**A CRISIS OF CARING: CONSTRUCTIONS OF WOMEN'S
POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POWER
BY FEMINIST PARTNER ABUSE WORKERS**

by

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in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to understand what women mean when they talk about “women’s power”. Toward that goal, it draws on semi-structured interviews with 30 self-identified feminists who are working and have worked as board members, executive directors, and counsellors in 8 Canadian partner abuse organizations. The interviews that were tape-recorded between October, 1998 and May, 1999 were transcribed and analyzed in open, axial, and selective coding phases of grounded research.

Women’s negative power included direct “domination”, and “manipulation” that was female-specific and indirect. Women’s positive power encompassed “caring” as an indirect type of interaction that is imposed through female socialization, and direct “confidence” that is developed through a process of developing self-esteem, ideally with other women’s respectful support. With self-esteem, women would be able to confidently assert their choices and “voices”, or speak, be listened to, and heard by others. A lack of safety, tension, and silence in feminist organizations constrained that goal.

This study challenges feminism’s contrasting analytic models of negative and unequal male domination or “power-over”, and positive and equal female cooperation or “power-to”. It contradicts assumptions of female caring, as well as feminists’ caring about cooperation, respect, and equality. Testimonies that are grounded in workplace relations also enhance our knowledge of women’s work and feminist organizations. This research disputes the thesis that the financial dependence of feminist organizations on government is the source of all internal tensions. Women’s perceptions, interpretations, and expressions of power are instead, shaped by contradictions arising from the interaction of outside social forces, female socialization, and feminist politics.

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INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

This dissertation questions how feminists define women's power. My interest in this topic derives from my workplace experiences of female power that were not, as feminism had led me to expect, collaborative, respectful, and egalitarian. Although a few women that I worked with shared my perception of negative power, most refused to entertain the possibility that anything other than a "personality problem" existed. This work responds to my suspicion that such resistance to recognizing violations of women's positive power reflects the limitations of feminism's sex-based¹ analysis of power. In planning this project I was interested in seeing whether feminism at a theoretical level had "filtered down" to individual feminists. I wondered whether forty years after its emergence, feminism's models of female "power-to" and male "power-over" survived in the consciousness of feminists, and what values were embedded in those assumptions.

Because perceptions alone could reflect ideals that misrepresent reality, I felt that it was crucial to "ground" this study in the everyday practice of working feminists. Feminists who perform partner abuse work that is "all about power" were, in my estimation, best qualified to contribute to this research. They could share perceptions of power that were informed by their feminist politics, as well as insights about their experiences of power among female workers in partner abuse organizations. As subsequent chapters in this study will show, the testimonies of board members, executive directors, and counsellors revealed contradictions between feminist theory and practice, and also revealed negative, as well as positive expressions of women's power.

¹ The word "sex" refers to male and female.

Feminism, power, and partner abuse

Gillian Walker (1990:33-34) has recalled that in Vancouver in the 1970s, feminist efforts to construct an analysis of heterosexual partner abuse involved three streams of thought. She identifies them as:

One, of the organization of the structural dependence of women in the family, enforced by men's use of their authority in a range of ways, including violence; the other, of wife-beating as an example of the direct male domination of women throughout recorded history through various forms of violence, such as rape, incest, and sexual slavery. They were cross-cut by a third position that connected some feminists to a professional framework and delineated the issue as one of inappropriate expression of the basic human emotion of anger....Adherents of the other emerging feminist analyses rejected this position as dangerously apolitical in its individualization of the issue into one of interpersonal relational dynamics, and saw institutionalization in this manner as a form of co-optation and control.

Two of those feminist perspectives are integrated in Schechter's (1982:209) perception that:

Woman abuse is...an historical expression of male domination manifested within the family and currently reinforced by the institutions, economic arrangements, and sexist division of labor within capitalist society.

Certainly, shifts in liberal and conservative social climates over the decades have had considerable impact upon partner abuse workers and organizations. The particularly transformative influence of government funding will be examined later in this study.

Despite external and internal changes over the past forty years, the basic assumptions on which feminist analysis and partner abuse work are grounded have remained constant. From a feminist perspective, it is still assumed that in patriarchal societies, the abuse of women is an expression of male "domination and control" that is maintained by social structures and "the gendered organization of power relations in the family" (Walker, 1990:216). Although feminism has been said to be "fundamentally about power", the data in this thesis instead indicates that it is more accurately "about"

one sex-based interpretation of power (Reinelt, 1994:702; Yoder & Kahn, 1992).

Since the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s, feminist writings have transmitted the perspective that domination is male and negative power-over, while collaboration or power-to is female and positive. According to researchers, "bad power" is associated with society's understanding and men's perception of power as "control over other people and resources", or "domination" (Lips, 1991:7; Miller, 1991:198; Miller and Cummins, 1992:427; Stamm & Ryff, 1984:3). Women are instead linked with "good power" (Lips, 1991:7). Contrasting associations with male power and self-interest, women's "power-to" has been portrayed as shared and altruistic, motivated by a

political understanding of the oppression of women...[and] a high degree of respect for women, their strengths and their self wisdom, and...an understanding of change at individual, family, and larger systems levels. (Avis, 1991:153).

Thus, for example, in one of few studies on women's perceptions of power, participants rejected power as control-over and valued power-to as autonomy and personal authority (Miller & Cummins, 1992:426). As we will see in the next section, the emergence of women's "consciousness-raising" groups enabled the transmission of feminism's sex-based model of power, and entrenched the notion of female power-to.

Consciousness-raising and female power-to

The conceptual origin of the female power-to model is credited to the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's book, The Feminine Mystique, and to the first national women's liberation conference held in Chicago on Thanksgiving Day, 1968. At that event, the New York Radical Women "formally introduced....a paper entitled 'A Program for Feminist Consciousness Raising'" (Shreve, 1989:6,10). Shortly thereafter, consciousness-raising (CR) groups gained popularity across North America. Shreve

(1989:14-15) has described them as a type of feminist “basic training” in which women could, by sharing their personal experiences, “understand why they were oppressed and how” and the limiting effects of “a sexist society”.

At the height of their popularity in the 1970s, women’s CR groups were seen as both an individual response and a public challenge to male power-over, or patriarchal relations of domination and subordination. At a personal level, the goal of CR groups was women’s “empowerment” (Matthews, 1994:150). Ristock (1991:44) explains that:

The ideal of empowerment, of ‘women helping women to help one another’, is usually contrasted to the world of power where women are identified as ‘other’ and experience invalidation, separateness from male norms and powerlessness.

In CR groups, women’s disclosures of economic and employment discrimination, rape, incest, partner abuse, and other sources of pain and feelings of second-class status were, with support, reformulated as evidence of women’s power of survival, rather than their powerlessness as victims. Such personal experiences were also “translated” into a political analysis of male domination, or power-over women. As a rejection of male domination, and a response to women’s experiences of subordination, a kinder and gentler model of female power took shape. Rather than competition, the female power model would foster relations of collaboration. Instead of subordinating others by domination, the female power model would express respect and equality. The values associated with positive female power-to opposed those expressed in negative male power-over.

Ideologically, CR groups drew heavily on the values of equality and homogeneity expressed in the Women’s Liberation Movement slogans “The personal is political” and “Sisterhood is powerful” (Morgan, 1970:xvii). Dill (1983:132) explains that for

feminists,

Sisterhood is generally understood as a nurturant, supportive feeling of attachment and loyalty to other women which grows out of a shared experience of oppression. A term reminiscent of familial relationships, it tends to focus upon the particular nurturant and reproductive roles of women and, more recently, upon commonalities of personal experience. A second, more recent and progressive expression of the concept views sisterhood as an element of the feminist movement which serves as a means for political and economic action based upon the shared needs and experiences of women.

Redefinition of women's experiences, from the personal to the political, was central to the social change goal of CR groups. As Shreve (1989:12) explains,

by seeing the common threads that united all the women in the room, women would then begin to have some awareness - or consciousness - of the political nature of their problems....and become agents for change.

Although the popularity of CR groups declined by end of the 1970s, the principles of equality, homogeneity, social change, and the model of female power-to were adopted by most of the formal feminist organizations that had taken shape earlier as collectives and alternative structures (Reinelt, 1994; Ristock, 1991; Shreve, 1989). Of particular relevance to this thesis, partner abuse organizations were affected by that ideological legacy.

Feminist ideals and government funding

It was assumed that feminist organizations would be havens of "sisterly" support in which collaborative, respectful, and egalitarian power-to prevailed. However, in the 1980s, such ideals were "compromised" by the emergence of government financial support (Ristock, 1991; Wine & Ristock, 1991:10). While American and Canadian feminists had commonly envisaged shelters as a temporary measure pending the eradication of partner abuse through social change, they responded differently to government funding. Wine and Ristock (1991:10) have explained that:

Feminists in the United States and Britain have been more wary about ties with the state, and have been active in seeking funding sources that do not obligate them to follow bureaucratic directives and expose them to pressure to reformulate their feminist ideology and goals.

In Canada, feminists have interpreted government funding of partner abuse organizations as a “mixed blessing”. Its primary advantage is that it has facilitated feminists’ sustained attention to the problem of partner abuse. In the Province of Ontario where this study was conducted, the first report on partner abuse was tabled in the Ontario Legislature in December 1982. In September 1986, the Government of Ontario announced the Ontario Joint Family Violence Initiatives. For the first time, comprehensive, five-year funding aimed at the reduction of partner abuse was dedicated to public education and prevention, shelter and support services, and law enforcement initiatives (Ontario International Committee on Wife Assault Prevention, 1991). For shelters, varied funding assessed by a formula of occupancy rate “per diems” has, over time, been replaced with more predictable annual allocations from the Ontario Provincial Government (MacLeod, 1987:59).

In Ontario, anti-violence programs receive funding from a variety of government departments. In 1996-97 these included the Ontario Women’s Directorate, Ministry of the Attorney General, Ministry of the Solicitor General and Corrections, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Citizenship, Culture & Recreation, Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), and the Office of Francophone Affairs (McGuire Associate Consultants, 1996:20). MCSS is currently the primary funder of partner abuse organizations (Regional Coordinating Committee to End Violence Against Women, 1993:2). In 1996/97, for instance, the MCSS “base budget allocation” for anti-violence programs was \$66,691,900.00 (McGuire Associate Consultants, 1996:20).

From the outset, the conditions attached to government funding affected, in practice and ideology, feminism's goal of social transformation. In anti-violence work, MacLeod (1989:16) has identified a feminist "dilemma of balancing the need to work for social change (which may result in losing their financial base), and the need to play the funding game". Of ideological compromise, Walker (1990:317) has cautioned that as partner abuse is "absorbed into existing institutional structures....the sites of our struggles are dispersed, disconnected and depoliticized". Feminists' ability to fully practice collaborative, respectful, and egalitarian power-to has also been hindered by the need to interact and "please" officials who work from, and expect organizations to display a power-over perspective. As well as acceptance of government funding by partner abuse organizations, feminism's ideal of power-to has been hindered by the accidental and deliberate silence of feminists.

A code of silence among feminists

While feminist critiques have assisted our understanding of women's domination by and subordination to a patriarchal state, their outward focus has diverted attention away from women's relations with each other. In consequence, our knowledge of women's use of power is limited. Since the 1980s, feminist organizational research has concentrated on the consequences of philosophical and structural "cooptation" caused by the "overwhelming power of funding agencies" that represent or replicate government bureaucracies (Rodriguez, 1988:224; Schillenger, 1988:471). Moreover, the woman-centered analyses of socialist, radical, and liberal feminists have greatly enhanced our knowledge of gender differentiated power bases in workplaces, families, and other arenas (Adamson, Briskin, & McPhail, 1988). In addition, they have raised our awareness of "alternative" feminist

organizations “that challenge existing power arrangements”, and their ideologies and effectiveness (Loeske, 1992:58; Reinelt, 1994:702; Leidner, 1991; Freeman, 1972-73; Hartsock, 1988; Rothschild & Whitt, 1979, 1982, 1986). However, aside from anecdotal evidence in case studies, feminist workers have only rarely been recognized as actors who possess and express negative power (Mueller, 1995).

Silence also derives from the fact that the concept and language of empowerment, rather than power, has dominated feminist writings over the past forty years. For example, in her examination of the “Statement of Philosophy” of a Newfoundland shelter, Joan Pennell (1987:117) found that “The document portrays women as empowered and united, men as absent, and children as having their needs met”. Similarly, Ristock (1990:177) found that the themes of empowerment, equality, and choice consistently emerged in the “unity statements and job application forms” of thirty-four Canadian collectives (Ristock, 1990:177). In the United States “the importance of working to empower women collectively” was commonly valued by representatives of nineteen women’s organizations (Spalter-Roth & Schreiber, 1995:115). Ristock (1991:46) has suggested that in concentrating efforts on “creating an environment of empowerment, we [have been] mistaken to think that we can get rid of power differentials” (Ristock, 1991:46).

The silence of workers has also protected feminism and feminist organizations from criticism. In the 1980s, the voices of differently located women challenged assumptions of women’s equality and homogeneity (Lovenduski & Randall, 1993; Vickers, 1992). Ristock (1991:47-48) recalls that at that time, to maintain a united façade in feminist collectives, “contradictions pertaining to power issues” were managed by

“denial”. Pennell (1987:113) also found that the pattern in feminist service organizations of “obscuring disagreements”, unconsciously or deliberately kept intact feminism’s ideological cornerstone of women’s equality. Silence has also been related to the protection of feminist power analysis. Ramazanoglu (1989:96) has suggested that tensions among women are “obscured” to safeguard the idea that “women everywhere are oppressed by men”. As we will see, research participants in this study supported the claim that women have tended to avoid confronting “the political problem of women’s power over each other as a divisive issue” (Ramazanoglu, 1989:115).

As well as protecting ideology, Davis (1988:403) draws attention to “an ideological directive to leave well enough alone and avoid criticism of vulnerable and essential institutions”. Regarding the “little feminist debate on organizations” since the 1960s, Acker (1990:141) speculates that:

Perhaps one of the reasons was that the reality was embarrassing; women failing to cooperate with each other, taking power and using it in oppressive ways, creating their own structures of status and reward were at odds with other images of women as nurturing and supportive.

Adamson et al. (1988:211) argue that focusing “attention on the problems within our organizations [that] turn feminist against feminist” detracts from “the social structures that create and sustain the oppression”.

Furthermore, fear of reprisal impedes the willingness of feminists to discuss women’s power. Margaret Atwood (2001:33) recently expressed her concern that:

The fear that dare not speak its name, for some women these days, is a fear of other women. But you aren’t supposed to talk about that: if you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all. There are many strong voices; there are many *kinds* of strong voices. Surely there should be room for all. Does it make sense to silence women in the name of Woman? We can’t afford this silencing, or this fear.

Barnsley (1988:20) suggests that for individuals, “daring to question the movement’s ‘successes’ means risking our sisters’ dismissal of us as “negative” and “cynical” and being marginalized in the process”. Because of feminist principles and assumptions, internalized through decades of other- and self-imposed silence, women’s power is a neglected area of feminist research.

Breaking the silence

This project responds to limitations and silences in feminist theory and practice. It opens to examination feminism’s models of women’s positive power-to and men’s negative power-over. It breaks a silence on women’s relations that are not collaborative, respectful, and egalitarian. The perceptions of feminists and their workplace experiences of women’s power add to our knowledge of “women’s work culture” and the cultural component of emotion recognized in the “few studies of feminist organizations” (e.g., Fried, 1994; Morgen, 1983, Morgen 1995:236, 243). By utilizing the concepts and analytic framework of organizational culture theorists, this research also resists a historical separation of organizational theory and research on feminist organizations (Ferree & Martin, 1995, Schein, 1992; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Instead, it uses the concepts of organizational culture theorists to understand women’s workplace relations of positive and negative power.

In this study, the perceptions and experiences of respondents are expressed in the vocabularies of feminism, partner abuse, and social service work, with which the reader may be unfamiliar (Appendix G). The unique cultural reality of feminist partner abuse workers is reflected in those vocabularies. Espin (1999:134) has stated that “Learning to ‘live’ in a new language...is not a neutral act. It implies becoming immersed in the power

relations of the specific culture that speaks the specific language”. According to Pettigrew (1979:575), “By acquiring the categories of a language, we acquire the structured ‘ways’ of a group, and along with the language, the value implications of those ways”. Women who work in feminist organizations speak a language of power-to that conflicts with the more dominant language of power-over. The women who were interviewed for this study bring to light areas in which these two languages collide and create personal dilemmas for individuals who desire a world in which power-to is the norm.

By expanding our knowledge of the language, meaning, and expression of women’s power, through their experiences and in their own words, this project is deeply feminist. It recognizes, as Jack (1991:11) has noted, that “Interpersonal intimacy is the profound organizer of female experience and the key to understanding women’s ‘different voice’”. Writing of “violence”, Walker (1990:327) contrasted descriptive and abstract concepts that “express action in general form but without the actor” with those that are explanatory and “grounded in the social relations in which events and activities take place”. In a similar fashion, the concept of power used in this dissertation is grounded in the research method described in Chapter One. For this reason, the perceptions of power outlined by the women interviewed for this study are highlighted as part of that chapter.

Chapter Two explores the points of intersection between feminism and other theoretical perspectives, and highlights the finding that only feminism differentiates between male and female types of power. Interpretations of respondents reflect a feminist analysis of power that was developed in the 1960s, and has continued to be reproduced in feminist scholarship since that time. Reflecting that analysis, the feminists

in this study perceived that negative and unequal domination is male power-over, and positive and egalitarian collaboration is female power-to. A feminist-specific interpretation of positive power emerged from research participants' distinction between their impressions and other women's views of a powerful man and woman. That "vision" of women's positive power as "confidence" reflected feminism's ideals of collaboration, respect, and equality, and women's value of caring.

To ground such conceptions of power in the work relations of respondents, Chapter Three draws on the insights of feminist organizational scholars. Their research findings suggest that in ideology and practice, partner abuse work expressed the feminist concept of empowerment. As such, one would expect that the feminists who participated in this study would adopt from feminism the assumption that only positive power is female power. They should express feminism's goal of equality in empowering practices that have, over time, included consciousness-raising, self-help, and peer counselling strategies. Respondents' understanding of the meaning of empowerment was, like their vision of confident power, linked to values of respect, support, or female "caring". However, board members, executive directors and counsellors contradicted this vision. They claimed that "disempowerment" took place within the collective/political, interpersonal and individual levels of workplace experience.

Feelings of powerlessness on the part of the women who were interviewed are, as Chapter Four explains, influenced in part by government's bureaucratization of the workplaces that it funds. The transition from egalitarian structures and roles to hierarchies has particularly impacted the work relations of feminists. Consequently, the assumptions of the feminist power-to model do not reflect the reality of feminist partner

abuse workers. Rather than positive female power-to, respondents reported negative domination or power-over by executive directors. The interpersonal experiences of the women who were interviewed also contradicted their assumptions of females' caring and feminists' caring about equality. Instead, feelings of distrust and behaviours of disrespect countered their empowerment, or ability to develop positive power as confidence in their abilities and choices.

Chapter Five probes the assumption of female caring that co-exists with feminists' assumptions of positive female power. It will be seen that socialization fostered respondents' expectations of women's lack of self-interest and respect. Respect was seen to produce feelings of being "cared about". Interviewees also considered that respect is a critical condition for women's empowerment, or ability to develop confidence in their abilities and choices. However, rather than female caring and feminist goals of collaboration, respect, and equality, research participants reported manipulative negative power by self-interested women, disrespect through "feeling rules"², and inequality that fostered climates of tension leading to coping strategies, and feelings of powerlessness.

In Chapter Six, this study turns its attention away from socialization that promotes assumptions of female caring, and toward ideological assumptions of feminists' caring about egalitarian relations and organizational practices. Violations of organizations' service model values, a feeling rule of silence, and female socialization practices that

² Feeling rules are norms of emotional expression that are maintained by informal/formal sanctions.

constrained, rather than fostered, women's equality were experienced by respondents. Relations of inequality were experienced as disrespect, rather than respectful support, or caring, that facilitates women's ability to be powerful. Instead of power as confident "voice", research participants conveyed feelings of powerlessness in organizational climates of tension, lack of "safety", and silence/silencing.

CHAPTER 1 - METHOD

Dorothy Smith (1987:209) has likened the task of woman-centered research to a “journey”. This chapter charts the methodological course of this study. It begins by identifying the research goals. I describe the rationale on which my choice of semi-structured interviews was based. Recruitment efforts through organization contacts, problems of access to participants, and my experience of role conflict are explained. The sample is subsequently introduced, and particular needs for confidentiality and anonymity are clarified. Regarding data collection, the interview questions are reported, other data sources and activities are identified, and concerns of validity and reliability are addressed. This chapter concludes with a detailed description of the study’s grounded data analysis process.

Research goals

According to Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990:37), the theory-generating goal of grounded research requires,

a research question or questions that will give us the flexibility and freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth. Also underlying this approach to qualitative research is the assumption that all of the concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon have not yet been identified, at least not in this population or place; or if so, then the relationships between the concepts are poorly understood or conceptually underdeveloped.

Although Lips (1991:6) has claimed that “For nearly a century and a half, feminists have raised questions and generated debates about power”, my scrutiny of writings since the 1960s suggests that such reflections have characteristically concentrated on women in relation to a patriarchal state and to men. This project was fueled by my feelings of powerlessness to change negative power dynamics among women that could not be

understood by such observations, or explained by the feminist model of negative male power-over and positive female power-to (Yoder & Kahn, 1992).

Reinharz (1992:251) relates that “For many feminists, research is obligated to contribute to social change through consciousness-raising”. Cancian (1996:187) has explained that:

Activist research...aims at empowering the powerless, exposing the inequities of the status quo, and promoting social changes that equalize the distribution of resources. Activist research is “for” women and other disadvantaged people and often involves close social ties and cooperation with the disadvantaged.

Although “an emancipatory intent is no guarantee of an emancipatory outcome”, this research has, as hoped, enhanced my understanding of power relations among feminists (Acker, Berry, & Esseveld, 1991:145). In questioning the taken-for-granted, my project also appears to have had some impact on the women who were interviewed (Garfinkel, 1967). For example, some women noticed that the interviews enabled reflection on their understandings of power (#10, 15, 24, 27)³.

For some respondents, participation in this study allowed them to break a silence on a “taboo subject” of women’s power relations (#1, 5, 18). Other women were generally “interested” in the subject (#7, 8, 9, 12, 19, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28). At a personal level, counsellors maintained that they welcome “every opportunity...to just see where I’m at and see where I need to be doing more work for myself” (#5, 13). Some felt that knowing more about women and power was “important” (#9, 14). One counsellor elaborated that:

This is such an important thing to talk about and look at and understand, and develop a better understanding for, and it’s an important part of my commitment to building a revolution. Power is a real complicated tool of hetero-patriarchy to control us by either abusing power or having us fear our own power, so we need to talk about it more. (#4)

³ The prefix # reflects individuals’ response.

Executive directors also expressed an interest in scrutinizing women's power relations:

One woman commented that:

I hate people who try to control other people so the idea that anybody would be researching it or doing anything with that really interests me. The more people are working on that, hopefully changing that, the more hope there is for the rest of us. (#23)

Another executive director participated because:

It's a very, very important topic and it's loaded. It's so complex. Sometimes you say, "I wish people could see that!". If you can make a difference – if you can teach it – if these interviews can have a better understanding of it, teach...the one who thinks they have power...because to me it's an illusion. It's kind of the biggest joke. (#20)

Such comments reflect feminists' interest in improving their own situations and relations among women in general.

Farrell (1992:61) has proposed that a "changed...collective consciousness... [that] includes difference and diversity as well as commonalities of experience....may be the 'crucial corrective' that revolutionizes not only sociology but all disciplines". In that spirit, and in response to feminist opinion that "Categories of difference are not neutral, but reflect complex relations of power", I have tried to do diversity justice (Adamson, Briskin & McPhail, 1988:102). As a lesbian and an adoptee I am aware that "difference", or the practice and/or felt experience of inequality and exclusion is not always obvious or predictable. Consequently, attention to visible and invisible differences was a self-conscious component in the recruitment of interviewees, the formulation of the interview questions, and the data analysis. I was able to obtain interviews with women who speak various languages, have assorted levels of physical ability, and differing sexual, class, and ethnic identities. Such diversity, I believe, enriches the results of this research.

Finally, what one respondent called the “messy” work of discussing women’s power necessarily involves questioning the accuracy of feminism’s sex-based model of power that Ramazanoglu (1989:102) has criticized for obscuring “differences between women” and women’s commonalities with men (#1). In so doing, this study rejects that the assumptions of women’s positive power-to and men’s negative power-over that have been transmitted as truth over the past four decades of modern feminism are all that there is, or all that we need to know.

Interviews

The initial decision to interview feminists in partner abuse organizations was informed by four unresolved questions. For one, my shelter and academic work on lesbian partner abuse and sexual assault left me wondering what women mean when they talk about abusive power. For another, I was interested in seeing how women whose work is embedded in beliefs about male power and control over women would respond to questions about women’s power (Regional Coordinating Committee to End Violence Against Women, 1993). I was also curious whether the notions of male power-over and female power-to that emerged with the Women’s Liberation Movement had survived forty years later. Last, but not least, I wanted to better understand the splits and tensions that I had witnessed among board members, executive directors, and counsellors in my shelter workplace, and in other partner abuse organizations.

The decision to conduct interviews was shaped also by my knowledge of the partner abuse literature and the gaps in it. From my master’s research on lesbian partner abuse I knew, for instance, that since the first emergence of shelters in Britain in 1971, few Canadian academics have systematically investigated those, or other partner abuse

programs and services (Pizzey, 1974). Similarly, female workers' perceptions of their own condition have only rarely been the focus of scholarly undertakings (e.g., Pennell, 1991). Instead, one early study surveyed experiences of clients in order to ascertain the "effectiveness" of a Southern Ontario shelter (Menzies, 1978:141). Another project examined the impact of shelters upon the transition of clients to the community-at-large (Ridington, 1977-78).

To varying degrees, an arm's length methodological approach characterizes those and more current inquiries that include, for example, Beaudry's (1985:14) Quebec-based project that relied exclusively on a review of the literature, and Pennell's (1987:116) discourse analysis of the St. John's Transition House statement of philosophy. Yet other researchers have, through questionnaires, assessed the needs of and for shelters by polling the opinions of shelter staff and workers in organizations that refer women to shelters (e.g., MacLeod, 1987; MacLeod, 1989; Pelletier & Craig, 1988; Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton, 1987). A qualitative examination of the perceptions of partner abuse workers about their relationships was a missing element that I believed needed to be addressed.

My choice of methods was also influenced by Reinharz's (1992:19) suggestion that interviews are "Particularly important for the study of women because...learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women". Interviews "Offer researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 1992:19). Moreover, "Intensive, focused interviews...have been particularly helpful in

understanding the social context of women's lives and how they intersect with the larger social structure" (Farrell, 1992:59).

Based on such considerations, I judged semi-structured interviews to be the best means to ascertain how feminists define women's power. They ensure response to set topics but, through open-ended questions, leave room for elaboration and variation. The semi-structured interview method

is a qualitative data-gathering technique. It differs from ethnography in not including long periods of researcher participation in the life of the interviewee and differs from survey research or structured interviewing by including free interaction between the researcher and interviewee. Survey research typically excludes, and interview research typically includes, opportunities for clarification and discussion. Open-ended interview research explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory. (Reinharz, 1992:18)

As location may affect perceptions, insights into women's experiences of formal and informal power were obtained by interviewing workers who occupied different positions at different time periods (Amir & Amir, 1979; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Davis, 1985; Gornick, Burt, & Pitman, 1985; Loeske, 1992; Reinelt, 1994; Staggenborg, 1988). Accordingly, I interviewed counsellors and executive directors and board members using the same semi-structured questionnaire as a way of tapping their individual perceptions on a similar range of topics and issues related to the definition and expression of male versus female power.

Recruitment: Organization contacts

Partner abuse organizations were determined to be all female and mixed-sex workplaces that attend, as a dedicated part of, or their only mandate, to the needs of abused women and children. That definition permitted the inclusion of partner abuse workers and partner abuse work in venues including, but not limited to shelters. To

participate in this study, it was only required that partner abuse workers define themselves as feminist. However, using the criteria established by Patricia Yancey Martin (1990), I found that the organizations in which interviewees worked could also be identified as feminist. That claim is not based on the collective structure by which organizations were typically assessed as feminist in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, by the 1980s, bureaucratizing conditions of government funding rendered that criterion problematic (Reinelt, 1994:687). Rather, although Martin (1990:184-185) has stipulated that “There is no consensus on the essential qualities of feminist organizations”, she has proposed that:

An organization is feminist if it meets one of the following criteria: (a) has a feminist ideology; (b) has feminist guiding values; (c) has feminist goals; (d) produces feminist outcomes; (e) was founded during the women’s movement as part of the women’s movement including one or more of its submovements.

All of the organizations in which respondents worked met Martin’s criteria for feminist organizations.

Eighteen feminist organizations in Ottawa and within a commuting distance of the city were initially identified. In September and October of 1998, approximately 400 letters of invitation to participate in the study were delivered to those organizations by hand or mail. Because individuals’ names were not known, quantities of invitations were enclosed in envelopes addressed to “staff”, “board members” and, where applicable, “on-call workers”, in each of the eighteen organizations (Appendix B). At the time I assumed that the person who opened the packages would distribute the letters of invitation to appropriate individuals. I later learned that I was wrong in my assumption and additional contact tactics had to be employed.

By the end of December 1998, twenty-one interviews had been scheduled. To obtain additional participants, in January 1999 approximately 250 letters of invitation were sent in the same way to organizations that had not responded to the first invitation (Appendices C, D). The second letters were signed in purple ink to attract attention. Once again, I received no response. Three meetings were also arranged for the purpose of encouraging participation. One meeting introduced the study to a nineteenth agency and two appearances involved agencies that had already received mailings. As well, following a telephone request to participate, an invitation was faxed to a former partner abuse worker. Neither the meetings nor the fax generated participation. Rather, nine additional interviews were obtained by telephone calls to women whose names I had heard, or with whom I was acquainted. By May 1999, the thirty interviews on which this research is based had been tape-recorded.

Recruitment: Problems of participation

By reporting on difficulties related to participation, this section responds to the call for researchers' disclosure of "problems of access, interpretation, and the like" (Cicourel, 1964:58). Although I anticipated some access problems I assumed that they would be offset by my insider status in the feminist community, my reputation for woman-centered academic and volunteer projects, and my seven years' work experience in a shelter for abused women and children. I was therefore surprised that only twenty-two women from a total of nineteen contacted agencies consented to participate, and that only eight of the thirty women who volunteered to be interviewed were complete strangers.

When I questioned the women who agreed to participate in my study about their decision to speak with me, they said that my reputation, as either personally known or recommended, had positively influenced their involvement. For instance, an acquaintance noted that “I know you so I thought it was going to be a serious thing” (#14). One woman who did not know me disclosed that “When X sort of pre-approved you, I thought, all right” (#25). Some women consented to be interviewed because, based on my other woman-centered research, they “respect” my work (#9, 17, 20, 29). For instance, one counsellor commented that

I think that it goes to my idea of all working together. I think that you're working on women's issues – women and power, lesbian partner abuse. I think when you do that work it's important for us all to contribute at some level. (#29)

Other women were encouraged by my “connection” to partner abuse workers and “experience” in partner abuse work (#17, 25).

Half of the sample (15) was not only willing to participate but, despite their heavy workloads, offered interviews at their workplaces during regular business hours. Such generosity of spirit speaks to the commitment of a volunteer sample, and their “interest” in the research topic (#1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 23, 26, 27, 28). However, this project may have interested the most outspoken, politically active, and/or dissatisfied feminist partner abuse workers. Political awareness was suggested by women’s perception of the subject as “important” (#4, 5, 9, 14, 20). Other comments reflected participants’ “commitment” to social change in general, and specifically as it relates to women (#4, 30). One counsellor voiced her “support [of] people, women” (#19). Another counsellor explained that “I want to participate in the community in any way that I can...whether it is voicing my opinion, participating volunteer here and there” (#11). Other counsellors specified

that “Power is an under-examined aspect of reality, particularly in women’s organizations”, and “I told you we have to do something and this is my duty as a woman” (#1, 16). Accordingly, women who adhered to the feminist philosophy that the “personal is political” may have been most motivated to participate in this study.

Sources of discontent emerged in response to the question “If you were granted three wishes that could change anything about the environment at your organization, what would you change”. All of the women who participated in this study were dissatisfied with the amount of provincial funds that their organizations receive. They echoed the sentiment that “Funding...affects everything we do here, puts such immense limitations on what we can do” (#6). Some women (11)⁴ identified the need for more staff, while others (3) imagined better pay and benefit packages for existing staff. Participants (16) envisaged having the financial and staff resources to expand “accessibility for women” through, for instance, building renovations, new and expanded programs, community outreach, media promotions, and political lobbying (#18). Aside from funding and its effects, some women (9) were dissatisfied with organizations’ executive directors and board members. One counsellor suggested “sending all the bosses to school [laughter] to teach them how to govern” (#11). An executive director imagined “Getting in...a good manager, very people-oriented...organized. I think with a proper manager a lot of the team dynamics would certainly improve” (#23). Several participants (13) wished for better collaboration among and within feminist organizations.

The fact that only eight of the thirty women who volunteered to be interviewed were complete strangers led me to reflect on possible barriers to participation. As noted above and elsewhere in this study time, rather than disinterest, was one likely constraint. All counsellors and executive directors and board members felt overworked. One executive director explained of her decision to participate in this research that “I like to reflect on things that I’m doing and I don’t feel we have enough time to do that” (#3). A counsellor pointed out that “I am very busy and I could have easily said ‘no’ because I’m so busy” (#27).

Alternatively, I considered that the lack of financial remuneration offered volunteer participants could have inhibited response. That possibility did not, however, fit with my knowledge of activists in the anti-violence movement, who generally do not hesitate to freely give their time to people in need, and projects in which they believe. Given that the problem of partner abuse is explained as a consequence of domination and inequality that produces feelings of powerlessness and requires an empowering response, women’s disinterest in the research subject of power was, I believe, an unlikely prospect.

Exploring other factors that may have affected women’s decision not to become involved, I examined my recruitment efforts. How I could have done more or been more inclusive escaped me. It seemed possible that an ethic of confidentiality to which social service workers are academically trained, and workers are socialized in partner abuse organizations, may have stifled women’s willingness to be interviewed. Turning to the testimonies of other researchers, I learned that feminists in organizations may hesitate to cooperate with feminist academics. They may be skeptical that outsiders or funded researchers’ motives and goals are sisterly, or compatible with their own (Amir & Amir,

⁴ Refers to the number of participants who responded.

1979; Barnsley, 1995; Matthews, 1994; Pennell, 1987:113). They may fear that women's differences will be misunderstood, or that research findings will leave their organizations vulnerable to outside criticism (Armstead, 1995; DeVault, 1995; Riessman, 1987; Schein, 1992). Such findings failed to explain why my insider status would not calm such concerns.

My recruitment experience suggests other possible rationales for women's limited response to the initial and follow-up letters of invitation. Phone calls received from staff in two different organizations and a phone call made to an employee in a third workplace shed light on that question. Executive directors and board members may have played a gatekeeping role that constrained my direct access to counsellors. For example, one woman called to question my "politics" before distributing the interview invitations. This encounter reassured me that recipients understood that letters of invitation were to be individually disseminated. However, in a subsequent telephone conversation directly with her executive director I learned that the twenty-five letters mailed twice had not been relayed to individual counsellors. Rather, that executive director had posted only one invitation on a clipboard in a central area. My request to personally present the project was denied on the grounds that outsiders are not permitted to attend staff meetings.

After twice mailing twenty-five individual letters of invitation, a phone call was received from a counsellor in another organization. She explained that before her workplace agreed to participate in the study, its board members wished to review the interview questions at its upcoming meeting. I explained that this was not possible as attempts were being made to follow a common procedure. I also clarified that feminists,

not organizations, were the focus of the research project. When no reply was received after the scheduled board meeting, I telephoned an inside contact. That individual claimed to have no knowledge of the project, despite the fact that she had been present at a meeting outside the organization where I introduced the study. While she agreed to be interviewed subject to her executive director's approval, I never heard from her again. A similar situation evolved following my telephone call to a worker in a third organization. She consented to participate, contingent on her executive director's consent. Although a written description of the project was promptly faxed at her request, no response was received.

While routing invitations through organizations may have generated confusion that deterred individual women's participation in this project, their location in partner abuse organizations constrained a more direct and personal approach. To protect workers from retaliation by the partners of the abused women they assist, employee lists are neither published, nor available upon request. Although I had access to counsellor "insiders" who could have covertly distributed the invitations, I believed that it would be unethical to jeopardize their job security given, as explained in the following chapters, that counsellors were particularly vulnerable to formal and informal sanctions.

Such fears may have dissuaded some counsellors from participating in this study, and inhibited others from following through on their promise to seek the "permission" of executive directors. Neuman (1994:363) has suggested that "powerful elites can block access, and they have effective gatekeepers". Given other evidence of the control of information to and from counsellors and board members by executive directors, their gatekeeping in the distribution of the invitations to participate may have blocked my

access to potential interviewees. Although I cannot impute motive here, my past experience with these types of organizations leads me to believe that my assumption is valid.

As well as fear and gatekeeping, ideologically-motivated silence may have negatively influenced participant response. As stated in the Introduction, a code of silence prevails on power-over, or relations of domination and inequality among women. Owing to silence, women may have believed that they had nothing to contribute to this project. One board member explained that “My only hesitation was that I thought, ‘I don’t know anything about power’. But you have led it along in ways that have allowed me to think that maybe I did know something about power (#10)”. For another board member,

The idea [of] talking about power is intriguing. You know what? I didn’t think I’d have anything to say. I didn’t think I had anything to say about it ‘cause I don’t use that word very much except in relation to leadership. (#24)

A lack of awareness implied by such comments contrasts counsellors’ work as a response to partner abuse as a problem of “power and control”. The responsibility of board members for the business of partner abuse organizations may supersede ideological discussions. Owing to a silence on power, board members may perceive and interpret women’s power more narrowly than counsellors and executive directors who speak a language of partner abuse on a daily basis. That language includes a feminist analysis of partner abuse as an expression of unequal power and control, with which board members may be unfamiliar. Consequently, board members may be more inclined than executive directors and counsellors to view power traditionally, as role status.

Recruitment: Problem of role conflict

As well as by fear of retaliation, executive directors' and/or board members' gatekeeping, and a tradition of silence, my access to participants appears to have been negatively influenced by my position as a paid worker in a shelter for abused women and children. In studies involving observation, particular problems have been documented related to the transition from participant to researcher, and researchers' ability to gain staff acceptance of their studies. Based on their feminist participatory research experience, one research team has noted that:

For those of us with a foot in each world, the process of negotiation between activism and research is fraught with a complex set of dilemmas....[that does] not eliminate the tension between our shifting insider and outsider locations. (Naples with Clark, 1996:161)

An academic who worked as a volunteer in a feminist shelter found, for example, that when she formally invited the participation of her colleagues in her project she "encountered almost militant resistance" from some of the staff (Hoff, 1988:274).

Although her research was eventually accepted as non-exploitative, she concluded that her "status as academic researcher...[and] background as a mental health professional did not help" (Hoff, 1988:275). Another research team has drawn specific attention to "a usually unarticulated tension between friendships and the goal of research" (Acker et al., 1991:141).

Rather than "the danger...of manipulating friendships" to gain information, I suspect that the tension accruing to this study derived from a two-sided role conflict. On the one hand, participants had to place me in a new context. Although my academic connection was known as a fact, none of the women that I interviewed had ever seen me doing academic work. On the other hand, I was required to relate to participants in an

unfamiliar way. In interviews, particularly with similarly employed colleagues and friends, I experienced a sense of role confusion that was unfamiliar and uncomfortable. I was, for example, surprised to find colleague counsellors hesitate to reveal educational credentials that were considerably less than my own. This experience suggests that women who did receive information on my project may have decided not to participate for fear of revealing parts of self to someone they had already defined as a co-worker or activist, rather than as a disengaged, non-judgmental academic researcher.

As well, while the inclusion of counsellors, executive directors, and board members enabled valuable comparisons, the interview climates differed. Counsellors generally spoke freely, often providing intimate details of workplace power dynamics. With a few exceptions, management's response was more careful. Executive directors and board members were more inclined than were counsellors to pause and think before answering questions. They more frequently withheld specific examples of workplace power dynamics. One executive director and one board member stipulated that they would not be able to elaborate on personnel issues. This left me wondering if they felt unable to discuss personnel issues with a counsellor, or whether an academic stranger would have encountered similar reticence. It also validated my belief that executive directors and board members may have blocked knowledge about my study to protect organizations from possible criticism if negative findings were revealed in the interview setting and later published.

The caution of executive directors and board members cannot be explained by their role responsibility for presenting a positive organizational image to the public. When questioned, only one board member and two executive directors indicated that

their public description of the organization would differ from their description to a close friend (#21, 23, 25). For one executive director,

I guess I would tell a close friend that it's a daily struggle to come in and constantly have to re-assert the position and sort of take ground and try to do it in a way that people don't find threatening, but yet still get what I need to do my job out of the environment. (#23)

Counsellors also viewed themselves, and were encouraged to think of themselves as organizational representatives in their interactions with the public in-person, on the phone, and at special events. They were much more careful about limiting their public disclosures than executive directors and board members. Thirteen of the seventeen counsellors who were interviewed reported that they would describe their work environment differently to a “close friend” than they would “at a public meeting or to a stranger”. One counsellor noted that with a close friend she would “tell the truth” (#14).

Another counsellor elaborated of the public/private difference that:

I would probably, and have, to a close friend express my frustration around the politics and the work environment and the power struggles in the work environment and that somehow these all affect the work that we do. When we're in conflict with each other, when we're in conflict with the executive director it affects your ability to work. The mood swings...if you're working with three other people who are all pissed off about something that's going in their lives or in the workplace at the time...like if the executive director's in struggle with the Board, or if X is pissed off at Y. (#12)

The willingness of executive directors, board members, and counsellors to participate in this study and disclose any negative details of their workplace interactions suggests that despite my researcher role, I was perceived to be more of a “friend” than a “stranger”.

Because of our common partner abuse work, counsellors may have trusted that friendship more than board members and executive directors. Counsellors were more likely to feel at ease discussing the interview subjects because they routinely discuss organizational

dynamics amongst themselves. In contrast, executive directors are isolated in their roles and board members have little or no contact with paid staff, meet infrequently, and often away from organizations.

Because of the overlap of my research on women and my paid work with women, I sometimes experienced the conflicting interview disclosures of counsellors and executive directors and board members as too close for comfort. An executive director reported, for instance, that front-line workers were actively involved in decision-making. Workers from the same organization instead claimed that the executive director makes decisions based on her preferences and only gives the appearance of team consultation. Likewise, a board member's perception of good working relations between the organization's executive director and counsellors was contradicted when I interviewed that executive director and those counsellors. Such misperceptions revealed the different perspectives of board members, executive directors, and counsellors. They indicated that a silence prevented counsellors from disclosing their discontent to executive directors, and constrained board members' awareness of tension between executive directors and counsellors.

The disparate revelations were frustrating in that, for reasons of confidentiality, they could not be shared with my shelter colleagues. By way of illustration, because of research ethics requirements, I twice avoided offering comments at special problem-solving meetings that brought together an outside facilitator, an executive director, board members, counsellors, and administrative staff. Because of my research, I possessed knowledge of tensions and misunderstandings that could have assisted the facilitator and enhanced the level of discussion and productivity of the exercises. I also felt more

vulnerable in interviews with executive directors and board members than with counsellors. This may have been an effect of the different interview climates created from my comfort as a counsellor and my discomfort at interviewing women who might have easily, in another situation, been my “boss”.

In feminist research, access has sometimes been seen as an indicator of researcher-participant power relations. Finch (1984:86) has generally stated that “A feminist sociologist doing research on women actually shares the powerless position of those she researches, and this is often demonstrated in the research context itself”. Reay (1995) experienced feelings of powerlessness when she encountered the time constraints of the busy mothers she wished to interview. Feelings of powerlessness similarly characterized my data collection experience. Work, family, and volunteer commitments stretched the women that I wished to interview. Sensitivity to their time constraints highlighted my dependence on their participation to satisfy my academic goals. At times, I felt excessively grateful without a means of repaying my debt. Other times I felt demanding in a way that conflicted with my own self-perception as a woman who understands and supports other women’s needs. Cotterill (1992:605) interpreted her tendency to apologize when women failed to keep appointments as “an indication of the researcher’s humility and powerlessness”. Like Cotterill, I found myself in a powerless situation, making as many accommodations as I could to ensure women’s participation in my study. The following section introduces the reader to the research participants whose input shapes the answer to my research question, “How do feminists define women’s power?”.

Sample

Participants: Organizational settings

Partner abuse organizations tend to be either non-residential or residential types of settings. Non-residential organizations are typically located in office buildings, houses converted to office space, and community resource centres. There, security precautions are often in place. These may include glass-enclosed reception areas, bolted half-doors, or doors with security codes or alarm buzzers. Because of subsistence funding, space is a luxury that many organizations cannot afford. Executive directors usually have their own offices but it is not uncommon to find two or three counsellors sharing an office, or even a desk. In such circumstances, privacy among counsellors and between counsellors and abused women is impossible. Non-residential organizations may, however, have a staff lounge or kitchenette where workers can collect their thoughts, or eat their lunch in private. Space constraints may alienate board members from the organizations they serve. For example, on-site meetings are only possible if a large room, table, and a number of chairs exist. When this is not the case, meetings are held in rented or donated boardrooms off-site and sometimes in board members' homes.

Residential partner abuse organizations or “shelters” are typically rented or owned houses that, aside from larger-than-usual parking lots and brighter-than-normal outdoor lighting, are not easily distinguished from other homes in downtown, suburban, or rural areas. Such blending helps protect the confidential location of shelters. Shelter addresses are rarely advertised in, for example, the telephone book. Other security precautions are in place. These may include door and area surveillance cameras, door buzzers, steel and steel-framed outside doors with special locks, bulletproof windows, and/or alarm

systems. On a necklace, counsellors wear a panic button that alerts the police when it is depressed. In Canada, only one unauthorized entry with violent consequences has been documented (Clark, 1999, n.p.). In that case, a woman's estranged husband managed to enter the Quebec shelter's front door and shoot her dead in her sleep. The incident prompted re-examination and reinforcement of security measures in Canadian partner abuse organizations, and particularly in shelters. Although this was an isolated event, it emphasizes the potentially dangerous positions occupied by the women who responded to this study, and explains their apparent obsession with maintaining confidentiality.

Shelter populations vary from ten to twenty women and children, depending on the size of the house. With the addition of staff, it is fair to characterize shelters as busy, crowded, and noisy. As in non-residential organizations, executive directors usually have their own offices, although that space may be shared with administrative support staff. Front-line counsellors almost always share their office space. The office area typically forms the "hub" of the house. Information is shared between counsellors going off and coming on shift. Executive directors and counsellors who work with children, in outreach, volunteer, or other in-house programs may need to consult logs and resources that are located in the front-line office. They may need to discuss residents' needs with the front-line counsellor on duty. The front-line counselling office is also shared with residents who may need to talk, ask a legal question, check their appointment schedule, take a phone call, have a cupboard unlocked, or obtain their medication from staff. Children may want band-aids, scotch tape, help with the VCR, or counsellors' company. Shelters converted from homes rarely, if ever, have private space where workers can gain a few moments of respite from response to others' needs.

Non-residential organizations are typically open during business hours from Monday to Friday. Regular business hours do not, however, accurately reflect the work of counsellors, executive directors, and board members in either type of organization. Executive directors attend evening meetings, speaking engagements to educate groups in the community about partner abuse, and fundraisers. Counsellors typically facilitate evening groups for abused women and/or children, and may also be on-call after business hours. In such circumstances they carry a pager and respond to emergency situations such as relocating a woman and her children from her home to a shelter, due to threats by her estranged partner or assault by a cohabiting partner.

Board meetings and board committee meetings usually take place in the evening. Like physical space, evening meetings keep board members at a distance from the daytime operations and relations among counsellors. Unlike executive directors, counsellors do not usually attend board meetings. Thus, although board members may be as committed to partner abuse organizations as paid workers, as a group, their limited or lack of contact with executive directors and counsellors suggests that they are least likely to ground their perceptions of power in the daily realities of partner abuse workers.

As in non-residential organizations, shelter executive directors do not work weekends, but may need to attend evening meetings or fundraisers. Board members usually meet in the evening. Off-site board meetings have the same effect of alienating board members from shelter operations and counsellors. Unlike non-residential organizations, shelters respond to the needs of abused women and children twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year. This difference primarily affects front-line counsellors. Full-time counsellors may work rotating seven to twelve hour day, evening,

and overnight shifts that include or exclude weekends. Part-time counsellors may work fewer hours on a similar shift rotation, or exclusively on weekends. On-call workers are used to replace full or part-time counsellors who have work-related meetings, are sick, on holidays, or on leave. In extraordinary circumstances such as a security concern or multiple arrivals of new residents, relief workers may be called in to strengthen the counsellor component.

The arrival of a new resident requires prepared bedrooms, intake paperwork and counselling, house tours, and orientation to the shelter's rules, procedures, and fire evacuation plan. Residents may leave as other women and children arrive. At departure, counsellors complete paperwork, do security planning, arrange transportation, return women's medication, and ensure the return of keys, linen, and other house belongings. Following departure, the paperwork is separated, filed in various locations, and a new intake file is assembled. The vacant bedroom room is supplied with fresh linen and personal care items. Although cleaning and disinfecting are the responsibility of departing residents or a maintenance worker, the job often falls to staff.

As one can see from this description, the term "front-line worker" fits the counsellors quite well. These women are confronted on a daily basis with the impact of dominating power-over, and constantly sensitizing abused women to the differences between negative and positive power. Unlike their executive director and board member counterparts who are removed from the realities of abused women, counsellors are most likely to have formulated an image of how positive power should be, and how negative power can be expressed.

Participants: Characteristics

This study is based on the contributions of thirty self-identified feminists who are working and have worked as executive directors (6), board members (7), and counsellors (17) in eight Canadian partner abuse organizations. Women's ages ranged from 30 to 60, with a median of 40 and mean of 42 years. Twenty of the thirty participants named English as their first language. All of the women had obtained, or were in the process of obtaining college diplomas or undergraduate or master's degrees. Although they were not asked about their academic disciplines, several women (10) disclosed that social work was their field of specialization. Twenty-five women were educated in Canada. Sixteen women identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual. However, eight of those women stipulated, for instance, that they "guessed" or "thought", or are "currently", or "so far" and "up to now", heterosexual (#7, 8, 10, 11, 19). Twelve participants reported a lesbian orientation, without hesitation or qualifications. Two women declined to answer the question.

Twenty-three individuals were not affected by visible or invisible disabilities. Regarding their ethnic/cultural identity, four women identified themselves as Canadian and eight responded "none". For the eighteen other participants, ethnic/cultural identity involved national, regional, racial, and/or religious roots. Given the intimacy of the partner abuse community, those specific details would compromise the anonymity of research participants. By way of example, they expressed identities such as "Chinese-Canadian", "WASP", "Francophone", "Easterner", "Russian", and "Christian". To describe their political identities, eleven participants used the word "feminist" alone or in

combination with the following terms: “left” (10), “liberal” (5), “radical” (4), “socialist” (3), “lesbian” (3), “social democrat” (2), and “humanistic” (1).

Research participants were asked to identify their class identity as dependent children, and as independent adults, with the following results:

Class Identification of Participants as Adults and as Children

	Upper	Upper Middle	Middle	Lower Middle	Working Class
Children	5	0	14	2	9
Adults	0	1	16	6	7

Such response indicates some downward mobility in the child-adult transition. Class-based interpretations of women’s power may generate tension between the two largest income groups that participated in this study. Unexpectedly, participants differentiated between economic class and class values, with the following results:

Income/Value Conflict by Participants as Adults and as Children

Participants	Income	Values	#
Children	Working Class	Middle Class	2
	Working Class	Upper Class	1
	Middle Class	Working Class	3
	Upper Class	Working Class	1
Adults	Working Class	Middle Class	1
	Middle Class	Working Class	2

Research participants’ less specific adult class differentiation, and the response of participants who did not experience conflict were not probed. At the time of the interviews I interpreted the income/value distinction as an indication of feminist participants’ awareness of difference and values, and as “sensitizing” information to which I should attend in the data analysis stage of this grounded research.

As well as the potential for different experiences of class in an individual's lifetime, other research indicates an individual's class identity may contrast with others' perceptions. For example, Davidson and Jenkins (1989:491) have reported that "Shelters often are staffed by women who come from the middle or upper classes, or by those who *appear to because of their educational attainment and values* [emphasis added]". Owing to their feminist politics, the women in this study may be particularly sensitive to their own experiences of difference, and feelings of difference imposed by others' perceptions. That possibility, combined with research participants' demonstrated consciousness of values, suggests that tension may derive from value differences, and that values encouraged by female socialization and feminist orientation may influence their interpretations of women's positive and negative power.

Participants: Roles

Thirty women who work or have worked in eight partner abuse organizations consented to participate in this study. The sample includes seven board members, six executive directors, and seventeen counsellors. To protect the anonymity of participants in this study, their specific job titles and reporting structures cannot be reported. Alternatively I have, as accurately as possible, grouped according to their different roles, "board members", "executive directors", and "counsellors".

The category of board member includes women who volunteer in partner abuse organizations, and are usually elected to terms of fixed length at annual general or special meetings. Typically board members are responsible for the formulation of policy and long-term planning, and are at the "top" of organizational hierarchies. Board members may indirectly supervise executive directors, or may delegate direct supervision to an on-

site manager. They may frequently or infrequently communicate directly with the funding Ministry of Community and Social Services, as well as or instead of executive directors. For board members, the mean length of service was 2.5 years and the median was 2 years. Board members were unpaid volunteers who all had other paid jobs.

Research participants lacked clarity about the responsibilities of board members. All but four of the seventeen counsellors felt estranged from board members, with whom they had little contact and communication. One woman explained that “I don’t think as a staff we understand their major work...[or] that they really understand the work that we do on a day-to-day basis” (#1). Counsellors believed that board members were primarily responsible for making policy and for long-term planning. The welcomed and unwelcomed influence of executive directors on such decisions was, however, noted. Board financial responsibilities were seen to include signing cheques and approving large expenditures.

Concern with participant confidentiality and anonymity shaped my decision to include all participants between the levels of counsellors and board members in one category of executive director. I judged that more precise titles would have, given their uniqueness, enabled identification of the organizations in which participants worked. My desire to protect women who took the risk of breaking a silence from suspicion, if not reprisal, was paramount. The resulting inaccuracy lies in the fact that most, but not all, executive directors reported directly to board members, and directly communicated with the “Funder”⁵, Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. I am, however,

⁵ The “Funder” is a nickname used by respondents to refer to the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, a branch of the Government of Ontario that is the primary source of funding for partner abuse organizations.

satisfied that the term succeeds in conveying a common denominator. That is, that all counsellor participants were directly supervised by and reported to those participants that I have labeled as executive directors.

Executive directors may report to board members or other individuals in managerial roles. They may or may not directly interact with the funding Ministry of Community and Social Services. They may be one of several, or the only on-site administrator. The mean length of service for executive directors was 3 years. None of the executive directors held second jobs. All of the women in the study considered the executive directors to be responsible for the overall coordination of organizational activities. In non-residential and residential contexts, participants described the responsibilities of executive directors as coordination, finance, and administration. Coordination included liaison between counsellors and board members. Executive directors were seen to be responsible for executing decisions made by boards of directors and relaying staff concerns to board members. It involved the supervision of and meetings with counsellors where one woman noted that “She’s the final word” (#4).

Coordination included monitoring the quality of staff performance, responding to their professional development needs, and some personnel decisions. Not a single respondent could say who had responsibility for hiring and firing. In terms of finance, executive directors were considered responsible for all aspects of the budget, and authorizing expenditures within a fixed amount set by boards of directors. Administrative duties of executive directors included letter-writing, responding to phone inquiries, and liaison by phone and in meetings with the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social

Services representative, board members, other executive directors, and community partners.

Selection of the generic term counsellor was much easier as it is commonly used in job descriptions to refer to, as in this study, those workers who routinely provide direct or front-line service to abused women and children. The mean length of service for counsellors was 5.4 years and the median was 6 years. The counsellor group included full and part-time workers. Six of nine full-time, and five of seven part-time counsellors also performed work for pay elsewhere. All of the study participants considered counsellors to be on the front line of day-to-day program operations and service to abused women and children. In terms of operations, counsellors were viewed as trouble-shooters and intuitive and procedural decision-makers. Such capabilities were integral to service delivery. In non-residential settings counsellors could need to quickly assess and provide women with guidance on security, housing, finances, child custody, and a variety of other issues. In shelters, the decision-making of counsellors could range from whether or not to accept an abused woman as a resident, to coping with a flood, security threat, interpersonal conflict, or medical emergency.

Regarding services, counsellors in non- and residential organizations delivered existing programs and planned new ones, subject to the approval of executive directors. They were obliged to update and consult with executive directors on problems related, for example, to clients, safety, and repairs. In shelters, problems could include the violation of shelter rules or missing persons. In both types of organizations, anticipation of and response to the emotional and practical needs of abused women and children was the primary focus of counsellors' day-to-day work.

Participants: Interview settings and sample size

The interviews were conducted between October 17, 1998 and May 3, 1999. Half of the interviews took place at the offices of the respondents during business hours. My initial surprise at their choice of venue increased when those women expressed concern about the confidentiality of their disclosures. I suspect that research participants may have felt safe inviting me to their offices because my presence could be easily explained to potentially curious colleagues as a meeting between partner abuse workers, a consultation involving my work on lesbian partner abuse, or a friendly visit by a female friend. Eight women were interviewed in their homes. Six interviews were held at university offices, and one woman was interviewed in my partner's home.

Beyond paying for parking and coffee on two occasions, no financial remuneration was offered. Personal thank-you cards were sent to women in appreciation of what has been described as "the gift of their time and their stories" (Massat & Lundy, 1997:47). Each interview took between one and two hours. The interviews grew shorter as I became more familiar with the interview guide and the categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:76). The busy schedules of the interviewees were reflected in the lack of small talk before, or lingering after the interviews. In a few cases health problems or meetings respectively warranted conducting an interview in two separate parts, and re-booking an interview. One woman explained that:

I told you I'd be doing this in February so I was kind of disappointed I didn't come to you in February because I didn't forget, but we had things on our plates. I would have been disappointed not to go through it because when I commit my word to someone I usually follow through. I think that's respect. I'm a person of my word. That's my bottom line I guess. I hope your study outcome will be made known. (#30)

Two women forgot our appointments but successfully re-scheduled. All of the women consented to be tape-recorded. These response patterns indicate that, of those women who ultimately accepted an interview, all were committed to the completion of the project and the interview process.

This research is based mainly on the data gained through the completion of thirty in-depth interviews. My deliberations regarding the sample size took into account research studies involving interviews with feminist workers. One involved thirteen pro-choice organizations and fifty interviews (Staggenborg, 1988). Another focused on fifteen rape crisis centres and fifty interviews, and a third included twenty-five partner abuse organizations and twenty-two interviews (Gornick et al., 1985; Wharton, 1987). Researchers' opinions were also consulted. For example, it has been suggested that thirty to fifty in-depth interviews suffice in a grounded research project (Morse, 1994:225). Glaser and Strauss (1967:70) have emphasized the importance of thoroughly "saturating" the core and secondary conceptual categories. Rather than a specific target, Kvale (1996:101, 103) has stressed the "quality rather than the quantity of the interviews", noting that "To the common question, 'how many interview subjects do I need?', the answer is simply, 'interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know'". My sample fits all of these parameters, and I am satisfied with the information generated.

Participants: Confidentiality and anonymity

In this project, my academic awareness of the ethical issue of participant anonymity was compounded by my experience in a shelter where workers are expected to abide by a rule of confidentiality. For instance, the names of clients are not to be

disclosed and their situations are not to be discussed outside of workplaces or with other clients. For security reasons, locations of the shelters are secret. Workers learn to behave cautiously by, for instance, limiting to family members their drives to and from work.

As well as the confidentiality of clients and shelter locations, workers may be taught to protect the confidentiality of partner abuse organizations. At one meeting that I attended, counsellors and executive directors and board members were advised to avoid discussing internal operations with workers in other organizations and the women's community. We were led to believe that confidentiality would reduce opportunities for tension and competition among partner abuse organizations. The ethic of confidentiality was also portrayed as being in the best interests of the organization's survival. Fostering cohesive and collaborative appearances when interacting with sister organizations and the community-at-large would protect our workplace from public criticism and intervention and/or financial reprisal by the "Funder". Deliberately or accidentally, the link between confidentiality and organizations' survival was strategically powerful. By appealing to the emotional commitment of workers to partner abuse services and their practical need for a job and income, a positive public image of women and women's organizations was managed by silence disguised as "confidentiality". One board member reported that "I'm very careful to be discrete and confidential about stuff because I feel like a lot of the people I know move in the same circles and I don't want to be perceived as saying things that are confidential things" (#15). Women's personal discontent and relations of tension among women were restricted to organizations where, as this study indicates, a norm of silence was encouraged and enforced.

Apart from the special meeting described, such messages were routinely conveyed in smaller group and committee meetings and informally in day-to-day conversations. Such experiences reaffirmed my belief that the invitations to participate in interviews had been blocked by “gatekeeper” executive directors. They also strengthened my commitment to protect the confidentiality of women who, by participating in this study, resisted organizational codes of silence. For this reason, I took several precautions to protect participants’ anonymity. Women were asked to read but were not required to sign a letter of consent (Appendix E). I transcribed the interview tapes myself using rented transcription equipment and my computer. Because I judged that anonymity was ethically important, all identifying and potentially identifying details were eliminated from the outset, during transcription (Kvale, 1996:172). These included names, titles, dialect subtleties, favourite expressions, discipline terms, and physical and structural details of the work places.

Other potentially revealing details such as participants’ ages and work histories were summarized. Although some insights on diversity may have been sacrificed, I am satisfied that I have done all that I can to respect women’s fear of reprisal. Two spontaneous exchanges that occurred during the interviews substantiate the need for such sensitivity.

Participant: Are you going to use the name of the organization?

Me: No. It’s too dangerous. Nobody would talk to me.

Participant: Nobody would talk to me either!

Participant: It’s really important to me...I did say some things...extremely confidential...

Me: I guarantee. Do you want the tape back when I’m finished with it?

Participant: That’s good because that’s extremely confidential. That’s personal and that’s very private. [Note: The tape was returned.]

Data collection: Interview questions

My knowledge of feminist and partner abuse organizations, work, and workers, and readings on the subject of power and women's power informed the construction of the interview questions (Appendix F). The specific question of how feminists define women's power was influenced by my involvement with women's organizations over the past twenty-five years, and by observed and felt conflicts between and among women. During that time I have performed many roles in sites such as a shelter for abused women and children, a woman's union and union local, and rape crisis and women's centres. Such personal experiences have given me a "sympathetic understanding" of feminists' concern with male power-over or unequal domination, and female power-to, or equal collaboration.

At times I have been one of many volunteers committed to a special project or event. At other times I have been a volunteer with a fixed term of office and position on a policy committee or as a board member. Sometimes I have been one of several paid workers; other times I have been the only paid worker. In some environments I have been the only lesbian; in others I have been one of a few. In these different capacities, I have received information and instruction from others, delivered information, and selected and disseminated information that was, at times, widely distributed. These collective personal impressions, or preliminary "evidence", inform the research and particularly, the interview questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:23).

In the interest of producing research for women, the original sixty-three questions and probes used in the semi-structured interview schedule were pre-tested in an interview with an unpaid worker in a feminist organization. Her recommendations prompted minor

re-organization. She felt, for instance, that more time and opportunity for reflection was needed to answer the question on “whether and/or how difference affects power dynamics between women”. As a result, this question was moved from the very beginning to the end of the interview. Other revisions that were made during the formal interview phase are elaborated below. Such adjustments reflect the view that “Improving interview quality is not simply a question of better interview techniques or design; it also involves a reflective conception of the topic and purpose of the inquiry from the beginning” (Kvale, 1996:100). These amendments put into practice the advice that researchers be “open” and “flexible” and sensitive to the fact that data that is considered “relevant” at the outset of the research process may shift with new thoughts, information, and/or observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:65-66; Blumer, 1969:40, 48).

For example, although income was originally queried, it soon became obvious that several women held a second or third job. Within and among organizations, income varied with differently calculated seniority systems, classifications, pay equity, union contracts, and full and part-time status. While counsellors and executive directors were paid, board members were volunteers. On-call counsellors earned hourly wages which, based on organizations’ emergency need, could not be predicted over the course of a year. Because such diversity would make the construction of a baseline of comparison difficult, I re-assessed the merits of the question. It was deleted when I realized that its inclusion owed more to academic reflex and conformity with other research studies than to my conviction that income would elicit new insights on how feminists define women’s power.

Other questions and/or probes that were repetitive and did not generate new or relevant information were eventually deleted. These included:

- If at all, do you think that any difference influences your relationship with your female colleagues?
- [If yes] has this been positive or negative for you? Why?
- Do these or other differences affect power dynamics between women? How?
- Did you always feel this way [about the work environment]?
- How do you explain the difference [in all-female versus mixed sex work places]?
- What would you consider unproblematic emotional display in clients, counsellors, the director, the board?
- probes: responsibilities, work

Some questions were deleted once the “saturation” of “categories not of core value to the theory” was recognized and satisfied (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:73). These included:

- Do you think society views men’s and women’s power as the same or different? Why/why not?
- In theory, feminists see all women as having equal personal power. Is that accurate or not? Why?
- Have you encountered women’s good power in your work? Examples?
- Have you encountered women’s bad power in your work? Examples?
- Is women’s power discussed?
- How would you recognize power inequalities among the paid and unpaid workers at your organization? Examples?
- Does empowerment apply to men and women?
- How do women get empowered?
- What emotional qualities does this type of work require?
- What would you consider appropriate emotion in clients, counsellors, the director, board?

It bears note that participants responded negatively to the wording of the question “What would you consider appropriate emotion in clients, counsellors, the director, board?”. They argued that all feelings are appropriate and only the manner of their expression could be problematic. Such negative response to the question may derive from participants’ social work and counselling training to receive emotional disclosures without judgment. It may also reflect the feminist value of empowerment wherein historical patterns of silence are resisted by encouraging and validating women’s

emotional communications. Of particular note, although the source of participants' discomfort was not probed, perceptions of classism were suggested in one woman's statement that feelings are "not appropriate in the sense that you have to be all nice and middle class" (#5). Response to this question became more favourable when it was reworded in subsequent interviews as "inappropriate emotional displays".

To develop insights provoked by women's emerging comments on, for instance, authority, new questions were introduced during the interview process. These included:

- We all use the word "power" in conversation with colleagues and clients. Is there some common understanding of what that word means? Why/how?
- Do workers and supervisors and boards have equal/different responsibility for fostering a positive work environment?
- Considering also the funder and clients, rank the power of groups in your organizations from the most to the least.
- What does women's "personal power" mean to you?
- You identify as a feminist. Do your feminist politics influence your vision of power?
- Is partner abuse an example of "bad power"? Why/why not?
- Are power differences discussed in your work place?
- Does dependence on government funding influence the organization's power, worker's power, relations between organizations?
- Do men and women resolve conflict in similar or different ways?
- What do you have to learn about women's power, if anything?
- What do you have to learn about your own power, if anything?
- Is authority the same as power?

Although the data for this study was primarily obtained from interviews, information was also gathered from mission statements, reviews of scholarly writings from various disciplines, and my personal experience as a feminist worker in a shelter for abused women and children. As sensitizing and informative research tools, these sources of data are addressed in the following section.

Data collection: Other data sources and research activities

To ascertain what organizations value, mission statements were obtained from seven of the eight organizations represented by the thirty participants (Reinelt, 1994).

The eighth mission statement could not be accessed by study participants or from non-participating insider contacts. It was decided not to alert that executive director to workers' participation by requesting the organization's current mission statement from her. In conceptualizing this study, mission statements were seen as baselines against which power dynamics, values, and assumptions, could be compared with women's experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Spalter-Roth & Schreiber, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990:55). Pettigrew (1979:577) explains that such values

are not merely the stated purposes of an organization, though they may imply such purpose, but they also are and represent the system of beliefs and language which give the organization texture and coherence. The vision will state the beliefs, perhaps implying a sacredness of quality to them, use a distinctive language to define roles, activities, challenges, and purposes, and in so doing help to create the patterns of meanings and consciousness defined as organizational culture.

Ultimately, mission statements were only used to illuminate the meaning of caring. A more detailed analysis of the statements would have revealed the identities of the organizations represented by participants.

Various scholarly writings were also consulted in the early stages of the project "to stimulate theoretical sensitivity" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:50). These included, for example, the perspectives of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and feminist and organizational scholars' writings on power and work. Other material was consulted throughout the data analysis and writing phases. The "as the need arises" approach responds to the caution that:

We do not want to be so steeped in the literature as to be constrained and even stifled in terms of creative efforts by our knowledge of it! It is **only** after a category has emerged as pertinent that we might want to go back to the technical literature to determine if this category is there, and if so what other researchers have said about it. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:50)

For example, the emerging category of caring led to a review of the literature and “validation of the accuracy” of my findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:52).

As well as using interview data, mission statements, and scholarly writings from various disciplines, my experiences with feminist work and workers informed both my decision to research how women define women’s power and my subsequent data analysis. Speaking to research ideas, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990:35) explain that:

Someone may come across a problem in his or her profession or workplace for which there is no known answer. Professional experience frequently leads to the judgment that some feature of the profession or its practice is less than effective, efficient, human, or equitable. So, it is believed, perhaps a good research study might help to correct that situation.

In so doing, my work realizes from its inception the proposition that “feeling and experience..should be the main principle on which feminist research is based” (Stanley & Wise, 1993:174). Familiarity of location also accords with other feminist researchers’ motivations. For example, one study drew on the author’s experience as a shelter worker in late 1973, and “information given her by colleagues and members of the [Vancouver] Women in Transition Society” (Ridington, 1977-78:563, 566). Another study was informed by the researcher’s involvement in the “battered women’s movement” and her work, between 1979 and 1984, establishing a Newfoundland shelter (Pennell, 1987:116). Like these researchers, my sense of self as a feminist scholar fueled my decision to study feminist workers’ perceptions of power.

Data collection: Validity and reliability

The concepts tested in this study were informed by my work as a crisis counsellor in a shelter for abused women and children from November 1993 to November 2000.

For four years such paid employment coincided with this research project. My sensitized experience of the shelter environment during that time informally approximated that of a participant observer. As such, this section addresses the criteria of access, evidence, and discussion that have been suggested as measures of validity in observation-oriented research (Jorgensen, 1989:36). Jorgensen (1989:36) has proposed that the greater the researcher's direct access to "insiders' world of meaning and action", the greater the validity of the concepts tested. As an insider I knew, for instance, that power, women's power, and empowerment are key concepts in the vocabularies of shelter workers and management that are transmitted internally to new employees and clients, and conveyed to the community-at-large in brochures, public education, and networking. I was also aware that my shelter's mission statement and its framework of analysis for partner abuse are grounded in assumptions of men and women's power, and the feminist value of empowerment.

Reliability, on the other hand, has been defined as "The extent to which a procedure, especially measurement, produces the same result with repeated usage" (Jorgensen, 1989:36). To encourage standardization, the interviews were structured by pre-formulated questions. Each key concept was queried in more than one question. For instance, power was probed in questions relating to male and female power, negative and positive power, personal and social power, and women's visible and invisible power. Repetitiveness was considered to be a positive indication of the internal consistency of individual interviews. Saturation of categories was seen to reflect internal consistency of the sample. New questions were introduced only when saturation had been reached and exceeded.

On the issues of validity and reliability it bears note that in 2000-2001 partner abuse organizations in the research area did not tend to employ women in their teens and twenties. In this study, women's ages ranged from 30 to 60, with a median of 40 and mean of 42 years. Accordingly, all participants had some exposure, via participation or observation, to activities of the Women's Liberation Movement sometime in-between its heyday in the 1960s and its declining visibility in the 1980s. Through those experiences participants inherited the vocabulary and politics of feminism. Readers should therefore consider that the findings reported in this study could differ with a younger sample. To assist future researchers of women's power, this chapter and the appendices critically address most aspects of my methodological approach.

Data analysis

The decision to transcribe whole interviews was based on the advice that "better more than less", and also on my technical skill at "reliable" verbatim transcription (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:31; Kvale, 1996:163). Metaphorically likening the interviewer to a traveler on a journey, Steinar Kvale (1996:4, 165) describes interview transcripts as "topographical maps abstracted from the original landscape from which they are derived". Kvale (1996:162) goes on to say that:

The question 'what is the correct transcription?' cannot be answered – there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode. A more constructive question is "what is a useful transcription for my research purposes?".

To answer that question I attempted to capture symbolically meaningful expressiveness by documenting nuances such as sighs, pauses, silence, laughter, and/or emphasis. Because I was the only person involved in interviewing and transcribing the thirty

interviews, it was generally not difficult to recall the contexts of women's comments (Kvale, 1996).

Following transcription, replies to each question were grouped together. Fearing that subtleties could be overlooked or lost because of my inexperience, I decided against using analytical software tools (Kvale, 1996:173). Instead, using word processing programs, I cut and pasted response sections. Question by question, each set of thirty replies was printed. Those reply sets were organized by theme and related questions. Nine two-inch binders contained the interview data with which I began the first, open coding phase of the grounded research process that took place from June 15 to August 7, 1999 (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Through all phases of data collection and analysis my work was guided and inspired by the writing of Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin. The authors define the grounded theory approach as a "scientific" and "A qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon...that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:24, 27). They explain that "Analysis in grounded theory is composed of three major types of coding" – open, axial and selective coding. Rather than fixed stages, movement between these types can be fluid because the "lines between each type of coding are artificial" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:58). The first step of open coding involves

the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data. During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data. Through this process, one's own and others' assumptions about phenomena are questioned or explored, leading to new discoveries. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:62)

Working question by question through each of the nine binders, I prepared summary sheets that identified categories and their dimensions. Categories or “grouped concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena” emerged from women’s comments. The complimentary task of identifying dimensions or “locations of a property along a continuum” was more difficult. Perhaps because participants’ perceptions and experiences of power were typically expressed and experienced as feelings, dimensions such as frequency, extent, intensity, duration, or manner didn’t often or easily apply (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:71-72).

As well as preparing summary sheets identifying categories and where possible, their dimensions, I extrapolated comments from the printed response sheets, transcribed them by hand, and attached them to the category-relevant summary sheets. While time-consuming, this organizational decision a) facilitated familiarity with the interviews, b) ensured that comments would not get buried in subsequent coding phases, and c) streamlined the material with which I worked. When the categorization was complete, I returned the original printed interview data to the binders and the binders were filed.

The “making of comparisons” and “the asking of questions” have been identified as “two analytic procedures [that] are basic” to open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:62). Comparisons between, for example, men and women, or counsellors and board members and executive directors, were illuminated in the open coding phase. In such cases questions were combined. Throughout analysis, I recorded questions and insights on small index cards. These code notes were dated and placed in a small file box within easy reach for ongoing reference (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:73).

The second coding phase of the grounded research process took place over two months, from August 7 to October 18, 1999. Axial coding has been explained as:

A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:97)

In preparation, open coding summary sheets and comments were read and re-read, theme related question by theme related question. That back-and-forth process revealed weaknesses in my earlier assessments. I discovered that some questions and their answers were unexpectedly related. For example, response to “three wishes for the organization” and “expectations of work with women” both impacted on the category of conflict. I also realized that some comments did not belong with earlier established categories. Comments relating to provincial funding were, for instance, observed in most replies. Consequently, these were collated as I happened upon them and eventually became causal and intervening conditions, or other categories. As well, some answers did not fit the categories that I had earlier constructed. In those instances the categories were re-labeled.

Following this preliminary review of the established categories, dimensions, and interview data, I began a category by category identification of emerging causal and intervening conditions, context, strategies, and consequences. The new summary sheets and their relevant interview comments were constructed by hand. Once completed, related comments were read twice or more often to ensure that all appropriate ideas and innuendoes were captured on the summary sheet. Having produced new, more detailed summary sheets and attached to each those relevant comments, the material from the open coding phase was clipped together and filed.

When a new axial coded summary sheet was complete, its highlights were transcribed on a yellow index card. Gaps or unclear links unexpectedly emerged from that shorthand. In such cases, I returned to the comments. Sometimes they were re-grouped. In other cases new comments were incorporated. For instance, by comparing similarities and differences in response to the questions “How does one become empowered?” and “What is empowerment?”, I recognized a spurious perception inconsistent with a response pattern, such as financial stability, and omitted it. A new yellow card was prepared and the process was re-executed until all the relationships made sense. These cards were numbered and stored together in a file box. When I began work on a new question with the same theme, I reviewed the numbered yellow cards to avoid repetition. I then extrapolated comments that fit already established cards and added them to the appropriate back-up material for that card.

The axial coding phase produced seventeen categories. Each category was represented on a separate summary sheet to which pertinent supporting testimony was attached. I integrated comments from the note cards into the summary sheets as much as possible, and the yellow highlight cards were revised accordingly. Referencing both types of cards, a one-page typed summary sheet was prepared for each of the seventeen categories. In some cases this process highlighted gaps or information that, for example, was more appropriate as an intervening condition than a context. I then made revisions where necessary. Seventeen data packages emerged from the axial coding process. Each package contained a summary sheet that listed a category and its causal and intervening conditions, context, strategies, consequences, and related respondent comments. Five different categories were identified. These included powerlessness (5 packages), power

conflict (5 packages), bad power (2), emotion (2 packages), and empowerment (1 package).

The third coding phase occurred in May of 2000. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990:116-117), selective coding aims at “more abstract level of analysis” by

explicating the story line....relating subsidiary categories around the core category by means of the paradigm....relating categories at the dimensional level...validating those relationships against the data....[and] filling in categories that may need further refinement and/or development.

The core category was determined to be power and the subsidiary categories were identified as role, process, and feeling. Women’s comments associate power-to with a role that is formal (e.g., title) and/or informal (e.g., opinion). They perceive power as a process of being socialized to powerlessness and/or to becoming empowered. It is a feeling of being powerless (e.g., passive, silent, withholding, accommodating) and/or powerful (e.g., active, resisting). Such findings are contextualized by the concept of caring. They are additionally influenced by four key historical developments since the 1960s. These include: the decreased visibility of a Women’s Liberation Movement and feminist activism, increased recognition of women’s diversity by feminists, a more conservative social climate, and the greater intervention by the Government of Ontario in the funding, operation, and direction of services for abused women and children. This framework became the basis for the discussion of power outlined in the following chapters.

As a “back and forth” process that is driven by emerging insights, data analysis did not end with the selective coding exercise. Rather, clarification-driven analysis continued as this dissertation was written and edited. By way of illustration, I realized that although I had reached a point of satisfaction with my interpretation of “power”, I

was confused about women's meaning of its prerequisite of "respect". Because respect was associated with other conditions of caring, trust, and equality, all required review. By listing their features and charting their contexts, new connections emerged. I concluded that respect was meant as trust of women's caring and feminists' caring about equality. The definitions included in this study were revised accordingly (Appendix G). By describing the research goals and activities, data analysis process, and problems, this chapter begins the "journey" of understanding how feminists define women's power (Smith, 1987:209). That process continues in the next chapter where theorists' perspectives on power are compared with the perceptions of research participants.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF POWER

Debates on the subject of power speak to its complexity and multiple meanings and manifestations (Boudon & Bourricaud, 1982; Johnson, 1995; Marshall, 1994). This chapter examines how Marx and Engels, Weber, Foucault, organizational scholars, and feminists have viewed the concept of power. It questions the uniqueness of feminism's power analysis and explores its theoretical "fit" with the perceptions of interviewees.

Power according to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

The concepts of power and, by implication, authority, provide the thematic cornerstones of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels' observations of economic, political, and other transformations precipitated by the Industrial Revolution. For these two theorists, power and authority were, at their core, issues of inequality between a bourgeois class who owned the means of production and wage-labour, and a proletarian class of wage workers (Marx & Engels, 1848:36-38). Within the emerging capitalist system, they proposed that the bourgeoisie's "personal...and social status" and "social power" derived from the capital generated by an exploitative production process (Marx & Engels, 1848:47). Such class tension, they believed, could only be transformed through economic equality (Marx & Engels, 1848:47). For Marx and Engels (1848:37,53), political power derived from economic power, and was dependent on the subordination of a working proletariat to an elite bourgeois class. They were, for instance, critical of the uneven concentration of "population ...production...[and] property" in the hands of the bourgeoisie, and the fact that the "social and political constitution [was] adapted to it" (Marx & Engels, 1848:40). While political control was seen to rest with the economically dominant bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels (1848:43) did consider that the proletariat, as a class, constituted a "political party"

with the capacity to transform an unequal status quo.

Resistance of workers to economic disadvantage would, through their “self-conscious” organization in trade unions and enhanced contact through modern methods of communication, culminate in a “revolution” against the bourgeoisie (Marx & Engels, 1848:43-45). As well as power dynamics between classes, Marx and Engels (1848:43) recognized struggles within classes. They proposed that:

The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle...at first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries.

Marx (1847:93) wrote that cooperation within the proletariat class “is continually being upset...by...competition between the workers themselves”, that was fuelled by the bourgeoisie’s greed for profit.

Power according to Max Weber

Max Weber (1962a:117) initially defined power as “that opportunity existing within a social relationship which permits one to carry out one’s own will even against resistance and regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests”. Like Marx and Engels, he recognized that economic control of property facilitated the domination of one class over another (Weber, 1946a:180). However, rather than the inevitable class relations of domination predicted by Marx and Engels, Weber (1962a:117) cautioned that “The sociological concept of domination...can only mean the probability that a command will be obeyed”.

Although Weber’s analysis of power took into account the economic class disparities stressed by Marx and Engels, his work has been said to “favor the narrower concept of ‘domination’ which is in effect political power” (Secher, 1962:20). The link

between economic and political power is reflected in Weber's (1946c:160) statement that economic benefits "naturally exist everywhere among strata living off the exercise of political power". Speaking to the power incentive, Weber (1946b:78) wrote that "He who is active in politics strives for power either as a means in serving other aims, ideal or egoistic, or...to enjoy the prestige-feeling that power gives".

Marshall (1994:411) has suggested that Weber envisaged power more broadly than had Marx and Engels. In addition to economic power Weber introduced the notions of status as "a kind of social power" and parties as "groups active in the political sphere in pursuit of various goals". He differentiated between economic classes and status groups as follows:

Classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life. (Weber, 1946a:186-187, 193).

Accordingly, access to power could derive from status and/or party affiliation, as well as class location (Parkin, 1982:90). That proposition has been criticized based on the fact that:

One of the most immediately noteworthy things about this initial classification is what it leaves out. Among possible candidates for inclusion in the catalogue of power, the state and bureaucracy stand out as distinguished absentees[although] he often seems to regard state and bureaucracy as among the heavyweights in the struggle for power. (Parkin, 1982:90)

Like Marx and Engels, Weber (1962:85; 1946:185) recognized struggle between and within classes. Weber (1946:186) shared with Marx and Engels a belief that the opposing economic interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat foster the "most bitter...class antagonisms". However, Weber (1962:86) perceived that the outcome of resistance would be decided not by workers through revolt, but by the interests of prevailing rational, charismatic, or traditional authorities. Weber (1962:85) also added to Marx and Engels'

view of antagonistic resistance, the proposition that resistance could express opposing “will” in “peaceful” and “controlled competition” for “control over opportunities and advantages”. Such situations are illustrated in Weber’s (1962:97) discussion of “closed” social relationships where “the participation of certain persons are excluded, limited, or subject to conditions”.

Power according to Michel Foucault

The work of Michel Foucault challenged and expanded the visions of power and authority put forward by his predecessors. Generally, Foucault (1979b:57) rejected analyses that, as the work of Marx and Engels particularly illustrates, attempt a “global systematicity which puts everything in place”. Contrasting Marx and Engels’ emphasis on economic, and Weber’s focus on legal-political relations of domination and subordination, Foucault (1980:158) criticized historically static and dualistic representations of power over others. The simple “dominating...dominated structure” of power true of monarch/peasant relations in the Middle Ages differed, Foucault (1980:141-142) felt, from the “multiform production of relations of domination” that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Foucault disputed what he considered to be yet other narrow perceptions of power.

He resisted the equation of power with repression because:

If power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it? What gives power its hold, what makes it accepted, is quite simply the fact that it does not simply weigh like a force which says no. (Foucault, 1979a:36)

Also contested was the proposition that “power...produces nothing but ideological effects” (Foucault, 1979c:59). Rather, Foucault (1979a:36) suggested that power is “a productive network which runs through the entire social body....[and] produces things...induces pleasure...forms knowledge...produces discourse”. Alluding particularly to the work of

Marx and Engels, he refuted the view that power could be “totally on one side” due to class and/or wealth (Foucault, 1979c:60). Also challenged was the proposition that the State is power. Rather, Foucault (1979c:60) viewed the State as “the instrument of a system of powers” that included, for example, “local and religious communities”.

Unlike Marx and Engels and Weber, Foucault (1979c:66) viewed the economy and politics as “nothing but the system of...disciplinings, through which power works”.

Although he agreed with Marx and Engels and Weber “that relations of power do in fact serve”, Foucault (1980:142) felt that this was true “not at all because they are ‘in the service of’ an economic interest...but because they are capable of being utilised in strategies”.

Accordingly, he endeavoured “to analyze the specificity of mechanisms of power, locate the liaisons, the extensions, to build step by step a knowledge of strategy” (Foucault, 1980:145).

Regarding the operation of power dynamics, Foucault added to Weber's (1962a:117) concept of “discipline” other strategic possibilities. These included, for example, the “gaze” as a form of social control of “great importance among the techniques of power developed in the modern era” (Foucault, 1980:155). Foucault (1980:133) perceived “opinion” as a form of “democratic surveillance”, and “truth” as “an ensemble of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements”. In maintaining that power could be spatially, as well as ideologically and practically organized and strategized, Foucault identified what Marx and Engels had only implied in their discussion of factories. Foucault (1980:147) viewed palaces and churches as architectural “strongholds” of power until the end of the 18th century, and drew attention to the “panopticon” building design that enabled the surveillance of “lunatics”, “patients”, “convicts”, “workers”, and “schoolboys”.

Foucault's (1980:155) vision of "resistance" or "disobedience" included, but was not limited to class dynamics. For him (Foucault, 1979:55), power and resistance were synonymous as "There are no relations of power without resistances". Foucault (1979:52) maintained that "strategies" of resistance could be found "where power is". Rather than the economic focus of Marx and Engels and Weber, Foucault (1979:55) proposed that there are as "many different kinds of revolution" as there are kinds of power. Unlike other theorists, Foucault (1980: 163-164) acknowledged both "the possibilities of resistance and counter-attack on either side".

Power according to organizational theorists

Like Weber and Foucault, some scholars associated with the power and politics school of organizational theory perceive that power "characterizes relationships among social actors" and is therefore "context or relationship specific"(e.g., Pfeffer, 1978:311). Yet other researchers have drawn attention to dynamic relations of power. Ragins and Sundstrom (1989:51-52) acknowledge diverse levels of power "as influence by one person over others, stemming from a position in an organization, from an interpersonal relationship, or from an individual characteristic", or combinations that shift over time. In contrast, Vijay Sathe (1985:275) perceives that influence is not power but a "process of using power to alter others' behavior, attitudes, or feelings". For Sathe (1985), feelings of power vary with people's ability to get what they want and resist what they don't want. Organizational scholars recognize resistance as a form of power and also as political activity (Pfeffer, 1978:314; Sathe, 1985:275).

Power according to feminists

According to Lips (1991:6), "For nearly a century and a half, feminists have raised

questions and generated debates about power”. Writings since the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1960s reflect feminists’ tendency to “divide power into two types” (Lips, 1991:7; Yoder & Kahn, 1992). Johnson (1995:211) has explained the feminist distinction between power-over and power-to as follows:

The concept of power-to views power as something based not on hierarchy or domination and subordination but on the capacity to do things, to achieve goals, especially in collaboration with others. Whereas the power-over view tends to focus attention on competition for power and dominance, the power-to view stresses the potential for cooperation, consensus, and equality. Unlike power-over, an increase in power-to does not require that anyone lose power. Theoretically, power-to is infinitely expandable, while power-over is not.

Power-over or “bad” power has been associated with society’s understanding and men’s perception of power as domination (Lips, 1991:7). This is the type of power typically of concern to scholars such as Marx, Engels, and Weber. In their study, Miller and Cummins (1992:426-427) found that women’s belief that “Society defines power in terms of money and control over other people” accorded with “the way traditional social scientific theory has defined power...[as] control over other people and resources”. Implicating relations in organizations, Johnson (1995:210) has suggested that the feminist concept of negative power “reflect social systems organized hierarchically”.

Like Foucault, critiques of power-over by feminists of all political persuasions have taken issue with its consideration as purely economic domination. For example, some marxist feminists have expanded class analysis “by giving equal importance to patriarchy, which they argue existed prior to capitalism, though interacting with it as capitalism developed” (e.g., Glenn, 1984:119). Some socialist feminists view neither heterosexism, nor “class, gender...[or] race...as the primary source of oppression”, and have focused their inquiries on relations “between...capitalism - and the organization of male power - what we

might refer to as patriarchal relations” (Adamson et al., 1988:98, 99, 112). Further, some radical feminists have differently identified sex as the basis for women's oppression and proposed that as a “sex-based class”, women have “common interests against men, since men have common interests in dominating women” (Ramazanoglu, 1989:101-102). In criticizing patriarchy, feminist and grassroots women's organizations, initially through consciousness-raising groups, identified power-over as an expression of male domination to be resisted and discarded. Feminists sought to effect, through social change, a kinder, gentler, more responsive form of power that expressed the values of collaboration, respect, and equality, and spoke to women's lives. They conceptualized a different, positive type of power that is power-to.

In feminist writings, positive power-to is often used interchangeably with the concept of empowerment. It will be recalled that empowerment was originally envisaged as a process through which women could resist and transform feelings of powerlessness. Through the positive feedback, support, and validation of sister feminists in consciousness-raising groups, women would increase their self-esteem and become aware of their power. Jean Baker Miller (1991:198-199) has noted that unlike domination, women's positive power “produces a change....involves a different content, mode of action, and goal”, and “uses one's power to empower another – increasing the other's resources, capabilities, effectiveness, and ability to act”. Accordingly, Miller (1991:199) has speculated that “I think most women would be most comfortable in a world in which we feel we are not limiting, but rather are enhancing, the power of other people while simultaneously increasing our own power”. That enabling process is represented in power-to as a product of empowerment. For Kanter (1977:166), the concept of empowerment resists power as

“domination and control over others” by a few, and reframes it as “mastery or autonomy” by the many. That view agrees with Iannello’s (1992:44) finding that feminists use the term empowerment typically in reference to women’s power-to at a personal level and collectively, through alliances.

Feminists’ tendency to “dichotomize empowerment and power” has been said to “lack clarity” (Hartsock, 1988: 294). The potential “overlap” of positive and negative types of power has only occasionally been recognized (French, 1985:505; Giele, 1984). However, the models of power-over and power-to succeed in conveying both repressive and creative dimensions of power (Griscom, 1992). The view of “dominating as a male form of power and empowering as a female form of power” also illuminates the mediating influence of gender on experiences of power (Miller & Cummins, 1992:417; Reinelt, 1994). The following section explores points of commonality and difference between the power analysis in feminist theory and the analyses of Marx and Engels, Weber, Foucault, and organizational researchers.

Questioning the uniqueness of feminism

Feminism shares with Marx and Engels, Weber, and Foucault, the perception and language of power as domination. Where feminists generally highlight patriarchal relations of domination, marxist and socialist feminists also share with Marx and Engels, a recognition of economic domination. For Marx and Engels, domination was a feature of a capitalist economy and class structure that was supported by the laws of the State. Weber recognized patriarchy as the oldest form of traditional authority, identified economic and legal-political domination, and implicitly recognized the power of the State. Foucault believed that relations of domination included, but were not limited to those originating at

the level of government. Instead of domination at a macro level, organizational scholars have examined workplace “influence” that varies with position, interpersonal relations, and individual characteristics. Neither dominating power, nor power as a feeling are uniquely feminist propositions. Weber noted the “prestige feeling” that derives from power, and organizational researchers have observed variations in feelings of power and powerlessness.

Feminism shares with Marx and Engels and Weber, a tendency to interpret power as relational types. Feminism has constructed female and male models that convey women’s powerlessness compared to men. Marx and Engels attributed economic powerlessness to a proletariat working class that was subordinated to the economic power of a bourgeois class of owners. Weber identified economic and political-legal types of power. In contrast, organizational studies focus on diverse variations in influence. Foucault perceived as narrow interpretations, power models of dominating/dominated. Instead, he proposed that relations of power exist everywhere.

Value judgments of power emerge from the assumptions of feminism that negative power is male domination or power-over. For Marx and Engels, negative power was associated with an economically dominant bourgeois. Feminism and Marx and Engels also share a tendency to conflate self-interest and inequality with negative power. More specifically than other perspectives, feminism assumes that female power is positive power-to. The repressive and productive dimensions and effects of power are acknowledged by Foucault, and elaborated in the workplace observations of organizational researchers.

The subject of resistance is addressed by feminism in the concept of empowerment as a process of transforming female powerlessness. Marx and Engels envisaged that the revolt of workers against a bourgeois class would be enabled by a collective consciousness

of their oppression developed by modern methods of communication and also by the organization of workers in trade unions. Weber's work acknowledged both antagonistic resistance and peaceful competition through, for instance, strategies of exclusion. From Foucault, we gain an awareness of strategies of resistance and counter-resistance. Organizational researchers have recognized power as politics and attended to dynamics of influence.

This comparison suggests that feminism has uniquely highlighted patriarchal relations of domination and subordination and formulated a sex-differentiated power analysis that is based on assumptions of negative male and positive female power. From a feminist perspective, power is expressed and experienced negatively in relations of inequality (e.g., power-over), and collaboration that may be expressed and experienced positively in relations of equality (e.g., power-to). The agreement between the perceptions of respondents and theorists' interpretations of power is the focus of the following sections.

Women define power

The women who were interviewed considered that power could be negatively and positively expressed and experienced, and defined negative and positive power in terms of sex. Negative power was implied in the notion of power-over that was seen to be male, short-lived, and social (#8). Positive power-to was viewed as female, enduring, and personal (#7, 21). Referring to endurance, one executive director explained that:

Women, because of our experience, because of where we found ourselves in terms of the culture – in the home, working with children, caring for our communities, building communities, and all that, have a longer term understanding of what it takes to survive every day. (#7)

Male power-over was considered to be conscious, artificial, and oriented toward money. In contrast, female power-to was perceived to be unconscious, “true”, and directed toward

knowledge (#21). As “an internal feeling”, positive power provoked “a sense of you can deal with what comes up, not just rationally, not just emotionally, [but] in a kind of holistic way” (#2, 3).

As well as negative and positive power, features of domination and collaboration emerged from women’s comments. Research participants perceived, for example, that male power-over is the power to control, while women’s power-to is the will to “do good”. Power-over was considered to be typical of Western societies in which power is given to some by others. In contrast, power-to was seen to transcend Western norms and external opinion because it is developed by, and accountable only to the self. One board member stated that “When you have that kind of power you don’t really care what other people who have power think about you because they don’t give you – nobody gives you that power” (#21). The following section examines how women try to balance the contradictions of practicing power-to in a social world in which power-over dominates.

Power-over and power-to

Relations of inequality were implied in response to the question of how men’s and women’s power is socially regarded. Research participants spoke of a double standard in which a powerful man is seen to be assertive, while a powerful woman is viewed as aggressive. Most women (23) associated confidence with assertiveness. Their views of an assertive woman were reflected in positive terms such as “fearless”, “bold”, “decisive”, and “able to say yes/no” (#4, 8, 16, 17). They anticipated that an assertive woman would, however, be perceived by men as a “bitch”, “mouthy”, “loud” or “angry” (#10, 14, 25, 26). Several women (10) agreed with the statement that “Men find women who are articulate kind of intimidating” (#7). One executive director suggested that “A man [who speaks his

mind] is wow, brilliant...[but] a woman who speaks her mind is a ‘bitch’” (#3).

Research participants believed that men are considered to be businesslike, while women in business are also expected to be emotional leaders (#20). Where men are permitted to be fallible and “make stupid mistakes but...be forgiven”, women “have to be double as good as men in order to have the same position as a man who holds power” (#5, 14). Yet other differences were highlighted. While male power was considered to be good and “constructive” in the social world, research participants expected that powerful women would be seen as “threatening” by men (#2, 4, 20). In that regard, the women who were interviewed distinguished between public perceptions of male power as legitimate and women’s power as illegitimate.

Legitimate power, they claimed, is public and “direct”, as evidenced by men’s positions in academe, “corporations”, “occupations”, “politics”, and their social status in “the family and in society” (#1, 7, 8, 20). Women spoke of social “expectations” and “assumptions” that men will have power (#14, 20, 30). In society, men’s power is the “natural order of things”, and “sets the standard for what powerful is” (#9,15). In other words, power-over has become the acceptable, institutionalized form of power that is associated with males, and the patriarchal social world. Demonstration of those characteristics has become a “male right”, from which women are excluded, even punished.

In contrast with social perceptions of men’s legitimate, public, and direct power, research participants believed that woman’s power is viewed as illegitimate, private, and indirect. A counsellor commented that while men are considered to have “earned or inherited” power, “Women have to have stolen it from somewhere” (#9). Where “Men are expected to have power, women need to get it” (#14). Although power was seen as a

“natural phenomenon” to which all people are theoretically entitled, some women acknowledged that in practice, power is disproportionately “assigned institutionally” (#1, 5, 6). Women spoke to the limitations of cultural norms that allocate power based on class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability (#6). Economics was particularly emphasized (#5, 7, 17, 19). One counsellor elaborated that

We live in a class society...and we live in a capitalist society so people with the power are people who control the money, and people who have strong connections...with the people who control the money. (#19)

Perceptions of how men view powerful women

Research participants perceived that men decide that a woman is powerful on the basis of her appearance. Women (6) proposed that men would find physically strong or large women powerful, while others (11) expressed, in different ways, the idea of being “dressed well, good grooming”. A few women stipulated that a woman who was considered by men to be powerful would likely be white, able-bodied, mature or “40ish”, “married”, and heterosexual (#22, 23). The women who were interviewed believed that men would assess a woman powerful because of work-related factors. A third of the participant sample felt that men would view a “businesswoman”, or woman of “position” as powerful (#7, 12). Women (9) also perceived that an “influential” woman was considered by men to be powerful (#13). The means of such influence was captured in words like “networked” and “connections” (#12, 25). Some research participants suggested that men would find a “rich” or “high income” woman powerful (#11, 12).

Several women (12) speculated that men would find a woman powerful if she conveys, for example, “confidence” as being “very sure of herself”, conviction or “strength” or “independence” (#3, 4, 11, 12, 23, 25, 29, 30). A few women (4) also hinted that men

perceive powerful women more negatively than women see powerful men. For example, men could view a powerful woman as man hating in the sense of being lesbian or “emasculating” (#8, 9). They could see her as male-identified in not being attractive, and in being “one of the boys”, or “attached to a powerful man” (#14, 20, 30).

Perceptions of how women view powerful men

How women typically view powerful men was found to accord with participants’ perceptions of how men assess powerful women. Research participants suspected that typically women would interpret a powerful man by his outer appearance. Appearance included physical strength, “large, big, and strong”, and being well presented or “attractive”, or “well-dressed” (#2, 7, 11, 14, 20). Some research participants believed women would be inclined to perceive an aggressive, white, able-bodied, and heterosexual man as powerful. In demeanor, some women (10) linked aggression in a man as being “loud”, “arrogant”, “authoritarian”, “demanding”, “mouthy”, “over powering”, “intimidating”, and “decision makers” (#5, 10, 15, 17, 18, 19, 24, 26). Regarding decision-making, some participants (5) echoed the view that men “take over” and “don’t listen - they just give you the solutions” (#3, 20).

As well as by looks and demeanor, research participants believed that women would judge a man to be powerful based on what he does and how well he does in his work. Research participants (14) imagined that women would consider well-employed professional men to be powerful. Four women spoke to the power that derives from men’s “connections”, or their “social standing in their [cultural] community” (#15, 25). Many participants (18) associated men’s image of power with their financial resources or income. The following section reveals an emerging distinction between “us and them”, or feminists’

perceptions of power, versus those of men and women who are not feminists.

Feminist perceptions of powerful men and women

Respondents were questioned on ‘the kind of woman a man sees as powerful’ and ‘the kind of man a woman sees as powerful’ and whether ‘society views men’s and women’s power as different’. Unexpectedly, the feminists who were interviewed distanced themselves from their perceptions of men and women in the general public, and how they assess each other’s power. Rather than from status by profession, community standing, and/or wealth, powerful men were identified as confident, respectful, caring, and honest. A powerful man projected confidence from self-esteem. Research participants indicated that he is “sure of himself” and “doesn’t lose his cool” (#3, 13). Confidence was interpreted as self-knowledge. One woman stated, for instance, that powerful men “know who they are and don’t need the approval of a man or a woman” (#2). As well as formal “education”, informal “smarts” expressed the idea of powerful men’s confidence from self-knowledge (#7, 17).

Regarding values, research participants identified respectfulness in general, and respect for women in particular (#3, 26, 27). One executive director commented that “I’ve had some men in my life who would really value women, really trying to listen to themselves, listen to them, the children....valuing their intellect” (#3). For some of the women who were interviewed, caring was a characteristic of a powerful man. A caring man, women explained, would “speak out for what they care about”, be “open to the emotional part of themselves”, and be “supportive” (#3, 7, 17). For others, a powerful man was honest and had “honourable” ethics (#2).

Like their speculations about men’s power, research participants interpreted a

woman's power as "confidence". In their opinion, powerful women feel an inner confidence that is expressed physically, verbally, and in different forms of knowledge. Confidence was associated with "self-esteem", "strength", and "feeling good about who I am inside" (#2, 5, 6, 27). Women spoke, for instance, of the ability to "to feel and say and be able to be heard", and "to walk out literally or walk out in your mind" (#18, 20). Women (18) described self-esteem as a sense of being "grounded in herself" that was felt as a "presence" that is "exuded" and "inspires confidence in others" (#12, 23, 26, 28). Positive self-esteem was visible. One woman speculated that a powerful woman "can count on herself, has dignity, is not a victim, owns her life, feelings, and is probably grateful [sarcasm]" (#20). Research participants spoke to powerful women's self-esteem that generates confidence to "be yourself...not try to be somebody else" (#24). According to one executive director, "You know who you are within yourself. It doesn't take somebody else telling you who you are or what you are" (#20).

From a powerful woman's inner self-esteem, research participants perceived that she would convey confidence in her appearance and demeanour. She would be "quiet" and "calm" (#2, 3, 7, 15, 17, 25). A few stressed body posture (#15, 16, 19). The "way she...smiles", and her "ability to...look into your eyes" were identified as yet other clues (#19, 25). As well as physically, several women (13) interpreted a powerful woman's confidence from her self-expression. Being articulate encompassed, but was not limited to skilful verbal expression (#16, 26). An articulate woman would weigh her words carefully, rather than speak for the sake of speaking (#3). She was thought to balance her comments, and "doesn't want to be...more vocal...than other people in the room" (#8). Nor would such a woman "impose her views" (#28). Instead, she would be "able to put things in

context” and, where needed, “see what’s causing this [deadlock] and be able to move women on from that” (#5, 21). Above all, the power of being articulate was considered to derive from the ability to listen well and “not pretend”, and secure others’ interest in listening (#16). By way of example, one respondent commented that “If someone was talking to her, she was hearing everything she said” (#7). Another imagined that in her company, “Everybody stops and listens to what this woman says” (#22). The power of an articulate woman would, in short, be reflected in “the way people speak, listen to others, are listened to” (#15).

Confidence was also interpreted as knowledge that included a powerful woman’s “self-esteem”, experiential knowledge or “knowing what they’re going to say/do”, and feeling knowledge or knowing “my own emotions and myself” (#3, 21,27). Although formal education was noted (2), the women in this research more commonly (15) focused on a powerful woman’s experiential knowledge. One board member explained that:

It’s saying I’ve had these experiences as a woman. I’ve raised my family. These knowledges are important. They’re valuable. I’m going to act on that. I don’t have to feel embarrassed about it, and I don’t have to accept the common view that that work is nothing. (#17)

On the basis of experience, powerful women were considered to be “smart”, and have a “wide range of knowledge” (#23, 26). They were perceived to possess knowledge of their “full weaknesses and full strengths” (#16). One counsellor explained that

The more you have information, the more you have power. It’s like women who have gone through an abusive relationship. The next relationship they’ll have a better edge of what it felt like...of not getting into it. (#18)

As well as knowledge from experience, powerful women would have feeling knowledge. Feeling knowledge was associated with “intuition”, or “a sixth sense....that men don’t [have]” that makes it possible to “see things...make connections” (#13, 15, 18). One board

member reported that “We’re very emotional creatures and we relate with each other on that level and that’s a very powerful place to come from” (#17).

The influence of a powerful woman was considered to derive not from compliance by domination, but willingly, from others’ perception of her as “charismatic”, and “visionary” (#5,10). Charisma was “instinctive” or “intuitive in the sense that it’s both intellectual and feeling knowledge that’s kind of joined up” (#7, 11). For ten research participants, charisma was claimed to be sensed as a “feeling” of being “drawn”, as an “energy”, or “karma”, or “magnetism” (#2, 4, 12, 13, 28). One woman stated that “It leaves one with a feeling that this woman knows” (#10). While influence was equated with “decision-making”, and impacting “others” and “things”, professional, and/or wealthy women were not included in personal perceptions of powerful women.

Participants’ statements reflected feminism’s goals of collaboration, respect, and equality, and also their value of female caring. Women in this study (5) viewed a powerful woman as a team player who “collaborates” in, for example, “discussion”, “events”, and “work” (#4, 6, 15, 18). They (6) noted that a powerful woman would exhibit integrity through “respect” (#5). A powerful woman would respect women and be respected by women. She would, for instance, “attack issues, rather than people” (#8). According to research participants (8), a powerful woman would command “respect...[for] the work that she does” (#19). Based on her “politics” or “analysis”, she would “work like a dog” for social “change” (#4, 6, 19, 21). Regarding equality, a powerful woman would be “fair”, and committed to behaviours that were not dominating but “win-win”, “inclusive” (#5, 24, 25).

Women (7) suggested that caring involved, for instance, “helping women”, “being woman-positive”, and displaying “trust and compassion”, and “sensitivity” (#7, 15, 16, 29).

Honesty or acting “right” was illustrated by “transmitting information that she has”, and not “twisting around” what women disclose (#1, 18, 20). Caring encompassed such things as “helping other people feel good about themselves”, and using power “not...against each other but with each other” (#7, 19). In her interactions, a powerful woman’s integrity was associated with honesty, fairness, and responsibility. Honesty included “acting on one’s values”, and “knowing what you say is what you believe in” (#6, 20). Being “fair” was described by one respondent as “the capacity for wellness without taking away from anyone or anything” (#18, 28). Women spoke, for instance, of taking responsibility “to make something happen”, “for your actions”, and using “personal power...responsibly” (#6, 20, 27).

Feminism’s sex-differentiated analysis of power was reflected in research participants’ comments. Replicating the trend in feminist writings, the women who were interviewed defined negative and unequal domination as male power-over, and positive and egalitarian cooperation as female power-to. Although only as it applies to males, in acknowledging power-over, participants did concur with the theorists’ proposition that power may be oppressive. Research participants also substantiated theorists’ points of agreement that power is relational and productive. From feminists’ personal perspectives, positive power was defined as confidence that derives from men and women’s inner self-esteem and fosters in others, feeling impressions of their powerful influence.

Unexpectedly, my questions on how men and women generally assess each other’s power generated reactions of surprise and defensiveness. Some counsellors reacted to the questions with surprise. They indicated that “Oh, my goodness! It’s not easy to put in words”, “I’m not sure what you mean”, and “It’s hard!”, “It’s a tough one, Catherine [long

pause]”, and “Hmm – interesting question [pause]” (#12, 13, 22, 27, 29). Executive directors similarly responded by “Oh!” and “This is brilliant!” (#23, 25). One counsellor stated that “I don’t know that I know that answer because I think that any expression of a woman’s power is usually thought of in a derogatory way. I’m talking generally from a societal perspective” (#9). Such reactions suggest that my question may have confronted assumptions of male power that are not discussed and consequently, difficult for feminists to articulate. Alternately, woman-focused feminists may not be accustomed to considering the perceptions of men.

Other research participants insisted on separating feminists’ political ideology and practice of power from perceptions of power in the “outside” world. With and without attitudes of defensiveness, some (5) feminist participants contrasted the perceptions of men that they like or love, with “other” men’s views of powerful women (#13, 19). In the words of one such woman:

I can’t think of a group of men that would all use the same words because most of the men I know might be representative of other men. Most of the men that I know and would hang around with are Left. They would support women in power. They would use positive words. They would say she’s extraordinary. She’s strong. She’s intelligent. She’s assertive. And she’s committed. So they’re all words of admiration and so on because most of the men that I know would more than support women being in power, if they say that power was a good thing, because power’s not necessarily a good thing. These men aren’t typical. (#19)

A counsellor responded that

That’s not fair because there’s the whole social perspective of powerful women, and then there’s women that I admire because they’re powerful, and then there’s women who men might admire because they’re powerful. (#26)

One executive director stipulated that “I can answer...what I think would be the generalized, societal view...if I can answer it another way too” (#3). One board member stated that “Gee that’s interesting [laughter]! I have to think about it for a minute. Are you talking in

general? Are you talking about how I would see it or [generally] women?” (#17). Another board member stated that:

I know [what] I would think...but that might not be what the average woman would see as powerful. Really depends on the context too. Like powerful where? Powerful on a non-profit board? Powerful in the world of business? (#15)

Such comments reflect a divide between feminists and women who are not self-identified feminists. They also indicate that as an “ideal type...construction of certain elements of reality into a logically precise conception”, feminists assume of each other, positive power that expresses their consciousness of and commitment to feminism’s goals of collaboration, respect, and equality (Gerth & Mills, 1946:59). Emerging distinctions between respondent speculations of men and women’s perceptions and their own feminist definitions of power suggest that the explanatory capacity of feminism is limited. That proposition is elaborated in the following section.

Evaluating feminism

Common themes emerged from research participants’ conjectures of how men and women assess each other as powerful. These included being white and heterosexual, conveying an appearance of being physically strong, well-dressed, or confident, and having influence through employment, community standing, and/or wealth. Such correspondence with dominant group privilege, social influence, and wealth, indicate an accord with the power analyses of Marx and Engels and Weber.

In contrast, the personal perceptions of the self-identified feminists who participated in this study reflected feminism’s power analysis. Reflecting a historical tradition and norms of patriarchy, the women in this study perceived that only male domination is considered to be legitimate, public and direct. In relation to men, they suggested that female power is

instead viewed as illegitimate, private, and indirect. Rather than status by profession, standing, and economic assets, the women who were interviewed assessed power according to their feelings and values. Perceptions of confidence illustrate that difference.

Research participants imagined that in the social world, an appearance of confident power is generally conveyed in physical strength and clothing. Among feminists, confident power was interpreted as women's intuition or "feeling knowledge" that projects an appearance of self-esteem. Rather than status rewards of position or money, research participants perceived that confident power enabled greater authenticity between the inner self and the public assertion of choice and voice. They stipulated that confident power was not self-interest at others' expense. Ideally, powerful women retain and express by example, feminist values of collaboration, respect, and equality, and also female caring. Such findings suggest that for research participants, feminism was both a political orientation and an identity whose values shaped their personal ideals and expectations of the power of other feminists.

In contrast to definitions in feminist theory, research participants defined positive power according to feelings and values, rather than by sex. Feminism was limited in its ability to explain such perceptions, given its narrowly constructed power analysis and sex-differentiated positive and negative models. To understand power that transcends sex, this study draws on Foucault's power strategies, and the insights of organizational researchers that include, but are not limited to, workplace dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The next chapter examines how assumptions of women's equality and positive power-to are expressed in feminist organizational research, and feminists' workplace ideology and practices of empowerment.

CHAPTER 3 – ORGANIZATIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF POWER

Although the goal of this study was to ascertain how individuals who identify as feminist define women's power, organizations provided the framework for the perceptions and relational experiences of the feminist partner abuse workers who were interviewed. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to understand, through the insights of feminist organizational researchers, how women's power has been interpreted. Such findings suggest that feminist work expresses, in ideology and practice, a belief that all women can be empowered, and that all women can develop confidence in their personal, interpersonal, and collective power-to. Female values of respectful support, or caring are crucial to the enabling or empowering process. I suggest that this emphasis on women's equality, and assumptions of women's positive power and caring, have limited our knowledge of the contradictions illustrated by the comments of respondents.

Although their interest areas and perspectives vary, organizational researchers agree that much remains to be learned about power. Pfeffer (1987:315-316) has observed that:

An examination of the major textbooks now current in the field will indicate that the subject of power is either not mentioned at all in the subject index or, if it is, it receives short shrift in terms of the number of pages devoted to it. When the subject of power is found in the index, it is frequently associated with a discussion of the individual bases of power...or the need for power...and, in specialized books dealing with topics such as organization design or organization development, power typically receives no mention at all.

He speculates that such inattention may derive from "competing perspectives for understanding...decision-making" and avoidance that is based on power's "troublesome...implications and connotations....[for] the socialization of managers and the practice of management" (Pfeffer, 1987:310). Feminist rationales instead highlight the exclusion of

women in androcentric research inquiries (Acker, 1990:141; Brown, 1995; Calas & Smircich, 1992:228; Hearn & Parkin, 1992:63; Iannello, 1992).

The work of male researchers associated with the organizational culture, power and politics, and related schools of management and communication has typically focused on bureaucratic operations (e.g., Deal, 1985; Pfeffer, 1978; Sathe, 1985; Schein, 1992). Among other limitations, that trend has been seen to promote, to the exclusion of many women's projects, the misconception that all organizations are "rational, bureaucratic, or political" (Pfeffer, 1987:322). To feminists, such bias has rendered questionable "organizational theory's texts...its concepts...[and] its contributions to an understanding of social life" (Brown, 1995:201).

For example, Brown (1995:200) has suggested that when female managers are recognized, they are assessed against "the male presence as the standard, the norm". Working women have been obscured by male researchers' tendency to focus on "decision makers" in corporate bureaucracies (Iannello, 1992:45). Some researchers, however, are optimistic that "Although traditional organizations are very slow to change, feminist organizational issues and questions are beginning to resonate there", for example, in issues of more participatory processes and opportunities for women's upward mobility (Adamson et al., 1988:236). The next section elaborates not only how male, but also feminist organizational research has been found wanting.

Limitations of feminist organizational research

Feminist organizational research has been criticized for its tendency to more often provide an "overview of male organizational power than a separate paradigm, theory, or typology" (Parkin, 1992:65). Such specialized interest has been seen to constrain the

broad formulation of “a coherent political theory of social change” (Franzway, Court, & Connell, 1989:159). The focus of feminist researchers on gender differences has also limited our knowledge. Feminists’ attention to how women’s and men’s power are shaped and reproduced by differences of, for example, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, and/or class have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the “gendered processes” that affect women’s work and working women (Billing & Alvesson, 1993; Kanter, 1975; Acker & Van Houten, 1992:249, 251). Thus, Kanter (1975:55) argues that:

It is reasonable to hypothesize that groups of women differ from groups of men primarily in orientations toward interpersonal relationships and level of aspiration...as realistic responses to women’s structural situation in organizations, of the kinds of opportunities and their limits, of the role demands in the organizational strata occupied by women, and of the dependence of women on relationships for mobility.

Ironically, such focus on gender differences has perpetuated a historical pattern of rendering women visible *in relation to men*. Consequently, despite feminism’s inclusive and emancipatory goals, less is known about power relations among women and in women’s organizations than about women’s powerlessness relative to men.

Yet other challenges have constrained the development of woman-centered inquiries. For instance, feminist researchers confront the difficult task of separating women and women’s organizations from patriarchal power relations. Hearn and Parkin (1992:64) have noted that “Even all-women organizations...may depend upon other existing organizations, which are themselves male-dominated, for funding or other assistance”. One research team found, for example, that trade unionist women’s efforts to effect organizational change in a women’s committee were ultimately constrained by male dominance and sexism (Adamson et al., 1988:234). Taylor and Whittier (1993:543) have additionally proposed that the absence of a visible and vibrant Women’s Liberation

Movement has weakened the transformative impact of feminist insights. In their view, because “The women’s movement of the 1980s and 90s is in abeyance...[it] is primarily oriented toward maintaining itself rather than confronting the established order directly”.

Gaps in how to understand and transform patriarchal power relations may also derive from the fact that feminist theorizing has struggled to find a place in the organizational literature. The possibility that male gatekeeping has constrained its visibility and development is reflected in Brown’s (1995:198) observation that:

It is interesting to note that many of the articles which deal with a feminist approach to organizational analysis exist as unpublished manuscripts or as conference papers, rather than as journal publications or chapters in books, which makes it difficult for those interested in the topic to acquire them.

Outside of the organizational literature, feminist researchers have had more success making public, typically in case studies, their observations of the “alternative institutions” that fully emerged with the Women’s Liberation Movement in the 1970s (Morgen, 1988; Pelletier & Craig, 1988; Pennell, 1987; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979:510; West, 1990). Drawing on such work, the following section examines how power in organizations has been interpreted by feminism over the past four decades.

Homogeneity, equality, women’s power

Until the 1980s, feminists tended to assess power inequalities not on the basis of sex differences, but rather, by correlates of skill, influence, opinion, and access to decision making and information that paralleled the tradition of a male-dominated organizational literature (Parkin, 1993). In the 1970s, one study of a women’s center, a radical workplace, and a food cooperative in New England reported “inequalities in expertise, attractiveness, verbal facility, length of time spent in the organizations, access to information, interest, and effort” (Mansbridge, 1973:255, 366). An investigation of the

Boston Women's Health Collective between 1977 and 1979 linked feelings of inequality to the "exclusion" of some women "from collective decision making" (Morgen, 1988:373). Rape crisis centres were likewise concerned with "equal access within the group to decision making and information" (Gornick, Burt, & Pittman, 1985:264).

Organizational observations made during the 1970s expressed an assumption of women's homogeneity, feminism's goal of equality, and its model of male and female power. For instance, reflecting "the initial idea...that women shared a common experience of subordination", data gathered between 1977 and 1979 from workers in the Women's Health Collective revealed that counsellor training and consciousness-raising sessions exclusively focused on power as gender inequalities (Morgen, 1988:373). Differences among women, such as feminist politics and sexual orientation that "strained the women's movement in the 1970s and early 80s", were de-emphasized (Mueller, 1995; Taylor & Whittier, 1993:542). This focus tended to perpetuate the image of power-over as negative and male, and power-to as positive and female.

As feminists began to discuss and recognize these previously obscured diversities, equality was re-conceptualized as inclusion, rather than homogeneity. Illustrating that development, Morgen (1988:379) reported that around 1982,

The staff of the Women's Health Collective shifted their emphasis from an assumption of shared sisterhood to a recognition that the bond women share is textured by the different experiences women have because of their position in the larger society. With that recognition they moved from a desire to incorporate diverse groups of women into the center, to the hard work of constructing a collective identity and organizational goals and actions that encompassed differences and entailed changing power relations between groups of women.

The following section explores how new attention to heterogeneity changed the focus of feminist power discussions away from women's inequality with men in patriarchy, toward inequality among women.

Difference, inequality, women's power

The term "difference" is used in my study to refer to the practice and/or perception of inequality and exclusion. As meaning is contained and transmitted in language, I share one research team's decision to "struggle...with the word *different*, mainly to hold it apart from its common mistranslation, 'deficient'" (Taylor, Gilligan, Sullivan, 1995:2). Particularly since the 1980s, researchers have acknowledged a "tension between commonality and difference within the women's movement itself" (Leidner, 1991:265; Spalter-Roth & Schreiber, 1995). Leidner's (1991:273) study of the National Women's Studies Association in the United States found that the

Feminist membership has confronted tensions between commonality and difference, and between empowerment and efficiency, in its attempts to put into practice ideals of substantive equality, unity, inclusivity, and participation.

Predominately in case studies, scholars have explored types of difference and their "trickle down" effects on equality in feminist organizations (Fried, 1994; Leidner, 1991; Spalter-Roth, 1995). Issues of class, ethnicity, and ideology have garnered the most attention.

Class has been identified as one source of inequality among women and in feminist organizations (Morgen, 1995:240; Ramazanoglu, 1989:115; Riger, 1994). Researchers have also documented the impact of class on interpersonal relationships between, for instance, shelter workers and residents (Davidson & Jenkins, 1989; Murray, 1988:91; Ristock, 1991:46; Srinivasan & Davis, 1991:44; Wharton, 1987:157). At a

macro level, class has been linked to the exclusion of Black, working class, Native, and immigrant women from the work of feminism (Feree & Hess, 1985; hooks, 1993; Lachapelle, 1982; Ng, 1982). For example, Ng (1982:253) has said that immigrant women view feminism as “essentially a middle-class movement of women in search of self-improvement and access to the top executive world”. At a micro level, real and perceived class differences may alienate clients from counsellors (Davidson & Jenkins, 1989:491).

Taylor and Whittier (1993:54) have claimed that “During the late 1980s and 90s...the issues of race and racism...most divided the movement”. From this perspective,

The issues raised by women of colour remind us that organizational structures and processes, even feminist ones, are not neutral. Power relations are built into those structures and processes, and one of our tasks as feminists is to understand and expose them. (Adamson et al., 1988:249)

The commitment of researchers to recognize and expose inequalities illuminated the complexity and inter-relatedness of differences. Studies brought to attention the notion of “multiple oppressions”. For example, “class backgrounds” were said to produce “divergent visions, priorities, or interpersonal expectations” (Morgen, 1995:240).

In the process of self-scrutiny throughout the 1980s, feminism’s cornerstone assumption of women’s homogeneity was contradicted. Poster (1995:673) found, for instance, that while an organization composed of working class women of color adhered to an ideology of “unity based upon differences”, an organization of “upper-class white women” instead aspired to “unity based on similarities”. Unity of differences was also attributed to African-American women’s historical connection to “the larger black familyhood” and their abilities, through the Church and women’s organizations, to find “collective and powerful ways to exercise influence in spite of discrimination” (Gilkes,

1992:72). According to Ferree and Hess (1985:87), Hispanic women's "cultural norm of independence" conflicted with the collectivist orientation of feminism and produced feelings of marginalization from the Women's Movement. Such observations are similar to Gilkes' (1992:72) suggestion that equality based on homogeneity is only for "white women...a goal of the feminist movement" (Gilkes, 1992:72).

In organizations, political differences that challenged the assumption of women's homogeneity were also apparent. In the 1980s, Morgen (1995:240) observed in feminist clinics "internal division and controversy arising...from ideological "splits" in the women's movement". Research on the anti-violence movement in St. Louis, Missouri from 1988 to 1990 revealed that the "Differing ideological positions of the liberal and the radical feminists led to conflicts over structure and the near breakup of the coalition" (Arnold, 1995:287). Opposing strategic perspectives in rape crisis centres and shelters for abused women and children have also been documented (Amir & Amir, 1979; Scott, 1993).

Research conducted during the 1990s speaks to ongoing ideological differences among feminists. A recent Canadian study of twelve national women's groups found that:

All respondents mentioned a considerable amount of tension and conflict ...because of different ideological standpoints, understanding and/or lack of knowledge of issues of inclusion and diversity. (Tobo-Gillespie & Torres, 1996:23)

Unlike the resolution of language differences by translation and interpretation, and disability by, for example, wheelchair ramps, Tobo-Gillespie and Torres (1996:21) found that "Issues which have an ideological construction (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation) seemed to be hardest for organizations and respondents to address". Recently, Mueller

(1995:266) identified emerging ideological differences associated with feminist views of “pornography, sexuality, and spirituality”. Such findings suggest that in partner abuse organizations, attempts to confront or discuss power relations that challenge the feminist model of male power-over and female power-to may be resisted or silenced.

It has been proposed that “The movement...has not often – some would say, rarely – been successful at balancing sisterhood and difference” (Adamson et al., 1988:246). Divisiveness led Dill (1983:146) to write in the 1980s that:

I would argue for the abandonment of the concept of sisterhood as a global construct based on unexamined assumptions about our similarities, and I would substitute a more pluralistic approach that recognizes and accepts the objective differences between women.

Feminism has not, however, abandoned the goal of equality expressed in the concept of sisterhood. Nor has it abandoned assumptions of positive female power and negative male power. The importance of the shift in feminist emphasis from homogeneity and equality to difference and inequality is conveyed in Ramazanoglu’s (1989:96) proposition that:

Variations in the situations of women in different social classes, in the work that women do, and in the power they hold over others become particularly significant in evaluating the assertion that women are everywhere oppressed by men. Once it is argued that women are not always oppressed by men, or not as badly oppressed in some places or at some times as in others, then specific explanations are needed of why there should be such difference or variation.

While one would expect that the feminist debates sparked by women’s testimonies of unequal difference would have dealt a “death blow” to the notion of women’s equality, and prompted a re-conceptualization of feminism’s assumption of only positive female power, that has not been the case. In contrast, by examining the different experiences of board members, executive directors, and counsellors, the goal of this study is to break the

silence of feminism that masks women's recognition of their use of negative power. As the following section illustrates, part of that silence stems from the way in which feminism has adapted to inequalities implicated by difference through an ideology of "different but equal", a new strategy of inclusion, and a continued emphasis on all women's potential empowerment.

Inclusion, equality, and empowerment

Although feminist organizations' practical recognition of women's diversity has been found to depend on individual or group pressure to change, and on the financial cost of inclusive practice, some efforts toward inclusion have been made (Tobo-Gillespie & Torres, 1996). For example, within the National Women's Studies Association the caucus system gave more than one vote to women marginalized by, for example, economic resources, education, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Leidner, 1991:275,277). Likewise, a Toronto Rape Crisis Centre "gave power and leadership in a particular area" to "working-class women, women of color, lesbians, and Jewish women" (Ristock, 1990:180). Of significance for this study, an older strategy that links feminism's goal of women's equality with female power-to continues to be expressed in the language, meaning, and context of empowerment.

While power is often interpreted as domination and/or political status, alternate understandings have been documented (Raymond, 1986:193). Iannello (1992:43) has suggested that power defined instead as ability and as social change can be found in the dictionaries of the 1930s, and historically in philosophy and literature. She (Iannello, 1992:43) notes that although "feminist theory did not create this alternate understanding of power, it has served to bring it to light" via the model of female power-to. Nor is the

concept of empowerment exclusive to feminism. References to empowerment are found in “community organization methods, adult education techniques, feminist theory, and political psychology” (Gutiérrez, 1990:149). Of organizations, Shera and Page (1995:2) have explained that:

Concepts relating to organizational empowerment are found predominately in the management, organizational, and business literature [as] managers in these sectors have found that empowering practices lead to increases in employee satisfaction, management and leadership satisfaction, morale, motivation, organizational functioning, productivity, and consumer satisfaction.

The misconception that empowerment is a feminist concept may derive from the tendency of feminist researchers to credit its emergence to “movements of social change of the 1960s and 1970s” – one of which was the “Women’s Liberation Movement” (Reinelt, 1994:688). At that time, empowerment was the very reason for women’s consciousness-raising groups. Feminists perceived that in CR groups, women from all walks of life could transcend feelings of powerlessness and become personally and collectively powerful as a sisterhood working for social change. According to Spender (1985:29), “The contemporary women’s movement was ushered in on a wave of consciousness-raising, which specifically challenged our socialisation and ways of thinking”.

As previously noted, from such discussions, feminists constructed, in theory and organizational practice, a model of power expressing both negative and positive processes. Of that dichotomy, Reinelt (1995:99) has written that:

Earlier movement activists understood power as the ability of the state, institutions, and those who held positions of authority to impose their will on others. Power was competitive, individualistic, and zero-sum. If some had it, then others did not. As feminist politics changed, power was redefined as the ability to act, the ability to transform oneself and the world. Power was no longer

defined only as something that others possessed and wielded over you....This sense of power is very different from control and domination. It is a collective power that is experienced by movement activists as they mobilize and gain recognition for their work.

An empowered woman's positive power was viewed as power-to, while negative power was attributed to male power-over, or domination.

As the popularity of CR groups declined, alternative forms of feminist organizations emerged. It is recalled of that time that:

Our experience as women in organizations – whether traditional women's organizations, political parties, workplaces, unions, or left organizations – was one of powerlessness. Within feminist organizations women attempted to understand why we were powerless in those other organizations – not just ideologically, but also structurally. Gradually feminists developed a critique of traditional organizations and began to experiment with new organizational forms and processes. (Adamson et al., 1988:229)

The concept of empowerment was inherited from CR groups and integrated in informal feminist groups and in formal feminist organizations as an ideology and practice of "self-help". Self-help has been described as "a process through which women, experts about their own lives, learn to know their strength" (Schechter, 1982:109).

For example, in a Northern California shelter, staff believed that an abused woman, by

talking about her experiences and her feelings about these experiences....comes to grips with the reality of her situation and begins her journey down the road to self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and ultimately self-empowerment. (Murray, 1988:81)

In ideology and structure, women's organizations expressed feminist values of cooperation, respect, and equality. Morgen (1983:205) reports that in the 1960s and 1970s, "These organizations embodied the essential ideological principles of feminism:

they were run ‘by women, for women’ and stressed equality and women’s autonomy”. In terms of structure,

Collectivist feminists gave ‘hierarchy’ the additional negative meaning of a basically male principle of organization in contrast to a female mode of equality, defined as ‘sisterhood’, that is, a horizontal rather than vertical relationship. (Ferree & Hess, 1985:65)

Feminist organizations represented the view that “within organizations based on empowerment, members monitor themselves....[while] in organizations based on power, there must be an administrative oversight function” (Iannello, 1992:45).

Feminist workers who wanted to “get things done” grew disillusioned in the 1980s and 1990s with process-oriented collectivist and/or participatory democracy formats. Also at that time, fear for organizations’ financial survival prompted funding relations with corporations and/or government. Through a process of “routinization”, the operational conditions developed in bureaucracies were imposed on feminist organizations by government. As Morgen (1983:203-204) explains,

Routinization is classically defined by Weber (1946) as a process involving bureaucratization, oligarchization, and goal conservatization. In other words, routinization is the process by which alternative, participatory-democracy organizations become more bureaucratic, more hierarchical (in organizational structure), and less radical in their goals; they increasingly come to resemble dominant, ‘rational’ forms of authority and organization.

Accordingly, feminists face the challenge of how to apply to bureaucratized feminist organizations, an empowerment model of positive power-to that was developed in the context of egalitarian collectivist structures.

Having survived issues of women’s difference that impacted feminist politics and practice in the 1980s, one researcher has credited the “staying power” of empowerment as “a goal basic to feminism” (Leidner, 1991:281). Closer scrutiny suggests, however,

that feminism's interpretation of empowerment has been more stable as an ideological construct, than as an organizational practice. As an ideology, the personal-political dimensions of empowerment are reflected in a variety of feminist studies published in the 1990s. Thus, for example, Arnold (1995:279) has defined empowerment in grassroots organizations as a "set of political beliefs and values on the basis of which individuals interpret conditions and events". One American shelter for abused women expressed their social change function ideologically, using the politic of empowerment to:

explain the nature of violence in this society and the role of the shelter in stopping it. The staff believed that violence is a learned behavior, that there is an identifiable cycle of violence, and that by empowering the women, the shelter could help break the cycle. (Srinivasan & Davis, 1991:47)

In turn, Morgen (1995:237) has defined feminist health clinics in the United States as a "movement committed to empowering women in health care decision-making, practice, and policy". Campbell (1998:3) similarly advocates "making the health care system an empowerment zone for battered women".

Given this feminist perception of empowerment, the ideological impact of government funding on feminist organizational structure has been significant. For example, by 2002, informal self-help groups usually existed outside of feminist organizations. According to Taylor (1995:231-232), in "feminist self-help groups, caring and nurturant personal relationships provide a point of connection and identification with others that is not only therapeutic but empowering". Within feminist organizations, government funding and attached conditions have constrained the free expression of feminist practice. Consequently, the ideology of empowerment may only covertly underlie the practice of "peer counselling" that is currently typical in partner abuse organizations (MacLeod, 1989; O'Brien & Murdock, 1993). Explaining that process,

Gutiérrez (1990:150) has described counsellors who take the role of a peer and abdicate the role of an expert,

accepting the client's definition of the problem, identifying and building upon existing strengths, engaging in a power analysis of the client's situation, teaching specific skills, [and] mobilizing resources and advocating for clients.

Future changes in how feminist workers practice empowerment are likely. A shift away from peer counselling toward more conventional counselling or "therapy" would, given the unequal structure of the expert/client relationship, conflict with the egalitarian intent of empowerment and eliminate the practice of peer counselling. Added to such insecurity, the evidence presented in the following sections suggests that empowerment as a sound strategy of female equality and power-to is weakened by the lack of agreement among feminists regarding its meaning.

Meaning of empowerment

Although the concept of empowerment is central to feminism as the process through which all women can reject powerlessness and recognize their power-to, research participants were divided on whether it is a uniquely female practice. In response to the question "Can men be empowered?", many women (19) said "yes", several (7) said "no", and a few individuals (4) chose not to respond. The perception that men can also be empowered reflects, as researchers have observed, feminists' exposure to use of the term by non-feminists, for example, in reference to the "team-building" goals of business.

I additionally suggest that participants' different views of men's and women's capacity for empowerment reflects an ideological tension between liberal and grassroots ideologies that has been overlooked in feminist research on empowerment. A liberal feminist perspective is reflected in one counsellor's statement that "I think that anybody

who doesn't feel like they have personal power...within yourself to be who you are...can find that space" (#8). Indicating a grassroots feminist perspective, another counsellor commented that:

I think empowerment for men is different because I think they already have a very solid system in place that keeps them in power, and therefore, empowered. It isn't an issue of 'Can a man do this?'. It's assumed that he has a right to do it – that he's entitled. Men don't encounter the same roadblocks that we do. (#1)

Such comments do not contradict feminism's assumption that all women can be positively empowered. They do, however, indicate that research participants recognized the social complexities of power and personal empowerment and interpreted their observations using different feminist ideologies. Accordingly, feminists' definitions of power appear to be more complex than feminism's sex-based analysis leads one to expect. Gutiérrez (1990:149-150) has cautioned that among feminists, "Use of the term empowerment is often vague and can mean different things". That proposition was supported by one executive director's comment that the concept is "overused, misinterpreted" (#6). Another executive director claimed that "To tell you the truth, empowerment is a 'buzz word'. I think we say it...and we have no clue what it means" (#20). In an attempt to clarify the concept, Gutiérrez (1991:202) has identified three dimensions of empowerment: personal power, interpersonal power, and political power.

Personal power is "increased" by "identifying and understanding the power that one already has" (Gutiérrez, 1991:202). According to Reinelt (1994:688), "Empowerment is a process through which those who have been oppressed learn to know their strength and recognize themselves as experts about their own lives". Empowerment has been associated with women's feelings of self-control (e.g., Hall, 1990; Reinelt, 1994). For Iannello (1992:44), "Power is associated with the notion of controlling others,

while empowerment is associated with the notion of controlling oneself'. It bears note that the conceptual transformation of control from a negative to a positive phenomenon is characteristic of, but not exclusive to feminist research. From other disciplines it has been suggested, for instance, that "learned helplessness" becomes "learned hopefulness" by "focusing on the positive consequences of exerting control" (Zimmerman, 1990:72). Loeske (1992:59-60) describes the concept of empowerment as felt self-worth, self-esteem, and inner strength that individually and collectively generate in women, what Raymond (1986:195) has called a "power of being".

As Gutiérrez (1991) suggests, the women who were interviewed understood empowerment as personal power. One board member explained that:

The only kind of power I'm kind of interested in, that's where women come from and where their strength is, is-I start from myself and my power will come from my beliefs and if I have any followers it's only because I reflect their beliefs. They're following me because my vision is consistent with their vision. It's not because I'm going to give them something or because I have power over them.
(#24)

Reflecting feminism's historical link between sisterhood and collective female empowerment, respondents (12) noted that ideally, emotional and/or practical support facilitates the empowerment process. In the words of one board member, "It feels to me as though mostly it should be and it's most powerful in a collective experience, as opposed to a personal one, which it seems to be mostly now" (#10). The women who were interviewed (8) claimed that with or without the support of others, women could increase their self-esteem, or voice. With self-esteem, participants (11) perceived that women would recognize their inner power. From acknowledged personal power, many research participants (17) proposed that women would gain feelings of ability and choice.

Such understandings of an empowered woman's personal power echo those expressed by Gutiérrez and other feminist researchers. In contrast, the isolation experienced by research participants due to the demise of feminist CR groups and the bureaucratization of feminist organizations, conflicts with feminism's assumption of sisterly support in the empowerment process. The testimonies of the women in this study suggest that feminism's interpretation of empowerment has not kept pace with historical changes since the heyday of the Women's Liberation Movement. They cast doubt on the closely related assumption of women's positive power encompassed in the analytic model of female power-to.

A second type of empowerment or "interpersonal power", is defined by Gutiérrez (1991:202) as:

the ability to influence others through the use of social power...(that derives from such things as social position (e.g., as a supervisor), role (e.g., as a parent), interpersonal skills (e.g., conversational ability), credibility (appearing knowledgeable), and attractiveness (either physical or personal).

Some research participants (8) were uneasy with the prospect of influence. Reflecting their feminist belief in women's positive power and experiences of men's negative domination, they were uncertain how to not "misuse" power, but to use it in "good ways", "without being oppressive", and "for the better" (#4, 7, 14, 22). Gender socialization exacerbated women's discomfort with being influential. One counsellor elaborated that:

Because women as little girls are trained to be more emotional, more understanding, more in tune with what's around them, more giving, more caring about other people's feelings...what happens is when we grow up and come into our own independence and our own assertiveness, we have all that conditioning behind us to be 'nice'. Men grow up to be assertive and strong, and not emotional, and looking out for themselves and the king of the castle. So when they grow up, how does power work for them! (#29)

One executive director proposed that women “struggle more [than men] with how to be powerful” (#7). A board member explained that “If you really own [your power] then you have a big responsibility and I’m afraid of it. You know, I have a real fear that I can actually influence people” (#24). Such inhibitions suggest that despite their feminist identities and feminist work, not all participants in this study viewed themselves to be personally or interpersonally empowered. Thus, despite their claims that some men may need or can be empowered, these women recognized the likelihood that because of the structural limitations placed on women, men would have less need of personal empowerment.

As well as personal and interpersonal power, Gutiérrez (1991:202) has recognized empowerment as “political power”, or “the ability to influence the allocation of resources in an organization or community through formal or informal means”. In consideration of this model, I suggest that empowerment as political power reflects the legacy of the activist past of grassroots feminism, more than feminists’ current ideological and organizational realities that are, as Kanter (1975) recognizes, structurally limited. As such, it recalls the tendencies of feminist researchers to express in the concept of empowerment, both individual and collective power-to. In the 1980s, for example, Schecter (1982:109) explained that empowerment’s “premise is to turn individual defeats into victories through giving women tools to better control their lives and join in collective struggle”. A personal-political link is evidenced, also, in Hall’s (1990:83) description of the social change intent of the Leadership for Black Women organization as “the empowerment of individuals to effect valuable change in their personal, organizational, and community life”.

Like the personal-political interpretation presented by the women in this study, the egalitarian goal of empowerment has been credited to grassroots, more than to other types of feminism. Reinelt (1995:91) recalls that in the 1980s:

If a shelter or a movement organization was organized collectively to empower people at the grassroots level by engaging in political confrontation against patriarchal institutions, then it could be considered feminist. If it worked with mainstream institutions, developed hierarchical or bureaucratic organizational structures, then it was co-opted.

One study of a grassroots feminist organization reported that workers were “empowered” by an “informal structure [that] enabled [them] to participate with one another on an egalitarian basis” (Srinivasan and Davis, 1991:53). Researchers Nancy Adamson, Linda Briskin, and Margaret McPhail (1988:231) have argued that concern with “power, democracy, and equality among group members” is more typical of the “process models” that developed from “grass-roots feminisms” than the “organizational models” that emerged from “institutional feminisms”.

Such expectations of personal-political power-to and egalitarian organizational structures have been impacted by a decline of feminism as a visible social change movement, and an increase in government control of feminist organizations through funding and conditions that constrain their activism. Government’s interpretation of feminist organizations’ service goals has increased the demands on workers, and narrowed the focus of partner abuse work, for example, eliminating opportunities for public outreach on the problem of partner abuse. Resistance to government policies on partner abuse and inadequate resources for abused women and children has been deterred by examples of the closure of partner abuse organizations by the funding Government of Ontario. Rather than the intended result of women’s collective power-to, ten research

participants perceived a reduction in “women’s power...compared to the 70s and 80s” (#23).

Empowerment at work

Although abused women’s empowerment is well described in feminist studies of partner abuse organizations, comparatively little is said about the empowerment of counsellors who work directly with abused women. While it is assumed that workers will be empowering and that they can be empowered, the means to such ends are typically ignored or generalized to conditions of “collaboration, trust, and the sharing of power” (Gutiérrez, 1990:151). The ability of counsellors to empower clients appears to depend on their self-consciousness. The theme of personal responsibility emerges from Pinderhughes’ (1983:338) advice to social workers that:

We can liberate ourselves and be prepared to empower our clients if we first ...identify our own power gestalt – the significant experiences that have caused us to internalize feelings relative to our power or lack of power within the social system, our racial group, our ethnic group, our communities, and our profession. Then being fully aware of the ways in which we have used and enjoyed power, its benefits and its costs, and the ways in which we have experienced powerlessness and defended against it, we are better prepared to empower our clients....For sharing our power means empowerment for our clients and empowerment for our clients means empowerment for ourselves.

Among workers, empowerment by caring has been linked to hugs or touch, a language of sisterhood, and/or close friendships or relationships (Morgen, 1995:244; Taylor, 1995:231).

As conceptualized by feminists, empowerment was expected to produce female power-to. Almost all participants in this study disputed the permanency of that positive effect. Empowering increases and disempowering decreases were associated with changes in women’s self esteem (#7, 8, 9). They were linked to greater or reduced roles

in organizations (#6, 14, 15). One counsellor noted that her power with the Funder would decrease if she broke her silence and “just told her what I think about her” (#5). Other women reported that although they were empowered by partner abuse work, they felt disempowered by silence in organizations (#1, 2, 13, 26). One counsellor said,

As far as the nature of the work, yes, it's been what I expected. It has not been what I expected in terms of...the organization. Essentially it's the power plays and underhandedness and lack of communication [emphasis added] that initially took me by surprise. (#1)

According to Shera and Page (1995:3),

An empowered agency is one in which employees feel a sense of power and hopefulness, rather than the powerlessness and helplessness associated with the persistent problems and dilemmas many human service agencies face.

To the contrary, participants in this study differentiated between their empowering partner abuse work, and their disempowering organizational climates. The need to resist negative workplace dynamics was expressed by women in all respondent groups (#3, 8, 9, 14, 21). Counsellors stated, for example, that “The work with the women and kids...empowers, [but] on the institutional side...I don't feel anything that energizes”, and “I like my work [but] I hate the environment” (#9, 14). They reported that partner abuse work environments were not only emotionally, but psychologically “unhealthy” (#14, 19, 24).

Such findings suggest that board members, executive directors, and counsellors may, for the sake of inspiring abused women's recognition of their positive power, mask their own feelings of powerlessness. To consistently convey an appearance of being empowered, feminist workers may become adept at denying and/or protecting through “silence”, the negative organizational dynamic that fosters powerlessness. These and other observations in this chapter reflect the tendency of feminists to avoid the negative

and accentuate individual, group, and organizational dimensions of positive female power. Fried's (1994:570) case study of the Sexual Assault Hotline found, for instance, that "power to, not power over" was fostered by workers' references to "empowerment". However, bell hooks (2000:87) has cautioned that:

Narrowly focused feminist ideology tends to equate male development and perpetuation of oppressive policy with maleness; the two things are not synonymous. By making them synonymous, women do not have to face the drive for power in women that leads them to strive to dominate and control others.

Although the challenge of defining power is not uniquely feminist, feminist researchers admit that they are still struggling to understand "how to apply...definitions of power within the literature as well as within the actual operation of organizations" (Iannello, 1992:44; Shera & Page, 1995).

Such difficulties may be enhanced by contradictions between feminist theory and the realities of day-to-day practice. Assumptions of women's positive power-to and men's negative power-over may constrain researchers' ability to fully define and accurately apply definitions of power to women's organizational dynamics. Similarly, assumptions of the positive power of feminists may hinder feminist workers' ability to identify unsisterly expressions of negative power. Yet other challenges derive from the values embedded in and expressed as empowerment. Empowerment has been associated with caring about women by organizations, groups, and individuals. It has been linked to the egalitarian role structures of feminist organizations, and their social change role in challenging "oppressive...inequalities", and the respectful support of feminists (Breton, 1994:24). However, as we shall see in the next chapter, government funding and bureaucratization have had profound effects upon the assumed feminist values of

cooperation, respect, and equality, upon the assumption of women's caring about women, and upon relations of power among feminists.

CHAPTER 4 – FUNDING AND ROLE RELATIONS

According to Sandra Morgen (1995:245), government funding of feminist organizations produces,

both organization effects (for example, structural change or co-optation), and organizational affect, women feeling deeply about what is happening to their organization.

Particularly since the 1980s, scholars have tried to understand organizational dynamics from the perspective of culture (Shafritz & Ott, 1987:373). For example, March (1984:22) has defined an organization as a “complicated collection of interests and beliefs acting in response to conflicting and ambiguous signals received from the [external] environment and from the organization”. Aldrich and Marsden (1988:372) have proposed that within organizations, internal environments can be perceived as the quantifiable “attributes that exist independent of individual actors” and, as in this study, the qualitatively assessed “perceptions of participants”.

This chapter focuses on how funding relationships with the Ontario Government Ministry of Community and Social Services are perceived to have impacted the role relations of workers in feminist organizations. I emphasize that organizations are not the focus of this project per se. For one, self-identified feminists rather than feminist organizations were its units of analysis. For another, because it sought the input of partner abuse workers, respondents were selected from all-female programs in mixed-sex workplaces, and all-female workplaces. Organizations do, however, provide the structural and relational frameworks for feminists’ perceptions and experiences of women’s power.

Debates on emotion

Eleven years after Arlie Hochschild’s (1975) seminal work, a sociology of

emotion was formally recognized by the American Sociological Association (Thoits, 1989). Informed by the symbolic interactionist approach, Hochschild portrays the process of emotional understanding, emotional control, and emotional display unfolding through “feeling rules” against which actors interpret and define the situation, and base their emotional response (Hochschild, 1979:566). By way of illustration, researchers using her approach have found that:

Social workers, whose cultural norms adhere to the dominant model [of professional objectivity], treat stress and burnout as pathologies or as personal and professional failures....Thus, the medical/scientific model inculcates the implicit display rule: ‘never show that you can’t cope’. Feelings of uncertainty and stress must be handled in ways that preserve the professional persona. Implicit feeling rules, then are habitual and automatic – a by-product of the complex process of occupational training, client relationships, and organizational constraints. (Putnam & Mumby, 1993:39)

Norman Denzin (1989:29-30) has challenged researchers’ inattention to emotion on the basis that:

Emotionality is everywhere present in interpretive research. It is present in the moods and feelings persons bring to the study. It is present in the lives of those who are studied. It is present in the interactions that go on between researchers and subjects. It is present in the observations that are gathered. It is part of power and of being powerful, or powerless. An anatomy of power and feeling in the interpretive study reveals that detached, unemotional, purely cognitive interpretation is impossible.

Although attention to emotion in feminist work cultures and feminist movement work is particularly rare, a few women have likewise urged the integration of emotion in scholarly research (e.g., Hochschild, 1975; Morgen, 1983; Taylor, 1995). Like Denzin, they echo the view that:

Feelings, ideas, and actions together constitute experience....to exclude the analysis of feelings from an analysis of experience distorts its very essence and inevitably diminishes the power of the analysis to depict the fullness of human experience. (Morgen, 1983:209)

Fostered by feminism's recognition of personal experience, emotionality has been identified as a feature of feminist "emotion cultures" (Morgen, 1995:229; Taylor, 1995). Morgen (1995:237) found, for instance, that her "interviews with [thirty seven] women's health activists revealed a wide range of work experiences, but almost all the women emphasized the *intensity* of them".

Rare guidance on how to integrate emotion in this research is provided in Norman Denzin's (1990:86) "interpretive framework for understanding how emotions, as individual and cultural phenomenon, are experienced in everyday life". The principles supporting Denzin's (1990:86) model, on which my study draws, include that:

Emotion must be studied as lived experience...The essential features of emotion must be isolated and described...Emotion must be understood as a process that turns on itself, elaborates itself, and has its own trajectory...Understanding and interpretation of emotion will not be causal...[but] descriptive, interpretive and processual...Any interpretation of emotion must be judged by (a) its ability to bring emotional experiences alive and (b) its ability to produce understandings of the experiences...[and] the... interpretation of emotional experiences must be cultural and historical.

Male and female researchers alike suggest that people are both conscious and feeling (Denzin, 1990; Fineman, 1993; Hochschild, 1975). We think about, and are emotionally triggered by situations. We feel our experiences, and construct their meanings from both cognitive and emotional interpretations (Fineman, 1993). Morgen's (1983:215) critique of her study of female workers speaks to the inseparability of feeling and experience in that:

Had I asked questions about the conditions promoting the feelings which fostered conflict avoidance and then scapegoating, or about the actual role of feelings in the decision-making process, my explanation would have more closely reflected the experience of those involved in the process.

Through feelings, we locate ourselves in, and engage with the social world (Hochschild,

1990; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989:53).

Like interaction, power is a dynamic process with emotion attached (Denzin, 1990:86). Pfeffer's (1987:314) work differentiates between power as "a property of the system at rest" and politics as "the study of power in action". Other latitude of movement is captured in Ragins and Sundstrom's (1989:51, 53) suggestion that power "can be objective or perceived...[at] "four levels of analysis: social systems, organizational, interpersonal relationships, and individuals", and that "Events at any one level influence and are influenced by other levels". In other words, people respond to demonstrations and use of power in emotional ways. Thus, we would expect feminists to react emotionally to power that contradicts or threatens their belief in women's power-to and their ability to empower self and others. Such interplay of thought and feeling interpretations is played out in relationships of partner abuse organizations with the Funder, and in relationships among the women who work in them.

Funder relations

According to Beaudry (1985:58), through its demand for boards of directors, government gains an initial "foothold" in the non-profit organizations it funds. Slowly since the 1970s, the false "paper hierarchy" that egalitarian organizations used to satisfy funders, has been replaced by real bureaucracies with formal rules, roles, decision-making, hiring and other internal processes (Beaudry, 1985; O'Sullivan, 1978; Potuchek, 1986:429). In the 1980s American scholars began to document in shelters a "boardification" trend, or movement toward boards dominated by professionals with "a very different vision of what shelters and their directors should be" (Messing, 1986:22). The survey of shelters by Roberts (1981:37) found that "The most frequently cited

profession of a board of directors' member was attorney, followed closely by social worker". In Canada, a similar pattern was observed that "Boards are being seen...more as power brokers...chosen very deliberately for the influence they wield in the community...[and] fashioned on a business model" (MacLeod, 1987:57). One shelter activist has described the trend of professionalism as "the dilution of feminist principals and practice" (Funston, 2000:41). This scenario is diametrically opposed to the one envisioned by the early feminist movement and its goals of collaborative and egalitarian power-to relations, and the empowerment of women.

Petrie (1998:81) has reported that emotional control through an ethic of professionalism, evolved with the scientific theories that emerged in the late 1960s, and coincided with the Canadian government's increased funding of social service agencies. As the tradition of benevolence gave way to a discipline of social work, the value of professionalism and its feeling rules of objectivity gained ground as a condition of government financial support. The business model infiltrated feminist organizations later, but under similar circumstances. As business ideology took hold in feminist organizations seeking secure funding, government gained the ability to dictate:

The nature of the clientele to be served, the make-up and composition of the [organization], the membership of the board of directors, the nature of the record-keeping or data collection required, the nature of the counseling or service to be rendered, and just about anything else concerning the day-to-day operations. (Johnson, 1981:827, 833)

Research results suggest that organizational experiences of feminists have been positively and negatively affected by the coexistence of and conflicts between a grassroots feminist ideology of normative emotionality and emotional expression, and the business ideology and norms of professional objectivity imposed by the funding bureaucracies (Fineman,

1993; Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

Optimistically, Epstein, Russell, and Silvern (1988:364-365) have proposed that emerging tensions between egalitarian and business ideals may be “more productively described in terms of organizational development than in terms of ideological failure”. For Matthews (1994:155), “Techniques were adopted from social work in order to improve counseling” and referral networks were enhanced. Grassroots advocates have, however, been more critical of government’s influence. For example, some researchers have claimed that hierarchical counsellor/client roles in therapeutic relations are at odds with feminism’s value of equality (Matthews, 1994:xiii). Schechter (1982:108-109) has reported that “Differences between professionals and feminists or grassroots women also emerged over the issue of self-help....based on personal caring, honesty, and mutual growth”. Davis (1988:416) has highlighted shelters’ “incarnations as impersonal bureaucratic or custodial settings” and cautioned that their “endurance...will largely depend on their adaptation to existing agency agendas, and their silencing of ideological and structural differences”.

My study suggests, however, that the ideological distinction between feminist “insiders” and bureaucratic “outsiders” that are reflected in such accounts is inaccurate. It conveys a false impression that all feminists value grassroots principles of emotionality. It also portrays business norms as an imposition, obscuring that for some feminists, objectivity is a personal preference or a professional choice. Furthermore, the distinction between feminists and bureaucrats promotes a myth that the world of women is a “safe” place of positive power-to, removed and protected from negative power-over in the world of men. The devastating consequences of such disappointed expectations of women are elaborated

later in this study. First, attention turns to tension in partner abuse organizations related to conflicting perspectives on objectivity and emotionality.

In response to my interview questions, particularly ‘How important are feelings to your work?’ and “What emotional qualities does this type of work require?”, counsellors (10) resisted the notion of emotional distance inherent in the norm of professionalism to which they had been trained, and/or by which they were expected to function. One woman explained that “As an individual who has been trained to be extremely impartial – no feelings – you can’t just be a robot. I’m trying to satisfy the bureaucratic form...but I think it is better to use your common sense” (#16). Another counsellor suggested that

I know what people say...that we have to shut off our feelings and distance ourselves and try to not let it get to us. But I think...if we're not able to show our feelings about our work somewhere... then I don't think we could continue to do the work.
(#8)

Only one executive director advocated emotionality over professional detachment. She noted that “How I work is feel, feel, feel, not think, think, think” (#23).

Of the four respondents who prioritized professional detachment over emotion, only one was a counsellor. For her, “Feelings are important but when I walked in that door I knew I would have to switch on my professional, objective self and try...not to be emotional” (#28). An executive director commented that “I have a lot of resistance to this sort of everybody-get- in-touch-with-your-feelings sort of approach to things” (#6). Board members were apt to credit feelings with inspiring their volunteer commitment, rather than the work (#2, 17). In partner abuse work, one board member commented that “I really encourage other people to think as decision-makers” (#24).

The difference between the emotionality of counsellors and the objectivity of executive directors and board members may indicate that executive directors can choose

their degree of emotional involvement. In contrast, counsellors are directly immersed in the everyday lived experiences and “emotion worlds” of abused women and children. The choice of distance may be moot for board members who have little or no contact with clients because they meet outside of work hours, and/or at off-site locations. It can also be speculated that executive directors and board members are, in their administrative roles, closer to government where different feeling rules of business-like objectivity dominate.

At the same time, it must be remembered that such closeness is not an accident, but a product of the paid and volunteer choices that are made by board members and executive directors. Hence, their chosen structural positions in organizations may reflect their ambivalence toward feminism’s goals of collaboration, respect, and equality, and empowerment. For example, while executive directors could have become counsellors, and board members could have become program volunteers, they sought management positions and the emotional distance that those roles entail.

Along with conflicting ideologies, researchers have related conflict among women to egalitarian and hierarchical models of practice (Amir & Amir, 1979; Hall, 1990; Matthews, 1994; Pennell, 1987; Rodriguez, 1988). All of the women interviewed for this study worked in partner abuse organizations that were, by preference and/or because of funding requirements, structured and operating as hierarchies. With rare exceptions, academic and activist writings have tended to relate role hierarchies to the dependence of partner abuse organizations on government funding. However, only the executive directors and board members who were interviewed shared that perspective. Bureaucratization was explained by one executive director as imposed “reorganizing because of the Ministry” (#20). A board member explained of her organization that “It was a hierarchy, particularly

‘cause the Ministry was threatening to take away our funds. They wanted to see clear lines of accountability” (#24). Another board member maintained that

It's not that I have much respect for [the Funder], but I also know for the sake of [the organization] there's a game that has to be played. The game is not to be too aggressive, to give in on certain points but not give away, and be very, very certain of facts before I meet with her. (#2)

Hierarchy was, for an executive director, expressed in “roles” (#3). A board member likewise highlighted different “responsibilities” (#25). Once again, their occupational role may have made these women more conscious of the Funder’s presence and their own position of power and powerlessness relative to the Funder.

Like executive directors and board members, counsellors interpreted hierarchy as “different classifications” and formal processes such as voting (#5, 18). They were similarly aware that organizations’ financial survival depended on compliance with the requirements of the Funder. Counsellors’ persistent hope of egalitarian relations within organizations suggests, however, that they may be more committed to projecting an appearance of compliance with the Funder’s conditions than the real compliance to which executive directors and board members are committed. Several participants echoed one counsellor’s comment that she had expected partner abuse organizations to function with “more shared power” (#8). One counsellor reported that

There are just some basic structural conflicts between management and staff. Not human rights but...like everyone should have the same opportunities and everyone should be treated the same and it doesn't happen that way. (#22)

Another counsellor reported:

When I'm in a workplace and suddenly I feel that I'm being judged, or that my competence is not being recognized then I feel, 'Wow, this person has power over me'. When I've been in a workplace where we've worked as a team, where the people who have the power to fire and hire didn't use that power or didn't flaunt it [emphasis added] but there was an atmosphere where 'We hired you. We've hired

you on the basis of your competence and your qualities. We expect that you will do well'. Then I felt that things were equal. But power inequalities come when you hit that ceiling. When you hit that spot where 'No, you can't do that because I have the power to stop you from doing that'. Or, 'I have the power to judge your work as good or bad'. Or, 'I have the power to hire or fire you'. I guess it's all those kinds of things. (#8)

Power of the Funder

At an institutional level, all funding relationships have been said to be “asymmetrical” in the sense that funders “have power...by virtue of their control over scarce resources (money) that service organizations need” (Potuchek, 1986:427). Accordingly, the inclusion of women-specific concerns in government budgets has not been viewed as benevolence. According to Johnson (1981:828), “Financial support from official agencies often carries various kinds of benefits to the officials who underwrite and/or support program enterprise”. Government may, for instance, “project a pro-active and concerned image through the production of woman-focused government reports” (Barnsley, 1985:78). It may also gain from “at least implicitly undermining feminist work in defining and raising the issue...reclaiming the turf, [and] appropriating the issue to an institutional framework” (Barnsley, 1985:78).

Barnsley (1988:19) has suggested that government control, redefinition, and compromise of women's issues facilitates the appearance of concern without the risk of concrete social change. Echoing Lips' (1991:12) criticism of the “critical mass” perspective on transformation, one executive director proposed that “If you put all these women together they should be powerful because we constitute 52% of the population in Canada [but] it has not made any difference” (#23). Although respondents considered that the feminist movement is in “shambles”, they recognized its early accomplishments (#24). Such gains were, however, perceived to have “decreased greatly” as a result of “a

major backlash” against women from “men...and women on the Right” (#23, 26, 27, 29). As evidence, one woman pointed to the “marginalization of families and supports and isolation...what work’s valued and not” (#9). Others pointed to the limited opportunities for women in roles with responsibility for decision-making (#15, 17, 20). Thus, one executive director proposed that “If women had power we wouldn’t cut as many programs” (#20). For a counsellor, the institutionalization of services for women that were originally intended as temporary measures, such as shelters, symbolized a lack of social change (#21). Despite their distinct positions in organizational hierarchies, when it came to the overbearing presence of the Funder, and their sense that the Funder constrains their feminist goals, differences among respondents tended to disappear.

As well as business norms of objectivity and hierarchy, feminist organizations have been seen to inherit through their relationship with government, its tension-inducing androcentrism, classism, and racism. Such effects have been well described by researchers. Rodriguez (1988:226) has noted that in shelters, bureaucratization in professional credentials and client rules, “reproduce the stratified relations of the larger society and perpetuate the submissive status of battered women”. Likewise, Brodribb (1988:54) has recounted that difficulty in negotiations with the Canadian Government to open a shelter for abused Native women increased after its opening as

Winonah’s Place was appropriated by non-Natives, articulate in bureaucratic forms, pragmatically reformist, and appropriately deferential to and concerned about masculine receptivity and authority.

Similarly, in rape crisis centres, Matthews (1994:161) notes that:

The bureaucratic definitions of the situation are biased toward white and middle-class definition of social contexts. The organizations were expected to be able to provide discretely defined services related to rape, ignoring how women’s experience of rape was enmeshed in other aspects of their social context, such as

poverty, racism, or lack of legal documents.

Spalter-Roth and Schreiber's (1995:119) survey of nineteen national women's organizations found that tension was most profoundly experienced by feminist organizations that "started out in the 1960s and early 1970s as alternative service providers, with largely volunteer staffs, determined to overcome the paternalism of traditional service agencies". A variety of now-institutionalized social services fits such criteria, including shelters for abused women and children and rape crisis centres. The possibility of retaining the integrity of feminist principles without "cooptation" has provoked considerable debate (Johnson, 1981:827).

Some researchers have accentuated the positive. For Schraeder (1990:179), "State funding should be recognized as a legitimate gain for women, and evidence of the impact of struggle". Potuchek (1986:428) has suggested that the abilities to survive and, within albeit limited parameters, exercise a commitment to social change, are worth a cost. Other feminists share the opinion that, while organizations have "sometimes compromised and sometimes stuck with feminist principles in general, these groups were not co-opted as a result of the trade-offs they made" (Gelb, 1995; Spalter-Roth & Schreiber, 1995:125). Speaking to the debate, Matthews (1994:xiii) has claimed that government funding,

has had a contradictory effect...both effectively promoting the movement's survival and contributing to its transformation from grassroots activism to professionalized social service provision.

The women I interviewed were conscious of the contradictions inherent in their partnership with the Funder, particularly as it placed their ability to help abused women and children in a perpetual state of vulnerability.

At the time of this study, a Conservative Party under the leadership of Premier Mike Harris governed the Province of Ontario. All of the organizations in which respondents worked received funds from Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). Most executive directors regularly, and some board members occasionally interacted with an assigned MCSS representative or the 'Funder'. Counsellors were removed from such personal contact. Rather, they understood from executive directors and board members that "We have obligations clearly outlined by the Funder" and "We are governed by a mandate which is given to us by the Board, which is given to us by the Funder/ Province" (#9, 22). For one counsellor, "The Funder's always there in the background, hovering" (#1). The women in this study were quite aware of the Funder and its limiting influence on the ideology and practice of feminism.

Since the 1980s, researchers have explored the transformative effects of professionalism and other consequences of the location of feminist organizations in an increasingly conservative social climate. All participants in this study were old enough to have actively participated in, or witnessed the activism of the Women's Movement in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s. None of their organizations were so new that they had not been impacted by political developments reported by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (1996):

Since the June [1995] election of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, the Mike Harris government has hurtled at breakneck speed, and with unprecedented fury, against all the doors of escape inching open for abused women and their children....Answering only to the call of economic special interest groups, the Ontario government has abdicated any responsibility to represent the people of Ontario.... For women and children escaping violence in terror and poverty, Mike Harris has initiated funding and service cuts amounting to **government violence against women and children.**

In accordance with the suggestion that "Top-down approaches generally result in overt

compliance to what is mandated, not covert acceptance”, all of the women who were interviewed opposed in principle the purportedly divisive agenda of Ontario Premier Mike Harris (Kilmann, Saxton, & Serpa, 1985:13). Thus, one counsellor remarked that:

I think it is a global, overall plan by the Government somehow. Sounds like a conspiracy kind of theory! But I think somehow the Government is trying to amalgamate [similar organizations] and/or change them by dividing us up and making each one of us so busy with our own little crap [that] we don't have the power that we would have as a group of people. It's a slow dismantling [of solidarity]. I think that has played itself out, not provincially, but within regions and within cities. (#22)

These women saw the Government Funder as a force actively undermining their ability to empower abused women. While Faith (1994:27) has identified feminism as a movement of “resistance to invisibility and silencing”, the respondents’ interest in resisting the Funder was compromised by time, money, and “safety”, or freedom from emotional and practical reprisal. Although alliance was suggested by an executive director as the key to “facing the Funder”, the women in this study reported being understaffed and over worked (#7, 11, 14, 15, 26, 29). One exhausted counsellor noted that “We’re kept so busy. There’s so much to do. It’s like we’re kept busy and that’s, in my eyes, very strategic, because then the backlash, you don’t have time to fight it” (#5). Their perceived mandate to help women first and the energy resources involved in achieving that goal left them too exhausted to resist the Funder.

Cutbacks in human resources left some counsellors struggling alone to satisfy the program expectations of the Funder, and too busy to seek connections with other workers (#5, 26). Counsellors (4) and one board member used the word “isolation” to describe such effects. Because “We never have enough funding to operate in a healthy environment for staff that isn’t really stressful”, counsellors only dreamed of being “compensated adequately

...holidays, improved benefits – all those things that help you do your job” (#19, 27). They also wished for “more money for women” (#18, 28). Examples of possibilities included “a child care centre where we could offer respite”, “well-developed employment programs that would help integrate women into the work force”, “offering more groups”, and “more money to bring in outside resources” (#27, 28, 29). In sum, the pressure to maintain government funding distracted the women’s attention away from resistance. A board member identified the tendency to “look at the Funder instead of looking at how can we...be a resistance” (#21). Another suggested that “The old issue that social service agencies are continually having to deal with is there’s this much of the pie and how much am I going to get, instead of struggling together to make that pie bigger” (#17).

Regarding safety, distrust of the Funder’s “commitment to us” was linked to the vulnerability of resources for abused women and children (#12). In resisting the Funder, women feared that the “organization might completely fold”, or that jobs might be lost (#2, 7). Given evidence that subjective criteria influence funding decisions, Potuchek (1986:431-432) has suggested that the financial rewards of being “liked” by government may encourage board members and executive directors to project organizations as “professional, accountable, stable social service agencies”. To be considered “good risks”, they may avoid garnering a “bad name”, or “appearing too radical” (Potuchek, 1986:432). As well as to government, organizations may feel a need to convey an impression of internal unity to the community publics from which they receive expressive and instrumental support, such as volunteers and donations. As suggested, women were reluctant to “foster divisiveness” and aspired to “keep the peace” (#16, 25). In consequence, their feminist ideology and their loyalty to the feminist goal of empowering

self and other women were subsumed by the immediate needs of their clients. Those needs took precedence over the less obvious and less urgent feminist practice of political resistance.

Such testimonies indicate that the funding relationship of partner abuse organizations with the Government of Ontario directly impacts women's perceptions and experiences of their work environments. They highlight potential tension between women who assume that partner abuse work adheres to a feeling norm of emotionality rooted in grassroots feminism, and those who advocate a professional and objective approach to the work. Other tensions may derive from conflict between the feminist value of equality and the hierarchy of bureaucratic structures, and socio-political climates of conservatism. Funding cutbacks and inflated service expectations have compounded the stress of already overworked and underpaid workers.

Other emotional effects have been proposed. In organizational cultures, Pettigrew (1979:577) has described commitment as:

the willingness of participants to give energy and loyalty to an organization, to be effectively attached to its goals and values and thereby to the organization for its own sake.

As an impetus for social change, women may particularly value the issue orientation of organizations (Taylor, 1995:234). For example, Hearn (1994:743) has suggested of survivor groups that "Organizing around pain and damage can produce very powerful organizational processes...the movement from violation to anger to action".

However, cultural change such as imposed funding conditions that are executed by management may weaken the commitment of workers. Sims and Kroeck's (1994:946) study of mostly female health care workers reported that "feelings of

belonging to the hospital decreased” as differences between the desired and actual climates increased. Imposed cultural change may produce a “deep sense of individual and collective loss and grief [that] is rarely acknowledged or discussed” (Deal, 1985:303). By imposing hierarchical, bureaucratic structures, the Funder has instituted cultural change in partner abuse organizations. This has fostered feelings of alienation and powerlessness among women. All of the women in this study spoke of the goal-limiting effects of government funding. They shared the view of one executive director that “One of the most pressing things at this point is funding because it affects everything we do here, puts such immense limitations on what we can do” (#6). For example, one counsellor explained that:

The women that are the clients are the owners of partner abuse organizations in a way. They bring their issues and through their issues we should be going outside in the community...to [tell] the people in decision-making that ‘This is going on’. What is happening now is scarcity and what scarcity is doing now is the funding and cutting of resources. We are struggling barely to obtain this, as opposed to having meetings on parenting, fun with women, and maybe a round table or a special supper. All these issues that come from these activities could be the basis to lobby and do public education. (#14)

Another counsellor imagined having the money to respond to the needs of abused women and children for child care, employment programs, and “more staff in order to offer more groups” for abused women (#29).

Although organizations may manage to convey an impression of harmony to the Funder and public, feelings that have been repressed or silenced for fear of jeopardizing the survival of women’s organizations and jobs do not disappear. Rather, Ferree and Hess (1985:65) have proposed that:

Powerlessness makes it difficult to confront those who actually wield power, and easier to displace anger horizontally. Existing on the radical fringe of social movements appears to produce a “siege mentality” that frequently leads to both

personal and ideological attacks on comrades-in-arms.

To that effect, a counsellor reported that, “We couldn’t lash out at the Funder because they might cut you more [so] we lash out at each other. It’s like the man hits the wife, hits the kid, and the kid hits the dog” (#27).

Authority

The type of authority influences how role power is expressed. For Weber, legitimate power was expressed in three “ideal types” of authority (Gerth & Mills, 1946:59). Legal authority that “rested upon rules that are rationally established by enactment, by agreement, or by imposition” was, Weber (1946d:294) maintained, most usually the dominion of political “power-holders”. A second type, charismatic authority, was conferred upon certain individuals because the “governed...believe in the extraordinary quality of the specific person” regardless of “whether this quality is actual, alleged, or presumed” (Weber, 1946d:295). Traditional authority such as “patriarchalism” was described as a legitimated form of “domination that rests upon...piety for...[norms that]...actually, allegedly, or presumably have always existed” (Weber, 1946d:296).

The features of legitimacy and relations of domination/subordination found in Weber’s ideal types emerge in contemporary attempts to define authority. For Johnson (1995:210), authority is a form of power characteristic of a “particular social status”. Other academics have suggested that authority is “exercised in a consensual context...where subordinates accept it as being used legitimately” (Marshall, 1994:412; Boudon & Bourricaud, 1982). The element of legitimacy is also found in organizational work. Pfeffer (1987:312) has noted that “The distribution of power within a social setting can...become legitimated over time, so that those within the setting expect and value a certain pattern of

influence....When power is so legitimated, it is denoted as authority". According to Pfeffer (1987:312-313):

The transformation of power into authority is an important process, for it speaks to the issue of the institutionalization of social control....Authority is maintained not only by the resources or sanctions that produced the power, but also by the social pressures and social norms that sanction the power distribution and which define it as normal and acceptable.

Feminists have also acknowledged authority as one type of power that may or may not involve "coercion", and may be a feature of occupational, organizational, and/or formal or informal sex-based "roles" (French, 1985:506; Giele, 1984; Miller & Cummins, 1992; Stamm & Ryff, 1984; Weick, 1981). This is one reason that feminists have fought for an egalitarian, non-hierarchical organizational structure in which authority can be dissipated and the possible negative effects of power-over positions can be counteracted or counterbalanced.

Common themes in theorists' suggestions establish authority as a legitimated form of power that may be expressed in occupational roles as domination. The women in this study also associated authority with legitimacy, roles, and relations of domination and subordination. However, these women distinguished between *having* role authority and *being* an "authority of experience" (#7, 16). *Having* role authority was considered to be an "externalized reality" acquired, for instance, by a "position" and "title" with responsibility to "veto decisions, proposals", and "control budgets" (#9, 21, 14, 16). Links between role authority and legitimacy were expressed in terms such as "delegated", "vested", "given", "designated", "sanctioned", and "formal" (#10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 27).

Close proximity to the Funder was seen to signal *having* role authority. Given the Funder's role of overseeing the funding, structure, operation, and direction of services for

abused women and children, many counsellors considered the Funder to be more powerful than either executive directors or board members. However, given the direct and frequent liaison of executive directors with the Funder, some women perceived them each to have more power than board members. A counsellor said of executive directors and board members that “They’re tied to the Funder and they have other interests.... They’re not connected to the clients” (#19). Counsellors instead considered themselves to be aligned with abused women and children who had little authority.

For respondents, domination by role authorities could be expressed in behaviour and attitude. In behaviour, women interpreted domination as acting “authoritarian” and “imposing leadership”, “oppressive”, and “bad”, “abusive”, and “coercive” (#4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19, 28). In attitude, domination by role authorities was linked to projecting airs of “elitism”, “privilege”, “not...the same equivalency”, and being “all puffed up” and “arrogant” (#4, 5, 7, 14). Board members indicated that they had to be “careful” to avoid such perceptions (#17). One board member suggested that

When you say something [as a board member] it’s taken into consideration. The status is important to be able to make changes. But when you get that status you can just forget where you came from. That’s where I say ‘No’. (#30)

For another board member, “When you go into power-seeking jobs to flatter ego that’s when it becomes bad power. You lose the humble and go into seeking power to compare and compete” (#30).

All respondents queried on the subject (16) stressed that institutionally delegated role authority does not automatically constitute power. An executive director proposed that one may have a “position of authority [and] absolutely no power” (#23). A counsellor

explained that “A supervisor at Loblaws has some authority over the cashiers, but in the big scheme, like Dave Nichols, she’s nowhere” (#19). A counsellor explained that:

Someone who has authority over someone else in a work situation doesn’t necessarily have the power that they want. I can think of a situation where a supervisor had authority as a supervisor but she didn’t have a lot of power for the team. The team basically did their own thing and didn’t tell her about it. She didn’t have a lot of respect but she had the authority. (#27)

By imposing/introducing organizational structures of hierarchy, the Funder introduced roles of authority that contravened the grassroots feminist ideal of authority based on experience. That development led to a process of distinction and segmentation within organizations, and in women’s perceptions of authority and how it is used. As such, research participants identified two forms of authority. They distinguished between *having* role authority and *being* an authority of experience.

Originating internally via a sense of self, being an experiential authority was viewed as positive rather than negative, chosen rather than enforced, “respectful” rather than coercive, and collaborative rather than dictatorial (#27, 28). For women who have role authority to be considered an authority required the respect of others. Respect depended on whether or not role authorities could be “trusted” to care about women and relations of equality (#14). The following sections explore how the respect of board members and executive directors was perceived and experienced. In particular, it discusses the distinct position of executive directors and board members who, through their position in the organizational hierarchy, possess role authority (i.e., power-over traits), and the ability to foster trust and caring that are associated with power-to.

Trust and caring about women

By their own accounts, relations of executive directors with counsellors ranged from “excellent” to “okay” to needing “improvement” (#6, 23, 7). One woman credited her excellent rapport to her “respect for the workers...[and their] obvious strengths” (#7). Another executive director reported that although initially counsellors “didn’t trust me”, she had devoted “a lot of effort to keep [relations] okay” (#23). The need to improve her rapport with counsellors was, in another executive director’s opinion, linked to “building trust” (#7). According to executive directors, respect expressed in directors’ trust of counsellors resulted in counsellors’ respect for their authority.

On the contrary, counsellors reported “superficial” and “strained” relations with executive directors (#1, 8). They perceived as distrust, the attempts by executive directors to control ideas/actions, and information (#1, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 27, 28, 29). One counsellor likened such control to a “policing system” (#29). Another reported that “If you think differently you’re not on a good track” (#13). One woman drew attention to a gap between “how we should be doing things and how we do things” (#12). It was suspected that management and counsellors “might have different ideas on what’s important” (#5). Counsellors shared one colleague’s claim of an executive director that “She doesn’t have the same philosophy for abused women that I have. It’s scary at times, the advice. It’s not the reality of the women!” (#13, 21, 29). Others noted that executive directors’ “wacky” judgment inspired a lack of “confidence”, and feelings of being “pushed around” (#14, 26).

Riger (1994:293) has proposed that “The fiscal responsibility assumed by a board of directors might cause them to hesitate in committing funds to a risky project, but the staff members’ daily exposure to women’s needs might make that same project seem

mandatory to them". Counsellors shared a colleague's frustration that "I have been fighting for decisions to be made by us because these are things that affect our lives" (#5, 11). Another woman commented that "I think different perceptions on who do we serve and what are their views can cause conflict between staff and [management]" (#21).

Regarding actions, counsellors interpreted as distrust, the tendencies of executive directors to judge and "challenge" their competence, and needlessly "monitor" counsellors' work and work "styles" (#8, 11, 12, 18, 26, 29). One counsellor lamented that:

She doesn't let other people BE....Doesn't allow other people's creativity to flow. Sometimes the director comes in on a situation without having had that prior interest or running knowledge so it makes it more difficult for staff who are in the midst of it at the time. (#8)

Another woman reported of an executive director that "She wants to be in on every little thing that's ever done!" (#22). Counsellors recounted that they were also "divided by management" (#22). They drew attention to executive directors' differential monitoring of their work, selective access to career opportunities, "abrupt" behaviour and favouritism toward some staff (#11, 13, 19, 22).

All workplaces appeared to encourage good written and verbal communication among counsellors and executive and board members through staff and joint committee meetings, open board meetings, and minutes, logs, and bulletin boards. Exclusionary practices, however, generated counsellors' distrust. For example, in some organizations only a few full-time counsellors were paid to attend staff meetings (#1, 7, 9, 20). Although executive directors could represent decisions to board members and the public as formally endorsed by all counsellors, the opinions of part-time and on-call workers were, in reality, excluded. Written information was sometimes incomplete. According to one counsellor, "The minutes [are]...found in various spots. Even then they're not always up-to-date. I

think that's the hard thing – not the information in it [but] the information that's not in it" (#22).

Shortcomings in the flow and accuracy of information were also reported. Within organizations, executive directors often functioned as a "conduit" between counsellors and board members (#10). Counsellors proposed that "If you're in a position of power you become selective about what you say and what you don't say to control it" (#9, 12).

Women from all respondent groups agreed that some executive directors, through selective silence, attempted to "control the situation" in organizations by "not sharing things", withholding information, making "excuses", and "lying" (#2, 4, 13, 20). As their comments on information sharing illustrate, counsellors generally distrusted executive directors in their "bridge" role. They were perceived to "withhold information" and obstruct the "flow of information down" from board members to counsellors (#1, 11). In counsellors' absence, "The executive director makes the decision as to what is brought back from the committee meeting" (#8). In such cases counsellors anticipated from executive directors, a "muddled" report or none at all (#1, 18). With sarcasm one woman suggested that "We would probably hear about it [first] from the outside!" (#5).

As well as information from boards, counsellors distrusted the accuracy of information conveyed to board members through executive directors, given that "She gets to interpret anything that we've asked" (#8). The comment that "I am told that there are positive staff meetings that take place" suggests that executive directors do influence board members' opinion (#17). One counsellor stated that "Sometimes the executive director is just a messenger. Other times I think she influences the messages [but] whether that's declared or not I don't know" (#22). One woman noted that "Whether my concerns are

interpreted in the same way to the Board, whether I receive the same message down from the Board, that's a question" (#14). Counsellors believed that their presence at meetings of board members was the only sure way to ensure accurate reporting to and from board members.

Board members recognized such withholding of information by executive directors. One woman attributed omissions to "obvious issues of confidentiality" (#15). Another board member was more critical. For her, the ebb and flow of counsellors' trust,

has to do with the role the executive director plays because if [staff] are not getting things communicated to them, or if it's communicated 'This is the Board's decision', then it's hard for them to think we're credible. (#24)

For some counsellors, the liaison function was inherently flawed. One woman elaborated that:

I realize that there's an issue in terms of when somebody carries information back and forth that some of that goes with the person's interpretation of things...not maliciously...although in some organizations I do think that's the case. But that's almost inevitable about that role if you don't have people bringing their issues directly to the Board. (#22)

Ideally, "Communication would be direct [versus] having to go through all these different channels (#1).

Counsellors compensated for their distrust of executive directors and their lack of or limited support as "positive feedback" by turning inward or toward each other for positive reinforcement (#1, 4, 8, 12). Such strategies drew on authority of experience. Counsellors' positive self-assessment evolved from their internal "knowing" and being "as well intentioned as you know how to be" (#13, 15). A counsellor related, for instance, that:

The director can come in on something that she thinks the staff is handling poorly and can make a judgment on the total performance of that staff member. Our work will be criticized by the executive director and...I have to stop and say 'I know my job better than anybody else'. (#8)

Drawing on personal perceptions of self was not unproblematic (#22, 26). The emotion work of self-support was “very difficult” and not entirely successful (#8). One woman reported that “I try to say it to myself but I’m a harsh critic” (#18).

Counsellors’ positive perceptions of themselves were also shaped by their sense of “connection” with abused women and children (#8). For one counsellor, evidence of doing a good job was that:

Women go on. Women get a sense of themselves. Women start laughing. Women start having dreams, start getting their own vision of who they are and what they’d like [and] for their children. The women start seeing that they matter and they can make a difference. I guess for me that’s how I know. I see women [over time] and all of a sudden you see them go to university. Just to be part of that. It has something to do with what they got from [the organization] and to be part of that, that’s wild. That’s always wonderful. (#5)

Likewise, another counsellor reported as rewarding that:

I know because...There was a woman today who was with me just before you came. She was so excited. She was showing me the apartment that she’s going to see on Friday and she was very happy. While I was talking to her, another woman called and she said ‘Thank you so much. I just moved into my place’. Actually I have to call her back. She wants to buy some curtains so I have to tell her places where she can buy them. So, I know I’m doing a good job because so many women who have really been in a very terrible situation are calling me and I see them looking different, and doing different things, and feeling themselves. (#11).

Other counsellors gained a sense of doing good work from abused women’s “comments”, “relating”, “thank you”, “telling”, and “making changes” (#9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19). One counsellor explained that:

It’s how the women come and relate to you, then coming back and letting me know where they are. Hearing their voices on the answering machine. I called to let a client know that there was information for her at [the organization]. I just wanted to hear from her and let her know about that. Then she left a message the next day thanking me because I had called. As soon as she heard my voice everything came back from the past and she realized that she was in an abusive situation again and she dumped the guy [laughter]! (#14)

Another counsellor explained that:

Usually you get feedback. You see people making changes and you get all that 'If it wasn't for you', [but] you don't need to hear that to know that you're doing a good job. You just need a warm voice at the end of the phone. Someone who's happy you called. (#19)

Feelings of common purpose promoted a connection of kind among counsellors that was typically absent among executive directors. In instances where there was only one executive director position in partner abuse organizations, women lacked a body of co-workers to whom they could easily turn for role-related support, and experienced contact with other directors only at structured functions such as fundraisers and business meetings. In organizations where there was more than one supervisory position, feelings of support could be limited by, for instance, their rapport, schedules, and disparate subject areas.

As well as from each other, executive directors could be isolated from counsellors. One counsellor explained of that distance that she could not know from the executive director that she was doing a good job because "There isn't enough connection with the executive director for that [feedback] to be appropriate" (#1). Another counsellor reported that "Part of what's difficult is as an executive director she does not give positive feedback very often at all. Basically the only time she'll give positive feedback is if I say something [complementary] to her" (#4). One executive director acknowledged that counsellors' interpretation of whether she is doing a good job "can be mixed" (#3). Counsellors distrusted executive directors whom they considered to be aligned with the conflicting goals of the Funder. One counsellor noted of an executive director that "It is kind of a requirement that we let the Funder know about anything we do without even discussing it among ourselves first [and] we have women who are cooperating with that" (#14).

In contrast, individual counsellors more often employed the pronoun “we” than “I” in their response to interview questions. Having similar roles promoted bonds among counsellors. It was reported that from the counsellor group’s “common...purpose related to the clients”, they garnered “support”, and “respect” (#8, 14). Distrust of executive directors and a lack of “understanding [for] the work that I do” by outsiders, encouraged counsellors to confide only in each other and/or intimate partners (#9, 12, 19, 27). From such relations they received “support”, “comfort”, “closeness”, “collectivity”, “team”, “familiarity”, and “involvement” (#4, 10, 15, 18, 22, 29). One woman commented that with her colleagues, “I’ve been through a lot” (#9).

Despite their individual differences, alliance among counsellors was encouraged by professional ethics that encouraged “boundaries”, or counsellors’ self-imposed limits on involvement with clients. Counsellor bonds could also be enhanced by workplace designs. With rare exceptions, counsellors shared an office with one, a few, or several co-workers. Such spaces were typically at a distance from an on-site executive director. Although often cramped, the physical separation of counsellors from executive directors was seen positively. One counsellor stated that “I can blow off steam and not have to worry”, while others valued the lack of direct supervision by executive directors (#5, 18).

Counsellors were not, however, immune from isolation. One woman noted that as organizations bureaucratized, “I think some of us working more at the grassroots didn’t have certain connections” (#15). Isolation was compounded for those counsellors doing “shift work [where we’re] not connecting with people like in a work place where everybody’s there every day, all day” (#8). In consequence, counsellors tended to draw from past personal experience and a sense of authenticity and trust in their grassroots

expertise, more than from consultation with others, especially executive directors and board members.

By default and design, executive directors reported that they gained support from friends and/or partners, rather than by the counsellors and board members with whom they work (#3, 6, 7, 25). For example, one woman indicated that because of a lack of “support” from board members, she felt “very isolated” in her position (#20). Although executive directors viewed board members as emotionally “supportive and well-intentioned”, the lack of availability of board members who juggled paid employment and volunteer work created for executive directors, “a lot of stress when you’re already stressed” (#7, 15). Of note, one executive director mentioned that occupational role boundaries limited her ability to access support from counsellors. She explained that “It’s...a bit tricky because I also have to be aware of the power differential stuff so I don’t want people to feel obligated to give me support” (#3). Another executive director claimed that she is “careful about diminishing [management] positions” (#25). Instead of considering board members and counsellors, one executive director emphasized her “wonderful, supportive group of friends [who] would keep my confidences absolutely” (#7).

Thus, perceiving a lack of organizational supports, some executive directors attempted to provide themselves with positive reinforcement. As such, although one executive director didn’t yet know whether she was doing a good job, another woman reported that “I know I’m doing a good job when...I’m not making pre-judgements. I’m not thinking about the future. I’m not trying to impose an agenda. I’m just there in a relaxed way” (#3, 7). Like counsellors, some executive directors gained feelings of doing a good job from the abused women and children that their organizations helped. One executive

director perceived that she's doing a good job "If clients, both women and kids, are comfortable coming and hanging out that's a good sign to me" (#6). Another executive director noted that:

It's a tremendous pleasure to me every time I see one of our clients – just run into her on the street and she tells me she's doing well. She's starting to look for work or she says what a difference it made to her life. For me that's really the reward of the work. (#7)

Despite such claims, counsellors reported that some executive directors would "seek out support in ways that are not appropriate to her position" (#26). They were particularly critical of those executive directors who sought support from, rather than supported abused women (#6, 25). Counsellors also contradicted executive directors' purported respect for boundaries. They reported that although "normally I wouldn't know anything about that", executive directors had disclosed to them that their relations with board members were "strained", "not that great", and not "supportive" (#12, 14, 22). In other words, the executive directors' sense of isolation made them cross role boundaries and act in ways that counsellors perceived to be inappropriate.

Board members did not associate with each other outside of monthly and committee meetings. They had little or no direct contact with abused women, and limited interaction with counsellors. In their attempt to maintain the organizational role boundaries existing between their own and the staff's positions, most board members sought support from organizational outsiders (#10, 17, 21, 24, 30). One woman explained that she generally "likes to be careful about my work relations with people". Other board members agreed that support was "too complicated with staff" (#17, 24). Yet another woman noted that she is "mindful of the fact that I'm board so I'm probably not as free...as I would be if that was not our relationship" (#10). As a result of this lack of contact between staff and board, three

board members were unsure whether they were doing a good job (#10, 15, 21). One woman commented that:

I don't [laughter]. Good question. I don't really. I think I can do a good job by doing what I'm supposed to do in terms of doing what I say I do, turning up on time to meetings, not needing to be reminded. That kind of stuff. Being reliable I guess. (#10)

Another board member speculated that her feelings of doing a good job derived “acting maybe not as hard as you can in terms of time management. Just if I can look myself in the mirror and say ‘You’re as well-intentioned as you know how to be’ (#15). Some board members relied on informal feedback from colleagues or more formal evaluations (#15, 24). Other board members reported that they gained a sense of good work from their “personal satisfaction” and ability to “make a difference” (#17, 30).

Trust and caring about equality

Typical of most organizational structures, executive directors were seen to “coordinate the service” and oversee matters of administration and finance (#4, 22). All counsellors instead considered themselves responsible for day-to-day operations and decisions related to abused women and children. Counsellor “input” on protocol, policy, case management, and business items was formalized through, for instance, “supervision”, committee participation, and/or regular staff meetings (#11, 29). One counsellor expressed satisfaction with improvements in the “consultative process”, and another noted that such systems provide “a place for our voice to be heard” (#19, 29). However, such formal distinctions also served to divide abused women, counsellors, executive directors, and board members. Separation made it more difficult for them to identify common goals and collaborate in achieving women’s empowerment.

The women in this study perceived that collaboration puts into practice “power with”, and “facilitates...solidarity and sisterhood” (#17, 23). Mirroring their individual work with clients, counsellors especially associated collaboration with women “coming together” to “deal with difficult situations” or “really serious issues” (#4, 8). Thus, counsellors advocated “guidance” through the “sharing” of “information” and “experiences” because such actions reflected their own feminist goal of enhancing creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving (#4, 5, 9, 12, 19, 22, 28). For counsellors, creativity and problem-solving overlapped “when we can find a win-win situation” (#13). Given this perception, counsellors interpreted problem-solving as providing “advocacy” and offering “options” for consideration, such as “I solved this...by that” (#9, 11, 16). They also linked collaboration to “meetings where we’re creative and we do things”, “putting projects together”, and “pulling together” on committees, or special events such as fundraisers (#1, 8, 14).

Board members also spoke positively of “sharing...knowledge” and workload in, for example, committee “teams” (#10, 15, 17). Like counsellors, they suggested that by “taking a positive lead or giving a positive personal message”, women could be encouraged “to be the best they can be...to succeed”, or be “given the opportunity to explore things” (#10, 17, 21, 30). Although one executive director noted the value of informal support “just by being there and going yeah, that’s terrible”, they typically emphasized formal processes where, with an “attentive...therapist/professional”, or “mentor”, women could enhance their awareness of “choice” (#3, 7, 5, 20). Unlike counsellors and board members who drew on feminist values and the goal of empowerment, executive directors appeared to draw on their position of role authority in the organization, thereby indicating a stronger identification with the ideals promoted by the Funder. As noted below, this perception also became

apparent in the counsellors' and board members' descriptions of executive directors' behaviour and their use of negative power-over with women involved in organizations.

Some participants perceived that in work, women's interpersonal styles are more caring than those of men. For example, counsellors and board members felt that collaboration is characteristic of work with women, while "taking over" is more typical of work with men (#10, 14, 15, 19, 29). A board member proposed that men "just take for granted that he's the boss. He can just say 'The decision's handed down. This is it'. A woman wouldn't hand a decision down without justifying why she's making it" (#30). Counsellors, however, introduced an element of permission in their descriptions, adding such statements as "whether other people allow that person to be powerful" or "where she's not allowed to be herself" (#8, 26). For counsellors, collaboration was limited by their position within the organizational hierarchy. Counsellors described constraining situations "When [an executive director] says something to me I'm supposed to go, 'Oh man, maybe I should do that'", or with "a boss who tells me, 'You work for me'" (#11, 12). Other counsellors mentioned executive directors "imposing" views, or "I am dictating to you and I decide for you" (#13, 28). For one counsellor, "I could go for a position as an executive director but...I don't know whether that would corrupt me too. Would I turn into the kind of person that stomps all over everybody?" (#8).

Although the women in this study believed that, in the area of decision-making, men were "more apt to want to make quick decisions, as opposed to work through the tough stuff" (#17), they also noted that consultation did not consistently occur or involve counsellors. One woman recounted that "Some decisions are made by the executive director in complete isolation of the team and then communicated to the team" (#4). Other women

noted the absence of a “particular kind of decision-making pattern...that certain things come to the team” (#5, 27). Typically, counsellors disputed executive directors’ claims to, and forms of consultation. According to one counsellor, “The executive director appears to include the staff but in the end the decisions are kind of made before” (#26). Another counsellor noted that “Sometimes I get the impression that she’s made the decision prior to completing the process so I’m never convinced that there’s been good process or good decision-making” (#12). Given executive directors’ “veto power”, other counsellors suggested that it appears that “We all consult together but she’s the final word” (#4, 5, 13, 19, 26).

Regarding consultation, one board member reported that because “The executive director comes to a lot of board meetings with a decision already made in her head, I’m not sure where I come into play” (#17). Another reported that in meetings she “just takes over” (#12). Some board members identified pressuring strategies. For example, “The executive director would pick at something...and finally people would just go [hands up] and agree to anything she wanted” (#23). The veto power of executive directors was felt to exceed their responsibility for administration and finance and impinge on client matters for which the counsellors perceived themselves responsible. Such scope was experienced as an unnecessary delay by one overworked counsellor (#4). Executive directors were perceived to “misunderstand” their responsibilities and misinterpret their job descriptions (#9, 13). This was experienced by one counsellor as “ignoring my role and just taking over” (#2). Board members shared the perception of counsellors that executive directors were responsible for administration and finances. They also reported some blurring of responsibilities (#23, 30). For instance, although some executive directors were not

formally responsible for personnel matters, they had “some control in who she wanted to hire and how she wanted it done” (#30).

Board members were the most removed from women’s daily activities and internal power dynamics within the organizations. While one woman clearly identified her board’s focus, the other board members were unsure of their roles (#17). Counsellors appeared similarly confused about mandates of their boards. Some guessed that they are responsible for “long term important decisions”, “financial?” matters, or “where we want this organization to go”, while others admitted that they “don’t know” (#1, 8, 22, 26). Similar uncertainty characterized the subject of decision-making. One board member speculated that “Any big major problem would come back to us I guess” (#30). Another noted that because of their distance from day-to-day operations, it was hard to accurately know what was going on within organizations (#21). For example, one board member reported that “I see very little of what happens at [staff] meetings”, while another “suspects...it doesn’t work as well as it could or should” (#10, 24).

Experiential and physical separation from day-to-day operations led some boards to “put a lot of responsibility on executive directors’ shoulders” (#17). Other women alluded instead to “tensions”, and being too “lenient” with executive directors (#15, 30). One board member cautioned that “If the Board’s not strong she will assume a much bigger power position” (#24). Counsellors spoke about that suggestion. Some claimed that “In reality, the executive director makes a lot of [Board] decisions”, and “The executive director has a lot of power with the Board. They’ll do whatever she says” (#4, 11). In contrast, although some executive directors recognized their decision-making power, their comments refer to different levels of commitment to collaborative practice. They ranged from “I couldn’t

imagine” making a decision with the Board without counsellors’ input” to “I have the authority to make certain changes logically because I guess I’m trusted with the fact that I’m trying to do something beneficial for the organization. Some of them are discussed with staff before” (#6, 25).

The emergence of equality as a condition of respect speaks to the respondents’ feminist orientation. Although respect was specified as a condition of authorities’ role power, relations of equality between executive directors and counsellors and board members were not reported. Rather, counsellors (10) and board members (6) shared the view that “The executive director has a lot of power, both in relation to the Board and...staff” (#17).

For one counsellor,

There’s a certain kind of person who aspires to the directors of agencies. You need to be competitive. You need to have this drive. I think that people who aspire to those positions...believe in power-with but they operate in a power-over mode because that’s who they are. (#26)

In contrast, a counsellor proposed that “I don’t think the staff has power. I don’t think they ever had” (#9). Some counsellors related inequality to organizations’ hierarchical structure where “Staff is at the bottom [of] a pyramid” (#8, 18, 30). Board members suspected that relations between executive directors and counsellors were “not egalitarian” and that executive directors could be “authoritarian” (#17, 24). One woman recounted that she was led to believe by an executive director that “Staff don’t share work equally” (#15).

In partner abuse organizations rooted in feminism, “knowledge and experience” was claimed to count as much, if not more, than academic credentials (#11, 15). Such emphasis did not, however, prevent the competition for advantage associated with traditional bureaucracies. Counsellors reported that “There are little hierarchies within the structure [based on] duration, experience” (#22). Regarding seniority based on length of service,

rather than the quality of their work, some counsellors were seen to possess more credibility in organizations than workers similarly classified and paid (#3, 4, 22, 29). Length of service was said to accord with greater or lesser “status”, “voice”, and perceived knowledge (#11, 13, 26, 29). One woman noted that seniority was such a sensitive subject that “To bring the issue up is to be making a claim on being more important or competent” (#1).

While sharing the same classification and wage, full-time counsellors were said to have more “status” in, and “value” to organizations than on-call workers (#20, 22). One woman who worked irregularly reported feeling “ignored...almost an invisible component of the staff team” (#1). Solely based on time at work, full-time counsellors were felt to be trusted with more “responsibility” and “perceived [to] have more knowledge and expertise” (#8, 20). Full time counsellors were seen to be more “committed” to partner abuse work (#2). Of on-call workers, one woman noted that “Our dedication is questioned...on a regular basis...often through off-handed comments and assumptions about what we know” (#1).

Organizational commitment was also positively and negatively assessed through the “degree of involvement that other staff notice”, “extraordinary performance”, “over-achievement”, the “amount” or “volume” of work completed, and “work ethics, people skills” (#1, 10, 15, 20, 23, 28). Skills were broadly conceptualized. For example, young women without children were reportedly “discounted”, and older childless partner abuse workers were believed to “know less about relationships” than mothers (#24, 25). Women reported exclusions based on non-work characteristics such as “weight” and fashion-consciousness (#25). Regarding the latter, it was said that, “The way the staff dress, or wear nail polish, it’s as if there is a standard. To be a partner abuse worker you have to look like this. One woman was criticized for reading *Cosmopolitan*! (#20).

The findings in this chapter concern feelings of powerlessness of board members, executive directors, and counsellors in their relations with the Funder. Rather than the empowering condition of respect as trust, women distrusted the Funder's caring for women, and caring about equality. As evidence, they pointed to partner abuse organizations' experiences of inadequate funding, funding cutbacks, and closure. Executive directors and board members claimed that funding conditions were responsible for the bureaucratization of organizations. Distrust fuelled fears for workers' and organizations' safety, or freedom from emotional and practical reprisal. However, such distrust and fear cannot be fully explained by the Funder's involvement with feminist organizations.

Women in executive director and board member roles advocated business norms of professional objectivity. Some executive directors explained their lack of collaboration as a privilege of their position. Counsellors competed with each other for prestige. Counsellors distrusted executive directors who attempted to control the flow of their ideas, actions, and information to and from board directors. Board members recognized executive directors' withholding of information. Both counsellors and board members recognized the lack of collaboration and consultation by executive directors. Counsellors did not feel respected as equals by executive directors, and board members did not trust that such relations were egalitarian.

Researchers have tended to attribute tensions in feminist organizations to the "trickle down" effects of government funding. A more detailed pattern of the meaning of this process emerged in the interview data. Counsellors' criticisms of board members, and particularly executive directors, focused on attitudes and behaviours that contradicted two assumptions: that females care, and that feminists care about equality. Schein

(1992:61) has proposed that “An efficient assembly line may mechanize behaviour to such a degree that the organization begins to be perceived as caring more about efficiency and profit than the welfare of its employees”. Morgen (1995:241) has suggested that tension among women may develop from their disappointed expectations that organizations will attend to workers, as well as business needs. The accounts presented in this chapter support such claims.

According to Schein (1992:60), “Defensive cultural assumptions form to deal with the stress” created by feelings of “territory...invasion”. Such propositions inform evidence of territories and territorial violations. The counsellors indicated “territory” in their sense of common purpose related to clients, collegial support, and use of the pronoun “we” more frequently than “I” in response to interview questions. Their reports of executive directors’ interference in their work, and their perception that executive directors either interpreted or misinterpreted information to and from board members reveal a sense of territorial invasion. In various ways, executive directors were perceived as exceeding their responsibility areas and infringing on those of counsellors and board members. Thus, more than board members or counsellors, executive directors were seen to enact power-over rather than power-to. Consequently, this group was often the most distrusted and alienated from the women with whom they worked.

The pattern of counsellors’ caring- and equality-related criticism of board members and executive directors expresses their feelings of powerlessness and their construction of a defensive cultural assumption as a way of offsetting the absence of external validation by respect, and their feelings of powerlessness. Counsellors may defensively assume that they care more about the problems of partner abuse, partner abuse organizations, and abused

women and children than do board members and executive directors, especially directors who are closest to the Funder, and are seen to both have and enact authority and power over other women. As well as to caring, the “better” feminism of counsellors was implicated in their distrust of executive directors’ interpretations of partner abuse and organizations’ purpose. The relationship between caring and feminists’ conceptualization of power is specifically explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5 – SOCIALIZATION AND CARING

This chapter examines the impact of female socialization on women's interpretations and expressions of positive and negative power in their work relations. It investigates whether the condition of respect facilitated women's confident power in their abilities or, in feminist terms, their 'empowerment'. Gender socialization has been defined as "The process...through which sex is translated into gender as women and men learn to incorporate into their behaviour and attitudes, assumptions related to masculine and feminine roles" (Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991:17). As well as noting the creation of different expectations of the sexes, Denzin (1992:29) has stated that "Ideology and beliefs about the way the world is and ought to be are "shaped by gendered emotional codes". Bedford (1986:30) has proposed that:

Emotion concepts...are not purely psychological....In using emotion words we are able...to relate behaviour to the complex background in which it is enacted, and so to make human actions intelligible.

Accordingly, the value of caring incorporates emotion as "the process through which members constitute their work environment by negotiating a shared reality" (Putnam & Mumby, 1993:36).

Writings that emerged in earnest in the 1980s to fill feminist and sociological gaps on the subject of caring illuminated gender-differentiated realities (O'Connor, 1996:15; Zajdow, 1995). Researchers discovered that males are socialized to the activity of caring for others, while females are socialized to the "emotion and activity" of caring and caretaking (Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991; Gimlin, 1996; Zajdow, 1995:533). For example, one Canadian study found that adolescent girls learned primarily from their mothers and

grandmothers, caring as “love and affection about others”, and “labour and help for others” (Reitsma-Street, 1991:112). Thus, men and women have different feeling rules for caretaking based upon their socialization experiences. This difference should affect the perceptions of respondents concerning women’s power relations in partner abuse organizations.

Owing to females’ socialization to care for and about others, Zajdow (1995:534) has claimed that “It is difficult to separate adequately the emotion from the activity which surrounds it”. Such suggestions have been made of family work, for which women have traditionally assumed primary responsibility (Piercy, 1998:116). Respondents shared Piercy’s perspective. Board members (2), executive directors (2), and counsellors (5) linked women’s indirect or “second hand” power of caring for and about others to their historical responsibility for the household and raising children. An executive director explained that “For women it’s really you care for other people and that’s your source of power. The idea is if you care for other people long enough, eventually you’ll get your own needs met” (#3). With the exception of “women in politics”, mothers and their power in the “household” and “for the good of the family” were considered to be girls’ primary role models (#1, 17, 18, 25). As such, the women in this study revealed an awareness of the impact of gender socialization on their work, and on their own and others’ evaluation of their work performance.

Among its effects, socialization fosters assumptions that women are more emotional than men, and that women are natural caregivers (Fisher, 1993; O’Connor, 1996; Taylor, 1995; Zajdow, 1995). The influence of gender socialization was reflected in participants’ comments. Participants in this study assumed that women were more “nurturing, caring for

other people” and “a little more humanitarian” than men, who were considered to be self-interested and lacking the “knowledge how to use [power] to help other people” (#3, 11, 28). One counsellor proposed that,

I think that's a big piece in terms of using power responsibly - caring for other people. Women I think, have that piece that men are missing. And I don't know that it's biological, but we're conditioned anyway to be more nurturing and caring.
(#27)

From such perspectives, they expected women to be more caring in their approach to other workers and toward the abused women and children who sought their help. That sense of care was associated with a lack of self-interest.

Lack of self-interest associated with women's care for others was seen to indicate trustworthiness. These participants attributed to female socialization, women's tendencies to “over-nurture other people” and “use their power for the good of others” (#3, 4). Of note, counsellors spoke positively of an “ethical” or “fair” individual who “works for the community good and not for the individual good”, and “not at the expense of someone else” (#9, 19, 22). Such women would use their power not “to crush” others, but to “make changes toward a more egalitarian society”, and “to defend injustice and [make] policies to help others”, and “to change things for the better” (#5, 14, 18, 29). For other counsellors, selflessness involved, for instance, “community building” and “advocacy” (#4, 5, 9). Similar sentiments were reflected in a counsellor's claim that “Whenever women have had a bit of representation it is towards peace, a more egalitarian society, toward sharing power” (#14). Owing to women's concerns for others, a counsellor suggested that “Without our existence...there wouldn't have been a human existence. We make society” (#11). Consequently, “Whether this is where [power] needs to be, this is certainly where it is – in the ways we care” (#9).

Board members likewise associated trust with a lack of self-interest, or “altruism” (#24). They spoke about the trustworthiness of women whose actions are “not at the expense of other people” (#10). The notion of greater good was illustrated as activism “when women get together and say...‘We’ve had it’” (#21). A board member commented that “When you see women organizing in society, more often it’s...around social change...women’s rights...more power in the workplace...violence against women...children’s rights” (#17). In contrast, executive directors did not address power at the expense of others. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, their silence on this topic may have been due to their hierarchical position in the organization and the authority attached to their role of executive director. Thus, rather than the possibility of power over others, executive directors mentioned examples of women’s activism such as “speaking out in the community about violence”, or

using their power as a staff worker, as a white person, or whatever power they have in a particular context, to challenge oppressive acts....[make a] difference as far as women’s working conditions, as well as their living conditions. (#6, 7).

As products of female socialization, the way that respondents conceptualized women’s power included the demonstration of caring for others and putting others before self.

Caring work

In paid work, it has been suggested that women “transfer this [caregiving] to the public sphere” where they dominate the disciplines of nursing, education, and social work (Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991:17; Fisher, 1993; O’Connor, 1996). Schlesinger and Bart’s (1982:153) investigation of an illegal abortion clinic revealed that, “The dichotomy between taking care of oneself and taking care of others is demonstrably false [as] it was, indeed, by taking care of *others* that the...women fulfilled their own potential”. Modern

advances in the status of women have not altogether transformed assumptions of females' "natural" caring, and socialization to care for and about others. By way of illustration, women were admitted to the social work program at the University of Toronto as early as 1914. More than seventy years later, Baines (1991:57,60) found that "Although approximately 70 per cent of the profession are women, they are concentrated in the lower-paying direct service positions committed to an ethic of caring about and for marginal populations".

Study participants likewise interpreted caring as emotion and activity. Counsellors stated, for instance, that "We are in the feeling business", "A lot of what I do or what we do at work are feelings" (#18, 22). Another counsellor noted that "I bring emotion and feelings into my work. That's what makes me good at my job (#29). Board members spoke of "working from an emotional base" and from "emotional commitment" (#2, 17). As well as producing a female-specific understanding of care, socialization shapes women's identity as caring/caretakers. That relational sense of self is reinforced through their interpersonal experiences and "social norms about gender" (Jack, 1991:15-16). Gilligan (1982:159) found, for instance, that adult women defined themselves not by academic or professional achievements but rather, by "a standard of relationship, an ethic of nurturance, responsibility and care". Likewise, executive directors (2) remarked that women are "nurturing", and that female workers are more inclined than men to "discuss, negotiate, cooperate" (#3, 6). Board members (2) believed that men operate in an "objective and distanced" mode, "do all the talking" and, unlike women, "don't have much understanding of process" (#10, 21). The counsellors (5) in this study similarly indicated that because women are socialized to consider the "good of children, family", they are "more humanitarian" workers (#1, 28).

Qualities of empathy, resilience, patience, and emotional awareness were considered by the women in this study to be key requirements of “good” work (#11). Empathy was represented as compassion, active listening, and acceptance without judgment. Counsellors linked the quality of resilience to their constant exposure to the suffering of abused women and children (#5, 13, 16, 19, 28). In contrast, rather than mentioning suffering, executive directors associated their resilience to managing the anger evoked in them by certain clients, abusers, or men in general (#3, 6, 25).

For some women (7), patience was synonymous with maintaining an internal state of calm. Other research participants (11) interpreted emotional awareness as an openness to their feelings that facilitates openness to clients. Thus, one counsellor related that, “Inner contact allows us to be more aware and more present, more open I suppose, for how we attend to other people” (#1). At the same time, such inward and outward awareness was for counsellors a “challenge” and a strain because “It would be easier to just be closed and not be touched” (#5, 13). In this way, the women interviewed for this study identified caring as an important aspect of their work and a significant factor in a positive assessment of self.

Caring in work relations

Taylor (1995:231) has noted that “Feminist organizations make explicit claims to an ‘ethic of care’ that promotes female bonding, even if in reality it may not always be practiced”. To ascertain whether and how feminist organizations interpreted care, I examined seven mission statements for emotion themes. That examination revealed that care was reflected in the concepts of respect, equality, and empowerment. Guided by such insights and other revelations, this section introduces the women’s perceptions of power as

confidence, and examines how they interpret and experience the necessary condition of respect, or felt trust of women's caring.

The women in this study viewed power as every woman's dormant potential. Some participants spoke, for instance, of women's "untapped power" (#6, 8). Others implied that power is "our little secret" (#17, 25). Counsellors noted, however, that it's a "slow" and "a long, long process between its existence and becoming visible" (#1, 16). Almost all counsellors (15), and executive directors (5), and board members (6) considered that "respect" was necessary to women feeling powerful and expressing power (#10, 14, 17, 28). Respect was expressed in terms such as being "valued", "recognized", and "accepted for who you are" (#6, 18, 29).

The concept of respect was linked by women (13) to developing power as "self-confidence", "self-esteem", "strength", and "self-knowledge" (#12, 26, 30). For instance, one board member said "That's power – being able to direct your actions. The greater... consciousness of your own self, that's how you can direct your actions (#24)". These qualities were also described by one counsellor as "a connection of the dots between what I know of myself, what I believe in for myself, and...knowing that I have the potential for greater abilities for myself" (#1). For another counsellor, agency involved confidence of conviction (#12). It was explained that "You don't have to go along with the things you don't agree with. You can stand up for what you believe in" (#5, 7). According to one board member, "The exercise of power is actually being yourself...not trying to be somebody else" (#24).

In contrast, participants spoke of confidence as the "ability to make decisions", the "ability to get what you want", and the "ability to change their lives" (#4, 10, 19). Other

respondents emphasized the element of “choice” (#13). Although one woman viewed agency as passively “having choices”, more typically women were seen to be empowered by actively “making choices” (#5, 13, 14, 22, 23, 25, 25, 27). One counsellor commented that “where I’m exercising my choices, I’m exercising my power” (#14). Women stressed making “my own choices”, “choices for myself”, “decisions for yourself”, “exercising your own will over your own life”, and being “the master of how it’s going to be done” (#20, 22, 23, 24, 29). The ideal of “good” or “informed” quality of choices was occasionally stipulated (#25, 27). In summary, respect was considered to be a facilitating condition of women’s empowerment, or process of gaining self-confidence. In their work relations, participants interpreted respect as an absence of judgment, anger and rage, and the presence of personal boundaries, or self-imposed limits on involvement.

Respect and judgment

As I have previously stated, mission statements of feminist organizations expressed caring in their reference to values of respect, equality, and empowerment. Expectations of respectful work relations were reflected in the comments of respondents. Counsellors felt that they should avoid disrespect in the form of “judgment”. Respondents used the term to mean a standard of superiority by which some women are, based on their differences, assessed as “less than” other women (#5, 24). One board member and four counsellors indicated that to be respectful, one should avoid judgment “about what that person should or should not do with their life”, and “racist comments” (#2, 14, 16, 18, 26). Board members believed that counsellors should be respectful and non-judgmental (#10, 17, 21, 30).

Regarding executive directors, some counsellors specified that they should be non-judgmental (#1, 8). Other counsellors noted that respect for “input from staff” and

“someone in distress” is automatically assumed of people in executive director positions” (#19, 26, 28). Board members echoed the need for respectful executive directors, and management that holds “staff and the clients...[in] regard” (#17, 21, 30). Counsellors felt that board members should avoid judgment (#1, 9, 14). Only one executive director equated disrespect with judgment, and board members spoke about the behaviour of others, rather than their own. As such, the women’s personal ideology tended to reflect the ideology promoted by organizational mission statements.

Respect and caring

Practice did not, however, always match these conceptualizations. The women in this study noted frequent experiences of judgment by women that contradicted their expectations of their caring through respect. Moreover, contrary to the goal of empowerment, judgment undermined women’s self-confidence. One woman claimed that the sincerity of her feminism was judged by her co-workers because in her culture of origin “We didn’t have feminism as an official ideology” (#25). Another woman who was educated outside North America encountered attitudes that her academic credentials were inadequate for the job (#14). She explained that:

Of course I try not to get offended or upset at the beginning. I can’t react. I try to avoid a reaction so I don’t lose why I’m there. So sometimes you let a lot of these things go through or fall into the cracks because ultimately my role is to try to reach women who are in an abusive situation. (#14)

Partner abuse organizations were seen to be “still basically White” workplaces in which “We re-create society’s prejudices” (#12, 20, 24, 29). One counsellor noted that:

There have been times when, in my personal opinion, had I been a woman of colour I would have had more power. I think it depends where we are in that kind of slide thing. Right now I would probably say that being a woman of colour would not be an asset. (#22)

One board member perceived that such fluctuations involved the perception within and outside partner abuse organizations that “If it’s a white woman she can handle any client. If it’s a woman of colour she’s going to probably have difficulty relating to anyone else but her own culture” (#24). For one board member, prejudice was predominantly “client-driven [as] some clients have a discomfort working with...a person of colour”, although she acknowledged that “There is conflict sometimes at the staff level around colour” (#24). Rather than a particular source of judgment in partner abuse organizations, she perceived that “It’s racist in the sense that everyone is racist” (#24).

Yet other executive directors (2), board members (2), and counsellors (8) shared the view that “Unfortunately I think that there is different treatment of people in the organization. It seems that the anglophones are treated better by some people, supervisory staff” (#19). One counsellor described such attitudes as “You’ve got a bigger voice because you say it better” (#8). Lesbians did not feel “comfortable” or able to be themselves in environments where they were not a “critical mass” (#2, 6, 20, 27). While career risk deterred one woman’s openness, others learned from experience that there could be a range of negative reactions, from a “lack of support for lesbians from heterosexual staff”, to a refusal to work with admitted lesbians (#4, 28, 29).

One counsellor related judgment within organizations to heterosexism in society because “Sometimes the idea is that partner abuse organizations are run by lesbians so the credibility of [organizations] is in question” (#14). Women questioned whether organizations would support their open lesbian orientations with abused women, particularly “because...in some countries...it’s a big scary thing” (#27). As one woman explained, We’re ‘out’ to each other but we’re not ‘out’ at the organization and I don’t know if the

organization would be supportive of that. That's yet to be tested" (#22). Sporadic "purges" of lesbians, and "middle-class" and "working-class" women were reported (#22, 27).

Some research participants understood women's judgment as a learned behaviour stemming from their socialization as girls who are taught to compete with each other. For instance, one board member proposed that "In an organization where women have very little power...they can tend to vie for that power among each other, not necessarily recognizing how come this is happening (#17). A counsellor explained that "We're raised when we're young to work against each other. We're raised to compete for boys" (#29). An executive director and one counsellor agreed that among women "There's so much jealousy and looking at each other [laugh]", and "Women have been taught to fight with each other from the get-go" (#3, 18).

As Reitma-Street (1991:118) found in her research, women tended to "judge" other women's "ability to care". One counsellor related that women's judgment was expressed "by their look...body language ...words" (#5). Probes revealed that counsellors who considered feelings to be a condition of good work tended to negatively judge colleagues who adopt the objectivity of professionalism and act "more like therapists" (#11, 19, 29). Women who valued their work as a grassroots expression of feminist activism could be similarly judgmental. For example, judgment was reflected in the opinion that "Not every woman working there has a strong commitment to change for the better. Some women go there to have a job" (#14, 19). In consequence, although the women in this study all supported and strove to trust women's caring, or respect for self and others, they reported practices that limited such ideals.

Regarding judgment from conflicting ideologies it was explained that “I think from the inside we all know...that we all have our own ideology within feminism. At the same time we have the...expectation...that all feminists are going to think alike [and] that can cause some problems (#8, 22, 29). In particular, board members occasionally expressed an awareness of tension caused by judgment of women’s caring commitment to partner abuse work (#17, 21). In one woman’s words,

There’s a difference between feminists, women, executive directors, and board. Not all women that work in women’s organizations are there for the same reason. I think to be able to move on...it’s time that we all get truthful. Say, ‘I’m here to buy my Jeep [and] I don’t care about this’. Say, ‘I really care about the issue [and] the Jeep goes back’. If you had all those things on the table, then your expectations of women would be out there and you’d have to respect why they’re there. (#21)

Counsellors associated being judged by others to a decline in the quality of their peer relationships (#8). One woman imagined that colleagues could be “pissed off...very cold...never work with you again” (#22). Some executive directors concurred that among counsellors, problems from judgment could emerge (#3, 25). They noted that they could be affected by “how they would be viewed by other people...[They] might even question who’s the better worker” (#3). Unlike counsellors, executive directors did not anticipate judgment or deteriorating relationships within their ranks. However, this perception is not surprising since, as previously noted, the majority of these executive directors worked in isolation, meeting and interacting with other executive directors or board members at public meetings and more formal gatherings.

Judgment and feeling rules of emotionality

As well as judgments of too much and too little care, participants reported not “nice” feelings and too much emotionality (#7). Only one counsellor and one executive director believed that emotion was accepted unconditionally (#25, 29). Some women from all

respondent groups claimed that emotionality was discouraged both in theory and in practice (#14, 16, 20, 21, 23, 30). However, most respondents (22) reported that while all emotions were accepted in principle, informal feeling rules encouraged only those that are “positive” (#26). Some participants associated that expectation of ‘niceness’ to female socialization.

According to one counsellor:

For staff I'd say that we're getting better at it, but you're not allowed to come to work and be sad. The only real emotion that you're – well, not the only one, but like you're supposed to be happy. You're supposed to be outgoing. You're supposed to be congenial. You're supposed to be welcoming. It's almost like all those girlie things. All those women's characteristics, ideal women's characteristics that we try to teach...little girls....Those seem to be the ones we ask for from each other at work. (#22)

Positive feelings were identified as “thanks”, “elation”, “sensitivity”, and “sadness” (#1, 22, 27, 28). Participants identified negative feelings as “disappointment”, criticism, “vulnerability”, “anger”, and “fear” (#1, 4, 8, 13, 25). Of anger, one counsellor believed that “It would be accepted...between male workers, the repercussions would not be the same if it's woman-to-woman” (#5). Likewise, an executive director noted that “A more traditionally male rational way of working it through would be more respected ‘cause it's easier. It's all neat, right?” (#3).

Parkin (1993:183-184) has reported that “Emotions are controlled by those in power defining what is meant by emotionality, and then imposing a pathology on expression of emotions which do not fit the criteria of organizational strength”. Specifically, the counsellors revealed an awareness of transgressing an unclear divide by expressing “too much” emotion. Such excess was associated with passionate modes of self-expression, presentation styles that are frank and direct, and open disagreement with executive directors (#3, 8, 13). Individuals who expressed too much emotion were perceived as “rocking the

boat” (#8, 14). One executive director noted that “Somebody who maybe comes from a different culture or they are just a different personality, much more spontaneous and just ‘lay it out there’, I think that’s seen as less okay” (#3). One counsellor explained that “It was always a conflict in a meeting. Francophones love to talk about feelings and have no problem saying it. The English are very reserved so it was hell for me. In the beginning it was, ‘Gee, you’re emotional’. I said, ‘Yeah, that’s who I am’” (#18).

Other comments suggest that the “right” amount of emotion and being listened to, related to women’s willingness to “agree with management” (#8). One counsellor described such a colleague as “Someone who the executive director gets along with, that she can relate to...because they say things that she wants to hear” (#26). Another counsellor stated that to openly disagree with an executive director on policies “wouldn’t be acceptable” (#5). Board members (2) clarified that emotions were accepted if they matched those expressed by executive directors. One board member recalled more specifically that “What the executive director said, went, and everybody just agreed” (#21). The women were keenly aware that breaking feeling rules could bring strong sanctions, especially by executive directors who occupied positions of power in the organizational hierarchy.

Feeling rules and sanctions

Rafaeli and Sutton (1989:24) have noted that failing intuitive conformity, management and peer strategies of exclusion may be employed to force women to “alter the intensity or shift the content of emotions expressed by the role occupant at the outset”. In organizational cultures that discourage emotional expression, strained employee relations, tension, silencing, and an obstructed “upward information flow”, are but a few reported consequences (Putnam & Mumby, 1993:44). Putnam and Mumby (1993:44) have suggested

that failure to comply with feeling rules may have negative ramifications such as “distrust and disrespect between employees”. The women in this study were conscious of such possibilities. For example, counsellors reported that the “mood” becomes “threatening” when feeling rules are broken (#9, 12). Board members and executive directors highlighted a decline in the group’s “emotional safety” when unwritten feeling rules are violated (#2, 7, 25).

Hochschild (1979:564) has explained that sanctions for “misfeeling” may take the form of “teasing”, “scolding”, or “shunning”. However, as well as these types of behaviours, the research participants illustrated other types of sanctions. For example, one counsellor recalled that “When I did confront the executive director I diminished the way that I was able to bring up any other issues afterward. Counsellors that have confronted certain issues...what can we say? The line’s lower” (#13). Another counsellor recounted that “I did confront her and I did yell at her. Yes, there were consequences. Instead of listening to the message, she listened to the emotion. So ‘You’re not okay’ was there more than ‘Have you heard what I said?’” (#13).

Asked about potential consequences for inappropriate emotion, one counsellor replied that “I think there could be. There’s all kinds of things that we can mess up. This is a scary job [laughter]” (#8). A board member’s disclosure that “We always have the bad child who is one of the [counselling] staff” suggests that labeling may also be one covert effect of negative emotional expression (#21). Sanctions may, however, become more explicit and punitive. According to Dyer (1985:380):

Rites of degradation are used relatively infrequently by social groups; their purpose is to dissolve the social identities and power of certain members. A complete rite of degradation includes the following elements: (1) the collective attention is focused on the people being degraded and their behaviors are publicly associated with

failures and problems, (2) the degraded people are discredited by some supposedly objective report or analysis, and (3) the degraded people are publicly stripped of their positions and statuses.

Formal processes through which counsellors could be held accountable included client complaints, conflict resolution including mediation, supervision or probation by executive directors, and ultimately, dismissal (#5, 9, 16, 22).

An executive director qualified that “Staff are strongly encouraged to resolve the conflict between themselves first. It’s important, not just because it’s the logical thing. It’s important because they are to have good communication and personal skills as front-line workers” (#25). Failing resolution through one-on-one dialogue, counsellors could request intervention by a supervisor or other third party mediator, or file an official complaint. Where their problems involved executive directors, counsellors distrusted mediation. One woman commented that “I don’t think that mediation in conflict between two women works...if there is a real, real power difference where it’s perceived as unsafe” (#8). Another counsellor noted that “You can’t have two unequal people to negotiate. We have that in our conflict resolution [and] that just stinks because it’s not safe” (#11). Yet another counsellor’s dissatisfaction was based on the fact that “We don’t have the staff to do it” (#9).

In contrast, executive directors did not identify formal sanctions for emotional displays that participants understood to be inappropriate. These included judgment, negative comments, and anger and rage. Such immunity may derive from the fact that some boards had yet to establish disciplinary processes, although they recognized the “need to develop those kinds of policies” (#7, 30). In their absence, board members appeared uncertain of recourse with executive directors. They imagined that they “reinforce better behaviour” or “talk to them and suggest they need a break” (#17, 24).

Respect and anger and rage

Among counsellors, executive directors, and board members, respect was interpreted as an absence of anger and rage. By limiting women's confidence in their abilities, disrespect expressed in anger and rage contradicted the feminist goal of empowering self and others. In particular, unlike the abused women they assisted, counsellors did not believe that they could publicly express anger. One counsellor explained that:

Clients get a lot more leeway [chuckle]. I think they're entitled to a full range of emotions because they're in a crisis. They can be angry. It's okay to be angry. It's not okay to be violent but it's okay to be angry. We give them a certain range. They're very emotional – crying, up and down from day to day. One day they're having a good day. One day they're not having a good day. That's okay. So for clients, pretty much everything with the exception of violent behaviour is okay. (#12)

Anger turned to rage was considered to be inappropriate for clients, counsellors, executive directors, and board members alike. Some counsellors shared the view that anger is an emotion, but rage “goes beyond emotion. It now can be called ‘violence’. It goes into a behaviour” (#1, 5). Examples of rage included “anything that's abusive, and that can be verbal abuse – swearing at somebody, yelling at somebody, hitting somebody”, “slamming doors, throwing things”, “breaking things”, “physical threats [and] screaming”, “violent behaviour”, and “hurting me or themselves physically” (#3, 6, 13, 17, 24, 27).

Counsellors alluded to an organizational feeling rule that discouraged displays of anger (#5, 8, 9, 12, 29). Likewise, counsellors' rage in the form of physical threats or “slamming doors”, and verbal acting-out by “screaming”, or “swearing, yelling”, or “temper tantrums” was not perceived to be acceptable behaviour (#1, 8, 13, 19, 27). Counsellors' rage was similarly unacceptable to executive directors and board members (#6, 15, 21, 23, 24, 27). Removed from on site and daily involvement in the day-to-day practices of organizations, board members theoretically frowned on anger and rage by counsellors and

executive directors (#10, 17). One board member stipulated, however, that executive directors “have a broader range” of feeling expression than counsellors who work directly with abused women (#10). Based on witnessed behaviour, one counsellor noted that an executive director’s anger “seems to be acceptable” (#14). Other counsellors recounted that they had observed executive directors “yell” and express anger to the point “that she was really abusive in a personal way” (#10, 13).

Executive directors did not comment on their own feelings of anger and behaviours of rage. Findings reported elsewhere in this study suggest that they may feel less constrained in their feeling expressions than the counsellors, due to a lack of sanctions and/or the absence of on-site supervisors to whom they would be held accountable. A similar rationale may explain one board member’s experience that at meetings, “Somebody was always angry” (#21).

Most counsellors were aware of feeling rules that promoted respect and discouraged public displays of their anger. Counsellors understood that such rules have their source in female socialization. Some counsellors (7) suppressed anger and other feelings to solidify their role as caretakers and absolve abused women from such responsibility. It was explained that:

We can't deal with our own issues when we're working with the clients. We can't let our emotions get to the point where it becomes our tears for our issues, or our sadness, or our anger. It's got to be theirs. So we can support their anger with a little bit of righteous indignation but we can't let it overcome their feelings. We always have to leave them a space to show their feelings. We can't dump our problems on our clients. If I'm having a bad day I need to find somewhere else to go with that. (#8)

Another counsellor agreed that:

We've got to leave women room to feel what they're feeling. That applies to anger as well. I know that I'm very angry in a lot of ways about male violence and that's

one of the things that I need to struggle with is to leave room for her to get angry and not get angry in her place – the whole ‘rescuits’ thing where you get overly involved in somebody’s life. (#4)

In contrast, one counsellor attributed the feeling rule prohibiting anger to female socialization to conflict avoidance. In her words,

To me the big one that has been swept under the carpet is anger. The ultimate irony of that is that in support groups we do this whole spiel about how we politicize violence against women and children and how women don’t need therapy; they need to get angry because of what has been done to them. But we don’t facilitate that for a whole bunch of reasons. I think that it’s individual levels of comfort and discomfort with anger. I think it’s again structural in terms of there aren’t enough supports to really help people deal with whatever they need to deal with, [and] the financial. (#9)

The testimonies of the women who participated in this study suggest that in partner abuse organizations, female socialization to caretaking and conflict avoidance is reproduced in the feeling rule of respect without anger and rage. Participants’ comments on respect and boundaries echo and enhance such findings.

Respect and boundaries

Counsellors’ interpretation of the feeling rule of respect through “boundaries”, or self-imposed limits on involvement, was also associated with female socialization and caretaking. As with anger, some counsellors maintained an emotional distance from abused women to protect themselves from assuming the caretaking role to which they were socialized. For example, one counsellor explained that:

We’re paid to be here as supporters. We’ve got to be careful because if we’re crying when [abused women] are going through something, what happens sometimes as women we’re so brainwashed into being caretakers that we shut ourselves down and we worry about taking care of the other person. I certainly don’t want to give the impression that I think we need to be unfeeling, but we have to be careful not to emote for women. (#4)

For some counsellors, crying in the presence of clients illustrated poor boundaries and over-involvement (#4, 5, 8, 12, 19, 28). According to one counsellor,

If I were to cry or have a tear that would be seen as very inappropriate. I don't see it as inappropriate. It's just very moving. You're there with the person, you know. I don't see myself as being the 'expert'. I'm with a woman with equal standing. It's like 'Wow, that's strength'. But others would find that very inappropriate, disgusting; '[She] shouldn't be working there'. (#5)

The over-involvement of counsellors was also seen to contradict their caretaking role and constrain their ability to provide strong and steady support to clients (#8, 28). One counsellor explained that:

It's good to be compassionate but....it's not a good idea to just break down and have a good cry with [clients]. You're the one that's supposed to be sort of in control and give abused women a certain level of confidence in where they are and that they might get through it. (#12)

Another counsellor stated that “Of course you’re human and so on but you also want to be considered sane and capable [chuckle]” (#19).

Board members and executive directors shared the opinion of counsellors about boundary violations through over-involvement with clients. One board member noted that:

I think if a client is very sad and is talking about something horrendous and you cry, that's okay. But I think that if you sob out of control [laughter]...I think you have to be a little in control or have your client think you're in control. (#10)

Likewise, an executive director stated that “If you’re having really strong emotions about something and you need to leave, that’s okay. But it’s not appropriate to be asking clients to take care of your emotions. I mean, this is your job” (#6).

Apart from counsellor/client relations, most executive directors’ positions on respectful boundaries were more relaxed and more accepting of emotionality. For example, one executive director recounted that:

At the board level some of them couldn't keep them in check...and it was all right. I've seen crying on the Board and the person saying 'This is unacceptable behaviour'. You cannot treat another human being like that! (#20)

One executive director “encouraged” expressions of emotionality among staff “because it frees you. It gives you a sense of comfort. It gives you a sense of having some support” (#25). Only one executive director stated that “Crying in meetings [laughter] is inappropriate” (#23). Displays of colleagues’ emotion had been witnessed by most of the board members who participated in this study. A couple of board members accepted such feeling expressions (#10, 30). Others were critical of board members who failed to respect boundaries by, for instance, “crying” or dominating or prolonging board meetings because of their personal problems (#15, 21, 24). One board member included an executive director who, in attending board meetings, “takes up a lot of emotional space” (#15).

The women identified additional disrespectful boundary violations. Of note, counsellors stipulated that love relationships with clients were inappropriate (#4, 5, 28). Interference by executive directors in the work of counsellors was construed as a significant boundary violation, indicating disrespect for the type of work that they performed. Thus, one counsellor recounted that:

I would be talking on the phone with someone and my boss would come and say, 'We have a meeting'. I'm talking on the phone to someone who's in crisis! What the hell is it that you're giving me a hard time for being on the phone, for doing my job, and being late maybe five, ten minutes? (#11)

Other counsellors perceived that an executive director “who talks a lot about herself”, one who “has shared information about other workers that I felt was totally inappropriate”, and those who don’t “hear” counsellors and “who totally disregards any input from staff” were “not respectful” of boundaries (#5, 19, 26, 28). Such attitudes of superiority conflicted with

the feminist ideal of equality, and were interpreted especially by counsellors as disrespect.

A board member explained that:

I would consider the staff and the director a team. Therefore, even though her work does not involve interfering with your work, I would dislike it very much if I thought that the executive director thought that she was above. You know, that hierarchy of 'I'm here [and] you're there'. I would [also] hate to think that the Board thought that they had a superior role. We each have an equal role in a different way. (#2)

Although one counsellor experienced as disrespect, the behaviour of an executive director who made her feel that "I'm supposed to take on the submissive role, inferior", only one executive director recognized as respectful boundaries, avoiding "sharing information about other workers" with counsellors (#1, 23). Typically, executive directors tended to focus their comments on the need for counsellors' respectful boundaries with clients, rather than on the behaviour of the executive director herself. Once again, this occupational group appeared to be less aware of its own role in the creation of disrespect or how their actions threatened the goal of empowerment and the feminist ideals outlined in the mission statements of their organizations.

This chapter has described how feminists who perform emotion work in partner abuse organizations interpret feeling rules of emotionality in partner abuse organizations. It describes how workers diversely experienced informal and formal sanctions for too much and too little caring, and too negative and too much emotionality. It has illustrated how other feeling rules that discourage judgment and anger and rage, and encourage emotional boundaries, or self-imposed limits on involvement, were understood, and not always experienced as the empowering condition of respect. In this way, the data in this study support Jack's (1991:154) proposition that women's "silenced creativity...reinforces feelings of worthlessness". As such, I suggest that feeling rules and inconsistencies constrain the

feminist goal of power-to. They undermine women's confidence in the caring/caretaking identities and abilities to which they have been socialized, and for which they may assume that they have been recruited/hired. The following section further considers Jack's (1991) proposition by examining the coping strategies developed by respondents, and how such strategies affected their perception of self as feminist partner abuse workers.

Strategies of coping

Fineman (1993:18) has observed that "wariness and fear hold potential dissidents in their place". Added to the constraints of feeling rules and the danger of personal reprisal, the women in this study were keenly aware that partner abuse organizations were vulnerable to the Funder's intervention and financial sanctions. An executive director elaborated that:

I think the odds are against us to begin with. People see us as 'radical', 'man-hating', 'out there' women to begin with. So any excuse to sort of undermine what it is that we're trying to do is used. Conflict obviously is a great one because then it's YOUR fault on top of it [laugh]! We've seen examples...all over Ontario actually...where the team that's playing up to the powers-that-be get all kinds of support, and the team that's sort of challenging the status quo, or stepping outside of that, is villanized. I think there should be a place for conflicts within organizations but I think what happens often is it gets re-characterized as 'These women just can't get along'. Then the powers-that-be externally come in and clean house and use that as an excuse. If you had a conflict in a hospital you wouldn't come in and fire the whole hospital staff but...we've seen it happen several times [in women's organizations] in Eastern Ontario. (#6)

This section seeks to answer another executive director's question, "What do we do with those feelings?" (#7). It examines how feeling rules and fears of personal and organization reprisal generated, and were expressed in strategies of restraint, silence, emotion management, "venting", and self-care.

As noted in the previous sections, some counsellors (7) complied with feeling rules that were at odds with their personal convictions. One counsellor explained her restraint as an attempt to avoid co-workers' judgment of her emotionality as "inappropriate, subjective,

disgusting, shouldn't be working there" (#5). Another counsellor observed that "It's kind of an antagonism between your standards and the professional standards. The more blind of emotions you are, the higher the level of professionalism" (#16). Counsellors recognized the cost of suppressing emotion to satisfy feeling rules. One counsellor stated that:

It's this whole separating out of what we need and what we feel which leads to problems that I'm aware of. In doing this work I've had to shut down my spontaneous feelings and then it fucks you up in the rest of your life because they don't just come back spontaneously. (#4).

Another woman lamented that "We are experts without feelings" (#14).

Male organizational researchers have suggested that feelings that lie beneath the appearance of compliance may spill over and trigger strategies of resistance in other areas (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984:136). Such strategies may include "silence, insults, harassment, innuendo" (Fineman & Gabriel, 1996:92). In contrast, Jack (1991:137) has proposed that "Forcing themselves to stop thinking, judging their own thoughts, and silencing their voices and opinions are methods by which women keep themselves from expressing anger and resentment". Parents', teachers', and peers' different attitudes and expectations of boys and girls foster, in Lips' (1994:90) opinion, females' "cultural preparedness for powerlessness". Consequently,

For girls, it is an abiding path of acquiescence, of relative silence in the face of uncertainty, conflict or the throes of daily testing. What is absorbed is a habit of self-doubt in the face of confusion or competition, a hesitancy that can affect a young woman's later decisions in situations ranging from speaking up with a good answer, to entering a male-dominated contest, to choosing career options, to asserting her rights strongly and publicly when faced with discrimination, sexual harassment, or abuse. (Lips, 1994:102)

Some counsellors and board members resorted to silence, a method of conflict avoidance to which girls are socialized. Through silence, counsellors avoided expressing their opinions to executive directors. One woman admitted her tendency to "Just give her what she wants

so she'll stay quiet [chuckle]" (#29). Another reported that "Now I'm getting better at being more silenced" (#14). A board member similarly recalled that "Rather than holding my ground...I pulled back and that was bad of me" (#2). Another explained of her tendency to self-imposed silence that "I don't want to foster divisiveness among the board members" (#17). Executive directors did not report self-silencing.

Another coping strategy reflected the socialization of girls to nice behaviour and anger suppression. For example, among young mothers, Horowitz (1995:166) found that their dissatisfaction with compulsory group sessions was expressed in covert strategies such as "changing the topic, sitting without responding to questions, [and] not responding with truthful statements". In this way, women could believe that they had opposed the rules without angering and triggering consequences by the rules-makers. Some women who participated in this study attempted to convey an impression of compliance with feeling rules by managing, and expecting others to manage how nicely discouraged emotions were communicated. Regarding anger, for instance, one counsellor reported that

It's okay to be angry if I'm hearing something from a woman or from a colleague, but there's a line. There's words to say, 'I don't feel good about what you said', but it's not to take the anger out [on others]. (#13)

Another counsellor explained that,

If I were to say, 'My client Suzy, I just think she's really bad parent', that would not be appropriate. But if I were to say 'God, she didn't show up again', without identifying who I'm talking about, that would be fine. (#3)

Likewise, an executive director stated that "I don't want to hear 'I can't stand her. I'm going to kill her'. That's different than 'I'm hurt and what you said touched me or hurt me'. Then you can respond to it" (#20).

Another coping strategy used by the women who were interviewed was the act of “venting” (#6). By venting, participants sought to express their feelings and avoid informal and formal sanctions for too much and too little care, and too negative and too much emotionality, and disrespect. A board member described venting as “complaining with no obligation to protect the listener (#24). For safety’s sake, women only vented with those that they trusted to keep their complaints confidential. Counsellors did not vent with executive and board members. Instead, they were most prone to “share”, or disclose personal feelings to trusted friends and/or women in the same line of work.

Some women (8) were, however, also guarded in their intimacy with colleagues due to distrust that their confidences would be respected, or fear that information would be misinterpreted or used against them, or relayed to executive directors. For other counsellors, their lack of sharing with co-workers was explained as respect for boundaries, or self-imposed limits on involvement (#23, 27). Some counsellors (3) confided in their partners, one employed a therapist, and another woman sought spiritual support. She related that “I go to church when it’s too overwhelming and I sit there and say, ‘Please help my clients’, or ‘Please help me’” (#18). Other women vented alone by, for example, “laughing”, “crying”, and using a “punching bag” (#13, 16, 18).

Executive directors did not confide in counsellors because “The power differential stuff...is a bit tricky” (#3). It was explained that “Because I’m in a position of power I think it’s my responsibility not to do that stuff with people I have power over” (#6). Feelings were, however, expressed to outsiders such as therapists and friends, with the directors of other organizations who experience “similar stress”, and through activist work that “deals

with the underlying causes” of partner abuse (#3, 7, 25). Only one board member occasionally felt the need to vent her feelings with board colleagues (#2).

Despite such strategic attempts, only one counsellor and an executive director claimed to manage an “emotional distance” in their relationship with partner abuse work (#4, 25). More typically, counsellors struggled to stop caring *about* women after their paid work caring *for* women ended. Most of the paid workers interviewed (16) expressed a need to “separate” from their work through “strategies” of “self-care” (#4, 19). Some counsellors (8) reported that their efforts to separate self from work involved physical activity. Others (7) enjoyed music and nature. Yet other counsellors (7) also or exclusively focused on caring about and for friends, dogs, and children. Executive directors reported using activities such as “sewing”, “physical activity”, and “laughter” (#3, 7, 23, 25). Perhaps due to their lack of direct exposure to the needs of abused women and children, and limited time involvement with organizations, volunteer board members did not identify separation problems or express the need for strategies of self-care.

Messages that individuals consciously deliver to the subconscious, or what I refer to as “self-talk” emerged as a counsellor-specific coping strategy. It was explained that “In order to keep functioning and not burn out, or have my head pop off....I have a ritual that I do. I literally let it go, breathe it out. It sounds stupid – airy fairy” (#4). Others reported that “I leave work behind in my mind as I bike or walk”, or that they talked to themselves, saying ‘I came home. It’s 5 o’clock now. This is my time and I’ve got to leave that stuff somewhere else. Pick it up tomorrow morning’” (#8, 27). Yet other counsellors indicated that “I remind myself that these stories don’t belong to me by saying ‘This isn’t mine to

own. I've done the best I could and I'm going home now'" (#18, 22). The effectiveness of self-talk was however, relative and limited.

Learning to separate from caring work took time. For example, counsellors tended to assess self-talk in terms of "then and now", weighing their current expertise against their novice exposure to partner abuse work. One woman felt, for instance, that "I'm much better than I used to be" (#22). Another recalled that "When I first was working here I brought my work home with me and I didn't shut it off" (#4). Speaking about the difficulty of that learning curve over "years" of practice, counsellors recounted that "I learned over time because I used to come home and be totally wiped", and "I realized it's okay to accumulate emotion...and help yourself get rid of it" (#16, 22, 27). One counsellor recalled that "It used to be very hard for me in the sense that I used to take it with me" (#11). Another woman claimed that "I've learned...if there's something that could be very unbalancing, I could dance the dance of others" (#13).

Despite improvement, emotional separation continued to be a "difficult challenge" of limited effectiveness (#18). One counsellor noted that "When I start getting tired...I know I'm at risk because I can't leave [work] at work" (#5). Other counsellors recognized that "There's no doubt you take some of it home", and that they could only "try not to let it consume us" (#12, 29). After years in the field, one woman related that still, "I'll wake up at night and think about work, or I'll be home, cooking, and all of a sudden a woman and what she said during that day...will pop up" (#5). Another longs for the day when she'll "be able to say, 'I've done my job and done it as well as I can for today' and to be able to learn to let that go" (#22).

The strategies of restraint, silence, emotion management, venting, and self-care were provoked by, and expressed women's fear of informal and formal sanctions within organizations and potential sanctions on organizations by the Funder. Resistance to feeling norms that conflicted with women's caring/caretaking identities was, because of fear of reprisal, internalized, rather than openly communicated. In climates of fear and tension, participants in this study attempted to negotiate their public and private selves without revealing their 'not nice' feelings. Evidence that women's behaviour was controlled by feeling rules and fears, and that their control of their behaviour was limited to "pleasing" strategies, contradicts feminism's goal of empowerment (Jack, 1991:82). Rather than facilitating power-to or self-confidence, the reports of the women in this study confirm Jack's (1991:32) suggestion that "Women lose themselves as they try to fit into an image provided by someone else". Female socialization informs the coping strategies that have been identified, and a female-specific strategy of power to which we turn our attention.

Manipulation versus positive care

It has been reported elsewhere in this study that the feminists who were interviewed identified and opposed power-over as a direct expression of the "dominance" to which men are socialized (Jack, 1991:12). Participants also proposed that female access to public or "male" power is limited by their socialization to caring/caretaking and, as previously suggested, men's domination and gatekeeping of opportunity structures. This section examines a female-specific form of negative power, or "manipulation" that contradicts the female value of caring and the feminist value of respect.

Acker and Van Houten (1992:28) have noted that gender socialization encourages sex-differentiated power strategies, and penalizes transgressions that do not support gender

normative behaviour. As children, girls learn to manage a nice and caring self-image. The expectation to be nice encourages vigilant monitoring of others' cues and reactions, and female-specific expressions of power. Unlike male's socialization to direct power-over or domination, Tancred-Sheriff and Campbell (1992:39) have noted that through "manipulation....women, in common with other oppressed groups, rely on indirect forms of power to attain their ends". Regarding the motivation for women's indirectness, Jack (1991:82) has suggested that:

In its intent, the goal is to maintain relationship by removing the bases for deep disagreements. The woman's actions to meet her own needs must remain hidden, even to herself. And this indirection and 'manipulation' originate in the woman's sense of powerlessness to act directly for her own interests.

Some participants in this study shared Jack's perception. For example, one board member maintained that "Straightforward means are not accessible to most women" (#10). One counsellor speculated that "I think women internalize their power so women are seen to be manipulative because that's the one way that it's allowed to come out (#22).

Despite such understanding, most respondents (23) indicated in various ways that women's manipulation is "abusive power" and "the best power that woman have perfected" (#24). Counsellors described manipulation as "oppressive", "coercive", and "cut throat" (#18, 28, 29). For executive directors and board members, women's manipulation was "destructive", "malicious" or "vicious", and "scary" (#3, 7, 24). A board member explained manipulation as "I'm going to make you guess what I really want and until you do, all process will stop" (#24). In a similar fashion, counsellors considered women's manipulation to be "done differently" and "harder to recognize" than men's overt "power-over", or domination (#1, 5). They indicated that manipulation is "indirect", "sneaky", and

“sly” (#2, 24, 25). One counsellor stated that “Sometimes it’s hidden. You don’t even know it until it comes out somehow when you least expect it” (#27).

Recognition of manipulation was constrained by its indirectness. Some women “thought” that they could recognize negative power from women’s behaviour and their partner abuse training and skills. They spoke, for instance, of “actions”, and their “innate radar” for identifying overt and covert forms of abuse (#16, 19, 23, 26). Other women felt a general change in the workplace atmosphere. One woman used as an indicator “when you feel differently when the boss is there and when the boss is not there” (#8). For other women, feeling “silenced” signaled the existence of negative power (#6, 8). One board member stated simply that “Everyone feels really crappy” (#24).

For the women in this study, the ability to recognize manipulation was constrained by the positive value assumptions of women to which they had been socialized, and also by feminism’s assumption of women’s positive power-to, compared to men’s negative power-over. An executive director recounted that “When I started doing this work I had a much more ‘women are great’, kind of ‘us and them’, [but] it’s just much more complicated than I wanted to think it was at one point” (#3). A board member similarly noted that “There was that period in my life where I thought if you’re a woman there had to be that innate goodness in you” (#2). One executive director explained that “I used to think that women were innately power-with, just sort of part of their nature. I don’t think that any more and I feel like a terrible traitor to the Women’s Movement” (#23). One counsellor recounted that she “just did not get it” when a female colleague was “treated like garbage. I had never expected that a woman would treat another woman like that” (#11). Another counsellor

explained that “I think because you don’t expect it - you have this dream - it’s more hurtful because it’s women doing it to you” (#5).

Rather than positive caring/caretaking for self and others, women’s manipulation was interpreted as a product of poor self-esteem that is displayed in attitudes and behaviours of self-interest. One board member wished that every woman was “blessed with a high sense of...self-worth so they wouldn’t need to feed off each other” (#24). In one counsellor’s opinion, “As a society we don’t allow women to be outwardly powerful because it scares the crap out of people” (#22). An executive director elaborated that:

This is the big struggle in any of these oppressions. We are victimized. As a group, women are less privileged. We are oppressed. But do we claim that as our status? Does that become our identity? Do we internalize that or do we say ‘Yes, this is how women are treated and I don’t like it and I’m not going to, as much as possible, either reproduce or buy into that’. But it’s actually both. It’s how you’re seen to be as a woman, but also how you’re feeling because of how you’re seen to be as a woman. Both of these things are always going on. (#7)

One woman speculated that “We’ve lived our whole lives being put down, and devalued, and degraded, and terrorized, and that stuff has an impact on us” (#4). From that perception, manipulation was perceived as internalized “insecurity”, lack of self-esteem and poor self-worth (#30). One counsellor proposed that “It’s insecurities in ourselves because we’re not feeling very secure at the moment” (#1). Reflecting on her use of power in admittedly “abusive” ways, one board member disclosed that:

I didn’t know that what I would do would actually have an impact on others because I didn’t see myself as significant. That’s why self-worth is so essential - because where you see your self-worth you realize that if you are kicking, the dog is actually experiencing something. It’s not I can just kick the dog because it’s worth nothing and nothing I do matters. I don’t think it’s as much related any more to structure as much as it relates to what we bring as ourselves...self-worth. (#24)

Other respondents described a woman who uses negative power as someone who “feels like a victim”, or is “not willing to look at themselves...or not able to” (#3, 7).

Women's manipulation was linked to attitudes and behaviours that express self-interest. Respondents specifically linked manipulation to not "feeling good", having a "gut feeling", an "instinct", or a "suspicion" around and about women who "seem to be self-interested", "for her own" (#8, 13, 18, 19, 24). In a counsellor's words, "It's power for me, myself, and I" (#18). Another counsellor perceived manipulation "When the woman, her own personality is one that her needs are more important than others at all times" (#8). Two board members specified that manipulation "uses people" (#15, 21). Other women (15) linked it to motivations of "personal gain". Manipulative women were considered to focus on their own "needs", or "personal gain" as "flattering ego", "self aggrandizement", or "money" (#8, 10, 14, 16, 17, 25, 29, 30). An executive director criticized women who "do something because it's politically beneficial and not because it's good for the cause that she always puts forward" (#3).

As well as in attitudes, manipulation was expressed in behaviours. One counsellor and one executive director reported women "sabotaging somebody's work" and "Game playing - old issues will be brought up [and I'll] hear all the rotten things somebody's doing before I go to a meeting" (#20, 22). Some counsellors identified executive directors' "manipulation" and "conniving" and "game-playing" (#12, 15, 22). Manipulation was linked by one counsellor to an executive director's self-interest in that "She starts right away trying to manipulate the situation to her own end [by] little side conversations here and there, putting a bug in an ear over there" (#12). Counsellors and one board member distrusted executive directors who, because of their self-interest, were considered incapable of providing "safe support" (#5, 13, 24). Executive directors' manipulation of women's fears to secure their compliance with feeling rules was also implicated. One board member

perceived that for executive directors, “One way to gain power...is ‘I’ve talked to the Ministry and we have to do it this way’” (#24). Significantly, this particular finding coincides with Schechter’s (1982:108) proposition that “Professional women have sometimes squelched debate over political issues or manipulated fears by suggesting that without expanding programs or funding, shelters would close or lose credibility”.

Evidence of female negative power, or manipulation that conflicted with the feminist assumptions of women’s caring and positive power-to were managed through denial. According to Hochschild (1990:129), “We pursue gender strategies – persistent lines of feeling and action through which we reconcile our gender ideology with arising situations”. By way of illustration, Hochschild (1990:134) relates that one woman developed an “anger-avoidant myth” that helped her focus on the good parts of her marriage, and minimize her dissatisfaction with her husband. Similar strategies have been reported in situations of partner abuse where women consciously or unconsciously manage their emotions to the point of “numbness” for survival purposes, or while justifying their escape (Mills & Kleinman, 1988:1018).

Denial helped some participants in this study manage evidence of manipulation that contradicted their assumptions of women’s positive caring and feminists’ expectations of women’s positive power. Participants recounted their tendencies to “give her a chance”, “wait for examples of behaviour”, “take time to acquaint yourself with someone”, and avoid “being too quick to judge” (#4, 6, 9, 28). Because of denial, some women reported not “recognizing it until much later on”, and seeing it only “a couple of years down the road” (#12, 14). One woman reported “I’ve seen some situations that seemed like good power and

afterward it appeared much different. I'm not sure that the person really changed that much. It was more the perception" (#15).

For some participants, denial was facilitated by the tendency to self-blame, learned through female socialization. An executive director stated, for instance, that "I may think there's something wrong with me when really it's the way power's being used that isn't okay" (#7). Likewise for a board member, "I don't catch on very well. I always say 'Women are great'. I go from that analysis. When I meet someone who uses their power badly I don't really believe it. So I'm always the one who's shaking my head" (#21). Possibly to maintain their trust in feminist ideals of women's positive 'power-to', many respondents (19) dismissed evidence to the contrary and echoed an executive director's statement that she still "expects good power more often from women in the sense of nurturing, caring for other people" (#3).

Other women who were interviewed said that their feelings of betrayal had instead transformed formerly positive expectations of female caring and feminist positive power-to. Women from all respondent groups felt "disillusioned", "burned", "bitterly disappointed", "hurt", and "stabbed in the back" by women (#6, 7, 11, 13, 15, 17). For example, one board member remarked that "If you're a woman who really believes that women have this special goodness in them, it takes you by surprise" (#2). Such betrayal provoked in counsellors the feeling that they are "always at risk" of using, or being affected by manipulation (#5). One counsellor cautioned of one executive director that "[You] don't turn your back because the knife is right there!" (#5). Painfully learned experiences of women's uncaring and negative power provoked distrust that conflicted with feminism's principle of 'sisterhood', or shared

goals among women. Accordingly, some participants turned to strategies of personal vigilance to control the unexpected.

For example, one counsellor felt a need to “honour and act on instinct” (#4). Another relied on self-awareness to “be honest with myself when I’m playing games and when I’m not” (#9). Board members likewise reported “continually evaluating yourself and thinking, ‘Is this what you wanted to do? Was this the most ethical?’” (#21). One board member aspired to greater “self-awareness, self-knowledge, and striving for betterment of your own self” (#28). Executive directors did not report such self-monitoring. Here, once again, these types of statements appear to reflect their isolated position of power in hierarchical organizations and the limited forms of public censure encountered by executive directors when they made mistakes.

In summary, assumptions learned through female socialization shaped the values of participants in this study and their assessments of women’s positive and negative power. Socialization produced a female-specific understanding of caring as emotion and activity, and fostered women’s identities as caring/caretakers. Accordingly, participants in this research expected from themselves and from other women good work that reflected caring qualities of empathy, resilience, patience, and emotional awareness. Participants also believed from mission statement claims that they worked in partner abuse organizations that cared about respect for women and feminism’s principles of equality and empowerment.

The testimonies of the women who were interviewed suggest that the female-positive assumptions to which they were socialized as children were reinforced in adulthood by the feminist ideology that they embraced. For example, having been socialized to women’s goodness as caring/caretakers, participants learned from feminism that women’s

power-to is cooperative and positive, compared to men's negative power-over, or domination. The expectation of women's collaborative power in their work relations was encouraged by feminist organizations' mission statement values of equality and empowerment. The combined influences of female socialization and feminist politics are reflected in this study's finding that respect was perceived as feeling cared about, and identified as a necessary component of enabling, or empowering women to develop positive power, or confidence in their abilities and choices.

However, the work experiences of the women in this study conflicted with their socialization to assume female caring and their feminism-induced assumptions of women's cooperative, respectful, and equal power. In this chapter we have seen evidence of women's disrespect as anger and rage, and boundary violations. Disrespect expressed as judgments of too much and too little caring, and too much and too negative emotionality limited women's ability to develop power as confidence. The assumption that women's caring/caretaking for self and others could be trusted was contradicted by participants' experiences of manipulative power by self-interested women. Specifically, counsellors and board members considered that self-interested women were inclined to express a female-specific form of negative and manipulative power that was at odds with women's learned power of caring, and feminists' ideal of positive and collaborative power-to.

Participants in this study resorted to strategies to manage the gap between their positive assumptions of and negative experiences with women, to avert sanctions within organizations and/or by the Funder, and to rationalize women's manipulative power. Female socialization to be nice influenced the women's choice of strategies that let them covertly negotiate, rather than overtly confront problems in partner abuse organizations. As

a result, rather than caring, respectful, and collaborative environments that enabled women's positive power, strategies of emotion management, silence, restraint, venting, self-care, denial, and vigilance, created climates of tension and fear in which counsellors and board members were unable to directly express power as confidence. Such findings challenge feminism's portrayal of women's positive and men's negative power and power relations.

Other comments contradicted the feminist assumption of women's equal power, and the value of equality claimed in partner abuse organizations' mission statements. For example, some research participants linked their experiences of disrespect to differences of language, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and ideology. Inequality was suggested by the different perceptions of executive directors, and counsellor and board members. Unlike counsellors, most executive directors did not anticipate internal sanctions for behaviours of judging, expressing anger and rage, and too negative emotions. Neither did executive directors equate disrespect with judgment, nor did they comment on their own feelings of anger and behaviours of rage.

In contrast with counsellors and board members, executive directors did not express a need to avoid women's manipulative power by a strategy of vigilance. Although executive directors were referred to in the comments of counsellors and board members on manipulation, they did not identify women's manipulation as power at the expense of others. Such disparities suggest that executive directors may hold themselves to a different standard of behaviour than counsellors and board members because of their immunity to sanctions and their unique position in the organization hierarchy. Of all types of workers, those executive directors who advocate a business, versus a political approach to partner abuse may scrutinize their own and others' behaviour less closely than do counsellors whose

feminism reflects grassroots consciousness-raising principles. However, as mentioned elsewhere in this study, executive directors may have monitored their own disclosures. The next chapter explores such possibilities through its focus on how respondents experienced the feminist proposition of egalitarian power relations among women.

CHAPTER 6 – FEMINISM AND EQUALITY

Although the value of equality has been a cornerstone of modern feminism, gaps in the theory and practice of equality in feminist organizations have been documented (e.g., Murray, 1988:79). Business ethics of professionalism and academic credentials have, for instance, devalued and displaced women's experiential skills (Ahrens, 1980; Ferree & Hess, 1985:65). Differentiated roles and salaries have structured inequalities among workers and, of particular interest to researchers, transformed the counsellor/client relationship. This chapter explores yet other influences on women's equality. It examines contradictions in organizational service model values. Internal operations supported by a feeling rule of silence, and female socialization practices of conflict avoidance and manipulation by silencing and "personalizing", constrained the egalitarian goal of feminism. Experiences of a lack of safety, and experiences of silence and of tension, affected how respondents perceived and practiced equality, and obstructed their ability to develop power as confident voice.

The significance of voice

As previously discussed, participants in this study perceived that in conditions of respect for self and others, women would develop positive power as the ability to make choices with confidence. Counsellors (9), board members (4), and one executive director claimed that respect would enable women's positive power as the ability to confidently express and experience voice (#15). One executive director described voice as "feeling valued - knowing that my voice, opinions, background count" (#3). Others included the components of speaking, being listened to, and being heard in the concept of voice (#22). For example, self-respect gave a woman the confidence to "speak" to others honestly,

directly, and freely. In consequence, one counsellor described silence as “feeling I can’t speak” (#9). In addition to speaking, a woman’s confidence would be strengthened by others’ respectful “listening” to what she had to say. Thus, another counsellor equated not being listened to with “disrespect...dismissed kind of” (#13). Through the validation of others in word and deed, a woman gained confidence that her input had been considered. For this reason, the effect of not being “heard” was described by one board member as “feeling a little bit upset because my input hasn’t been considered” (#17). Another board member explained that feelings of respect varied with

how much people listen, seem to listen to what you say. Do they respond to something, pick up on something, ignore what you said, act as though you never said it? If you do things but people attribute that or comments you make to somebody else, then you feel that maybe you’re not heard. Lots of times I say something and I feel it does get heard because somebody comes back to that comment. (#15)

Counsellors (13) especially emphasized that a “powerful woman” speaks, and is listened to and heard by others. They explained the concept of being heard as “Not just an acknowledgment, [not] ‘I can hear that you’re feeling that way’, but...take it and do something with it” (#22). Board members also addressed the issue of speech, highlighting components of being listened to and heard (#2, 15, 20, 21). One woman reported however, that some board colleagues “weren’t listened to” (#21). Of the two executive directors who commented on speaking and being heard, one disclosed that “What I say is heard more easily by management [and] people can feel left out because of that” (#3, 6). One board member imagined that “If we can really listen and take time to hear...we would probably end up with a fair amount of respect for each other” (#10).

That data indicates that the suppression of women's voice undermined their self-esteem and impeded their ability to develop positive power as confidence. Pringle (1988:32, 58) has explained of such consequences that:

The loss of self coincides with a loss of voice in relationship. Voice is an indicator of self. Speaking one's feelings and thoughts is part of creating, maintaining, and recreating one's authentic self. If reciprocal relations between the women are expected or promised, there may be bitter disappointment if things do not work out that way.

For participants in this study, experiences of women's not listening to, and not hearing what they had to say was particularly disappointing. Not only did disrespect for voice conflict with their socialized assumption of women's good caring. It contradicted their learned assumption that feminists value equality among women. The findings presented in the next section indicate that women's respectful speaking, listening, and hearing on power differences in partner abuse did not extend to power differences among women at work.

Silence and inequality

Since 1993, Ottawa area partner abuse organizations that are funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services have claimed to follow a "Framework for Services for Abused Women". According to the author, that document reflects the input of the Funder, service providers, abused women, and individual and organization "friends" (Regional Coordinating Committee to End Violence Against Women, September 1993:4). The "core values" declared in the framework service model include "woman-positive, accountability, accessibility, choice, equality, responsibility, respect for differences" (RCCEVAW, September 1993:5, 13). It will be recalled that the value of equality was similarly stated in the organizational mission statements reviewed for this project.

In principle, most executive directors (4) and board members (4) advocated workplace-focused discussions of power. One executive director considered voice, or speaking about and listening to and hearing perceptions of others about inequality, to be logical because “We name power in relations women have with abusers [so] why wouldn’t we name power in our own settings?” (#6). Of note, board members perceived that dialogue about power inequalities was a first step to encouraging women’s awareness of their power (#15). They envisaged finding “common ground”, and “promoting...shared power”, rather than judging women’s power “right or wrong” (#15, 24). All counsellors (17) were likewise eager to “bring [inequality] out into the open” and “name and let out the unsaid things” (#1, 13). Like board members, counsellors welcomed discussions of power relations that would facilitate women’s recognition of their power (#29). One counsellor commented that “Talking about power helps us realize who has it and who doesn’t. Once we realize who has power and doesn’t, then we can talk about equalizing it” (#29).

The comments of counsellors and board members presented in this section indicate, however, that respect for voice did apply to all subject areas. While speaking about power differences in partner abuse was encouraged, listened to, and heard, a feeling rule of silence discouraged discussions of workplace power inequalities. One board member commented, laughing, that in the context of partner abuse, “We talk about power all the time!” (#21). With regard to internal power relations, however, another board member explained that:

The power and control model has really infiltrated the anti-violence movement so [power] is really used a lot but not understood a lot. It’s structural and gender specific, as opposed to actual behaviours. Like the links [to behaviours] haven’t been made. (#24)

One counsellor likewise stipulated that “We just use the words in kind of a covert way to create a façade. We talk about women’s power on a superficial level. We use the words but

we don't challenge them on a fundamental level" (#9). Executive directors did not identify a feeling rule of silence about internal relations of inequality. As noted previously, that type of discussion might have revealed their own use of power and threatened their sense of self as fair and equitable feminists dedicated to the goal of empowerment. For this reason, it is not surprising that silence was differently perceived by counsellors, board members, and executive directors.

Gendered assumptions of "more listening" by women, and men's "inclination to silence women" were occasionally expressed (#4, 21). More typically, however, counsellors (10) and board members (2) echoed the view that because of a "taboo" or feeling rule of silence, women are not "allowed" to "address...the existence of power in our workplace and power differences" (#1, 5). In one board member's view, the feeling rule of silence about power inequalities masks "what's really happening" in women's organizations (#15). One counsellor specified that equality is "often under the guise of all the feminist propaganda. It's women who...have all the feminist rhetoric....[and] they're the ones who are doing the most harm for the last few years in different agencies!" (#5). Counsellors claimed that women's equality was an illusion to which anti-violence workers are "trained" (#9, 11). To be hired by partner abuse organizations, one counsellor explained that "I would say equal in theory because that's one of the requirements in an interview. You need to have a certain understanding of woman abuse" (#19). Only one board member overtly agreed with counsellors that "I think that our biggest bullshit between women is our equality. We're not equal" (#21).

By silencing contradictory opinion and evidence, organizations managed an appearance of commitment to the value of equality espoused by the framework service

model, mission statements, and feminism. Moreover, counsellors and board members suggested that the practice of unequal power relations in partner abuse organizations was obscured by a feeling rule of silence. Silence hindered women's ability to speak, be listened to, and heard and accordingly, prevented women from developing power as confident voice. The next section reveals that although participants identified respect as a necessary condition of developing confidence, and the framework service model of the organizations included the value of "respect for differences", disrespect silenced some women's voice.

Silence and disrespect for difference

Differences of language and class

Inequality of voice was linked to women's language abilities. Eleven of the women who were interviewed said that anglophone women were more encouraged to speak, and were listened to and heard better than women who speak English as a second or third language (#4, 5, 15). One counsellor explained that:

Women who don't speak the language as well aren't listened to as much. I've often heard, and I've probably done it myself...cut off women who are talking because they talk either too slow or because they don't have a grasp of the language. (#8)

English-speaking counsellors were felt to be "treated better by management" (#19). One executive director identified "incredible language barriers at the Board level", while a board member recalled that women speaking English as a second or third language "never felt that comfortable to say 'Stop the meeting [because] I don't even know what they're saying'" (#20, 21). English programs for abused women were said to receive better funding than programs for other language groups (#13).

As well as by language, voice was unequally privileged by class, defined by the women in this study as economic assets and values. According to research participants,

women perceived to be middle/upper class were more free to speak and more likely to be listened to and heard than women from working class backgrounds. One board member explained the relationship between voice and class values in her observation that “If you grow up in a small village and you don’t have the social skills, that has a big impact on how you come across” (#2). In contrast, meetings were delayed until a middle-class, professional woman was in attendance, and middle-class women were felt to be “heard more than others” (#21, 29). Counsellors stated that “The better the expression, the more the speaker’s power”, and the better management’s treatment (#18, 19, 24).

For example, middle/upper class women were more likely to be offered opportunities for advancement than working class women. One counsellor commented that “Who’s going up? The ones who fit into your profile of what management looks like!” (#29). Such perceptions of exclusionary silencing suggest that women who did not speak English as a first language, and women with working class incomes and/or values were less respected and less able to develop confidence of voice than English speaking and middle/upper class women. Different ideologies of equality were also associated with executive directors’ silence, and counsellors silenced voice.

Differences of ideology

Reflecting organizations’ framework service model values of “accountability” and “responsibility”, counsellors (3) and board members (2) welcomed measures that would encourage “accountability to those whom the power is over”, “equalizing out the power on paper”, and “rejecting...bad power”. Only one executive director mentioned the need to use power “responsibly” (#6). In contrast, for counsellors, inequality was reflected in executive directors and/or board members’ attitudes of “superiority” (#14, 16, 18, 26). Some board

members speculated that executive directors and board members' attitudes of "superiority", "abusive policies", and women's disregard for "where people are at emotionally" would constitute inequality (#2, 10, 21).

According to the counsellors, breaking the silence on women's unequal relations requires "honesty" on the part of executive directors by, for instance, "recognizing that they are actually in a position of power" and "taking responsibility for your actions" (#1, 16, 27). Honest dialogue, in one counsellor's opinion, hinged on "acceptance that someone does have the power" (#4). Another counsellor attributed the tendency to restrict dialogue to power dynamics in partner abuse to a lack of "willingness" and "honesty" by executive director and board members (#1). Only one board member generally agreed that "honesty" plays a critical role in any dialogue (#15).

Counsellors emphasized their frustrated attempts to hold executive directors accountable for behaviours that they interpreted as unequal power-over, or domination. One woman objected to executive directors "getting away with it" (#19). Another counsellor reported that executive directors avoided personal accountability and responsibility by "shifting the blame" to the Funder. In her words, "The executive director is saying, 'I can't make a decision – it's the Board's decision' [so] it becomes a way of not making decisions or not being accountable for decision-making" (#9). Indeed, executive directors and one board member tended to attribute unequal power relations to the Funder's expectation of organizational hierarchies, rather than to their own behaviours of domination.

One executive director attributed her "power" and practice of "imposing an agenda" to external factors because "the Funder's trying to give you a lot more power than you want, give the Board more power" (#7). Another executive director claimed that "If there's any

friction it's because the Government continually puts our funding at risk so we're always in a crisis" (#25). An executive director and board member respectively described organizations' relations as a "hostage situation" in which "We're kind of at [the Funder's] mercy" (#20, 30). Executive directors' apparent lack of discussion on such issues as silencing indicates that counsellors and board members' perceptions of executive directors' behaviour may be more realistic than the perceptions provided by executive directors themselves.

Although executive directors (5) did not specifically use the word "honesty", they frankly acknowledged power inequalities in the interviews conducted for this research (#3, 20, 25). One woman commented that "I think in practice you're not equal in terms of employer/ employee relationships ever" (#7). Another executive director reported that "On paper, yes, [equal]. In practice I would say there's probably some inequalities" (#23). It was explained by another executive director that:

One of the things we talk about here all of the time is, as much as you can try to share power, power exists. As an executive director I have power over paid staff and volunteers. Paid staff have power over volunteers. Volunteers have power over clients. It's kind of dangerous that people say 'No, we're all equal. Everybody's equal'. It's not true. (#6)

However, executive directors may have been more honest with me in the interviews than they typically are at work. In that event, counsellors may have interpreted executive directors' silence as a "dishonest" denial of unequal workplace relations. Having witnessed executive directors' silence, denial, and blaming dominating power on the Funder, counsellors were silenced by an intuitive feeling that if they spoke about unequal relations, they would not be listened to and heard.

Repeated experiences of executive directors' lack of accountability and responsibility for dominating behaviour may have fostered among counsellors an assumption that they have dissimilar ideologies of workplace equality. Accordingly, counsellors may have anticipated that because executive directors accepted unequal power relations as a "normal" feature of organizations that are hierarchically structured, they would not be listened to and heard if they spoke about equalizing power. Supporting that speculation, some counsellors perceived that their voice was internally constrained by an "upper echelon" who are loathe to change, or unwilling "to give up power", or who are "benefiting from it" (#4, 22, 26). They considered this to be the main reason that executive directors avoided discussions concerning their role in the creation and perpetuation of the feeling rule of silence and the unequal work relations that they experienced.

In support of this perception, although one executive director recognized that "If you're not talking about power, you're not sharing power", others claimed that you could "reduce your power just by talking about it" (#3, 6, 23). As a result, rather than creating respectful relationships, promoting the feminist goal of equality, and supporting research participants' goal of power as confident voice, perceptions of executive directors' domination silenced counsellors and undermined their confidence. The next section explores how female socialization also influenced the voices of counsellors, executive directors, and board members on inequality.

Socialization and organizational climates

With the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, participants in this research may have felt safer in the interviews than they do at work in the company of counsellors, executive directors, and board members. My past experiences with partner abuse

organizations lead me to suggest that women's frank admission to differences of opinion was uncharacteristic of their interpersonal relations. As such, the interview testimonies provide a privileged glimpse into the perceptions that underlie the tension, lack of safety, and silence that constrain women's ability to develop power as confident voice.

They indicate that workplace feeling rules of too much emotionality, too negative emotions, and silenced voice can have an impact on relations of inequality and repeat the silencing of self and others that research participants had learned as girls, through female socialization. Consequently, the women in this study had internalized and took into their work feelings of powerlessness, or a lack of confident voice that could not be "fixed" in organizational climates characterized by tension⁶, a lack of safety, and silence/silencing.

Tension and confident voice

Almost as many participants reported tension between counsellors and executive directors (19), as they did tension among counsellors (18). Women (13) also interpreted tense relations between executive directors and board members. Perhaps due to their infrequent contact and lack of insider knowledge, few women (5) perceived relations of tension between counsellors and board members. ~~Rather~~ ^{Furthermore;}, most respondents understood relations among board members to be largely harmonious. Thus, counsellors reported that within their ranks and also in their relations with executive directors and board members, "There's definitely political and philosophical differences" (#1, 5, 18, 22, 28, 29).

One counsellor emphasized a gap between "how we should be doing things and how we do things" (#12). Pertaining to executive directors, counsellors identified a "power dynamic that's a problem", "bosses who disrespect", and those who treat counsellors

⁶ Because "conflict" is rarely, if ever, openly expressed by workers in partner abuse organizations, the word "tension" is used in this study to more accurately reflect workplace climates of covert strain.

unequally (#4, 11, 22). One executive director reported “conflicts over feminism and what that means....role differences” (#3). Another executive director identified “different interpretations of job descriptions, expectations, policy, focus on our work” (#23). In board members’ experience, different opinions pertained to “how a feminist organization works. One says ‘This is the way it’s done’, and the other says, ‘But we don’t have to do it that way’” (#10, 15). Another board member highlighted debate on “what is the style of management that works for [the organization]” (#24).

Lack of safety, silence, and confident voice

Although differences were perceived and experienced, female socialization to be nice identified in the previous chapter left the women unprepared to verbalize, or confidently speak their discontent. Rather, pressures to be nice and avoid conflict fostered personal and organizational tensions. For example, one counsellor recalled a “bad energy” and “a sense that something was wrong” (#14). Another counsellor observed that “People get edgy. Frustration levels rise” (#8). Specifically in relation to executive directors, counsellors reported “a feeling among staff that it’s not safe to bring up a lot of issues” (#8, 14, 27). In her relationships with counsellors, one executive director experienced “real strains” (#7). Yet another executive director explained that “You can just tell that there’s a level of frustration, of something simmering. The people just aren’t feeling safe or comfortable with taking anything forward” (#23). A board member commented that “I don’t say too much because I want to keep the peace” (#2). In the words of one board member, “My sense is there probably is a lot more disagreement than shows” (#10). For board members, repressed disagreement was felt as “discomfort”, “being silenced...not heard”, and “just ignored” (#2, 15, 17).

Female socialization informs the suggestion that a lack of safety impedes women's open discussion of their different opinions on equality. I suggest that safety through silence is also a familiar pattern of indirectness that is learned through females' socialization to be nice and conflict-avoidant girls. Lack of safety is instead associated with directness, and the unfamiliar world of men. For example, one executive director suggested that "Probably women get into conflict with each other more often because it's safer to do so. It's not as safe to have a conflict with a man" (#6). Counsellors also stated that "The lines of power are more clearly defined with men", and "With a male boss I might think twice...to talk when we have power conflicts" (#9, 18). Hence, the all-female interactions that dominate female partner abuse work tend to create and sustain patterns of indirectness in communication and the use of conflict avoidance techniques.

Researchers have linked with adolescent girls, a lack of "effective voice" and feelings of "isolation and psychological distress" that, in maturity, is experienced as "devastating", energy-draining, and confusing (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995:3, 156). According to the authors, "The stakes may also increase over time when the consequences of being unsupported in raising difficult issues on the job include putting a career in jeopardy" (Taylor et al., 1995:156). In this research, women also felt tension that is "emotionally draining" and feared for their jobs (#8, 14). More important, the fear of unsafe directness encouraged self-silence, the silencing of others, and personal and work-related tension, rather than women's positive power, or confident voice.

Specifically, counsellors were "afraid" of repercussions by executive directors and board members, but particularly fearful of reprisal by executive directors, with whom they had more frequent contact (#19, 22). Their "emotional well-being...could be in jeopardy" if

power was discussed in the presence of executive directors and board members because “The people with the power may feel attacked” (#8). Counsellors feared that “Whatever conversations we have...are going to be picked up by people in positions of power and destroyed and fragmented” or “perceived as out of line” (#9, 14). In the presence of executive directors, one counsellor related that “We just shut up and take it, and don’t say anything in response” (#22). One counsellor stated that “I think the people with more power are able to vent their feelings about conflicts but I think the staff tends to go underground with them” (#8). A counsellor recalled that, having “confronted” an executive director, “The executive director felt very threatened so in my position, what is my power?” (#13).

Another counsellor explained that:

I think the problem is that the people who have the power-over aren’t necessarily willing to hear the part...that they might have power-over. I had to deal with that...and I worded it really carefully and she just didn’t want to hear it. If they’re a power-over person they’re not willing to give it up. (#26)

Accordingly, in their discussion of executive directors counsellors disclosed that “I don’t think that I can just be open and say whatever I want whenever and feel safe”, and “We don’t...trust her” (#12, 14).

However, while talking more generally of all work relations, one counsellor proposed that “In discussing power, it can be perceived as weaknesses. You can tell what the other person’s weaknesses are and then the person that has power...can get more powerful” (#22). As a result, counsellors generally considered that speaking out was more of a liability than an asset. As one woman explained, “If you want [an issue] to go your way, it certainly is a good thing to know in advance where people sit on it” (#12). More typically, however, counsellors’ comments reflected the view that “You have to be careful what you say, how you do things” (#8). Yet despite counsellors’ perceptions that executive

directors and board members had greater latitude to express their views, both of these types of respondents also felt unsafe. For example, one executive director said,

The cost that comes to mind for me is that sometimes I feel really vulnerable when I talk about [power]. I think that there's a cost to feeling exposed or vulnerable....I think another cost is that if you talk about it openly, if you're really being open about it, like if I'm talking about it with a colleague who has a bit less power than me, then I'm opening it a bit because she can then criticize me. So I'm giving up a bit of power. If I'm talking about it with somebody who has more power than me, then the potential costs are much more. Then they could be judging me. They could be rejecting me – emotional costs. They could fire me, depending on what the context was. (#3)

Another executive director craved an atmosphere “where it’s safe to admit that you fucked up....not [be] judged for the next six years!” (#7). A third recalled instances of blame where “If you made a mistake it was management’s fault, and not the employee’s” (#20). For one executive director and one board member, issues related to internal power dynamics could only be raised by an already “brave group of people” or “a very grounded, secure woman” (#2, 23). One board member acknowledged that “It can be quite hurtful to hear certain things about ourselves” (#15). Board colleagues “didn’t dare offer a conflicting view because of concern of it being distorted or misrepresented or seen only in a narrow context” (#15). A board member recalled that:

[The Board] didn't enjoy the discussions of power when it came to them having to change. They loved the discussions of working with the members in a way that made them feel empowered, but when it meant your behaviours have to change... [counsellors] wanted to flatten the hierarchy. Well, you can change a structure, but then you have to change your working relationships with people. Well, they didn't want to hear that. (#24).

Yet other board members anticipated reactions of “defensiveness” or “anger” from counsellors, executive directors, and/or board colleagues if they expressed individual or conflicting viewpoints (#17, 30).

Such comments indicate that women are “caught” in tension between a learned norm of female indirectness, and a feminist ideal of assertiveness. As previously reported, the women in this study aspired to be a “powerful woman” who confidently speaks her opinion and is respectfully listened to and heard by others. However, feeling rules, combined with the tension and lack of safety expressed in this section reflected instead, the maintenance of nice and conflict-avoidant behaviours to which the women had been socialized. The next section examines how the women in this research managed to bridge the gap between the familiar and the new, or indirect and assertive voice.

Conflict avoidance and confident voice

In organizations, Hochschild (1990:122) claims that women’s experiences are shaped by an “ideology (or culture)” that prescribes “feeling rules” or “rules about what feeling is or isn’t appropriate to a given social setting”. As noted in Chapter 5, research participants developed strategies to circumvent feeling rules that discouraged and punished the expression of too much and too negative emotion. This chapter has identified another feeling rule of silence that affects relations of inequality among women. Added to such feeling rules, female socialization to be nice and avoid conflict limited research participants’ ability to develop power as confident voice.

In support of this claim, Beaudry (1985:63) has called conflict, “a reality with which women tend to be unfamiliar”. Such unfamiliarity has also been linked to girls’ socialization to “be nice” (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995:146). Avoidance, however, blocks the development of women’s conflict resolution skills and fosters perceptions of conflict as “dangerous” (Taylor et al., 1995:155). For example, the prospect of conflict evoked feelings of “vulnerability” in one counsellor (#13). One board member also stated

that “I think the discomfort...is about trying to find ways that are not hurtful” (#17). Another board member was cautiously hesitant because “Once you put [things] on the table, they’re kind of there. People have said certain things out in the open and that has to be dealt with” (#15). Yet another board member proposed that:

Men think power conflicts are normal. I think men have been raised to have tools to deal with conflict...this kind of one-upmanship or stuff they use. We’re not very good at it and we don’t think it’s normal. We think ‘Oh, conflict – this is really bad’.
(#24)

Similarly, one executive director stated that “Men are given permission to have conflicts [but] women aren’t given permission to do it, or don’t feel comfortable doing it...safe enough to deal with conflicts openly and having the forum to do that” (#6).

In expressing their dissatisfaction, men were considered by counsellors and one executive director to be “more direct” and “overt” than women (#4, 7, 26). According to one board member, “Because they’re aggressive, they tend to get it out” (#21). One executive director and a board member perceived that men “sort of go head to head on an issue” and “With men it’s like, ‘Let’s go and have a beer now’. It’s done” (#21, 23). Rather than directness, one counsellor acknowledged her tendency to “procrastinate” when faced with the possibility of conflict (#26). A board member reported that “Women will tolerate and try to avoid and accommodate” (#30). To avoid open conflict, board members reported that women “go around and around and around” contentious issues, without resolution (#21, 24).

While conflict avoidance represented a safe and familiar behaviour learned through female socialization, and safely complied with the feeling rules within organizations, women from all participant groups (16) claimed that “unresolved” differences of opinion fostered workplace tension (#1). In one counsellor’s words, “I think it creates a lot of

tension, a lot of stress, a lot of undercurrents” (#9). Other counsellors agreed. Some women described the tension from differences of opinion as a “grey zone” and “a time bomb” (#13, 18). Three counsellors and one executive director shared the perspective of a counsellor that “I think it affects the atmosphere when there’s an unresolved conflict. I mean, everybody can feel that” (#12). Both counsellors (3) and executive directors (2) drew attention to non-verbal antagonism from looks on women’s “faces” in meetings or conversation, gestures such as “rolling of the eyes”, “sticking their heads down”, “body language”, and “tone of voice”.

One counsellor speculated that “I guess [differences] just fester underground and then they raise their heads again and maybe they’ll get resolved that second time” (#29). One board member was aware of a lingering “underlying problem”, and one executive director explained that “You talk about something for a while, then it goes away, then it comes back, [and] you talk about it again” (#3, 10). Other counsellors (3) and executive directors (2) and board members (3) perceived that tension was only completely resolved by leaving the organization, the threat of being asked to resign, or being forced out when partner abuse organizations close. Only one of the thirty research participants expressed confidence in her statement that “I’m very comfortable confronting authority and challenging it and I don’t let it silence me. If I think something’s really wrong, I’m going to argue it” (#4).

As well as being socialized to avoid conflict, the tension and silence of participants in this research were influenced by fear of reprisal by the Funder, and loyalty to feminist beliefs. Of the Funder, one counsellor stated that:

Ultimately we’re in such a funny place because if we really address some of the issues that need to be addressed, it’s inevitably going to lead to conflict. There’s

nothing wrong with that except when you have the Community and the Funder saying 'You guys fight one more time and I'm taking away the cookies!'. So how do you become true to a process that has that kind of risk? (#9)

Some participants also expressed a reluctance to contradict the feminist assumption of egalitarian relations among women by speaking the “truth” about power inequalities. In discussing this topic, Ristock (1991:46) has explained that:

Women entering the ‘helping professions’ may have an even more difficult time acknowledging power relations. Those working in feminist social service collectives, while acknowledging the empowerment of women as their goal, disavow power itself as something negative, hurtful and oppressive. The irony is that feminist...workers do have power, denied or not, and their decisions and actions do affect, positively or negatively, the lives of their co-workers and service recipients.

Pessimistically, one board member forecast that discussions among women

won't go well because people won't admit it. We have this incredible shame of admitting that we feel more powerful than someone else, especially in the Women's Movement. But we talk openly about our equality. (#21)

Lacking a sense of being able to resolve these conflicting perspectives, the following section examines how the research participants consciously or unconsciously used the manipulation that they learned through female socialization. Manipulation was employed to block the expression of tension as conflict, the violation of feeling rules, reprisal for too negative emotion, and speaking directly about unequal organizational dynamics.

Manipulation, voice, identity

In this study we have seen evidence of women's powerlessness to directly speak about inequality, and other feeling rules that discouraged the expression of too negative emotions. Given such rules, the dangers of reprisal, and organizational climates of tension from repressed conflict, the women unconsciously or consciously used a strategy of

“personalizing” to avoid open conflict while still verbalizing their discontent. One board member recalled that:

I've seen it at meetings. There will be an impassioned discussion...and all of a sudden they don't talk to each other the rest of the meeting. You don't like me any more. I'm not talking to you any more. You don't see that with men. (#24)

This section explores that manipulative strategy of personalizing, or redirecting disagreement and dissatisfaction toward individual women, and its relationship to the feminist orientation and female socialization of respondents.

From previous chapters it will be recalled that manipulation was, in the perception of research participants, a female-specific, indirect, and self-interested form of negative power.

Pringle (1991:82) has, however, more positively suggested that:

Others have seen women's indirect attempt to meet their own needs as manipulative. In its indirectness, such action appears manipulative; in its intent, the goal is to maintain relationship by removing the bases for deep disagreements. The women's actions to meet her own needs must remain hidden, even to herself. And this indirection and 'manipulation' originate in the woman's sense of powerlessness to act directly for her own interests.

In its fit with the features of indirectness and self-interest that were identified by research participants, I suggest that manipulation by personalizing responds to women's feelings of powerlessness in organizations, the fear of open conflict to which females are socialized, and women's need to maintain their feminist identities. Through personalizing, research participants attempted to avoid the lack of safety experienced within organizational climates of tension, and the sanctions associated with directly speaking about inequalities in organizations. The women were not, however, completely protected from negative reprisal. For example, one board member who tried to clarify a process with an executive director stated that “I think my questioning her decision-making process annoyed her” (#2).

Likewise, a counsellor reported that an executive directors reacted negatively to “people questioning [her] power” (#26).

Women also sought to avoid open conflict, with which they were unfamiliar due to female socialization to ‘be good’ and ‘be nice’. By personalizing, or redirecting disagreement and dissatisfaction toward individual women, through questions, research participants believed that they could safely speak about equality. For participants in this study, speaking about or questioning inequality was perceived to be safe and common only among women. Because of men’s different consciousness of equality and concern with inequality, the women in this study assumed that men would not respond to questioning favourably, without emotional and practical reprisal.

However, research and testimonies on the effects of gender socialization contradict the assumption of women’s safety with women. They instead suggest that personalizing by questioning individuals may create a sense of safety by avoiding open conflict, but remain unsafe in its emotional effects. As Mansbridge (1973:358-359) explains,

In face-to-face groups, a person’s ideas become heavily entwined with his emotional and psychological self. Each person takes criticism of his ideas as criticism of himself and evaluates others’ ideas as extensions of themselves....Because it more frequently involves the emotions, participatory, face-to-face decision making will be particularly hard on those who have trouble facing and handling emotional issues.

Thus, for example, one executive director perceived that women are “much more emotional” than men (#3). As such, another executive director proposed that “Women have more emotional related conflicts. Men....have very job related conflicts” (#20). Counsellors agreed with a colleague’s statement that “more subtle emotional stuff happens with women” (#1, 4, 26, 28).

Illustrating the emotionality of workplace dynamics among women, Morgen

(1995:243-244) found that:

Staff meetings in feminist health clinics are routinely punctuated by the expression of strong feelings, ranging from the taking of passionate positions in the process of decision-making to the more everyday expression of both “good” and “bad” feelings about interpersonal relations. For example, it was not unusual at the clinic in which I did fieldwork for agendas to be interrupted and occasionally replaced by attention to the feelings of a staff member about something going on in the workplace.

In this study, one counsellor identified a “strategy [where] if you don’t want to deal with something, you personalize it (#9)”. An executive director reported that:

Women working together, they’re more likely to challenge each other. We say, ‘Wait a second. Why are you saying that to me in that tone? We’re equals’. They’re not likely to say that to a man. There’s a lot of ‘hooks’ in conversations. What I mean by ‘hooks’ are things that just get thrown out and you think, ‘Oh! Should I take that impression or let that one go?’. That’s really frequent – passive aggression. (#23).

A board member explained that “When women do talk they personalize. We are really committed to our ideas. We take them and we live and breathe them” (#24). One woman recounted thinking, “She’s so nice with others, it must be me” (#13). Owing to women’s vulnerability to criticism, emotional strategies of voice such as personalizing by questioning may exacerbate the tensions that constrain women’s ability to develop power as confident voice.

Through the practice of questioning, the women in this study manipulated their disagreement and dissatisfaction in personal ways toward individual personalities, rather than directly challenging inequalities in organizations, over which they had little control. By expressing some, albeit personalized opposition to inequality in organizational relations, women positively acted in their self-interest, or “own needs” to maintain their feminist identities and politics of equality (Pringle, 1991:82). Participants from all respondent groups

claimed that feminists possess an enhanced “consciousness” of unequal and dominating power relations (#6, 10, 13). Counsellors emphasized their commitment to egalitarian practice (#28). One counsellor noted that “Because we are feminists we are questioning so when we work with women we’re always aware” (#8). Another agreed that feminism has “made me question the things I’ve taken for granted, or aspects that I’ve never looked at before” (#22). Yet another counsellor explained that “Because of our expectations of women....we’re always ready to jump on the least little bit of inequality” (#8). These perceptions exacerbated the process of personalizing and the silencing effect that this behaviour produced.

As well as questioning women’s personal beliefs and behaviours, power dynamics of inclusion and exclusion based on “personality” were identified by women (10) from all respondent groups. Personality was associated with being “liked or not”, or having personal alliances through which women could “benefit”, such as close relational or ideological “proximity to the Executive Director”(#9, 22). It was also related to having skills that are in demand. These included “people skills” that attract colleagues needing “support and understanding”, and “financial”, “problem solving”, and “facilitation” business abilities (#11, 15, 20, 24, 26). Similarly, in researching a hospital ward, Witz, Halford, and Savage (1996:177) found that:

Single sex female workgroups were often described as being emotional, intense, and even ‘bitchy’, but also as fairly open, sharing environments, within which women shared information about non-work matters, but which could also tip into ‘backbiting’.

Pringle’s (1989:246) study of secretaries also indicated that women may “freeze out individuals that they do not like”. In this study, one counsellor similarly reported that “If [women] are against you and they don’t like you, they will do everything possible to find

problems for you and to make you suffer” (#11). Such “not liking” was expressed through actions such as “spreading a bunch of gossip about somebody” (#23). Contradicting feminists’ goal of power as confident voice, Pringle (1989:248) has proposed that the practice of “bitching” symbolizes women’s “powerlessness, their lesser space to manoeuvre, their difficulties in asserting themselves directly”.

In sum, the testimonies of the research participants contradict assumptions of women’s positive power of caring, feminist relations of collaborative power-to, and partner abuse organizations’ value of equality. Counsellors perceived that executive directors were particularly disinclined to care about women’s equality. They perceived that such uncaring stemmed from the unwillingness of executive directors to be held accountable and take responsibility for their behaviours of domination, or power-over. Significantly, rather than collaboration, counsellors and some board members reported that feeling rules that discouraged too negative emotions and encouraged silence impeded their ability to speak, be listened to, and be heard about workplace relations of inequality. Participants in this research interpreted such experiences, and the differential silencing of women by language, class, and ideology as a gap between organizations’ stated values and practices of equality.

Rather than the condition of respect for self and others that would encourage women’s power as confidence of voice, influences of female socialization, feeling rules within organizations, and individual women’s protection of feminism, and fear of the Funder, fostered climates of tension in which women felt unsafe and silenced. Furthermore, the manipulative strategy of personalizing discontent by targeting individual women appeared to exacerbate existing feelings of a lack of safety and silence, and generate new insecurities.

The impact of socialization, outside social forces, internal dynamics of feminist politics of power, and definitions of power are explored in the next, concluding chapter.

CONCLUSION: LIMITATIONS IN FEMINIST POWER ANALYSIS

In Chapter Two I questioned the uniqueness of a feminist analysis of power, given that it shares with male theorists observations of patriarchal, economic, legal-political, and relational forms of dominating power. In this conclusion I suggest that feminists did not formulate an entirely “new” power analysis, but rather, built on the value of caring that they had learned and internalized through female socialization. I suggest that the explanatory potential of feminist power analysis and its models derive from positive assumptions that include female caring, and cooperation, respect, and equality among feminists. In emphasizing positive female power-to and negative male power-over, feminist power analysis is limited in its ability to explain relations of oppression, negative power, and disempowerment among women. Such positive stereotypes have fostered a feminist silence on power that has limited our knowledge of women’s realities and their perceptions and experiences of women’s power.

Female socialization, caring, and feminist power analysis

Spender (1985:28) notes that “There is considerable debate about just how *far* we can break free from our conditioning”. In this section I explore the proposition that a feminist power analysis does not altogether escape the earliest and strongest impact of female socialization. I suggest that the power analysis that emerged in the 1960s reflected what feminists were taught as children. That is that females are different from males but “special” because of their caring for and about others. As adults, women’s experiences of their different social position of subordination, compared to male domination, reinforced the perception that women are different than men. Feminist analysis of power reflects the

assumption that women will, because of their special capacity for caring, “do power differently” than men, given the chance. The analysis of power that feminists constructed also avoids competition and conflict with men for social power, because it is not dominating power-over, but a “special and different” type of caring female power-to that women want.

I propose that feminist analysis incorporates from socialization, an assumption of positive female caring/caretaking. From experiences of male domination, it integrates an assumption of women’s positive versus men’s negative power. Where female socialization promotes the value of caring for all others, feminism particularly focuses on caring for other women, through its values of collaboration, respect, and equality. We have seen those goals reflected in the mission statements of the feminist organizations in which research participants worked, and in the framework service model by which organizations functioned. The theme of caring is also crucial to feminism’s conceptualization of empowerment as a process of building women’s confidence, ideally with the respectful support of other women, so that they can effect personal and social change.

In its models of power-to and power-over, feminist analysis transmits the view that all that is caring is positive and female, and that all that is uncaring is negative and male. This study suggests instead that women behave in positive and negative ways that are assessed against a standard of caring. Behaviours that are perceived as caring are evidence of women’s positive power. Behaviours that are perceived as uncaring are indications of women’s self-interest, or negative power. We have seen that research participants interpreted the dominant social status of men as a reflection of their self-interest, hence lack of caring for women. Through its inadequate funding, the Government of the Province of Ontario was considered not to care about the problem of partner abuse, partner abuse

organizations and workers, and abused women and children. The norms of professionalism and hierarchy that were imposed on organizations by the Funder were also interpreted as evidence of a lack of caring by government for feminist values of grassroots knowledge and experience, and cooperative and egalitarian work practices.

Workplace relations among women could be similarly uncaring. Executive directors and board members who cooperated with the goals of the Funder were viewed as uncaring. Counsellors and board members distrusted the caring of executive directors. Their testimonies of how executive directors expressed disrespect through anger and rage, poor boundaries, judgment, interference in work, and imposing attitudes and behaviours, contradict Hooyman's (1991:253-254) proposition that "Feminist leadership....seeks to institute, as legitimate, the feminine values of caring, service, and concern with relationships". Among counsellors, disrespect for differences accruing to work styles, feminist ideologies, ethnicity and culture, and sexual orientation, was experienced as a lack of caring.

Statements of board members and counsellors about the uncaring of executive directors may reflect the different relations among board members, executive directors, and counsellors. Board members experienced little or no contact with counsellors, but some had limited or regular interaction with executive directors. As a result, they would know more about the behaviour of executive directors than the behaviour of counsellors. Unlike board members, executive directors had opportunities to engage in friendly communication with abused women and children, and were exposed to counsellors on a daily basis.

However, the front line work of counsellors was, in the fullest sense of the term, "emotion work". Reflecting its intensity, only counsellors related that their caring for and

about clients did not stop after work. This may be explained by the close relationships of counsellors with abused women and children, and by their unique and intimate knowledge of their situations and emotional and practical needs. It may also derive from the career commitment of counsellors to caring, versus administrative work. VanEvery (1995:89) has suggested that “In some cases, the *specific job* is linked to their identity as feminists. Thus it is not merely having employment but the content of that employment which is important”. From that perspective, counsellors’ ongoing *caring about* abused women and children and partner abuse reflects the continuity of their feminist identities after their paid *caring for* work ends.

Such findings suggest that owing to female socialization to the value of caring, a feminist power analysis differs from the power perspectives of male theorists. They indicate that feminist models of male power-over and female power-to extend, rather than transcend, the sex-based differences that women learned as girls. Rather than creating a new theory of power, I offer this critique that familiar and false assumptions that are transmitted through socialization are replicated in the feminist assumption of women’s only positive, and men’s only negative power.

Unlike other theories, feminism moves women from the margins to the centre of its inquiries. With regard to power I propose that that is not the case. With a few exceptions, notably the insights of feminist organizational researchers on relations among women, much of what we know about women’s power is in relation to men. The comments of respondents suggest that by accentuating the positive and avoiding the negative, what we have been taught about female power by the women who created and transmitted feminism’s power analysis and sex-differentiated models is only part of a larger and “messier” story. In the

book, Breaking Out Again, Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1993:61) state that “For us ‘feminist theory’ and ‘feminist research’ ought to be concerned with the implications of *feminism* itself”. The following sections examine how this study about how women define women’s power contradicts feminism’s sex-differentiated analyses of oppression, power, and resistance to powerlessness, or empowerment.

Contradictions to feminist power analysis

Women oppressing women

Regarding oppression, Stanley and Wise (1993:61) have claimed that:

The most central and common belief shared by all feminists, whatever our ‘type’, is the presupposition that women are oppressed. It is from this common acceptance that there is indeed a problem, that there is something amiss in the treatment of women in society, that feminism arises. This statement of women’s oppression is a factual one for feminists and is not open to debate.

Findings of women’s negative power challenge the feminist assumption that repressive power is always male. Such evidence contradicts the typical emphasis of feminist researchers on patriarchal relations of male domination and female subordination. It substantiates the alternate proposal by a few academics that females can also oppress females (e.g., Chesler, 2001; Ramazanoglu, 1989).

Drawing on Foucault’s notion of strategies of power, the women in this study were oppressed by silencing, and silenced each other at many levels. They were silenced by collective pressure to maintain the survival of partner abuse organizations, by presenting a positive image to the Provincial Funder and the public from which organizations receive financial and emotional support. In feminist organizations, women were silenced by feeling rules that discouraged expressions of too much and too little caring, and too much and too negative emotionality. Women were silenced by the risk of informal and formal sanctions

for violating feeling rules and learned behavioural norms to be nice and to avoid direct conflict. The silence of some women was related to the feminist assumption of women's positive power, and expectations of collaborative, respectful, and egalitarian relations among women. Other women protected feminism by suppressing contradictory evidence of women's negative relations. Such findings challenge a feminist power analysis, and also its premise that men only oppress women.

Contradiction: The negative power of women

The results of this research suggest that a feminist analysis that compartmentalises power in models of female collaboration and egalitarian relations, or power-to, and male domination and unequal relations, or power-over, cannot fully explain women's realities. While the perceptions of respondents reflected the sex-based power ideology of feminism, their experiences told a different story. They revealed instead that women express power that is both positive *and* negative.

Research participants' expressions and experiences of women's positive and negative power contradict bell hook's (2000:87) claim that "Women...are not taught a different value system. Although women do not have the power ruling groups of men often exert, they do not conceptualize power differently". Rather, for respondents, the "feeling, expressions, and meaning" of women's power developed from their unique experiences of the combined and conflicting values of government, female socialization, and feminism (Gordon, 1981:564). As such, I propose that in feminist emotion cultures where women perform emotion work, females perceive and experience power not in terms of position or wealth, but as positive and negative feelings.

Feeling the positive power of women

Not one, but two types of positive female power emerged from the response of interview participants. The women in this study considered caring to be an indirect power that is imposed on female children through the gender socialization process. In contrast, a direct power of confidence was described as the product of a voluntary process of empowerment through which women, ideally with other women's respectful support, develop self-esteem and belief in their abilities. With self-esteem women would develop the confidence. With inner confidence, they would be able to assert both choice and voice, or speak, be listened to, and be heard by others.

At first impression, the power of caring appeared to be less important to research participants than the power of confidence. Closer scrutiny revealed, however, that caring was considered to be an important quality of positive power in men and women. Only the *indirectness* of caring was viewed as problematic to the women who were interviewed. Women did not aspire to dominating power that feminism has linked to patriarchal traditions of female subordination and women's second class social status. Rather, they wanted the confidence that enables men to be assertive.

Although women desired the confidence to directly express their choices and voices, familiar patterns and unfamiliar prospects constrained that goal. Respondents identified gender socialization as a major constraint on the confident power of women. While socialization fostered in males the confidence to be assertive, indirectness was instead encouraged by female socialization to be passive, or nice and quiet. The women who were interviewed were sensitive to a double social standard that accepts male assertiveness, but interprets female assertiveness as inappropriate behaviour.

Women's consciousness of the limiting effects of female socialization did not, however, translate into confidence-building workplace practices. Instead, respondents repeated behaviours that conformed to the "nice and quiet" message of female socialization. The women who were interviewed reported being silenced and silencing themselves to avoid conflict. As in the outside social world, women who were assertive were seen to violate nice and quiet feeling rules. When counsellors expressed too much and too negative emotion, they were vulnerable to formal (e.g., mediation, firing), and informal (e.g., criticism, ostracism) sanctions.

Although female socialization to power as caring for others was criticized for its indirectness and lack of regard in a social world where male norms of directness dominate, research participants had internalized the value of female caring. As such, they were unwilling to forfeit caring for confidence. Although some women were reluctant to acquire the influence that they associated with a powerful woman, others aspired to a kind of "caring confidence", rather than the "dominating confidence" that they associated with male behaviour.

Feeling the negative power of women

Domination and manipulation were identified as two types of women's negative power. Manipulation was considered to be an indirect, self-interested, and female-specific type of negative power that is fostered by female socialization and reinforced by women's powerlessness in the social world. The women who were interviewed reported that the indirectness of female manipulation had caused them hurt, fostered feelings of a lack of safety from women's emotional or practical reprisal, and triggered their strategies of hyper-vigilance.

As well as manipulation, research participants interpreted negative power as domination that is direct, self-interested, and a feature of male socialization. These traits are not, however, exclusively male. Research participants were critical of direct domination by the Funder, men, and women. Having experienced the practical limitations and emotional pain of male domination, none of the women in this study wished to dominate others. We have seen, however, that counsellors interpreted as domination, executive directors' attempts to control ideas/actions and information, judge their competence, and needlessly monitor their work. Domination conflicted with the value of female caring to which the women had been socialized. As feminists who valued collaboration, respect, and equality, respondents opposed compliance against the will of others, and at the expense of others. Commonalities between manipulation and domination suggest that for the majority of the women in this study, any behaviour of self-interest, whether indirect or direct, or male or female, signalled negative power.

Organizational climates of tension and fear are easier to understand if one considers that anything but caring behaviour could be interpreted as self-interested and hence, evidence of women's negative power. To avoid being seen as self-interested, women publicly managed a 'nice' façade by strategies of emotion management, silence, and restraint. To avoid evidence of self-interest that conflicted with their assumption of female caring, research participants resorted to a strategy of denial. They privately vented their not nice feelings with people whom they trusted. In personal time away from work, they sought to restore a positive sense of identity through strategies of self-care, such as hobbies, and family time.

The themes of caring/not caring that were respectively reflected in feminist models of positive female power-to and negative male power-over, and in definitions of women's positive and negative power, were also linked to the confidence-building process represented in the feminist notion of empowerment.

Contradiction: Disempowered feminist workers

From a feminist perspective, women can resist powerlessness by developing self-esteem that enables the confident assertion of their choices and voices at individual and social levels. The presence or absence of caring, interpreted as women's respectful support, was seen to facilitate or constrain respondents' goal of power that is both caring and confident. However, external and internal factors have negatively affected the transformative and confidence-building potential of the empowerment process that feminists envisioned.

The spirit of sisterly solidarity and political activism that began with the Women's Movement of the 1960s and motivated women's consciousness-raising groups and grassroots feminist organizations are things of the past. Rather, academics have observed the current invisibility of the Women's Movement (Taylor & Whittier, 1993:543). The women who were interviewed also perceived that the social influence of women has eroded since that time. Government funding has bureaucratized the structure of feminist organizations and imposed professional standards on partner abuse workers.

Originally geographic in context, Stonequist's (1937:212) concept of "marginal culture area" informs the organizational predicament of feminists. Stonequist (1937:212, 214, 217) proposed that:

Where two cultures overlap and where the occupying group combines the traits of both cultures....It is the conflict of groups possessing different cultures which is the

determining influence in creating the marginal man. His is not a problem of adjusting a single looking-glass self, but two or more such selves. And his adjustment pattern seldom secures complete cultural guidance and support, for his problem arises out of the shifting social order itself.

The marginal status of social service organizations reflects a lack of regard by government.

Of the work, Hooyman (1991:253) has stated that:

Social work is a profession that tends to be devalued by our society, in part because it is characterized by female values of care and concern that are viewed as secondary in status compared with marketplace values of competition and gain.

Social services are characteristically under-funded and vulnerable to government cutbacks.

They are simultaneously occupied with “toeing the line” to maintain existing government support, and locating new funding sources to supplement shortcomings and subsidize the program expansion demanded by the Funder. Such alternatives may, for instance, include special grants and corporate and personal donations.

Referring to work roles, Alperin and Ritchie (2001:6) have determined “human service workers” as being marginal. Participants in this study recounted that they were over-worked, under-paid, and stressed by their awareness of the vulnerability of their organizations to government funding cutbacks and, failing compliance with imposed conditions, closure. Constrained by time and workload, partner abuse workers struggled to fulfill the empowerment goals of feminism and feminist organizations through their respectful support of abused women.

While common feelings of being under “siege” by government could have drawn feminist workers closer, that was not the case. Rather, respondents indicated that their socialization to distrust female competitiveness and manipulation was compounded by internal tensions from organizational feeling rules, informal sanctions, and coping strategies of repression and vigilance. For counsellors, their vulnerability to formal sanctions

increased their distrust of board members and executive directors. Because of working conditions, partner abuse workers lacked the emotional energy and time to support each other.

As the women in this study have testified, a perceived lack of respect among workers additionally constrained their empowerment. Although counsellors experienced their work with clients as empowering, relations of disrespect among board members, executive directors, and counsellors constrained women's self-esteem and ability to develop confident power. Such findings contradict the image of empowered workers that a feminist power analysis leads one to expect. They cannot be explained by feminism due to its positive assumptions about women's caring behaviour.

Despite feminism's goal of empowering women, I suggest that it has had more impact on women's perceptions of power than their ability to feel powerful. Although all (30) research participants agreed in principle that they have things to "learn about power dynamics between women", only a few (3) women were able to identify *what* they had yet to learn. Their comments indicate that women resist the possibility of women's negative power. A counsellor expressed her frustration with women who deny their "power abuses" (#4). Another counsellor proposed that "Maybe I'm a little bit idealistic sometimes about my feelings about women's power because I want to think that we're more evolved [than men] (#8)".

One board member and two counsellors reported that they needed to learn how to be "comfortable" with being powerful (#18). Although one executive director claimed that "I'm quite comfortable with my analysis of power", she did not comment on her practice of power (#6). Another executive director noted that:

If I were to leave this position...I would need to do some serious work on myself before going into another position - to make sure I was grounded and was who I really feel I am, as opposed to the person that I compromised in order to survive in a certain atmosphere. (#23)

Two board members, one executive director, and a few (3) counsellors assumed from feminism that their power should be positive, rather than negative. According to one board member, women's power should not be self-interested and "used in an egocentric way to improve just me (#30)". One counsellor suggested that she needed to learn how to "use my power in good ways" (#4).

Some (6) women recognized negative power from their experiences. One counsellor recalled that "I was very naive....for me it was just good power that women had" (#13). Rather than acceptance, the comments of respondents suggest that for feminists, women's negative power is an anomaly that must be resisted and can be transformed. Women wanted to know how to "recognize the difference between good power and bad power in myself and others" (#4). One board member suggested that "I think you have to learn that when you see something happening that someone is using their power in a negative way, to have the courage to challenge that. That's hard. And to do it in a way that's kind, but frank" (#2).

Aside from producing positive female assumptions and ideals, feminism has failed in its goal of empowering women to resist feelings of powerlessness. Research participants struggled to understand, in one counsellor's words, "What is women's power? You're the expert here!" (#28). To feel powerful some women looked inward for "clues". One counsellor recounted that "If I don't know that I have power and I link power and choices, then when I exercise my choices I'm exercising my power" (#14). One board member speculated that she might be powerful based on her self-esteem. She said that, "I don't know if I have power, actually. I feel good about myself, but I don't know" (#2).

In contrast, some women sought feelings of being powerful from others, through positive reflections of self. One counsellor explained that:

I mean everybody wants to have some power and influence in a group. I don't think I'm like, power-hungry, but I think more for me it's respect. I only really need to have the respect of my co-workers and that's it. (#12)

Some (6) counsellors were entirely unsure whether they had any power and how they could become powerful. They echoed one woman's desire to "really understand what kind of power I have" (#1). Clearly, feminism needs to enhance women's understanding of how to become powerful. I suggest that that is only possible if feminists first ascertain, as this study attempts, what power is it that women want.

Breaking the silence

Feminism's sex-differentiated power analysis is understandable in the context of the Women's Movement of the 1960s and its focus on raising public consciousness of the impact of patriarchal oppression, and inspiring women to resist personal and social powerlessness. Silverman (1994:271) has, however, pointed out that:

Views of power...change over time, in a dialectical exchange between members and their world, the one always interacting with the other. Women in such groups, and their views of power, are not 'affected' by the politics around them – for that would imply them to be separate from it – but are part of its making, part, in short, of political history.

Feminism's analytic models of positive female power-to and negative male power-over should have, and perhaps were intended as starting points for an ongoing process of re-evaluation that has only selectively taken place.

Feminists have been willing to confront the impact of institutional power on women. Their studies document historical changes of ideological co-optation in feminist organizations due to government funding. In contrast, there has been a silence about power

relations among women that contradict assumptions of female caring and positive power, and assumptions of cooperation, respect, and equality among feminists. Atwood (2001:33) recently commented of feminism that:

Theory is a positive force when it vitalizes and enables, but a negative one when it is used to amputate and repress, to create a batch of self-righteous rules and regulations, to foster nail-biting self-consciousness to the point of total block.

In the 1980s, feminists pressured feminists to recognize the false assumption of homogeneity embedded in the notion of equality (i.e., Dill, 1983:146). Women's testimonies of exclusion forced acknowledgement that women are not all the same. The slow, painful, and ongoing dialogue on the diversity of women has enriched feminism as a world-view and as an inclusive identity. It has facilitated the distinct contribution of feminists to our knowledge about women's common and unique cultural experiences. To facilitate similar growth in a feminist power analysis, I suggest that feminists need to reject the false assumption of only caring and positive female power, and assumptions of always cooperative, respectful, and egalitarian relations of power among feminists. To make a feminist power analysis inclusive of women and relevant to women requires a painful letting go of ideals. Inclusiveness also requires new movement toward the integration of insights that are grounded in the interpersonal and organizational experiences of women's positive and negative power.

Feminists can encourage that process by resisting the fear of being labelled "unfeminist" and instead, drawing attention to all kinds of female dynamics in academic and activist work. To ensure that women's realities are represented as accurately as possible, feminists can contribute to research, their perceptions and experiences. As my challenges in recruiting participants for this study indicate, representation of these realities requires of

feminists a willingness to break the silence and resist pressures to protect feminism, feminist organizations, and feminist sisters.

In organizations that claim to be feminist in name or philosophy, board members and executive directors need to encourage by example, discussions about power that are more than superficial, and safe from the risk of informal and formal sanctions. Dialogue can begin by identifying gaps between the principles and practice of feminism. For some organizations, the result may be a transition away from their feminist identities. I suggest that the latter is a less traumatic alternative than the “crazy-making” contradictions that workers experience in organizations that only purport to be feminist or operate by feminist values. Additionally, feminists who influence children and youth can have substantial impact upon the direction of a feminist power analysis by resisting gendered stereotypes of negative and positive power. We can resist expecting that girls will be caring, and that boys will be assertive.

Feminists can also resist “settling” for a type of power that is possible, rather than desirable. In the 1970s, Mansbridge (1973:366) suggested that “Some [women] may decide to forego complete equality of influence and settle for equality of *respect*”. Fifteen years later, Hartsock (1988:295-296) proposed that:

We must recognize the importance of responsibility as a source of power (energy) for individual members of feminist organizations. To have responsibility for a project means to have the respect of others in the group.

Although respect was pivotal to being an authority with power, respondents did not perceive respect as women’s power. Respect was a more complex concept and process. It was instead identified as a caring condition that enables women to develop positive power as confidence. Supported by the respect of others, the women who were interviewed aspired to

positive power as a caring confidence that would enable their direct assertion of choice and voice.

Resistance to breaking the silence

I propose that a feminist analysis of power that encourages confidence of choice and voice will require a devaluation of caring that will be strongly resisted as a threat to female identity. Women have been told and learned to feel special and unique because of our caring/caretaking feelings and skills. With rare exceptions (e.g., Chesler, 2001; Ramazanoglu, 1989), a pattern of selective silence by feminists about women's power is, I suggest, a protective defence of a caring female identity. The strategy of silence avoids the identity crisis that looms in questioning, 'Who will we be if we are not what we have been told we are?'. This research reflects respondents' desire for a power of confidence that includes, rather than sacrifices, women's power of caring. The evidence in this dissertation suggests that such strain is counter-productive to feminist wishes and goals, and creates ambivalence about being powerful women, and a paralysis of feminist theory.

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Appendix A

Submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Carleton University, 1998

Statement of Purpose

Over the past three decades, feminists of diverse political persuasions have viewed power through a gendered lens. Power-over, or what feminists have called “bad power” (Lips, 1991:7), has been linked to society's understanding (Miller & Cummins, 1992; Stamm & Ryff, 1984) of men's “money and control over other people” (Miller & Cummins, 1992:426), or male “domination” (Miller, 1991:198). Power-to or “good power” (Lips, 1991:7) has been associated with women's personal or collective “empowerment” (Yoder & Kahn, 1992; Albrecht & Brewer, 1990), or their “influence for some general good or collective entity” (Miller, 1991:199).

Drawing on the insights of symbolic interactionists, ethnomethodologists, and sociologists in the fields of organization culture and emotion, this research project will probe, through interviews and mission statements, such definitional assumptions (Weber, 1996) and the influence of, for example, class, ethnicity, politics, and sexual orientation on feminist workers' definitions of women's power.

Duration of interviews/Location

Judging by the pre-test, each interview is expected to take between 1 1/2 and 2 hours. Provision for a short follow-up interview is included in the letter of consent. Respondents will be given the choice of being interviewed in an office at Carleton, in their home, or at their work place. The interviews will be scheduled and conducted in the Fall of 1998.

Data Collection Procedure

Two types of data provide the foundation for this research project. Mission statements may provide a baseline against which work place ideologies that assume women's equal power, women's unity and equality, and/or recognition of women's diversity (Ristock, 1990) can be compared to respondents' lived work experiences of power dynamics (Spalter-Roth & Schreiber, 1995). However, due to the intervention of provincial funders in the affairs of local feminist organizations in recent years, language disparities between past and present mission statements are suspected (Ng, 1988). To accommodate participants' retrospective and current accounts, efforts will be made to obtain both archive (late 1980s/early 1990s) and active documents. As materials in the public domain, access to mission statements is not expected to pose a problem.

Guided by the perspectives of symbolic interactionists and grounded theorists, in-depth interviews have been determined to be the 'best' means to acquire data on how feminists define and interpret women's power. Interviews can, for example, elicit rich experiential details that other, less intimate research techniques may miss. Data will be collected from in-depth (1 1/2 to 2 hour) tape-recorded interviews with at least fifty self-identified feminist women who have worked and are currently working in the Region's partner abuse organizations. It is hoped that my 'insider' standing in feminist and partner abuse circles will allay respondent concerns, and offset access problems reported by other researchers (i.e., Armstead, 1995, Pennell, 1987).

Sampling Strategy

To maximize opportunities for comparison, data will be collected through in-depth interviews with at least fifty self-identified feminist women who have worked, and are currently working as counsellors, directors, and board members in same-sex and mixed-sex partner abuse organizations at different stages of development. Fifteen such work places in the municipality of Ottawa-Carleton have been identified. Respondents will be recruited through personal contacts, announcements at staff and board meetings, and snowball sampling. Efforts will be made to equally represent variables such as education, ethnicity, income, and sexual orientation.

Letter of Consent

The attached letter of consent specifies to respondents my expectations of their participation in the research study, and their rights and recourse. The women will be asked to read the letter of consent, and will be given a copy for their records. To protect their anonymity in the small local partner abuse work community, participants will not be asked to sign their names. Other confidentiality precautions are outlined in the letter.

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Appendix B

Date

Dear [partner abuse organization]:

You may know me as a crisis worker at [shelter name], or through my work on lesbian partner abuse. Wearing another 'hat', I am a graduate student whose Ph.D. dissertation focuses on women and power. By investigating how female feminists in partner abuse organizations define power, I question the feminist assertion that 'power-to' or empowerment is female, and 'power-over' or domination is male.

Your voice is crucial to this research project. Accordingly, this letter requests your participation in a 1 1/2 to 2 hour interview, at a time, date, and place of your choosing. You will not be required to answer any question that causes you discomfort, and will be free to withdraw from the interview process at any time, without consequence.

In the interest of confidentiality, I will

- conduct and transcribe the interviews myself;
- interview at, or away from your office at Carleton University, or in your home;
- accept your verbal, rather than written consent;
- use a pseudonym and eliminate identifying details of your organization in the write-up;
- honour your choice to have the interview tapes erased or returned to you at the end of the project.

I believe that knowing how women perceive and experience 'power' is a first step toward improving organizations' internal operations, and inter-agency relations. If you can assist by consenting to an interview, please contact me by

e-mail #

pager #

phone #

Thanks!

Catherine Browning
Ph.D. Candidate (Sociology)
Carleton University

Appendix C

Date

Dear Women:

Since my original letter was distributed (attached), [number] women working in [number of] partner abuse organizations or programs have consented to be interviewed about their perceptions of women and power.

I am still eager to add your voice to my doctoral project. If you are able and interested in scheduling 1 1/2 hours at a time and place of your convenience, please call me at [phone #].

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Catherine Browning
Ph.D. Candidate (Sociology)
Carleton University

Appendix D

Date

TO: Executive Director
[3 organizations]

FROM: Catherine Browning

RE: WOMEN AND POWER PROJECT

Enclosed please find letters of invitation to participate in my Ph.D. project on women and power. I would very much appreciate your assistance in distributing them to your female staff.

I hope that you and the workers will consider adding your experiences and insights to others from the partner abuse-serving community.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Thanks,

Catherine Browning
Ph.D. Candidate (Sociology)
Carleton University

Appendix E

Letter of Consent

In partial fulfilment of the Ph.D. degree requirements (Sociology) at Carleton University, I am currently gathering information on how feminists in partner abuse organizations define women's power and how differences of, for example, class, ethnicity, politics, and sexual orientation shape their interpretations. This interview will explore your thoughts, feelings, and work-related experiences of women's power. Your participation in this project requires one interview at Carleton University or a place of your choice, for a period not to exceed two hours. A brief follow-up interview may be required to clarify points arising from the first. You are free to stop or withdraw from the interview at any time, for whatever reason. Equally, you are under no obligation to answer questions that may cause you discomfort.

Concerning confidentiality, the following precautions will be taken.

- I will personally transcribe each tape-recorded interview.
- I will erase each interview tape or, if you prefer, return the tape to you after the dissertation is written.
- I will eliminate identifying information from the transcripts of the interview, from the dissertation, and from any speeches, research, or articles or books not yet written or published.

This means that, for example,

- a pseudonym, rather than your real name, will be used. Distinctive personal details will be changed;
- positions and organizations will be grouped by type, rather than individually described;
- you will not be asked to sign this letter of consent. Instead, this letter will be included in my dissertation as the only proof of our agreement.

This letter of consent clarifies the nature of my research, my responsibilities as a researcher, and your rights as a respondent. Any complaints relating to the interview process should be addressed to:

[departmental contacts' names and phone numbers]

Upon completion of the Ph.D. in 2000, copies of the written dissertation will be available for your perusal in the library at Carleton University and the National Library of Canada. Thank you for your time and valuable input.

Catherine Browning

Date

Appendix F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

1. Query respondents

- . age
- . class
- . language(s)
- . where they grew up
- . income
- . education in and outside Canada
- . sexual orientation
- . ethnic/cultural identity
- . visible or hidden disability
- . politics
- . other paid occupations
- . position with organization
- . length of time with organization

B. DISCUSSION

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT WORK PLACE

2. How did you get involved with [organization]?
3. Has it been what you thought it would be? How/how not?
4. How do you feel about your work environment?

Probes 4: Organization work place

- . unionized/not
- . wages
- . seniority
- . different positions
 - board of directors
 - coordinator
 - managers
 - counsellors
 - volunteers
 - other positions
- . decision-making
- . control information
- . formal/informal status

5. At a public meeting or to a stranger, how would you describe your work environment?

6. To a close friend, how would you describe your work environment?

Probes 5, 6: Description work environment

the physical space

relations

board and staff

board and management (they identify 'management')

management and staff

paid staff and volunteers

among paid staff

7. In your next job, would you prefer to work in all-female or mixed sex work place? Why? Why not?

TURNING TO POWER...

8. Are all the women working for wages or as volunteers at [organization] equal in theory, in practice, or both?

Probe 8: Equal theory/practice

in theory

. mission statement

. wages

. responsibilities

in practice

. conflicts between whom

. conflicts over what

. conflicts visible/hard to identify

. what happens when there are conflicts

. are conflicts resolved/unresolved

9. Could you use five adjectives to describe the kind of woman a man sees as powerful?

10. Could you use five adjectives to describe the kind of man a woman sees as powerful?

11. Do you think society views men's and women's power as different? Why/why not?

12. In theory, feminists see all women as having equal personal power. Is that accurate or not? Why?

13. How would you define power?

14. How would you define woman-power?

15. Is a woman's power visible? Examples?

16. How do you recognize a woman's power? Examples?

Probes 16: Recognize woman's power
 personal power
 social power

17. In what kinds of work situations does women's power show?

18. Can a woman's power increase and decrease? Examples?

19. What does 'good' power mean to you?

20. Do women have good power less, as, or more often than men?

21. Have you encountered women's good power in your work? Examples?

22. What does 'bad' power mean to you?

23. Do women have bad power less, as, or more often than men?

24. Have you encountered women's bad power in your work? Examples?

25. Are you always able to distinguish between women's good and bad power? Examples?

26. Is women's power discussed?

27. What are the costs and benefits of talking about women's power?

TURNING TO CONFLICT...

28. How would you recognize power inequalities among the paid and unpaid workers at [organization]? Examples?

29. Are power conflicts less, as, or more typical of work with men or women, or are they just different? Examples?

30. Have you ever witnessed power conflicts at [organization]? Examples?

Probe 30: Conflicts at organization

male/female/both
board
management
staff
volunteers

31. Have you ever witnessed power conflicts between partner abuse organizations?
Examples?

32. Have you ever witnessed power conflicts within other partner abuse organizations?
Examples?

33. What kinds of things are at stake in power conflicts?

Probe 33: Issues in conflict

ideology
difference

34. Can power conflicts be resolved? How? Examples?

35. What does 'empowerment' mean to you? How do women become empowered?

36. Can men be empowered?

TURNING TO DIFFERENCE...

37. Now that we've talked about power, I would like to re-visit my first question on whether differences affect power dynamics between women. Is there anything that you would like to add to your earlier comments?

Probes:

age
class
language
urban/rural upbringing
income
education
sexual orientation
ethnic/cultural identity
disability
politics
position with organization
length of time with organization

TELL ME A BIT ABOUT EMOTION...

38. How important are feelings to your work?
39. What emotional qualities does this type of work require?
40. Are there any special emotional challenges in your work with abused women and children? What?
41. What would you consider to be 'inappropriate' emotional displays in
 - clients
 - counsellors
 - the director
 - the board
42. Are there any consequences for inappropriate emotion?
43. Have you experienced any emotional challenges in your relationships with
 - clients
 - colleagues
 - the director
 - the board
44. How do you handle the emotion of the job?
45. In meetings are feelings encouraged/discouraged/limited?
46. Does your organization encourage you to share your feelings? Certain types of feelings? With whom?
47. Do you share your feelings with anyone at work? Who?
48. Are there people with whom you would not disclose your feelings?
49. Are there people with whom you watch what you say? Why?
50. With whom do you talk most freely about your feelings about work?
51. How do you know that you are doing a good job?

A FEW LAST QUESTIONS...

52. Why did you agree to participate in this project?

53. If you were granted three wishes that could change anything about the environment at [organization], what would you change?

54. Do you feel that you have anything to learn about power dynamics among women?

55. What about your own power?

56. Is authority the same as power?

QUESTIONS ADDED IN INTERVIEWS 21-30

We all use the word 'power' in conversation with colleagues and clients. Is there some common understanding of what that word means? Why/how?

Do workers and supervisors and boards have equal or different responsibility for fostering a positive work environment?

Considering also the funder and clients, rank the power of groups in your organization from the most to the least.

What does women's personal power mean to you?

You identify as a feminist. Do your feminist politics influence your vision of power?

Do men and women express power in similar or different ways?

Is partner abuse an example of 'bad' power? Why/why not?

Are power differences discussed in your work place?

Does dependence on government funding influence the
organization's power
workers' power
relations between organizations?

Do men and women resolve conflict in similar or different ways?

What do you have to learn about women's power, if anything?

What do you have to learn about your own power, if anything?

QUESTIONS TAKEN OUT IN INTERVIEWS 21-30

How would you recognize power inequalities among the paid and unpaid workers at the organization? Examples?

Have you ever witnessed power conflicts at the organization. Examples?

What emotional qualities does this type of work require?

Have you experienced any emotional challenges in your relationships with clients, colleagues, the director, board?

Are there people with whom you would not disclose your feelings?

Do you feel that you have anything to learn about power dynamics among women?

What about your own power?

Appendix G

Author definitions

Authority	Legitimated form of power that may be expressed in occupational roles as domination
Difference	Practice and/or perception of inequality and exclusion.
Power dynamics	Strategies of inclusion and exclusion.
Power	Domination that may be expressed and experienced negatively in relations of inequality and cooperation that may be expressed and experienced positively in relations of equality.

Participant definitions

Agency
The ability to make choices with confidence.

Articulate
Includes verbal skills, speaking honestly, being listened to, and heard in word and deed.

Boundaries
Self-imposed limits on involvement.

Caring
A type of female-specific and indirect positive power.

Commitment
Lack of self-interest, acting for the greater good.

Confidence
Women's goal of positive power. Associated with self-esteem, self-expression, assertiveness.

Domination
A type of women's negative power that is associated with self-interest.

Empathy
Includes compassion, active listening, and acceptance without judgment.

Respondent definitions continued

Equality

Includes security, trust, and support that are expressed as respect and felt as caring.

Fear

Experienced as lack of confidence, assertiveness, self-esteem, and/or self-expression.

Good work

Requires empathy, resilience, patience, and emotional awareness.

Harm

Includes self-blame, confusion, hyper-vigilance, and hurt.

Integrity

In interactions, associated with honesty, fairness, and responsibility.

Judgment

Having a standard of superiority by which some women are, based on their differences, assessed as “less than” other women.

Knowledge

Includes self-awareness and intuition and information.

Manipulation

A female-specific and indirect type of negative power associated with self-interest. Expresses insecurities and poor self-esteem and induces harm and fear.

Personalizing

Manipulation by redirecting disagreement and dissatisfaction toward individual women.

Power (women’s) negative

Includes two types: domination and manipulation.

Power (women’s) positive

Includes two types: caring and confidence to assert choice and voice.

Respect

Trust of females’ caring and feminists’ caring about women’s equality.

Role authority [having]

An externalized reality that is negative: enforced, dictatorial, and coercive.

Role authority [being]

Originates internally via a sense of self: positive, chosen, collaborative, and respectful.

Respondent definitions continued**Role power**

Authority sanctioned by support, trust, and equality.

Safety

Freedom from emotional and practical reprisal.

Sharing

To disclose personal feelings.

Silence

“Feeling I can’t speak”.

Support

Viewed as guidance through sharing information and experiences, toward the goal of enhancing women’s creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

The Funder

Province of Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. A primary source of partner abuse organizations’ funding.

Venting

“Complaining with no obligation to protect the listener”.

Voice

The freedom to speak without negative ramifications, and to be listened to and heard in word and deed.