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**THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW:
UNDERSTANDING YOUNG WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVES
ON FEMINISM AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

**by
JOSÉE LECOMTE, B.Sc. (Sociology)**

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
May 26, 1997
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and Research acceptance of the thesis

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Heather-Jon Maroney, Supervisor

Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

June 10, 1997

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores young Canadian women's experience and the meaning they give to feminism and the women's movement. It favours a feminist grounded approach and methodology, particularly as developed by Smith (1987). It is based on ten in-depth, open-ended interviews conducted with Canadian university women in their twenties, in which they discussed their knowledge of feminism and the women's movement, their identification as feminists, the relevance of the women's movement in their lives, their perspectives on women's issues and change and the context and nature of their involvement for women's causes. Their accounts provide some valuable insights into Mannheim's (1952) notion of political generations, into the historical development of feminism in the 1980s and 1990s, and into Melucci's (1989) analysis of the role of collective identity and social resources for social movement participation and of the emergence of new cultural forms and practices which support social activism.

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PART I: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

FOCUS OF THE INQUIRY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The development of the second-wave of the feminist movement in North America in the past three decades has had a critical impact on women's personal and social experiences and has contributed to a greater public awareness of women's issues. This movement has sought through collective action to reveal the relations of domination and subordination to which women are subjected and to oppose the power structures that support such relations. It has also sought to transform traditional, patriarchal modes of thinking in order to recognize and value experiences and realities long ignored or dismissed.

More specifically, the contemporary Canadian women's movement has succeeded in organizing itself through national and grass-roots organizations so that it "has been and is still one of the most significant and successful social movements in Canada." (Adamson et al. 1988:3) According to Vickers (1992), the second-wave of Canadian feminism is characterized by its "radical liberalism" : a belief in dialogue and social change through participation with the state and the existing political process; a belief in the welfare state; a service commitment; and a tolerance of ideological diversity. As Vickers, Rankin and Appelle point out, the movement "has been skilled at coalition building and

management, developing a multipartisan approach, a reliance on government funding, and a service orientation." (Vickers et al. 1993:30) Since the 1960s, the movement has seen the development of institutions that are specific to the Canadian political milieu, like the National Action Committee (NAC) on the Status of Women and the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), which lobby the government, and develop and debate public policy. However, feminist grass-roots organizations and unions have served as a counterforce to the more institutionalized feminism of umbrella organizations. (Adamson et al. 1988; Vickers 1992)

The Canadian women's movement has expanded greatly over the years. There now exists a variety of groups and organizations such as federations, networks, alliances, service groups, task forces, caucuses, and collectives, which continue the important struggle for women's equality and liberation. (Wine and Ristock 1988; Backhouse and Flaherty 1992) This movement has also fostered the development of an important women's culture, contributing a significant body of knowledge to the burgeoning field of feminist theory and assisting in the establishment of women's studies programs in universities. Throughout the years, the movement has addressed a wide variety of issues related to the workplace and trade unionism, day-care, abortion, gender roles in the family, family property, pornography and violence against women, and many more. (Adamson et al. 1988)

Other issues, such as sexual orientation and race, have provided

significant challenges to the scope and nature of Canadian feminist movement politics over the years. Adamson et al. (1988) mention that, in the 1970s, lesbian feminists and organizations confronted feminists about issues of homophobia and heterosexual privilege. They point out:

Lesbian feminism has had a tremendous impact on the women's movement, forcing the discussion of issues of sexuality and insisting that feminists grapple with heterosexism. The struggle to legitimize those issues was a long, difficult, and sometimes bitter one...The ease with which heterosexual feminists and lesbians have discussed these issues has varied across the country. (Adamson et al. 1988:59-60)

In the 1980s , women of colour, aboriginal women, and immigrant women also started to demand that the movement integrate their concerns, confront its inherent racism and incorporate an anti-racist position and analysis in their politics. (Adamson et al. 1988; Rebick and Roach 1996; Vickers et al.1993) As Roach states with respect to women of colour: "In the women's movement across the country in the late 1980s, women of colour were demanding more representation. They were saying that if the women's movement was really in favour of equality, it had to fight for all women, not just the privileged few. " (Rebick and Roach 1996:106) Since the 1980s, non-white women have produced an important body of literature, exploring their particular experiences within the feminist movement and society at large, and emphasizing that race and gender issues are inseparable realities in their lives. (Bannerji et al.1991;

1993) Within NAC, issues of representation have come to the fore in recent years: the movement must now include not only the concerns of white middle-class women but also women of colour, immigrant women, aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and poor and working-class women. (Rebick and Roach 1996:108) Overall, the Canadian feminist movement has developed greatly in recent decades and has been an important agent of social transformation. As Wine and Ristock note:

The contemporary women's movement has been a potent force for social change in Canadian society for more than two decades...the movement is still very much vital and alive. It is represented in feminist activism in communities in every Canadian province and in national organizations, activism that reflects the diverse class, ethnic and linguistic identities and concerns of Canadian women, and the diverse geographic and demographic characteristics of their communities, as well as the uniquely Canadian political climate. (Wine and Ristock 1988:1-3)

Within this context of ongoing struggle, I am interested in understanding the experience of young women and their perspectives on feminism in the 1990s. In contrast to their precursors, these young women grew up in a time when feminism was already very vocal and visible. As Findlen points out:

We are the first generation for whom feminism has been entwined in the fabric of our lives...During our early years, feminism was already a major social force. As we reached adolescence and adulthood, the feminist movement was challenging society's basic assumptions about gender. (Findlen 1995a: xii-xiii)

From an early age, many had come into contact with feminist ideas and images through the media, teachers, parents, books, courses, or existing groups.

(Steinem 1995) These women grew up in a period of social transformation and public awareness, when gender issues were being addressed by a feminist movement that was becoming ever more present and active. Their lives were shaped in one way or another by the upheaval that has taken place in women's roles, rights and realities. As Glickman points out:

In a profound sense all women roughly between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, whether they embrace or reject feminism, are the daughters of feminism, heir to its struggles, failures, and successes; inheritors, willy-nilly, of the heroic phase of the modern women's movement. (Glickman 1993:xiii)

This study seeks to explore the experience of young Canadian women in order to better understand the meaning they give to feminism and the Canadian women's movement. What are their views on this social movement? How do they understand feminism and its objectives and actions? Do they identify themselves as feminists? Is the movement relevant to their lives? What do they think is left to be done for women? Do they participate in feminist activities or groups? Do they perceive the women's movement as an instrument of social change? How do they assess the social and political conditions in their lives?

While some studies have explored issues related to feminism among younger women and although some women of this generation have begun to

speak and write about these issues, most of this work has been carried out in the United States. A literature review reveals a significant gap in Canadian feminist and sociological research. While the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) undertook some interesting surveys and symposium research in 1992 on the reflections of adolescent women on issues such as family, school, friendship, politics, society, it did not explore the relation of young women in their twenties to feminist issues and the women's movement today. This study seeks to shed some light on this topic and therefore fill some of the research gap in this area. It may also prove useful for the feminist movement's wider goal of social change and provide insights into the mobilization potential of younger and future generations of women. As Renzetti explains:

The future growth and prosperity of the feminist movement largely depends on the successful recruitment of new members. It has been argued that the women's movement of the late 1960s and 70s was able to attract widespread support because it "spoke directly to the daily experience of women". If today's young women are to be tomorrow's feminist leaders, they must perceive the movement as relevant to their experiences and responsive to their needs. (Renzetti 1987:276)

Walker goes further to argue that the feminist movement "must continue to be responsive to new situations, needs, and especially desires, ever expanding to incorporate and entertain all those who wrestle with and swear by it, including those who may not explicitly call its name." (Walker 1995a:xxxv-vi)

THE “POST-FEMINIST” GENERATION: A REVIEW OF THE DEBATE

The relationship of young women with feminism has recently become a focus of discussion in the mass media, the scholarly press and feminist circles. A few studies, mostly in the US, have begun to explore the experiences of this younger generation of women and their relationships to the feminist movement. In addition, some young women have entered the debate with a critique based on their experience of feminism, the women's movement and the configuration of their everyday lives. They identify themselves as a distinct political generation with a common experience of particular social and economic conditions that has led them to re-evaluate the “accumulated heritage” of feminism.

The 1980s are often portrayed by the mass media as the “post-feminist” era. The rise of conservatism, an “anti-feminist” backlash and a generation of younger women lacking a feminist consciousness are all part of this portrait. (Whittier 1995; Glickman 1993; Renzetti 1987) The women's movement is seen as inactive and the next generation to have little interest in the women's movement as a whole. As Schneider states:

...one of the consistent patterns in media coverage of the women's movement has been predictions of its disintegration and death...Media talk of “post-feminism” typically applies the label “post-feminist” to the younger generation of women, typically college students and professional women in their twenties. Its use implies that the women's movement in its active, public phase is

over, if not dead, since a certain spark of freshness and excitement that characterized the 1970s generation is missing. And that spark of agitation is equated with a lack of interest in the women's movement by its potential inheritors. (Schneider 1988:10)

One of the "post-feminist" myths is that young women believe that all is well and that the battle for equality is over. They now have access, for example, to employment, to equal education, and they seem to be taken more seriously. (Whittier 1995) Much attention has been given to young women's reluctance to call themselves feminists, even though they may endorse some feminist ideals and practices in their everyday lives. (Whittier 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1993) The common phrases of "I am not a feminist but..." or "young women do not consider themselves feminist" dominate images of this age group.

This debate has also been taken up in the dialogue between older feminists and younger women. Some older feminists feel that young women are apolitical, less committed to feminism and the women's movement and that they take things for granted because the position of women has improved. (Whittier 1995) Young women are seen to distance themselves from feminism because they fear reprisal, or political commitment, or change, or even ideas given a pervasive anti-intellectual culture. (Hogeland 1994) Both Sidel (1990) and Glickman (1993) indicate that many of the women they interviewed are ambivalent about identifying themselves as feminists. Concern has also been expressed that young women may have been influenced by distorted media images and stereotypes of feminists and feminism. (Steinem 1995) Other

feminists attribute declining interest in feminism to general cultural tendencies like the rise of conservatism in the 1980s and 1990s or the encouragement to focus energies on the private world of romantic and sexual relationships.

(Hogeland 1994) Many feminists argue that the women's movement and feminism, especially in the USA, experienced an important "backlash" in recent years. (Faludi 1991; Harrison and Heyward 1994; Erwin 1988) As Sidel suggests, women growing up in the 1980s lived "in an era of wide acceptance of certain elements of feminist thinking but one in which feminism as a movement seems to be in retrenchment." (Sidel 1990:5) According to Hogeland (1994), the experience of the backlash is real. A precarious economic situation may discourage young women from "risking" feminism; they are afraid of being labelled "feminazi" and cast out of the competition for men. Overall, then, this generation has been characterized by some older feminists as afraid of feminism, lacking political courage and commitment and generally reluctant to identify themselves as feminists.

In response to accounts that reduce them to a fragmented and unfeminist mass, young women have started speaking out about what feminism means to them. (Findlen 1995b) Indeed, some feel that the older generation lacks confidence in their commitment and is out of touch with their needs and visions. (Kaplan, Letter in Ms. 1994, March/ April:8) Some young women shy away from the label "feminist", not because they are ignorant, prey to negative images of the feminist movement, or lack political courage and commitment, but because

they “have a very different vantage point on the world than that of [their] foremothers.” (Walker 1995a:xxxiii) As a result, they have a different outlook on what feminism means in their lives. As Slee notes: “My feminism is not the one of my mother - it starts from a different point and has traveled different routes.” (Slee 1995:274) Thus, a changed social and political context and different formative experience have given rise to the new needs, the new preoccupations, and the new perspectives of this generation. (Walker 1995b; Kaplan, Letter in Ms. 1994, March/ April:8; Glickman 1993; Whittier 1995)

Certainly, the social and historical processes young women face include a greater political conservatism and backlash against women, tougher economic times marked by anxiety and survival strategies, the presence of a more subtle sexism, high rates of divorce, AIDS, and a movement towards multiculturalism. (Glickman 1993; Findlen 1995a) As a result, some see the current social conditions as part of a bigger, depressing reality: “This whole country is falling apart...There’s so much wrong in the world - crime, war, famine. What’s wrong for women? Just throw it in there with everything else.” (Glickman 1993:162) Thus, for many young women, feminist issues have become part of larger human issues that need attention. (Glickman 1993) These young women face new challenges in a context not favourable to social and feminist transformation: “For today the discoveries and insights spill out of the feminist cornucopia into a social, political, and economic atmosphere that is hostile to dreams of social transformation.” (Glickman 1993:190) Young women today do not have many

resources and political opportunities so that they “face their own dilemmas in a context that offers little opening for the mass feminist mobilization of twenty years ago.” (Whittier 1995:243)

These perspectives of the opportunities for social change also affect young women’s strategic choices. They recognize that there is still a lot to be done for women and acknowledge the efforts of the previous generation which paved the way. (Glickman 1993) But today, new issues and new realities require women to struggle in a new way. They engage the “battle” in a more individual and private fashion from the “ground-up”, for example, focusing on their relationships and on educating people in their immediate surroundings. (Glickman 1993) In contrast to a previous generation’s emphasis on public and political struggles for change, few young women today see the need for a collective approach, a larger women’s movement, or activism. (Glickman 1993) Even if some young women do not organize rallies or take public stands, they are very involved in attempts to eliminate sexism and discrimination from their personal environments. (Spaet, Letter in Ms. 1994, March/April:8) Many young women believe that individual acts of resistance can be a powerful way to make change, for “social change is not just about the kind of political action brought upon by group actions. Politics is also interpersonal - about how we talk to each other and how we relate to one another...” (Herrup 1995:250)

Just as young women are committed to a different kind of activism that is relevant to their personal and social experiences, they are also redefining

feminism. For a variety of reasons, some women have come to see feminism as authoritarian, intellectually rigid, "a political movement that has defined itself as of the minority, by the minority." (Wolf 1993:126) Young women level a variety of charges against the movement as exclusive, restrictive, strident, too radical, dictatorial, impractical, theoretical, or remote. (Dent 1995) Many women dislike the word feminism because they feel it connotes a stereotype that defines its adherents as man-hating, unattractive and lesbian, or that feminism restricts them to certain attitudes or to someone else's agenda. (Findlen 1995b; Wolf 1993) Thus, while they may support feminist ideas and aspirations, they do not necessarily want to identify themselves as feminists because of the stigma attached to the term. As Taylor and Whittier point out: "A feminist is seen as someone who deviates from gender norms by being unattractive, aggressive, hostile to men, opposed to marriage and motherhood, lesbian, and seeking to imitate men." (Taylor and Whittier 1993:545) According to Walker, some women have problems identifying with feminism because it suggests a world that leaves no room for complexity and individuality: they are afraid accepting this identity will place them in the unflexible divides of women/men, black/white, oppressor/oppressed, us/them, good/bad. (Walker 1995a:xxxiii) Finally, some women are also uncomfortable with what seems to be feminism's tendency to cast women as victims, a view of feminism that is supported in the mainstream media. As Wolf (1993) argues, feminism, as much as it needs to recognize the hard reality of women's victimization, should also focus on ways that women can create and

use their power to change this reality.

Young women today do not of course view themselves as “unevolved”, “unfeminist”, or “hopelessly duped by the patriarch”. (Walker 1995a:xxxii) Rather they want to create a feminism and female empowerment they can call their own: no one lifestyle, no one way of acting or thinking, no dichotomy, divisiveness or dualism but rather freedom, self-possession, self-determination and the acceptance of contradictions and uncertainty. (Walker 1995a:xxxiii) They seek to create “identities that accommodate ambiguity and our multiple positionalities: including more than excluding, exploring more than defining, searching more than arriving.” (Walker 1995a: xxxiii) It is difficult for young women to relate strongly to a feminist ideal that has not been defined by them. (Walker 1995a) Many young women want to be able to express the different realities of their lives without the fear of political reprisal. Their experiences with men are often not all that negative and they think men should be able to participate in the struggle for greater equality between the sexes, and “in the discussion of how to heal the gender divide...” (Wolf 1993:190) They want to be able to live out their lives, their beliefs in terms of sexual practices, careers choices, politics, maternal desire, marriage, femininity, and so forth, in a way that is meaningful to them, “to exist whole and intact without cutting or censoring parts of themselves...” (Walker 1995a:xxxv; Davis 1995) Young women want to embrace the diversity of the many feminisms around them, and define themselves in tune with the variety of their daily lives, experiences and beliefs. (Walker 1995b)

Even though some young women may be resistant to, or ambivalent about feminism, many more endorse feminist principles, values and ideals in their everyday lives than is being portrayed. This includes some “closet feminists” or “private worshippers” who do not necessarily identify themselves as feminists or proclaim their feminism publicly. (Dent 1995; Findlen 1995a; Davis 1995) Young women’s views are anything but simple and unidimensional. As Glickman (1993) notes, they “reveal a multilayered, complex, untidy reality.” Some eagerly embrace many feminist ideals and practices in their everyday lives, while struggling to find their place within a movement they grew up with. They are aware that they would not be able to express these views and share their experiences if it was not for the efforts and changes brought about by the previous generation of feminists, but they want to address the many varied identities, differences, and experiences that make them who they are. Their struggle to bring together past legacies and new experiences and realities indicates an important generational shift. As young women incorporate and challenge feminism, there is much to be discovered in their accounts and experiences. As Findlen writes:

This country hasn’t heard enough from young feminists. We’re here, and we have a lot to say about our ideas and hopes and struggles and our place within feminism. We haven’t had many opportunities to tell our stories, but more of us are finding our voices and the tools to make them heard...(Findlen 1995a:xvi)

This study seeks to explore some of these realities and issues as they

are expressed particularly by young Canadian women in their twenties today. The purpose of this research is to explore their individual experiences, their beliefs, views, feelings and knowledge about feminism and the women's movement today and how it is all translated in their everyday lives, in the choices they make, in the questions they ask, and in their doubts, fears, and aspirations about the present and the future. I hope this study will shed some light on the many preoccupations and concerns of a new generation of women and feminists as they search for and define their varied personal and social identities and their commitment to a movement they have grown up with and that has influenced, in one way or another, the fabric of their lives.

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUNG WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF FEMINISM

My study draws on three bodies of sociological literature. First, a feminist approach contributes to the underlying point of view, direction and assumptions of this study. It is an approach that takes women's experience as the starting point of knowledge and inquiry, considers women as knowledgeable speakers about and actors in their lives, and allows the exploration, from women's own accounts of their everyday lives, of the larger social and ideological relations which shape their experience. In particular, I use the work of Dorothy Smith which provides valuable conceptualizations and insights in this area.

While Smith's work allows us to understand individuals as social actors, it does not provide a particular analysis of social movements. For that, I turn to the work of two political sociologists, Melucci (1989) and Mannheim (1952). Melucci offers an analysis of the role of collective identity and social resources in participation in the collective action of "new social movements" like the women's movement, which is relevant for the present study. In addition, as I have noted, much of the debate about young women's relation to the women's movement revolves around the issue of political generations. Mannheim offers a concept of political generations, developed with respect to feminism by Schneider and Whittier, that is helpful in situating the women I interviewed in relation to the historical development of feminism in the 1980s and 1990s.

Finally, the research methodology and process of this study are within the qualitative sociological tradition, particularly as developed by Smith (1987). This investigative method is in line with the theoretical premises of this research, specifically as it relates to assumptions about reflexivity and agency.

A Feminist Sociological Approach

i) Women as Authoritative Speakers of Their Lives

A grounded feminist approach to social research is useful in capturing the experience and meaning of feminism and the women's movement for this generation of young women. According to Smith, theories and analyses need to be grounded in women's experience, thus "making our direct embodied experience of the everyday world the primary ground of our knowledge." (Smith 1990a:22) Women's perspectives and meanings are considered a significant, credible ground for research in which "women's experiences, ideas and needs are viewed as valid in their own right." (Taylor and Rupp 1991:121) A feminist approach thus understands women as subjects, actors, and knowers. (Du Bois 1983). They must be recognized as interpreters who give meaning to their experience, and as actors who shape the lived world around them, in the sense that "human beings are not only shaped by social facts and social forces but are

constantly shaping and creating their own social worlds in interactions with others." (Benson and Hughes: 1983:37; Reinharz 1983; Acker et al. 1983)

Women must also be considered as reflexive, authoritative and knowledgeable speakers of their lives. A feminist approach encourages women to name, explain and interpret their own experiences and to become, as Levesque-Lopman suggests, "the experts, the authorities, and the sources of knowledge about [them]selves." (Levesque-Lopman 1988:58) For Smith, "in learning to speak our experience and situation, we insist upon the right to begin where we are, to stand as subjects of our sentences, and to hear one another as the authoritative speakers of our experience." (Smith quoted in Anderson et al. 1990: 95)

This approach is an alternative to positivistic and objective perspectives and procedures that have considered women as objects and not as active, knowledgeable subjects of study. (Harding 1987; Levesque-Lopman 1988; Fonow and Cook 1991a; Anderson and Jack 1991) It also challenges more deductive strategies that interpret individuals' experience through predefined categories already formulated by the researcher and that encourage distance between the researcher and the researched. (Jayaratne and Stewart 1991) In this way, a feminist approach values the personal and subjective and takes women's perspectives, experience and meanings as the starting point for research. Such a perspective calls for research methods and interview techniques that give precedence to women's viewpoints and that allow women to express themselves in their own terms and to define the boundaries of their own

experiences. (Du Bois 1983; Levesque-Lopman 1988; Reinharz 1983; Smith 1987; Anderson et al. 1990; Harding 1987; Jayaratne and Stewart 1991). In this way, women are considered active collaborators in the research process and in the construction of knowledge, rather than being passive, distant objects of study. (Reinharz 1983)

I have chosen this kind of feminist and contextual approach to young Canadian women's experience in order to discover "what *they* are experiencing, how *they* interpret their experiences, how *they* themselves structure the social world in which they live." (Psathas 1989:17) The experience of young Canadian women and the meaning they give to feminism and the women's movement have served as the basis and starting point of this analysis. An important aim of this study is, therefore, to reproduce the voices of the women involved in the research and to ground explanation contextually in their everyday lives, as part of specific social and historical conditions.

ii) Subjectivity, Experience, and Social Organization

While a grounded approach is very useful in understanding subjective experience, this study also provides some preliminary insights into the ways the everyday realities of young women are linked to and framed by larger social, economic and ideological realities. If we listen to what women have to say about their experience, we can uncover significant insights for the investigation of the

social relations of power that organize and determine their everyday lives and practices. We can explore the dialectic that connects the individual to the historical, social and material conditions that shape her life. (Smith 1987) As Smith explains: "The movement of research is from a women's account of her everyday experience to exploring *from that perspective*, the generalizing and generalized relations in which each individual's everyday world is embedded." (Smith 1987:185) This research can also provide groundwork for the exploration of the social organization of knowledge, of ideas, concepts, vocabularies, images, to reveal "who produces what for whom, where the social forms of consciousness come from." (Smith 1987:54)¹

Experience and meaning are thus considered in their social dimensions. Experience here refers to the subjective understandings of the women involved in this research, but also to the larger social relations and conditions that circumscribe and define these understandings. Experience is thus treated here as "a point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process." (Smith 1987: 157) According to Smith, this enables us:

¹ For example, in her research project on the work that mothers do in relation to their children's schooling, Smith (1987) reveals how the concept of "homework" is socially organized. The language of the school, which is itself organized professionally and bureaucratically, is an ideology, a discourse that defines and determines the role and responsibility of women in relations to what happens to their children at school, to their "performance" and "fate" within that context.

...to see realities as social and as arising in an ongoing organization of practices that continually and routinely reaffirm a world in common at the most basic grounding of our life in the concrete daily realities as well as in more complex social forms. Our world is continually brought into being as it is and as it is becoming, in the daily practices of actual individuals. (Smith 1987:125)

This dialectic between women's personal and social experiences is important, but the complexity of explicating, interpreting or defining this important relationship in any final way places such a task beyond the scope of the present research. This study limits itself to revealing what young Canadian women have to say about their experiences, their thoughts, and their feelings about feminism and the women's movement. It seeks to provide some preliminary insights that may be valuable for further research on the realities of young women's lives and the understanding of the larger processes and relations in which their experience is embedded. (Smith 1987)

Overall, a feminist sociological approach allows for a contextualized analysis grounded in women's experience, one in which women are addressed as the authoritative speakers of their lives and as social actors who give meaning to and actually construct the social world around them. This inductive method of inquiry provides a glimpse into these women's accounts of their everyday lives and their experience of feminism and the women's movement. However, while this approach allows for the exploration of young women's experience, it does not provide an understanding of how their age cohorts,

educational experience and identity or the social and historical characteristics of social movements shape their relation to the women's movement. As I began the analysis of the women's accounts, it became evident that several issues which were raised by the participants had to be understood from additional perspectives. Consequently, I returned to the sociological literature on the subject of political involvement, collective action and the concept of generation for analyses which were consistent with Smith's orientation. Two perspectives seemed relevant: those of Melucci (1989) and Mannheim (1952). First, Melucci, like Smith, conceives of individuals as social actors who create and interpret their worlds. His work on social movements provides a useful analysis of collective action as a process which develops collective identity, critical cognitive frameworks and new cultural forms and practices which support social activism. Second, understanding the concept of political generations and intergenerational relations, as developed by Mannheim, is helpful in grasping young women's experience and their need to rethink feminism and the women's movement as members of a specific generation.

Collective Identity, Participation and Collective Action

Alberto Melucci's work on social movements and individual needs in contemporary society provides some useful insights. More specifically, his analysis of collective identity, modes of participation in social movement activism

and the emergence of new types of collective action, are fruitful.

First, Melucci provides a valuable analysis and definition of collective action and collective identity. In his view, collective action can be understood on three levels: the mobilization potential which rests on “a negotiated view, among a number of individuals, of the opportunities for and the constraints upon action”; on existing networks where “individuals interact, influence each other, negotiate and hence establish conceptual and motivational frameworks for action”; and on the motivation to participate which is not solely individual but is developed through these interactions. (Melucci 1989:30) Through such interactions, individuals come to see themselves as collective actors and develop a collective identity which is a necessary precondition for participation in collective action and social movements. Melucci defines collective identity as:

...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. (Melucci 1989:34)

Collective identity is a process, based on the development of common cognitive frameworks in relation to the objectives, strategies and area of action, on the interactions between individuals who negotiate and make decisions, and on the emotional investments of individuals which allow them to identify to one another. (Melucci 1989:35)

Second, Melucci looks at social factors that influence the emergence of

“new social movements” and the participation of individuals in collective action. He argues that the manner and length of an individual’s involvement can be explained by different social factors such as the access to a range of social resources including: information, education, employment, social networks, and professional and communicative skills. (Melucci 1989:35) Individuals participate in collective action for personal reasons, because they are confronted by the contradictions of the system, but also because they have access to resources which allow them to evaluate the benefits of participation. (Melucci 1989:216) An individual’s position in the social structure will thus present certain possibilities for involvement in collective action and in the construction of collective identity. (Melucci 1989: 53-4) Melucci states:

For example, studies show that militants and activists in social movements are typically recruited from those who are highly integrated into the social structure, play a central role in the networks to which they belong, and have at their disposal substantial cognitive and social resources. (Melucci 1989:35)

Two main social locations typically produce involvement in “new social movements” like the women’s, youth, peace and environmental movements. (Melucci 1989:52-5) First, the new middle class, working in advanced technological sectors based on information, in human service professions, and in the public sector, is mostly composed of highly educated individuals who enjoy relative economic security, are well and highly integrated in social institutions and have had previous membership in networks and organizations.

These individuals have a tendency to participate in earlier phases of mobilization due to their “central location” which gives them access to resources in terms of education and professional and social abilities. Second, marginal and peripheral groups (students, the unemployed, the retired, youth, housewives) have a tendency to get involved in existing waves of mobilization, though their membership is more temporary. Students, as “affluent marginals” have access to knowledge resources, social networks and leadership positions in their local environment; their capacity to participate in collective action thus depends on their exposure and access to “the core information resources of complex societies”. The capacity of more marginal and deprived groups for involvement is based more in their exclusion from power and their vulnerability to economic crisis. The individuals in this last group “become involved more slowly, for shorter periods of time, and at levels of participation which have lower costs.” (Melucci 1989:36)

Finally, Melucci offers some interesting insights into the emergence of new types of collective action in the so-called “new social movements”. In complex societies, collective action takes place and develops increasingly outside the boundaries of actual political systems and organizations and creates “new spaces, which function as a genuine sub-system. These social spaces are the products of different forms of behaviour which the system is unable to integrate, and include not only conflictual action but also deviant behaviour and cultural experimentation.” (Melucci 1989: 56) After decades of high levels of

mobilization, collective action, in the 1980s, took place in more “submerged networks”, which functioned at the level of everyday life. Here individuals and groups created new meanings and cognitive frameworks as they shared information and invested themselves in alternative types of relationships and practices. While some of these groups did mobilize occasionally on specific issues, their participation was limited and temporary. In a period of movement latency, these networks acted as “cultural laboratories”. Melucci states:

In the 1980s, collective action came to be based on ‘movement areas’. These take the form of networks composed of a multiplicity of groups that are dispersed, fragmented and submerged in everyday life, and which act as cultural laboratories...The latent movement areas create new cultural codes and enable individuals to put them into practice. (Melucci 1989:60)

Recently, action at the personal level has come to the fore as individuals and groups attempt to “practice directly and personally the innovations in daily life.” (Melucci 1989:71) The focus of collective concern has shifted towards daily life, personal relationships, and the creation of new meanings. Collective action manifests itself increasingly in a latent form through “submerged networks”. This type of action provokes “a molecular change which is cultural in the anthropological sense: an alteration of daily life, of ways of living, and forms of social and personal relationships.” (Melucci 1989:77) However, this does not mean that the movement is inactive for as Melucci states:

...there exists a physiological link between the visibility and latency of movements... Latency does not mean inactivity. Rather, the potential for resistance or opposition is sewn into the very fabric of daily life...movements live in another dimension: in the everyday network of social relations, in the capacity and will to reappropriate space and time, and in the attempt to practice alternative life-styles. This dimension is not marginal or residual. Rather, it is the appropriate response to new forms of control that no longer correspond solely to state action. Resistance and conflict also operate in this molecular dimension as well as bring about important changes. Paradoxically, the latency of the movement is its effective strength. (Melucci 1989:71)

In conclusion, Melucci's (1989) work on social movements provides some valuable insights for the present study on young women and feminism. I use his analysis of the different social factors and conditions that play a role in an individual's potential and motives for participation in collective action, and in the construction of collective identity. Through this framework, I try to understand young women's educational experience and their social location as students or "affluent marginals", their access to resources of knowledge and social networks, their common cognitive frameworks, and their emotional investment in a feminist identity. Melucci's analysis of the emergence of new types of collective action in "new social movements" will also be used to examine the participants' involvement in the more latent forms and practices of the women's movement and the mobilization potential of this younger generation of women.

Political Generations and the Women's Movement

Young women who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s had formative experiences that shaped their definitions of, and relationships to, feminism and the contemporary women's movement in a particular way. (Whittier 1995) Understanding the formation and persistence of political generations can assist in interpreting the experience of this younger generation and their attempts to give new meanings to the women's movement and women's issues.

The concept of political generations stems from Mannheim's (1952) essay on "the problem of generations." He suggests that individuals who are born at the same time share a common experience of the world. (Mannheim 1952) Not only do members of the same generation share the same age, they are also predisposed to certain experiences, modes of thought and historically relevant types of action because of their similar location in the social and historical process. (Mannheim 1952) Formative experience and interpretive frameworks can be shared by otherwise isolated individuals who do not necessarily come into personal contact. (Mannheim 1952) Even though a generation is never completely homogenous, common experiences bind the individuals together as a "political generation", or with a "collective identity", which differentiates them from other generations. (Mannheim 1952; Whittier 1995) Thus, within each actual generation, various groups with different ways of approaching and understanding their common experiences are constituted, forming "generation

units" (Mannheim 1952) or "micro-cohorts" (Whittier 1995). According to Mannheim (1952), an "actual generation" is formed depending on the extent to which the participants are involved in the social currents of their time in a passive or active manner. The latent potentialities of a specific generation depend on the "prevailing tempo and impact of social change" and on a variety of social and cultural factors. (Mannheim 1952:310)

In relation to the women's movement, the concept of political generations suggests that age cohorts of women with different formative and "politicizing experiences" will have different "collective identities" and hold different political outlooks about feminism, the women's movement, and its modes of action.

(Whittier 1995; Schneider 1988) As Schneider states:

...the different responses of each of these generations to the ongoing feminist movement is a reflection of their unique set of historical experiences....young women are, necessarily, likely to view feminist issues and their relationship to the political domain through a different lens than the first generation of women, however diverse, touched by and/or active in the women's movement. (Schneider 1988:9,13)

Not only is the women's movement affected by the external social and political context, it is also marked by the impact of this context on the collective identities of different political generations. (Whittier 1995: 243-4)

As each generation comes forward, new understandings, developments and practices follow as its members come into fresh contact with the "accumulated heritage" of the past. (Mannheim 1952) Thus, as a new political

generation enters the stage, it asks new questions about the women's movement that often lead to a renegotiation of collective identity and to transformations in its definition and strategy. (Whittier 1995; Schneider 1988) Thus, different outlooks, responses and identities are developed that can have an effect on the direction of the movement, for "what it means to call oneself 'feminist' varies greatly over time, often leading to conflict over movement goals, values, ideology, strategy, or individual behaviour." (Whittier 1995:15; Schneider 1988) Generations continually interact and these "intergenerational relations are characterized by cooperation and connection as well as discontinuity and conflict..." (Whittier 1995:233) While the transmission of the cultural and social heritage from one generation to the next may involve conflict and misunderstandings, it sometimes produces a positive re-evaluation of the state of affairs. This re-evaluation may often be a "condition of continuing life". (Mannheim 1952) Overall then, intergenerational dynamics as well as social context, influence the way social movements change as well as persist. As Schneider suggests:

...within a social movement, awareness of historical significance in second and later generations is, at least, partially a function of the early generation's ability to reach and mobilize the later ones and partially the result of specific historical factors that uniquely impinge on those later generations. (Schneider 1988: 7)

Thus, the emergence of political generations and interactions between generations are useful in understanding the shifts and continuity in collective

identity and social movement activism. As Whittier states: "If we are to understand how social movements endure and how they are transformed, we must understand the formation and persistence of political generations and the processes of intergenerational cooperation and conflict." (Whittier 1995: 258) While everything cannot be explained by a generational approach, and while a multiplicity of factors, such as class, sexual identity, ethnicity, race, ideology, and personal experience can also shape collective identity, political generations obviously play an important role in the continuity and change of social movements. (Whittier 1995; Mannheim 1952) According to Whittier, we have to listen to what generations have to say for the "task of thinking, speaking, and listening across generational lines is critical to the longterm survival of the women's movement." (Whittier 1995:254)

RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCESS

The In-depth Interview as the Selected Method for Data Collection: A Literature Review

In order to explore the experience of and meaning attached by Canadian women in their twenties to feminism and the women's movement today, I have chosen to conduct in-depth, open-ended interviews. A literature review on this method of data collection reveals that this type of interview is an appropriate and powerful tool for research that seeks to explore participants' views, experience and beliefs, expressed in their own terms. (Anderson and Jack 1991; McCracken 1988; Anderson et al. 1990) It values individuals as authoritative speakers who are able to reflect on their experience, and define the issues and conditions that circumscribe their lives. As Taylor and Bogdan note: "The hallmark of in-depth qualitative interviewing is learning about what is important in the minds of the informants: *their* meanings, perspectives, and definitions; how *they* view, categorize, and experience the world." (Taylor and Bogdan 1984:88)

In in-depth interviews, the researcher explores some general themes with open-ended questions that encourage participants to respond in a very informal and unstructured manner and allows them to set the topics of discussion, so that "the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it." (Marshall and Rossman

1995:80) The researcher's role is limited to probing cautiously to encourage and help individuals to elaborate, identify, and clarify their feelings, thoughts and views. (Weiss 1994; Taylor and Bogdan 1984) In this way, the researcher must listen carefully and sympathetically, pick up markers, key terms and implications in the conversation that could be explored further, manage transitions between different topics of discussion, and create an atmosphere that allows the participant to express herself as comfortably and freely as possible. (Weiss 1994; Gauthier 1992; Anderson and Jack 1991; McCracken 1988) All questions are formulated from the subject's own accounts and interpretations so as not to influence the direction of the interview process and to respect and value their perspectives. (Anderson and Jack 1991) This gives a more active role to the participant in the research process and in the construction of knowledge and allows for a more collaborative and interactive relationship between the researcher and the participants. (Anderson and Jack 1991; Gauthier 1992; Reinharz 1983) Thus, the in-depth, open-ended interview is a research method that can help uncover and explore women's views and experiences. As Anderson et al. point out:

The oral interview not only allows women to articulate their own experiences but also to reflect upon the meaning of those experiences for them. It provides a picture of how a woman understands herself within her world, where and how she places value, and what particular meanings she attaches to her actions and locations in the world. (Anderson et al. 1990:102)

In short, this kind of interview approaches participants as thoughtful and knowledgeable social actors, and makes their experience and perspectives the starting point of inquiry. The investigative technique of the in-depth interview is thus congruent with the theoretical assumptions about reflexivity and agency outlined by Smith (1987; 1990a).

Moreover, considering the lack of Canadian research in this area, this interview method is valuable in uncovering a variety of issues useful for future research. In-depth interviews allow for the collection of large amounts of information in a very short time. The extensive data collected in this way, offers a broad and interesting basis for the current analysis. Overall, I believe that open-ended and in-depth qualitative interviews are a very appropriate method considering the research question and exploratory nature of this study.

Selection of Participants

a) The significance of selecting from a population of university women

Taking into account constraints of time, funds and mobility, I had to focus my research on a small sample of twenty-year old Canadian women. Since universities are often composed of significant populations of women in this age bracket, it was deemed useful and appropriate to select participants from this milieu. Moreover, university women have a greater chance of being exposed to

feminism through their education, and their access to resources and networks make them of particular interest for my study. The literature also indicates a tendency to apply the label "post-feminist" to this group of women because of their apparent lack of interest and involvement in women's issues. (Schneider 1988; Whittier 1995) Others have also pointed out young women students' fear of feminism. Hogeland, reflecting on her experience as a professor of English and women's studies in the US, indicates that this is a reality she and others have faced:

I began thinking about young women's fear of feminism, as I always do in the fall, while I prepared to begin another year of teaching courses in English and women's studies. I was further prodded when former students of mine, now graduate students elsewhere and teaching for the first time, phoned in to complain about their young women students' resistance to feminism. (Hogeland 1994:18)

The study of a sample of this particular group of young women can therefore provide interesting insights on their generation's perspectives on feminism and the women's movement.

b) Selection of the sample

Participation in this project was on a voluntary basis. The selection of participants was done through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling relies on referrals to find available participants for the research and usually starts by

asking well-situated people to suggest the names of possible subjects. (Patton 1990; Li 1981) As Li states: "A snowball takes the imagery of a snowball accumulating more snow as it rolls down the hill. In the same way, a researcher is hoping to gather more cases through referrals, in the process of studying available subjects." (Li 1981: 31) Using this approach, I identified a few informants who were in contact with this population of women such as university professors and students. They supplied the names of women who would be potentially interested in being interviewed and participating in my research. During the interviews, the participants also supplied the names of friends and acquaintances who might be available or could be helpful in finding some women to be interviewed for my study. In the end, I managed to find and interview four francophone female students and four anglophone female students studying at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. In addition, I had two pre-test interview subjects. Such a number is considered very adequate when doing in-depth or intensive interviews. (McCracken 1988; Taylor and Bogdan 1984; Weiss 1994) As McCracken states:

...qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it. It is, in other words, much more intensive than extensive in its objectives...The selection of respondents must be made accordingly. The first principle is that "less is more." It is important to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many of them. For many research projects, eight respondents will be perfectly sufficient. (McCracken 1988:17)

At the time of the interviews, the women were aged between twenty-one and twenty-seven years old and were studying in the disciplines of theatre, french literature, cultural and historical geography, psychology, social work, industrial relations, sports administration and chemistry. They were pursuing their degrees at a variety of universities: Université du Québec à Montréal, University of Ottawa, University of New Brunswick, Queen's University and Université du Québec à Hull. These women are from different cultural backgrounds: Franco-ontarian (Ottawa), Québécois (Hull, Mont-Laurier), Haitian, British, and English-Canadian (Ottawa, Maritimes). At the time of the interviews, four women mentioned they were single, five women were involved in relationships, and one woman was married. This sample of women, while relatively small, contains a good variety of cultural backgrounds, educational interests and personal experiences which seemed appropriate for the aim of this study.

c) Comments on snowball sampling techniques

The use of snowball sampling for the selection of participants from a particular social milieu demands that attention be given to issues of confidentiality when presenting women's accounts. Since the women interviewed were selected through referrals, I exercised discretion in presenting their accounts, for it is possible that some women might be able to identify the words,

thoughts and profile of other participants. In using snowball sampling techniques it is also possible that a participant may be preoccupied with the way she presents herself or may censor herself because she was referred. (Weiss 1994) I tried to circumvent this problem by assuring the participants that their identities were going to be kept entirely confidential and that they could express themselves freely without any judgment on my part.

Furthermore, the use of snowball sampling, the limited number of women interviewed, and their specific educational background means that this research can not pretend to address the diversity of experience of this generation of women; nor can I claim that the accounts of the women in this study are representative of their generation. The results and analysis, therefore, refer only to the specific realities and accounts of these ten women and cannot be generalized to larger populations of young women. (Strauss and Corbin 1990) For these reasons, this study is only a point of entry; an analysis of a few, but nonetheless a significant few young Canadian women's views on the relation of feminism to their everyday lives.

Conducting the Interviews

Each woman who participated in the interview process was fully informed of the nature, purpose and objectives of the research, the type of interview, her role in the research process, and the time needed for participation. This

preliminary contact was done by telephone in an informal and collegial manner. Before starting the interview, participants were advised that all interviews were completely voluntary, that they could withdraw from participating at any time during the interview process and that flexibility about the time, place, and length of interviews would be granted. The participants could refuse to answer any questions and they could ask questions or demand further information if the need arose. All of the women interviewed were assured of the complete confidentiality of the information obtained during interviews, research, and analysis. A consent form was signed by both the participant and myself. (See Appendix I) One interview was conducted with each woman and lasted from one hour and a half to three hours depending on what the women had to say and their individual schedules. The interviews were tape-recorded with their consent and took place either at the woman's residence or mine. At the end of the interviews, the women were given the option of choosing their pseudonym for the thesis. All the women, except one, eagerly did so. Furthermore, I conducted two pilot or pre-test interviews before engaging in the research interview process itself and the recorded tapes were analysed with input from my committee to assess my listening and follow-up skills. The interviews and their transcription took about six months to complete.

The interview was conducted through open-ended questions in which issues of feminism, activism, women's movements (identification, participation, knowledge, social change, generational change, etc.) as well as more personal

topics related to their everyday lives, such as career, relationships, marriage, children, sexuality, images of women and femininity, were explored as they appeared spontaneously in their conversation. There were no preformed questions or any order of topics followed during the interview even though I had elaborated a simple thematic interview guide to help me during the interview process. (See Appendix 2) To ensure that the women expressed their experience, their meanings in their own terms, the first question was very open-ended and the interview proceeded inductively from there, allowing me to formulate questions stemming from participants' own interpretations and accounts. (Anderson and Jack 1991) The women were made aware from the start that it was *their* experiences, *their* points of view that were to be privileged and that would guide the interview process. They were also given ample opportunity to explain and clarify what they had said. (Taylor and Bogdan 1984)

During the interview process, I tried to be sensitive, attentive, receptive, and I tried to convey an attitude of acceptance, politeness and respect for each individual's pace. (Marshall and Rossman 1995) To encourage reciprocity, sharing of experience and commonalities, the participants were invited to ask me questions (very few actually did so) although the focus was on the participant's meanings and experiences. (Minister 1991) Since some importance was given in this research to women as authoritative speakers, I encouraged women to express themselves in their own terms so as to allow the "passionate participation of the knower in the act of knowing." (Du Bois 1983:113; Maynard

1994; McCracken 1988; Anderson and Jack 1991) In order to create a context in which the women felt free to express themselves and their experience, I tried to use more personal, direct, informal and nonjudgemental ways of speaking and interacting. (Reinharz 1983; Taylor & Bogdan 1984) For example, I encouraged a more conversational rather than a formal interrogative style in the interview; I used the women's own terms or language to formulate questions; I refrained from using abstract, ambiguous, and theoretical terms; I tried to be receptive and not convey any verbal or nonverbal signs of agreement or disagreement in regards to their accounts; and I fostered a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere by respecting each participant's style and rhythm during the interview.

Proceeding in such a manner meant the interview could be as flexible, dynamic, egalitarian, nonobtrusive and nondirective as possible: a process that encouraged collaboration, authenticity, reciprocity and intersubjectivity. (Minister 1991; Skeggs 1994; Anderson and Jack 1991; McCracken 1988; Reinharz 1983; Acker et al. 1983; Taylor and Bogdan 1984) Acker et al. describe this interview process:

The research process becomes a dialogue between the researcher and researched, an effort to explore and clarify the topic under discussion, to clarify and expand understandings; both are assumed to be individuals who reflect upon their experience and who can communicate those reflections. This is inherent in the situation; neither the subjectivity of the researcher nor the subjectivity of the researched can be eliminated in the process. (Acker et al. 1983:427)

Such a method of data collection allowed a more contextual, intensive and reciprocal relationship between both the participants and myself.

This focus on the interview process sought to address and minimize the risks of error and bias that are sometimes linked with the use of qualitative methods, more particularly interviews, such as: interference of emotional factors (for example, feelings of embarrassment), preoccupation with personal image, distortions, fabrications, deception, omissions, misunderstandings, influence of the interviewer's attitude, reactions, tone on the respondent's answers, and suggestive or leading questions of the interviewer. (Taylor and Bogdan 1984; Newman 1991; Marshall and Rossman 1995; Weiss 1994; Lofland and Lofland 1984) Moreover, I kept some field notes in which I assessed and reflected upon my own feelings, concerns and abilities as a novice interviewer and researcher. This allowed me to better evaluate and develop my skills as I went through the interviews. For example, I learned to express myself more clearly and with more confidence, to ask simpler and more specific questions, to probe more adequately and deeply into these women's experiences and thoughts, and to be more cautious of suggestive or leading questions or responses. Overall, I believe that I approached the interviews and the women's narratives with sincerity, open-mindedness and thoroughness and created a setting which allowed the participants to be at ease in expressing their many ideas, feelings and opinions. (Lofland and Lofland 1984)

Comments on the Interview Process

I found that the in-depth interview was an appropriate and fruitful source of data for this type of research. Interviews offered a lot of flexibility and possibilities to explore the varied dimensions of the experience of the participants and allowed access to more spontaneous, direct, personal and in-depth information about their thoughts, feelings and opinions. (Marshall and Rossman 1995; Gauthier 1992) Through the interview process, it was possible to gather large amounts of information in a short period of time and it gave many possibilities to clarify, to specify and explore subjects of discussion on the spot leading to a more complete and relevant amount of information on the topic at hand. (Marshall and Rossman 1995; Gauthier 1992) The participants took the time they needed to reflect, to ask questions and to express their many opinions, thoughts and feelings. Any incomprehension on both our parts could be remedied right on the spot and women had the chance both during the interview and at the end, to come back to what they had previously said to add some comments or clarify the meaning of their words. At the end of each interview, I asked: Would you like to add something, come back on something you said or forgot to say or do you have any comments about the questions or the interview itself? While a few women wanted to clarify some comments they made or wanted to make a final statement, most of the women felt they had talked quite enough and were satisfied with what they had said. Also, I had the opportunity to

probe carefully in order to help the participants to expand and define some of their thoughts and feelings and unravel some of the underlying assumptions of their accounts. Furthermore, the in-depth interview gave the opportunity for these women to express themselves in their own terms, at their own pace and to value the information, knowledge, and feelings they brought forward during the interview process. For example, here are the comments Eloise made at the end of her interview:

I don't think I have something to add...(Laugh) I talked so much. I can't think of anything else to say. Your questions were very interesting, very open-minded questions. That was good. Easy-going. It was fun. It's good because it's not strict. I feel I'm allowed to say what I want and that it's not bad what I say.

In this sense, the interview method offered excellent conditions and possibilities to explore the participants views and experiences.

Overall, the experience of the interview process was an interesting and enriching experience. These face to face encounters were very sympathetic and the women involved provided some important insights and reflections and brought to this experience of exploration and discovery a lot of meaning, openness and interest. However, some women did show a little bit more hesitancy and uneasiness during the interview process for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they didn't have any knowledge of the topic at hand or they didn't know where they stood on different issues. Some women felt that they were talking too much and were getting off topic, and some were not used to being the

center of attention. I tried to overcome some of these difficulties by making the interview process as comfortable as possible and respecting each woman's pace. I reassured them that they could take as long as they wanted to reflect or answer the questions, that their knowledge and opinions, however limited or ambivalent, were all very valuable and that they shouldn't worry about the length, precision or direction of their answers. It is important to mention, however, that some women were more articulate than others and had more to say about the topics at hand which did affect the overall balance of the presentation of accounts. In particular, two of the participants, who happen to be english-speaking, did not have much knowledge about women's issues and the feminist movement and therefore did not have much to share and discuss about the research topic. For this reason, it may seem that the francophone women have a stronger voice in the accounts than the anglophone participants.

Moreover, the interview process was a good first experience for me as an interviewer and collaborator in the research process. It allowed me to experience the intensive aspects of qualitative interview research and to explore and evaluate my skills in such an open-ended, unstructured interview context: for example, creating an atmosphere and attitude of collaboration, acceptance and openness to women's narratives, an awareness of my own position and role in the interview process, and my ability to articulate ideas, to concentrate, to formulate questions and probe deeper into these women's experience. This experience also opened my eyes to the complexities, the relevance and benefits

of using such an in-depth and qualitative approach for doing social research. In addition, it allowed me to reflect upon my own experience and understandings of the subject and to gain a deeper awareness of the varied dimensions, issues and realities that circumscribe young women's views and experiences. It was also a good experience for some of the women who collaborated. As Karissa pointed out in her final comments:

I think a lot of the questions, a lot of the things we were talking about, my initial reaction is kind of changing once we get more talking about it and I kind of realize yeah but you know... It's opening my eyes a lot...But as we talk about it more, it sort of comes out...I think I actually said a lot of things and I've learned a lot. Yeah like just, you made me think a lot about a lot of things and yeah, it's interesting...It was a really good learning experience for me.

Method of Data Analysis

Once I completed the interviews, I transcribed the material from audiotape to verbatim typed notes. First, the material was classified in files which contained the transcripts of each interview. Second, excerpts of each individual interview were brought together under the different themes explored during the interviews such as knowledge and definition of the women's movement, identification as feminists, relevance and opinion of the women's movement, women's issues and social change, generational change, participation in the women's movement,

family background, marriage, children and relationships, images of women and femininity, sexuality, career, work and studies.

Third, efforts were made to summarize the content of what women said about a specific theme and its subsequent signification, attention being given to similarities but also variations and nuances in women's narratives, thus addressing the full range of their views and experiences and minimizing the risk of bias in the interpretation and analysis. (Weiss 1995; Kirby and McKenna 1989) I then sifted out tendencies and meanings by comparing and questioning the data in order to identify "the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by the participants in the setting." (Marshall and Rossman 1995:114)

Finally, links and relationships were elaborated between diverse categories and areas for an inclusive integration that "...knits into a single coherent story the otherwise isolated areas of analysis..." (Weiss 1994:160; McCracken 1988; Jayaratne and Stewart 1991) At this point, I moved inductively from participants' accounts to the literature on the women's movement, political generations and social movements to look for helpful concepts to aid my understanding and interpretation. Throughout the analytical and writing-up phases, importance was given to hearing women's voices in the account, to acknowledging them as conscious, active agents and knowers of their lives, to giving accurate descriptions of their experience and to making the links between their personal and social experiences. (Acker et al. 1983)

It is important to mention that while I did explore a variety of themes with

the women during the interviews, there was enough material based on their discussion of feminism, the women's movement, social and generational change, to justify the focus on these topics in the present study. The rest of their accounts about more personal issues linked to their everyday lives, while useful and instructive, did not, in the end, form the basis of any specific section or reference in this work.

PART II: EXPLORING YOUNG WOMEN'S ACCOUNTS

The in-depth interviews that I conducted with the ten participants involved in this study, provided abundant information on the experiences of these young women and the meaning they give to feminism and the women's movement. The following chapters will explore their accounts about their knowledge and definitions of feminism and the women's movement, their identification as feminists, the relevance of the movement in their lives, their perspectives on women's issues and change, and the context and nature of their involvement in women's causes. Before presenting these accounts, I will present a profile of the participants which briefly outlines the participants' academic and professional interests and goals, their family background and influences, and the context of their lives at the time of the research.

CONTEXTUAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS: A PROFILE

A Student's Point of View and Experience

The women interviewed for this research were actively pursuing post-secondary education in various fields or had just completed a program of study. While some women looked forward to pursuing their studies in the future, others were exploring their options and interests in terms of jobs and career. As a

result, several were very preoccupied with their studies, their future in the workplace, or both.

When asked about their academic interests and goals and what they hoped to accomplish, they responded in general terms that: they are studying because they want to make a difference in the world; they want to pursue social justice in its many different forms; they want to make sense of it all; they want to give back to others the knowledge that they have acquired; they want to do something that they love and that they are good at; they want to prove themselves to the world, to do something with their lives and feel in control; and finally, to have a tool and some power to influence the world around them. Some women acknowledged that their studies had broadened their knowledge and their horizons and given them a general overview of what exists out there as well as some tools to successfully face the realities of today.

Many of these women were looking to pursue their interests and to deepen the knowledge they had acquired through their studies in jobs and careers. Their job aspirations were diverse and they aimed high. They want jobs to be fulfilling; to give them the opportunity to exploit their potential and abilities; to make them feel intelligent and useful; to allow them to have fun; to motivate them and earn them respect from the significant persons in their lives. Some women want to do something they were trained to do while holding on to their beliefs, bestowing knowledge, influencing and changing attitudes and improving society. Finally, other women want to find something that would enable them to

find a balance between personal needs and career expectations. Self-reliance, self-actualization and valorization, fulfillment, autonomy, integrity, honesty, flexibility, control: these mattered more for these young women than money and prestige. Each, in her own way, hoped to pursue these goals after completing her studies by, for example: travelling outside Canada to get in touch with other people's realities; teaching abroad; becoming a therapist working with women; pursuing employment in the pharmaceutical industry; defending the interests of part-time workers, women, mothers and others in the interest of social justice; becoming an industrial psychologist; creating an international organization; becoming a historical and cultural consultant or researcher; or opening a business related to sports.

Some expressed ambivalence as well as eagerness about their eventual transition to the workplace. While some had very definite goals in this area, others had yet to define precisely where they wanted to go or still had difficulty thinking about the future at all. While some were eager to pursue further studies or work, some were apprehensive about the future because they had been immersed in the school environment for so long and had been so defined by their status as students. Rachel, for example, mentioned that she needs to stop and enjoy life more, develop her social relations and figure out who she is and who she wants to be before engaging in any career. Francesca expressed the need to pursue her studies and career while keeping a balance in her life: to achieve the best results possible, while maintaining the other things that matter

to her such as family, friends, health, and her partner. Finally, some of the participants expressed apprehension and insecurity about the economic conditions of the 1990s with cutbacks, major changes in work and a lack of job security and opportunities. However, while some of these women feel tremendous pressure to get their show on the road and feel the heavy burden of social expectations and the demands of an increasingly competitive world as they completed or had recently completed their education, others were apprehensive about the future without being overwhelmed. They believed that if they gave priority to their own needs, if they were happy and fulfilled as individuals and invested the right amount of time and energy, the rest would eventually fall into place.

Overall, there was a sense that these young women were all struggling to define their own identities and needs as they pursued their studies and reflected upon their goals and aspirations for the future. Their accounts were filled with much commitment, enthusiasm and idealism as well as a hard realism. For some young women who were still involved in their studies, the future, in terms of jobs and career, was still a somewhat distant reality. For others, who had almost completed or had finished their studies, this transition was very real: they were examining their many options and were searching for, or finding, their own personal direction as they made their way into the future.

Family Background and Other Influences

Participants' accounts suggest that these young women have come of age in a period of transformation in the family and in gender relations. While seven women grew up in a typical nuclear family, the others were brought up in a single-parent household with their mother, with divorced parents, or in a reconstituted family. Four women felt they grew up in what was already a fairly liberal and egalitarian setting where there was no real gendered division of labour, where both parents worked and shared household tasks and decisions, and where children were not brought up in very stereotypical ways. However, two participants talked about more traditional values and roles in their families: differential treatment of brothers and sisters, a prevalent sexism on the part of the father, more traditional and stereotypical beliefs of what men and women can accomplish, and so forth. One woman mentioned that her family became more egalitarian as she was growing up, as her mother, in her own struggles for equality and identity, questioned, reevaluated and changed her relationships and her role within the family. Thus, some felt their families allowed them to fulfill their potential fully without any resistance or restrictions, with positive encouragement for their accomplishments as equals with their brothers, and never felt like second-class citizens. On the other hand, others have had to live with, and some have stood up against, inherent sexism in their families and a more stereotypical upbringing. Finally, two women mentioned that they carry a

heavy burden because of a family history of divorce or other difficulties and expressed their anguish and fear of commitment because they do not want to repeat the experiences of their parents.

Whatever their family background, most participants mentioned that the women's movement was never directly discussed at home, even though Laurie, for example, mentioned that her parents were always very involved in politics and that her mother had participated in a women's group. Some women attributed this to the fact that their parents had a different mindset, that they were more traditional in their views and that they did not really know what was going on in terms of women's issues and the feminist movement. However, although mothers never openly declared themselves feminists as the participants were growing up, others believed that their families were feminist in many of their practices, relationships and beliefs because there was an openness to women's issues and realities and an underlying belief in women's equality with men. Although Aretha's mother identified herself as a feminist, she never actually bestowed this belief on daughter. Aretha got a non-traditional upbringing, but it was not a particularly feminist one. Finally, Aline, who was brought up mostly by her mother, says her mother is a feminist who taught her to be autonomous, honest, to respect herself and not depend on any man or other individuals.

Some women, during the interviews, acknowledged their mothers' past or present struggle for equality and identity and admired their courage and their

success in achieving these goals. Their mothers remained an important influence in their lives. When I asked these women about important influences, many referred in one way or another to their mothers: to their strong sense of identity, their life experience, their personal crises and struggles, their openness to women's issues and change, their independence, the social values they bestowed on them, or their efforts to make their children confident and raising their daughters' consciousness and independence. For some, their mother has been an important role model admired for being able to work, to raise children and maintain good relationships. While other women did not see their mothers as strong role models in their lives and would not want to be like them, they still recognized their mothers' influence, their mothers' struggle to raise children as well as they could, and their mothers' courage in dealing with their own personal issues including for some, the difficulties of separation and divorce.

Finally, as I asked these young women about other important events, people and influences in their lives, they mentioned a variety of experiences dealing with: other family members; a feminist sister; inspirational female professors and teachers; experience in a private school for girls; being in enriched classes in high school; difficult experiences in adolescence; travelling and exchange programs; sports and the self-confidence which it promotes; women in non-traditional careers and fields; books; therapists; being in the workforce at an early age; and moving out on their own. While some had difficulty thinking about any specific events or people, others clearly related

some crucial events and identified some people as having had an impact on their outlook and experiences today.

Overall, most women discussed their background and experiences with apparent honesty and openness. They acknowledged the many events, influences, and people, that have shaped their lives and played a role in who they are today. With their different backgrounds, they were striving to make their own way, to recognize and develop their own visions and needs as women and individuals.

Life Today

No doubt, the main concern of these women at the time of the research was their studies and getting the show on the road in terms of jobs and careers. However, many women were also taking some time to reflect on their lives, to develop their social networks, their friendships and their intimate relationships with their partners, and were engaging in many leisurely activities, enjoying life and pursuing their many passions and interests.

While some of the women interviewed were still living with their parents, most of them were living on their own or with friends and roommates, and a few were living with a long-time partner or husband. While a few had recently become involved in a relationship, a small number had had the same partner for many years or had been recently married. As some women were planning their

lives and their future with their partners, others were less interested in serious relationships and were doing some serious soul-searching: they wanted first and foremost to discover who they are as individuals and assess all their different needs in order to become self-reliant and self-confident. Some women who were involved in more casual relationships, sought to have fun and to feel free, to explore their many desires and needs even though many of them looked forward to eventually "settling down".

In conclusion, it seems that these women were at a point in their lives where they were giving priority to their individual needs and goals. They talked about self-actualization, self-reliance, self-confidence, happiness and fulfillment as individuals and finding their own personal direction for the future. They were thus focusing on developing themselves through their studies and relationships, even as they were thinking and making decisions about the future in terms of jobs and career. Most women mentioned during the interviews that they had not yet felt any particular barriers because they are women, had not been victims of any overt discrimination and felt free to pursue their personal goals and opportunities without any resistance. As we will see later on, this may have an impact on their views about the relevance and importance of collective action and their involvement in a larger women's movement at this specific period in their lives.

WHAT ABOUT FEMINISM?: KNOWLEDGE AND DEFINITION OF THE MOVEMENT

This section seeks to describe the participants' knowledge about feminism and the women's movement and their reflections on how and when they came into contact with them. An exploration of their own definitions of what feminism and the women's movement meant to them and their interest and commitment to women's issues also took place. A brief description of their accounts and the themes that emerged from their discussion of these topics will be presented, allowing for some reflection on how their knowledge, educational experience and social location may play a role in their capacity for participation in the women's movement. As Melucci (1989) argues, how and when individuals get involved in collective action and in the construction of collective identity depends, in part, on their exposure to the contradictions of the system, on their position in the social structure and their access to resources of information, education, employment, social networks, and professional and communicative skills, which allow them to evaluate the benefits of participation.

The Impact of University

Feminism and the women's movement were not really subjects of discussion within these women's families. For almost all of them, knowledge and awareness about women's issues came about at university, in their courses,

readings, discussions with professors, in the papers they wrote and the talks they attended. While very few of them had taken women's studies courses, they were exposed to feminism and women's issues in their different disciplines, in courses such as women and politics, psychology of women, and women's history. Some women felt that there was an increasing effort in their departments to incorporate women's perspectives into the curricula. The overall university culture and experience played an important role for most of these young women's awareness of feminism and women's issues. For example, Naomi stated:

I think I didn't really know about it, I think it really sort of became stronger definitely at university. I went to — University, which can be a very political university or a politically correct university. And really that was when I first really thought about it; and I remember I think it was in a...in a philosophy class, and the T.A. asked in a little seminar: who are feminists?...I think it was certainly in my university career I guess where I had to sort of dismantle a lot of those stereotypes and a lot of those images...I think I really had to really, really look at my background and say "well why should I be thinking this way?". And, you know, that goes for a lot of different things.

Linda did not know exactly where her knowledge of the women's movement came from, but recognized that widening social and educational opportunities had an influence:

... I can't really distinguish a time where it's like boom there it is, women's movement. But I guess you become more aware of it, well I became more aware of it when I went to school. Just being involved with different people who come from different areas and

not having the safety of my parents, like living under my parents roof. Coming out on my own.

Therefore, the university institution and culture were an important means for raising their gender consciousness. It has allowed them to gain some theoretical knowledge about women's issues, to learn through their interactions with others, and thus, to develop their own views and relationship to the movement. These students, as "affluent marginals", have had access to knowledge resources, social networks and contacts and have been exposed, to a certain extent, to the contradictions of the system through their education and environment.

Personal Background and Experiences: Becoming More Sensitized

Some women also related their interest in, and knowledge about, women's issues to personal experiences such as working in a shelter for battered women, or as a school teacher; having experienced discrimination, searching for personal identity, overcoming obstacles; family background or their mother's struggles and transformations which sensitized them to experiences of injustice and to their identities as women. For example, Aretha talked about her experience in high school:

It was an all-male school that began accepting women and it was a seven to one male-female ratio, but there was a lot of opposition to becoming a coed school and especially with the old class teachers.

I mean right out of Dead Poet's Society [a 1980s film about a private school for boys]. And that's when I first realized that there was a real difference here, you know, and the girls were the girls and the boys were the men. You know the way that the teachers talked to the kids and everything else and it made me think wait a minute...And things like marks, I was marked differently...just that's when it really started to make me mad and also not even so much with the faculty but with the boys we went through school with. Again, you know, they were taught to be men... And when you spoke out, you were chastised and I was completely an outcast because of it, but it made me want to speak out more you know. So I guess that's where I started to get angry and then just it kind of went from there....Just as soon as I realized that there's a definite difference here you know. That's when I thought, "Ok, let's think about this, you know. I got some books out and all the rest of it...It sort of progressed through the years...

Other women talked about key people, friends, a feminist mother or sister, or an inspirational professor, who played a role in sharing knowledge and sometimes sparking their interest in women's issues or the women's movement. Two participants also went to a private school for girls where they were introduced to a variety of different perspectives and exposed to a female environment and important role models.

Feminism in the Background: Not a Preoccupation in Their Lives

While some women could identify key people and events in their lives which made them aware of feminism, a few women mentioned that what they knew came from reading magazines and newspapers, listening to television and documentaries, hearing about demonstrations and campaigns, or taking a self-

defence course for example. Two women, Linda and Karissa, mentioned that feminism and the women's movement had not been a central preoccupation. Although they were vaguely aware that the women's movement existed and that some women were fighting for their rights, it was not something they had a strong desire to learn about. As Linda mentioned: "Yeah, I guess it was kind of always there in the background and even now I am not really preoccupied. Like it's not something I think about all the time, like oh I am a woman..."

Knowledge About Feminism and the Women's Movement

When asked about their knowledge of feminism, most responded that they knew more about specific women's issues and realities than about the movement itself. For example, Eloise knew more about women's movements elsewhere than in Canada. Other women said that they knew more about the beginnings of the movement with the suffragettes and about the women's movement's activities in the 1970s and 1980s. Apart from the very little found recently in the mass media, Rachel felt she had not heard much about the movement lately and that people in general did not talk about it as often today. While some women were exposed in their courses to some of its different philosophies or theories, such as maternal feminism, ecofeminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, and equity feminism, they did not have much

knowledge about the actual issues, organization and activities of the movement since most of them had had few contacts or network connections with activists or members of the women's movement. Their contact with and knowledge of feminism and the women's movement therefore remained more theoretical and intellectual. Finally, the two women for whom feminism was not a central preoccupation were more unfamiliar with the movement: they had never really taken any courses that dealt with women's issues and feminism, read many books or articles on the topic or met anyone who was either very interested in feminism or involved in the movement.

Defining the movement: feminism as equality between men and women

For some participants, feminism and the women's movement were hard things to define since they are so varied, they take many forms and can mean different things in different countries. Naomi saw feminism as an ever changing historical process. Her own personal feminism has evolved through the years and will continue to do so as she has new experiences in the future. She observed:

... it's a movement, it's continuously moving, feminism is continuously moving. You look at, you know, all the different philosophies that stem from feminism like ecofeminism or radical feminism, whatever, that, I mean, it's a continually changing thing and so it's a process that goes with the times. As well, my definition

of feminism now might be very different in a few years. I think it will change definitely. It will change and I think my fundamental values that incorporate women's issues will remain the same but my perspective of feminism will evolve...

Some women felt uncomfortable defining feminism because they didn't know what the official definition of feminism was. However, when I asked about what feminism and the women's movement meant for them, no matter how other people had defined it, they said: it is all about equality between men and women; it is about women rallying together to get more power and access; it is about allowing women to get involved, to be represented politically and at a variety of levels; it is about women catching up to men in various aspects of society; it is about women trying to get a safer foothold, getting the same advantages as men and a fair chance in the world; it is about recognizing that women can do as much as men and recognizing their right as women to be considered as good, as intelligent, as strong, as necessary and as important as men. For most of these women, feminism is all about equal chances, equal opportunities, and equal rights. However, while some women talked about equity and equality in the workplace, and about valuing women's work, other participants' definition of feminism seemed much larger. For them, it is a broad and deep movement of women that attempts to reach equality at all levels of society. As Laurie expressed it:

Je pense pas, pour moi, comme vouloir accéder à l'égalité des trucs comme ça, pour moi ça c'est pas le féminisme. Pour moi ça c'est la normalité...pour moi le féminisme, c'est plutôt un mouvement de femmes qui dépasse un peu le fait, qui dépasse l'égalité...plus fondamental...je trouve c'est un peu superficiel, l'égalité c'est vague...tandis que les féministes, le féminisme c'est quelque chose qui peut tenter de rechercher l'égalité mais à tous les niveaux...le rôle de la femme...plus en profondeur pis plus étendu aussi...comme partout, à tous les niveaux de la société, à tous les niveaux de structures familiales...c'est un mouvement qui peut, qui fait en sorte qu'on peut savoir où la femme en est, où la femme s'en va...

When asked about feminism, Aline focused on the struggle against inequity, injustice, paternalism, phallocracy and working towards autonomy, evolution, openness and equality. Marilie associated feminism and the women's movement with groups that are involved politically through lobbying and petitioning for laws to change, others that offer services to women in the form of centers and shelters for battered women, and those that educate women by creating meeting places and organizing talks for example. Feminism, according to Naomi, was also about prominent women in history who have made a significant mark. Aretha referred to feminism and the women's movement as a school of thought that seeks to transform mentalities and the way people think and to change the way that people use science. She observed that the goal was "equality in not so much, you know, what's attained, but in the way that people think. And that's the root of it all." For Francesca, feminism and the women's movement was all about redefining women's roles, breaking down barriers and creating opportunities which they have long been denied. She said:

It's looking at what history and the impact of the last thousands of years on our roles as women and how women are basically stuck in a very defined boundary and to make those boundaries...to break them in a certain way and to realize or to give value to her intelligence, all her possibilities or all her potential which I think were muffled...it's a movement for me that wants to bring hope to all the women that have felt really again muffled, for lack of a better word, you know, in existing and it giving value to all those things and giving opportunities and for me the women's movement is that.

Perception of Feminism as a Radical Movement

A few participants thought that the feminist movement had been inaccurately portrayed as very radical and extremist in recent years. Marilie, for example, knows that radical feminist groups exist and that she might not agree with all their practices and their approach. Still she thinks the focus on this type of feminism is an overgeneralization and stereotype of the movement as a whole. As she mentioned during her interview:

Comme l'image populaire, ça serait comme des femmes qui brandissent leurs brassières, pis qui crient pis qui gueulent, pis tout ça. Moi, je veux pas avoir cette image là mais je pense que dans la société c'est un peu cette image là. Les femmes ont brûlé leurs brassières à Washington là, des affaires de même là... extrémistes mais je veux pas avoir cette image là mais quand tu me demandes ça, on dirait que je vais penser à ça mais c'est pas ça. Je le sais que c'est pas ça...c'est sûr qu'il y a des féministes radicales mais c'est comme dans tous les grands regroupements. Je pense qu'il y a des radicales mais je ne suis pas d'accord que le mouvement féministe c'est juste ça. Il y a ça, mais on l'amplifie.

Comme il y a ben du monde qui ont intérêt à ce que ça change pas les relations de sexe...un jeu de pouvoir aussi. Ceux qui sont des médias là, ça peut les servir ça. Ils contrôlent ce qu'on voit.

Rachel admitted that she has a negative image of really radical women in the women's movement but she knows that it might be based on prejudice. She acknowledged that radicalism had its purpose and its place and has contributed to the advancement of women's causes and struggles for equality. However, as we will see in the following section, while some of these women identify strongly with some feminist ideas and goals, they are very uncomfortable, or disagree with radical positions and practices.

In short, most of these young women had some general knowledge about feminism, women's issues and the women's movement. While some participants' awareness of women's issues and feminism began at a young age because of specific personal experiences, most of them became aware and learned more about feminism in their twenties, as they were introduced to women's perspectives and issues in their courses, or through contacts and experiences at university. Only two participants mentioned that their knowledge of women's issues and feminism is limited. The majority of these women defined feminism in a "liberal" fashion in terms of equal chances, equal opportunities, and equal rights. Only a very few women had a more developed understanding of feminism which they defined as a school of thought and a movement that seeks to transform social structures and the processes by which we understand the world.

In addition, while most of the participants had some theoretical knowledge about feminist ideas, almost all knew less about the actual activities and practices of the movement itself. They were exposed to the movement in their studies and courses, rather than coming to feminism through personal experience and practice. Certainly, my research focus on university women may account, in part, for this tendency.

It is also interesting to note that many of these young women defined the women's movement in generally positive terms. Even those women who were not concerned with what the feminist movement is all about, thought that, in general, it is good that some people do realize that inequalities between men and women exist and that something should be done about them. However, as we shall see in the following sections, even though the participants may define feminism in positive terms, they do not necessarily identify and agree with everything feminism is about or has stood for in recent years. As some of the participants readily embrace many feminist views and ideals, they also question some of its tenets and approaches.

Furthermore, their commitment to feminist ideas and practices expresses itself at different levels: while a good number of these women are conscious of women's realities, seek out more knowledge and have a definite interest in women's issues and feminism, others are still just discovering feminism and exploring what it means to them. There is also a minority of women who acknowledged that preoccupations with women's issues, feminism and the

women's movement, have not yet taken an important place in their lives: they know that these realities exist but have not sought to learn more about them. As Karissa mentioned: "I think it is good that it is happening but it's not something that I actively go out and look for kind of thing."

In conclusion, most of these female students meet some of the requirements for social movement participation, as outlined by Melucci (1989): they have had access to resources of knowledge and social contacts, have been exposed to the contradictions of the system through their education, and most have accepted the cognitive frameworks of feminism which they define in terms of equality and opportunity. However, as we shall see later on, none of the participants are activists. As Melucci (1989) suggests, other conditions are also necessary because knowledge in itself does not produce activism. While these women have access to knowledge resources and have developed common cognitive frameworks in relation to feminism, they lack network connections with members of the movement, they have no emotional investment in the movement, and some of them have a negative assessment of the political opportunity structure. Moreover, these women are not highly integrated in the social structure and are isolated from the professional and social resources and abilities which are important conditions for an individual's involvement in collective action. (Melucci 1989) Many of them also acknowledged, as we shall see in their accounts, that while they may have been exposed to the contradictions of the system through their education, they have not yet been

confronted with them in their everyday lives. Their experience as women has been generally positive.

“I AM NOT A FEMINIST BUT”... OR IS IT ” I AM A FEMINIST BUT...”: YOUNG WOMEN’S IDENTIFICATION WITH CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM

As participants discussed their knowledge and thoughts about feminism and the women's movement, I eventually asked them: do you consider yourself a feminist or would you call yourself a feminist? This question provoked a variety of responses and reflections as these women explored what being a feminist meant to them and the place and importance of this form of identity in their lives. Most of the participants acknowledged that they identified with feminism but added that this expresses itself in particular ways. As Whittier (1995) suggests, the meaning of “feminist” changes over time and each generation, marked by specific formative experiences and the social context of their time, has different responses and identities in relation to feminism and the women’s movement. This section provides some insights into the specific forms the collective identity of feminist takes for the participants involved.

Uneasiness with the Notion of “Feminist”

When questioned, many women were hesitant to say out right that they were feminists. Some women were very conscious that an image of feminists as totally radical, mostly lesbian, and unfeminine exists and that negative connotations are often attached to feminism in consequence. As Laurie stated:

“...pour moi le féminisme, souvent j’ai l’impression qu’on l’étiquette à quelqu’un pis comme, c’est presque péjoratif finalement d’être féministe.” Therefore, before they could answer my question, many of the participants asked me: what do you mean when you say feminist? It seems that many of these women while saying they are feminists, feel the need to clarify exactly what that entails: they are not radical or extremists, they do not hate men, and they do not want to “burn down institutions”. Aline, for example, distinguished between a feminist who takes women’s right to equality to heart, and a radical feminist who thinks that all men are against women and that all women are oppressed. When someone asks her if she is a feminist, she says:

...des fois on va me demander, “toi t’es tu féministe”? Là je dis “ben écoute”, moi dans ce temps-là à chaque fois je répond, “tu sais être féministe là c’est vouloir l’égalité. Si tu veux savoir si je suis frustrée là contre les hommes pis que je veux brûler les institutions, je suis pas de même. Je suis une modérée, je suis rationnelle, sauf que oui je suis une idéaliste, je veux changer le monde pis je vais soutenir la cause des femmes pis j’accepte pas qu’une consoeur soit victime de discrimination.”

Rachel said that if you present yourself as a feminist today, you get teased, you get labelled negatively, you get accused of hating men. It is a hard reality to deal with. When I asked her how people around her would react if she declared herself a feminist, she said: “...je me ferais agacer ça c’est sûr. Comme, ah toi on sait bien que t’aimes pas les hommes... Je trouve ça plate d’être obligée de dealer avec ça. Je trouve que ça été le mauvais côté de ce que ça nous a

amené pis encore là que ça nous suive encore.”

Therefore, while many of these young women do perceive feminism as something positive and beneficial to women and identified with it in some ways, at the same time they did not want to be associated with views and actions they do not believe in. For them, feminism takes several forms, it represents a variety of ideologies and means different things to different people. These women recognized the nuances and they wanted to make clear where they stood in relation to this diversified movement. For example, Marilie said:

...je vais dire que je suis féministe mais je vais dire, je vais m'expliquer. Je dirais jamais, j'ai pas honte de le dire que je suis féministe mais je dirais jamais je suis juste féministe...je pense qu'il y a plusieurs formes pis que je suis pas d'accord avec ça fais que je pourrai pas dire "féministe" parce que je suis pas d'accord avec toutes les sortes de féminisme. Je voudrais pas être associée à des choses que je crois pas pis comme aussi quand je dis je suis féministe quelqu'un pense que je suis contre les hommes ou je ne sais pas trop quoi. C'est pour ça que je justifie qu'est-ce que je suis vraiment.

Some women would rather say that they believe in equal rights than claim to be feminists. For example, Marilie indicated that she would rather present herself as egalitarian because she thinks that the word "feminist" does not include men. While she strongly believes in women's rights, she thinks that we cannot become equal if men do not participate in the struggle. However, she feels that it is difficult for men to say they are feminists because it is not a word that really involves or incorporates them. She thinks the word "feminism", is

about being for women at the expense of men, and she wants to be both for women “and” men:

...la plupart du temps je le dis, je ne suis pas féministe, je suis égalitariste...Je ne suis pas pour les femmes, je suis pour l'égalité. C'est comme mon type de discours...j'aime pas le mot féministe parce que féministe pour moi ça veut dire que t'es pour les femmes. Mais pour moi ça veut dire pour les femmes au détriment des hommes. Ben moi je suis pour les deux...parce que je trouve que le mot féminisme, un homme pourrait pas dire je suis féministe mais si il prend un mot comme égalitariste...pour que l'égalité, l'équité des femmes progressent, en tous les cas pour qu'on avance, faut que les hommes, qu'on se rallient, que les hommes se rallient à nous autres. Mais avec un mot, une appellation comme féminisme là, je pense pas qu'il y a ben des hommes qui vont se rallier. Pis c'est comme ça que je suis pas d'accord... Ben, je ne peux pas dire que je ne suis pas féministe. Je pense que dans ce que c'est le féminisme, c'est pas vrai je le suis.

Nevertheless, she cannot deny that she is a feminist since she believes in what it is all about but she just does not like the word itself.

Others were hesitant to say they were feminists because they weren't sure what being a feminist really means or what the common definition of feminism is today. Their lack of personal experience of feminism and their lack of contact with feminists and the women's movement, may have affected their ability to define feminism and identify as feminists. For example, Eloise mentioned: “I don't know what the exact definition of feminism is so I don't know if I could consider myself a feminist. If a feminist is someone that fights and does demonstrations for rights, I'm not, because obviously I don't do any

demonstrations. If a feminist is someone who thinks that women should fight for their rights and that women should be considered equals to men, then I am a feminist so I just don't know..." Laurie did not know if she was a feminist.

According to her, it depends on how you define the word but she feels that she is open and sensitive, and tries to learn in order to "make a woman of herself". In that sense, maybe she is a feminist:

...peut-être que je connais pas assez bien la définition du mot féminisme en tant que tel, tu comprends ce que je veux dire, alors je ne peux pas dire que je suis féministe...je pense pas que je peux dire que je suis féministe dépendant de la définition qu'on donne chacun...Non je pense que je suis assez sensible. Je suis ouverte...je pense que j'essaie d'apprendre. J'essaie de voir comme jusqu'à quel point ça doit changer ou bien jusqu'à quel point, qu'est-ce qui est bien, qu'est-ce qui n'est pas bien. J'observe pis j'essaie de me faire une, de faire une femme de moi.

Other women also feel that they cannot necessarily call themselves feminists because they associate that identity with being very active politically in protests and demonstrations. Naomi talked about how initially she was not sure if she was a feminist because she was not an activist: "...initially my definition or my view of feminism was one that was very radical and I thought, you know, we have to protest and you have to, you know, have a real sense of cause and mission to dismantle, you know, the patriarchal society..." Linda also associated feminism with adamancy and forcefulness: "I don't consider myself a feminist in any way, but then I guess that's because of the notion of feminist

being very, very adamant about their point of view where as you know I only get really forceful if it's, when it gets personal...I guess I'm not quite that active." In addition, some women wondered if they could call themselves feminists if they did not know all that much about feminist theories: "...si pour être vraiment féministe, il faut allier l'action au fait de connaître bien, parce que je connais, je suis presque nulle à ce niveau-là, de connaître bien les théories féministes et tout, je peux pas dire que je suis féministe..." However, many of these women told me that if being feminist is about believing in equal rights between men and women, if it is about wanting to eliminate injustice and discrimination, if it is about the little things you do in your everyday life in your relations with men and friends and if it is not just about feminist theory and militant political activism, then they believe they could be feminists in that way. For example, Laurie said:

...je trouve que dire que je suis consciente de ce que les femmes ont, dire que je suis consciente de ce que les femmes n'ont pas, dire que je voudrais que les femmes en aient plus ou des choses comme ça, à ce niveau-là peut-être que oui, si c'est ça, si c'est ma définition du féminisme...je pourrais dire que je suis féministe..si c'est dans la vie de tous les jours, dans mes réactions par rapport aux actions de certains hommes ou bien mes réactions par rapport à la société en général, si c'est juste ça, mais je pense que je peux me dire féministe.

Naomi, after struggling for some time about her identity as a feminist, because she was not that politically involved and was not radical in her views, finally decided that feminism can be expressed in a variety of ways. She is now comfortable saying she is a feminist:

...it really made me think about what does feminism mean for me and I realized, and I sort of hesitated, and then it was only til after that I thought damn it yeah I am you know. It doesn't necessarily mean that I have to be, you know, swing the entire way but, I mean, women's issues are important to me. I feel that, you know, women are, in many cultures...are second-class and that should not be so and are prevented from entering certain realms...I am a feminist because I believe in equality and I believe that women can achieve what they hope to and that they shouldn't be prevented from or limited because of their gender in any way...you know, I hadn't protested or anything like that but you don't necessarily have to be that way. It's more sort of a mindset necessarily than the way you make it, you might express it.

Moreover, some women believe in feminism and identify as feminists in some ways but do not like to proclaim themselves feminists. While they might react against sexism and discrimination, they do not like labelling themselves whether as a feminist or as anything else. They want to be able to express themselves without falling into defined realities and identities. They prefer to say what they believe in rather than identifying with, or restricting themselves to, a feminist label. As Rachel explained:

Ben, je dirai pas je suis ci mais je vais dire je suis pour ça par exemple...Non je ne suis pas pour que tu parles contre les femmes, tu sais. Mais je ne dirai pas que je suis féministe...comme je pourrais mettre mon coup de poing à terre pour dire ben arrête de faire tes jokes racistes...Je ne suis pas, je suis pas nécessairement quelque, une étiquette là...je suis pour les femmes, je suis pour la personne, pour toutes les personnes. Pis que je supporte pas qu'une personne se fasse abaisser à cause d'une de ses caractéristiques qui a même pas rapport finalement, que ce soit sa classe sociale, son sexe, sa race...Pareil comme, je sais pas, il y a des choses dans le marxisme que j'aime mais je pourrais pas me

dire marxiste. Ca serait comme mon dieu. Ca serait me poser une vraie étiquette, tu sais. C'est un peu la même chose parce que dans le féminisme, il y a des bonnes choses pis il y en a des moins bonnes.

Thus, while they are willing to speak out and take positions on a variety of issues, whether women's issues or others, many of these women do not necessarily feel the need to present themselves as feminists. On the contrary, some of them prefer to present themselves in a more general sense, as simply human or humanitarian. For example, Laurie observed: "Ben je pense que je suis juste, moi je suis humaine. Je veux dire j'ai tendance à penser que, comme j'aime pas les termes...les étiquettes, c'est ça..."

A few other participants were really not concerned with a feminist identity. Their sense of identify sprang first and foremost from their actual situations: for example Karissa said she identifies as a "struggling student" trying to get by, and Linda identifies as a "nomad" with no house, no car, no possessions of her own and only a tentative plan for the future. Moreover, Aline, while willing to say she is a feminist, identifies as a socialist first. She believes in equality not only between men and women but also between all classes and social strata. She contests all inequality, in all its different forms, as well as injustice against women::

Je suis socialiste. Ah moi, irrécupérable socialiste. Pis moi je me réfère plus socialiste genre l'égalité mais pas juste entre les hommes pis les femmes mais entre toutes les couches. Tu sais donner une chance à tout le monde indépendamment de leur

provenance, de leur milieu familial...Fais que moi j'ai toujours contesté les inéquités, l'inégalité, la discrimination. Fais que dans cette perspective-là, l'injustice faite aux femmes ca me touche encore plus. J'ai toujours réagi contre ça...

Integrating Feminism Into One's Life

For others, it seems that feminism is integrated into their lives. For them, wanting the same things as men seems obvious and normal, something that is part of them, and, in that sense, not something they need to say out right or proclaim. Laurie, for example, said that she does not feel like she is a feminist because everyone around her seems to be like her. A feminist discourse of women's rights and abilities is integrated as a given for her and her friends: "C'est pour ça que moi je suis pas féministe parce que pour moi c'est comme normal...Pour moi c'est des choses, comme, c'est évident. Je veux dire je connais pas, j'ai aucune de mes amies qui comme, qui ne supporterait pas ce que je dis...Comme pour nous c'est qu'on y aspire même plus finalement comme c'est des choses qui devraient être..." For her, being associated with feminism does not really matter. If she needs to say it to make a point or to make things change maybe she will, but it is not necessary for either of these purposes. Feminism is already integrated in her life and no matter what people say, it does not change her beliefs or the way she lives her life. Again she said:

..le fait qu'on m'associe au mouvement féministe ou pas, je pense pas que ça change ma façon de vivre, ma façon de voir les choses, comprends ce que je veux dire, comme si uh... si que pour telle telle chose ne se fasse pas, les choses avec lesquelles je ne suis pas d'accord, faut qu'on dise que je suis féministe, ben on le dira que je suis féministe, tu comprends? Mais pour moi c'est pas nécessaire non plus comme parce que pour moi, peut-être que dans le fond, le féminisme... il est tellement intégré... pis que je m'en rends même plus compte....

Thus, some of these women do not feel the need to proclaim their feminism outright, but they do say that it all depends on the context. For example, with their friends they do not feel the need to say they are feminists because their friends are all relatively open and aware. But in certain situations, if they need to make a point, to shake some people up, they will not hesitate to say they are feminists and are certainly not ashamed of it. As Rachel pointed out:

Mais j'ai pas honte de le dire, par exemple. Si c'est ça qui tape, si c'est ça qu'il faut, je suis capable de le dire. Mettons j'arrive pis c'est toute vraiment une gang de machos total. Je vais arriver oui je suis féministe juste pour pouvoir les brasser. Mais je veux dire, entre notre gang, je le sais qu'on est pas mal toutes conscientisées - j'irai pas me dire féministe. Ça dépend peut-être un petit peu du contexte. Il y en a qui ont besoin de se faire plus brasser que d'autres pis dans ce temps-là....

While they do not feel they are feminists at all in certain situations because it seems everyone is that way, at other times, in milieux where ideas and practices are more traditional or sexist, they are perceived as and feel like feminists.

Finally, there are the very few women for whom there was no struggle or hesitation to call themselves feminists. As Francesca says: " I am a feminist and

this is what I believe in is not hard. And they go eww and I go, sometimes I'll explain what feminist is to me but no I'm not scared of saying it." Aretha also mentioned that she is very outspoken and that people around her know very well that she is a feminist. She identifies very strongly with being a woman:

...if someone said define yourself, you know, I define myself as a woman first, then a student, then maybe what I like to do, what my employment is at that time. You know I wouldn't say daughter or I don't know it's always woman first. I don't know I'm very conscious about and uh...I mean I've had you know obstacles... I identify so strongly with being a woman and the plight of women and women's issues, you know, that's where I really...and I think that you know this is who I am in the core...

However, she does feel that some people around her react negatively to feminism. Still this does not stop her from taking a stand and explaining her point of view on a variety of issues.

In summary, while the phrase "I am not a feminist but..." is often associated with this generation of women, the accounts of the group of women interviewed for this study, mostly confirm a collective identity that is similar but not quite the same, that is "I *am* a feminist but..." Like Walker's (1995b), Wolf's (1993) and Glickman's (1993) young American women, some said they are feminist even though they do not like the word: it has become ideologically overloaded and too often has a negative and pejorative undertone and has come to signify an exclusion or rejection of men. Most women react against blatant stereotypes of feminism as radical and man-hating by clearly stating what

particular “kind” of feminists they are. They are also trying to find their place and identity in a movement that has become ever more complex and diversified, accepting or adopting what seems to be the most relevant elements for them. Moreover, while some of the women neither feel the need nor wish to proclaim themselves feminists or anything else, they are not ashamed of it and do not hesitate when it comes to taking a stand, in their own way, to contest the sexism and injustice they see around them. Many women do not want to be categorized or defined by a word, a label or a specific identity: they want to express themselves truly and entirely, without constraints or labels.

In contrast to fears about post-feminist backlash, some of the women I interviewed feel that feminist values and beliefs are so integrated in their lives and in their present social circle, they do not know if they can call it being feminist anymore: it seems so normal, so assumed, so obvious for them. However they do realize that it all depends on the context: it all depends on how “feminist” is defined and perceived in different social situations. There are a few women who are very defined by their feminism and are very outspoken, even though they are challenged by certain people in their social circle. Overall, though, while most women are more or less committed to a feminist identity, they lack the emotional investment that Melucci (1989) sees as also necessary for social activism. However, as we shall see in later sections, they still have a personal commitment to women’s issues and are part of the women’s movement in its latent form, in their individual networks and environments.

As for the few women who said that they are not feminists, this should not be construed as a rejection of feminism or feminists as a whole, but rather of its more radical and extreme currents. They are not sure of what being a feminist really means to others and to themselves. Some women just do not know if they can call themselves feminists. They lack knowledge about the movement and feminist theory, they are not politically active and have no strong sense of mission and cause. For others, identifying as a feminist does not really matter to them since it is not a big preoccupation in their life at the moment.

Therefore, these young women's identification with contemporary feminism reveals itself in many different ways as a result of their particular formative and educational experiences and the impact of the external social and political context on their identities. It is, as Glickman (1993) suggests, untidy and complex. While many of the participants may feel some uneasiness with the notion of "feminist", they are not opposed to feminism and the women's movement. Actually, many of them feel that they endorse feminist values and ideals in their everyday lives even though, as we shall see in the next section, they may question some of its ideology, goals and strategies.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE MOVEMENT: “IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ME BUT...”

The following section explores the participants' views about the relevance and meaning of feminism and the positive and negative aspects which they perceive. While many of them embrace some feminist ideals and goals in their everyday lives, some expressed ambivalence or disagreement with some of the tenets and approaches of the women's movement. The concept of political generations developed by Mannheim (1952), sheds some light on their experience and their relationship to feminism and the women's movement. Shaped by particular formative experiences and the social and political context of their time, each generation develops new understandings, new outlooks and asks new questions about the meaning, relevance, direction and strategies of the women's movement as it comes into contact with past legacies. (Whittier 1995; Schneider 1988; Mannheim 1952) Such transformations can lead to conflict over the movement's goals, ideology, values and strategy. (Whittier 1995) The accounts of the participants indicate such a generational shift as many of them are rethinking and redefining feminism and the women's movement for themselves and in relation to their personal experiences and daily lives. Many women had much to say about their beliefs and questions about feminism, others were less outspoken and some explored these questions for the first time. Nonetheless, all these accounts provide some fruitful knowledge

for the understanding and exploration of their varied and actual experiences of contemporary feminism.

Feminism and the Women's Movement: Necessary and Beneficial for Women

As we have seen, most of the young women interviewed for this research have some general knowledge about feminism and define the movement in relatively positive terms. In general, they perceive feminism as something necessary and beneficial for women and recognize the important battles the movement has fought in the past. Laurie, for example, definitely views the women's movement as something positive and important:

I: ...c'est quelque chose de positif pour toi le mouvement des femmes?

P: Ah oui, définitivement, définitivement...Je trouve que c'est important même qu'il y a un mouvement des femmes parce que comme, qu'on le veuille ou non, c'est une société d'hommes pis si il y avait pas de mouvement des femmes, je pense que ça serait toujours une société d'hommes. Comme, depuis la base, c'est une société d'hommes. Tout est fait en fonction des hommes finalement pis c'est maintenant que les femmes peuvent s'afficher dans l'histoire.

Many of these women are grateful for everything feminists have accomplished and are still doing for women's rights and causes: "...c'est comme je les remercie parce que si il y a avait pas eu ce mouvement-là, on serait encore peut-être ben

victimes justement pis il y aurait beaucoup de choses qu'il faudrait qu'on travaille..." Because of the women who struggled before them, they are now more conscious about a variety of issues that relate to their identity as women and their everyday lives, and can now enjoy and have access to many things which women had been denied in the past. When I asked Francesca about what effect the movement had on her life, she responded:

Basically...well just the fact that I am now doing my Phd, that I never found any resistance in any way to that, that comes from the work of the women before me. The fact that my partner has always respected me, that I've been able to stand up to those values...The fact that I am comfortable with who I am and that I can make a difference in this world...The work of other feminist movements have helped me along. The fact that I can choose, that I have contraception available to me, that I can choose if I want children...I think it has had a tremendous effect.

While some women said that they "feel strongly about" the movement and are "definitely for it", others said they are "pretty comfortable" with feminism in general. In fact, as we have seen before, some of them feel they have integrated many feminist ideals and practices in their daily lives: "...il est tellement intégré...pis je m'en rends même plus compte...le féminisme est intégré, le féminisme de base ou le féminisme normal..." Finally, some participants feel that feminist struggles in the areas, for example, of education, salaries, work, laws, and services to women, are very relevant and meaningful to them.

Reactions to Some of the Tenets and Approaches of the Movement

While most of these women perceive the feminist movement in generally positive ways, they also expressed their concern about, ambivalence towards or disagreement with some of the ideas and approaches they have come to associate with radical feminist groups. As we have seen before, some women identified as feminists but not with a more “radical kind” of feminism. There is an overall feeling that, no matter how they were introduced to feminism, what they had learned about it, or what “radical” meant to them, many expressed apprehension and opposition to any positions that seem to be too extreme or forceful. As Eloise stated: “I think, well, being a woman I think the women’s movement is good but sometimes I feel that it has gone too far. There are some extremists that are way too extremist...” Despite their awareness of different forms of feminism, some of the participants feel that it is the radical images and contents of feminism that are often talked about and presented in the media, by some of their professors, and in the texts and some of the courses they have taken. Only Aretha mentioned that she identified with some radical feminist literature she read as an adolescent, which she says, had an important influence on her attitude toward feminism. Overall, most of the women were reluctant to risk identification with what they find are the more extremist facets of feminism, facets which do not ring true with their everyday lives and their experiences as women. For many of them, anything too extreme is not progressive: it hampers

change, it scares people off and makes them antipathetic to women's causes.

For example, Eloise mentioned:

...sometimes I do feel that some feminists are way too radical...it brings something negative to change. Maybe sometimes makes it worse than what it was because people are afraid of extremists. If the extremist movement comes strong, I think women will just be afraid and they won't, instead of changing bit by bit, they'll try to stick to what they had and what is, what they feel secure in and then evolution cannot be happening. So I think that sometimes extremism instead of helping is just blocking and creates an obstacle to evolution.

Many participants mentioned that they are uncomfortable or disagree with some of the tenets that have been linked to the feminist movement. They perceive as too radical or extreme the notions that all men are oppressors or potential sexual aggressors; women will be liberated when they reject the institution of marriage and heterosexual relationships; motherhood is alienating and women shouldn't stay at home; procreation is all about men taking advantage of women's bodies; to be truly feminist you must reject what is called femininity; and finally, there are no differences between men and women. Some of these women do not recognize themselves at all in such discourse. Rachel, for example, after reading a feminist text on procreation and motherhood, said she could not relate to the radical positions that were presented:

Présentement je suis en train de lire des textes sur la procréation pis des choses comme ça pis c'est comme MON DIEU...c'est comme c'est les hommes qui profitent du corps des femmes pis des choses comme ça. Je me retrouve pas pantoute là-dedans. Pis

c'est pour ça que j'ai un peu de misère parce que ça m'éloigne de ça pis je voudrais pas... Je suis pour le féminisme, je suis mettons pour la femme pis tout ça mais, pour la reconnaissance... mais quand je vois des choses, il y a radical pis il y a radical...Il faudrait avoir des enfants à l'extérieur du corps de la femme pour pouvoir la désaliéner de...c'est comme ben je sais pas là moi, peut-être ça me tenterais d'en avoir un...peut-être que c'est, que ça vaut quelque chose pour moi. C'est pas nécessairement négatif là. Pis je trouve eux autres que c'est vraiment ça là. Pis c'est ça, c'est un courant que je n'adopte pas du tout. Pis je trouve que c'est souvent ça qu'on nous présente.

Moreover, some women actually expressed some anger and disappointment with feminist discourse that maintains that men are the enemy and are all oppressors. Many of them do not want to reject the men in their lives, their experiences with men are not all necessarily negative. They feel confrontational approaches and such shocking declarations are not conducive to change since rejecting men or treating them as oppressors or enemies, will not encourage men to change. Aline stated: "Quand c'est trop radical là tu sais, les femmes qui crient pis les hommes c'est toute des gros porcs, c'est toute des écoeurants, phalocrates, des violeurs en puissance, aie les nerfs là. Aie tu blesses les hommes en disant ça. Sur dix hommes, il y en a peut-être un qui vit ça pour de vrai mais les autres sont corrects. Ils ont juste besoin peut-être d'être sensibilisés, éduqués mais sont pas fermés à ça. Sauf que, si tu dis des grossièretés comme ça, tu vas les perdre." Marilie, for example, mentioned that, in one way, radical feminists are being sexist in treating men as such:

Des affaires de même que les féministes radicales que j'ai lu, que j'ai entendu qui m'oripillent, font du sexisme eux autres même. C'est comme tu comprends, on vire l'affaire de bord, comme genre on hait les hommes parce qu'ils nous font du sexisme mais on va leur en faire eux autres aussi. C'est comme moi tu sais, c'est pas pantoute ma mentalité dans rien, pas là-dedans.

In addition, some women also reacted to feminist positions they've heard or read about which say that women, to be truly liberated, must abandon heterosexual relationships and the institution of marriage. These participants mentioned that while they have nothing against lesbianism or with the idea that people should live out their lives in whatever way seems fulfilling to them, they do not agree that all relations with men or marriage are necessarily oppressive experiences or that all women must become lesbians to be liberated. Marilie, for example, reacted very strongly to a text written by what she perceived to be a radical lesbian feminist who made that argument:

...j'ai déjà lu un article qui disait, ben moi je dis que c'est une radicale, je le sais pas si elle s'identifiait de même mais elle disait que les femmes vont être sauvées, si on peut dire, pas sauvées mais en tous les cas, bon être libérées quand elles vont rejeter l'institution du mariage, ok? Comme, mais moi je ne suis pas, le mariage ça me dérange pas mais je prend ça comme la cohabitation si tu veux là. C'est comme franchement là...La femme en plus était, j'ai rien contre les lesbiennes, mais elle était lesbienne pis elle va dire ça. C'est comme, pourquoi faut toutes revirer lesbiennes pour se libérer? C'est comme j'ai pas pantoute cette mentalité-là. C'est comme je veux continuer, tu sais, à être hétérosexuelle pis à vivre avec mon chum, tu sais. Comme, j'ai rien contre les lesbiennes, je veux bien mettre ça au clair mais c'est juste que je pense pas que c'est la solution...je revirais pas aux femmes parce qu'il y a du sexisme dans la société pis pour me

libérer des hommes là...en tous les cas même si j'ai des relations lesbiennes, je vais avoir quand même un père pis je vais encore être entourée d'hommes pis ça changera pas les structures de pouvoir. C'est les hommes qui les détiennent là.

Rachel mentioned that feminism to her is not just about being lesbian and radical, it is also about heterosexual women who love men and who want equality in their relationships with them. She finds it hard to identify with radical lesbian feminists and is disturbed by the fact that many people have come to associate feminism with the radical positions of lesbian feminists:

Pis tous les textes qu'elle nous présentait, c'était écrit par des lesbiennes, par des radicales, pis tout ça. C'est comme, moi je me retrouve pas là-dedans. Je veux dire eux autres c'est tellement comme on veut pas d'hommes, on veut pas ça ce côté-là pis...parce que je sais qu'elles avancent souvent de très bons points là pis que je suis d'accord avec ça...J'aime pas ça quand un homme vient me dire "ah toi maudite lesbienne", des affaires de même. C'est comme j'aime pas ça. C'est pas juste ça le féminisme là. C'est pas juste une gang de femmes qui aiment pas les hommes là, c'est loin d'être ça...c'est des femmes aussi hétérosexuelles là. Je veux dire, qui aiment les hommes mais qui veulent avoir une relation de pouvoir égalitaire avec eux autres.

Many of these women feel that feminists should not take positions that exclude or condemn men because they believe you need more than half the population in order to make social change. Because some radical movements exclude men, they cannot be the driving force behind progress. As Naomi said: "I think it's important to have those but I do not think that it will be the driving force behind progress cause I think it's important to incorporate the other gender as well and I

think unfortunately with radical feminists instead of saying I'm sorry if you're a man, even if you believe in our cause, forget it. You know it can be sort of male-bashing and I think that's really too bad...".

Naomi also expressed concern with what she perceives to be feminism's focus on achieving equality through one's career. She believes that women have new standards to live up to: they not only have to be supermoms but also successful in their careers. Putting so much emphasis on career means that women now have to struggle very hard to make everything come together. This is not as liberating as some feminists would suggest. Women now feel that they are "letting something down" if they choose one or the other. Those who choose to have children and want to stay home with their children, may feel criticized, judged or downgraded by certain feminists who perceive motherhood or working at home to be alienating and denigrating experiences. She stated:

But I do have some, I guess, queries about feminism too because on the one hand being able to achieve, feminism tends to be linked with career really. You know feminist movements, in order to achieve equality in a career setting, that in some ways feminism has been, can be looked at as having a negative effect in the sense that women now have to be supermoms and that, you know, high achieving, push push push, go go go, you know, achieve this career status yet also having a family and being terribly supportive and fulfilling that role as well. And I know a lot of women who have children that are, you know, are thinking about having children or are just of at our stage in life who have a real struggle trying to figure out where it is that you know parties lie. And I think some women really feel that they've let something down if they choose family over career because it seems to be oh well you're just conforming to everything that women have struggled for and you're just going to this traditional subservient position where in actual

fact it may be completely your choice and it may be something you feel incredibly strongly...

Some of these women feel that motherhood does not necessarily have to be a negative experience and that feminists should respect women who decide to work at home. Laurie mentioned that she feels that some of the choices she makes in her relationships, for example, in relation to the division of roles in the household, would not be accepted by what she calls "extremist feminists". She feels that some feminists would view women working in the kitchen and taking care of the household as alienating experiences, but she does not find them so: such attitudes and beliefs do not reflect her reality and her background. She mentioned:

Mais tu sais comme l'extrémiste comme par exemple, lundi, je sais pas je vais prendre un exemple banal là, par exemple de la vaisselle...Genre parce qu'on est émancipé, lundi tu fais la vaisselle, mardi je fais la vaisselle...pour moi je me dis que c'est la personne qui a envie comme je trouve que c'est deux individus qui vivent ensemble, c'est deux personnalités qui s'unissent ou quelque chose. On parle d'un rapport homme-femme là...c'est le respect de l'un et de l'autre alors comme c'est pas important, c'est pas grave si c'est pas divisé cinquante cinquante...en autant que la personne qui en a plus ou la personne qui en a moins soit contente d'en avoir plus ou moins...Alors le mouvement extrémiste...je le sais pas, pour moi ça ne me représente pas en fait, c'est ça, c'est pas ma façon de percevoir les choses...justement parce que, comme étant donné les choix que je me fais, je pense que consciemment, probablement que pour certaines féministes extrémistes, ça ne serait pas bien...Mais comme la maison, comme j'ai souvent l'impression dans les mouvements féministes, le fait que ça soit la femme qui soit en charge de certaines tâches ménagères, comme par exemple la cuisine, c'est vu comme

dénigrant. C'est pas correct que ça soit la femme qui soit en charge de ça. Mais moi, si ça se rapproche pas de ma réalité, c'est parce que j'aime ça...

Other participants have the impression that some feminists deny the existence of differences between men and women in order to ensure women's equality with men and to give all possible opportunities to women. This is not necessarily positive, as Laurie pointed out, for there may be some differences between women and men because of socialization and cultural upbringing that are not necessarily negative and that should not necessarily be abolished. She said that she is not a radical or "extremist feminist" because she does not deny her femininity:

Parce que quand je dis féministe extrémiste, parce que je trouve, pour moi, c'est pas vraiment positif parce que, je ne renie pas du tout ma fémininité... Comme à trop vouloir être égales, comme à trop vouloir faire en sorte que les femmes aient tout... pour moi c'est sûr qu'il y a des différences entre les femmes et les hommes, qu'on le veuille oui ou non tu sais. C'est sûr qu'il y a des différences entre les femmes pis les hommes et puis je pense que ces différences-là, il faut pas les renier... à vouloir trop devenir, en voulant trop devenir égales, on essaie de devenir homme, je trouve pas que c'est mieux... C'est que comme c'est important de rester ce qu'on est quand même tu sais. Pis ça veut pas dire qu'on est moins que l'homme...

Rachel mentioned that some of the feminism with which she is familiar encourages women to be more like men, to prove that they can do everything men can and that this tends to promote dominant masculine values. She does

not agree with such positions. The struggle for equality is not only about getting into the game but changing it too.

As well, a few women find that assertions such as “all women are oppressed” or “all women are victims” are depressing. Moreover, these assertions do not represent their experiences. They have not experienced much overt discrimination in their lives. Rachel finds it hard to identify with such declarations because she really does not feel oppressed and she does not think this is because, as some would suggest, she is unevolved or unaware. However, she does realize that she is lucky and that some women are more oppressed than others. She stated:

Comme à chaque fois que je peux parler “ben écoute non, c’est parce que tu t’en rends pas compte, t’es opprimée mais tu t’en rends même pas compte, t’es super opprimée, c’est pire encore...t’as même pas pris conscience de ton oppression encore, c’est pour ça que tu parles comme ça”. Ben je le sais pas si c’est vrai ça. Je le sais pas. Peut-être c’est vrai pis on le sait pas. Mais j’ai de la misère à croire ça....C’est vrai que...peut-être parce que j’ai pas été confrontée mais même quand je pourrais être confrontée, j’aurais une réaction contre ça là. Je me laisserais pas faire... Il y a peut-être certaines femmes qui sont plus opprimées que d’autres, ça c’est sûr certain mais il y en a qui sont moins que d’autres aussi, ce dont je pense je fais partie pis je suis très chanceuse pis je m’en rends compte...Mais je veux dire, acceptez-le! On est peut-être pas, pas parce que t’es femme qu’on vit la même chose tout le monde...J’aime pas ça me faire mettre dans le même paquet que tout le monde parce que j’ai pas le même vécu...

She also reacted, as did a few others, to the victimization approach she feels certain feminists foster. While she does recognize that some women may be

more victimized than she, she feels such discourse is disempowering and depressing. It puts too much emphasis on all the different ways that women may be victimized and does not concentrate enough on the ways they can acquire some power and make a difference in this world: "On est toutes victimes...Pis ouf! il y a pas personne qui aime ça se faire traiter de victime là... on t'as enlevé ton pouvoir pis AHH j'aime pas ça là...c'est du négatif...pis c'est comme tellement, c'est déprimant..." This discourse seems so overwhelming, there is so much to change that sometimes she feels powerless to do anything about it: "...la femme est opprimée dans la société pis tout ça, pis c'est comme, ben mon dieu, ça me donne pas de faire quelque chose, ça me donne quoi de me battre d'abord? Finalement, je trouve que c'est tellement gros que je peux jamais m'en défaire de ça..." This same woman, for example, mentioned that she has problems with concepts such as patriarchy. She cannot see it, she cannot feel it, it is like a big invisible monster lurking over her shoulders: concretely what does it mean, what can we do about it, how do we cope with it, and what are the alternatives? She stated:

...pis c'est comme moi le patriarcat pis ces affaires-là, c'est comme une grosse bibitte dans un coin pis elle nous regarde là...Je le sens pas. Je le vois pas. C'est comme, ça aussi c'est une affaire qui, ça explique tout là. Oui mais, je veux dire, pis après là? Pis même à ça, même si c'est ça, qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire pour ça? On dirait qu'eux-autres, elles ont expliqué la situation de la femme...On peut pas s'en sortir, le patriarcat, tant que la patriarcat sera pas là, on s'en sortira pas tu sais...

Moreover, she feels that feminism puts too much focus on gender relations, it is too reductionist, and tends to ignore other individual and social elements such as class and race. Because you are a woman, this does not mean that you live the same thing as every other woman; not all women are victims in the same way. She feels that feminism has made us more aware, has given us a new way of seeing things, but it is important to acknowledge that it does not explain everything:

Pis c'est comme je suis pas d'accord, il y a des éléments individuels, il y a des éléments plus social autre que juste les rapports de sexe, il y a d'autre chose là. Je veux dire, un homme qui est pauvre va peut-être être plus opprimé qu'une femme qui est riche. Ou des choses comme ça là...Classes sociales...même les races, les choses comme ça, ça peut changer. Une femme blanche sera pas opprimée pareil comme une femme noire...Quand on réduit trop, c'est comme avant ça on en tenait pas compte, les genres. Maintenant, selon moi, on en tient trop compte pour expliquer...

The Need for More Subtle Approaches: A Feminism Adapted to the Realities of Today

Almost all the participants, whatever their views and opinions on feminism, mentioned that they disagree with some of the radical approaches taken by the movement or certain feminist groups. As Aline said: "Je suis pas contre le mouvement féministe. Je suis contre leur stratégie, leur approche. Ça m'énerve moi... C'est pas juste ça que je vois. C'est ça qui m'énerve tu sais.

C'est ça que j'aime pas du mouvement féministe: les excès." Anything too extreme, whether it be for a more progressive or for a more conservative cause, is neither necessary nor positive, according to some of the women: " It's like in everything. You do not have to be too extremist. Being too extremist for me is almost as being, well, too extremist on one side is as bad as being extremist on the other side. You need to cooperate with people. Maybe a revolution is not what's good. Evolution is better, step by step. I think it should be more, not more calm, but, well, less radical, it should be more relaxed in a way..." Some participants feel that forceful protests negatively affect the credibility of the movement. Women who scream too loud, who protest in a radical fashion are perceived in negative terms, especially in the social context or climate of the 1990's which is not favorable to excesses or radicalism of any kind. Some of the demonstrations the feminist movement organized, for example, have had a negative effect on the image of the movement as a whole according to Eloise:

I think that the women's movement should be to get more rights, to be more considered yeah. But I don't think we should obtain that by being mean and exaggerating...well I don't think that demonstrations like I just remembered, it happened a few years ago and women were outside of Parliament and took their shirt off...I think we shouldn't do some demonstrations of that type because it doesn't give a good image of the movement. So I don't feel people are listening to the movement seriously after that because they are seen as crazy women....And sometimes I do feel that some feminists are way too radical.

According to some of the women, the radical movements may have been

necessary some decades ago because so much had to be done; injustice and inequality had to be publicly denounced for the first time. In the 1960s and 70s radicalism was necessary. As Aline observed: "Oui les années 60-70, ouais ma mère elle a participé là. Il y avait des femmes qui brûlaient leurs brassières. Ça avait l'air ridicule sur le coup mais c'était symbolique. Je pense que des fois c'est dans les excès, ça prend des excès pour acquérir un équilibre." However, much has been accomplished since then and the feminist movement needs to take on a new approach:

...parce que comme je te dis je pense que les trente, quarante, cinquante ans passés même jusqu'à v'là quinze ans passés, oui il fallait gueuler. Mais là, avec tout ce qu'on a gagné là...tu sais il n'y a rien de parfait pis ça s'en vient mieux. Tu peux pas continuer à gueuler tu sais. Tu vas écoeurer le monde pis tu vas juste les rendre antipathiques. Comme tu sais c'est correct d'être convaincus. C'est correct d'être convaincant mais comme je disais toute à l'heure, si tu veux brasser fort, c'est correct de brasser, surtout quand c'est vraiment inégalité écoeurante... là c'est parce qu'on est pu dans des inégalités écoeurantes. Il y en a encore des inéquités mais c'est plus subtil. Je pense que si on brasse trop fort, on va perdre l'avance qu'on a gagné. La cause elle avancera pas. Au contraire même, on va s'attirer des foudres...du public, des hommes...Tu sais quand tu veux changer quelque chose, changer de mentalité, ça change pas du jour au lendemain, c'est pas facile...faut que tu vendes tes idées, faut que tu sois calme. Quelqu'un qui a de l'air toujours trop violent, ça fait peur ça.

While many of these young women acknowledged that the more radical feminists groups may have contributed to the advancement of women, and for that reason the women's movement is indebted to them, they believe that times have changed and that women now have to struggle in new ways. There are still

a lot of things that need to be done for women. There is still a need for militant people, but there is at present not as much need for a revolutionary or radical movement. People are now more aware of women's issues and of feminism and progress has been accomplished in this respect and there are more subtle ways of doing things that can be more effective at this time. Linda believes there are more positive and less confrontational ways of doing things. The shocking declarations and radical approaches taken by some feminists may be offensive to many people, including women:

I'm not too thrilled with the idea. I'm not really keen on it...there's a more subtle way of doing things that are, that's more effective. I mean people are now aware of it. If people weren't aware of it, then you know maybe that's a good attention grabber. But I still feel there are more subtle ways of doing it...I have a problem with something that's too strong. You know, there's overkill and it's just too strong or too much...I don't know. It just doesn't sit well...to use a cliché, you can attract more bees with honey... So by, you know, by going about things in a more positive, you can usually gain more support rather than if you're going radical and you know insulting people who might not necessarily need to be insulted. Like not all men are bastards or anything. I mean there are quite a few, I could give you some names (laugh), but, you know, by taking a radical approach you can offend a lot of people you don't need to. And you can also offend a lot of women who don't want to be associated with that...

While she understands why some groups feel the need to be forthright, Naomi finds that an "us against them" mentality does not encourage openness but can actually cause a "gridlock":

It tends to come out in sort of a forceful way which I think is unfortunate in many ways because people don't react well to conflict. And the tendency is sort of backlash reaction or just sort of put up their heads and say well forget it, you know, we're obviously not seeing eye to eye on this rather than being more of an open discourse and more of a discussion. It tends to be too forthright and I think that 's unfortunate although in some ways like you see any sort of minority group that you know they've been hammered down for so long that if they're given la parole that you know they are gonna say it forcefully which can be effective in some ways but can also be, have a negative consequence...But I think that us against them situation isn't very progressive. In fact it can be a gridlock...I think unfortunately with radical feminists who tend to label the whole feminist movement in some cases all like that and that whenever they're given a voice they're gonna say it and they're gonna say it loud...

Saying things forcefully can be effective in particular contexts but it can also have negative consequences. According to Aline, people will not listen anymore, they'll want to hide and will not participate because they do not want to be considered "fascists". There are different ways of effecting change that are more positive, subtle and successful. In addition, she argued that we do not need radical action anymore because women have made some valuable progress and she feels that there are other causes such as illiteracy and homelessness, which demand our attention and which may require radical action: "...féministe radicale, je pense pas qu'il y aille encore de la place pour ça de nos jours. Je pense qu'il y a des causes pas mal plus graves que ça genre les itinérants, genre la pauvreté, genre les analphabètes. Ça c'est grave. Ça faut gueuler contre ça. Ça faut abolir ça. "

According to some of these women, the image of the feminist movement

and feminists needs to be recreated. For various reasons linked to media representations and radical feminist approaches and tenets, the movement has been tagged with a negative image. Some of the participants feel that there is a lack of positive visibility for the movement today. All we see are the more radical aspects of the movement and many people now associate feminism with angry women who make exaggerated statements and who hate men. There is too much focus on the old image of feminists of the 1960s and 70s burning bras and walking the streets. The movement needs to present itself in a new way. Feminists have to recognize that we have made some progress, and they have to include rather than exclude people in their struggles. Change requires a more subtle, honest and moderate approach.

Some participants find that the movement needs to be revitalized: feminists must realize that things have evolved even though change may be slow. At present, feminist discourse and practice often appears negative and depressing to some of these women and they find there is no room for hope in this vision. For example, Aline feels that many feminists do not recognize and celebrate the progress that women have made. Nor do they recognize that the younger generation is now more aware, more in control of their lives, and less accepting of injustice and discrimination:

...oui on a fait du progrès pis on dirait qu'elles sont pas capables de le reconnaître ou tu sais, la nouvelle génération de femmes, il me semble qu'on est plus averties... pis tout ça pis j'ai pas nécessairement le besoin de faire des grosses revendications pis

des choses comme ça. Mais, c'est, j'aurais besoin qu'il y aille un renouveau, un néo-féminisme comme on pourrait dire pour que, qui croit peut-être un petit peu, comment je pourrais dire ça, qui prenne en ligne de compte qu'on a évolué pis qu'on est pas aussi pires qu'on pouvait être.

However, Aretha argued that, contrary to what some other women believe, there has not been as much change as they would think: " I think there's so much work to be done and I think with this whole political correctness, you know, when it comes to gender specificity, I think it's pretty much a sham and I don't think as much has changed as people would like to think."

Finally, some women also feel that the feminist movement needs to readjust itself to the realities of today. Feminists need to change their rhetoric and explore different avenues. According to Rachel, young women have heard the message loud and clear and it is now time to move on to a more modern and actual discourse and practice. Sexism is much more subtle today and feminists should seek out those new areas where subtle sexism occurs. What about the reality of women in the 1990s? What has changed and what has stayed the same? Where is the hidden discrimination and how can we abolish it? As she says:

...elles nous ont amené beaucoup de choses pis maintenant ça serait bon peut-être qu'elles s'assoient pis qu'elles discutent de ce qu'on a présentement pis de repartir. On dirait qu'elles se battent encore pour des choses que moi je considère que j'ai d'acquis... Tu sais présentement c'est ça aussi, je trouve qu'on sait moins où la femme est, comment je pourrais dire, ben opprimée disons.

Dans quel secteur pis dans quel domaine...C'est rendu pas mal plus...On s'en rend moins compte...c'est moins rendu évident...ils se servent de d'autres choses...Selon moi c'est peut-être rendu plus subtil pis on le voit pas mais je trouve qu'elles devraient justement lâcher ça là. On l'a compris pis faut essayer de fouiller d'autres choses... elles ont acquis leur point là selon moi....Mais là présentement, comme montrez-moi où est-ce que je pourrais être opprimée ou que mon droit pourrait pas être respecté pis je vais y aller me battre pour ça....Parce que les gros morceaux, il me semble qu'ils ont été plus ou moins compris là. Ça serait le fun qu'il y aille une partie en tous les cas, peut-être qui lâche pas ça encore parce qu'au cas que ça reviendrait en arrière, mais au moins qu'il y en aille une autre partie qui regarde autre chose...

In conclusion, as these young women have come into contact with past legacies of feminism, they have asked new questions and have attempted to give new meanings to the movement which take into account the personal and social context in which they now live. They expressed some ambivalence over some of the goals, values and approaches put forward by radical feminists which they do not consider relevant to their individual experiences. Thus, some argued that a new feminist discourse, image and strategy are needed to adapt to the context of the 1990s and the different issues, realities, and experiences of young women. Many of the participants feel their experience as women has been generally positive, that women in general have made some progress over the years and that there is a greater awareness of women's issues and feminism today. This led them to suggest that the women's movement should adopt more subtle approaches and tactics and a more modern discourse. This age cohort of women, marked by specific formative, social and historical experiences,

therefore holds different views about feminist issues, the women's movement, and its modes of action. (Schneider 1988; Whittier 1995) However, as we shall see in the next sections, while they may question some feminist values and beliefs, these women are committed to women's issues in their own way, and believe that there is still change to be enacted in women's lives.

WOMEN'S ISSUES AND CHANGE: WHAT'S LEFT TO BE DONE?

Even though the women involved in this study have different levels of knowledge and identification with feminism and think that the movement is more or less relevant to their experiences as women, they seem to share the kind of cognitive framework (Melucci 1989) that produces a common assessment of the accomplishments and structure of opportunities facing the women's movement. Most of them clearly expressed some personal interest in women's issues and causes and recognized the necessity of effecting change in various areas of women's lives. Many of them told me during the interviews that even though they believe that women may have made some progress over the years, the struggle for equality between the sexes is not over. These participants were aware that in certain domains or in relation to certain issues, there is still much to be done for women. They saw a need for progress in the areas of work and salaries, the exploitation of women in the media and pornography, the sexual division of labour, daycare, sexual harassment, funding and research on female illnesses such as breast cancer and the treatment of women within the health system, poverty and single-headed households, women and old age, the situation of women in Third-World countries, and in the areas of socialization and education. Many of these participants recognized that all is not equal and well for women and that there are some areas where change is definitely required. While some of these women did not necessarily feel the impact of this

inequality currently in their lives, they were aware that some women are more directly affected by some injustices and that action should be taken to remedy them. While, as we have seen, some of these women expressed some disagreement with the more radical currents of the women's movement, they continue to believe in women's issues and change and, in fact, restate some of the ideals and objectives of the past generation of feminists, even though, as we shall see in the next section, they may differ in their methods and practices. As Whittier (1995) argues, both continuity and change mark intergenerational relations and the development of social movements over time.

When I asked these participants to discuss how they saw change coming about for women, they mentioned a variety of strategies such as educating people and spreading the word, presenting more positive images of women in the media, getting more women into prominent political positions and other positions of power where they would serve as important role models, socializing children in non-stereotypical and non-sexist ways, getting involved in peaceful actions such as boycotts and cultural events, establishing stronger regulation of pornography, harsher punishment for crimes against women and more severe sanctions in the area of equity policies, developing services for women and lobbying for women's groups, and informing men and including them in women's struggle. They also mentioned the need to change mentalities, attitudes, and to break down stereotypes of women. As Aretha, one of the participants, pointed out: "the most useful way of making a difference isn't so much the tangibles but

the intangibles, the attitudes. I mean that's where it all rests...attitudes need to be changed...not having women as second-hand citizens." Other women, such as Francesca, felt that change must be instigated in many different ways:

Right now, number one would be to reorganize against the backlash... Lobbying and information. Getting the information out and having positive role models...Get them on TV...Continue in children's books in portraying women in a positive way. Encouraging education...All the question also of the definition of beauty, continuing to press on that...Continuing that fight and continuing to fight the backlash. Getting the information out, public, you know, getting out there, making it positive and reacting quickly to what is happening. And infiltrating male-oriented areas, getting the message across...

Overall, the women interviewed suggested many different ways to effect change in order to promote a larger awareness of women's realities and to achieve greater equality between men and women. The following section will present a more detailed account of their views on these issues and on strategies for social change.

Getting the Message Across and Offering Positive Role Models

Many of the participants felt that we need to educate and sensitize individuals of all ages about equality and women's issues and causes by "spreading the word" in different ways: for example, sharing knowledge and research and informing people through the means of discussions, talks,

seminars, information sessions, articles and editorials, documentaries and movies and by presenting positive images of women in various media such as in books, in magazines, and on television. Marilie, for example, asserted that “information is power”:

...il y a des conférences pis on va parler mettons de sexualité ou de n'importe quoi, pour éduquer les femmes. Je trouve que c'est bon parce que c'est justement l'information qui donne le pouvoir...Je me rends compte que quand tu parles dans les discussions, quand t'as de la scolarité ou que t'as lu, même si t'as pas été à l'école, t'a des connaissances pis c'est comme tu vas plus te faire écouter. Tu vas avoir plus d'influence...

She added that if she wanted to make some people conscious she would reach them through the “concrete” by showing films, giving facts, comparing realities and reaching them in their everyday lives rather than through theory: “...moi ça serait vraiment par le concret là. Je voudrais pas leur donner cinquante milles théories...ça serait en leur amenant des faits...peut-être que je montrerais des chiffres...j'irais par les émotions...” Eloise also believes that writing articles and presenting research could be a good way of encouraging awareness and change: “...showing some facts like saying this woman has this job and the man beside her is doing the same job and she's being paid a thousand dollars less a year. Showing the facts would awaken the people. It would make them realize what's happening...” She considers education and the media to be effective and accessible ways of reaching everyone in their everyday lives. Linda thinks that

subtle ways of making a statement such as writing editorials in a newspaper, spreading the word through music with women bands and female artists, through advertising or appearing on television shows could be effective in their own way. Other women maintained that we have to encourage non-sexist education at all levels of schooling, starting at a young age, in primary schools and in schoolbooks and teaching curriculums. Marilie stated:

Dans l'éducation, même au primaire, c'est comme l'éducation non-sexiste là. Tous les manuels scolaires, les exemples, Marie l'infirmière pis Jonathan le médecin. Je refrais tout ça là. Je trouve que c'est le départ... ça serait important, tant qu'à moi, commencer quand les petites personnes sont jeunes pis après ça sera mieux parce que quand ça fait, comme je comprends que pour les hommes qui ont quarante, cinquante ans, qui se sont toujours fait servir par leur femme, que c'est dur de changer du jour au lendemain...

Moreover, many participants mentioned the necessity of presenting positive images of women, making their way up in the world. Aline thinks these role models are important:

...je pense que, dans l'image positive, voir des femmes avec des postes de direction, des "success stories". C'est bon ça. Les femmes qui réussissent pis quand tu vois ça, t'as un magazine Actualité ou Affaire Plus pis tu vois une femme pdg (président directeur-général), ah moi je trouve ça le fun...c'est des rôles, des modèles pour nous autres les jeunes. On voit des femmes grimper les échelons comme ça, ça nous donne courage...À quelque part on a besoin de modèles. On a besoin du monde pour nous montrer c'est quoi. Je pense que c'est de même qu'on va réussir, en

montrant des modèles que ce soit par la télévision, par les émissions...Moi je pense qu'il faut éduquer le monde...

Aretha suggested that we need more women in positions of power for they have a significant impact: "you have to have women in more positions of power so that the men in power recognize their value but well where are the women in positions of power? They are so few." Naomi thinks women in prominent political positions can act as important role models of what women can accomplish. However, she also believes that change may come from a more local level in the family where girls are raised with a "strong sense of who they are" and in this way are encouraged to achieve higher goals:

I mean it's sort of the chicken or the egg thing. Is it as a consequence of seeing important political figures, prime ministers, ambassadors, you know, the finance ministers' as being women, who act as positive roles models where either women or girls look at that and say yeah that can be done...or whether it comes from a more local level where, you know, whether in the immediate family the women get a really strong or girls get a really strong sense of who they are and what they want to achieve and as a consequence they'll get to more important...So in actual concrete things I think it's probably a function of both.

She also believes that having women at the top may bring in a new perspective in terms of policy-making or in the attention that is paid to women's issues for example.

Breaking Old Patterns: Thoughts About Socialization

Some participants expressed the view that positive change for women would happen if the stereotypical ways men and women are socialized could be changed. According to Aline, it will be up to her generation, in their relationships, in their families and with their children, to abolish sexism and innovate in order to break old patterns. They need to be patient and consistent in their actions and discourse, encourage the equal sharing of household and child-rearing responsibilities between partners and give a good example to their children by upholding values of equality and fairness. She mentioned:

Il faudrait carrément que les hommes pis les femmes partagent toutes les responsabilités familiales en partant...c'est ben beau de dire quelque chose mais si tu fais le contraire, si tu réclames l'égalité mais que ton chum ou ton mari est pas capable de faire le souper, qu'il fait pas la vaisselle, tu fais son lavage, tu ramasses tout le temps après lui...ben tes enfants vont voir ça et ils vont être imprégnés de ça. Pis je pense qu'il faut que tu sortes du cercle vicieux... Je pense que c'est à nous autres les jeunes quand on va avoir des enfants d'abolir le sexisme. C'est notre responsabilité. Ça c'est dans l'éducation. On voit que notre éducation nous a influencé fais que à quelque part faut changer ça. Faut que tu brises le pattern pis ça c'est pas facile...il faut sortir des sentiers battus.

Furthermore, Aretha asserted that women should be encouraged to be more competitive and to obtain that sense of achievement and independence that is so encouraged in male socialization for it is the only way of getting ahead in the

world today and it has worked fairly well for men until now. She believes that women are brought up to lack the masculine characteristics that are valued in today's society and that we should treat boys and girls as individuals but with a "more masculine swing to it":

I think that women's biggest problem is that we lack masculine characteristics because we're brought up to lack masculine characteristics...You know from the time that you're four years old, boys' games are competitive and win win win and girls' games are cooperative...The encouragement to be competitive, I mean that's completely masculine and to change that is huge but I mean women need to be encouraged to be competitive and everything else...you see there's so much negativity when you talk about competition and achievement and I don't know if, I'm sure a lot of feminists would say excuse me we need to celebrate the differences, do you know what I mean? By the same token the male is the only way to get anywhere right?...I think that a female upbringing should be abolished absolutely and that maybe male upbringing should be abolished too but it's worked fairly well for them until now (laugh)...And what's the answer? For now, I'd say the easiest answer is to treat them like boys, you know, encourage them to be independent, not stay by their side while the boys go on you know chop wood and everything else.

She feels that we need to change the way we are raised and the whole notion that women need and should have children. Women have to get ahead even if that means sometimes sacrificing having children and spending more quality time with their husbands for example. She thinks it all comes down to socialization and she hopes that the children of our generation will be raised differently: "...it probably all comes down to socialization. And I hope that our generation, the children that we will have, will grow up differently but I don't

know. I mean I think it's probably gonna change ten percent each generation..."

If she had the ultimate power, she would take all the teachers and parents in the world and teach them all over again because socialization has such an impact when it comes to gender issues, self-esteem and confidence: "I think the world would be a completely different place if you taught the teachers and the parents obviously. No easy task." She also strongly believes that universal daycare would be an absolute necessity for there to be real equality between the sexes.

A Variety of Other Strategies

According to other participants, there are also other strategies that women should pursue: a stronger regulation of pornography; more severe sanctions in the area of equity policies; ensuring that women are paid well because money is power in our society; valuing women's roles and work; establishing harsher punishment for crimes against women; infiltrating male-oriented domains; and getting involved individually in organizations and locally with the police. Aline, for example, maintained that some non-violent actions such as boycotting and writing letters and petitions, could have a positive impact on women:

...les femmes faut qu'elles boycottent...moi en tant que femme, si je vois une entreprise qui exploite les femmes, j'irai pas. Pis si j'ai à envoyer quelqu'un à quelque part, ben je vais l'envoyer n'importe

où sauf là...faut être politically correct pis c'est difficile parce que faut que tu changes tes habitudes de vie. Mais faut que tu sois cohérent. Tu veux que le monde change oui ou non? Si tu veux que le monde change, faut que tu prennes des actions pis faut que tu boycottes des produits, faut que tu boycottes des compagnies. Pis ça, ça en est des moyens de pressions. Comme c'est sûr que ça écoeure, faut que tu changes tes habitudes mais à quelque part, si tu veux que ça change, il faut que tu poses des gestes.

She also pointed out that peaceful demonstrations, cultural events and activities could have a positive influence. Women's participation in such events could improve the image of women's groups. Women and men should get more involved individually and through their communities to inform people about a variety of issues related to women. They should depend less on the government to bring about change. That could mean, for example, encouraging businesses run by women in your community. Naomi also mentioned getting involved at a community level: "...just participating and I think that goes for both genders. You know just being active in your communities and helping out and creating an environment which is very congenial and, you know, I think it makes for a more happy sort of living..."

The Importance of Various Women's Groups

Some of the women acknowledged that women's groups are important and useful in the struggle for equality and in improving the awareness of women's issues. In Rachel's opinion, women's groups or movements are

important in order to inform women, in order to reach out to larger populations of women and to do research. Not all women are capable or interested in fighting for women's rights and, therefore, it is important that these groups or movements exist. She stated: "Mais je trouve ça important, oui, qu'on aille un certain mouvement ou un certain regroupement qui permet de se mettre ensemble parce que c'est sûr que c'est pas toutes les femmes qui peuvent faire des recherches là-dessus. Faut qu'il y ait un certain groupe qui soit fait pour ça, qui va aller gratter un peu partout...avec ces groupes-là, ça permet justement de faire l'effet boule de neige pis d'aller toucher les personnes qui sont pas nécessairement touchées... C'est bon pour ça qu'il y aille un intermédiaire..."

Naomi thinks that we need women to lobby because they have a purpose and impact:

I think there's all forever gonna be something that needs to be done and I think it's always important to have important lobby, influential lobbyists or interest groups, even though that women may not necessarily fully identify with them. That just the mere fact of having them present is an important point I think...I think it is necessary in order to achieve certain levels of status whether it be in government or whatever, you know, that it will act as a domino effect.

Laurie believes that it is important that women's groups be represented at a political level but also at all levels because some women feel more comfortable with a more individual approach and do not necessary feel like getting involved on a larger scale. The group contribution is very meaningful in her view:

Je trouve que c'est important que les femmes soient représentées comme en tant que mouvement de femmes au niveau politique. Je trouve que c'est primordial. Ben finalement je trouve que c'est important à tous les niveaux parce qu'il y a peut-être des femmes qui vont pas se sentir dans une ou l'autre, doivent se sentir bien mieux dans une approche individuelle parce qu'eux autres ont peut-être pas nécessairement envie de s'impliquer. Elles ont juste envie d'avoir des idées par rapport à ce qui pourrait changer ou ce qui peut rester alors c'est important aussi. L'apport de groupe, c'est important...

Some participants also talked about the importance of women's groups and support groups at a community level, offering services for battered women, for example, or for women who have not had positive experiences. Aretha thinks that women's groups and meeting places, women's support networks, and working from the "bottom-up" by offering services to women such as centers and shelters are vital "because you're giving that identity as a woman which is so undervalued and so lost... I mean women, just as much as men, do not know how to be anymore and we need these kinds of pillars to remember, like anchors really to being a woman and to have a new female identity."

Including Men in the Struggle for Equality

Finally, a few women attested that in order to make real change for women and to achieve equality, we have to allow men to participate in our struggle, to fight with us and inform the men around them. Linda, for example,

believes that men should get involved at every level because it shows we've made progress because "the more people we can get involved the better it will be...if you can win over the men in this generation, then there will be a lot of problems that are solved...the more they get involved, the more they can help. And they can also spread the word to their men friends and, you know, that's half the battle." Aline also considers that including men in our struggle can be influential because by taking a stand, they encourage others to question themselves and it can have a "pyramidal effect". She said:

Il y a ben des hommes qui sont roses pis ça n'en prend. Moi, ça m'impressionne beaucoup quand je vois des gars qui se battent pour les droits des femmes. Ça me touche ben gros. Je trouve ça le fun. Ça n'en prend plus pour déniaiser leurs amis masculins... faudrait peut-être qu'ils nous donnent un coup de main là pour influencer parce que tu sais l'effet d'entraînement, si un gars se lève pis qu'il dit "aie, telle affaire `ca pas d'allure", il y en a un autre qui va suivre, qui va convaincre ses chums... l'effet pyramidal finalement. Tu parles à une personne, cette personne-là parle à quatre personnes. Tu sais, c'est de même que ça va changer. Mais c'est parce que là on a besoin d'hommes pour soutenir qu'est-ce qu'on fait parce que sinon ça fait comme un genre de ghetto...

Overall, most of these women seem to believe that change is still needed for women and, in fact, most of them share the goals and values that have been expressed by the women's movement in the past: getting the message across and offering positive role models, breaking socialization patterns, valuing women's groups and a variety of other strategies. However, as we will see, some

of them argued that their struggle for women's issues and change is different from that of their predecessors because times have changed: they have new opportunities but also new challenges and constraints that circumscribe their involvement or participation in the women's movement. Many of the participants feel they still have a commitment to women's issues and feminism but it expresses itself in a different way.

NEW TIMES, NEW CHALLENGES: “MY INVOLVEMENT IS DIFFERENT BUT I CARE...”

As many of the women interviewed discussed their views on feminism, various women's issues and different strategies for change, they also characterized their own personal involvement or participation in women's causes and the feminist movement. As we shall see in the following accounts, the social and political conditions that circumscribe their experience and their involvement are different from those that affected their precursors and, therefore, so are their priorities and the strategies they choose in order to pursue a feminist agenda. Young women, as members of the same generation, share particular social and historical experiences which affect their understanding of feminism and their relationship to the political domain. (Schneider 1988) As Mannheim (1952) suggests, they not only share the same age but are also predisposed to certain experiences and historically relevant types of action because of their similar location in social and historical processes. Many of the participants identified some of these conditions and the context of their involvement in women's issues and the women's movement in the 1990s.

This section explores the participants' motivation to get involved in the women's movement and their level of involvement in women's causes. While they are not activists, they have a sense of personal commitment: they practice their politics in their own way and stand up for their feminist beliefs in their social

networks and environments. As we have seen, some of these women identify as feminists and while others don't feel the need to proclaim they are feminists out right, they are not ashamed of doing so and are not afraid of taking a stand to counter the sexism and injustice around them. They may not be active in the women's movement at the present time and may lack some of the conditions required for social movement participation, but a mobilization potential does exist because many are part of the movement in a diffuse sense, at the level of their everyday lives. We can understand their involvement and commitment in relation to the emergence of new types of collective action in "new social movements", as outlined by Melucci (1989). He suggests that collective issues and concerns have recently shifted towards everyday networks of social relations, personal relationships and the creating of new cultural meanings. Change functions in a more "molecular dimension" and collective action takes place increasingly in a latent form. (Melucci 1989) Indeed, in Canada, in the 1990s, collective mobilization is not at a high level. However, as Melucci (1989) points out, the latency of movements does not mean they are inactive but rather that they exist in another dimension as individuals and groups attempt to integrate cultural innovations in their daily practice and lives.

Tougher Social and Economic Times

Like Glickman's (1993) young women, some participants maintained that they are living in a social and economic context that makes it more difficult for them to struggle as passionately and fiercely as the generations before them. Aline, for example, believes that the difficult economic climate that young people are facing today may make it more difficult for this generation to get involved and fight for women's issues compared to a few decades ago. It is hard to think and question the way things are when you are trying to fulfill some basic needs: where do you get that energy and time when you are struggling so hard just to get by? It is hard to speak out, to be militant when you are preoccupied with everyday exigencies and just trying to find a job. She states:

...on est tellement sur la corde raide qu'on peut pas, tu sais, selon moi, on peut pas vraiment rien dire...on a pas le temps. C'est facile de réfléchir pis de vouloir remettre en question les choses quand t'as ta job, ta maison, ton char. T'es comme ok, j'ai tout ça là, j'ai comme les assises, maintenant je vais pouvoir penser...Mais quand t'as rien de ça d'assuré là, quand t'as des besoins de base...Au niveau économique, eux autres quand ils finissaient l'école, ils avaient leur job. Nous on l'aura pas. Je veux dire quand t'as à penser à ça là, je veux dire comme tu as plus de misère à aller dire "ben moi je vais aller militer pour", tu sais, pour certaines choses parce que bon finalement, tu sais ça va peut-être nous couper l'herbe sous le pied ou j'ai pas le temps de le faire ou j'ai pas d'énergie non plus pour le faire parce qu'il faut que je pense comment je vais payer mon loyer. Je trouve que c'est sûr qu'il y en avait aussi de ça avant mais je trouve que là c'est vraiment le lot, surtout, tu sais, presque de la majorité des jeunes de notre âge...C'est sûr et certain comme quelqu'un me dirait je vais te

donner une job à 40 000\$ si t'arrêtes de revendiquer, ben je pense que j'arrêteraïs de revendiquer parce que présentement c'est tellement difficile.

Aretha also feels that young people today are faced with a new context. For example, divorce rates and teenage pregnancy have skyrocketed, institutions do not have the credibility they once had and it is the first generation to be raised without structured religion. It is difficult for young people to be motivated and enthusiastic about the future:

I mean society's going down, you know, going downhill so fast...I mean why should we be motivated? Look around us, you know...not many people feel empowered and I think that's the downfall. But is that our fault? I don't think so...so many people are scared and just sitting around because, well, look at you know we're in a really tough economic situation...I mean we're gonna have to support the baby-boomers. There are no jobs. Like no wonder we're unmotivated for godsake...I think that our generation realizes that we don't have the same rose-colored glasses. We don't have these institutions to depend on in a way, to give us security, you know, and financially, I mean, we're in so much trouble. How are we supposed to be enthusiastic about the future when there's nothing out there?

Naomi thinks that young women and men are less materialistic because they are aware that they will never have the means to achieve the same standard of living as their parents and the conditions they were raised in. According to her, a part of the challenge for young people today is that they are very conscious and educated but given current economic conditions, they will have to struggle and work a lot harder to acquire the same status as their parents. Unfortunately,

success has been defined by material things and she believes that this generation may not be able to achieve the same level of material comfort they grew up with so that “many youths or young adults react in sort of throw their heads up and say well it’s hopeless.” She feels that this generation has high expectations and will have to re-evalutate their goals in life.

Women’s Progress: The Tyranny of Choice

On the other hand, there has been much progress and positive change in women’s lives. Young women now have many choices and opportunities that women before them didn’t have. They have benefited from their predecessors’ collective struggles. However, this new state of affairs creates new expectations and new problems and can lead to what Naomi calls the “tyranny of choice”:

I think that women as opposed to the former generation have a much stronger sense of who they are and, in many ways, doors have opened to them, which they couldn’t have dreamt of, you know, twenty years ago. And I think that is something that’s very positive definitely. But it also adds the whole element, that sort of a tyranny of choice or you know all these doors are opened to you so in turn your expectation is fairly high too so I think that is sort of another issue...where do you start... overwhelming... Unfortunately it can react in sort of a shutdown...you know the world is your oyster. Well, where do I start and that degree of potential failure is so much greater...Where as now it’s just a hundred and eighty degrees that it can be pretty daunting the whole prospect. And I certainly feel that sometimes too that, gosh, you know, there’s so many things that I can do, where do you even start?

Francesca also maintained that, as the first generation to reap the benefits of women's struggles, young women today are a bit lost in the face of the choices that confront them and are searching for new goals, directions and strategies. She thinks that they are in an ambivalent period, in a period of reflection but they are not unconcerned or uninterested:

I think that our generation is different in the sense that we have more than our mothers and grandmothers have had in terms of opportunities and change. But I think it's kind of a very ambiguous, ambivalent period where there's a realization that there's still some work to be done but it's not clear. It's like we've made some advances but I'm not sure about our generation, are we sitting on what we have or we want more. It's a new question period for women, that, to see now that I have all these choices, what do I want? Do I have them really or not? I mean it's a period of reflection and many people think that women of our generation aren't concerned about those issues. I don't think that's it. I don't think it's there, far from it. I think it's just looking at the real agenda and you know looking at what has been done and what has not been done...a period of reflection.

As Francesca pointed out, it's a new period of questioning for young women as they try to make use of the heritage passed on by previous generations. Young women are very grateful for the new opportunities they have but the newly acquired freedom and choice can also bring confusion.

A Closed Political Opportunity Structure: A More “Disillusioned” Generation

Some of these women believe that this younger generation is more aware but that they do not yet have the means to put their knowledge and their consciousness into practice. Aline maintained that society has no place for young people these days: the government and older generations do not really listen to what young people have to say and this generation has less access to employment and thus less access to positions of power that would allow them to make change:

Pis même souvent ils disent allez-y, tu sais, comme exprimez-vous, donnez votre idée mais ils nous écoutent plus ou moins là. Fais que je trouve ça plate aussi quand t'as aucune reconnaissance... c'est pas que la volonté est pas là je pense mais ils ne prennent pas compte de nous en tant que jeunes... nous autres il me semble qu'on est plus au courant, plus conscients de plein d'affaires qui faudrait faire mais on a aucun moyen pour les faire finalement parce que toute la société nous est exclue... les jeunes ne peuvent plus rentrer, ben beaucoup moins facilement, pis moins en nombre aussi, avoir des bons emplois ou des emplois stables, juste avoir un emploi tout cours. Fais que tu sais, dans ce sens-là, on a moins accès aux positions qui pourraient nous permettre de changer quelque chose.

Aretha also argued that her generation feels “disillusioned” by a closed political opportunity structure:

But we're disillusioned too...we're the last group that politicians target cause like, you know, analytically where's the biggest voting population? Well, Jesus, the baby-boomers. You know, so why should they care about us? I mean we're not gonna get any attention politically until we're in our sixties. I mean there's no way. So, you know, in terms of political affiliation, I understand why we don't have any beliefs, why should we? What does it have to do with us? Nothing...

She believes that our generation has lost its idealism and that's maybe why they're not as involved. Older generations were more motivated, more passionate and that's understandable because they had this ideal to look forward to: "But you lose your idealism, that's where it comes from, that's why we're not involved... I mean it was understandable for our parents and older people to be motivated to passion because they still had this ideal to look forward to. We don't have an ideal to look forward to, you know...I would have to say yeah we are a pretty unmotivated cynical generation but we should be dammit!"

Moreover, young people often feel powerless and cynical in the face of change because they are overwhelmed by it all. Aline thinks that young people today are much more aware of social issues and problems on a larger scale around the world: ecology, escalating violence, and a declining economy. It can be quite overwhelming to be confronted with the immensity and complexity of change: where do you start and how do you go about it? Unlike Aretha who sees her generation as cynical, Aline sees a more conscious generation but with

many new preoccupations:

Fais que, je me dis, on a beaucoup de préoccupations que les autres avaient pas. Soit au niveau écologique, on va tu avoir une job? Est-ce qu'on va encore avoir de l'eau? Tu sais, ça va tu être pollué? Tu sais, plein d'affaires comme ça qu'eux-autres, ils avaient pas à penser nécessairement ou moins. Fais que nous autres c'est comme il faut s'engager partout. C'est ça que je trouve difficile. On peut pas s'engager juste à une place. Pour eux autres, peut-être qu'ils pouvaient plus. Je le sais pas, il me semble...on est submergé de problèmes...Je sais pas. C'est le contexte qui est différent...Présentement on est désabusé de tout ce qui nous entoure parce que c'est comme je disais, on est plus conscients de tout ce qui se fait ailleurs. Pis, tu sais, t'es comblée de pensées.

Consequently, young people today get involved on a more individual and local level by doing what they can in their own personal surroundings. Aline believes that young women try to do their best in their own individual ways to make things change and to live in an environment in which they feel valued and respected.

Aretha said that she is a bit of a cynic when she thinks of getting involved:

I think in terms of getting involved and this is where the cynic comes out... I'd get involved in the environment. I'll go to these marches. I'll do everything else. But in the back of my head I'm thinking the entire time: who controls the environment, you know? I mean, who's got the purse strings here?...I wouldn't say that that would motivate me to inaction, you know what I mean?... but I'd say, ok, you know, I'll recycle. I'll do as much as I can on a local level...

Still Young Women are Starting One Step Ahead: A New Awareness and An Ongoing Commitment

Even though young women today are facing new challenges, they are more aware and have a strong sense of who they are. Aretha thinks that, in contrast to the generation before them, they will not find empowerment out there, from what they can do, but rather from what's inside them, from within. When someone asks what she feels strongly about, this is what she says: "I once had someone say to me what do you believe in and I was stumped...I have no strong political affiliation. I have no strong religious affiliation. I feel strongly about myself, you know, about being, you know, feeling comfortable with myself. And I feel strongly about being a woman..." She believes that, even though some people may not feel very empowered or motivated, the positive side to all this is that "we're a generation who is free to speak out, we think about ourselves a lot more and I think that's good and we question authority so much more."

Moreover, she believes that there has been change between her mother's generation and hers because there's so much more awareness: everybody has heard the word feminism, knows that the women's movement exists, and that there are some inequalities between men and women. Although Aretha does not think there has been as much change as some people would assume and that change will be slow, at least some steps are being taken and there are a lot more empowered women today.

Naomi believes that there is a great deal of apathy among this younger generation and she does not know how that is going to change and the impact it is going to have on the women's movement. But, like Aretha, she thinks young women today have a much "stronger sense of who they are": "I think, you know, of my contemporaries going through university, even though they may not necessarily agree or have very articulated or formed opinions on the women's movement or feminism, at least they are aware that it exists and that it is important to bring different perspectives in". Laurie believes that women certainly do not engage in movements and demonstrations as they did in the past and that many women, including herself, may hesitate to say they are feminists. They are less determined and passionate about their positions and the cause. However, she does think that young women today are more aware and conscious because feminism has become more integrated. There are things young women today would never accept and they are starting one step ahead even though they may have their own struggles. She compares her mother's experience with her own:

...elle a peut-être vécu l'étape pour moi, pour nous en fait, pour ma soeur et moi. Mais je pense que malgré le fait que je commence une étape en avant, on a chacun notre combat...mais c'est facilité surtout à cause que ça devienne intégré finalement le féminisme ou bien le fait de croire au potentiel des femmes. Il y a beaucoup de choses qui deviennent évidentes, qu'on prend pour acquis aussi. Comme il y a des choses que je N'ACCEPTERAIS JAMAIS pas parce qu'on m'a appris à ne pas les accepter mais parce que je sais qu'il faut pas que ça s'accepte...

She does not think they are uncommitted or false-hearted as some would suggest. According to her, women's situation and consciousness have evolved a lot and young women today are not confronted with as much flagrant injustice as before and thus feel less the need to revolt and organize in a movement. For example, she finds young men in this country pretty evolved and thus that women of her generation need to struggle in a lesser degree: "On est pas fourbes. On est très conscients. Je pense que tout le monde, je regarde les jeunes hommes aujourd'hui, par exemple. Si je prend par rapport au féminisme, comme là je parle d'ici certainement, ils ont beaucoup évolués...ça fait que les femmes de notre génération ont peut-être moins à se confronter à eux. Pis le fait qu'elles aient moins à se confronter à eux, ça fait en sorte que ça fait moins de frustrations donc ça fait moins de révoltes donc ça fait moins de mouvement à ce niveau-là." She thinks that this generation is very conscious about the changes and the progress in women's lives compared to the previous generation and maybe that's why they do not need to fight as hard. Moreover, the changes are so recent they do not yet feel a need to change things further. Young women were raised in a period of transition and change and she thinks that's why some young women are less strident about the cause. She states:

...on est tellement conscientes de ce que la génération avant nous n'avait pas. On est tellement conscientes qu'il y a eu certains changements par rapport à l'ancienne génération donc c'est pour ça qu'on veut moins se battre parce que c'est tellement proche finalement...Je veux dire ça fait quatre, cinq ans avant que je naisse...Ça fait pas longtemps que les changements ont eu lieu.

Puisque ça fait pas longtemps ben on a été élevé dans la transition finalement. Alors on a été élevé un peu dans le changement. Fais que je pense que c'est peut-être pour ça que les gens sont pas tellement à la recherche tout le temps de changements ou ben sont pas tellement combatifs pour avoir plus.

She does admit that even though she thinks some young people are militant and involved, at other levels there is less participation than what we would have witnessed some years ago. Marilie argues that young women are still involved, interested and committed to women's issues and the struggle for equality between the sexes, it is just that they are engaging themselves in a different way. Times have changed and women have made some progress. While young women may not be as politically involved as their female predecessors, they are not taking things for granted and they have not abandoned the fight. In fact, because of the progress and accomplishments of women in past years, they can now allow themselves to be less radical than some groups of women before them: "...je pense que c'est peut-être différent dans le sens qu'avant elles avaient pas le choix, ok...elles n'avaient pas le choix d'être radicales parce que si elles avaient juste été modérées, elles auraient rien eu, tu comprends? Mais maintenant qu'on a quand même acquis pas mal, on peut se permettre dans le fond d'être modérées..." While young women should maybe be more active, she feels that they are still involved and she certainly does not feel that she is passive and taking things for granted for she is continuing the struggle in her own way:

Peut-être que ça serait mieux de faire plus d'action sociale. Je le sais pas. Mais je pense pas que moi je m'assis sur mes lauriers...je me fais aller la boîte pis j'essaie de convaincre le monde, les conscientiser. Comme je pense pas que je suis assise sur mes lauriers parce que je veux pas me promener avec des pancartes la nuit là... Oui, j'en profite de ce qu'elles ont fait mais je pense que je continue à ma façon de faire avancer les choses. Comme en conscientisant, en donnant l'exemple...

According to Eloise, her generation grew up in a time when things were going well, in a period of social and economic expansion. Young women, even though they are now aware that they will not attain what their parents had, have had a good life as they were growing up and maybe that's why they are less concerned. She thinks that maybe the next generation will be more committed because they will have seen their parents having more social and economic problems, political instability, and no job opportunities. While young people today are not as committed as the past generation, she thinks they still try to change things and that they are not totally unconcerned about the future and about what's happening in the world. She has many friends, for example, who are getting involved in cooperative work in other countries and she thinks she is open and aware: "I'm trying to learn how things are elsewhere. I'm trying to be open-minded, not to have strict convictions on everything. I won't criticize...I just want to learn how people are..." Linda also thinks that although politics do not interest her, she still considers herself a committed and motivated person. She does not take things for granted, she's very goal-oriented, she works hard to develop herself and she is committed to herself and to her friends. She looks out

for herself and for them. She believes that this generation, compared to the previous one, has “a greater sense of self-preservation and self-dignity”.

Participating In Women's Causes on an Individual Basis

While these women are not actively involved on a larger scale for women's issues and cause, they say they are very involved in their own personal environments to counter sexism and discrimination. They are involved but in a different way, on a daily and individual basis rather than at a political level. They get informed about women's issues and realities and inform the people around them such as their friends, family, and partner. Aline, for example, thinks that today we have to effect change in a more subtle and calm fashion. She believes that change is a slow process and that we have to be more lenient, patient, coherent and consistent in our struggles. There is no more room for radical action and strategies anymore: we now have to encourage people to join the struggle by being more individually involved. In her view if everybody does her or his part, if everyone puts a bit of water in the collective glass, eventually it will be full and we will achieve some change:

Individuellement, qu'est-ce que je peux faire pour la cause des femmes?... Essaie, fais ton petit bout pis si tout le monde fais son petit bout là, ça va faire comme une grosse courtepointe... On va chacun mettre notre petit carreau. On va la changer la société. C'est une question de temps...ton rôle sera peut-être pas dans le manuel d'histoire mais si chaque personne met de l'eau dans le

verre, il va finir par se remplir. Tu sais, au lieu de le siphonner à tour de bras le verre, ben faut que le monde embarque dedans tu sais.

According to her, today's struggle is all about doing what you can in your immediate environment and your community: informing others, sticking together and sharing, taking small bites without trying to change everything from one day to the next. She believes in boycotting organizations and individuals which discriminate against women and treat them unjustly. She tries to be consistent in her everyday life, making the things she says and the actions she takes as politically correct as possible. She finds dialogue important and considers herself a flexible and intelligent person. She feels she does not do anything flashy but she has her own personal feminism which is realistic, sane and which does not drain her: "moi dans ma vie de tous les jours j'essaie de vivre ça, ce que je veux dans le féminisme, c'est réaliste, que je suis capable de vivre à tous les jours, qui me videra pas de mon sang comme une sangsue, un féminisme qui est sain..." This means being a good and dependable person, helping and encouraging others to question themselves and change their attitudes, helping her friends, trying to be a role model for others by showing she is "coherent", speaking out and never accepting to be discriminated against. In her view, you have to work firstly on yourself, ameliorate yourself by getting rid of your prejudices and stereotypes and then the others will follow: "Travailles sur toi, améliores toi. Les autres vont s'améliorer aussi". Moreover, while she does not

perceive herself as a militant feminist, she says she might eventually participate in a movement that is moderate, not too radical, but that still has a social purpose: for example, giving some voluntary time to help out women who are starting their own business, writing texts or distributing hand-outs to sensitize people. She said:

...je m'embarquerais dans un mouvement féministe mettons qui aide les femmes qui veulent se lancer en entreprise...moi, mon projet on va dire, moi j'aime le droit, bénévolement deux soirs par semaine je prendrais mes soirées. On a un local on va dire. Moi je donne des conseils aux femmes comment mieux gérer leur budget, comment partir leur entreprise, comment manager. Moi je connais ça. J'ai de l'expérience de travail. Mettre mes capacités, mes compétences au service des autres pour leur donner des meilleurs outils.

Marilie also tries to make people around her more aware and makes them think about a variety of issues and facts. She makes her own contribution to women's issues by continuing the fight through her individual actions: for example, she reacts against sexist jokes and comments, she expects her boyfriend to be non-sexist and share household tasks, she demands respect from everyone around her and insists that her rights be recognized and her intelligence valued. She states:

...on fait plus respecter nos droits avec les hommes qu'on rencontre. Pour moi, c'est une façon d'être engagée...mais juste de dire ben je considère pas que je suis moins parce que je suis une

filles. Juste de dire des choses comme ça en petit groupe, je pense que c'est de l'engagement fait que ça fait réfléchir les gens...Ça peut faire du changement tu sais. C'est du petit changement mais petit train va loin...je continue à ma façon de faire avancer les choses...en parler au monde, j'en parle tout le temps dans mon entourage. Je stresse le monde à l'os...

Moreover, she does recognize the necessity and importance of women's groups and a larger women's movement but it just is not in her personality to get involved that way: "Je ne suis pas une fille de même. C'est pour n'importe quoi. Je ne suis pas une fille de gang pis je ne suis pas une fille d'action sociale pis pour n'importe quoi. C'est parce que c'est pas moi. C'est pas parce que je ne suis pas d'accord avec ça. C'est parce que c'est pas mon genre de personnalité mais si je le ferais ça serait pour ça...Mais je le ferais pour rien. Je ne suis pas de même...Je suis plus intériorisée qu'extériorisée."

Rachel also thinks that she would not be part of a movement because it just is not her style: "Disons que je suis pas une grande militante, anyway, pour n'importe quoi. J'aime mieux faire ça autour de moi. Je trouve que c'est pas mal. Je trouve que c'est mieux." She prefers to get involved on a more individual and daily basis in her circle and thinks it better and more effective than other types of activism. She is for all social movements of course, whether they be for ecology, peace or for women. For now, however, she acts for these causes in her own way. She sees herself as a great defender of women's rights around her and speaks out all the time. She is not afraid to express her views because it is her right and a given for her:

...c'est tellement un acquis pour moi que ça me gênerais pas. Même être toute seule, oui je le dirais...je pourrais être avec cinq, six gars pis qu'ils commencent à parler contre les femmes ou des choses comme ça pis que wao ho! Moi je le sais que c'est pas ça moi. Comme, oui, je vais prendre la parole parce que c'est mon droit...Disons que maintenant je suis rendue très sensibilisée à la cause des femmes pis je trouve ça le fun...

She also mentioned that she has her own feminism that she finds very gratifying:

“ J'ai mon propre féminisme que je trouve très valorisant pis je trouve le fun, tu sais. C'est un engagement à tous les jours pis c'est motivant. J'essaie de voir les progrès qu'on fait pis j'ai espoir, qu'à un moment donné, on va peut-être pouvoir faire changer quelque chose.” There is not one day she says, where she does not say something on different issues related to different social movements. She makes her involvement as actual and present as possible: it is habitual, spontaneous and fun. She tries to make men and women around her more aware, to make them realize that it would be fun to live in a society where both men and women are valued, recognized, equal. Individually, she does the best to get informed and share her knowledge with people around her. If she had more time, she would invest some energy in meeting with other women to share and talk about personal experiences. She finds this more worthwhile than demonstrations, for example. Until now, she has not felt the need to be active in a movement or group but maybe when she will be out in the “real world” and when she will be confronted with more social inequalities, maybe then she will

take part more but right now she does not have the time to get involved outside her immediate environment: she does her best on her own and thinks it is enough.

Laurie also pointed out that the women's movement may become more relevant in her life as she gets older. She thinks she will probably have to refer to it more because until now, her life has been pretty easy for she has not had to deal with much sexist discrimination. Maybe as she gets older, she will see and feel the barriers more:

J'ai l'impression que c'est un mouvement qui, plus je vieillis, plus je vais avoir besoin de m'y référer...parce que comme, jusqu'à maintenant finalement, mon cheminement a été assez facile. Je veux dire j'ai pas eu à faire face à beaucoup de discrimination sexuelle parce que je suis une femme. Mais je pense que c'est peut-être comme ça pour beaucoup de femmes que, plus on vieillit, plus on essaie de réaliser des choses pis plus on a des barrières...quand je vais avoir l'impression d'être vraiment brimée, parce que peut-être que c'est pour ça que je m'y suis pas encore jusqu'à maintenant super identifiée...

While she does not currently participate that actively in women's causes, she does not reject the idea of participating in the future. Actually, she could see herself getting involved in issues related to developing countries such as access to employment but mostly in the area of women's place and roles in the economy and in development: "...en fait ma priorité ça serait la part des femmes dans le développement...que les femmes soient conscientes de leur rôle vraiment dans l'économie...c'est surtout au niveau de la conscientisation de leurs rôles." She

could also see herself working at different levels, in a group or maybe even at a more political level as a speaker or “porte-parole”. She feels she could become a militant but not only for women’s causes but by linking women’s realities to issues of race and poverty, for example:

...je suis persuadée que je serais beaucoup militante...Comme je pense qu’il faudrait qu’il y ait d’autre chose aussi qui entre en ligne de compte pour que je devienne une grande militante...Comme pour moi allier par exemple le contexte des femmes pis la situation de pauvreté. Comme je serais définitivement comme en faveur de militer pour ça.

While she believes that the struggle has to start from the “ground-up” and that she would like to participate in that way, she can also see herself working at a more organizational level as the head of a project, for example. She could see herself working in a women’s movement in Africa or for the “Ministère de la Condition féminine” in another country. She thinks her interest for such action and issues stems from having been raised in a family that has always been involved politically and socially and she herself has been involved in many activities in cégep and in university even though her level of involvement has changed throughout the years.

Other women also mentioned that even though they haven’t participated in the women’s movement, haven’t been that active in women’s causes or have not made that a priority in their life, they do have some interest in women’s issues. Naomi, for example, mentioned that she has never really thought about

getting involved in women's issues for she has not had the opportunity - but she has not sought out opportunities either. She has not joined any specific groups although she is interested in all these issues and expects, as an eventual teacher, that she will make a point of including women's perspectives in her courses. She also talked about how her feminism is ever-present in her daily life and how it expresses itself in different ways: for example, in her discussions with her boyfriend, she is very critical of stereotypes, and she will go "tête à tête" with certain people over feminist issues. Her feminism is very integrated, it is just part of who she is and she is often stunned by some people's lack of awareness: "It's just sort of ever-present...I think I express it in many ways and I think it's just part of me. And I'm really amazed by some people my age who are just totally oblivious to, you know, being sensitive to certain issues or being aware that they exist. I mean it's just mind-boggling." She also mentioned that if she were ever to become more involved, it would be locally to organize or canvas for breast cancer for it is an issue that has touched her life:

If I were to get involved locally, I guess it would be maybe to organize or to canvas for cancer or do something in that way because first of all it has touched my life because I've got people I know who have had it and even died from it. And also because I look at it and think that it is really a real women's issue and in turn needs support in some way. So I think that would be the first way I would do it.

Eloise mentioned that although she has never been involved in women's groups or in the movement, and has never thought of organizing something herself or

writing articles about women's issues, she is really interested in learning things or hearing about women's gains. She thinks women's issues are not a big preoccupation in her life right now because she has not lived many injustices in her life yet: in her family and immediate surroundings, women have always been treated as the equals of men. Feminism is not a priority of hers at the present time but she says that she would certainly be interested in reading books and doing research on women in the future. Nevertheless she would not see herself ever becoming a lobbyist or at the head of a movement - she would participate more in her own way, by for example doing research in her field. She mentioned:

...for now it's not a priority in my life. But I am interested. Well in history I am always interested in reading books and research on women in past years...I could see myself doing, at one point in my life, the evolution of women in history, throughout the world, some countries and some regions or some field of study. I'm always interested in that. And that I could see myself doing.

Another participant, Linda, mentioned that she has never gone to a march, a sit-in or a demonstration but feels that she is not totally passive for as she says "I know which side I stand on. Like, that's pretty definitive." She tries to be active, not to be the "old-fashioned kind of sit at home, be nice, be a good woman". She says that she likes to get out and is involved in a lot of sports and not necessarily non-contact sports either, and always tries to treat everyone equally. She supports the cause in her own way, however small her part may be:

...just making sure that whenever I do something, I'm comfortable with it and I'm not doing something simply because I'm a woman. I make sure that I don't get passed over...I feel that if I stick up for myself then I'm sticking up for everyone...I guess it's not a big deal but it's what I do.

On the other hand, Karissa, for example, mentioned that she has never really been preoccupied with women's issues even though she thinks that it is a good thing that there are people out there fighting for women's rights. She could not say how she is involved at that level right now and does not know if she would ever participate in the future. It is not something she has really ever thought about. If she did though, she thinks she would probably get involved in something related to sports such as being part of an association or participating in recreational activities for women but not in any kind of leadership role: "I guess it's just not something that I've thought about enough to actually get involved in. But, I mean, possibly in the future yeah. Probably like something related to sports. And I don't think if I would get involved, it wouldn't be a lot of involvement. I don't know. I guess, like just being part of a group but I cannot see myself being like a leader of any group." She feels she is more of a laid-back individual and less of a go-out-and-get-it kind of person.

Some participants feel uneasiness when they talk about their lack of involvement in women's causes. Aretha feels some guilt because she is not out there leading women's groups but she thinks she is doing all she can. She is proud of what she does in her milieu but recognizes that some people would not

view it that way and would think that she could do more:

I'm not out there leading women's groups. I mean I'm doing what I can and I often have guilt about that, like getting involved with these groups and everything else...I do a good deal but it's on a very, you know, my environment kind of level and I know that I've made a difference...I'm proud of myself for that but, by the same token, I'm sure that a lot of people wouldn't recognize that, you know, and they'd think that I should be in the marches and everything else...

She sometimes feels that she should be doing more because she identifies so strongly with women's issues. Her concern comes, as she says, "in losing that sense of myself and of making a difference, you know. Cause it's so easy to keep your mouth shut and that makes me nervous to think that I do that, do you know what I mean?" However, she has participated in two outings with women's groups but she found it to be a negative experience. Even though her experience with women's groups is limited, overall she just does not like group mentality. She states:

Group mentality I don't like. And I think that a lot of my experience, which is very limited with women's groups, is that, you know, there's positive collectivism and then there's collectivism...the two outings that I had, it was negative. It wasn't talking about what you need to change...not how you're gonna change it but the dilemma that we have now. So if anything, everybody was feeding off this negativity and anger and everything else, but nothing positive came out it right...it's like talking about someone you don't like. Well, instead of saying "what we are gonna do about this person" or "how we can let this person know", they just talked

about the negative faults... And I think it was depressing for everyone involved and no good came of it.

For now, she is very outspoken about women's issues in her classes, with her peers, and with her family. She believes that it is the little things that count: for example, she tries to change the people around her, she questions people in power, she makes a positive impact through her essays and research, she encourages her girlfriends to speak out, she values their intelligence and helps them become more confident and makes them see how things are unjust and unequal, and she keeps a critical perspective on events. As she mentioned during her interview:

I speak out all the time and I don't know how many times this year, you know in classes and everything else, when I'd say you know I disagree, I disagree, I disagree...you know it's little things...If you were to ask my friends, they'd say I talk too much and I quote statistics too much and that I speak out too much...

This woman strongly believes that she will make a difference through her studies and her career because she wants to work with women.

Francesca also mentioned that participation is something that she has a lot of problems with: she thinks that most people in her generation do not participate all that much and that she does not feel the motivation and does not have the energy to get more actively involved even though she appreciates what women's groups and the women's movement do. She could maybe see herself

participating in the future if the opportunity arises and she would never exclude the possibility. Like the other women interviewed, she thinks that maybe it is because there are no emotions to motivate her because her experience has been generally positive: "I haven't suffered discrimination all that much. I think when sometimes you are discriminated against, your energy comes from there..." She is also presently very busy with her university studies and she has to make priorities. When the opportunity will present itself to her, she would like to give it the time and energy that is required and deserved. For now, she, like many others, contents herself with contesting sexism and discrimination around her: she participates by talking about women's issues, making people think around her and getting involved in small ways even though she does not necessarily think it is the most efficient way. Nonetheless, she has been questioning herself lately on how or why she does not vocalize and get involved in an organized movement or lobbying for things she believes strongly in: "I've been questioning myself recently on not just that issue but other issues too, you know, that you believe strongly in. That's one that I believe strongly but I don't vocalize it, you know. I don't get involved in an organized movement... those are very very important things...It seems I don't have the energy or the guts or what it is to get involved in it...But I believe strongly in it..."

In conclusion, while their generation has often been portrayed as apathetic, cynical, uncommitted and afraid of change, most of the participants consider that they are quite interested in and committed to women's issues and

change. However, they stress the point that we have to understand the social, economic and political context that circumscribes their experience and their involvement: young women are aware of many new realities and are facing the particular challenges of their time such as tougher economic conditions and a closed political opportunity structure. In addition, some of them believe that because women have made some progress in past decades, they may not have to struggle as much or as passionately as before and therefore need to embrace change in a new manner. As a generation, they have had different formative experiences and are facing different social conditions than their predecessors. They are thus adopting different practices to manage new social environments.

For now, most of these women continue to oppose sexism and discrimination in their immediate environments and networks and to fight for equality in their own way, mostly on a daily and individual basis. However, at the present time, their motivation to participate in collective action is rather low. As we have seen before, they lack some of the conditions for participation in social movement activism: while they accept the cognitive frameworks of feminism and have access to resources of knowledge and social networks, they lack network connections with activists, a strong emotional investment, and a positive assessment of political opportunity structures. But a mobilization potential is present. In fact, some participants point out the possibility of their participation in the women's movement in later life and list the conditions in which they might become more active. Furthermore, while they may not be activists, many are part

of the movement in its latent form and their accounts confirm the shift towards the personal nature of collective action, as outlined by Melucci (1989): for many, the movement exists in their everyday networks, practices and relations.

Feminism and women's issues are still important for these young women but they point out that their involvement has to be understood within the particular context of their times. Conditions have changed and, consequently, so have the strategies and actions they pursue for women's issues and change. They may be involved in a different way but they still care...

PART III- THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW: UNDERSTANDING THE VOICES OF A NEW GENERATION

A study of the accounts of the participants involved in this project allows us to grasp the uniqueness of these women's experiences. It reveals valuable insights into the notion of political generation. Women who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s have been shaped by different experiences from those of their predecessors, who came of age and gained a sense of their own identity in a different historical period. (Whittier 1995) Their experience of feminism, the meaning they give to the women's movement, and the actions they pursue, therefore, have to be interpreted within the particular social conditions and currents of their times. Many of the participants identified these specific conditions, experiences, outlooks, and practices. Most of them share similar formative experiences, a similar interpretive framework and similar practices in terms of their involvement in women's issues. It is important to note, however, that these participants do not form a homogeneous group: they respond differently to their social context. Some of them are obviously more knowledgeable, articulate and committed than others. Nonetheless, as we shall see in the following sections, some common themes emerge from many of their accounts which bring to light the concerns and preoccupations of a new generation of women coming into contact with the "accumulated heritage" of feminism. In addition, these women's accounts about individual commitment and

involvement in women's issues also shed some light on the nature of collective action today. As we have seen, their experience and participation have to be understood within the context of the emergence of new types of collective action in recent times and may lead to interesting insights into the different cycles of protest which mark the development, continuity, and transformation of social movements such as the women's movement.

A New Generation Enters the Stage

One of the underlying themes to surface from many of the participants' accounts is that their responses, outlooks, practices and identification with feminism and the women's movement are different from those of the previous generation because they believe that times have changed. On the one hand, they mention that women's lives have improved and thus young women have new opportunities and choices which their predecessors did not have. On the other hand, they are facing new challenges and constraints linked to the particular social, economic, and political conditions that circumscribe their lives. Therefore, their experience, their "collective identities", their views on the meaning and relevance of feminism and on the direction and strategies of the women's movement are different, in line with Whittier's observation that "the social and political climate has changed and, as a result, so have the perspectives and opportunities of both longtime and incoming feminists."

(Whittier 1995: 243; Schneider 1988) This is also in line with the debate on this subject in the US, where young women have argued that they have different needs, preoccupations and a different vantage point on feminism and the world because they have had different formative experiences and because the social context has changed. (Walker 1995b; Slee 1995; Kaplan 1994; Glickman 1993)

The Success of the Women's Movement: New Opportunities and New Perspectives

Compared to past generations, these young women grew up in a context already changed by feminism and their experience is marked by the success of the movement in many ways. In this sense, the collective mobilization and activism of the Canadian women's movement in past years has created what Melucci considers "a new social space". (Melucci 1989) However, these women respond to these developments in different ways. We observe that a few participants in this study appear to be isolated from the currents of feminism: they are not really aware of past struggles and are not very preoccupied with women's issues, with feminism and with their specific identity as women. Most of the other participants are conscious of women's progress and believe that women have come a long way over the years. As we have seen, many of them recognize the new social space created by the women's movement and are grateful for the struggles of the previous generation of women and feminists who

paved the way for them. Many of the women interviewed mentioned that their experience as women had been generally positive: they had not yet suffered much sexual discrimination in their lives, and felt that they were not subject to any particular barriers because they were women. They feel they benefit greatly from the work of their predecessors and are aware and take advantage of the new opportunities and choices they now have. They are pursuing their individual needs and goals and developing their potential in many ways. They have new freedoms, new expectations about who they want to be and what they can accomplish: they feel they are more aware, more informed and that there are some things young women today would just never accept. Many of them find that feminism is now part of their everyday lives. It is present in their relationships, in their outlooks, and in their practices. A feminist perspective has become, as they said, "normal", "integrated", "just ever-present". They talk about the "taken-for-grantedness" of their rights and abilities as women. As some women mention, what was a "privilege" for the generations of women before them, is now a "right" and "given" for their generation. Some feel that their generation is different because they have more than the generations before them but they point out that this also provokes some new problems and questions. Some women feel confusion and angst about the new expectations linked to the "tyranny of choice" : now that they have all these choices, all these new opportunities, where do they start? What do they want?

Many of these women feel they are starting one step ahead of their

female predecessors in the long struggle for equality. They, therefore, have a different vantage point and have different outlooks about what the objectives, strategies and direction of feminism and the women's movement should now be. As some of them have pointed out, women have made some progress and thus more subtle approaches are needed today. New circumstances and new conditions demand that new strategies be developed. As one of them indicated (Rachel), the feminist movement needs to readjust itself to the realities of today, it needs to change its rhetoric and move on to a more modern and appropriate discourse and practice.

More Subtle Approaches Are Needed Today: Getting Away From Radicalism

One of the common themes to surface from these women's accounts is that radicalism is not as necessary as in the past because people are now increasingly aware of women's inequality and of the existence of feminism and the women's movement. The notion of radicalism is a central preoccupation in most of the women's accounts. It is an important component of their "collective identity" or interpretive framework about feminism and the women's movement. There is an overall tendency among many of them, to see anything radical as negative, "passé", and irrelevant to their experiences and lives. During the interviews, many repeatedly expressed their ambivalence or opposition to what they perceive to be the more radical tenets and approaches of the movement:

they are feminists *but...*the movement is relevant *but...*change is needed *but...*

They believe in and are dedicated to many feminist ideals and goals but they insist on dissassociating themselves from anything too radical because they say that it is not necessarily conducive to change for it scares people away, it is exclusive, and too strict. They also feel that radical tenets and approaches do not allow them to express and define themselves in tune with the variety of experiences and beliefs that make up their daily lives. Radicalism means losing parts of their identities and their realities such as marriage, motherhood, heterosexual relationships, and femininity. All women mentioned that they do not want to exclude the men in their lives and feel that they also should participate in the struggle for equality. (Wolf 1993) Like some US women have pointed out, they find certain parts of the movement too radical, exclusive, strident and restrictive. (Walker 1995b; Dent 1995; Wolf 1993) This may help to understand their more liberal definition and vision of feminism, their discourse about feminism in the sense of equal rights, equal opportunities and equal chances rather than about structural change. But still a few of them do define the movement's goals as more transformative: changing the basic social structures of society and transforming mentalities.

The radical elements and strategies of feminism and the women's movement seem irrelevant for many of the participants because they consider that most of their experience until now has been relatively positive. Some believe that maybe they have not been exposed to sufficient personal or direct

experiences which would motivate them to participate or identify strongly with more transformative and collective actions. Most of these women's have a more theoretical knowledge of feminism, obtained mostly in their courses, readings and contacts at the university. Their relationship to feminism does not come as much out of personal experience, which was often the case for older women and feminists. As Melucci (1989) suggests, individuals participate in collective action in part because they have been confronted to the contradictions of the system. Many of these women have not yet been confronted to the experiences that "radicalize" such as motherhood, marriage, and entering the paid labour force so that maybe "young women will have to come up against the constraints of the occupational structure, the limits on their income, and the problems inherent in domestic and marital structures before seeking a new, more activist direction." (Steinem referenced in Schneider 1988:15). However, some of these women indicate the possibility that they would participate in collective action in the future, when they get out into the "real world", where they will be confronted with issues requiring a more active involvement. Also, in contrast to the previous generation, these women consider that they have many new opportunities and choices at this point in their lives which may make their participation in more collective projects or action less imperative.

However, as some participants have argued, it is not because they are not radical that they are not committed to women's issues and change. Contrary to the "post-feminist" discourse on young women (Whittier 1995), they do not

believe that the struggle for equality is over. In fact, they believe that change is still necessary and envisage many ways of bringing it about: offering positive role models, changing socialization patterns, giving importance to women's groups, and a variety of other strategies. In this way, many of them still believe in some of the feminist goals and ideals of their predecessors but they differ in their methodologies and their strategies of intervention. As some of them suggested, women's situation and consciousness have evolved, leading them to conclude that they are no longer as likely to be victims of injustice: thus they may not feel as strong a need as their predecessors to revolt and participate in radical change. They consider that their social conditions are different and so are their priorities and the strategies they choose to pursue the feminist project in their lives. Their experience is well characterized by Schneider when she states that "each generation adds its own unique features and ideas to shaping a constantly changing movement. Hence, young women with their own priorities, must shape their own feminist agenda in accord with their experience."

(Schneider 1988:14) New approaches are sought which are in tune with their experiences. The struggle must go on but in a different and subtle way! Most of them are quite committed to women's issues and practice their own personal feminism in their surroundings and networks. They have not abandoned the struggle and are not taking things for granted they say, but rather are engaging themselves in a different way, on a more individual basis.

New Opportunities But Also New Challenges and Constraints

Some of the women interviewed find that their generation is confronted with new realities that may make it more difficult for them to struggle as passionately as the generation before them: a tougher economic climate, awareness and complexity of social issues today, little access to resources for employment and positions of power, few means to put their knowledge and consciousness into practice because of a closed political opportunity structure, and apathy toward the current political system. They want to believe that they can implement change but how do they go about it? For these reasons, some of the participants feel that their generation is more disillusioned, less idealistic and are consequently less optimistic about the possibilities for action, power, and change. They are a more conscious generation but with many new preoccupations. It is not that they are uncommitted, apolitical, or afraid of change (as some older feminists and generations have suggested) but rather that the context is not as favourable. In their view, it has become more difficult to get involved, to get mobilized, and to enact change. As Whittier indicates:

This generation came of political age during the 1980s and 1990s and entered a more quiescent and unpopular women's movement. Their actions as activists were limited by scant available resources and narrow political opportunities. Their collective identity, not surprisingly, differed from that of longtime feminists who acquired a sense of the world and themselves in a different era. (Whittier 1995:226)

Therefore the strategies that worked well twenty, thirty years ago may not necessarily be successful or possible in the present context.

Moreover, possibilities and abilities for involvement in collective action may also be linked to these young women's position in the social structure and their access to educational, professional, and social resources. As Melucci (1989) argues, activists are usually individuals who are highly integrated in the social structure and social institutions, have had previous membership in networks and organizations, and have access to resources which allow them to evaluate the benefits of participation. While many of these "affluent marginals" have access to resources in terms of education, information and networks which may give them a stronger capacity "for building and negotiating their collective identities" and getting involved in collective action, they are not inclined for the moment to participate in any collective project. It is important to note however, that these women are not highly integrated in the social structure, have had few previous memberships in organizations and are as yet isolated from the professional and social resources and abilities that can play an important role in one's capacity to get involved in collective action. (Melucci 1989) However, even though their involvement does not express itself at a collective level, these women clearly state that they have not abandoned the fight. They struggle for women's issues in their own way, at a more individual level, in their own personal environments. Their involvement may be different but they still care.

This concurs with studies and young women's accounts in the US which indicate that women are adopting more personal strategies for change in response to new realities and different possibilities for action and change. (Glickman 1993; Kaplan 1994)

The Nature of Collective Action Today: Understanding How Young Women Get Involved

The previous generation of women and feminists became involved in the women's movement at a time of expansion and major social, economic and political changes in Canadian society (Adamson et al. 1988). The rise and development of the second-wave of the women's movement in Canada was part of a larger wave of change and collective mobilizations as other social movements also emerged and gained public attention. (Adamson et al. 1988) It was a period which was characterized by "a belief in, and an enthusiasm for, the possibilities of change unparalleled in recent history." (Adamson et al. 1988: 257) After periods of extensive collective mobilization, young women have entered a more quiescent period in social movement activism. (Whittier 1995; Melucci 1989) Their experience and their involvement in the women's movement must be understood within the present context and the specific period in which this group has entered the stage: a more latent phase of social movement activism rather than a period of mobilized action. Today, the personal nature of

collective action has become increasingly present as conflict and activism are expressed more and more outside conventional areas of protest and the boundaries of political systems. (Melucci 1989) Change, resistance and opposition manifest themselves increasingly in a more “molecular dimension”, shifting towards everyday life, personal and social relationships, “submerged networks” of social relations, and the creation of new meanings. (Melucci 1989) In a way, most of the participants’ accounts about their involvement in women’s issues confirm this shift towards the molecular dimension of collective action and change today: it expresses itself in their everyday interactions, in their social relations, and in their personal networks and environments. While a few women are not involved in any way in women’s issues, many insist that they are still very committed, that they “do their politics” in their own way by standing up for their feminist values in their circle of friends, families and networks. While the previous generation was *creating* feminism in their everyday words, these women seem to be *living* it in their daily practice. Maybe young women are not activists like the previous generation of feminists was, but that does not necessarily mean that they are not involved or that the movement is dissipated or has vanished: latency does not mean inactivity but rather that “the potential for resistance or opposition is sewn into the very fabric of daily life.” (Melucci 1989:71) Finally, while some women do not see themselves ever participating in a collective movement for it just is not in accord with their personality, others feel they could become activists later in their lives. They see themselves as part of

latent networks of the movement that could become visible or mobilized in the future.

Therefore, different cycles of protest mark the development, continuity and transformation of social movements. As Whittier suggests: "Movements for social change are not reborn anew each time they resurge and they do not necessarily die when they decline. Rather, social movements are continuous and move from periods of peak mobilization into decline, abeyance, transition, and back to peak mobilization again." (Whittier 1995:257) Different age cohorts of women entering the stage at different periods of social movement activism, adopt particular perspectives and strategies that are relevant to their experience and the specific context of their times. (Whittier 1995) Social movements evolve greatly over time and understanding the different cycles of protest in social movements thus becomes important, for even when movements are in less mobilized periods, they are not static and inactive. (Whittier 1995; Melucci 1989)

The Women's Movement From One Political Generation to the Next

These young women had particular formative experiences which shaped their experience, their relationship to and the meaning they give to feminism and the women's movement today. As Mannheim (1952) indicates, members of a same generation not only share the same age, but are also predisposed to certain experiences, modes of thought and historically relevant types of action

because of their similar location in the social and historical process. As we have seen, these young women, as part of the present generation, have different “collective identities”, political outlooks and responses to feminism and the women's movement. Some of the participants involved in this study reveal certain of the features of a new political generation that is asking new questions about the status and direction of the women's movement. This has been the source of some intergenerational conflict as observed in the US debate between older and younger generations of women. Young women interviewed in this study are quite aware that they are often perceived, by certain older feminists, to be apolitical, afraid of change and lacking a feminist consciousness. But they believe that they are coming into contact with feminism and the women's movement in a different historical period. They are facing the particular social and political conditions of their times and, therefore, have new opportunities as well as constraints that shape their experience and their interpretive frameworks and the practices they have in regards to women's issues and the women's movement. “That was then, this is now”, they say : they have not abandoned the fight but are redefining what it means to them and are attempting to create a feminism they can call their own and that is relevant to their daily lives and experiences. As these young women embrace as well as challenge feminism, they are striving to bind together past legacies with new conditions and experiences. They are continuing, in their own way, the feminist project which

they have inherited from the previous generation. As Taylor and Whittier point out:

As one generation of feminists fades from the scene with its ultimate goals unrealized, another takes up the challenge. But each new generation of feminists does not simply carry on where the previous generation left off. Rather, it speaks for itself and defines its own objectives and strategies, often to the dismay and disapproval of feminists from earlier generations..."feminism is not simply a form of received wisdom" but something that evolves with each new cycle of feminist activism. Both continuity and change, then, will characterize the feminism of the twenty-first century. (Taylor and Whittier 1993:545)

PART IV- CONCLUSION: AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

This research has focused on the interview narratives of ten Canadian university women in their twenties. The participants involved in this study contributed valuable and rich insights on the subject matter as they talked about their knowledge of feminism, the relevance of the women's movement to their lives, their perspectives on change, and their commitment to and involvement in women's issues. They offer a particular but nonetheless fruitful glimpse of the needs, thoughts, feelings, understandings and perspectives of a new generation of women coming into contact with the legacy of feminism. Since very little research has been done on this topic in a Canadian context, this study opens a window on a deeper understanding of the preoccupations and visions of this generation of women. It also gives credibility to feminist research and practice in Canada and to the changing nature of feminism in the 1990s. This study may also offer some direction for further research in this area for it raises some new questions and issues, some of which I have will explore briefly in the following section.

Political Generations and the Women's Movement: the Necessity for Dialogue

A study of the participants' accounts indicates the relevance of a generational approach to any analysis that attempts to understand the

experiences and outlooks of younger women towards feminism today. They came of age in a different historical period, have been confronted with particular social and political conditions and have different formative experiences. Their collective identities in relation to feminism, their practices and strategies have been greatly influenced by this context. Their experience and the meaning they give to feminism and the women's movement has to be understood within this reality. Therefore, understanding how social movements endure and how they change requires that we grasp the historical dimension of these women's experiences and meanings.

It also indicates the need for a certain openness to the changing nature of feminism today and to the possibility that the women's movement may take on a somewhat different direction as it includes the needs and visions of a new generation of women. While these young women may not be activists in the same way as their predecessors, most of them still are, in many ways, committed to women's issues and change but are trying to live and integrate a feminism that is relevant to their experiences and their lives and to the context of struggle in the 1990s. While older and younger generations may differ quite often in their outlooks and strategies, it is necessary to encourage a more active dialogue between them. While the transmission of the feminist heritage from one generation to the next may often be the source of misunderstandings and conflicts, it can also lead to cooperation and to the continuing life and survival of the movement for "the question of how social movements endure is inseparable

from the question of how they change.” (Whittier 1995:255; Mannheim 1952)

Connections need to be forged across and within generations if the movement is to continue to soar into the future. As Whittier points out: “Longtime feminists and newcomers to the movement may sometimes disagree, but together they create the future of the struggle for women’s equality and liberation.” (Whittier 1995:258)

Bringing the Political Into Everyday Life: New Research Avenues to Explore

An examination of these young women's experiences and their relationship to feminism and the women's movement also raises important questions about the nature of collective action today. After important periods of collective mobilization of the women's movement in past decades, these women entered a more latent period in the history of the movement. While their female predecessors were more publically active, these women do their politics in their everyday lives, and enact change in a more individual fashion in their networks and social relations. It has been suggested that collective action has shifted towards daily life, new forms of personal and social relationships and the creation of new meanings. Increasingly, it develops outside the boundaries of political systems and organizations. This development raises important questions for larger issues of political activism and change which have not been explored in any significant way in this study. Further research on this shift and

the different cycles of protest that mark the development of social movements over time, could be fruitful to understand the implications of young women's involvement and experiences for the future of social movement activism and the women's movement as a whole.

The Social and Discursive Construction of Feminism and Radicalism

These women's accounts also raise some questions about the social and discursive construction of feminism and radicalism today. As some women themselves pointed out, the word "feminist" has become a label that categorizes and defines. Some of the participants struggle with a feminist identity because it is associated with negative connotations and reactions and with a negative image of feminists as totally radical, hard-core, mostly lesbian and unfeminine. These women seem to meet two definitions and images of feminism and the women's movement in which they have had to negotiate their own definitions: on the one hand a relatively positive discourse on feminism which they have learned at university, in their courses, in their readings and through personal contacts, and a more negative discourse propagated by more diffuse sources (they often mention the mass media). In addition, as we have seen, many of the women are uncomfortable with what they perceive to be the radical tenets and approaches of feminists and the movement. In their view radical means exclusive, restrictive, extreme, and it turns people away. However, many have

had little or no direct or personal experience with radicalism and are not activists. So where does their notion of radicalism come from?

These young women's accounts could provide some interesting insights for further research which would explore the ways the everyday realities and the meanings given by younger women to feminism today are linked to and framed by larger social and ideological realities. (Smith 1987;1990a) These insights could provide a fruitful point of entry for the exploration of the social organization of knowledge - ideas, concepts, vocabularies and images, and the ways in which young women's consciousness, experience and the language they use in relation to feminism may be linked to social and ideological relations of power. As Smith indicates, to see "who produces what for whom, where the social forms of consciousness come from." (Smith 1987: 54) While some women seem to have adopted, to a certain degree, the negative image and discourse of feminism without questioning it, others pointed out how they believe these ideas, stereotypes and images are linked to relations of power and the interests of a male-dominated, patriarchal society which definitely have to be countered and challenged. Some of the participants have provided some beginning insights into these relationships that could serve as a point of entry for future research which attempts to understand and explain how the words feminism and radicalism have become discursively and socially constructed, and the impact this has had on young women's perspectives and involvement in the women's movement.

Getting Radical With Age

Many women mentioned during the interviews that they had not yet suffered any discrimination or felt any particular barriers because they were women and have been able until now to pursue their individual goals without any resistance. For these reasons, they mention that they have not yet felt the need to participate in the women's movement in any important way. Some said that maybe in the future or when they get out into the "real world", then they will feel the need to become more involved. For now, they are taking advantage of the opportunities they have and they do not feel any particular constraints that would engage them in a more activist direction. As was suggested, maybe these women have not yet had the experiences that "radicalize". (Steinem referenced in Schneider 1988) The point they are at in their lives right now, focusing on individual needs and goals, making career choices, and so forth, may have an impact, to a certain degree, on their perspectives and involvement in the women's movement. If this is the case, it would be interesting to further research on how this relationship to feminism and the women's movement changes over the lifespan for if women do grow more radical with age, as they enter the workforce for example, the experiences of these women and the meaning these women give to feminism may change over the years. As Schneider points out: "If women do become more radicalized over time, research must continue on the basis and meaning to women of activism over the life course. This might mean

serious attention in longitudinal analyses of the evolution of their motivations for resistance to oppressive institutions.” (Schneider 1988:16)

Theories and Analyses Grounded in Women’s Experience

This research has favoured a feminist grounded approach in which young women’s experiences and interpretations have served as the starting point of knowledge and inquiry. Women were considered as active, reflexive, authoritative, and knowledgeable speakers of their lives. The in-depth interviews I conducted with them were very useful as a tool to uncover and explore their experiences, how they view and understand the world around them: their meanings, their perspectives, and their definitions, expressed in their own terms. By participating in this research and voicing their concerns and experiences, these women have contributed some important knowledge which begins to fill some of the gap in Canadian and sociological research on young women and feminism. Further research needs to continue to value women’s personal and social experiences, to value their perspectives and meanings as valuable and credible grounds for research and to consider women as active collaborators in the research process and in the construction of knowledge. As Smith indicates:

We have become familiar in the women's movement with the importance of women learning to relate to one another. We need also to learn how to treat what other women say as a source and

basis for our own work and thinking. We need to learn to treat one another as the authoritative speakers of our experience and concerns. (Smith 1987:35)

Scope of This Research

While this research has contributed some interesting insights into these young women's relationship to feminism in the 1990s, it offers but an introductory, if limited, analysis of the complex and multifaceted reality that shapes these women's personal and social experiences. It is far from being a comprehensive and complete study for there are many different dimensions and realities that interplay and makeup young women's experiences and the meaning they give to feminism and the women's movement today. For example, it was not within the scope of this study to explore issues of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and so forth, that also encompass women's experiences and their identification to this social movement. In addition, this study has also only touched the surface of how these women's personal experiences are linked to larger social, political and ideological realities. Also, considering the limited number of women interviewed and their specific backgrounds, this research does not pretend to address the diversity of experience of this younger generation of women nor does it suggest that the voices of the women in this study are representative of their generation. This study is but a point of entry into a few, but nonetheless significant, young

Canadian women's experiences and perspectives in relation to feminism and the women's movement. It has sought to explore an area that has been mostly absent in Canadian research until now and hopes to encourage further studies on the subject matter and maybe open the dialogue between older and younger generations of women and feminists.

Personal Reflections

The experience of doing this research was an enriching one for me as a woman and novice researcher. Not only did it initiate me to the exciting and complex world of qualitative research, but it also allowed me to reflect upon my own experience, feelings, and thoughts, as a member of this younger generation of women. It has opened my eyes to the importance of listening across generational lines and to the necessity of getting involved, in one way or another, in the ongoing feminist project. Glickman encompasses well my frame of mind at the end of this journey when she states:

It is time to remove the word from under the microscope. The daughters of feminists understand very well that the word was and is enmeshed in a social context. Indeed, they insistently remind me of this as they struggle to reconcile their mother's legacy with their own experiences in their world. We may well mourn the transformation of a robust, exultant shout into a tentative whisper. The word is in trouble. But revealing as the nuances of acceptance, ambivalence, or rejection of a crucial word are, that is not the whole story...(Glickman 1993:16-7)

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APPENDIX I**CONSENT FORM**

I am presently undertaking research in partial fulfillment of my master's degree in sociology at Carleton University on the experience of and meaning younger women aged between 19-24 give to feminism and its movement today. Your participation in this research project will involve one in-depth interview of about two hours. The interview will be conducted through open-ended questions on a variety of issues related to the subject matter. Flexibility about the time, place and length of interviews will be granted in order to accommodate your needs.

The purpose of this form is to notify you of your rights as a participant and interviewee in the mentioned study on young women and feminism. It is understood that your participation in this research project is completely voluntary and that you may stop or withdraw from your participation in this project at any time, for whatever reason. You may refuse to answer any questions during the course of the interview without penalty or any damaging consequences. All information obtained during interviews and during the research process will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to me and my thesis committee. Even though some excerpts of the interviews may be used or presented in my thesis, your name or any other characteristics that may serve to

identify you will not be included in the interview transcripts, the thesis product or from any research, articles, books, etc., not yet written or published. Each interview will be transcribed by me and interview tapes will be erased after transcription. For your interest, a copy of my thesis will be available for consultation after it is defended and bound in the Carleton University library.

Any complaints you may have concerning the interview process may be communicated to Flo Andrews, Chair of the Sociology Department, Carleton University or to Heather Jon Maroney, Chair of my thesis committee, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University.

I would like to thank you for participating in my research. Your contribution is important and sincerely appreciated. I would be grateful if you could sign this consent form to confirm that you have read, understood and agree upon its contents. This signature in no way constitutes a waiver of your rights. It is merely documentation that you are informed about what the research entails, and, on this basis, agreed to participate.

Josée Lecomte

Signature of participant _____

Signature of researcher _____

Date _____

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT

Afin de compléter mon programme de maîtrise en sociologie à l'Université de Carleton, j'entreprends présentement une recherche sur l'expérience et la signification que les jeunes femmes âgées entre 19 et 24 ans donnent au féminisme et au mouvement des femmes aujourd'hui. Votre participation dans ce projet de recherche implique une entrevue en profondeur d'une durée d'environ deux heures. L'entrevue sera dirigée autour de questions ouvertes portant sur une variété de sujets reliés à cette problématique. L'heure, l'endroit et la longueur de l'entrevue sont très flexibles et seront déterminés selon les besoins de chaque participante.

L'objectif de ce formulaire est de vous informer de vos droits en tant que participante et interviewée dans cette recherche sur les jeunes femmes et le féminisme. Votre participation dans ce projet de recherche est entièrement volontaire et vous pouvez interrompre ou vous retirer de cette recherche à tout moment quelque soit le motif. Vous pouvez refuser de répondre à toute question durant l'entrevue sans conséquences négatives et sans pénalités. Toute information obtenue durant l'entrevue et la recherche demeurera confidentielle et ne sera accessible qu'à moi et à mon comité de thèse. Même si certains extraits des entrevues peuvent être utilisés ou présentés dans ma thèse, votre nom ou aucune autre information pouvant servir à vous identifier, ne seront inclus dans les transcriptions de l'entrevue, dans la thèse ou dans toute

recherche, articles, livres, possiblement écrits ou publiés dans le futur. Chaque entrevue sera transcrite par moi-même et les cassettes des entrevues seront effacées après la transcription. Pour votre information, une copie de ma thèse sera disponible pour votre consultation dans la bibliothèque de l'Université de Carleton une fois qu'elle sera défendue et reliée.

Toute plainte au sujet de l'entrevue peut être adressée à Flo Andrews, directrice du Département de sociologie et d'anthropologie, Université de Carleton, ou à Heather Jon Maroney, présidente de mon comité de thèse, Département de sociologie et d'anthropologie à l'Université de Carleton.

J'aimerais vous remercier d'avance pour votre participation à mon projet de recherche. Votre contribution est importante et très appréciée. J'apprécierais grandement si vous pouviez signer ce formulaire de consentement afin de confirmer que vous avez lu, compris et acceptez les termes indiqués. Cette signature ne représente en aucune manière une renonciation à vos droits mais signifie seulement que vous avez été informée sur les objectifs de la recherche et de l'entrevue et que vous acceptez d'y participer.

Josée Lecomte

Signature de la participante

Signature de la chercheure

Date

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:

Maybe we could start the interview with a more general discussion on the women's movement itself. Afterward, we could explore more specific issues related to your personal experience and the women's movement. In your own words, how would you describe or define the women's movement?

What they know about the movement
 Where this knowledge comes from
 Initial reaction, feelings, response to the movement
 How they relate to it today
 What it means to be a feminist or participating in the movement
 What the women's movement has brought them in their lives
 How it is relevant to their experience, needs
 Approaches taken by the women's movement
 Issues that still need to be resolved and methods to approach them; how some issues have changed over the years
 If they consider themselves feminists/why; participation in the movement

ISSUES:

I would now like to get your thoughts and feelings on more specific issues related to your personal experience. What are important preoccupations in your life right now or/and for the future?

Interest in politics and social change, career goals and the workplace, marriage, intimate relationships, children and child-rearing responsibilities, division of

labour, images of women and femininity, sexuality, abortion, pornography, people or events that have influenced their perception and experience of women's issues and the women's movement, issues related to friends and family, how some issues have changed over the years, etc.

PERSONAL DATA:

University studies/field of study: where, what they are studying, reasons for studying and choice of field of study, satisfaction/experience

Work experience: work experience now and in the past, related to studies, school compared to work, if they look forward to being in the workplace after their studies, expectations

Family: number, sex, age and occupation of family members

Highschool

End of interview: ask if they want to add, comment, choice of pseudonym

ISSUES: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Our generation is often referred to as being apathetic, cynical, afraid of change, conservative, uncommitted, that we take things for granted, and so forth. Do you agree with such views? What are your thoughts, feelings, reactions to such statements?

To explore: Do they consider themselves as committed individuals
 Are they interested in politics
 If they think there are still some issues to be resolved for women today; which ones and how, where to start (individual vs public responsibility)
 Their participation in a social movement: reasons, interest

A key issue for many women today is how to manage both career goals and child-rearing responsibilities. Do you have children or do you plan to have children in the future? How do you see your life in terms of having both a career or a job and having children? (Important to be lesbian sensitive)

To explore: How they define themselves in terms of work and children
 Commitment to children or career: which is more important? Why?
 How they plan to manage both public and private roles and responsibilities

What about marriage? Are you married or do you plan to get married eventually? What does marriage mean or represent for you?

To explore: Reasons for marrying or not marrying
 How they see the sharing of responsibilities, roles and the care of children (if applicable)

What about now? Do you have a partner? What are your thoughts on intimate or love relationships today?

To explore: Importance of relationship(s) in their lives
 How they define a good or bad relationship
 Type of relationship they share or would like to share

Another issue I want to explore with you concerns images of women and femininity. What are your views on how women are portrayed for example in the media, in popular culture, television, music, advertisements, magazines, fashion, and so forth?

To explore: Do they agree with images of women and femininity
 Importance of this issue in their lives: preoccupations
 Their definition of femininity

I would also like to get your ideas on sexuality and women today. As you know, there have been many changes in terms of women's sexual behavior in past years with the advent of contraception and with the so-called sexual revolution. For some years now, the women's movement has accorded some importance to the issue of women's sexual autonomy and freedom. Would you mind sharing your thoughts with me on this issue?

To explore: Meaning of sexuality in their lives
 How they are living out their sexuality
 Satisfaction with sexual life and experiences
 Sexual exploitation of women
 Double standard of sexuality for women
 Opinion on pornography
 Opinion on abortion

To finish, is there someone or a particular event that has influenced your experience of and attitudes towards women's issues? Toward the women's movement? In what way?

This about covers the interview today. Are there other issues you would like to discuss that we haven't covered? Would you like to add something or comment on the questions, the interview, the research, etc.?

Finally, for confidentiality matters, you may not want to be identified in the research. Is there a specific pseudonym or name you would like to be assigned? You may also choose your first name if you wish.

GUIDE DE L'ENTREVUE

MOUVEMENT DES FEMMES:

On pourrait peut-être commencer l'entrevue avec une discussion générale sur le mouvement des femmes. Ensuite, on pourra aborder des thèmes plus spécifiques reliés au mouvement et à ton expérience personnelle? Dans tes propres mots, comment décrirais-tu ou définirais-tu le mouvement des femmes?

Ce qu'elles connaissent du mouvement

Source de cette connaissance

Reactions, émotions, sentiments initiaux face au mouvement

Leur relation au mouvement des femmes aujourd'hui

Ce que ça veut dire d'être féministe ou de participer dans un mouvement; d'où vient cette perception, cette opinion?

Ce que le mouvement leur a apporté dans leur vie

Est-ce que le mouvement répond à leurs besoins, comment, pourquoi?

Approches promulguées par le mouvement des femmes

Réalités ou problèmes encore à résoudre pour les femmes et comment s'y attaquer; comment certaines réalités ont changé à travers les années

Si elles se considèrent féministes et pourquoi

THÈMES:

J'aimerais maintenant obtenir tes pensées, tes sentiments, tes idées sur des thèmes plus spécifiques qui te touchent personnellement. Quelles sont certaines de tes préoccupations présentement et/ou pour le futur?

Intérêt et action politique lié au changement social, objectifs de carrière et le milieu du travail, mariage, relations intimes, enfants et responsabilités, division du travail, images ou représentations des femmes et de la féminité, sexualité, avortement, pornographie, personnes ou événements qui ont influencé leur perception ou leur expérience face à certains sujets qui touchent les femmes et le mouvement des femmes, sujets reliés aux ami(e)s et à la famille, comment certaines réalités ont changé à travers les années, etc.

DONNÉES PERSONNELLES:

Études universitaires/Domaine d'étude: où, domaine d'étude, raisons pour étudier et choix du domaine d'étude, satisfaction/expérience

Expérience de travail: expérience de travail maintenant et dans le passé, reliée aux études, école comparée au travail, anticipation face à leur entrée dans le milieu du travail, attentes

Famille: nombre, sexe, âge et occupation des membres de la famille

École secondaire

Fin de l'entrevue: si elles veulent ajouter, commenter, choix d'un pseudonyme

THÈMES: EXEMPLES DE QUESTIONS

Notre génération est souvent accusée d'être apolitique, désintéressée, pas impliquée, cynique, comme ayant peur du changement, conservatrice, qu'on prend les choses pour acquis, etc. Es-tu d'accord avec de tels points de vue? Quelles sont tes réactions, tes sentiments, tes pensées face à ces déclarations?

À explorer: Si elles se considèrent comme des personnes engagées, impliquées
Sont-elles intéressées à la politique
Si elle croient qu'il y a encore des problèmes qui touchent les femmes particulièrement et qui restent encore à résoudre aujourd'hui; lesquels, comment, où commencer (responsabilité individuelle versus publique)
Leur participation dans un mouvement social: raisons, intérêts

Une question d'importance pour beaucoup de femmes aujourd'hui est comment parvenir à poursuivre des objectifs de carrière et élever des enfants. As-tu des enfants ou est-ce que tu comptes avoir des enfants dans le futur? Comment tu perçois ta vie au point de vue d'une carrière ou d'un emploi et avoir des enfants?

À explorer: Comment elles se définissent en terme de travail et avoir des enfants
Quelle est la priorité dans leurs vies, pourquoi?
Comment elles planifient agencer rôles et responsabilités publiques et privées

Et puis le mariage? Es-tu mariée ou comptes-tu te marier éventuellement? Qu'est-ce que le mariage représente ou signifie pour toi?

À explorer: Raisons pour se marier ou non
Comment elles perçoivent le partage des responsabilités, des rôles, du soin des enfants (si ca s'applique)

Et maintenant? As-tu un ou une partenaire? Qu'est-ce que tu penses des relations intimes ou d'amour aujourd'hui?

À explorer: Importance d'une ou des relation(s) dans leur vie
 Comment elles définissent une bonne ou une mauvaise relation
 Genre de relation qu'elles partagent ou aimeraient partager

Une autre question que j'aimerais explorer avec toi touche à l'image ou les représentations des femmes et de la fémininité. Comment tu perçois et qu'est-ce que tu penses de la façon que les femmes sont représentées par exemple dans les médias, la culture populaire, la télévision, la musique, les magazines, la mode, la publicité, etc.?

À explorer: Sont-elles en accord avec ces représentations des femmes et de la fémininité
 Importance de cette question dans leur vie: préoccupations
 Leur définition de la fémininité

Un autre sujet que j'aimerais explorer est celui de la sexualité et les femmes aujourd'hui. Comme tu le sais probablement, il y a eu beaucoup de changements en ce qui a trait aux comportements sexuels des femmes dans les dernières années avec l'arrivée de la contraception et ce qui a été appelé la révolution sexuelle. Pour plusieurs années déjà, le mouvement des femmes a accordé de l'importance à la question de l'autonomie et de la liberté sexuelle des femmes. Est-ce que tu pourrais partager tes idées, tes pensées sur cette question?

À explorer: Sens de la sexualité dans leur vie
 Comment elles vivent leur sexualité
 Expériences et leur vie sexuelle
 Exploitation sexuelle des femmes
 Double standard de la sexualité pour les femmes
 Opinion sur la pornographie
 Opinion sur l'avortement

Pour terminer, y-a-t'il quelqu'un(e) ou un évènement particulier qui a influencé ta vision, tes attitudes, tes croyances en ce qui a trait aux réalités des femmes? Envers le mouvement des femmes? Comment?

C'est à peu près tout ce que je voulais explorer avec toi aujourd'hui. Y-a-t'il d'autres questions ou sujets que tu voudrais discuter qu'on a pas touché dans l'entrevue? Voudrais-tu ajouter quelque chose ou donner des commentaires sur les questions, l'entrevue, la recherche, etc.?

Finalement, pour des raisons de confidentialité, tu ne veux peut-être pas être identifiée dans la recherche. Y-a-t'il un pseudonyme ou un nom particulier que tu voudrais être accordé? Ca peut aussi être ton premier nom si tu le désires.

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