defensive” (65). Brodie posits that neoliberalism has served to marginalize women’s movements by denying their social significance and constituting their members as “lying on the outer limits of the norm – outside of the ordinary” (69). She shares with Findlay and Vickers, Rankin and Appelle the

position that state forms can and do change, and that states are important determinants of movements. Brodie's emphasis on the key role of discourse and social constructionism in shaping women's movements' political possibilities implies a similarly non-deterministic understanding of the state.

Yet, despite these understandings of the state as hegemonic, not monolithic, and its relationship to women's movements that see possibility for realignment in power dynamics, and thus change in the actual status of women, several accounts of women's movements in Canada present a predominantly negative picture of how the state has responded to movements' demands, and attempt to identify the "limits of reform". While others document a more conciliatory relationship between movements and the Canadian state, all analyses acknowledge the equivocal and contradictory nature of this alliance. Evaluating movements' relationships with the Canadian state has absorbed much of movements scholars attention, again underscoring the primacy of the state as a determinant of women's movements' abilities to meet their goals.

Providing the most negative assessment of the state's responses to women's movements, Findlay contends that, even from the very start, second wave women's movements' relationship with the state was fraught with difficulties and contradictions (1988: 5). She argues that the state resisted women's demands at every turn, beginning with its failure to initiate any of the Royal Commission's recommendations (6). Other scholars, such as Burt, note that "government response to the women's movement has not reflected a strong commitment to the movement's goals" (1986: 149). Further, "the state has attempted to contain feminism from the moment it appeared to have the potential for becoming a

significant political force” (Griffin Cohen 1993: 21).

The limits of government reform for Findlay lie in the state’s ability to integrate women into the policy-making process on its own, not movements’, terms. She conceptualizes these limitations through the process of representation, which the state has used to control women’s and women’s movements’ demands and thus restrict reform (1987: 33). Ultimately, she argues that the possibilities for women’s movements’ successful ability to make change are defined by how feminists in the state take advantage of opportunities to advance a movements’ agenda (1987: 48). Burt (1986) is similarly concerned with the factors which circumscribe government reform, concluding that the state’s concentration on legal equality at the expense of social policy changes, which would have had more significant impact on women’s lives, indicates – again – the limited willingness of the state to engage with movements’ objectives (51). The availability and distribution of state funding for women’s groups also contributed to their reliance on the state and susceptibility to its control (Griffin Cohen 1993). While the government could, and often did, facilitate movements’ ability to work towards their goals, it could, and did, also stand in their way.

Brodie (1995) advances a different kind of assessment of movements’ relationship with the Canadian state. Emphasizing changing state forms, she contends that women’s movements have been marginalized in Canada by the disappearance of political spaces (47), caused by welfare state restructuring and the rise of the neoliberal state. These developments have created a far more hostile environment for women’s movements, and one which differs substantially from the 1980s when at least there was political claims-making space for movements. Brodie states that women’s movements must “‘re-public-ize’ political

spaces and help build a new social consensus about the boundaries and content of the public and private” (83), for the state is deeply implicated in creating, monitoring, regulating and withdrawing public or political space, and has been able to condition its relationship with women’s movements by re-placing their concerns into the private sphere.

There is at least one source which suggests that women’s movements’ relationship with the Canadian state has been, if not entirely beneficial, then at least positive in many respects. For Vickers, Rankin and Appelle (1993), the key to movements’ success is institutionalization, which allows women to organize their efforts to gain equality over several generations, and to develop and participate in “politics as if women mattered”. In forming “stable, woman-centred institutions operating parallel to the structures of official politics,” (xii) women’s movements (have the potential to) profoundly advance women’s equality. This contrasts sharply with Findlay’s view of institutionalization as a means of control and regulation: “[the state] now has the capacity...to redefine our issues and shape our strategies – in other words, to ‘institutionalize’ feminist demands” (1988: 7-8). For Findlay, the susceptibility to manipulation by the state that comes with permanence compromises women’s movements’ integrity, autonomy and ability.

Clearly, the project of (normative) assessment of the state’s relationship with women’s movements is a defining feature of the women’s movements literature. During this period, scholars have tended to be very wary of the state, with the exception of Vickers, Rankin and Appelle, understanding it primarily in terms of the various ways it has limited women’s movements’ agendas. As I have described above, there is a decided contradiction between the conceptualizations of the state advanced in this literature and the analyses

offered of how the Canadian state has engaged with women's movements, again with the exception of Vickers, Rankin and Appelle. As with the other topics which characterize this body of scholarship, the focus on evaluating the state's conduct in relation to women's movements demonstrates the importance of the state as an analytical category for studying and understanding women's movements in Canada. It also speaks to the need for a normative framework for considering these movements, as I discuss in Chapter Four.

The subject of organizational development of second wave women's movements in Canada has also captured scholars' attention. Documenting the number and array of new women's groups which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s preoccupied scholars interested in understanding how movements acquired political force. Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988: 54-56) write that the

number of women's organizations and services started up in the seventies is staggering. The women's movement was able to build on a broad base of support established in the early years, and to focus in more detail on the provision of social services, the development of political strategies and theory, the growth of a women's culture, and the further expansion of the movement through new organizations. (54)

Griffin Cohen (1993) concentrates on the conscious-raising group as a critical way for women to become part of women's movements, and also on women's groups' commitment to working with non-hierarchical and inclusive internal processes (6-11). Burt (1986), like Phillips (1990), takes a more formal approach to considering organizational development, classifying national women's organizations into groups which worked for role change and groups which worked for role equality (134-42), suggesting that it is important to understand women's movements in terms of the political orientation of their organizations. Finally,

Black (1993) demonstrates a concern throughout with women's organizations as the cornerstone of women's movement, completing her article with a 'chronology of the second wave' that lists women's groups and their dates of establishment between 1960 and 1983 (171-3).

As I have shown, the literature from this period that deals directly with women's movements revolves primarily around the state. Movements scholars have paid close attention to: uncovering movements' origins, especially the role of the state in how and what types of movements develop; theorizing the state in relation to movements; evaluating the relationship between women's movements and the Canadian state; assessing the limits of government reform; and charting the organizational development of movements. The conceptual interest that characterizes the literature vis-à-vis the state, however, does not form a comprehensive theoretical approach for studying women's movements in Canada, nor does it extend into other topics in the literature. This scholarship is also mostly guided by an empirical approach, excepting the focus on theorizing the state, as mentioned. These topics and approaches, when combined with the central ideas which emerge from status-of-Canadian-women literature presented below, provide the basis for the adaptation of a theoretical social movements framework, tailored to the study of women's movements in Canada. The next section uses the status-of-women literature to identify empirical shifts which have occurred in Canada in the last decade or so, and outlines the topics which characterize this scholarship.

...To Writing About Women

By the early 1990s, the impacts of neoliberalism, the globalization of production and the rise of market over state regulation throughout the Western world were being felt in Canada in complex and profound ways. As Canada had built a fairly comprehensive and inclusive welfare state during the post-war period (Evans and Wekerle 1997b: 5), these shifts were particularly obvious in the area of social welfare. The dramatic restructuring of the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS) in Canada, particularly over the last decade, recast the state's responsibility for the social welfare of its citizens (Brodie 1995, 1996a, 1996c), and redefined citizenship itself (Jenson and Phillips 1996). The Canadian state's restructuring of society and economy (Griffin Cohen 1994: 103-5) in response to pressures of "global liberalization" (Bakker 1996b: 3) transpired concurrently with the transformation to a neoliberal state which embraces neoliberal governing practices (Brodie 1996c). This has meant, among other things, the contraction of the public and expansion of the private spheres, as manifested particularly in changes in public policy (Brodie 1996b). As many scholars argue, the KWS in Canada was defined by its desire to represent and advocate for particular, disadvantaged *groups* of citizens (Pal 1993), especially women. One of the most striking changes that has accompanied the shrinking of the state is the disappearance of the "state experiment to facilitate and even promote the collective voice of women [and other marginalized groups] and [their] representation within the state" (Jenson and Phillips 1996: 123).

These monumental changes, documented in the status-of-women literature, have precipitated a shift in scholarship from considering women's movements to considering

women. The rise of neoliberalism, particularly, has conditioned a focus on women rather than movements, and, often, on individual Canadian women rather than women both as a group and as an important analytical category. While this neoliberal focus on the individual as the most salient unit has occasioned an emphasis in the scholarship on how the “individualization” of women denies the gendered effects of social, political and economic restructuring (Bakker 1996a), it has also made scholars less likely to consider women’s movements and more likely to concentrate on women as individuals. This tendency both illustrates and contributes to the empirical bent of women’s movements and status-of-women literatures.

As I argue, the lack of the application of a theoretical framework to the study of women’s movements in Canada contributed to their effective disappearance from the literature. The scholarship sampled in this section is also relevant to my project because the empirical changes it identifies have influenced women’s *movements*, as well as Canadian women. Thus, a conceptual framework which incorporates (an ability to deal with) these shifts can more adequately or effectively explain changes in movements in the same context. The body of work I survey in this section identifies the new topics which are preoccupying scholars of women, and demonstrates the empirical nature of scholarly approaches. The central areas of concern have become welfare state restructuring, public policy, citizenship, women and official politics, and identities. Although I have categorized them into (relatively) discrete groups, these topics often occur simultaneously in the literature – a reflection of the complexity with which they interact in the empirical world.

The focus on welfare state restructuring and public policy analysis derives from the

empirical changes which have driven a shift in scholarship from considering women's movements to considering women. As the summary above of these changes shows, restructuring has fundamentally altered Canada's society, economy and polity (Andrew and Rodgers 1997; Evans and Wekerle 1997a; Bakker 1996a; Brodie 1995, 1996b). The collapse of the KWS in Canada, in fact, has been manifested mainly through policy changes. The state, and public policy emanating from it, have shrunk to accommodate the neoliberal consensus (Brodie 1995). Neoliberalism's exaltation of the individual and the delegitimizing of group-based social welfare claims – the hallmark of Canada's post-war welfare state – have created a notable absence of provisions for collective identity groups in public policy.

The work on restructuring and public policy takes a very empirical approach, seeking explanations for empirical change in that change itself. Although analytical, this literature tends towards an inventory of the shifts and their effects, rather than the theorizing of them. While such an approach is valuable for a variety of reasons, especially insofar as it provides comprehensive empirical accounts of how neoliberalism, globalization and restructuring have played out in Canada and how they have changed Canadian women's lives, it fails to locate these shifts more broadly. The lack of a theoretical approach the women's movements literature, as I argued in the Introduction to this thesis, contributed to the disappearance of movements from the scholarship. The similar lack of one here further removes women's movements from empirical and analytical attention. I begin with a sampling of the literature on citizenship, one of the most popular topics in the status-of-women literature.

The subject of citizenship is a relatively new one for scholars of Canadian women. The concept of citizenship, “never simply a synonym for nationality,” (Jenson 1997: 627) highlights the relationship between state and society, and provides a way to consider, in the current empirical context, the changes this relationship has undergone. While scholars use the lens of citizenship to explore different aspects of these shifts, as I demonstrate below, the turn to citizenship evidences the depth and profundity with which both the state and its relationship to Canadian citizens, particularly women, is being restructured.

The concept of a “citizenship regime,” (Jenson 1997) the idea that citizenship is organized ideologically, politically and empirically and functions in a regulatory manner, is a fruitful way to understand restructuring in Canada. The major thrust of changes in Canada’s citizenship regime has been the individualization of citizenship. This shift both denies the gendered effects of the restructuring of the state and citizenship itself, and eliminates provisions from the state for marginalized groups (Brodie 1996c). The emerging citizenship regime has been especially harmful to women, removing advocates for women from within the state, reducing the capacity and credibility of interest groups for women, and redefining government through partnerships with voluntary organizations (Jenson and Phillips 1996: 121-9). Canada’s changing citizenship regime is thus cutting women as a category deserving or needing advocacy within the state, and within society by the state, out of public policy. As the universal social safety net in Canada has disappeared, women, a disproportionate number of the poor in Canada, can thus no longer look to the state.

Citizenship is also understood in the literature as the meaningful participation in public or political life in Canada. While Canadian women have “formal” citizenship, they

do not have substantive or “full” citizenship, which includes the critical component of public or political voice (Gabriel 2002). Full citizenship also involves women’s equal sharing in electoral and official politics (O’Neil 1993). Women have been unable to take on these roles because their dual capacities as reproducers and producers are not acknowledged, and thus no (institutional) provisions are made to support women in their role as mothers so they may work in official politics. As a result, women’s citizenship is compromised by their continuing under-representation in electoral politics, and their lack of public voice, and their representational claims are further marginalized (Trimble 1998). Women’s twin positions as workers and mothers also locates them more precariously than men in relation to income security in the welfare state – another indication that citizenship is gendered (Evans 1997).

For Bakan and Stasiulis (1996), and Stasiulis and Bakan (1997), the situation of foreign domestic workers, almost all of whom are women, provides a window through which to consider Canadian citizenship. The structural position/ing of foreign domestic workers indicates that race, class and gender condition citizenship rights, and allows a critique of the notion of universal citizenship, both in Canada and elsewhere. To understand more fully how Canadian citizenship functions empirically, the concept must be deconstructed in light of the creative strategies that foreign domestic workers employ to negotiate (some) citizenship rights in their tenuous economic and political position (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997). This work both uses citizenship to explore how race, class and gender translate into differential social and political rights, and explores Canadian citizenship itself through the rubric of race, class and gender.

The treatment of citizenship in the literature is primarily empirical. Concepts such as

citizenship regime, and formal versus full citizenship, imply the possibility of a more theoretical approach for studying and understanding women's changing relationship with the Canadian state through the lens of citizenship. However, because they are grounded in a documentary approach, the accounts surveyed above do not provide theoretical analyses of changing citizenship practices in Canada. Further, as noted above, despite the focus on how changing notions of citizenship have forced the individualization of Canadian women, status-of-women scholars fall prey to the same phenomenon – noting this empirical shift while simultaneously perpetuating it. This, I have suggested, results from the lack of comprehensive theoretical frameworks for studying Canadian women's declining status, as appears to be the case here.

Analyzing women and official politics is not a new topic for those studying the status of women in Canada. Its re-appearance in the current context of neoliberal restructuring, when the relationship between women and the state has been effectively severed, however, is a decidedly new phenomenon in the literature, and signals women's return to seeking equality in and through the state. As both of the bodies of scholarship surveyed here indicate, women's movements and women have often had difficult and contradictory relationships with the Canadian federal state. Despite this, the state, not women, pulled out of these unions. It is thus not altogether surprising that scholars see possibilities in women's and feminists' re-engagement with the state.

Representation in official politics is another topic that currently interests scholars of Canadian women's status (Tremblay and Andrew 1998; Arscott and Trimble 1997a, 1997b). Feminist scholars have long argued that women's inability to represent themselves in official

politics demonstrates the sexist and androcentric biases of the formal political system in Canada, and exposes systemic problems in Canada's democratic processes and organization of electoral politics. The renewed focus on representation, especially on numerical representation in the context of neoliberalism, however, displays (new) faith in the state's ability to meet women's equality demands through formal political practice.

Several very recent accounts of women's movements' and feminists' participation in formal politics in Canada (Dobrowolsky 2000; Young 2000) emphasize their ability to make, if not substantial, at least significant contributions to official politics. While "the effort of [Canadian] feminists to transform political parties over the past thirty years [between 1970 and 1997] cannot be judged entirely a success, it has not been a failure" (Young 2000: 10). Women's movements' interventions into constitutional politics have been more successful. Movements' "pragmatic use of a broad and changeable strategic repertoire, [which] melded a number of representational forms" (Dobrowolsky 2000: 189) allowed them to achieve constitutional political recognition. These sources indicate both that women have had success in formal politics in the past, and that feminist scholars see possibilities for further productive engagement in the future.

Dobrowolsky's (2000) and Young's (2000) accounts are especially interesting because, although both directly address women's movements in Canada, neither offers any explanation for their retrenchment in the early 1990s. Dobrowolsky's work only considers 1981-2 and 1992 when movements were engaged, she contends, very successfully in constitutional activism. This outcome is not, and has not been, predictive of women's movements' permanence and continuing success in other areas of official politics, since

arguably movements were stronger and more successful in the realm of constitutional politics than in any others. Similarly, while Young's analysis highlights the decline in the early 1990s of political parties' interest in women or women's interests (2000: 182), she fails to note that one of the key factors in women's movements' decreased ability to affect party politics and political parties in the early 1990s was the retrenchment of movements themselves. The positive bent to both of these analyses implies a perhaps unwarranted nostalgia towards the participation of women's movements and feminists in official political life in Canada.

The rise of neoliberalism coincides with the proliferation of activity around collective identities in the empirical world, and of identities as a central topic in the literature. In Canada, the (re)individualization of citizens has contributed to generating a backlash from groups whose identities have been relegated to the political periphery. In the status-of-women scholarship, the focus is on the various ways that women and particular groups of women have been marginalized in Canada, rather than, as previously, on how women as a group have been able to contest discrimination and oppression. In other words, the idea that women can take collective action is fading.

Moreover, the shift from talking about women to talking about gender, especially in discussions of Canadian nationalism, acts to shift the focus further away from both women's movements, and women themselves. In one of very few works that directly addresses women's movements since the early 1990s, Agnew (1996) concentrates on the (unintentional) ways women's movements in Canada have marginalized working-class women of colour in feminist practice. The key focus in this work is not movements

themselves, but the ways race, class and gender interact to produce a variety of experiences for women with/in women's movements.

The attention to identities has often been manifested as a concern with the exclusionary nature of Canadian nationalism. This interest lies with the intersection of gender, race and nationalism (Strong-Boag et al 1998a, 1998b; Stasiulis and Jhappan 1995; Ng 1993) and particularly with the social and political positioning of women of colour (Bannerji 2000; Agnew 1996) and Aboriginal women (Turpel-Lafond 1997; Moss 1997; Fiske 1996). As with the other topics which permeate the status-of-women in Canada scholarship surveyed above, the focus on identities is oriented towards the empirical. While this collection of work is more theoretical than others addressed insofar as it enlists the idea of *construction* – of nation, gender, race (Strong-Boag et al 1998b) – the reliance on theory serves to account for history (Mackey 1999; Stasiulis and Jhappan 1995) more than to elucidate or develop conceptual frameworks.

For scholars of identities and nationalisms in Canada, the role of the state in articulating gender and race in sexist and racist ways in Canadian nation-building projects must not be underestimated. Stasiulis and Jhappan argue that the state's "failure to confront the profoundly colonialist, racist and sexist white settler ideologies which have driven its history has ensured an enduring legacy of deeply rooted conflicts" (1995: 127). In this context, any of the state's attempts to unify the Canadian nation are bound to fail. Because "gender and ethnic relations in Canada...have been mediated by the Canadian state historically, and continue to be organized by state processes," (Ng 1993: 183) they have become both institutionalized and systematized (1996). As Carty and Brand (1993) note, the

state's role in creating and perpetuating such sexism and racism, especially as the construction of the category "visible minority" women shows, means that non-whites must beware state-sponsored initiatives to "help" them. Further, the Canadian state is heavily invested in legitimizing the dominant class position, and serves to benefit from subordinating the non-middle-class, especially working-class, non-white women (171-173). The state's role in perpetuating racism and sexism through nationalist projects and discourses thus requires significant analytical attention.

Multiculturalism has been taken up by several scholars as one of the critical sites of Canadian nation-building. Bannerji, one of the most vocal critics of official multiculturalism in Canada, illustrates that it is another manifestation of the foundational sexism and racism that underpin Canadian nationalism, and the Canadian state itself. By reducing "deeper/structural relations of power" in Canadian society to "questions of curry and turban" (2000: 38) through multiculturalism, the state propagates racism and sexism while concurrently seeking to diffuse them. Understood slightly differently, with the introduction of multicultural policy in 1971 in Canada, "the state attempted to institutionalize various forms of difference, thereby controlling access to power and simultaneously legitimating the power of the state" (Mackey 1999: 50). The interest in multiculturalism indicates, again, the real and analytical importance of the Canadian state as a determinant of women's (and all citizens') status.

Scholars have also turned their attention towards Aboriginal women and their movements. They analyze and assess the historical and contemporary relationship between the Canadian state and Aboriginal women (Turpel-Lafond 1997), especially as it has been

conditioned by the Indian Act (Moss 1997; Nahanee 1997). These accounts indicate that “the role, either real or potential, of the Canadian state in bringing about meaningful social change for First Nations women” (Turpel-Lafond 1997: 64) has been either minimal or nonexistent. Its blatantly racist, sexist orientation towards Aboriginal people, particularly women, is evident in the Canadian state’s unwillingness to intercede in even the most dire situations (Flaherty 1997). The focus on Aboriginal women also appears in conjunction with an interest in nationalisms, as in Fiske’s (1996) work. Indigenous women’s movements, she argues, have intersected with the patriarchal, masculine Aboriginal nation in seeking recognition by the state. Fiske proposes that, despite the contradictions in doing so, Indigenous women’s movements can successfully use the state to support their claims against the sexism of Aboriginal nationalism. Although this positive reference to the Canadian state in relation to Aboriginal women is an anomaly, it perhaps demonstrates, in the literature at least, a more strategic approach to the relationship between Aboriginal women and the state.

The subject of identities in the status-of-women literature demonstrates that scholars have become increasingly interested in both specific identity groups and gender instead of women and movements as analytically significant categories. The sexist and racist underpinnings of the Canadian nation-building project have also captured their attention, as well as the social and political results of such constructions for those individuals and groups marginalized within them. The appearance of the state as an underlying force in these accounts, as in all of the literature surveyed here, reinforces the foundational nature of the Canadian state in conditioning and determining especially women’s lives in serious and

often detrimental ways. The topics sampled above – citizenship, welfare state restructuring, public policy, women and official politics, and identities – also indicate the analytical importance of the state for studying women’s movements and women in Canada.

As the status-of-women literature demonstrates, the dramatic empirical changes induced by neoliberalism, globalization and restructuring have occasioned a drop in Canadian women’s status, and piqued scholars’ interest in the various ways these changes have been manifested. They have also turned scholars’ attention away from women’s *movements* onto women, leading to a notable absence of discussion about the effects of these same changes on women’s movements in Canada.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the themes and topics which have preoccupied scholars of women’s movements in Canada, and those who study the effects of recent social, political and economic changes on Canadian women. The central concerns of the first body of work serve, in Chapter Four, to customize social movement theory for studying women’s movements in Canada. The subjects from the status-of-women literature contribute to specifying social movement theory as well, however, they also provide an inventory of the empirical changes that have been restructuring Canadian society, polity and economy in the last decade. Further, the above survey has shown that both literatures take primarily empirical, rather than theoretical, approaches – something which has left women’s movements scholarship particularly unable to cope with empirical change in movements themselves.

The themes from both of these literatures relate predominantly to the state. For most of the above-mentioned scholars, the state is the critical analytical category for understanding directly and indirectly how movements' and women's status have been shaped in Canada. For those who write about the impact on women of recent social, political and economic changes particularly, the state is perhaps the most important consideration in accounting for these changes, for it is the state which has often been the engine of this change and thus the distributor of its effects. The state thus forms the critical analytical link between these two bodies of work. It also requires, as Chapter Four explains, comprehensive theoretical treatment in a conceptual framework for studying women's movements in Canada.

The next two chapters outline the central tenets of the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory, respectively. They are the backbone of social movement theory which I adapt in Chapter Four with the themes and topics delineated above to present a conceptual movements framework for studying women's movements in Canada.

Chapter Two: Resource Mobilization Theory and the Political Process Model

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the resource mobilization and political process approaches to studying social movements. In Chapter Four, I take the central tenets of resource mobilization, political process and New Social Movement theory approaches, and merge them with the central analytical concerns of the women's movements in Canada literature and the scholarship on the status of Canadian women. This chapter provides an overview of resource mobilization and political process theory, isolating the central tenets that can contribute to a theoretical social movements framework appropriate to studying women's movements in Canada.

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) and the political process model originated in the 1970s, in response to criticisms of the collective behaviour approach to studying social movements. They attempt to provide explanations for social movements in terms of rational and strategic behaviours. Contrary to the collective behaviour school (Smelser 1963; Johnston 1966; Gurr 1970), which sees movements as primarily a crisis response to structural tensions, both RMT and political process theory understand movements' emergence and success to be a function of rational, strategic choices. Actors in social movements are thus not made up of the marginalized, aggrieved individuals that the collective behaviour literature identifies, but rather of socially active and integrated members. Social movements themselves, then, are also conceptualized as rational entities, which consciously and intentionally organize to meet their self-defined goals. This contrasts starkly with movements as crowds, panics, fads and crazes, as they were identified under

early collective behaviour theory.

As its name suggests, RMT understands social movements in terms of a group's ability to bring material and non-material resources (such as labour, facilities, money, technical expertise, media access) necessary for mobilization under collective control. Political process theory focuses on the relationship between political institutions and movements more generally, paying particular attention to the concept of a political opportunity structure. While RMT and political process theory are similar in that both deal directly with the material *how* of social movement organizing, they differ in the scale of their respective levels of analysis, in how they understand power, and in what they consider to be valuable resources for mobilization.

Yet despite their appearance as neatly delineated approaches, RMT and political process theory are not as distinct as the above summary seems to indicate. Both models are organized around the fundamental principle of individual rationality. Both are predominantly American approaches, especially political process theory, which grew directly out of a desire to understand how American social movements have interacted with American political institutions. Some scholars (e.g, Carroll 1997, Pinchardo 1988) subsume the political process approach under the RM paradigm, suggesting that what is usually known as RMT is in fact a misnomer for a variant of resource mobilization called the professional organizer model. While I retain the distinction between RMT and the political process approach, I understand both to be fundamentally related to one another. Since political process focuses much more strongly on the idea of a political opportunity structure than the RM approach, and RMT is interested essentially in what its title indicates, the

monikers I have been using to refer to each seem appropriate.

Resource Mobilization Theory

As mentioned, RMT emerged as an alternative to collective behaviour theory, which “has normally assumed a close link between the frustrations or grievances of a collectivity of actors and the growth and decline of movement activity” (McCarthy and Zald 1987: 15). This position originated from the relative deprivation school, which “holds that discontent produced by some combination of structural conditions is a necessary if not sufficient condition to an account of the rise of any specific social movement phenomenon” (17). Collective behaviourists believe that movements are (always) precipitated by an “increase in the extent or intensity of grievances or deprivation and the development of ideology” in the population of potential movement supporters within a collectivity (17). According to the collective behaviour approach, then, social movements are the direct result of felt grievances, arising out of structural strains, accompanied by generalized beliefs about the roots and possible solutions to these frustrations. For collective behaviourists, movements have little or no incubation period (the time that, for RM theorists, movements are doing critical organizational work), and so collective action flares up and dies down quickly, and can include “apolitical” or unpremeditated group behaviours such as fads, crazes and panics.

McCarthy and Zald’s seminal article, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory” (1987), was written in direct response to the collective behaviour school’s view of social movements. Although some scholars (Marx and McAdam 1994) suggest that social movements and collective behaviour, and their respective theories,

are not as far apart as sometimes presented, RMT's explicit focus on the rational individual puts early versions of resource mobilization in diametrical opposition to collective behaviour approaches. For McCarthy and Zald, originators and articulators of Resource Mobilization Theory in its most common form, the key to understanding social movements is the notion of rationality. Based on Olson's (1965) rational-choice theory, which "presents a model of instrumental rationality according to which rational decision-makers base their choices on a calculus of costs and benefits", RMT understands that "*mobilization costs something*" (Carroll 1997: 10, original emphasis). In other words, social movement actors actively make consciously thought-out choices about the pros and cons of movement participation. Consequently, mobilization itself can be conceptualized and analyzed as the outcome of practical, technical and functional processes – and this is exactly what the RM model attempts.

According to RMT, the organizational processes of social movements function in service of mobilizing resources. One of RMT's most important contributions to the field of social movement study is that movements *need resources* if they are to become movements at all. Under the collective behaviour approach, theorists seek to understand why collective grievances develop, assuming no analytical complexities in the translation between feeling or belief and collective mobilization. In contrast, "[r]esearch from the resource mobilization perspective finds people's shared grievances, interests, and aspirations considerably less problematic than their capacity to act on them collectively" (Fireman and Gamson 1979: 9). The key variable, then, under RMT is *how* movements develop and sustain themselves.

RM's theoretical inquiry is guided by the central problematic of the 'free-rider

problem'. Citing Olson (1965), Carroll comments:

Collective action, if successful, generates collective goods...[s]uch collective goods can typically be enjoyed by all members of the movement's constituency – *regardless of whether or not a particular individual has participated in the movement*. Given the costliness of participation, it is most rational to 'free-ride,' to enjoy the collective benefits of movement mobilization without bearing any of the costs (Olson 1965, 11). Yet if all potential participants make this egoistically rational choice, no mobilization, that is, no movement, occurs. (1997: 10, original emphasis)

RMT uses the free-rider paradox – in sum: despite the apparent irrationality of movement participation for individuals, social movements abound – to frame its inquiry into the organizational dynamics of movements' action. Zald and McCarthy write that “[e]xplaining collective behavior requires detailed attention to the selection of incentives, cost-reducing mechanisms or structures, and career benefits that lead to collective behavior” (1987: 18). RMT is also known as the professional organizer or entrepreneurial mobilization model because it posits that the free-rider problem can be solved by paying attention to how social movements “distribute ‘selective incentives’ to activists [or professional organizers/entrepreneurs], thus rationalizing their intense participation” (Carroll 1997: 10).

To understand how movements get rational individuals to work for collective goods, McCarthy and Zald (1987) developed a comprehensive set of analytical categories which help explain (successful) mobilization processes, the most important of which is the social movement organization. They define a social movement as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preferences for changing some elements of the social structure or rewards distribution, or both, of a society” (1987: 20). A social movement organization (SMO) is “a complex, or formal, organization that identifies its goals with the preferences of

a social movement...and attempts to implement those goals” (20).

The concept of a social movement organization is most relevant because it captures the very basic procedural, organizational work that movements must accomplish to induce (some) rational actors to participate (heavily) in social movements. SMOs perform the critical tasks of mobilizing (organizing, collecting, offering) incentives which make participation possible, and of further mobilizing resources such as technical expertise, lobby power, media savvy and money that make social movements themselves possible.

Analytically, the SMO is at the centre of social movement study for, after the (rational) individual social movement actor, it forms the hub of collective action in the RMT paradigm as the major mobilizer of resources.

The SMO provides a primary analytical unit for studying social movements. From it, McCarthy and Zald recognized and theorized that many SMOs have a professional or entrepreneurial component. The “organizational and technical imperatives” (Carroll 1997: 11) of SMOs result from the need to overcome the free-rider problem, and to understand how it gets overcome:

[a] major means by which an SMO sustains a movement over time is through provisions of [selective] incentives to *movement entrepreneurs* – ‘professional’ organizers, specialized in the task of movement mobilization, who invest much of their time in the movement but also reap selective benefits such as salaries, prestige, and power. (10-11, original emphasis)

SMOs, then, perform the function of organizing the benefits which are distributed selectively to social movement professionals or entrepreneurs who commit to collective action.

McCarthy and Zald (1987) argued that, in the mid-1970s, there was a decided shift towards professionalization of SMOs, before which “social movements were based in aggrieved populations that directly provided their own necessary resources” (Carroll 1997: 11). As a result of the post-war economic boom, and the consequent growth of the new middle-class, social movements, through their SMOs, had access to “an expanding pool of discretionary income” (11). McCarthy and Zald make a distinction between adherents and constituents of SMOs: “[a]dherents are those individuals and organizations that believe in the goals of the movement. The *constituents* of an SMO are those providing resources for it” (McCarthy and Zald 1987: 23). Constituents of SMOs can be, and often are, institutions, as well as individuals. Professional SMOs are particularly well-suited to acquiring resources from social and political institutions, where much of the battle lies in clearing bureaucratic hurdles – a skill that professional organizers tend to have. The professionalization of SMOs has involved a more conscious and concerted targeting of constituents for funds and other resources; for SMOs to be successful in garnering means from constituents, they must organize as permanent, professional organizations.

Professional SMOs have “outside leadership, full time paid staff, small or nonexistent membership, resources from conscience constituencies, and [perform] actions that ‘speak for’ rather than involve an aggrieved group” (Jenkins 1983: 533). What McCarthy and Zald call “classical SMOs” (1973), on the other hand, tend to work with “indigenous leadership, volunteer staff, extensive membership, resources from direct beneficiaries, and [perform] actions based on mass participation” (Jenkins 1983: 533). As SMOs are essentially interested in raising resources, their professionalization makes rational

sense under RMT. By behaving in an entrepreneurial, rather than a grassroots, manner, SMOs increase their potential for acquiring the resources that make movements possible.

The above summary captures the crux of Resource Mobilization Theory, particularly McCarthy and Zald's professional organizer or entrepreneurial mobilization model. I have concentrated on RMT's comprehensive theoretical framework, rather than on its more technical and empirical side, for the latter is more relevant for my purposes in this thesis. RMT's importance lies in its emphasis on "the significance of outside contributions and the cooptation of institutional resources by contemporary social movements" (Jenkins 1983: 533). Its more general contribution to the study of social movements has been the invention of a theoretical paradigm that accounts for movements in terms of organizational processes and the mobilization of resources necessary for collective action, rather than by looking for movements' roots in collective psychological factors. For RM theorists, social movements emerge because they can, not because there is necessary or sufficient reason for them to do so.

Political Process Theory

The political process model of social movement generation and development was originated primarily by Tilly (1978) and McAdam (1982, as summarized in 1997). It shares with RMT a fundamental emphasis on the rationality and organizational basis of social movement activity. Political process theorists, however, address the relationship between movements and institutions, and focus on political opportunities as the most important resource for movement action. Like RMT, political process theory shifts the focus of social

movement study from shared grievances to the organizational dynamics of mobilization itself. While Tilly's work, with its larger-scale emphasis on historical processes and collective action, captures the spirit of the political process model particularly well, I place more weight on McAdam's formulation of political process because it provides a more comprehensive account of political process.

The concept of a "political opportunity structure" (Eisinger 1973), capturing the degree of openness or closure of political institutions to social movements' claims, is key to political process approaches. Tarrow (1994), as I discuss further below, theorizes political opportunity structure as the single most important factor in movements' existence. The idea that institutional opportunities, or lack thereof, form the determining variable of a given movement's existence helps to understand political process's persistent focus on institutional arrangements. The political process approach "succeeded in shifting attention towards interactions between new and traditional actors, and between less conventional forms of action and institutionalized systems of interest representation" (della Porta and Diani 1999: 10).

While the political process approach pays more attention to the state than RMT, Tilly (1978) presents one of the only versions of the political process model which places primary emphasis on the state as the force to which movements define themselves in opposition: "[o]ne distinguishing feature of this approach is its historical sensitivity to the importance of the state as a centre of modern political contention" (Carroll 1997: 12). He develops his theory with a particularly long historical view, documenting "the broad shift over the past four centuries from short reactive actions by small-scale informal solidarity groups...to long

proactive actions mounted by large-scale special purpose associations” (Jenkins 1983: 540).

The latter are modern, “centralized, formally structured SMOs,” (540) whose success is determined by their ability to permeate institutional infrastructure.

In Tilly’s theoretical framework, social movements exist in relation to the state. He defines a national social movement as “a sustained challenge to state authorities in the name of a population that has little formal power with respect to the state” (quoted in Carroll 1997: 12). Taking his cue from history, for “[h]istorical analysis, taken seriously, will help us fashion more adequate models of power struggles,” (Tilly 1978: 231) Tilly puts the state at the centre of collective action. For social movements to be successful, therefore, they must penetrate and/or integrate into the state’s political opportunity structure.

McAdam’s political process model for understanding social movements is both more comprehensive and relies less on history than Tilly’s. Tilly’s major contribution to the political process model has been his “analysis of the modernization of collective action,” (Jenkins 1983: 540) that is, how various social movements have evolved politically through history in relation to states. His emphasis on the state as the key variable in defining and understanding (national) social movements fills an important gap in the RM paradigm. As the summary of McAdam’s work shows below, while the political process approach places sufficient emphasis on institutional structures and their relationship to movements, it isn’t always specific about which institutions form the subject/object of movements’ activity.

According to McAdam (1997) the term “political process” is appropriate for two reasons: first,

a social movement is held to be above all else a *political* rather than a psychological

phenomenon. That is, the factors shaping institutionalized political processes are argued to be of equal analytic utility in accounting for social insurgency. Second, a movement represents a continuous *process* from generation to decline, rather than a discrete series of developmental stages. Accordingly, any complete model of social insurgency should offer the researcher a framework for analyzing the entire process of movement development rather than a particular phase. (172-3, original emphasis)

Put another way, because social movements emerge from and operate in the same political context which produces and shapes political institutions, both the relationship between movements and institutions, and institutions themselves, must be given sufficient analytical attention. Further, political process theory attempts to map out this interaction as an evolutionary trajectory, understanding movements in terms of their long(er)-range life-spans.

McAdam (1997) argues that political process also differs from RMT in the way it conceptualizes power. If “theories of social movements always imply a more general model of institutionalized power,” (173) political process theory is underwritten by a more hegemonic, less rigid, approach, whereas RMT rests upon the a strong elite model of the American political system (173). Specifically, while political process theorists adhere to the “fundamental assumption that wealth and power are concentrated in America in the hands of a few groups, thus depriving most people of any real influence over the major decisions that shape their lives,” (173) they also subscribe to the view that “the power disparity between elite and excluded groups is substantial but hardly...inevitable” (173). On the other hand, RM theorizes power (structures) as far more rigid and less amenable to change: “[e]xcluded groups...are seen as functionally powerless in the face of the enormous power wielded by the elite. Under such conditions, the chances for successful insurgency would seem to be negligible” (173).

McAdam is especially critical of (the strong) entrepreneurial or professional mobilization model of RMT for “overstating the role of elites, underemphasizing the importance of the mass base, and oversimplifying the nature of grievances” (Buechler 2000: 37). Political process theory, on the other hand, understands social movements to use opportunities in political institutions to challenge precisely this disparity between mass and elite. As Pinchardo (1988) notes, this cleavage forms the central disagreement between the professional mobilization model and political process:

[t]he professional organizer model posits the involvement of external groups and agents (principally from the elite and the middle class) that are responsible for providing the bulk of the leadership and resources required to form and maintain social movement organizations (McCarthy & Zald 1973). The political process model, on the other hand, emphasizes the internal capacity of the minority community to generate social movement organizations, and maintains that the role of elites is limited to the support they provide when such support serves their own self-interests. (99-100)

While McCarthy and Zald’s approach hypothesizes that movements will do whatever is necessary to gain resources – the central precept of RMT is, after all, that movements must mobilize goods in order to engage in collective action – McAdam contends that there are limits to the degree and singularity with which movements embrace this process. For political process theorists, “social movements require more than a mobilization of resources: they require an *opportunity to act*” (Carroll 1997: 12, original emphasis). Openings in political institutions provide such opportunities.

In further disagreement with RMT, especially the professional organizer model, political process emphasizes social movements’ *indigenous* organization and resource mobilization (13). As a consequence of its reliance on an elite model of power, the RM

approach assumes that movements are essentially unable to find resources sufficient for collective action from within the group, and must mobilize goods (especially funds from the middle and upper classes) and skills (from professional social movement organizers or entrepreneurs) from outside. Political process, on the other hand, decentres this paradigm by focusing on movements' internal abilities to make movement: "[i]t is the resources of the minority community that enable insurgent groups to exploit...opportunities [for successful insurgent action]" (McAdam 1997: 178). Groups which are able to take advantage of emergent political opportunities in institutional structures generally have strong previously existent networks (178-9). Their indigenous organizational capacity then translates into (more) successful movement activity.

The political process model solves the free-rider problem, which forms one of the central problematics of RMT, by relocating movements' incentive structures to the indigenous organizations and groups which become SMOs in movement. According to McAdam, "[t]hese organizations already rest on a solid structure of solidary incentives which insurgents have, in effect, appropriated by defining movement participation as synonymous with organizational membership" (1997: 180). As a result, "the myriad of incentives that have heretofore served as the motive force for participation in the group are now simply transferred to the movement. Thus, insurgents have been spared the difficult task of inducing participation through the provision of new incentives of either a solidary or material nature" (183). The free-rider problem, then, loses its status as an organizing principle in political process theory, replaced by a focus on indigenous groups and their transition to SMOs.

Tarrow's *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*

(1994) takes a more deterministic approach than standard political process theory to the concept of political opportunity structure in explaining social movements. Tarrow defines political opportunity as “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action” (18). Tarrow shares with McAdam a critique both of the elite model of power that underlies Resource Mobilization Theory, and of RM's (over)emphasis on the professionalization of SMOs. He uses the concept of political opportunity structure to elucidate his position.

The idea of the political opportunity structure as the primary factor which explains how (and, according to Tarrow, also why) movements emerge, thrive (or not) and decline, offers an alternative model to RMT. Tarrow writes,

[t]he main argument of this study is that people join in social movements in response to political opportunities and then, through collective action, create new ones. As a result, the ‘when’ of social movement mobilization – when political opportunities are opening up – goes a long way towards explaining its ‘why.’ It also helps to understand why movements do not appear only in direct response to the level of supporters’ grievances. For if it is political opportunities that translate the potential for movement into mobilization, then even groups with mild grievances and few internal resources may appear in movement, while those with deep grievances and dense resources – but lacking opportunities – may not. (17-18)

Thus, movements are not necessarily singularly dependent on their ability to garner or raise resources. Instead, the appearance and disappearance of movements result from changes in opportunities in existing political institutions that are “*external* to the group – unlike money or power – [and] that can be taken advantage of even by weak or disorganized challengers”

(18, original emphasis). Movements (or potential movements) with few resources, and little capability to mobilize more, but with available political opportunities, can still become movements. Tarrow goes even further: “[m]ovements *are created* when political opportunities open up for social actors who usually lack them” (1, my emphasis). In this version of political process theory, political opportunities produce social movements.

With *Power in Movement*, Tarrow hopes to account for the fact that social movements have not only appeared with increasing regularity on the political landscape, but have historically exerted considerable power both in and upon societies (1). In putting power and (social) movement together, Tarrow hopes to understand how “ordinary people have erupted into the streets and exerted considerable power – if only briefly” (1). This position challenges RMT’s exclusive focus on resources: “in so many situations and against so many odds, collective action *does* occur, often instigated by people with few resources and little inherent power” (188, original emphasis).

Conclusion

This survey of RMT and the political process approach to studying social movements identifies the central concerns of the resource mobilization paradigm. These include emphases on the rational individual at the heart of social movements, the free-rider problem and the importance of incentives, organizational process, political opportunity structure, institutional arrangements, and the relationship between movements and the state. As mentioned, RMT focuses on *how* social movements emerge and develop. The political process approach, while similarly oriented, pays more attention to the idea of political

opportunity structure, a concept which can also account, at least in Tarrow's work, for *why* movements appear in particular places at particular times. Overall, though, the RM model – RMT and political process – is defined by its persistent preoccupation with the strategic choices and organizational imperatives of social movement activity.

The next chapter identifies the major themes of New Social Movement theory, as advanced by several of its most prominent theorists. In Chapter Four, I take the central tenets of the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory, and tailor them with the major topics from the literatures sampled in Chapter One. The result – a theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada – demonstrates the appropriateness of social movement theory for this case, and indicates areas where movement theory might benefit from additions for studying state-focused movements.

Chapter Three: New Social Movement Theory

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline several New Social Movement theorists' approaches to conceptualizing movements. I use Laclau and Mouffe, Castells, Touraine and Melucci to provide an understanding of the central concerns of New Social Movement (NSM) theory. This chapter develops the theoretical concerns of the NSM approach that, with the RM paradigm, constitute the foundation of the social movements framework for studying women's movements in Canada that I advance in Chapter Four.

To summarize the themes of New Social Movement theory, I have chosen to focus on four individual theorists, instead of providing a comprehensive overview of NSM theory as I did in chapter two with RMT. Unlike the RM paradigm, New Social Movement theory is characterized more by specific variations within each scholar's work than by a distinct approach. It is thus more productive, for my purposes, to organize my outline of NSM theory around some of its most relevant and definitive scholars than to produce a generic overview. While this may compromise the framework I propose in Chapter Four for lacking the spirit of the NSM paradigm, it has the substantial advantage of grounding my new conceptual scheme for studying women's movements in Canada in particular ideas and concepts.

New Social Movement theory approaches the study of social movements from a postmaterialist, postmarxist, postmodern, symbolic perspective. NSM theorists contend that (new) social movements form primarily around (non-material) identity concerns. NSM theory grew out of a critique of Marxist approaches to social movements that, NSM theorists

argued, relied on essentialist, reifying notions of class and industrial society, and a deterministic, structuralist approach to social change. Instead, NSM theorists present a new world, and new social movements in it. They argue that the 1970s heralded the beginning of significant changes in (global) relations of production, bringing the decline of capitalism as it had been known, and the rise of a postindustrial, postmaterial world. As globalization has decentred the nation-state, they contend that new social movements' struggles for articulation of particular identities have appeared in place of demands on the state.

The NSM approach also situates itself in opposition to resource mobilization and political process theories. Both RMT and political process are strongly materialist theories which present organizational, process-oriented, resource-driven accounts of social movements. As Carroll notes,

resource mobilization[,]...the predominantly American approach – focuses primarily upon *how* movements form and engage in collective action; the more European new social movement (NSM) formulations focus primarily on *why* specific forms of collective identity and action have appeared in late twentieth-century Euro-North American societies. (1997: 8)

As a result, the NSM approach is more theoretical and less instrumental. It understands social movements in a broader and often looser way than RMT, and seeks to contextualize movements in the changing global socio-political climate.

NSM theory holds that the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s are qualitatively different from previous movements – that they are, in fact, *new* – because they emerged in response to relatively recent processes of globalization, which have, among other things, decentred the nation-state and given rise to what Castells terms the network society

in the information age (1996). While not all NSM theorists understand this global shift in the same way, all agree that there has been a decided change in international relations of production and in international social and political relations that have subordinated the nation-state on the global stage. New social movements result from the state's inability to hold identity concerns together, as well a host of other related factors, which push traditionally political concerns into the social and cultural realms. Under NSM theory, then, social movements are primarily cultural and social phenomena; this assertion directly conflicts with one of RMT's guiding insights – that movements are inherently political.

There are several variations within the NSM tradition. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2001) Laclau and Mouffe develop one of the first, and most strongly poststructuralist, approaches to the study of social movements. In broadest terms, they present a new, postmarxist social epistemology, which understands the social (world) as contingent, ambiguous, open, partial and paradoxical. Social movements seek (to use language) to articulate identities and subject positions in discourse, thus forming (viable) political positions in the struggle to control language, and therefore meaning. Radical democracy is a politics which confronts inequality and subordination through symbolic challenges to the established (real and) discursive order.

While other NSM theorists tend to identify with more moderate postmodern and poststructural positions than Laclau and Mouffe, all address the broad social and political forces which create the conditions in which movements emerge, and all understand movements as primarily new, mainly social and cultural phenomena. As mentioned, Castells (1996, 1997, 1998) takes most seriously the task of arguing for the newness of the

‘real’ changes which NSM theory posits have produced new movements. He also provides the most comprehensive theory of social movements in relation to economic, social and cultural contexts. Touraine (1981,1988) and Melucci (1989) both theorize social movements as active/action systems that operate on identity, disconnected from historical trajectory. They argue that traditional sociological paradigms have been insufficient for understanding the critical contribution movements make to the social world, and that movements are, in fact, at the very centre of social production.

In a simple way, all NSM theory is about movement and change. For NSM theorists, both the world and social movements have changed and are about change. There is always the possibility that the world and movements can be different, and movements exist in service of capitalizing on this potential(ity)/possibility. RMT, on the other hand, suggests an essential fixity to the world and extends only a limited realm in which movements (can) do their work.

Laclau and Mouffe’s Unsutured Social (World)

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (2001), Laclau and Mouffe present a detailed critique of the (original) Marxist political project and a new theoretical account of hegemonic power and politics. For Laclau and Mouffe, the social (world) is contingent, multiple and paradoxical and, as such, cannot be known or understood in its entirety. Unlike Marxism, which extends the whole world for the working class to know and consequently rise up against, Laclau and Mouffe’s approach, particular/istic and provisional, presents the limits of knowledge in and of the world. Under this

epistemological paradigm, social movements must struggle both to understand the roots and nature of oppressions, and to develop identities. Neither are *a priori* given or discovered. Further, there is no knowable thing separate from its socially constructed self, or what Laclau and Mouffe call its articulation. Thus, what can be known about anything is always already defined and limited by how it is and has been known.

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy is not only or even *about* social movements directly; however, it contains an approach to understanding both movements and politics which grants revolutionary potential to (new) movements doing politics differently. For my purposes, I will concentrate on how Laclau and Mouffe's work applies to theorizing, studying and understanding social movements, necessarily simplifying in the process. A number of theorists have taken up the project of radical democracy in the wake of the first edition of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) (such as Trend 1996; Mouffe 1992). While this work is interesting and productive, it tends to be more normative and prescriptive than Laclau and Mouffe's original theoretical formulation of a postmarxist politics, and thus pays less attention to social movements themselves

Hegemony and Socialist Strategy situates itself in opposition to both Marxism and to those commentators who believe that we have entered, since the 'end of communism', a world without antagonism:

[social-democratic parties] claim that the notions of Left and Right have become obsolete, and that what is needed is a politics of the 'radical Centre'. The basic tenet of what is presented as the 'third way' is that with the demise of communism and the socio-economic transformations linked to the advent of the information society and the process of globalization, antagonisms have disappeared. A politics without frontiers would now be possible – a 'win-win politics' where solutions could be found that favoured everybody in society. (2001: xiv-xv)

The problem with this perspective is that it eradicates the (possible) range of political positions, positing that “politics is no longer structured around social division, and that political problems have become merely technical” (xiv-xv). For Laclau and Mouffe, however, politics and political problems remain at the very centre of the social world, despite the discursive removal of (the idea of) social conflict. This notion is captured in *antagonism*, which they argue “requires drawing new political frontiers and acknowledging that there cannot be a radical politics without the definition of an adversary. That is to say, it requires the acceptance of the ineradicability of antagonism” (xvii).

The reintroduction of antagonism into theory and into the discourse of the Left is no small matter. It provides the foundation upon which Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of hegemony is built, for if politics is antagonistic – if there is a whole ideological and political spectrum, rather than one singular, central position – it can also be hegemonic. For Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony is contingency, which means, in a simplified way, that things are not the way they are for reasons originating beyond themselves. In other words, as in this example, it means that “the moment of reactivation means nothing other than retrieving an act of political institution that finds its source and motivation nowhere but in itself” (xi). In the terms of deconstruction, in which “the notion of undecidability [is] crucial...one can see hegemony as a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain” (xi). Hegemony, then, is a concept that captures the potentiality of difference to that which currently *is*.

Hegemonic relations are thus not predetermined, as class consciousness is by socio-economic status under Marxism. They appear from themselves, and, most importantly, they

can change. Antagonism allows hegemony because it recognizes conditions under which there are political differences in political positions – a situation which is only available with the acknowledgment that these positions *conflict*. The hegemonic power relation is therefore one which contains antagonistic political positions sharing a balance of power (unevenly). More specifically, hegemony enacted involves a particular relation between the universal and the particular. The relation, “by which a certain particularity assumes the representation of a universality entirely incommensurable with it, is what we call a *hegemonic relation*” (xiii, original emphasis). In other words, the relationship between the position or particularity which represents itself as universal, and the universal representation, makes hegemony. This particularity in universal guise holds hegemonic power over other particularities which cannot be, or are not, presented as universals (yet). As Laclau and Mouffe indicate with the notion of incommensurability, there is no universality, only necessarily contingent particularities which hope for universal representation, and thus for hegemony. And “[s]uch a form of ‘hegemonic universality’ is the only one that a political community can reach” (x).

For Laclau and Mouffe, the constitution of political positions in hegemonic relations is equally complex and contingent. In fact, politics itself creates and shapes these positions: “[p]olitics, we argue, does not consist in simply registering already existing interests, but plays a crucial role in shaping political subjects” (xvii). More specifically, “[o]ur approach is grounded in privileging the moment of *political* articulation,” (x, original emphasis) that is – to change the emphasis slightly – in understanding the *political* moment to be the instant or process of articulation. Interests (and, in the case of social movements, identities) are

thus made in the political processes of representation and subjectivation. Laclau and Mouffe state that “politico-hegemonic articulations retroactively create the interests they claim to represent” (xi).

If the privileged (political) moment is that of political articulation, then the ground of politics is discourse: “for our analysis, a notion of the social conceived as a *discursive space* – that is, making possible relations of representation strictly unthinkable within a physicalist or naturalistic paradigm – becomes of paramount importance” (x, original emphasis). Because there is no necessary connection between a thing and its representation, political positions are made and politics played out with/in language. Words and meaning invent and define political positions or representations, and politics itself.

Part of Laclau and Mouffe’s project with *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* includes new tactics for the Left, based on these new understandings of the world and of the political. The task of the Left, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is not “*to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy*” (176, original emphasis). The problem it faces, though, is that of

essentialist apriorism, the conviction that the social is sutured at some point, from which it is possible to fix the meaning of any event independently of any articulatory practice. This has led to...an organization of discourse in terms of a logic of ‘a priori privileged points’ which seriously limits the Left’s capacity for action and political analysis. (177)

Instead, Laclau and Mouffe propose that the Left needs to take advantage of the unsutured social to *change* notions of democracy. Because liberal-democratic tradition and ideology are not fixed, they may be different. The Left, including (new) social movements, can

(radically) remake democratic practice by unhinging class and revolution – originally joined by Marxism – and (re)connecting objects/ideas and their articulations.

Social movements form an important part of Laclau and Mouffe's formulation of a new world because they participate in this project. Movements include struggles such as urban, ecological, anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional, feminist, anti-racist, ethnic, regional and sexual minority movements (159). They are new *not* because "[t]he common denominator of all of them would be their differentiation from workers' struggles, considered as 'class' struggles" (159). Rather, "[w]hat interests us about these new movements...is the *novel* role they play in articulating [the] rapid diffusion of social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations which is characteristic today of advanced industrial societies" (159-160, original emphasis). Unlike traditional 'class' actors, new social movements are not unified in their approach or in their target. They are new because they respond to new industrial conditions and relations of production, and articulate them in new ways. Laclau and Mouffe write:

[t]he central idea which we have defended thus far is that the new struggles – and the radicalization of older struggles such as those of women or ethnic minorities – should be understood from the double perspective of the transformation of social relations characteristic of the new hegemonic formation of the post-war period, and of the effects of the displacement into new areas of social life.... (163)

New social movements are thus further defined by their attention to what has traditionally fallen outside of the political sphere, and the inroads their struggles have made into new areas of the social. This distinction is often characterized as the difference between "old" movements which addressed political change, and "new" movements which seek cultural

transformation.

With the revitalized and existent Left, new social movements participate in the postmaterial/ist project of radical democracy. By unfixing, or unreifying, the (original) liberal-democratic project, movements have the opportunity to extend and magnify democracy – to make it radical in the sense of getting to its roots. Laclau and Mouffe do not understand radical democracy to be the undoing of liberal democracy, but rather its reinvention. The possibility of a genuine plural, and therefore radical, democracy hinges on the

[r]enunciation of the category of subject as a unitary, transparent and sutured entity[, thus opening] the way to the recognition of the specificity of antagonisms constituted on the basis of different subject positions, and, hence, the possibility of the deepening of a pluralist and democratic conception. (166)

Radical democracy is possible only with a plurality of unfixed subject positions, for their existence recreates antagonism – the necessary condition for politics. It is “a form of politics which is founded not upon dogmatic postulation of any ‘essence of the social’, but, on the contrary, on affirmation of the contingency and ambiguity of every ‘essence’, and on the constitutive character of social division and antagonism” (193).

New social movements participate in this project by waging their battles in contingent, anti-essentialist fashion, making politics in articulating specific identities and positions. In these articulations lie, for Laclau and Mouffe, the centre of a politics in which hegemony is an important and effective tool. Radical democracy provides the forum which, in its own making, maximizes the possibility for members of a/the plurality to register their antagonisms (168) equally and thus achieve a measure of freedom.

While *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* didn't invent NSM theory, in it Laclau and Mouffe provide a very new theoretical approach to both studying and doing politics – one which, when applied to social movements, provides new understandings of how movements operate in a postmarxist, unsutured social world. The crux of this theoretical framework is articulation: the moment of political articulation, and the political moment of articulation. New social movements are new because they articulate new conflicts in new ways, and, as such, they do politics differently. With *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe seek to understand these conflicts and politics differently, and to provide new strategies for the Left and new social movements.

Castells: Identity in the Information Age

In his definitive three volume work, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (1996, 1997, 1998), Castells presents an impressively comprehensive empirical and theoretical argument for understanding the current historical moment as the information age. Social movements emerge in response to these various changed and changing social, cultural, political and economic conditions, and are conditioned by them. In this (global) context, movements form primarily out of the need to articulate and assert particular identities. Where previously nation-states had “managed” identity concerns – although not always successfully – the state’s increasing powerlessness has left it unable to moderate (collective) identity claims, which often bypass the state altogether to make direct local-global alliances.

Because Castells’s work covers such a broad spectrum, in my summary I will omit

much which is not directly relevant to the study of social movements, and will concentrate on the theoretical, versus empirical, aspects the trilogy. While this is possible, I recognize that it risks distorting Castells's central claims. *The Information Age* attempts to both theorize and empirically prove that a "new world is taking shape in this end of millennium" (1998: 36) – one which, for Castells, involves change in every area of the world and people's lives, and which he understands in its entirety. I concentrate on social movements, the subject of the second volume, and especially on the relationship between movements and nation-states, after brief summaries of the first and third volumes in the trilogy.

In Volume I, *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), Castells presents the concept of the network society, and begins to outline his theory of how information and information technology have developed and changed the world since the 1970s. His overall intellectual endeavour with this project is "to propose some elements of an exploratory, cross-cultural theory of economy and society in the information age, *as it specifically refers to the emergence of a new social structure*" (26-7, original emphasis). The first volume deals with this new social structure, the network society, and how it has come to be the dominant form of society in the information age, but also more generally with how "dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organized around networks" (469).

Castells argues that the world has undergone an "Information Technology Revolution" (ITR) (Chapter 1), which began in the 1970s in Silicon Valley, California – the effects of which have revolutionized how society, economy and culture are organized. In combination with the ITR, and as one of its causes, another critical factor in the evolution of the information age has been globalization, which has produced a new global and

informational economy:

it is *informational* because the productivity and competitiveness of units or agents in this economy...fundamentally depend upon their capacity to generate, process, and apply efficiently knowledge-based information. It is *global* because the core components (capital, labor, raw materials, management, information, technology, markets) are organized on a global scale, either directly or through a network of linkages between economic agents....[U]nder the new historical conditions, productivity is generated through and competition is played out in a global network of interaction. (66)

Processes of globalization, then, have transformed the international economy into a global informational system, under which, perhaps surprisingly according to Castells, nation-states have *not* lost their economic role. He says that “*it is precisely because of the interdependence and openness of the international economy that states must become engaged in fostering development strategies on behalf of their economic constituencies*” (90, original emphasis). So while processes of globalization have affected the state by marginalizing it in the global economy, they have simultaneously created an economy in which states retain their ability to act. Castells posits that “[i]f states want to increase the wealth and power of their nations, they must enter the arena of international competition, steering their policies towards enhancing collective competitiveness of firms under their jurisdiction, as well as the quality of production factors in their territories” (90). In other words, globalization has not made the nation-state obsolete. It has, however, reconfigured its form and function.

For Castells, the Information Technology Revolution and its subsequent effects condition, in some way and in some spaces/places, every definitive element of the political, economic, cultural and social worlds. He concludes this first volume of *The Information*

Age as follows:

as an historical trend, dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organized around networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture. While the networking form of social organization has existed in other times and spaces, the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure. (469)

In other words, the network is one of the central axes on which the information society turns, and its ontological force lies in information technology's ability to disseminate its form.

Volume III, *End of Millennium* (1998), the last in the trilogy, explores some "macro transformations, while attempting to explain them as a result of the interaction between processes characterizing the Information Age: informationalization, globalization, networking, identity-building, the crisis of patriarchy, and of the nation-state" (2). This volume, more empirically focused than the first two, accounts for some of the downsides of informationalization: the collapse of the Soviet Union, poverty and social exclusion, and the global criminal economy. It also considers multiculturalism and economic interdependence and the potential unification of Europe. Throughout, Castells attempts to demonstrate that his theories or theses about the information age have been borne out in the world.

Castells ends the trilogy in this volume with the suggestion that the ills that information technology has brought to the world can be remedied by "conscious, purposive social action, provided with information, and supported by legitimacy" (360). The optimism that characterizes this sentence pervades all three volumes of *The Information Age*. Castells believes strongly in people's ability to make "informed, conscious, shared decision" (360) to

live in the information age without injustice, poverty, social exclusion or pain. One of the primary sources of such purposive action and shared decision-making is social movements, which Castells explores more fully in the second volume of the trilogy, as I discuss below.

The Power of Identity (1997), deals with “the interplay between technology-induced globalization, the power of identity (gender, religious, national, ethnic, territorial, socio-biological), and the institutions of the state” (2). It addresses the factors which have led to “the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment” (2). Castells argues that the end of patriarchy, the decreasing power of the state, and the crisis of democracy have all contributed to the explosion of social movements since the 1970s. These include both what are commonly considered progressive *and* regressive movements for, “*from an analytical perspective* there are no ‘good’ and ‘bad’...social movements. They are all symptoms of how we are, and avenues of our transformation, since transformation may equally lead to a whole range of heavens, hells, or heavenly hells” (3, original emphasis). Castells thus defines social movements as “purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society” (3).

In this end of millennium period, Castells contends that movements form around the fundamental factor of identity, which he understands as “the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning” (6). The making of subjects is at the centre of identity-building processes in the information age, as it has been in the past. Castells

hypothesizes that “the constitution of subjects, at the heart of the process of social change, takes a different route to the one we knew during modernity, and late modernity: namely, *subjects, if and when constructed, are not built any longer on the basis of civil societies, that are in the process of disintegration, but as prolongation of communal resistance*” (11, original emphasis). Social movements, then, develop – and develop identities and identity politics – from people’s “reconstruction of defensive identities around communal principles” (11). Instead of emerging in and from civil societies, and in attempts to reconfigure civil society, subjectivities result in the spaces, and defense of those spaces, where shared experience fills the vacuum left by civil society. Social movements are therefore founded around nonmaterial/ist concerns, and directed less towards macro social change than towards the constitution of resistance (culture) itself.

Castells demonstrates this hypothesis with reference to religious fundamentalism, nationalism, ethnic identity, and territorial identity. He uses feminism, which he sees as foundational to the global order, to illustrate a new and different form of new movement in the information age – a proactive, rather than reactive, social movement. Feminist or women’s movements have repeatedly challenged what Castells calls patriarchalism the world over. The patriarchal family, “the cornerstone of patriarchalism, is being challenged in this end of millennium by the inseparable related processes of the transformation of women’s work and the transformation of women’s consciousness” (135). These intertwined mechanisms, driven by both “the rise of an informational, global economy...and the powerful surge of women’s struggles, [combined with] a multifaceted feminist movement,” (135) have produced a sustained and irreversible (135) opposition to the patriarchal family.

Castells suggests that the timing of the challenge to patriarchalism results from the intersection of several simultaneous transformations: of the economy and labour market; of biology, pharmacology and medicine; of the feminist movement; and of the diffusion of ideas – the last of which poses a particularly strong challenge to patriarchalism (136-7). While feminist movements and ideas have been present in various places for more than a hundred years, it is only in the last three decades that both women's consciousness and societal values have been significantly altered. The end of patriarchalism is thus accomplished – or will be accomplished – according to Castells, by route of technological transformation and the new global economy. “[I]nduced by the interaction between informational capitalism and feminist and sexual identity social movements,” (221) the crisis of patriarchalism is rooted in the effective undermining of the patriarchal family, stronghold of patriarchalism.

Feminist movements have played a particularly critical role in subverting patriarchalism. For Castells, “the essence of feminism, as practiced and as narrated, is the (re)definition of women's identity...*In all cases, through equality, difference, or separating what is negated [by feminist movements] is women's identity as defined by men, and as enshrined in the patriarchal family.* (175-6, original emphasis). By challenging their identity as it has been constructed under patriarchalism, and inventing various new identities, women change institutions such as the family and remake cultural forms.

For Castells, identity is the critical variable which makes social movements in the information age *new*. The refiguring of various categories and labels as identities – that is, as primary sources of social, political and cultural meaning – is what makes them *social*

movements, with all of the potential for dramatic and widespread change that movements hold in the information age. It is “the interaction between structural change and social movements...between the network society and the power of identity – [that] transforms us” (138). This transformation, however, is at least partly contingent upon nation-states’ responses to identity-based movements: “[t]he ability or inability of feminist and sexual identity social movements to institutionalize their values will essentially depend on their relationship to the state, the last resort apparatus of patriarchalism throughout history” (242).

Castells argues, though, that

the extraordinary demands placed upon the state by social movements, attacking institutions of domination at their root, emerge at the very moment when the state seems to be itself in the midst of a structural crisis, brought about by the contradiction between the globalization of its future and the identification of its past. (242)

In other words, “[t]he challenge to states’ sovereignty around the world seems to originate from the inability of the modern nation-state to navigate uncharted, stormy waters between the power of global networks and the challenge of singular identities” (243-4). It is, however, the power of global networks (the power exerted by global networks) which has led to such an explosion of singular identity groups, struggling for social change and cultural refuge.

Despite the squeezing of state power between the twin pressures of globalization and identity, the nation-state has not disappeared and will not disappear: “while global capitalism thrives and nationalist ideologies explode all over the world, the nation-state, as historically created in the Modern Age, seems to be losing its power, although, and this is

essential, *not its influence*” (243, original emphasis). The dissipating power of the state is economic power and its various manifestations. Castells contends that “[t]he nation-state is increasingly powerless in controlling monetary policy, deciding its budget, organizing production and trade, collecting its corporate taxes, and fulfilling its commitments to provide social benefits,” (254) although it retains a (decreased) regulatory role and some control over its citizens. But this influence is not enough to save the state from a legitimacy crisis, which results from its inability to respond simultaneously to economic pressures, over which it no longer has any power, *and* identity-based demands, which, in their multiplicity and diversity, spill over the state’s jurisdiction. Castells argues that “the increasing diversification and fragmentation of social interests in the network society result in their aggregation under the form of (re)constructed identities. Thus, a plurality of identities forwards to the nation-state the claims, demands, and challenges of the civil society” (271).

The state itself is not without identity, and Castells points out that “the selective institutionalization of identity in the state has a very important...effect on the overall dynamics of state and society. Namely, not all identities are able to find refuge” (274) in state institutions. The state, on one hand, is “historically emptied...drifting on the high seas of global flows of power; on the other hand, [it is the target of] fundamental identities, retrenched in their communities or mobilized toward the uncompromising capture of an embattled nation-state” (276). In the middle, states try to reconstruct legitimacy by “navigating transnational networks and integrating local civil societies” (276). This process is not, however, successful insofar as it allows nation-states to regain power; rather, it sometimes helps prevent states from losing autonomy and retaining influence.

All of this has ramifications for theories of the state. It suggests, primarily, that “*the new power system is characterized...by the plurality of sources of authority [and power], the nation-state being just one of these sources*” (303, original emphasis). State theory had traditionally understood the state, society, and the nation in analytical relation to one other. According to Castells, the network society (in the empirical world) challenges this (theoretical) view by delinking state and society, and, more importantly, state and nation. As analytical units, state and nation must thus be pulled apart and reconsidered if state theory is to understand power relationships in the information age (306). Castells writes,

nation-states have been transformed from sovereign subjects into strategic actors, playing their interests, and the interests they are supposed to represent, in a global system of interaction, in a condition of systematically shared sovereignty. They marshal considerable influence, but they barely hold power *by themselves*, in isolation from supranational macroforces and subnational microprocesses. (307, emphasis added)

Despite this crisis of power of the nation-state, it has not disappeared and will not wither away. The new problematic for state theory is how to understand the state’s changed relationship to power, to the nation, to (civil) society, and to the new form of the network.

Finally, the information age is defined by informational politics and a crisis of democracy. Under informational politics: “electronic media...have become the privileged space of politics. Not that all politics can be reduced to images, sounds or symbolic manipulation. But, without it, there is no chance of winning or exercising power” (310). While this does not mean that media simply impose their political choices on public opinion, or that public opinion is a passive recipient of media’s message, it *does* mean that “political

communication and information are essentially captured in the space of the media. *Outside the media sphere there is only political marginality*" (312, emphasis added). This informational politics conditions the relationship between state and society by making obsolete the state's traditional organizational forms and political strategies, thus inducing a crisis of democracy (312).

The crux of democracy's crisis lies in the nation-state's fundamental inability to hold together the conflicting forces of globalization and identity demands, as mentioned. This tension, exacerbated by the rise of informational politics, puts both the state and democracy into tailspin. Castells says:

we are witnessing the fragmentation of the state, the unpredictability of the political system, and the singularization of politics. Political freedom may still exist....But political democracy...as diffused throughout the world in the twentieth century has become an empty shell. Not that it was just 'formal democracy': democracy lives out of these very forms....But the new institutional, cultural, and technological conditions of democratic exercise have made obsolete the existing party system, and the current regime. (349)

With the state so thoroughly displaced as a site, space or place of power, and all of its processes becoming extinct, where then does power exist and how is it exercised? For Castells, "[t]he new power lies in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions and people build their lives....The sites of power are people's minds" (359, original emphasis). Social movements in this system are one of the important ways that this symbolic power is mobilized and disseminated. The force of identity, necessarily symbolic, manifests itself in movements for new cultures and cultural forms. As Castells writes, "[t]he agencies voicing identity projects

aimed at changing cultural codes must be symbol mobilizers” (361).

For Castells, the social movements of the 1970s came forth from the convergence of new factors and processes which reconfigured the world as it had been known. While these new movements diverge/d on philosophies, tactics and goals, Castells contends that they are fundamentally defined by the sharp push of identity, which emerges from, among other spaces/places, the nation-state’s inability to successfully manage identity concerns in a globalized world.

The network society is characterized (above all) by interconnections: between economy and society, between economy and culture, between state and society. The same factors that produced the information technology revolution and sustain it are leading – not to its demise, for despite Castells’s (romantic) faith in people’s ability to organize against oppression and domination, even he does not see informational capitalism as reversible – to the conditions for successful challenges against this new world system. Forces of technological change and informationalization thus live in dialectic with forces of economic, social and cultural insurgency, creating, or attempting to create, new cultures and cultural forms.

Touraine and Melucci: Towards a New Sociology of Social Movements

Both Touraine and Melucci concentrate on new movements and their relationship to a changed society: for Touraine, the programmed society, and for Melucci, the complex society. They focus on identity as the defining variable in social movements, and on the central role that movements play in making (change in) the social world. For Touraine and

Melucci, more than for other NSM theorists, social movements and the work they do are critical to the new social order. They are thus interested not only in understanding how movements emerge and operate in this new world, but also in how movements *determine* it.

Touraine (1981, 1988) presents a theory of social movements in the context of arguing for a new sociology, which he intends to account for “the new relations and the new social conflicts that are coming into being in a deeply transformed cultural field” (1988: 48). For Touraine, as with other NSM theorists, social movements of the 1960s and 1970s differ from previous movements because they are new responses to new social, political and cultural conditions. These novel elements suggest to Touraine the need for a sociology to account differently for the social, and one which understands that “at the heart of society burns the fire of social movements” (1981: 1).

There are two parts to Touraine’s new sociology, which he terms the sociology of action: historicity and the class struggle. Historicity refers to the action of society upon itself, or “the capacity of a society to construct its practices from cultural models and through conflicts and social movements” (1988: xxiv). It is “the work society performs upon itself, by inventing its norms, its institutions and practices, guided by the great cultural orientations – pattern of knowledge, type of investment, and cultural model” (1981: 29). The class struggle is for Touraine the “incessant conflict for the social control of historicity” (1981: 29). Further, social movements

are not a sign of crisis or of tension in a social order; they are an outward sign of the production of society by itself. There can, however, be no way of creating historicity which does not pass through class conflict. *A social movement is the collective organized action through which a class actor battles for the social control of historicity in a given and identifiable historical context.* (1981: 31-2, original

emphasis)

For Touraine, social movements are critical to the process of historicity for they are major agents of society's self-creation: "[s]ocial movements are not a marginal rejection of order, they are the central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of society by itself and the action of classes for the shaping of history" (1981: 29). They "are not exceptional and dramatic events: they lie permanently at the heart of social life" (1981: 29). Social movements are important to sociology because they "bring out the most basic social relations and reveal that institutions and forms of social organization are produced by social relations instead of constituting a 'state' of society that would somehow determine social relations" (1988: 50). Thus, movements show the constructedness of the social world, as they simultaneously create it.

Touraine's sociology of action is designed to provide the analytical and methodological tools to study social *action*, which, for him, is the decisive unit of analysis. The emphasis is therefore on the process of *production* rather than on reified notions of what *is*. Touraine defines a social movement as "the action, both culturally oriented and socially conflictual, of a social class defined by its position of domination or dependency in the mode of appropriation of historicity, of the cultural models of investment, knowledge, and morality, toward which the social movement itself is oriented" (1988: 68). In this definition, movements are what they *do*, and any approach which hopes to capture their substance must put movements' action at its centre.

Identity forms an important part of both new social movements and Touraine's new

approach to studying them. He argues that in the movement-making process,

[t]he appeal to identity is truly a force of social struggle since defense constitutes half of action. But at the same time it is the destruction of a capacity for social action inasmuch as it cuts the defensive from the counteroffensive. This appeal to identity is thus both the first stage in the formation of a social movement and the failure to effect a passage to the second stage, that is, to the actual production of social movements. (1988: 78-9)

Identity, then, is not the end-point of social movement action; that is, movements do not *produce* identities. It is, instead, a defensive reaction, usually in the form of a natural or essential identity, by those without power (1988: 78). However, according to Touraine, the appeal to (natural) identity is fundamentally ambiguous because it is accompanied by “ever more direct political demands that are expressed not in terms of identity but in those of social relations and power” (1988: 78). Such an understanding of identity poses a challenge to sociology. In Touraine’s sociology of action, “identity is, then, no longer an appeal to a mode of being but the claim to a capacity for action and for change. It is defined in terms of choice and not in terms of substance, essence, or tradition” (1988: 81). Conceptualizing identity in this way allows Touraine to capture both its ambiguity and its formation in and through action.

In postindustrial society – that is, the current social order – social conflicts differ from their precursors in the first half of the twentieth century. Touraine identifies four characteristics of these conflicts under postindustrialism: conflicts are generalized; as power is increasingly integrated, its opposition tends to be carried out by increasingly global organizations; social conflicts and marginal or deviant behaviour are frequently conflated; and structural conflicts tend to diverge from conflicts tied to change (1988: 117-123). These

all call for a new sociological paradigm:

[w]e are entering into a type of society that can no longer 'have' conflicts: either these are repressed within the framework of authoritarian order, or the society acknowledges itself as conflict, indeed is conflict, because it is nothing more than the struggle of opposed interests for the control of the capacity to act upon itself. This unity of oppositional movements is strengthened by a more positive unifying mechanism: political action. (1988: 124)

The very existence of new social movements indicates that postindustrial society has not ushered in a postpolitical world. On the contrary, it is defined by conflicts, at which social movements are at the very centre, for it is these oppositional struggles that produce society.

Of his proposed sociology, Touraine writes that

[a]n urgent need exists for developing new research approaches that look directly at social action itself, that study actors not only in their acts but also in the analyses they draw from these acts, and who attempt to bring out, beyond the response behaviour imposed by a social order, the questioning behaviour through which society produces itself conflictually. The formation of new social movements and the transformation of sociological analysis are inseparable. (1988: 139)

Not only does Touraine's sociology of action invent a framework which understands social movements at the active centre of the production of the social, it hopes to account for how those (individuals) who participate in movements understand their action. This approach shares with ethnomethodology a focus on individual sense-making practices, although, unlike ethnomethodological tradition, Touraine links these to social production at the level of movement.

For Touraine, then, a new sociology of action is required to understand the integral and active role that social movements play in producing the social world. The concepts of historicity, or how society acts upon itself, and class struggle serve to explain movements'

centrality to both society and sociology. In his work, Touraine retains Marxism's emphasis on class, and even suggests that all social movements are class movements. However, he refuses the Marxist teleology, proposing instead of a predetermined directionality of history an ongoing struggle between class movements, the outcome of which always remains to be seen.

Melucci (1989), once a student of Touraine, provides a similar, although not identical, approach to social movements. He presents a theory of social movements and collective action that, underlined by a strong social constructionism, "provides the best example of a clean theoretical break from the Marxist tradition" (Carroll 1997: 18). Like Touraine, he is interested in rethinking conventional social science interpretations of social movements. And, also like Touraine, he rejects a static view of social movements and the social world, espousing instead a theory which understands the analytical value of movements in how and what they *move*.

The title of his major work, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (1989), captures Melucci's central concerns: first, that collective action in complex societies, such as those in Europe and North America, results from a balance in the conflict between individual needs and social movements, and second, that movements act without reference to the past and without relying on ideas about the future. They exist always in the present, rooted temporarily in particular time and space, and thus cannot be adequately explained or theorized as the end product of historical trajectories. Instead, movements

must be considered as fragile and heterogenous *social constructions*. Collective

action is always 'built' by social actors, and thus what needs to be explained in concrete terms is how movements form, that is, how they manage to mobilize individuals and groups within the framework of possibilities and constraints presented them by the institutions of complex societies. (Keane and Mier 1989: 3-4, original emphasis)

Melucci's new approach to studying social movements tries to get at *how* movements are socially constructed in the institutional context of the Western world. Unlike Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), which is also concerned with the mechanics of organization, but which explains movements by appealing to the rational individual, Melucci is interested less in the *possibility* of movements than in their *impossibility*. In other words, while RM theorists concentrate on how it is reasonable for social movements to exist, Melucci wants to know how movements *can* exist, given their context. It is this focus on social constructionism which sets Melucci's work apart from Marxist paradigms. There is nothing predetermined or given about social movements in Melucci's approach; they only exercise the force they do because they have been actively constructed (by themselves) to do so. The corollary of this constructivism is that the Marxist category of class is abandoned in favour of an understanding of identity which privileges that which *is constructed*. Melucci summarizes:

[c]ollective action is...the product of purposeful orientations developed within a field of opportunities and constraints. Individuals acting collectively *construct* their action by defining in cognitive terms these possibilities and limits, while at the same time interacting with others in order to 'organize' (i.e., to make sense of) their common behaviour. Collective action is not a unitary empirical phenomenon. Whatever unity exists should be considered the result not the starting point, a fact to be explained rather than assumed. (25-26, original emphasis)

As this passage makes clear, Melucci's new sociology of social movements begins from

movements as phenomena which need to be explained.

Melucci sees the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s as new indicators of conflicts, that is, “the symptoms of the structural problems of the system” (55). “In complex societies conflicts develop in those areas of the system which are crucial for the production of information and symbolic resources,” (55) and social movements, through collective action, respond to these challenges by publicizing conflicts (55) and constructing collective identity. Further, for Melucci, collective action can only exist when social movements (are constructed such that they) *account for* – or balance – individual needs. This presupposition means that

[c]ontemporary social movements, more than others in the past, have shifted towards a non-political terrain: the need for self-realization in everyday life. In this respect social movements have a conflictual and antagonistic orientation, but not a political orientation, because they challenge the logic of complex systems on cultural grounds. (23)

Melucci argues that “new conflicts develop in those areas of the system where both symbolic investments and pressures to conform are heaviest. These conflicts are increasingly at a distance from political organizations. They are interwoven with the fabric of everyday life and individual experience” (12). While movements use symbolic means to challenge the structural logic of the system, they seek change not in the political arena, but in cultural space. Movements are constructed to create spaces for individuals to (re)assert themselves. Through collective action, “individuals (potentially) enhance their control over the conditions and orientations of their action” (12).

Collective identity emerges from the process of constructing an “action system”, or

social movement. It is “*an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place*” (34, original emphasis).

Collective identity is thus not an unproblematic input into the movement formation process, but rather the (successful) outcome of ongoing construction practices. Further, “[c]ollective identity formation is a delicate process and requires continual investments” (34). For Melucci, “[t]he process of constructing, maintaining and altering a collective identity provides the basis for actors to shape their expectations and calculate the costs and benefits of their action” (34). Collective action and collective identity go hand in hand, for “[c]ollective identity is...a process in which actors produce the common cognitive frameworks that enable them to assess their environment and to calculate the costs and benefits of their action” (35). These common frameworks allow actors to generate collective action.

Melucci maintains further that social movements “also seek goals which are not measurable and cannot be calculated” (23). They are not interested in specific policy or legislative changes, or in official representation. Rather, “[i]t is important to realize that the manner in which this conflict [that is, structural problems in the system,] is expressed cannot be measured in terms of ‘effective’ action. The challenge manifests itself by reversing the cultural codes and thus has an essentially ‘formal’ character” (55). This formality of new movements that Melucci suggests contrasts with social movements under RMT, which highlights the *informality* of movement networks and organizing.

Melucci says very little about the state. He believes that Marx’s model of capitalism

no longer captures the roots of contemporary social relations, and that the

distinction between state and civil society, upon which the political experience of capitalism was based, has become unclear. As a unitary agent of intervention and action, the state has dissolved. It has been replaced, from above, by a tightly interdependent system of transnational relationships as well as subdivided, from below, into a multiplicity of partial governments, which are defined both by their own systems of representation and decision-making, and by an ensemble of interwoven organizations which combine inextricably the public and private. (171)

This position is partially commensurable with Castells's view of the changes the state has undergone in recent years. He posits that the state retains its form, function and influence, but has lost its power in the information age. For Melucci, however, as the above passage indicates, the state as defined in the Marxist problematic (a definition that has become almost universal) is no longer; its jobs are done, instead, by transnational and subnational forces operating on their own, new, terms. Given this new configuration of "official" politics, social movements

are not interested in capturing state power and they have an aversion to violent confrontations with government and state authorities. The new movements raise issues that cannot be mediated fully by institutional party politics, and they consequently publicize the limitations of the political decision-making process. (Keane and Mier 1989: 7-8)

Movements thus reorient politics by displaying both its limits and its possibilities. Further, these changes in state form and the expansion of non-state power, and their ensuing effects, "help explain why...contemporary conflicts concentrate more and more on questions concerning individual identity," as the "*loci* of power" spread out to include new areas of life, such as "[e]motional relationships, sexuality, health and even birth and death" (Melucci 1989: 4-5). People respond to this bureaucratization and administratization by refocusing on

their own identities – at the same time that they seek resolution to individual problems in social movements.

Touraine and Melucci share a similar understanding of history. For both, social movements do not emerge because they must, but rather because of specific conditions, contexts and initiatives in particular time and space. Touraine, however, retains the category of class. Instead of tying it to the necessity of history, though, he understands it as the primary subject of historicity – which is, for him, the most significant determinant of the social. Melucci, on the other hand, embraces a social constructionism which subordinates class to nonmaterial, symbolic identities at the hub of movements.

Both Touraine and Melucci reject traditional sociology's approach to studying and theorizing social movements and suggest alternative, action-based approaches. For them, the social world, movements included, is made in the doing. They thus eschew structuralist paradigms which leave no active role for individual or movement actors. Melucci is particularly concerned with individual needs, and proposes a revised sociology which makes the conflict between individuals and movements the centre of study. At the same time, he believes that structural problems in the 'system' precipitate collective action, which takes the form of challenges to the system's "structural logic" (57).

Perhaps most importantly, both Touraine and Melucci understand social movements to be the locus of social production. Social relations are made by movements challenging and confronting the established order, which they also help/ed to produce. This view contrasts with both the resource mobilization paradigm and other New Social Movement approaches, which tend to see movements more as *responses* to various (changed) social,

political and economic conditions. As Touraine writes, a social movement “is in no way a response to a social situation. On the contrary, it is the social situation that is the outcome of the conflict between social movements fighting for control over cultural models, over historicity, and this conflict may lead to a break up of the political system or to institutional reforms” (1988: 66). In contrast, for RM theorists, movements emerge because they have the organizational and resource mobilization capacity, and political opportunities to do so; for NSM theorists, movements result from identity-based concerns, which take the shape of new cultural forms, spilling out of the political realm. The logic of social movements under Touraine and Melucci’s formulations, however, is one of ontological and epistemological primacy. Not only do movements respond to changed and changing social conditions, they are that change: “contemporary movements practice in the present the change they are struggling for: they redefine the meaning of social action for the whole society” (Melucci 1985: 801).

Conclusion

The above summary of New Social Movement theory outlines its central concerns according to some of its dominant theorists. NSM theory is characterized, above all, by the contention that the social movements which emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s are fundamentally new – novel responses to a new social, political, cultural and economic world. For Laclau and Mouffe, new social movements endeavour to articulate new political positions in an unsutured social realm. Castells, who provides perhaps the most comprehensive take on how social movements fit into the new world order, argues that

movements seek to make new cultures in response to the deteriorating nation-state's inability to manage identity concerns. Both Touraine and Melucci theorize the integral role that social movements play in creating the social world. They develop a new sociology of social movements which understands that movements actively produce society through on-going social conflict.

The next chapter takes the central tenets of the resource mobilization paradigm, as developed in Chapter Two, and those from New Social Movement theory, as outlined here, and customizes them with the themes and topics from the literatures surveyed in Chapter One. The result is social movement theory tailored to the study of women's movements in Canada. Chapter Four thus argues that social movement theory is an appropriate and productive conceptual framework in which to study women's movements in Canada, and advocates for its application, particularly at this time.

Chapter Four: A Social Movements Framework for Studying Women's Movements in Canada

Introduction

This chapter presents a customized version of social movement theory for studying women's movements in Canada. It takes the topics in women's movements scholarship, from 1985 to 1995, and from the status-of-women literature, from the early 1990s to the present, and brings them to the central concerns of the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement (NSM) theory. Informed by the topics and themes from the literatures about women's movements and women in Canada, the conceptual framework I advocate here addresses the central analytical concerns for studying women's movements in Canada, as identified by scholars both of these movements and of Canadian women's recently changing status. The work of these latter writers is relevant to my project because the lack of a theoretical perspective for studying women's movements in Canada meant that the shift from writing about movements, to considering how recent social, political and economic changes affect women, was virtually inevitable, and, thus, the status-of-women scholarship is, to a degree, continuous with movements literature. It also functions to identify the way these changes have played out in the Canadian context. The topics and themes which characterize each body of work can together enrich social movement theory to make it applicable for the study of women's movements in Canada.

There is a noticeable correspondence between the RM paradigm and the subjects identified in women's movements literature, and NSM theory and the topics that flow from the status-of-women literature. This is analytically significant insofar as it mirrors both an

empirical shift which occurred in the 1990s with the advent of a neoliberal governing ideology, changes in state form, welfare state restructuring in the West, and the related shifts in scholarship that I have pointed out. These correlations also indicate that social movement theory forms an especially relevant and productive theoretical base for studying women's movements in Canada at this historical juncture. In the conceptual framework below, I rely on the correspondence and compatibility of the themes and topics from the RM approach and women's movements literature, and NSM theory and the status-of-women scholarship, using them as a systematic way to bring the major concerns from both literatures and the social movement theory together.

I am not suggesting, however, that the RM approach *explains* the changes that occurred in women's movements between 1985 and 1995, or that NSM theory *explains* the changes from the early 1990s to the present. That is, this chapter does not provide an application of the RM paradigm and NSM theory *to* the case of women's movements in Canada between the mid-1980s and the present. The decline of empirical work on federally-focused movements writ large since the early 1990s makes such a project impossible. Instead, this chapter uses these literatures to tailor RM and NSM theory to studying women's movements in Canada.

The conceptual framework outlined below is not comprehensive or definitive, nor does it present the only possible reworking of social movement theory to accommodate the study of women's movements in Canada. I have chosen to highlight the themes and topics from the literature from the late 1980s and early 1990s which does exist on women's movements, as well as those from recent social, political and economic changes which have

shaped women's status, and consider them in light of social movement theory because, in the recent absence of empirical work on federally-focused women's movements with which to ground a theoretical approach, such a maneuver still allows the development of a specific (social movements) framework for theorizing women's movements in Canada. The major shortcoming of this approach is its necessarily speculative and general nature. However, since theory can provide insight into empirical phenomena, an approach which begins from theory is as important and valuable as one that locates itself in the empirical. So, while the theoretical social movements perspective advocated here is somewhat limited in its specificity by starting from theory instead of empirical research, it is equally worthwhile for sketching the parameters of a particular conceptual structure which can guide further empirical work.

I bring the major concerns from scholarship on women's movements and women in Canada *to* social movement theory, and not the other way around, because movement theory already includes a (mostly) complete theoretical framework. In synthesizing these themes with the RM paradigm and NSM theory, each cannot provide equal input, for the themes themselves are insufficiently theoretical, and – as is to be expected – insufficiently comprehensive, to form the backbone of a new conceptual framework.

I do not attempt to amalgamate the RM paradigm and NSM theory in proposing this new theoretical framework. Others have attempted such a task without significant success (such as Canel 1992). As will become clear below, elements of *both* the resource mobilization approach and New Social Movement theory provide critical input into the conceptual framework I propose. This does not necessarily mean that the two models

should be integrated, however, as their underlying orientations are fundamentally different. This chapter demonstrates the importance of having a variety of theoretical tools for analyzing social movements.

I pay particular attention to factors which could contribute to understanding the changes women's movements in Canada have undergone since the early 1990s. Because the theoretical project advanced in this thesis is driven by a desire to understand women's movements' retrenchment and attendant decline in public visibility in the last decade, I am most interested in concepts which might account for such a (relatively drastic) change.

In what follows, I lay out one possible way to modify social movement theory to make it specific to studying women's movements in Canada. I take what I have identified as the relevant themes and topics from the literatures on movements and on women, and combine them with the RM paradigm and NSM theory, using the them to add to, remove from and modify the movement theory. Beginning from the RM paradigm, I note overlap and disparity in the central concerns of RMT and the political process approach, and the subjects from the literatures on women's movements and women, and suggest additions to, removals from and revisions of the RM paradigm to make it specific to studying women's movements in Canada. I go through the same process with NSM theory, developing a similarly tailored version of New Social Movement theory which accommodates the study of women's movements in Canada. This chapter concludes with a consideration of the possibilities and limits for the theoretical framework developed here.

Towards a Conceptual Framework for Studying Women's Movements in Canada

As Chapter One indicates, I have identified two sets of subjects which are relevant to studying women's movements in Canada. The first, from the literature on women's movements proper, includes: documenting how movements emerge and develop, especially the role of the state in this process; conceptualizing the state in relation to movements; assessing movements' (long-term) relationship to the Canadian state; and, to a lesser extent, considering the organizational development of movements. The second set is located in more recent scholarship about the impact of changing social, political and economic conditions on women in Canada. It includes welfare state restructuring, public policy, citizenship, women and official politics, and identities.

The focus of both of these bodies of scholarship revolves around the state. In the first, the state is considered in direct relationship to movements, while in the second it forms the critical determinant of women's (changing) status. To be adequate to this particular case, any theoretical approach must thus incorporate the state in its various guises. In both literatures, the state is understood in subtle and nuanced ways. Especially in the more recent scholarship, the interest in, and commitment to, understanding the myriad avenues through which the state conditions women's lives indicates its analytical importance – as does the earlier literature's focus on how the state has controlled movements' access to the policy-making process.

As Chapters Two and Three outline, the RM paradigm and NSM theory bring very different insight to social movement theory. RMT is characterized by a persistent focus on organizational detail and the process of mobilizing resources for collective action. While

similarly oriented, the political process approach pays more attention to institutional arrangements and the concept of political opportunity structure, which accounts for how movements interact with existing political structures and institutions. NSM theory, on the other hand, understands contemporary social movements to be new types of identity-based responses to changed and changing social, political and economic conditions. NSM scholars theorize the shifts in global relations of production and the rise of a postindustrial, postmaterial world in the 1970s as provoking movements which seek new cultures and cultural forms. Both have relevant and productive elements to offer a social movements framework for studying women's movements in Canada. I begin with the resource mobilization paradigm.

The Resource Mobilization Paradigm Tailored

RMT and the political process approach both speak to the concerns of the first literature, on women's movements between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. These centre around the relationship between movements and the Canadian state, an association that has often been difficult and contradictory for movements. RMT's key focus is on *how* movements develop and sustain themselves. This focus is reflected similarly in the women's movements literature in the form of emphases on the emergence and subsequent progression of movements. For RMT theorists, movements are contingent upon their ability to mobilize resources. These resources include material and non-material assets such as office space, equipment, money, technical expertise and media savvy. If unable to bring a variety of resources under collective control, especially at the beginning of their lives,

movements cannot and do not survive.

In terms of how movements develop and sustain themselves through mobilizing resources, for this case, RMT's framework needs to be supplemented by both a broader and a narrower focus on the state. It must be broader because the resources which have been mobilized by women's movements in Canada, and the conditions which made their appearance possible, have tended to come from the state – which is undertheorized in RMT, despite its persistent emphasis on the *how* of movements. The focus on the state must also be narrower to account for state-specific resources available to women's movements. While RM theorists understand very well that resources are required for mobilization, and seek to theorize movements' organizational and resource-garnering processes, they fail to explore the possibility of how the spectrum of resources which may be mobilized by particular movements is limited by given historical contexts. As women's movements in Canada developed on a course set initially by the Royal Commission and its aftermath, their sphere of potential resources was conditioned (although not entirely determined) by what the state could and was willing to offer.

The focus on the different development trajectories of grassroots and 'institutional' movements in the work of Adamson, Briskin and McPhail (1988), Findlay (1988), Black (1992) and Brodie (1995), points to the need for a theoretical analysis of less successful or competing social movements. Do some movements gain public visibility and political capital at the expense of others? What role do the state and the media play in giving or taking away movements' ability to speak publicly for their constituent groups? How does competition for resources – particularly non-material goods, such as legitimation through

state recognition, positive media coverage, etc. – play out amongst similar movements? In the Canadian case, both grassroots and institutional movements sought to end women's oppression, albeit in different ways, yet the institutional or liberal movement became the 'public face' of the women's movement (Findlay 1987: 31). To be specific to studying women's movements in Canada, RMT must thus be augmented with a fuller conception of the political economy of resources available to movements, and how these are gained and distributed.

McCarthy and Zald's (1987) concept of the social movement organization (SMO) is particularly relevant to this theoretical framework. The notion of an SMO, defined by McCarthy and Zald as a formal organization which identifies and attempts to implement a movement's goals, provides a clear analytical tool for studying the relationship between women's movements and women's organizations. It allows scholars of movements to understand more clearly how women's groups function to define and meet, or not, broader movements' goals. The premier example of a social movement organization in the Canadian context is the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), formed in the aftermath of the Royal Commission first as an ad hoc group to monitor the implementation of the RCSW Report's recommendations. Later becoming a permanent umbrella organization which, until the mid-1990s, received all of its operational and project funding from the government, NAC has functioned as the central vehicle for Canadian women's movements. The SMO concept effectively captures the role NAC has played both with and for movements.

By developing the notion of the SMO, Zald and McCarthy also 'solve' the free-rider

problem, which comes out of Olson's (1965) work on individual rationality and social movement participation. To review: because the collective goods generated by (successful) collective action can be enjoyed by all members of a movement's constituency, it is most rational to reap the collective benefits of mobilization without carrying any of the costs – that is, to free ride. Without any individual participation, however, no mobilization occurs. From the free-rider problem comes the need to understand what prompts rational individuals to expend time, energy and money on movement activities. The SMO concept accounts for how movements distribute selective incentives, such as decision-making power, prestige and salaries, to particular individuals so they are willing to do the difficult work of organizing.

In the case of women's movements in Canada, the most visible of which have been state-focused, much of the work has involved expertise in law, public policy and lobbying. Women's movements' SMOs such as NAC, the Women's Legal Equality and Action Fund (LEAF) and the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) have functioned to motivate those women with the skills to engage with the state to do so. The SMO concept provides a theoretical way to understand how women's groups, as movements' representatives and actors, have recruited individuals within the state-focused context in which movements have tended to operate.

McCarthy and Zald's professional or entrepreneurial model for conceptualizing the internal dynamics SMOs presents one way to understand how movements organize resources for action. The political process approach, on the other hand, suggests that movements' ability to make change comes from their indigenous organizational capacity, rather than from professionals and resources outside of movements. Given Canadian

women's groups reliance on state funding (Griffin Cohen 1993), thus accentuating their ability to hire paid staff, the professional organizer model seems to fit this case more accurately. However, its overemphasis on the role of elites in movements and movement organizations is incommensurate with the undercurrent, in movements literature, of the roots of women's movements in Canada in mass-based change of public consciousness.

The focus on the rational individual in the RM paradigm is less important in the context of women's movements in Canada and at the present time than it has been historically to both RMT and political process. As they were developing the RM paradigm in the early 1970s, RM theorists located their work in opposition to collective behaviour theory, in which social movements are understood as crisis responses to structural tensions. While the conceptual structure that has arisen out of a focus on the rational individual at the heart of movement activity has been and remains useful, the impetus for the original focus on individual rationality has long since passed. In a theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada, the rational individual herself is less than relevant, as indicated in long-standing feminist critiques of both rationality itself and the rational individual at the heart of liberalism. However, the concepts developed to explain the rational basis of social movement existence, such as the SMO and the notion of purposive action, form a critical part the conceptual framework for studying women's movements in Canada.

RMT also corresponds to the focus in women's movements literature on the organizational development of movements themselves, understood as the rapid increase in women's groups that occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s. With its central focus on how

movements garner resources, RMT provides the conceptual tools to theorize this pattern of expanding women's organizations. It thus speaks to the interest in organizational development of women's movements scholars, but also to their desire to trace the origins of women's movements in Canada, especially in relation to the RCSW.

RMT's conceptualization of movement participation as the outcome of practical, consciously thought-out behaviours, choices and processes speaks to how movements' relationship with the Canadian state have been assessed – one of the central themes from the women's movements literature. Commentators on movements' relationship with the state invariably note its shortcomings, some suggesting that the state has done (far) more bad than good for movements since the Royal Commission reported in 1970 (Findlay 1987; 1988). If the interaction of movements with the state are comprehended theoretically as the result of practical, actively chosen encounters, not as negative or positive treatments at the hands of the state, perhaps they can be better understood analytically. The outcomes of movements' actions towards the state, then, are neither good nor bad. Rather, they must be considered strategically as opposed to morally.

On the other hand, what movements' literature can bring to RMT to make it specific for studying women's movements in Canada is a normative dimension. While social movement participation (by individual actors) can be productively understood as the outcome of rational, strategic choices and behaviours, such an approach tends to obscure the distribution of power in movements' relationships to institutions. As the case at hand indicates, the state has always had its own agenda in shaping, representing and responding to movements' demands. A theoretical framework for studying movements must be able to

accommodate the state's goals in its engagements with movements, and provide an analytical framework within which unequal distributions of power can be understood. At the same time, such a framework must combine this normative perspective with one like RMT that allows for the development of a strategic picture.

The problem of power relations between movements and institutions is addressed by the political process approach. Political process literature is most interested in "the entire process of movement development rather than a particular phase" (McAdam 1997: 172-3). Accordingly, political process theorists seek to understand the entire political context from which both institutional arrangements and movements emerge. This understanding of movements' relationships to institutions, such as the state, is more conducive to incorporating an analysis of power than RMT, which, as McAdam notes, overstates the role of elites in movements themselves (as in the professional organizer/entrepreneurial model). By ignoring power relations in favour of more strategic understandings, RMT also undertheorizes the power inherent in relations between movements and institutions.

Political process theory, according to McAdam (1997), deals with this issue in two ways: first, by adopting a Marxist rather than an elitist theory of power, and second, through the concept of political opportunity structure. A more Marxist understanding of how power operates and is distributed posits a hegemonic version of the relations between those with more power and those with less. Power relations are thus amenable to change through challenges and negotiation, and are therefore not inevitable. Such an approach corresponds well to the way in which the state and its power have been conceptualized in the women's movements literature. Findlay (1987, 1988), Vickers, Rankin and Appelle (1993), and

Brodie (1995) all present theories of the state as a complex, dynamic, historically varying cultural form in which power is exercised hegemonically. Accordingly, they understand the Canadian state's relationships to women's movements to be determined differently, in different places, across time.

Second, the political process approach to the concept of a political opportunity structure provides a complementary solution to the problem of reified power relations in RMT. The political opportunity structure represents the degree of openness or closure within a given political institution to social movements' claims and advances. Such a concept is premised on the notion that movements can and do penetrate official politics and political structures, and that this is, in fact, often their goal. As McAdam notes, social movements use opportunities in political structures to challenge and change the rigid distribution of power that RMT reifies.

Political process theory focuses on political opportunities as the most important resources for social movement activity. The political opportunity structure concept is especially relevant for studying women's movements in Canada because they have often targeted the state for social, political and economic change. In so doing, they have both helped create and taken advantage of openings in state infrastructure. The hegemonic conceptions of state power in the women's movements literature show how the state is constituted by a variety of agencies which are often not consistent with one another, and are never organized in a unified, impenetrable front. This position is most evident in the work of Vickers, Rankin and Appelle (1993). The notion of political opportunity structure as a key factor in movements' success, and public visibility, is thus highly relevant as a

theoretical framework for understanding women's movements in Canada.

Tarrow (1994) takes the political opportunity structure concept several steps further than it appears in political process theory. In an almost deterministic way, he argues that presence or absence of political opportunities for social movements (entirely) explains how *and* why movements emerge and decline at particular historical moments in particular locations. While this position neglects other factors which also condition the lives of movements, given the retrenchment of women's movements in Canada in the early 1990s, a political opportunity structure concept provides theoretical insight into how this retrenchment is related to changes in the existence and availability of possibilities for women's movements to engage with and penetrate the Canadian state. In arguing that changes in state form have restructured women's movements' relationship with the government, Brodie (1995) essentially uses the concept of political opportunities to explain how the state has put women's movements on the defensive. If, as Tarrow suggests, political opportunities *produce* social movements, and the disappearance of such opportunities extinguishes them, the long history of women's movements relationship with the state makes a more deterministic notion of political opportunity structure very theoretically appealing.

The political process approach places analytical emphasis outside of movements themselves, onto how political context (determines and) structures their existence. The focus in RMT on organizational processes and resource mobilization within social movements is also important to the theoretical framework developed here. This is reflected in the later scholarship that focuses on the changing status of Canadian women on smaller

pockets of identity, indicating that the internal dynamics of movements must be of concern to theorists of women's movements in Canada. If movements are unable to mobilize resources due to internal organizational difficulties, movements cannot occur. Thus, the potential explanatory power in the RM paradigm's attention to what happens within and external to movements is especially relevant for studying women's movements in Canada.

In its persistent concern with institutional arrangements, political process theory comes closer than RMT to dealing with the state in a theoretically substantial way. However, only Tilly (1978) takes the state's pivotal role in/for social movements as theoretically seriously as is necessary for studying women's movements in Canada. Grounded in an historical analysis, Tilly's approach builds a modern theory of movement activity by studying collective action over the last 400 years. He defines national social movements – such as the case of federally-focused women's movements in Canada – as sustained challenges to the state by groups with little formal power in relation to the state. As the literature indicates, the state has captured a substantial amount of movements scholars' attention, and since the RCSW, this literature has demonstrated the degree to which the state is implicated in women's movements.

Tilly's focus on the state as social movements' primary adversary is also reflected in the Canadian experience. The major topic defining the scholarship on women's status in Canada (and critiques thereof) is the impact of economic restructuring on women. As the women's movements literature indicates, movements have often targeted the state for social and political change, as well as financial assistance. From both literatures, the theme of the state-as-adversary towards women's movements is paramount. A theoretical approach such

as Tilly's accounts for the central placement of the state at the heart of grievances held by women's movements in Canada.

Finally, political process theory's understanding of social movements as a process of generation *and* decline (McAdam 1997: 172-3) is especially valuable for this case. The notion that a movement's life-span includes its ebb can help to understand women's movements' retrenchment in Canada, especially in relation to their strong public influence and visibility in the 1970s and 1980s. Further, the idea itself of movement as process is an important component for studying women's movements in Canada, for it contributes the critical insight that social movements can, do and must change over time.

As this section has shown, the RM paradigm is generally well suited theoretically for studying women's movements in Canada. It does, however, require a more specific and substantial emphasis on the state because the themes and topics from women's movements literature indicate that its scholars have been interested primarily in understanding and assessing movements' relationship with the Canadian state. While the political opportunity structure concept goes relatively far towards filling this gap, it too needs more careful attention towards the degree to which the state itself often forms the (only) existing framework of political opportunities.

New Social Movement Theory Modified

NSM theory focuses, above all, on the newness of social movements and the contexts to which they respond. The literature that deals with the effects of changing social, political and economic conditions on Canadian women is also characterized by an emphasis

on shifts, transitions and changes. In a sense, both NSM theory and this literature revolve around transformation. For NSM theorists, the transformation of the Western world in the 1960s and 1970s served as a catapult for social movement transformation, which sought to reconstruct portions of the world for the better. Unfortunately, it is widely held by scholars of Canadian women that these shifts, as they have been played out in Canada, have greatly contributed to the transforming of women's lives for the worse.

In the same way that the resource mobilization paradigm both speaks to and corresponds with the dominant themes and topics of the women's movements in Canada literature, NSM theory and the status-of-women scholarship share a common concern with change. This commonality forms the basis of the integration of the topics from the literature into NSM theory, as outlined by Laclau and Mouffe, Castells, Touraine and Melucci. Along with the modifications to the RM paradigm above, NSM theory informed by the concerns of the literatures surveyed in Chapter One becomes a valuable, productive theoretical context for analyzing Canadian women's movements. This is not to say that NSM theory directly reflects the positions embodied in the literature on the status of women in Canada. For example, NSM theorists posit the decline of the state as one of the key variables that has produced new movements, which, they argue, tend to bypass the state in making claims and enacting new cultural forms. As is evident from both sets of literatures which I survey in chapter one, the state's (ability to) impact on both women's movements and women in Canada has been immense, and, as such, the state's role in women's movements' retrenchment must be further explored (see Brodie 1995). The shared concern with making sense of and understanding the implications of macro-level changes, however, makes the

union of NSM theory and the themes of the status of Canadian women literature relevant and fruitful.

Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2001) provides an important poststructuralist grounding for studying women's movements in Canada. With Laclau and Mouffe's work, there is less specific correspondence between their primary concerns and the topics from either the women's movements or status-of-women literature than, as in all the NSM theory, a shared emphasis on change. Laclau and Mouffe provide a postmarxist way to understand politics, arguing that the passing of communism has altered the field of politics and that how the social world is theorized must thus be rethought. They bring to the study of women's movements in Canada the critical insight that the social is unsutured. From this it follows that, with the reintroduction of antagonism into the theory and discourse of the Left, hegemonic power relations – those which are not predetermined and which can change – are possible. By understanding the political differently, Laclau and Mouffe seek to provide new strategies for the Left and new social movements.

By privileging the moment of political articulation, the thesis advanced in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* makes possible a genuine plural, and thus radical, democracy. If politics happens in and through language, and the social is understood as discursive space, there is no way for one (singular or unitary and permanent) subject position to take precedence over others because there are no such subject positions. The possibilities for radical democracy lie in the plurality with which variously articulated positions exist together in (discursive) space. Social movements play a critical role in working towards and achieving this goal because they perform their politics through specific, not (unachievable or

undesirable) universal, identities and positions. When power is exercised hegemonically, it can be an important and effective tool, allowing for (legitimate) political claims from multiple, and multiply defined, subject positions.

The concepts that Laclau and Mouffe provide are integral to thinking about women's movements differently. Because their approach is so abstract, there is no direct correspondence between it and the literatures under review. If the theoretical and the empirical do indeed have a dialectical relationship, then Laclau and Mouffe's work is ultimately located, at least in part, as and in the empirical – in the same way that the empirical world of Canadian women's movements always already relies on theoretical insight in some form. Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe's work is relevant to the project of customizing New Social Movement theory for studying women's movements because it is necessarily grounded (somehow) in the empirical, even if only minimally. The way it provides for thinking about how the political works makes analytical sense as a new and radical approach to capturing the newness of politics in the last 30 years. While women's movements in Canada seem not to have felt the effects of these global changes until the early 1990s, their current inability to articulate viable political positions is evidenced by their present lack of public voice and influence. Laclau and Mouffe's critical emphasis on (re)locating the moment of politics to be the process or instant of articulation has significant explanatory power in the case of women's movements in Canada.

Of the authors I survey, Castells provides the most empirically-oriented NSM theory perspective for understanding new movements. As outlined in Chapter Three, his work on social movements focuses on the relationship between identity, technology-induced

globalization and the state. For Castells, the new swell of expressions of collective identity signals the nation-state's inability to accommodate identity concerns in an era in which the power of global networks rules. With the decline of civil society, "a plurality of identities forwards to the nation-state the claims, demands, and challenges" (1997: 271) that would previously find adequate response in civil society. The nation-state, unable to meet most of the demands of identity group, sees its power decline. The state still plays a crucial role in institutionalizing selected identities; however, not all identities can find a haven in the state, and those that cannot develop into social movements.

Castells argues that the nation-state in the information age has lost its power, but – and this is critical – not its influence. Thus, nation-states as cultural and political forms have not disappeared, and will not wither away in response to the rise of informationalism, the continuing technological revolution, or the pressures of social movements. These factors have, however, changed their functions. With the state displaced as the major site and disseminator of power, in the information age power lies instead in the "*codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions and people build their lives....The sites of power are people's minds*" (1997: 359, original emphasis). This shift in where power exists and how it is exercised is, for Castells, one of the hallmarks of the information age, defined above all by interconnections between economy and society, economy and culture, identity and the state.

The literature on recent social, political and economic changes and their effects on Canadian women manifest a similar concern with the transformation of the state, and indicate that scholars of these changes also do not see the nation-state in decline. However,

the analytical confusion around the concepts of power and influence – Castells doesn't define what he means by either – present problems for thinking about the state in NSM theory in relation to women's movements in Canada. All of the central concerns of scholars of Canadian women relate directly to the Canadian state's crucial role in determining women's status. It is precisely these changes in state form and mandate and their negative impact on women that indicate the state's retention, and even strengthening, of its ability to control its citizens' status. In fact, Brodie (1995) argues that these end-of-millennium developments have served to marginalize women's movements in Canada the same way they have marginalized Canadian women. The focus in the Canadian literature on identities also does not reflect the experiences Castells presents of identity-based concerns forming the basis of strong, non-national movements. Instead, according to those who write about them, the rise of collective identity concerns and organizing in the Canadian context have played out on a far smaller scale, often implicating the state. Both of the literatures surveyed in Chapter One indicate that the state's regulatory capacity in Canada is growing, rather than diminishing, especially in relation to women.

Whether this is power or influence or both on the part of the Canadian state is an analytical point to be argued, but it seems clear that, in the Canadian case, the state has not responded to technology-induced globalization and the rise of international identity-based movements with any substantial relinquishing of power. Instead, in shrinking one part of its jurisdiction – responsibility for social welfare – while bolstering others, especially international trade, the Canadian state has clearly maintained some form of both power *and* influence. Especially in its ability to force those most vulnerable in society, particularly

women, to the market to meet their most basic needs, as the literature demonstrates, the state in Canada has indeed responded to the changes identified by Castells – however, it has not done so in the way he predicts.

Castells contends that his work challenges theories of the state by suggesting that the analytical relationships between state and society, and state and nation must be unhinged. He bases this claim on empirical study which indicates that, in the last three decades, nationalisms are no longer rooted in states, as they have been historically, and that the slow disintegration of civil society leaves the state with no realm over which to rule. This has not been borne out in Canada. As mentioned, the concerns of scholars of social, political and economic changes and their effects on women indicate that the Canadian state has continued to govern civil society, with profound consequences. It is also seriously engaged in nation-building projects, which remain deeply connected to both the state as government, and the state as territory (Strong-Boag 1998a; Penrose 1997). Canada is not a nation without a state, or a state without a nation. On the contrary, nation and state are very much wedded, as is apparent in Canadian nationalisms, which seek to perpetually (re)constitute this relationship.

The incommensurability in views of the state in Castells's work and the status-of-women in Canada scholarship indicates the need to look carefully at how the Canadian state has responded to the informationalization revolution, and the effects this has had on women's movements. Women's movements in Canada have always been predominantly state-focused, looking to the government for social welfare provisions, policy change and operational funding. While Castells believes that the advent of information technology shifted social movements' attention away from the state and into the cultural realm, this

appears not to have been the case in Canada. Rather than orienting themselves around nonmaterial concerns and towards the constitution of culture itself, as new social movements apparently do, women's movements in Canada seem to have retrenched in response to the coming of the information age, the effects of which began to become obvious in Canada in the early 1990s, as the decreased movements literature and increased status-of-women scholarship indicate.

For Castells's work to be relevant for studying women's movements in Canada, the state's role in and response to informationalization and globalization must be retheorized. Movements lost public visibility and influence in the early 1990s, just when, as the literature on change and status of women in Canada shows, a number of related, notable empirical shifts occurred. This marks a different relationship than the one Castells posits between social movements and social, political and economic change. While these empirical shifts can be conceptualized fruitfully as the effects of the rise of the network society in the information age, as Castells argues, their impact on both the state and social movements differs from the outcomes he suggests.

Castells's focus on the end of what he calls patriarchalism and the importance of feminism and women's movements is a positive addition to a conceptual framework for studying women's movements in Canada. He believes that women's movements have contributed to the altering of women's consciousness and societal values the world over in the last three decades. Their significance in Castells's formulation makes it all the more theoretically urgent to understand how and why women's movements have been in retrenchment for almost a decade, and what this might mean for Canadian women's

equality, and social and political relations between men and women. As I argued in the Introduction, the decline of academic writing about women's movements and the concurrent increase in scholarship about women's status in Canada can be understood as the result of the lack of a theoretical framework for studying women's movements. Castells's focus on the foundational importance of women's movements also implies that if movements are a necessary determinant of women's status, their retrenchment must be connected to broader social, political and economic changes.

According to Castells, the information age is also defined by informational politics, which have ushered in a crisis of democracy. The media, the new privileged space of politics, *captures* political communication, interaction and information: “[o]utside the media sphere there is only political marginality” (1997: 312, original emphasis). While there has been limited focus in either the women's movements literature or the status-of-women literature on the impact of media coverage on women's movements in Canada, their loss of public visibility and influence, particularly as evidenced by the decline in academic writing about movements, was a key factor in their retrenchment. Castells's emphasis on how informationalization affects politics is a much-needed component of a social movement theory framework for studying women's movements.

Informational politics induces a crisis of democracy by redefining the relationship between state and society, thus making the state's traditional forms and political strategies obsolete. Unable to relate to and control their civil societies as they had in the past – that is, unable to condition democracy as they had previously – nation-states lose their power. As outlined above, this is manifested in the state's fundamental inability to hold together the

conflicting forces of identity demands and globalization. The literature on the status of women in Canada shows clearly that the Canadian state's relationship with all of its citizens, but especially with women, has changed. Although Castells doesn't specify exactly what he means by the "crisis" of democracy, in Canada this crisis seems to lie in women's inability to voice their collective opposition to changes in public policy that marginalize them. This is undoubtedly related to the retrenchment of women's movements, which for 25 years provided women's collective input into public life in Canada. While Castells's understanding of the relationship between informational politics and the crisis of democracy provides a solid basis for addressing the issues raised by status-of-women scholars, it encounters, again, the empirical/theoretical contradiction between Castells's account of the nation-state's loss of power, and the reality of the Canadian state's retention of it.

Even though Castells's theory of how social movements create and are implicated in the informationalization of the world and its attendant effects does not correspond directly to either the experiences of women's movements in Canada or the subject matter of the status-of-women literature, it remains relevant for the study of women's movements in Canada because it addresses the social, political and economic changes to which the very existence of the status-of-women literature testifies. In taking such a comprehensive and direct approach to attend to the newness of the world and of social movements in it, Castells's work is an important element of a social movements framework for studying women's movements in Canada. As noted in the Introduction, movements' retrenchment corresponds to empirical shifts in Canada's social, political and economic context. A conceptual approach which takes these changes seriously, and seeks to theorize them, is valuable for

studying women's movements. However, to be specific to this case, Castells's theory must be supplemented by a more careful empirical and theoretical look at the state that accounts for its continuing, perhaps even increased, regulatory role in the areas of concern, especially public policy, identified by scholars of Canadian women, and how these changes implicate social movements.

Touraine and Melucci provide a different approach to studying and understanding new social movements. As outlined, both develop new sociologies of social movements that can account for movements' presence at the very centre of social production. Because they accord movements ontological and epistemological primacy, Touraine and Melucci understand them not as responses to changed or changing social, political and economic conditions, but rather as the very determinants of these conditions. This theoretical system is particularly appropriate to a conceptual framework for studying women's movements in Canada because it locates social movements as its central problematic.

Neither Touraine's nor Melucci's work directly addresses the themes and topics characterizing the literature about the effects of social, political and economic changes on Canadian women. Their focus on movements as primary producers of social relations, however, suggests that the areas in which scholars of Canadian women have seen change (e.g., citizenship, welfare state restructuring, public and child care policy, representation, nationalisms, identities and work) might be the *outcomes* of movement activity, rather than inputs into their status. While this is obviously not literally the case in Canada (that is, women's movements themselves have not restructured the welfare state or decreased women's policy provisions), such an approach presents the possibility that, in their

retrenchment, Canadian women's movements' suffer a decreased ability to (re)produce social relations which benefit women.

For Touraine, social movements are class actors fighting for social control of historicity, which is the action society performs upon itself, or society's self-creation. Although Touraine retains the Marxist category of class, he removes it from Marxist teleology, rejecting an evolutionary approach to history in which the outcomes of social and political conflicts are predetermined. The focus on class as a necessary component of movements contradicts other New Social Movement theorists, especially Laclau and Mouffe, who reject the Marxist project altogether. Touraine's emphasis on class, though, corresponds to the interest in women's movements literature on the development of the liberal or institutionalized movement at the expense of the grassroots movement. As several scholars of movements in Canada note (Findlay 1987, 1988; Black 1993), there was a distinct middle-class bent to the movement with the highest visibility and most political capital. The concept of class, then, is a necessary component of a social movements theory customized for studying women's movements in Canada, and Touraine's demythologized view of class and class-based movements supplies this conceptual input.

Touraine's social movement theory presents the analytical and methodological tools to study *action*. He hopes to account for the critical role that social movements play in producing the social world, and also for how identity functions in movement. His new sociology's potential explanatory power lies in its ability to understand social movements by what they do, what change they make, and how these relate to the identities they carry. For the case of women's movements in Canada, it requires an inversion to apply to movements

which, in retrenchment, no longer have the ability to act.

Melucci's central concern in studying social movements is how they are socially constructed. Unlike Castells, Melucci believes that movements are "nomads of the present," acting without reference to the past and without relying on ideas about the future. Their presence, then, is the outcome of conscious building efforts by social actors within the confines of the institutions of complex societies. Melucci is thus interested in *how* this process occurs. Unlike Touraine, Melucci pays attention, albeit in a fairly general way, to the institutional context of movements' actions. While he doesn't specify this as the state, it could be understood as such, despite his contention that the state is no longer the target of movements' action. As the literature surveyed in Chapter One of this thesis indicates, the state has played a definitive role in women's movements, and, as mentioned many times above, any theoretical framework for studying them must include a comprehensive focus on the relationship between states and movements. Melucci's interest in social constructionism furnishes a theoretical way to understand how women's movements in Canada have created themselves, and why this process has failed in the last decade.

Since, for Melucci, the fact of (the appearance of) unitary action, as it appears in social movements, is the result, not the starting point of movements, what needs to be explained is how this unification comes to be. In his contention that complex societies produce new conflicts which are interwoven with the fabric of everyday life and individual experiences, Melucci argues that social movements occur when individual needs are balanced within them. This emphasis on the internal dynamics of movements, while prevalent in the resource mobilization paradigm, is less common in NSM theory, making

Melucci's contribution to the field particularly significant. It is an important component of a social movements framework for studying women's movements in Canada because, as Agnew (1996) demonstrates, the internal dynamics of movements have been a factor in their ability to maintain public visibility and influence. Further, as the only NSM theory account of how individuals fit into social movements, Melucci's theory makes provisions for people's everyday lives in a way that recognizes the importance of how both conflicts and movement activity play out.

Both Touraine and Melucci, like Castells, understand social movements to be seeking cultural, rather than political or social, change. In foregrounding movements in the social production process, they thus suggest that the social is produced culturally. The emphasis on movements as cultural phenomena, challenging symbolic codes and making their own collective-identity based principles, hinges on the transformation of the state in the transition to postindustrial or complex or informationalized societies. For social conflicts and movements to no longer be political in a central and important way, the state must no longer be a site of power – and this is precisely what New Social Movement theorists contend. While this argument makes sense if the state has undergone such a metamorphosis, it does not account for other state responses to the global transformations of the last 30 years. As I have suggested above, the literature on both women's movements and women in Canada indicates strongly that, if anything, the Canadian state has *strengthened* its regulatory function and the amount of power and influence it exercises over its citizens in the last decade. Women's movements, then, as other social movements in Canada, are fundamentally political phenomena, actively contesting state power and intervention. A

theoretical approach for studying these movements misunderstands them if it conceptualizes them culturally. New Social Movement theory, again as I noted above, can be customized to this case with a closer theoretical and empirical look at how the state in Canada has responded to the new world which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

Laclau and Mouffe are an exception to this turn to the cultural as their work is premised on the very reintroduction of the political into public life. They do not separate culture from the social and political worlds, arguing instead that the critical category is precisely the political, as the site of ongoing hegemonic negotiation. For the case at hand, such an approach makes more sense than culturally-oriented ones because, as argued above, the state in Canada has not followed the trajectory predicted by other New Social Movement theorists. It has remained, instead, a major force against and in which women's movements have struggled.

Nevertheless, Touraine's and Melucci's work are important components of a social movements framework for studying women's movements in Canada, not because they correspond especially well to the major subjects the status-of-women literature, but, first, because they put social movements at the centre of both social production and their conceptual accounts of it, and second, because they offer, as do other NSM theorists, ways of theorizing the relationship between foundational social, political and economic change and social movements. As argued in the Introduction, women's movements literature was unable to accommodate the empirical changes in some movements because it lacked a comprehensive conceptual framework. Perhaps any theoretical base might have made this scholarship less likely to fade as it did. However, given the coincidence of the retrenchment

of movements and their scholarship, as well as the concurrent rise of a body of work on change and its effects on Canadian women, it seems that a theoretical perspective which connects the empirical phenomena of movements' decline and social, political and economic change will be especially productive for this case.

As this section has demonstrated, while the customization of New Social Movement theory to study women's movements in Canada runs into problems with how the state is understood in relation to new movements, NSM theory's critical focus on changes in the world provides an important base for accommodating the empirical shifts that correspond to the retrenchment of women's movements and literature about them, and to the rise of scholarship addressing the effects of these changes on Canadian women.

Limitations of and Possibilities for this Theoretical Framework

The most serious limitation of this specification of social movement theory for studying women's movements in Canada is the incommensurability between New Social Movement theorists' views of the state and the state-centred themes which emerge from both the women's movements and status-of-women literatures. Castells, Touraine and Melucci all argue that the global changes in the 1960s and 1970s forced a drop in the state's power, and that social movements no longer see the state as their primary adversary or look to it to meet their demands. The experience of women's movements in Canada until the early 1990s directly contradicts this position. The central concerns of scholars who write about the effects of recent social, political and economic changes on women in Canada indicate that the current (empirical) context has more, rather than less, to do with the state.

NSM theory particularly does not account for this reality. And despite resource mobilization's ability to explain the institutional context in which movements operate, and the correspondence between the major tenets of the RM paradigm and those from women's movements in Canada literature, even it fails to take the state seriously as precisely this institutional context.

The application of this customized conceptual framework is thus limited by its undertheorization of the state in some areas and overemphasis on the state's so-called decline in others. In the literatures surveyed in Chapter One, the focus on the state is critical, indicating that it has been an important determinant of women's movements' status, and that it played a role in their retrenchment in the early 1990s. To make resource mobilization, political process and New Social Movement theory specific to studying women's movements in Canada, much conceptual and empirical work remains to be done on how the Canadian state has conditioned women's movements' development, mandates and even their existence.

Conclusion

The components of a social movements framework sketched here have the major advantage of providing a conceptual approach to guide further empirical work on women's movements in Canada. If the theoretical and the empirical, in fact, are dialectically related, the empirical exploration this framework prompts can circle back to respecify the theory. Most importantly, the modified social movement theory proposed in this chapter accounts for (or at least has the potential to account for) women's movements' retrenchment. It is,

therefore, not simply a theory for understanding these movements in their presence, but also in their absence. While there isn't a perfect fit, social movement theory has the potential, with further empirical work to refine the customization presented above, to form a very productive and helpful theoretical base for understanding women's movements in Canada.

Conclusion

This thesis has advocated social movement theory as a valuable and productive conceptual framework for studying women's movements in Canada. I have suggested that the resource mobilization paradigm and New Social Movement theory may be tailored with the topics and themes from women's movements and status-of-women scholarships, thus providing a theoretical social movements framework specific to studying women's movements in Canada. This customization of movement theory, as it appears in Chapter Four, begins to fill the theoretical gap in women's movements literature, and, in providing a theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada, also has the potential to guide further empirical work on movements' retrenchment.

The project advanced here contributes primarily to the women's movements in Canada literature. By arguing for the need for a theoretical framework to study women's movements, and advocating for one rooted in social movement theory, this work indicates that women's movements can be understood better in a theoretical context. My thesis also contributes to social movement theory, albeit in a lesser way, by demonstrating the importance of the state for social movements, at least state-focused ones. Future work might, as I have suggested, focus on gathering empirical data on the retrenchment of federally-focused women's movements in Canada, in the context of social movement theory. This thesis also indicates that there is much theoretical and empirical work to be done on the relationship between states and social movements, in the context of movement theory.

If, as I contended in the Introduction to this thesis, the empirical and the theoretical are dialectically related, then theory is always relevant to studying social and political

phenomena in the real world, in the same way that empirical events and contexts always inform theory. Women's movements in Canada are no exception to this. The tailored social movement theory framework I begin to develop here will be further customized by empirical work on the declining of federally-focused women's movements, making it more accurate and more productive, in the same way that a theoretical framework allows greater insight into movements in the empirical world.

The turn to theory for studying women's movements in Canada is especially relevant at this historical moment because, as the status-of-women literature discussed in Chapter One shows, Canadian women's collective position has been in (slow) decline at least since the early 1990s. While my thesis does not address the relationship between the status of women and of women's movements, the coincidence of drops in both women's movements' public visibility and influence, and women's social, political and economic status, is not without significance. Lacking a strong, federally-focused movement to advocate on their behalf, Canadian women have limited collective resources to (successfully) lobby the state, and thus will likely continue to see their possibilities for equality fade. As the aforementioned body of scholarship also indicates, the focus on the individual Canadian woman at the expense of women's *movements* promotes further drift away from studying and understanding movements' empirical retrenchment – and at a time when movements are needed perhaps more than ever.

In a broader way, the construction of a theoretical framework for studying women's movements in Canada provides a hitherto underutilized way to talk about movements' retrenchment in the early 1990s. Politically, the effective disappearance of movements with

a strong public presence from both the Canadian landscape and the academic literature shows (clearly) that feminism is no concern at all in this country. This is a scary prospect indeed. Perhaps one way to reinsert feminism into public life in Canada lies in providing theoretical ways to analyze it. The reintroduction of a women's movements discourse, and thus of a strong and committed feminist discourse, into scholarship might contribute to this necessary project. With this thesis, I have hopefully begun the (long) process of recreating a way to talk about where women's movements in Canada have gone, what this has meant for feminism, and how both might be recovered.

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