WOMEN'S CENTRES AND WOMEN'S ALTERNATIVE SERVICES IN NOVA SCOTIA: RESISTING MULTIPLE-STATE PRESSURES TO DE-POLITICIZE

by

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Abstract

Title: Women's Centres and Women's Alternative Services in Nova Scotia: Resisting Multiple State Pressures to De-politicize

Since 1965, feminist social activism has seeded numerous feminist social movement organizations in Nova Scotia and across Canada – women's coalitions, social advocacy groups, political caucuses, women's centres, and women's alternative services. As well it has seeded feminist research and women's studies programs. In the tradition of the women's movement and feminist social activism, this thesis uses feminist 'street theory' methodology to develop a theoretically-based understanding of the challenges and contradictions women's movement services in Nova Scotia face in their ongoing struggle for survival. It locates women's movement services within the broader women's movement, provides an historical context for their development of social advocacy mandates, identifies the multiple state pressures they face to de-politicize and provides insights into their resistance to those pressures. It maintains that feminists located in community as well as in academia can learn from the 'on the ground' experiences of women's movement services about evolving feminist organizational structures and praxis.

Lucille Harper
November 7, 2003

Acknowledgements

Over the past twenty years I have been privileged to work with many women – women who shared stories about their lives and inspired me with their courage, tenacity and determination to create better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities and to work deliberately for social change; women who challenged me to push my own feminist analysis further and to find ways to hold to and to apply feminist principles and practices; women who are visionaries and who are in the community doing the day-to-day social change slog work. My thinking and analysis has been influenced by all of these women. It has also been influenced by feminist authors, thinkers, peers and colleagues. I have tremendous respect for and am thankful for the social change work women are doing in my own community and in all parts of the world. The knowledge that women globally in their own communities are working to eliminate poverty, violence, and the many forms of oppression that are common in women's lives and the knowledge that my own women's movement work is connected with that of all women through a global women's movement enables me to maintain a sense of hope that change is possible. I am thankful that I know that what we do matters.

Writing this thesis would not have been possible without the support of many, many women. I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff and board members of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre who supported me emotionally and intellectually while I was writing this thesis and who took on extra work at the women's centre to enable me to pursue my studies. I thank my feminist sisters in Connect! and in the women's alternative services that participated in this study for their insight, their commitment to improving the lives of women and for their friendship. I thank Angela Miles, my dear friend, who encouraged me to return to school. I thank Linda Christiansen-Ruffman who believes that women's community activist learning has a place in the academy as well in the community and who opened the way for me to enter the women's studies program. And, I would like to thank my beloved family who supported me in taking the space I needed to pursue my studies.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

AWA	Antigonish Women's Association
AWRC	Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
CACSW	Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
CCLOW	Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women
Connect!	Women's Centres Connect!, Nova Scotia Association of Women's Centres
CRIAW	Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
FemJEPP	Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy
NAC	National Action Committee on the Status of Women
NSACSW	Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
PCWC	Pictou County Women's Centre
RCSW	Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada
THANS	Transition House Association of Nova Scotia
WACNS	Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia

Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

I come to women's studies as a feminist, social activist who has worked for the past fifteen years in a women's centre - a feminist community-led, women's social justice, social change, social advocacy and service delivery organization. Over the years I have worked with numerous local, regional and provincial organizations and initiatives committed to making positive social, economic and political change for women. During these years I have seen changes in the way feminists working in and with feminist services and organizations talk about feminism, approach their work, and develop organizational structures to move that work forward. As the director of a women's centre, I have experienced direct and indirect pressures from the state and its agencies on our centre to adopt bureaucratic structures and practices and to de-emphasize our social advocacy and social change work. I have witnessed as well changes in government priorities whereby the state has moved away from supporting women's equality work. It has reduced funding once made available to and used by feminist organizations to build a transformational women's politics at the community level and has pressured women's organizations to limit their work to that which is essentially reformist in nature and focussed on public policy change that does not threaten substantively the status quo. I have worked closely over the past fifteen years with women's centres across the province in their effort to maintain their feminist praxis and to resist state co-optation while at the same time working to secure service-based, operational funding. As well, I have worked with feminist social movement organizations that are consciously and deliberately

developing a transformative feminist politics through which to address public policy issues and with feminist organizations that have resisted and actively continue to resist state pressures to conform to a state sanctioned agenda which perpetuates patriarchal institutions. In short, I come to this research as a feminist with an extensive personal history with women's organizations and with a commitment to working with women through community-led women's organizations as well as through feminist provincial organizations to improve the lives of women.

As a community-based, feminist social activist, I was acutely aware when I entered the Women's Studies MA Program that neither the history of development nor the 'on-the-ground' work of feminist organizations in Nova Scotia has been captured adequately through the often sparse and perfunctory documentation of community-led organizations. I soon learned as well that their history and accomplishments largely are neglected within the current body of academic literature. As a community activist, I found that the direction that much post-modernist 'feminist' literature is taking is not particularly reflective of my own experience of feminist community activism nor is it relevant to community activists working collaboratively for broad social, political and economic change. Similarly neglected within the current body of academic literature is an accounting of the formation of women's coalitions and collaborative initiatives, their contribution to women's movement social change work, and the political factors that have contributed to their success and/or undoing during the second wave of the women's movement in Nova Scotia. The lack of sufficient documentation of and reflection upon the processes, challenges, and insights coming from women's movement services in their

development and use of feminist praxis, and in their struggles to maintain both a service delivery as well as a social advocacy agenda, leaves a gap in women's movement literature that disadvantages alike feminist community activists and feminist academics who are working for institutional and systemic change. This gap disadvantages as well women's studies scholars who want to understand the contribution of women's movement social activists to feminist theory and to social change. Further, what is written does not capture adequately the perspectives of women working in and with women's organizations or address the complexity of factors that contribute to the internal and external pressures women's movement organizations are under to acquiesce to state imposed agendas. Nor does it provide an understanding of how the politics of women's movement organizations influence their response. There is a need for women's studies programs (programs that were born out of women's movement social activism and, at least in the early years of the program, often taught by academics active in women's movement social justice work[1]) to include the work of community-based feminist theorists and social activists and to learn about and from the extensive feminist participatory action research initiatives undertaken at the community level. Just as the knowledge gained through research undertaken by mainstream academic scholars informs

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[1] Margrit Eichler found that in a study of professors who have taught women's/feminist studies at Canadian universities that gave at least a bachelor's degree, more than half indicated they were involved in a women's group prior to teaching their first course and more than two-thirds identified a political concern with improving the situation of women as a reason for teaching women's studies. (Pg 122) Fully 99 of 100 respondents saw the relationship between women's studies and the women's movement "as a crucial one" even though many identified it as strained. (pg.129) See Eichler, Margrit. "Not Always an Easy Alliance: The Relationship between Women's Studies and the Women's Movement in Canada" in Backhouse, Constance and David Flaherty, eds. Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. Pg. 122. Some feminist academics continue to learn with community-based feminists about issues facing women by being active in social justice causes and in women's movement work that use street theory methodology and analysis.

and benefits the work of community-based social activists, so can the theorizing and knowledge developed by community-based feminist social activists inform and benefit the work of feminist academics.

To this end, this thesis offers a multi-levelled analysis that provides insight into the development and the social change work of women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia. It situates them within the women's movement, explores the interconnectedness between service delivery and social advocacy, and the ways in which service delivery and social advocacy direct the work of women's movement services. It identifies the different pressures exerted by the state and its agencies upon the services it funds, and it documents and reflects back to feminist social activists the strategies they have used to resist pressures to compromise their politics and their social change work. It provides insight into the contradictions and challenges faced by state funded women's movement organizations that oppose the state by looking specifically at the resistance strategies employed by women's movement organizations in response to the April 2002 provincial budget cuts slated for women's centres and transition houses. It is my hope that the analyses presented throughout the thesis will resonate with and be relevant to both community-based feminist activists as well as to women's studies scholars.

Methodology

Writing this thesis has provided me with an opportunity to reflect upon and to draw insights from my own experiences as a feminist social activist working in a women's centre and with women's movement social change organizations, as well as from the

experiences of women working in sister women's centres and in women's alternative service organizations - specifically transition houses and sexual assault centres. It has allowed me to ask questions about and to document, albeit somewhat cursorily, the development of women's movement organizations and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia post 1960 and to look at their connection with a broader women's social movement. It has provided the women participating in the research with an opportunity to reflect upon the current challenges they face in maintaining political spaces while providing feminist services and to identify pressures from the state to institutionalize, to decrease social advocacy, and to deliver services in a way that falls in line with the agendas of various government funders. As well, it has asked participants to identify the strategies and forms of resistance they have used to maintain their feminist praxis and to resist government pressures to acquiesce to a government imposed agenda. In the tradition of feminist 'street theory', this thesis intentionally is written using a story-telling style and language that honours early feminist consciousness raising circles in which women, through telling and analyzing their stories, developed radical feminist theory – theory that was revolutionary, that named and challenged patriarchal systems and practices of exclusion, exploitation and oppression – then used their developing theory to inform their actions, and their actions to develop further their theory.

Adhering to a feminist participatory action research model, the research is based in women's experiences and develops theory from a community activist perspective whereby the theory and analysis developed is grounded in the reflections and insights coming from the discussions with the women participating as key informants. Because it is grounded

in women's experience, it is better able to instruct the complexity of dynamics of those experiences. It respects and adheres loosely to the seven "postulates" for feminist action research articulated by Maria Mies, a feminist theorist and activist.[2] Mies' postulates set out a relationship "between practice and theory, between politics and knowledge, between living and knowing" that does not "separate, fragment or hierarchize these areas of reality." Mies uses the German term 'Betroffenheit' to describe a subjective process of reflecting upon "emotions of anger, outrage, rebellion", analysing their causes and translating the resulting insights into action. Thus, Mies uses Betroffenheit as a starting point for feminist participatory action research. She holds that in feminist participatory action research (1) conscious partiality on the part of the researcher is key to participatory action research; (2) research participants guide the research; (3) the researcher is an active participant in "actions, movements and struggles for liberation" and the research serves this goal; (4) changing the status quo is the starting point for the research (ie., theory comes from praxis); (5) the research process is one that conscientizes the researcher and the participants; (6) women's individual and social history is recorded as part of the process of conscientization enabling women to appropriate their history; (7) feminist research provides a means for women to reclaim their history through sharing their experiences, insights and theories.[3] The basic tenets of feminist street theory methodology are articulated well through Mies' postulates.

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[2] Morris, Marika. Participatory Research and Action: A Guide to Becoming a Researcher for Social Change. Ottawa: CRIAW, 2002.

[3] Mies, Maria. "Liberating Women, Liberating Knowledge: Reflections On Two Decades Of Feminist Action Research" in Atlantis, Volume 21.1. Fall/Winter 1996. Pp. 10-14.

In the mainstream academic community the street theory research methodology I have used would be supportable as "grounded theory", or "the discovery of theory from data", in the tradition of Glaser and Strauss.[4] Glaser and Strauss understand grounded theory to be a process "written with the assumption that it is still developing".[5] As with theory coming from participatory action research, the emergent concepts coming from grounded theory are "analytic and sensitizing". [6] Glaser and Strauss maintain that grounded theory must be readily understandable , sufficiently general to be applicable to diverse situations, and allow the user "partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time."[7] However, Glaser and Strauss do not take the next step of implementing grounded theory – of moving it into action.

Praxis understood as theory developing from activist engagement in the community, on the other hand, is both consistent with and informs the tradition of feminist street theory. In the tradition of praxis, critical theory informs practical action and is, in turn, modified as it is used.[8] Critical theory is understandable and makes sense to the community or individuals being researched. The process makes knowledge available to them and allows those using it to better understand current and unfolding situations. Further, it can be empowering in that, through better understanding the situations they

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[4] Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967. Pg. 1

[5] Glaser and Strauss, 1967. Pg. 32.

[6] Glaser and Strauss, 1967. Pg. 240.

[7] Glaser and Strauss, 1967. Pg. 237.

[8] Neuman, W. Lawrence. Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 4th edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Pg. 80.

face, communities are better able to exert some control over or to present resistance to those situations.

For the feminist activist community, the critical theory approach used in this thesis is consistent with feminist "street theory" – a term used by Jane Mansbridge to describe the bottom-up theorizing done by women activists whereby they create theory based on an analysis developed through making meaning of the stories women tell of their lived experiences. Mansbridge uses the term to differentiate it from "feminist theory taught in the academy". Street theory is fluid, evolving and used to inform social action. Mansbridge notes, "Talking and acting creates street theory and gives it meaning." As women see their experiences reflected and explained in street theory, they internalize the meaning and ideals and advance those ideals in the worlds in which they live.[9] Street theory maintains the centrality of women's lived experiences and acquired knowledge and supports them in further developing theories that reflect and advance feminist social change work. Such autonomous feminist theorizing that is not replicating or based in male "patricentric" theorizing is necessary both for understanding and articulating women's lived realities, as well as for creating women's politics, visions, and strategies for transformative social, political, and economic change.[10]

Thus, the methodology employed for this thesis research is feminist, qualitative, participatory, and designed to address women's non-academic, social activist

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[9] Mansbridge, Jane. "What Is the Feminist Movement?" in Feree, Myra Marx & Patricia Yancey Martin, eds. Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. Pg. 29.

[10] The term "patricentric" as it is applied to male theorizing came from a conversation with Linda Christiansen-Ruffman. October 2003.

communities as well as feminist academics and scholars. The insights, analysis, and theory presented continue to evolve as, along with myself, the women interviewed actively engage with government in negotiations that are concerned with the survival of their organizations and, at the same time, with the issues their organizations are mandated to address.

At the time of conducting the research for this thesis the Nova Scotia government made known its plan to redesign 'family violence' programs. The provincial budget tabled on April 4, 2002 slated some $890,000 in cuts to the services of women's centres and transition houses as well as to those of men's intervention programs. The redesign plan included the elimination of a number of transition houses and proposed the amalgamation/co-location of women's centres, transition houses and men's intervention programs. When the plan was introduced, the Department of Community Services, the department responsible for providing operational funding to women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia, demanded that women's centres and transition houses justify their existence by demonstrating the need for their services, that they are cost effective and efficient, and that they do not duplicate either each other or other services provided in their communities.[11] When the government introduced its plan to eliminate women's services, women, women's organizations and communities spoke in unison against it and, after considerable lobbying, the government put it on hold. Since that time, and until they develop a plan for redesigning their services that is acceptable to

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[11] Department of Community Services, The Model: Family Violence System Redesign (Draft), March 2002.

the government, funding for women's centres, transition houses and men's intervention programs has been and will remain frozen. Just as this research has been informed by the impact of recent events which have been interpreted by the research participants through their experiences with the state and its agencies over time, I expect, in turn, that the analysis developed by those participating in it will inform subsequent interactions between the participant organizations and government.

The analysis is drawn from in-depth, semi-structured, one-to-one dialogues with ten feminist social activists who are involved currently and/or have been involved historically with feminist, community-led, women's centres, women's alternative services and feminist social advocacy organizations in Nova Scotia. The interviews took place during July and August 2002. Open-ended questions provided a framework for a dialogue between myself and the key informants. The questions were designed to engage key informants in actively reflecting upon the development of their organizations, their experiences as feminist social activists, and their experiences in working with state funded, social advocacy and service delivery organizations. The discussion provided respondents with an opportunity to identify and explore the impact on their organizations of pressure on women's alternative service/social advocacy organizations to de-politicize.

The key informants were asked to speak from their particular experiences as staff, board members, participants, or supportive senior government staff, and they spoke from a range of experiences, perspectives and locations. Specifically, six key informants spoke from the perspective of their involvement with women's centres, two from transition houses, one from a sexual assault centre and one from her experience inside government.

All ten key informants are or have been involved with other feminist social advocacy organizations beyond the one from which they were speaking. While many more women could have been interviewed, limiting the interviews to ten key informants allowed time to conduct more in-depth interviews while still allowing for a range of experiences and perspectives. In this way the research is limited. The experiences of other women's movement social advocacy and service delivery organizations in Nova Scotia hopefully will be studied by others, and, over time, community-based social activists and feminist scholars will build a more comprehensive literature.

Through my work with the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, I have developed a working relationship with all the women who participated as key informants in the research and am familiar with their organizations and many of the issues they face. Through my years of participation in and with women's organizations in Nova Scotia, I had developed a strong enough working knowledge of the different organizations that I could identify for the purposes of the research which organizations to focus upon in order to bring a range of perspectives to it. This working relationship benefited the semi-structured dialogue process in that there was a pre-established level of trust and common understanding of issues between myself and the key informants that allowed our discussions to go to a deeper level more quickly than otherwise would have been possible.

In this thesis there is a primary focus on women's centres. In part, this is because feminist social advocacy is central to their mandates and, in part, it is because of my own extensive involvement with and knowledge of women's centres. The six women's

centres that were selected are reflective of the communities in which they are located and, as such, have different histories of development, demographics, and characters, as well as different approaches to working in their communities. The emphasis each women's centre puts on social change work reflects their individual development history as well as the particular dynamics of the community in which they are located. For example, the Pictou County Women's Centre located in New Glasgow, a town with a blue collar, industrial economy, is the oldest women's centre in the province, operates with a collective governance model and has a long history of feminist social advocacy. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre on the other hand is located in Antigonish, a conservative, Catholic town that provides some constraints to the range of issues on which the women's centre takes action. LEA Place, the most rural women's centre, is located in Sheet Harbour where there are few other community and government agencies. LEA Place has been pressured by its community as well as by government to move away from its focus on women and to provide services to men and children as well as women. Every Woman's Centre in Sydney was established as a social change organization and deliberately was started without government funding by a feminist group that had been active in the area for more than twenty years. Both the recently opened Central Nova Women's Resource Centre located in Truro and the Tri-County Women's Centre located in Yarmouth were established after provincial operational funding was made available to women's centres and after service delivery became a funded activity of women's centres.

The interviewees from the two transition houses and one sexual assault centre that were invited to participate as women's alternative services speak to feminist service

delivery and social activism in Nova Scotia from the perspective of organizations that have primary issue-specific, service delivery mandates and that are actively involved in social advocacy initiatives. The transition houses both independently and as members of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) have been advocating for provincial policies and legislation that would benefit abused women and their children, challenging policies and legislation that negatively impact abused women and their children, and conducting independent research. Chrysalis House in Kentville, has been a leader in the transition house movement in Nova Scotia and is an organization that is well recognized for its social advocacy work within and beyond the province. Tearmann House in New Glasgow, has had a longstanding working relationship with the Pictou County Women's Centre and has played a key role in resisting government imposition of a women's centre mandate on THANS member organizations in the Northern Region.

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre in Halifax, the primary sexual assault centre in the province, has been a fierce advocate for women who experience sexual violence and has provided leadership in the province in developing innovative programs that address sexual violence. The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre has significantly influenced and improved police handling of sexual assault cases in Halifax and has taken a lead role in the province in calling attention to the difficulties that the new Restorative Justice Program poses for women who have experienced male violence. Avalon acted as the catalyst organization for collaborative feminist research on the Restorative Justice

Program.[12] As well, it has initiated the Sexual Assault Nurse Educators (SANE) Program, an innovative program that provides sensitive support for women who have experienced sexual assault.

A former senior government staff person was invited to participate as a key informant specifically because she could reflect upon her tenure with government during the years in which many women's alternative services and women's centres were established. She provided insight into the attitudes and actions directed towards women's services by elected government representatives as well as by members of the bureaucracy. Through the various positions she held with the provincial government, she supported the work of women's alternative services and women's centres, and advocated for them within government. As a 'femocrat' she brought a much needed feminist analysis to government and, for a time, was able to influence significantly politicians and government staff and to promote woman-friendly policies and programs.

Writing the thesis while participating in a year long process with women's centres, transition houses and men's intervention programs to develop a plan for the delivery of

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[12] In 1998, the Nova Scotia Department of Justice issued its plan for the institutionalization of restorative justice. The plan, outlined in *Restorative Justice: A Proposal for Nova Scotia*, included sex offences and spousal/partner assaults as offences eligible to be dealt with through restorative justice, community-based, fora. In such fora there was the possibility to bring women who had been victims of violence together with the offender. While the Department of Justice framed this as potentially empowering to women, many feminists working with women who have experienced misogynist violence were concerned that women would be pressured by the forum to forgive the offender, would be intimidated or re-triggered into trauma by the presence of the offender, would not be well prepared to deal with the emotional impact of meeting with the offender, and would not want the power of judgement over the offender. As well, they noted the lack of gender-based analysis in restorative justice program design and evaluation. A further concern of women's organizations was the potential for "community ownership" of restorative justice measures to lead to the downloading of government responsibilities onto community organizations working with women without added resources. See Nova Scotia Department of Justice. Restorative Justice: A Proposal for Nova Scotia. Halifax, 1998. See Rubin, Pamela. Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia: Women's Experience and Recommendations for Positive Policy Development and Implementation Report and Recommendations. March 2003.

our particular services in Nova Scotia has deepened my analysis at the same time that it has allowed me to reflect back to the working group some of the insights coming from the research. It has also presented challenges. One challenge has been in balancing the micro and macro contexts of the year – participating fully in the coalition work with transition houses and men's intervention programs, participating in the coalition meetings with government and advocating for the survival of my own women's centre. A further challenge was trying to understand, through the interviews, the meaning women were giving to their work, while simultaneously trying to understand through coalition meetings and discussions, the meaning women were giving to events as they unfolded. Thus the research data was static while the research subject was fluid. The data was static in that the interviews had been conducted in the summer of 2002 . However, the research subject area was fluid in that the coalition process was continuing to unfold. Many of the key informants were participating in the ongoing coalition work and their analyses and insights about that work continued to inform the research and my analysis.

As the researcher, I have tried to be sensitive to the particular situation of each key informant and their organization and to present my thoughts and analysis in a way that respects and reflects as accurately as possible the contribution, insights and analysis of each woman interviewed. Having said that, the larger analysis is my own and may not reflect on any one point, the analysis of all or any of the key informants.

Thesis Structure and Key Questions

In the tradition of feminist street theory, the thesis is telling a story of the creation and survival of women's movement services in Nova Scotia through drawing upon, analyzing and theorizing the experiences of feminist social activists involved with women's centres and women's alternative services. Although most of the community-based feminist social activists with whom I work, including those I interviewed, refer to their work simply as 'feminist' and do not apply descriptive labels, in my opinion they work from a perspective and analysis that is aligned with 'integrative feminism', a feminism that is diverse, inclusive, integrative, multi-sited and multi-voiced, recognizes women's specificity, and makes women's experience 'as women' and women-associated values central to a politics of transformative social change.[13]

In Nova Scotia, women's centres and women's alternative services have not only managed to survive, they have survived while continuing to maintain an oppositional stance to state policies and programs that disadvantage women. Their survival, however, as independent, autonomous, community-led organizations is not assured; it is an ongoing process that necessitates balancing opposition and resistance with adaptation. In order to understand the survival strategies employed by women's centres and women's alternative

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[13] Angela Miles introduced me to "integrative feminisms". She uses the concept of 'integrative feminisms' to describe a model for 'building global visions' of feminist social transformation. The integrative feminism that Angela proposes is a transformative model of a full politics, is multi-centred and woman-affirming, and is "committed to specifically feminist, women-associated values as well as to equality". Integrative feminism is a key concept to creating and participating in a global women's movement. It provides women with a means of speaking to and uniting across divisions of race, class and sexual orientation and for working from their various locations and primary issues. See Miles, Angela. Integrative Feminisms: Building Global Visions 1960s - 1990s. New York, London: Routledge Press, 1996. Pg. xi - xiii.

services separately and collaboratively, it is necessary to understand how and from what context the organizations evolved, their different structures, mandates and practices, their relationship to the women's movement, their status with government funders and the current women-negating political climate. It also requires an exploration of the challenges that arise for organizations that are trying to balance and maintain service delivery and social advocacy mandates.

Although the challenges and contradictions of opposing state policies and resisting the imposition of bureaucratic practices while relying on state funding for their existence are not new to women's centres and women's alternative services, since April 2002 those pressures have intensified significantly. This thesis asks several questions that are pertinent to the survival of feminist women's movement services and organizations and that are especially relevant at this time when state pressures on women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia are particularly acute. They are questions that are informed by feminist social activist street theory and that have received little attention in mainstream academic literature. They include:

- What is the relationship between "the women's movement" and feminist women's organizations in Nova Scotia?
- What has been the response of the state to women's movement social advocacy?
- How does feminist praxis support women's movement services in maintaining political spaces while providing feminist services?
- What are the ways in which the state pressures women's centres and women's alternative services to de-politicize?
- What strategies have women's centres and women's alternative services used to resist state pressures to de-politicize?

Throughout the thesis, when referring to groups and organizations that have come from women's movement work, I use several descriptors that serve to connect women's organizations with and to locate them within a broader women's movement while at the same time serve to differentiate them. These descriptors include women's movement organizations, women's alternative services, women's centres, women's movement services and feminist organized services. While the differences are at times subtle, they reflect differences in primary mandates, involvement with social advocacy, and self-definition as feminist organizations.

Women's movement organizations are organizations that carry out the work of the women's movement. As such, they may or may not describe themselves as feminist and they may or may not hold a feminist transformative politics or vision. However, they are actively involved in working for positive changes for women and generally connect their work with women's movement work and with a global women's movement. Women's movement organizations would include women's centres, women's alternative services, feminist coalitions, and women's caucuses in unions and political parties.

Women's alternative services are community-led, independent services established to provide women with an alternative to mainstream services that do not meet women's specific needs adequately. In many instances, women's alternative services were developed by women who saw that services for women simply were not available. Women's alternative services include transition houses, emergency housing services, sexual assault centres, women's addictions programs, women's health clinics, women's employment programs, and other issue-specific services for women. Women's

alternative services may or may not describe themselves as feminist and they may or may not hold a feminist transformative politics or vision.[14]

Women's movement services again are community-led, independent services established to provide women with an alternative to mainstream services that do not meet women's specific needs adequately. Most women's movement services are involved in social change work whether or not they have a specific social advocacy mandate. Women's movement services include women's centres and women's alternative services.

Feminist organized services are services that have been established by feminist organizations specifically to provide feminist services to women. They have social advocacy as well as service delivery mandates and see themselves as active participants in a feminist politics. Feminist organized services would include women's centres as well as a number of women's alternative services in Nova Scotia.

The thesis is laid out in such a way that Chapter Two conceptualizes the women's movement as the diversity and collectivity of political spaces in which women undertake women's movement social action work. It locates women's centres and women's alternative services within the women's movement as sites of and for women's movement work. It provides an historical overview of and context for the development of women's

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[14] In writing this thesis I debated and continue to debate with myself the difference between women's alternative services and alternative women's services. While an argument can be made that they are descriptors that can be used inter-changeably, I prefer to use 'women's alternative services' as it implies that the services have been created by women and for women whereas 'alternative women's services' implies services created for women, not necessarily by women. While not all of the women's alternative services I interviewed were established exclusively by women, they have developed feminist boards, adopted feminist practices, hired feminist directors, and their board members are predominantly, if not exclusively, women.

movement organizations that is necessary for understanding current definitions of and challenges faced by them.

Chapter Three provides a brief overview of the changing response of the state to the Canadian women's movement, the way in which the state has contributed to shaping the direction of the women's movement and how the response of the state has impacted women's social change organizations in Nova Scotia. It looks at the limits, contradictions and challenges women's movement services and organizations face in engaging with the state through public policy social advocacy and makes apparent that for women's centres and women's alternative services, service delivery and social advocacy are integral to feminist praxis and exist con-commitantly on the spiral of feminist transformative social change work.[15]

Chapter Four identifies women's centres as social advocacy-mandated organizations that are political spaces and sites of evolving feminist praxis. It documents the mandates and practices of four women's centres established prior to the granting of provincial operational funding as well as the mandates and practices of two new centres emerging at a time when there was an established provincial, operational funding base and an increased focus on service delivery. Looking specifically at the development of women's centres in Nova Scotia as political spaces for feminist, community-based activism and as multi-issue, feminist services struggling to establish their legitimacy with provincial funders, it provides insight into the internal definitional struggles social advocacy/service

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[15] The spiral imagery is meant to convey an image of processes and initiatives as circular, simultaneous, overlapping and progressive.

delivery organizations meet - particularly in the face of external pressures to conform to a bureaucratically approved, service delivery model. Women's centres in Nova Scotia have expanded their service delivery work and have struggled to establish themselves as 'legitimate' services in the eyes of the provincial government in order to secure operational funding for service provision. In their negotiations with the state, women's centres face the ongoing challenges of maintaining their right to define the mandate of their centres, to define what it means to provide feminist services, and in doing so, to construct, name and defend their structures, processes and practices as feminist.

Unlike women's centres, not all women's alternative services in Nova Scotia were established from feminist perspectives, with feminist boards and governance structures, or with social change mandates. However, when their leadership is feminist, their work with women is likely to lead women's alternative services into social advocacy and social change work and into working collaboratively with other feminist organizations. Chapter Five documents the development of three feminist-identified, issue-specific, women's alternative service organizations. It explores their incorporation of social advocacy as a core activity of their organizations and as a key component of their feminist practice.

Women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia have had both parallel histories of development as well as longstanding working relationships. They co-exist in several communities in the province. They provide services primarily for women, often receive core funding from the same government department, have considerable longevity, and have a history of working towards some common understanding of their services. This is particularly the case for women's centres and transition house

organizations. The development of women's centres as social advocacy organizations that provide multi-issue services to women and the development of transition house organizations as issue-specific services that are involved to some degree in social advocacy provides insight into their different status with core funders as well as the different approaches they take to working within their communities and with each other at the provincial level. While there generally have been positive working relationships between women's centres and transition house organizations at the community level, there have not always been easy working relationships between and among their umbrella associations. Women's centres and transition house organizations have a history of being pitted against each other in their struggle to survive in what can be a hostile political and insecure funding environment. Chapter Six looks at the parallel development of women's centres and transition house organizations in Nova Scotia and makes the case that the tensions that have arisen between them are attributable not only to differences in their approaches to their work but, as well, to pressures created by the state's underfunding of their organizations. Further, it demonstrates that it is through their commitment to feminist practice and to improving the lives of women that they have been able to work across their differences and to maintain what sometimes appears to be a teetering solidarity.

Chapter Seven builds upon the previous chapters in that it identifies and analyses specific pressures to de-politicize exerted by the state and its agencies on women's movement services. Using their power to withdraw or to threaten to withdraw funding support from women's movement organizations, the state through its representatives and

agencies has attempted to impose and enforce its definitions and hegemony. Through the imposition of government sanctioned structures, policies and funding priorities, the state has pressured feminist women's alternative services and women's centres to redefine and to restructure themselves to fit bureaucratically approved practices and state program priorities. As well, state pressures have created and exacerbated tensions within and between women's centres' and women's alternative services' individual organizations and umbrella associations. It is largely because of their feminist definitions and praxis that women's movement organizations have been able to maintain feminist structures, practices and politics while at times resisting and at times accommodating government parameters for their services.

Naming the various forms state pressures take is necessary to taking effective action to resist them. Government control mechanisms that are not named or that are characterized as "other" than control, in fact, have the effect of forming, entrenching and reinforcing that control. The impact of state definitional pressures, along with the cumulative effects of state control and the threatened withdrawal of core funding, have led women's movement organizations to develop together and separately deeper analyses of their experiences and to find ways to work collaboratively to resist the imposition of government definitions upon their service mandates.[16] In Chapter Eight the resistance efforts mounted by women's centres and THANS member organizations to the provincial government's Family Violence System Redesign Proposal are documented and used to

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[16] Framing this argument in terms of "definitional pressures" was inspired by Lora Bex Lempert's work on "definitional dialogues" in abusive relationships. See Lempert, Lora Bex, "The Line in the Sand: Definitional Dialogues in Abusive Relationships" in Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin, eds. Grounded Theory in Practice. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1997. pp. 149-170.

identify and theorize the various forms of resistance women's movement services have taken as well as key strategies they have used to enable their resistance. Here, the feminist definitions and analyses of the women's movement services impacted by the redesign proposal provide insight into the meaning they have given and the actions they have taken in response to the identified state pressures.

This thesis asserts that feminists organizing against, around and within the state benefit collectively from analyzing their experiences of social change. Further, they gain organizational strength from and increase their solidarity and resistance to state imposed agendas through situating feminist service provision within the broader women's movement and by defining, articulating and defending their practices as feminist. It is my hope that this thesis will provide community-based feminists with reflections, insights and analyses that will clarify and contextualize some of the pressures they face, help them identify their work as women's movement work, and, ultimately, benefit their organizations in managing current situations and meeting future challenges. As well, it is my hope that it will add to the body of Nova Scotia feminist research and that it will raise questions that women's studies scholars may want to pursue in future research endeavours.

Chapter Two

Maintaining the Connection: Women's Movement Social Activism and Women's Movement Services in Nova Scotia 1970s -2000s

Women's centres and feminist women's alternative services were born out of women's movement social activism. However, over the years women in some organizations have lost their personal sense of connection with a larger "women's movement," how the work of their organizations is connected with it, and the ways in which the specific issues different organizations are mandated to address are inseparable when working to end women's oppression and lack of entitlement. Conceptualizing the women's movement as a political space and identifying women's centres and feminist identified women's alternative services within it as sites of women's movement social change activism provides feminists with a framework within which they can challenge, analyze, evolve, articulate and defend their organizations' structures, services, programs, and practices as feminist and, in doing so, increase their solidarity and resistance to state imposed definitions and agendas.

Many of the women I interviewed felt most strongly connected to and involved with the women's movement during their early social activist days in the 1970s and 1980s. Although all the women I interviewed indicated that their organizations were either created by women's movement organizations or resulted from issues feminists brought to light in the 1960s and 1970s, and that the work they are doing in their organizations is women's movement work, their sense of a women's movement today is one that is nebulous and splintered. They found it difficult to articulate who, where and what it is.

One of the women I interviewed expressed her concern that the women's movement is not as vibrant, prescient, or relevant for women in Nova Scotia today as it was in the 1970s and early 80s when she said, "I don't know who's looking for the women's movement other than ourselves [feminist social activists] sometimes."[17]

Feminist Social Activism and the Creation of Women's Alternative Services

The 1970s and 1980s were a time when women in communities across Nova Scotia were connecting with feminism and 'the women's movement'. The women's movement was about women's liberation - about developing feminist analyses, naming sexism, identifying systems of oppression, and working for social, political and economic transformative change. Women were working for social change from a place of personal and collective, intellectual and emotional passion. In small, local consciousness-raising groups they were talking about their experiences as women and identifying issues that had affected their own lives, the lives of women in their families and circles of friends, and the lives of women in their communities. They were creating feminist spaces and forming groups and organizations that had women's equality, empowerment, education and well-being as their core raison d'etre and social, economic and political transformation as their goal. Consciousness-raising groups, gatherings and conferences organized by women provided opportunities to learn with other women and to begin building a women's

[17] Women's centre interview # 1.

politics.[18] In some ways it was a heady time – feminist transformative change seemed not only possible but imminent. At the same time that women were making the connections among issues in feminist created and feminist identified fora and spaces, they were also making the connections in more mainstream women's organizations. Women involved with church groups, unions, peace organizations, Women's Institutes, university women's groups, women's business organizations, and women's culturally specific organizations were identifying ways in which women were disadvantaged and vulnerable and could come together to change the status of women.

Establishing women's centres, women's alternative services, and women's periodicals, was part of women's movement social action work undertaken by feminist social activists at their local levels. Creating positive change for women involved women in addressing issues such as poverty, violence, and discrimination, and in working together in a sense of shared struggle with sisters who were living with violence, poverty and inequities. Often their vision for women's justice and equality and their work to alleviate poverty and to end violence led to the development of women's alternative services. The establishment of women's alternative services was one of the ways in which community-led women's groups could translate and actualize their concerns for social justice, their feminist politics and their commitment to improving the lives of women. It was part of connecting with a larger women's movement, of embodying it, of

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[18] In the 1980s many women in Nova Scotia were introduced to feminism and the women's movement through their participation in conferences organized for a time on an annual basis by such organizations as the Women's Health Education Network (WHEN), a provincial organization, and Women Unlimited, a Sydney-based feminist group, as well as through one-time conferences such as the Rural Women Together Conference organized by the St. F.X. University Extension Department with funding support from the Sisters of St. Martha and held in Antigonish in May 1985.

moving feminist street theory into practice, of working to change power structures (both at organizational as well as at community and government levels), of engaging with women in feminist praxis and dialogue, and of providing much needed support to women.[19]

In the 1970s in Nova Scotia, feminists were actively creating feminist spaces in which to gather and organize, recognizing the need for feminist services that would meet specific needs of women, and beginning to establish women's alternative services.[20] The 1980s heralded the birth of numerous feminist social activist groups and of many of the women's alternative services that are still in existence today. As part of their women's movement work, longer established women's organizations as well as newly formed women's organizations identified the need for and worked to develop services that would address specific issues women were facing. They established transition houses, sexual assault centres, employment referral services and services for women in conflict with the law.[21] It was also the decade when many of the women's centres in the province were

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[19] Maria Marx Feree and Patricia Yancey Martin contend that the 'women's movement' continues to exist because feminists founded and staffed organizations that were political spaces in which women did the work of the movement. Feree, Maria Marx and Patricia Yancey Martin. "Doing the Work of the Women's Movement: Feminist Organizations" in Feree, Myra Marx & Patricia Yancey Martin, eds. Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

[20] The 1970s in Nova Scotia saw the formation of organizations such as the Halifax Women's Bureau, the Congress of Black Women – Halifax/Dartmouth Chapter, Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women – Nova Scotia, The Elizabeth Fry (Unison) Society Cape Breton, Rape Relief, Lunenburg County Women's Group, and the Women's Health Education Network. It was a decade in which feminist periodicals including *Atlantis* and *APPLE* were published. The first women's centres, Brenton Street Women's Centre, Halifax, the Pictou County Women's Centre, New Glasgow and A Woman's Place - Forrest House, Halifax, and the first transition house, Bryony House, Halifax, were established in the 1970s.

[21] Women's organizations and social movement groups that were born in the 1980s included Mothers United for Metro Shelter (MUMS), the Low-Income Network Committee (LINC), the Women's

established. Women's alternative services and women's centres that were created as initiatives of established women's groups included a cooperative day care set up by the Women's Liberation Group in Halifax, the MicMac Family and Children's Services in Nova Scotia established by the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association, the Women's Information, Resource and Referral Service (WIRRS) established by A Women's Place Women's Centre (Halifax), and the Elizabeth Fry (Unison) Society Cape Breton developed by Unison Halifax. Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women – Nova Scotia (CCLOW) helped establish both Eastern Shore Learning Opportunities for Women (ESLOW) which in turn started a women's centre, LEA Place, as well as Guysborough Learning Opportunities for Women (GLOW) which in turn developed the Guysborough Family Day Care program.

Similarly, five of the early women's centres trace their beginnings to women's movement social activist organizations. The Pictou County Women's Centre was the initiative of a local women's consciousness-raising group. Second Story Women's Centre was started by the Lunenburg County Women's Group, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre by the Antigonish Women's Association, the Women Aware Women's Centre by Women Aware, and Every Woman's Centre by Women Unlimited.[22] As

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Action Coalition of Nova Scotia (WACNS), association des Acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Women Unlimited, Stepping Stone, Canadian Abortion Rights Action League/Halifax, and The Midwifery Coalition of Nova Scotia. It was also in the 80s that Nova Scotia's feminist newspaper *Pandora* was first published. See CCLOW, Groups Dynamic: A Collection of Nova Scotia Her-Stories, 1990.

[22] Three women's centres were started by women involved in community economic development organizations or initiatives, namely, the Women's Place which was established by the Annapolis County Community Organization for Regional Development, Central Nova Women's Resource Centre which was established as follow-up to an needs assessment undertaken by a class of Nova Scotia Community College students studying community economic development, and the Tri-County Women's Centre which was established by Women for Community Economic Development – Southwest Nova.

organizations with a social advocacy, community development mandate, women's centres, in turn, established or participated in establishing issue-specific services such as transition houses, help lines, second stage housing, affordable housing, food banks, and family resource centres.

Issue-specific services that were established by women's social advocacy organizations and groups to meet the needs of women in their communities were set up, in some instances, as separate services with separate boards while, in other instances, the social advocacy organization became the service or disbanded after the service was established. For example, the Pictou County Women's Centre established Tearmann Society as a separate organization to oversee Tearmann House. The Lunenburg County Women's Group that established Second Story Women's Centre disbanded after Second Story was established. The Women Aware group established and then became the Women's Aware Women's Centre.

Women's centres aside, the majority of the alternative services developed for women in the 1970s and 1980s were single issue focussed and served a particular need or population of women. Whether or not they were established by feminist organizations, their genesis in the women's movement stemmed from the fact that they were addressing issues brought to light by feminists. Thus the establishment and provision of services for women (whether feminist or not) was part of women's movement social action work. The establishment of community-led services for women both concretized and changed the way in which women carried out that part of their women's movement work. Women saw that securing government funding was necessary if they were to maintain the services

they had worked so hard to establish. Consequently, securing and maintaining government funding not only became a priority activity of women's service delivery organizations, it required them to adopt governance structures and practices acceptable to their funders. When applying for charitable status (which many women's organizations did in order to improve their ability to fundraise in their communities), they found they could not declare in their by-laws an overt social advocacy/lobbying mandate.[23] Both in order to receive charitable status from Revenue Canada and in order to access provincial core funding, they needed to demonstrate that the primary activities of their organization were service or education related. Thus as a survival strategy, many service delivery organizations, at least on paper, emphasized the services they provided and de-emphasized their social advocacy work. Once they had secured state funding, women's organizations were less likely to adopt radical feminist collective governance structures and practices. The need to be accountable to government in bureaucratically prescribed ways as well as to their boards, memberships and communities, meant that they were more likely to adopt structures that maintained feminist principles, yet formalized board and staff positions and reporting practices in a way that met state requirements for accountability.

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[23] Most women's centres in Nova Scotia have experienced difficulty in securing charitable status through Revenue Canada. While some women's centres were accorded charitable status with little difficulty in the mid 1980s, others had their applications rejected because of their social advocacy mandate. To secure charitable status some women's centres revised their by-laws. After being denied charitable status, the Antigonish Women's Association (AWA) decided to establish the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre as a separate organization with a service provision, programming and public education mandate that met the Revenue Canada charitable status guidelines. The AWA retained its social advocacy mandate.

The struggle to keep their services funded requires women's organizations to compete with each other for government grants and within their communities for donations. It requires them to demonstrate to the public as well as to government the importance of their issue, the need for their specific service, and to develop a public profile that distinguishes their service from other services. This has resulted in women separating and prioritizing women's issues and has contributed to women identifying as 'other' and sometimes discounting issues which are not their primary area of concern as less important than the one to which they are committing their time and energy. Working on one issue has led to a more general disconnect from their sense of identification with and participation in a larger women's movement where the long-term goal is broad social transformation, as well as from an analysis that holds that the issues impacting women are inter-connected and are best addressed from an integrative approach.

Maintaining women's alternative services requires a tremendous commitment of time and energy from women, directs their energies to working within the parameters of the service organization, and focuses on the specific issue the service is addressing. As a result, women who do their women's movement social activist work in community-led, issue-specific service organizations have found they have less time and energy to give to creating and maintaining non-service-based women's movement organizations or to committing time and energy to other women's movement related initiatives.

While issue specific service work may serve, in one way, to disconnect women from identifying with a broad social movement, in another way, it provides an entry point for women who want to get involved with feminist work in their communities. Established

women's services, especially those situated in rural areas,[24] often are a primary venue for and sometimes the only venue available to feminists who want to get involved with women's movement work as well as to women who are new to women's movement work and want to get involved with an established women's alternative service organization because they relate to the issue the organization is addressing. Often women who are new to feminism relate more strongly to the specific issue a service is addressing or to the service provided than to a broad, seemingly unembodied women's movement. Many see themselves as 'volunteers' and not necessarily (at least initially) as social activists.[25] Learning about the history of the organization and its roots in women's movement social activism is often women's first introduction to feminist social activism. Naming women's involvement in women's movement organizations as social activism and connecting the issues that different organizations are addressing is essential to building and maintaining a sense of connection with and participation in an active, political women's social change/liberation movement.

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[24] In small communities and rural areas the number of women who identify as feminists and who are interested in working for social change is limited. In rural communities, it is often the same women who are involved in women's organizations, peace groups, environmental and health initiatives and so on. While women are often stretched thinly, there tends to be greater understanding for the need to work across various kinds of diversity and for accommodating a range of beliefs and values.

[25] Government funders 'encourage' community-led services to carry out as much of their work as possible with 'volunteers' and there has been an increasing downloading of the delivery of social programs by the state to 'volunteer' organizations. The term volunteer is a passive, de-politicizing term that reflects a 'charity' model; its use contributes to the depoliticization of women's social movement work.

Women's Organizations and Alternative Services: Sites for Women's Movement Work

While for some women the women's movement is a current social movement in which they see themselves as active participants, for some it is an historical movement of the 1960s and 70s. For some women, the women's movement is an unembodied concept that does not impact in any significant way their everyday lives and work. Yet, for many feminists there remains a strong 'sisterhood' connection to the women's movement that is experienced as much at an emotional level as it is at an intellectual level.[26] Reconceptualizing the women's movement in a way that women can situate within it themselves and the services they have created and maintained is essential to re-establishing the connections among women's issues, to building stronger working relationships among women's alternative services and women's organizations, to resisting state imposed definitions and agendas, and to nurturing and sustaining the sense of a transformative feminist social, economic, and political agenda.

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[26] The use of the word sisterhood is not meant to convey unity as much as it is meant to convey a willingness to engage in dialogue and to struggle with inclusion. In Canada there has been considerable tension within and among women's movement organizations as women struggle with issues of inclusion and exclusion. While class, race and sexual orientation exclusions have been the articulated focus for many of these struggles, they have also included language, geographic location, political frameworks, and issue stances. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) has personified the struggles of sisterhood inclusion in Canada. NAC has held the representation of women's diversity to be as important as the representation of their common interests and has worked deliberately to elect previously marginalized women into decision-making positions. Women in NAC have worked to expose the structural links among race, gender, poverty, violence and other forms of oppression and marginalization. Jill Vickers et al describe NAC as an institution in which "diverse points of view within feminism can interact, develop policy, and comprehend the basis of one another's differences." They argue further that NAC could claim "to represent women better than competing political structures' because of the number of diverse groups it managed to include. See Vickers, Jill, Pauline Rankin and Christine Appelle. Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

When asked about the women's movement, the women I interviewed were in general agreement that the women's movement in Nova Scotia has changed from what it was 10 - 15 years ago. Some questioned whether a 'women's movement' still exists in Nova Scotia, some questioned whether it exists outside of women's alternative services and women's centres, and some whether it is or ever was tangible and located. Clearly women relate and related to 'the women's movement' and to the changes they perceived in it in different ways. For example, one social activist I interviewed described the women's movement today as "tamer and more disjointed"than she had experienced it in the 1970s. She noted that whereas the women involved in the early days of the women's movement were involved as individual women "who had been violated and there as a consequence to their inequality," today, many of the women involved in the women's movement represent groups or organizations.[27] In part she is referring to the fora through which women identify their work with the women's movement. While in the early 1970s women often were directly involved in organizing women's groups, defining feminist spaces, and taking direct political street actions, women today are more likely to be involved with established groups and to take part in coalitions that largely are made up of those groups. This observation reflects as well women's questions about who speaks to women's concerns, with what authority, and what are the fora for doing so.

For some women the women's movement in Nova Scotia ten years ago was actualized through a central rallying organization, the Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia (WACNS). Although criticized by some women in the province for not adequately

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[27] Women's centre interview # 3.

including visible and linguistic minority groups or women with disabilities, WACNS did provide a feminist space for women's services, social advocacy organizations, unions, and political party women's caucuses to connect with each other, to learn more about issues facing women, to deepen their analysis, to connect their work to a larger social, economic and political feminist social change agenda, and to speak to that agenda with a collective voice. The demise of WACNS in the mid 1990s left social activists in Nova Scotia without a central rallying organization. Umbrella groups such as Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) and Women's Centres Connect!, for the most part, acted independently of each other in their social advocacy efforts. Women were left to do their social movement work primarily through their own organizations and associations which often were issue-specific and not aligned or connected with other women's movement groups or actions. Without a way of connecting with each other's work, women's service organizations and associations became dis-connected from each other and some lost their sense of connection with a broader 'women's movement'.

Individual women's movement organizations also became identified as well with different and, often, separate levels of organizing and action – local, community-based, provincial, national and international. Too often working with minimal financial resources and person power, women's organizations lacked the means for cooperating extensively in their various initiatives and actions. Women not connected through formalized groups found it hard to participate in ways that were meaningful and sustaining. With the demise of WACNS and the segmentation of women's organizing, community-led women's alternative services and women's centres became more visible

as advocates for social change, and were looked to by the media to speak to women's issues. Some people began to see women's alternative services and women's centres not only as primary sites for women's movement work but to locate the women's movement in Nova Scotia within them.

However, while all of the women I interviewed agreed that women's alternative services and women's centres were sites of women's movement work, they disagreed about whether or not the women's movement was located primarily in women's services. A number of women noted that there is a wider group of women in Nova Scotia doing feminist social activist work than those who are participating solely in women's services, in women's coalition groups such as FemJEPP (Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy) and FishNet,[28] or in service umbrella organizations such as THANS and Women's Centres Connect!. They noted that women's movement work is being done by "some of the progressive women academics as well as by women working on women's issues in traditional work places."[29] As well, some noted that many women involved in working for change within their communities and workplaces do not see themselves or their work as part of a women's social movement or identify themselves as feminist. Several women cited a number of recent examples of broader aligned and non-aligned women's actions as women's movement work. For instance, a group of women friends organized the Celebration of Courage in response to the 1999 judicial decision that cleared former Nova

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[28] Nova Scotia Women's FishNet is an organization of individuals and groups of women in coastal communities that are concerned with women's participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

[29] Women's alternative services interview # 3.

Scotia Premier Gerald Reagan of all charges of sexual assault. The Celebration of Courage recognized the courage demonstrated by the women who had come forward with their stories of sexual assault by Reagan. As one key informant noted:

> That was phenomenal that they took that on. And those are women that are here in our community that are very much concerned about women's issues but they are not involved in any women's kind of movement or organization. There's a lot of women out there that do care but its almost as if you need to organize something that pulls them all together.[30]

The World March of Women 2000 provided a forum for involvement in women's movement social action and huge numbers of individual women and women's organizations across Nova Scotia organized and participated in World March events. Further, the World March of Women 2000 articulated visions that enabled women, whether or not they actively participated in World March related events, to connect their work with the World March and to the work that women were doing in communities and localities around the globe. Again in April 2002 women not involved formally in feminist organizations turned out in significant numbers to protest the provincial budget funding cuts to women's centres and transition houses.

In part, the lack of agreement about the composition, location and viability of the women's movement among the women I interviewed reflects the need for an articulated, collective definition and vision of a women's movement in Nova Scotia that supports collaborative participation among women's movement groups and organizations. Without such a definition, women often are looking for a connected, organized, embodied, social change movement that they do not see in Nova Scotia. Rather, they see

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[30] Women's alternative services interview # 1.

disconnected, issue-based work that, largely, is centred in and defined by women's services and that does not correspond to their image of the women's movement.

The lack of an articulated definition of the women's movement not only keeps much of women's social movement work invisible, it makes it more difficult to organize collective social movement actions. When women's social movement work is happening as a result of individual efforts or non-organized efforts, such as 'the daily grind stuff' that takes place in unions, workplaces, institutions, and communities, it is not revealed necessarily as social movement work even to those who are involved in it.[31] Failing to include, make visible and to name 'the daily grind stuff' as women's social change/social movement work serves to make the concept of a women's movement less relevant to women who do not identify their work as social movement work. Again, this lack of definition serves to bolster the perception that currently women's movement work is being done largely through women's services and organized women's groups and that 'the women's movement' is fragmented, and issue-based or non-existent.

Naming women's centres and women's alternative services as sites for women's movement work rather than as 'the' women's movement frees them to work on specific issues, to collaborate or not on social advocacy initiatives, to organize at different levels, and to maintain an identity with and a connection to a broader women's social and political movement which manifests locally, provincially, nationally, and globally. It frees them from being charged with the responsibility of providing a face or voice for the whole of the women's movement in Nova Scotia and from being criticized when they are

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[31] Women's centre interview # 2.

unable to do so. It makes it possible to re-frame the dis-connect among the different organizations doing women's movement work and to speak to the success of women's organizing over the past decade. It makes it possible to name and celebrate the establishment and longevity of women's alternative services and women's centres as successes of the women's movement, and to explore more critically the role they play and the challenges they face.

That women have been able to establish and maintain community-led women's centres and women's alternative services is itself a testament to women's movement organizing. Although, as has been noted, women's movement work is clearly happening in sites beyond feminist-identified women's organizations, services, centres, and coalitions in Nova Scotia, it is and has been through community-led women's alternative services and centres that many women become involved. I would argue that over the past 15 - 25 years, through the intense periods of women's social movement activity in the province as well as through the lulls in that activity, feminist women's services have provided a stability and infra-structure that has maintained spaces for social change work and for women who want to be doing that work. Women's alternative services and women's centres are concrete, of value to women, and they provide rallying points. Whether as multi-issue organizations or as single-issue organizations, they bring women in and get women involved in feminist work and feminist workplaces.[32]

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[32]Adamson, Briskin and McPhail identify the different strengths of multi-issue organizations and single-issue organizations. They point out that multi-issue organizations are able to "address a range of issues from a shared political analysis and/or set of goals" and are able to connect and articulate the inter-relatedness of the issues with which feminist are concerned. The authors found that single issue groups with a focus on a particular issue are more likely to be made up of individuals with different political analyses who come together to work on an issue of common concern and they are likely to bring a wide range of

Women's connection to women's movement organizations, women's alternative services and women's centres and, in turn, to the women's movement is personal. It is because they relate to the issues being addressed that women get involved. As noted earlier, many women's alternative services were developed by women who were involved with social movement/social justice work and who saw a need for specific issue-focussed services. The services provide a venue and a structure for women who are concerned with particular issues and want to ensure there are supports in place for women. Through their participation in an issue-specific organization women are able to connect with other women around an issue and to take action to address it without necessarily exposing their personal experiences of violence, poverty, mental health conditions and so on. Although many women get involved initially to support the provision of a specific service, once there, they get involved as well with social advocacy that connects them with 'women's movement' work. As one key informant observed:

> I mean it does work both ways. The sort of feminists who want to do a political, social advocacy thing get hooked into the services but those who want to provide for women's immediate needs come into the politics.[33]

As well, women who use the services often are introduced to and get involved with women's movement work. It has been the experience of women's centres that women who participate in their programs begin to connect with feminism and to get involved with social change initiatives. In fact, programs and projects undertaken by women's centres are designed to involve women who are experiencing the issue being addressed.

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skills and experiences to the issue. Adamson, Nancy, Linda Briskin, Margaret McPhail, eds. Feminist Organizing for Change. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988.

[33] Women's centre interview # 2.

For example, women who participate in transition to employment programs come into the program because they want to go back to school, get a job or otherwise move ahead with their lives. Through the program they analyze issues that impact their lives; they are introduced to feminism and to the work of the women's movement. What often has been most meaningful for women in these programs is realizing the barriers they face as women are socially and politically constructed and maintained. That analysis allows them to feel better about who they are in the world and to move forward in a more deliberate, less self-blaming way. Although most of the women entering the program are unfamiliar with and hold a stereotypical view of 'feminists,' by the end of the program nearly all of the women identify as feminists and want to get involved in making changes in their lives and in their communities. This does not mean necessarily that they get involved directly with women's centres or other women's organizations, but they get involved in talking with people in their lives about what the issues are and how they impact women and their families and communities.

Understanding how women get involved with, conceptualize and relate to the women's movement can inform feminist efforts to create a stronger sense of connectedness to it. The power of the feminist women's movement lies in the word movement – a term which evokes its significance as an evolving, dynamic, fluid, social movement in which women are involved as individuals as well as through their feminist communities, organizations and groups. While there is a tendency and desire to concretize 'the women's movement' as an entity that has a separate and distinct existence, and to identify it as or locate it within particular organizations and activities, it is more

useful to understand it as political spaces where women carry out women's movement work, think about and plan for transformative social and political change, connect with other women and with broader movement efforts. This means that while women's alternative services do women's movement work and are women's movement spaces, they are not the women's movement. Nor are women's organizations, caucuses, coalitions or campaigns. They are at once actions and embodiments of the women's movement – a movement that is made apparent, to a large extent, through the knowledge that women in many localities and through many venues are doing women's movement/women's social change work, and through a shared sense that the issues and efforts of each are connected with those of the others and are contributing to social change locally and globally. Thus conscientization, education, and social advocacy are essential components of women's movement work, as is providing much needed services to women.

Chapter Three

Women's Movement Social Activism and the State

When articulated as a political space and envisioned as global, diverse, inclusive, integrative, multi-sited and multi-voiced,[34] the women's movement provides a broad social movement context and coherence for the many issues, sites, forms and actions that constitute women's movement work. Broad and profound social change requires women's movement organizations to be working intensively at the community grassroots level to engage with women in transformative social movement work that will shift power at the local level in communities, families and institutions. Shifting power in communities is necessarily a focus for women's movement work if feminist social transformation is to happen.[35] Along with engaging women at the grassroots community level, it requires the cultivation and nurturing of working relationships among women's movement organizations and social activist efforts.

Social transformation also requires women's movement organizations to engage with the state as they advocate for woman-positive legislation, public policies, and government programs as well as for social, political and economic change. Over the years, the response of the state to women's movement social activism has been one of both accommodation and resistance. Although the women's movement has had some impact on the state, the state, in turn, has contributed to shaping women's movement work in Canada by both facilitating and limiting it.

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[34] Miles, Angela. Integrative Feminisms: Building Global Visions 1960s - 1990s. New York, London: Routledge Press, 1996. Pg. xi - xiii.

[35] Women's centre interview # 2.

State Response to 'the Women's Movement'

"In a democracy public funds should be used for social advocacy."[36]

The response of the state to women's social activism from the 1960s on and its changing positions with respect to women's services and state-funded women's social change work provides some background for and insight into the struggles for survival faced by women's alternative services and women's centres in Nova Scotia today. Engaging with the various levels of the state and its agencies has kept much of the work of Canadian women's movement organizations focussed on the state and, as such, on attempts to influence government policies, programs and legislation at federal and provincial levels. According to their particular agendas, political make-up, and willingness to consider women's concerns, different governments at times have helped move forward a feminist social change/social justice agenda and at times have blocked or compromised that agenda.

At the federal level, the Government of Canada in 1967 responded to pressure from a coalition of national and regional associations of women involved with advocating for child care, birth control, abortion, world peace, and other causes of import to women to address women's inequality by establishing the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSW).[37] The mandate of the Commission was to "inquire into and

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[36] Women's Centre interview # 3.

[37] The committee calling for the Royal Commission represented 33 organizations with a membership that totalled some two million women and included the Committee for the Equality of Women led by Laura Sabia and le Federation des femmes de Quebec led by Therese Casgrain. Laura Sabia is credited as a key player in pushing Prime Minister Lester Pearson to establish the commission by threatening that one million women would march on Parliament Hill if the commission was not established. Inside government Judy LaMarch, a federal Liberal cabinet minister supported women's call for the

report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the Federal Government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society."[38] Calling the commission had the effect not only of legitimizing "the concerns of women regarding their status", it provided "a conceptual framework for future research and advocacy" and "established a vocabulary for the development and articulation of feminist ideology and analysis to come".[39] Once the RCSW was established, the Ad Hoc Coordinating Committee on the Status of Women focussed on convincing the government to take up their issues. The subsequent engagement of the federal government shaped the direction 'the women's movement' took as it emerged in the 1970s and 80s.[40]

When the Royal Commission presented its report to Parliament in 1970, the Report included 167 recommendations of which 122 were identified as the responsibility of the federal government. Because the Royal Commission's report was rooted in what women had told the commission, it appealed to a broad base of individual women and women's organizations. As Monique Bégin pointed out, "the report privileged what women had to say about their lives and about society around them" and women's organizations were

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commission. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was a seven-member commission chaired by Florence Bird. See O'Neill, Brenda. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women: Looking Back, Looking Forward. May 2003. http://www.uwc-wpg.mb.ca/royal_commission_talk.pdf

[38] O'Neill, 2003. Pg. 2.

[39] O'Neill, 2003. Pg. 3.

[40] Findlay, Sue. "Feminist Struggles with the Canadian State: 1966-1988" in Resources for Feminist Research. Volume 17.3. September 1988. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Pg 5.

ready to identify with and to get involved with women's movement work.[41] However, twenty-five years later when reflecting upon the action taken by government in response to the Royal Commission report, Bégin noted that while the government acted quickly to adopt "all the simple reforms requested, integrating women's issues in official discourse, and taking action on several fronts that did improve the daily lives of thousands of women in Canada," the state failed to "set in motion the radical changes requiring the transformation of society."[42]

Nevertheless, at the time, women believed the government could be forced to respond to their concerns and women from across Canada who had brought their concerns to the Royal Commission began to organize collectively to monitor the government's response and to push for the implementation of the recommendations. They encouraged other women to work with them for change. Thus, in 1970 women on both sides of the country created women's movement organizations with mandates to lobby for change for women – namely, the Newfoundland and Vancouver Status of Women Councils.[43] In 1972 the first national conference of feminists, "Strategy for Change", was held in Toronto and from it the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), a coalition of 30-odd women's groups and organizations, was formed in 1973 with a mandate to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal

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[41] Bégin, Monique. "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada: Twenty Years Later" in Backhouse, Constance and David Flaherty, eds. Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. 1992. Pg.33.

[42] Begin, 1992. Pg. 36.

[43] Findlay, 1988. Pg. 5.

Commission, to bring women's issues forward to government and to lobby for change.[44] NAC provided an important structure within which women with diverse interests could engage in politics collectively and it served as an arena for the development of feminist approaches to public policy.[45] Sue Findlay notes that there were early tensions within the women's movement with respect to engaging with government. However, while some feminists distrusted the government after its representatives had refused to hear their arguments for abortion on demand during the 1970 cross-country Abortion Caravan, "the majority of Canadian women campaigning for women's rights held to the belief that the government could be forced to respond [to their demands] if the appropriate strategies were adopted."[46]

Subsequent to the tabling of the Royal Commission's Report and in response to women's call for action, the Trudeau federal government in 1971 appointed Robert Andras, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, to represent 'the status of women issue' in Cabinet. In 1972 the same government established the Women's Program and the Native Women's Program and located them within the Department of the Secretary of

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[44] By 1988 the National Action Committee on the Status of Women had grown to include some 600 groups. It acted as an umbrella organization and carried a far-reaching agenda for social change. NAC provided a voice for the Canadian women's movement and was seen by activists as an "embryonic 'parliament of women' in which the representation of women's diversity was as important as the representation of their common interests" (Vickers et al, 1993, pg.4). Jill Vickers asserts that NAC reflects the differences between the Canadian women's movement and its US and western European counterparts in its ideological diversity, as well as in its ability to maintain interaction with the state while at the same time maintaining its autonomy. See Vickers, Jill, Pauline Rankin and Christine Appelle. Politics as if Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

[45] Vickers et al, 1993. Pgs. 11-12.

[46] Findlay, 1988. Pg. 5.

State and went on in 1973 to establish the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW)– an independent body with a mandate to advise government and to educate the public on issues of concern to women.[47] The Royal Commission Report concurred with feminists that only through working at the levels of both the community and the state could changes in the status of women be implemented. Thus the Women's Program, with a broad mandate to promote the status of women, provided funding to community-based, grassroots women's groups. This funding enabled women to organize within their communities, to educate their communities about women's issues, and to create much needed women's services. However, the struggles women faced in their communities to have their concerns taken seriously by those holding positions of power and authority - in the family, the church, the workplace, learning institutions and such - was mirrored in government. Feminist staff working for change within the Women's Program faced much of the same marginalization of their issues and discounting of their efforts as did community-based feminists.[48]

Over the next decades with funding support from the Women's Program, national feminist organizations such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) undertook extensive feminist research that documented women's oppression and vulnerability, and

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[47] Findlay, 1988. Pg. 6.

[48] Findlay observes that feminist staff working within the Women's Program "were constantly undermined by an almost exclusively male senior management and regional staff who constantly questioned the validity of a program to support feminist organizations and refused to allocate the time and resources necessary for its effective development and delivery." Findlay, 1988, pg. 6.

enabled women to argue for social, economic and political change. They produced feminist publications, and organized feminist conferences that provided women with access to necessary feminist information, visions, analyses and organizing spaces. They served as women's movement organization connectors that enabled community-based organizations to learn from and with sister organizations across the country and to experience themselves as part of a larger social movement. The United Nations Decade for Women, 1975-1985, provided legitimacy to women's organizing for social justice and equality, and further underscored to governments the necessity of supporting (or at least appearing to support) women's causes. The International Year for Women, 1975, acted as a catalyst for the federal government to increase the profile of the Office of the Co-ordinator on the Status of Women by giving it departmental status[49] as well as to increase funding to the Women's Program.

As Sue Findlay notes, the seeming willingness of elected politicians "to use the machinery of government to promote women's equality" further encouraged feminists in the 1970s and 1980s to focus their strategies on working with the state "in a collaborative and consultative manner" to further the status of women.[50] Rather than expedite systemic, feminist transformative social change, however, this involved many feminists and women's organizations in directing their energy towards addressing single issues through public policy. The reforms that were made were limited, and the process served

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[49] The Co-ordinator had deputy ministerial status and limited power prior to 1976 (Findlay, 1988, pg. 7). Even with departmental status, the Co-ordinator on the Status of Women remained in a junior position within Cabinet.

[50] Findlay, 1988, pg. 7.

increasingly to tie the women's movement to the state's agenda as feminist issues were redefined by government bureaucracies and institutionalized within a government policy-making process. As Findlay argues:

> What we must realize is that the struggle with the state has taken on new dimensions in the 1980s. ... What we are faced with now is a government that has institutionalized the representation of feminist issues; that is, it has integrated women's issues in the "unequal" structure of representation that is the basis of the policy-making process. It now has the capacity, and uses it, to redefine our issues and shape our strategies – in other words, to "institutionalize" feminist demands.[51]

Under the leadership of the Mulroney government, the federal state lost interest in funding women's social change work, reduced opportunities for women's organizations to work in a cooperative manner with the state, moved away from maintaining social policy responsibility, and adopted a neo-liberal agenda which by definition entrenches social inequalities by reducing social spending and adopting a market-driven development strategy.[52] Since that time women's organizations increasingly have been dismissed as special interest groups;[53] gender analysis has replaced feminist analysis within government bureaucracies; and the language of inclusion has been used to make invisible the specificity of women's experiences and concerns. Further, the Canadian Advisory

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[51] Findlay, 1988, pg 7-8.

[52] Brodie, Janine, 1996. "Canadian Women, Changing State Forms, and Public Policy" in Brodie, Janine, ed. Women and Canadian Public Policy, Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company. Pgs. 1-24.

[53] Marginalising women's concerns by applying the term 'special interest' to feminist issues and to organizations advocating on behalf of women is a way of managing women's call for justice and equality. The label 'special interest' implies that feminist concerns are not connected to the well-being of the 'general' population and that their demands are not in the interest of the 'general' population. It implies, as Janine Brodie points out, that a group is demanding privileges that are unearned and violate the norms of citizenship. The signifier 'special interest group' suggests that "their demands for inclusion and equality are outside of and antagonistic to" the interest of 'ordinary' people who do not require state assistance and intervention. See Brodie 1996. Pg. 21.

Council on the Status of Women has been disbanded. The Canada Assistance Plan has been replaced with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). The CHST not only significantly reduced funding available to the provinces for social programs, it removed national standards from social assistance programs and did not limit how the province could use the dollars.[54] Federal core funding made available through the Women's Program to women's equality seeking organizations has been eliminated.[55] In the 1980s, as the affordability of social programs was questioned and social programs were dismantled or more tightly controlled through financial and mandate restrictions, many feminists working in the civil service became disillusioned and frustrated with the increasing bureaucratization of their work and left government. With a reduced "feminist presence," the bureaucracies defined "the feminist perspective" often setting priorities that were antithetical to feminist causes.[56]

Beginning in the late 1980s and over the ensuing years the government substantially reduced funding allocated for women's equality seeking groups through the Women's Program. As a response to funding reductions the Women's Program limited the issues

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[54] Through the Canada Assistance Plan the federal government made fifty cent dollars available to the provinces for social programs. In Nova Scotia the majority of women's alternative services were funded with CAP funding. Under the CHST dollars designated by the federal government for health, education and social programs could be redesignated by the provinces to other programs or used as they saw fit.

[55] Although in 1987 the federal government promised to maintain the funding level of the Women's Program and to index it to a cost of living allowance, in 1989 it cut its budget by 15.3%. In 1990 it cut it a further 15% and cut core funding to women's centres, national women's organizations and women's periodicals. Funding to women's centres was restored partially and temporarily after a concerted lobbying effort by women and women's groups across Canada. National Action Committee on the Status of Women. "Canadian Women Protest Cuts of Government Funding" in Women's International Network News. Spring 1991, Volume 17.2. Pg.71. Core funding for women's centres was eliminated permanently in 1998.

[56] Findlay, 1988, pg. 7.

they funded as well as the approach women's groups could take to addressing those issues. Eliminating systemic violence against women and the girl child, improving women's economic status, and achieving social justice became the designated funding priorities of Women's Program. Women's organizations were to address those priorities by focussing on institutional policy and program changes, by facilitating the involvement of women's organizations in the public policy process, and by using a collaborative approach that engaged partners and stakeholders.[57] In 1996 the Women's Program budget was further reduced and the program was moved from the Department of Secretary of State into Status of Women Canada, a coordinating unit responsible for promoting gender equality and instituting gender-based analysis throughout the federal government.[58] The government's increasing use of 'gender' terminology to replace feminist language further reflected its move away from supporting women's equality issues. The concept of gender-based analysis or a gender lens first appeared in a federal government document in 1993 where Status of Women Canada substituted the term 'gender' for the word 'feminist' in its Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women.[59] Since that

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[57] Status of Women Canada. Women's Program Atlantic Funding Priorities 1998-99. Under the new Women's Program guidelines a challenge for one proposal submitted by women's centres was that they were required to obtain a letter of support from the government department (stakeholder) whose policies they were attempting to influence. This substantially compromised their project and their ability to implement an action plan in which they planned to build grassroots support as a strategy before engaging with government.

[58] Burt, Sandra and Christine Mitchell. "What's in a Name?: From Sheltering Women to Protecting Communities" in How Ottawa Spends 1998-99. Balancing Act: The Post-Deficit Mandate, ed., Pal, Leslie A. Toronto, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Pg. 285.

[59] Burt, Sandra and Christine Mitchell, 1998. Pg. 285.

time, feminist influenced government programs and policies have been weakened through the adoption of gender-neutral language and the imposition of gender-lens frameworks.

Concurrently, in Nova Scotia, in response to demands from women's movement organizations to address women's equality concerns, the provincial government in April 1975 appointed a Task Force on the Status of Women to "study the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) with particular reference to those recommendations within provincial jurisdiction" and to make recommendations to Government on "actions necessary to improve the status of women in Nova Scotia."[60] In the twenty-nine public hearings and twenty informal, group specific hearings held in communities across the province, the Task Force sought out and heard from women from all walks of life. In its report to government, the Task Force made ninety-five recommendations culminating with a recommendation for the establishment of a Ministry of State for the Status of Women, "to give women a strong voice at the highest level of decision-making in our province."[61] In 1977 the provincial government established the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW) as an 'arms-length' from government body. It was mandated to monitor women's issues, advise the government, conduct research and keep the media informed on issues affecting and of

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[60] Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women. Herself Elle-Même: Report of the Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women. Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1976. Pg. 5.

[61] Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women Recommendation # 95. Nova Scotia Task Force on the Status of Women, 1976. Pg. 72. The Task Force report calls for the transformation of society and its institutions, and sees that 'equality' with men is a restricted goal for women. It identifies women's 'participation' and 'development' as concepts that inform social and political transformation and holds that elevating "the positive aspects of traditionally 'feminine' personality traits, activities and occupations" to "a place of dignity and respect" is critical to that transformation. Pg. 6-7.

concern to women. Initially, council members were political appointees representing federal ridings and had little connection with women's organizations.[62]

Over the years, although feminist organizations in Nova Scotia have consistently supported the need for the NSACSW, the working relationship between the NSACSW and women's organizations has been at times strong and at times strained. The bell weather for the relationship has been the formation and disbanding of broad-based, provincial, women's movement organizations. The Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia (WACNS) was formed in 1987 after the public resignation of Francine Cosman, President of the NSACSW, who resigned on principle when the provincial government refused to provide the NSACSW with the budget required to carry out its mandate. WACNS provided a provincial feminist voice for women's organizations, organized annual lobbies of the provincial government, developed position papers on issues such as women's poverty, and for several years grew in strength and numbers. In the late 1980s, Debi Forsyth-Smith's appointment by the provincial government as President of the NSACSW brought to the Council new leadership. Coming from a media background, Forsyth-Smith was aware of the growing strength of WACNS and demonstrated a willingness to learn from women's movement organizations about issues of the day, to present a feminist analysis of women's issues, and to call the government to account on behalf of women. Through her efforts a strengthened working relationship was established between the NSACSW and women's community organizations and the

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[62] Beagan, Brenda L. "'Diversifying' the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women: Questions of Identity and Difference in Feminist Praxis" in Atlantis, Volume 21.1 Fall 1996.

NSACSW increasingly gained the respect of women's organizations across the province. Because the NSACSW was seen by women to act as a competent watchdog on government, there was less need for WACNS to do so. Thus, when the federal Women's Program eliminated core funding to women's organizations and reduced funding available for projects, and women's organizations became consumed with fighting cuts and with maintaining their organizations and services, they had less energy and resources to maintain WACNS. WACNS began to wane and eventually disbanded in the mid 1990s.

In 1993 under the leadership of Katherine MacDonald, the NSACSW, in consultation with women's organizations across Nova Scotia, introduced a process to diversify its membership in order to better represent the interests and concerns of all women in the Province.[63] Women's organizations supported this move to diversify the Council, to make it more representative of women's interests, and more responsive and accountable to the women's community. However, when in 1995, Eleanor Norrie, the Minister Responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, bypassed the diversity process and reverted to appointing Council members according to their political affiliation, the women's community protested and again withdrew their support. Shortly thereafter, the government merged the NSACSW with the Women's Directorate (a body appointed by government to identify status of women issues within government agencies), appointed the Executive Director of the Women's Directorate as the Acting Director of the Advisory Council and the Council effectively lost its "arms-length" from government status. Many women's organizations felt that the ability of the NSACSW to hold the

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[63] Beagan 1996.

government to account was compromised, that the women's community could no longer look to it as a representative voice and some came to distrust it as an ally. In effect, the government de-politicized the Council, curtailing its ability to criticize government policy and action and to join with community-led, women's movement organizations in calling for government accountability.[64]

Women's organizations began to look again to each other to voice their concerns directly to government and to the public through the media. Partly in response to the changes in the NSACSW, and partly out of a need to re-establish a multi-voiced, provincial, feminist women's movement organization that could speak to issues such as the increase in women's poverty in the province, women's organizations came together with individual feminist social activists and created FemJEPP (Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy) in 1998/99. While WACNS was established with a broad mandate to address women's equality and lobbied government as a strategy, FemJEPP was mandated to engage with government and to advocate for just and equitable public policy with a specific focus on promoting women's economic well-being. While there are

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[64] At the time, the demise of a strong, arms-length provincial Advisory Council had a number of significant consequences for feminist organizations, women's alternative services and women's centres. An important voice for women was perceived to be co-opted and, to some extent, silenced. There was less original, provincially focussed, feminist research made available to women to help them address current issues. Women's organizations lost an effective conduit to government policy and decision-makers. The visibility and vulnerability of women's services that were critical of or that opposed government policies and programs increased. Many women's organizations distrusted that the government appointed and connected leadership of the NSACSW would allow it to act consistently in the best interests of women. Recently, however, women have begun to build a renewed relationship with the NSACSW and to engage with it to further both Council and community initiatives. A number of individual Council members have the respect and goodwill of women's organizations, and the recent appointment to the Chair of an independent, well-respected and well-connected community-based feminist social activist has increased the willingness of feminists to work with the Council. Although, as is evident as well by recent appointments to the Council, political party affiliation remains a factor in the appointment process.

some ongoing differences of opinion among FemJEPP members about how to engage with government, under what conditions, and the usefulness of focussing on government, FemJEPP is looked to and valued by the women who participate in it as a space to deepen their analysis of women's issues, to engage in broader social change initiatives, to build support for the issue-specific work of member organizations, and to seek support for women's alternative services and women's centres in their struggle for survival. FemJEPP's focus on engaging with the state as a means of influencing change is reflective of the approach women's movement organizations have taken in Canada.

Since 1967 when the federal government appointed the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the direction of the women's movement in Canada has been influenced, if not set by the different levels of government and its bureaucracies. It has absorbed women's movement organizations into non-confrontational politics, shaped the way they participate in the public-policy making process (largely by creating mechanisms for public consultation[65] and by engaging them in implementing rather than defining political commitments[66]), and made it increasingly difficult for feminists working inside government to influence social policy. However, one of the contradictions is that at the same time that the state has influenced the direction of the Canadian women's movement, and limited and curtailed the efforts of women's movement organizations, government funding made available for women's movement activities has enabled women's

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[65] Phillips, Susan D. "How Ottawa Blends: Shifting Government Relationships with Interest Groups" in Abele, Frances, ed., How Ottawa Spends: The Politics of Fragmentation 1991-92. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991. Pg. 204.

[66] Findlay, 1988, pg.8.

movement organizations to evolve, women's alternative services and women's centres to establish longevity, and the women's movement to remain relatively strong and healthy.

However, as governments move increasingly towards the right of the political agenda, they move away from engaging with women's organizations in implementing feminist social change and from supporting the work of women's movement organizations. With the elimination of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the budget reductions and program restrictions to the federal Women's Program, and the depoliticization of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the ability of women's organizations to engage with the state through women supportive agencies is compromised and reduced. Further the demise in strength of pan-Canadian women's movement organizations such as NAC leaves provincial and individual women's movement organizations without a national rallying forum from which to organize cooperative and collaborative social change actions. This has set the stage for all levels of government to further reduce funding for women's movement social change and service delivery work and to impose government defined parameters to that work.

State Focussed Public Policy Social Advocacy: Limits, Contradictions and Challenges for Women's Movement Service Delivery Organizations

Of necessity, women working in and with women's movement service delivery organizations are involved in public policy focussed social advocacy. Working with women on a daily basis and helping them negotiate their way through the various mine fields of justice, legal, social assistance and child protection policies, programs and systems has not only further politicized women's alternative services and women's

centres, it has made it necessary for them to engage fully in public policy debates and to advocate for woman-positive policy. They work hard to change policies, programs and systems that were not developed in consultation with feminist women's services, do not consider women's safety and well-being, and that discriminate against, marginalize and oppress women. They have been successful in putting many of their issues on the public agenda in Nova Scotia and, as a result of women's efforts, there have been some significant pieces of legislation enacted and policies implemented.

Although the women I interviewed were in agreement that social advocacy is a core social change activity, not all of the women used the term social advocacy to mean the same thing. Some women used the term to refer to the advocacy they did with and on behalf of individual women using their services. This largely involved them in advocating with government agencies, the police, mental health providers and others to ensure that policies and programs were being properly implemented and that women could access the help they needed. They saw social advocacy as service-based and as improving the lives of women on an individual basis. Some used the term to refer to the lobbying they did with the state and its agencies where they called for specific legislative and policy changes that would benefit women. This included meetings with various levels of government, sitting at government policy tables, presenting briefs, and conducting independent, community-led research for the purpose of documenting women's experiences, educating the public and influencing government to take action on a particular issue. For some women, feminist social advocacy also meant working at the grassroots community level to build a consciousness that would lead to a shifting of

power in communities and a will to effect change. A number of women involved with delivering services expressed frustration that even when they are committed to social advocacy and to working across issues, they do not have the time to take on what they see as broader social movement social advocacy work. The time and resources required to carry out effective, sustained, and coordinated social change advocacy can seem overwhelming to women's alternative services that are already over-extended. Thus several of the women I interviewed keep their social change work issue-focussed and service-based as a survival strategy. As one key informant stated:

> You are just so over-worked in what you are doing, it's hard to do a lot of that social advocacy. You do your social advocacy within your organization, but if you pick up the newspaper and read something, you don't take it on. Unless it's the everyday social advocacy it doesn't get done.[67]

The contradictions and challenges for women doing social advocacy do not lie so much in the route or routes women choose to take – be it pressing for fair policy and program implementation, calling for legislated policy change, or working for systemic change – as much as they lie in whether and how they perceive the particular action to be connected with a larger vision of feminist transformative social, economic and political change.

Women's alternative services have insisted and are insisting they be consulted about public policy, and while many government public policy tables remain inaccessible, they have established representation at some government policy tables. And, at these tables, they have been able to change details of policies and to reduce harm to women. Women's

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[67] Women centre interview # 4.

alternative services have had less success, however, in influencing policy makers to develop and implement policies that would radically improve women's lives by transforming systems that support and are supported by the current patriarchally-based, capitalist, neo-liberal agenda. In spite of women's social advocacy efforts, poverty and violence remain everyday realities for women.[68] At root this is because the neo-liberal ideology adopted by government is in direct opposition to feminist visions for transformative social change. On the ground it is difficult to advance woman-positive systemic change through public policy advocacy because governments work within short four-year terms of office, their visions are limited to that term, their approach is not women-positive, and their policy focus tends to be reactive, scattershot, and reform oriented.

As well, the daily demands of service provision, the challenges of maintaining a service-based organization, the need to raise funds and hold on to government funding, and the issue specificity of their mandates have been contributing factors in limiting the social advocacy efforts of women's services to efforts that are more individual and reactive and less strategic and coordinated. The demands of their work often cause women's service organizations to direct their efforts towards challenging specific government policies and programs without sufficiently connecting with or coordinating

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[68] Despite decades of lobbying by women's organizations, and despite the participation of women's organizations in provincial roundtables and numerous government committees, the Nova Scotia government has increased only marginally the minimum wage; the wage gap between men and women has not narrowed significantly; a universal childcare program remains a dream; women on social assistance who go to university lose their assistance; public housing is hugely underfunded; advocacy programs once offered through transition houses for women leaving abusive relationships have been cut; and the list goes on.

their efforts with those of sister women's movement organizations working on related issues, and without locating their specific efforts within a broader vision of social change. Unless the women's services sitting at government policy tables are coming from organizations that, while focussed on a specific issue, are working closely with women's movement groups outside of their organizations on broad social change, it is difficult for them to broaden the policy table agenda and to re-frame the policy within a larger feminist, social change agenda.

Further, while there can be considerable benefit to women in having women's service organizations represented at government policy tables, often, it is not without cost to those organizations and to the women representing them. A former government senior staff member points out that for women's alternative services, their mandate to provide services along with their dependence on minimal and insecure government funding reduces their capacity to oppose government policy. She contends that service provision relegates women's services "to a kind of hand maid role" rather than a social change role[69] and that entering into the public policy field can have negative consequences for their services. Her comments point to the fact that women's services are supported by the state as long as they frame their services as non-political, volunteer sector services, provide them in a manner that is amenable to government, and limit their advocacy to that which is in line with a state agenda. It is when they take on a direct social advocacy role, challenge state ideology and practices, call the government to account, and move to

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[69] Former senior government staff member interview.

working at a more inter-connected and strategic level that the government responds with constraints and sanctions.[70] The former government senior staff person observed:

> ...isn't it ironic that when services get to something like a critical mass level where people are doing a certain amount of political education and advocacy then, all of a sudden, that's the time when government is saying let's re-trench, let's professionalize, let's pull back, let's bureaucratize, let's cut out all this duplication. What duplication are you cutting out? It is because women are now no longer just talking about being the hand maids and carrying out all the operational stuff. It's because they're saying we're shaping the policy here, we're shaping the policy agenda. But that's now when the legs are being cut out from under women because of the fact that they've evolved to that more strategic level.[71]

The particular limitations, contradictions and challenges posed in working for change by sitting at government determined policy tables can be especially acute for issue-specific women's alternative services that are not connected with women's movement organizations that are working actively towards a larger feminist social change vision. Working in isolation as issue-specific organizations can leave them vulnerable to being pulled into implementing a government reform-oriented agenda which they had little voice in defining. The policy table agenda, by and large, is determined and controlled by the government as is representation at the table. Policy tables, for the most part, mirror the silo structure of government departments and are not conducive to creating the kind of cross-departmental policies that are required to address in a substantive, integrated way the underlying causes of women's oppression and marginalization. Moreover, government policy tables tend to reinforce the issue

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[70] Former senior government staff member interview.

[71] Former senior government staff member interview.

specificity of women's services by inviting representatives from single-issue entry point organizations that provide services related to the specific policy issue. For example, transition houses are more likely to be invited to sit at policy tables that are addressing issues related to woman abuse even though this is an issue facing women using women's centres, women's addictions programs, and women's housing services as well. Similarly, women's centres, although they are multi-issue entry point organizations are more likely to be invited to participate at government tables developing social assistance policy even though that is an issue also facing women who use transition houses. Thus issue expertise is often assigned by the state and its agencies to organizations in a way that reinforces issue separation and women's movement fragmentation. And, the preferential status bestowed on women's organizations invited to the policy table can create tensions with organizations not invited.

Neither is it happenstance that governments and their agencies invite single-issue organizations to their policy tables and that those tables reflect the siloed structure of government departments. For the most part, the individuals invited to policy tables are from services and organizations that are seen to be willing to work with rather than oppose or expose a neo-liberal, pro-business government agenda. Once at the table, representatives of women's organizations are pressured to work within the parameters set by government. Representatives may be expected to cover the costs of their participation and to take time away from work to do so. Often, women's organizations' and services' representatives are present in such token numbers that they are unable to prevent government voices from dominating and prevailing. Tokenism allows government to

maintain that women's services have been represented and that they approve of the policy or program developed. When policy and program changes advocated by the women representatives are ignored, and policies and programs that disadvantage or discriminate against women are imposed in spite of their participation at the table, women who worked to influence the agenda in a positive way feel they have been betrayed and used. Women may also be caught in situations where they support a policy that may still hold some problems for women and may not be supported by women's movement organizations and services not at the table.

While women's alternative services bring to the table a level of expertise that is grounded in women's lived experiences, when they have not had established mechanisms for working together on issues across organizations, they have found their voice at the table limited to and isolated within their own organizational structure. Not only has this left them more vulnerable to government pressures to work within a narrow policy agenda, it has not built within the wider women's movement community knowledge about and support for the policy perspective they are bringing to the table. In fact, in some instances, it has left the women sitting at the table open to criticism from organizations whose communities or populations of interest are negatively impacted by the policy but are not represented at the table – organizations with which they would see themselves as ideologically aligned. This experience has contributed to a sense of isolation and fragmentation among some women's services, and has not served to connect them with broader support from the women's community nor with a sense of their participation in a wider women's movement. Moreover, although participating at government policy tables

as single issue organizations may be effective in influencing some policy changes, it is more likely to preserve current systems than to radically change them. The ability of women's movement service organizations to oppose and influence policy is strengthened by connecting their work at and apart from government policy tables with that of sister organizations in a way that deliberately contributes to building a 'women's movement' consciousness and visibility. When they are connected with sister women's movement organizations, issue-specific services can be powerful and appropriate representatives at government policy tables. They can advocate for specific, women positive changes that will reform current policies and programs at the same time they are working for systemic, transformative change.

State Focussed Public Policy Social Advocacy: Coalitions and Broad-based Organizations

Coalitions are both political spaces for women's movement work through which women's organizations build common analyses and broad-based visions for change and organize coordinated actions, as well as strategies for developing alliances and building networks among women's organizations working on different but related issues.[72] For

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[72] Peggy Antrobus identifies four 'spaces' for women's organizing. 1. Women's circles or consciousness-raising groups which are spaces for a small group of friends or colleagues who "share a common political philosophy and agenda" to support, challenge and further develop their analyses and political agenda. 2. Caucuses which are spaces for individuals to link their lobbying efforts, to further develop their education and analysis, and to build skills and capacities in lobbying, negotiating and advocacy. 3. Coalitions and alliances which are spaces where women's networks that are working on different but related issues link on issues of broader interest. 4. Campaigns which are spaces where the broadest coalition of people and groups come together to work "for a time-bound engagement around a common agenda". Antrobus, Peggy. "Building Global Networks: Women-led Alternatives" paper presented at Democracy and Active Citizen Engagement Conference, Coady International Institute Learning and Innovations Institute, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, August 2001.

several of the women I interviewed, coalitions such as the now disbanded Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia (WACNS) and Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy (FemJEPP) did and do embody the 'the women's movement'.

Although in Nova Scotia broad-based women's movement coalitions do not have a history of engaging with the state and its agencies at public policy tables, and largely have lobbied for social change from 'the street' and through the media, FemJEPP recently has begun to engage with government at the policy table As a coalition FemJEPP provides a political space for community-based, equality-seeking women's organizations and individual social activists to come together to connect, theorize, organize and strategize, to deepen their analysis of the issues underlying women's poverty and economic well-being, and to begin to envision how their work can contribute to transformative social and political change. FemJEPP views the policy table as a venue to which they can bring a feminist analysis and perspective and through which they can work for systemic social change. They define public policy social advocacy broadly thus allowing for engaging with government around public policy issues as well as for working through communities to effect systemic change. They have been successful in securing government project funding to address women's economic well-being by focussing on influencing public policy.

However, similar to women's alternative services and other women's movement organizations that rely on state funding, FemJEPP's work is bounded by limitations imposed through and, to some extent, directed by government funding priorities. Women's coalitions such as FemJEPP that hold inclusion as a core value and operating

principle and that require substantial funding to make it possible for women from across the province to participate in their work, have found that accessing project funding requires that they tailor their proposals to fit funders' mandates. There are few sources of government funding accessible to women's organizations wanting to address women's social and economic justice concerns. Interestingly, at the time of writing this thesis both Status of Women Canada and Health Canada had established funding streams which encouraged applications from organizations wanting to influence public policy. Unfortunately, the Status of Women Canada Women's Program, a primary funder of women's equality work, has a small budget and narrow mandate. Similarly, Health Canada funding once widely available to women's organizations to work on concerns that ranged from the provision of well-woman clinics to adolescent health concerns to HIV/AIDS education has been reduced drastically. Health Canada now funds few activities and funding is not made widely available to community-based organizations. Moreover, many government funders are requiring projects to secure partnership funding which means organizations must undertake the time consuming task of applying for funding support from more than one funding source. This complicates the proposal development and accountability process and ties organizations to multiple funder mandates which can both constrain and dilute their work. It also has the potential to create hierarchies among the partnering organizations that privilege the agendas of some over others – an example would be community/university research partnerships.

Over the years, in Nova Scotia, issue-based, women's service organizations have formed numerous issue-specific coalitions and cooperative efforts in order to work

together on issues of common interest. Often they have been formed as a strategy to challenge specific government policies through joint social advocacy efforts and they have had some success in insisting government pay attention to their concerns. Recent examples would include Women Leading Action on Violence Against Women, the Nova Scotia Coalition for Women's Justice, and the Management Committee of the Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia Project. While they have had some success in opposing and/or influencing government policies and programs and in exciting public interest in an issue, coalitions that form specifically to work on a particular issue or cause are often time-limited and are not necessarily issue-transferrable. A coalition formed to work on one issue is not necessarily the appropriate grouping of organizations to work on a different issue. As a former government senior staff person asks:

> Where is the focus other than an issue-based focus? Again you have to waste a lot of time coming together building that coalition (transition houses, women's centres, men's intervention programs) very quickly around this specific issue (cuts to services). If there is another issue that affects women, maybe the coalition that you've got in place on this particular reform issue isn't quite the right one. So then you have to go out and either rebuild from scratch or somehow build onto, renovate the coalition you built this spring into another kind of coalition to deal with another kind of policy.[73]

Service umbrella organizations such as THANS and Connect! provide further examples of women's movement organizations that have been formed to provide a united front for their member organizations when working with their funders, to promote their issues to government and to the public, and to work as umbrella organizations for policy change. The challenge before both issue specific coalitions and service focussed umbrella

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[73] Former senior government staff member interview.

groups is to connect their work with that of other women's movement organizations that are working to end women's oppression, exclusion and marginalization. Again, entering the policy arena on government terms can involve working with bureaucracies to implement government policies rather than to define them. Addressing issues as a concern of a particular constituency rather than as a concern of the broader women's movement can keep women's organizations focused on social advocacy efforts directed primarily towards engaging with the state, and can entrap them in a government policy and program reformist approach. Further, it can contribute to the segmentation and appearance of women's movement work as dis-connected, service specific and issue-based.

Chapter Four

Women's Centres: Sites of Feminist Praxis

Women's centres in Nova Scotia are sites of evolving feminist praxis that currently are defining what it means to provide feminist services and to locate feminist service provision within a social change organizational framework and ideology. Women's centres grew out of the women's movement. The first women's centres in Canada were established in 1971 in both rural and urban areas, namely, Nelson, BC and Toronto, Ontario.[74] The first women's centre in Quebec opened in Montreal in 1972. In the 1980s women's centres were in operation across Canada, and by 1986 there were 85 women's centres in Quebec alone. Women's centres that were established in the 1970s and 1980s were created by feminists as spaces for women to undertake social change work as well as to provide information and feminist support services. They were created consciously and deliberately as feminist organizations with alternative organizational structures and service delivery practices. Women's centres see themselves as sites of women's movement work that reflect women's politics, visions, and engagement in working for transformative social change.[75] Danielle Lamoureux, who was involved in establishing the first women's centre in Quebec, describes how she saw the connection of women's centres to women's movement work:

> I would say that the women's centre, despite all odds, has made a large contribution to the birth of what we now call "the women's movement", a

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[74] Findlay, 1988.

[75] R des Centres de femmes au Québec. Les centres de femmes parlent argent/The Financial Situation of Women's Centres, 1986. Pg. 20.

> movement of which we, the current centres, are part of in so far as we all have as our goal to move back or eliminate all the barriers and all the limits that prevent women from existing and living their lives.[76]

Feminists who established women's centres saw them as primary sites for involving women in women's movement work, introducing women to feminism, creating and deepening feminist analyses, developing feminist street theory, and moving that theory into social change action. Feminism informs the philosophy as well as the practice of women's centres. It informs the way they provide services to women, how they structure their organizations, what they identify as their principles, how and what they identify as issues, and how they challenge social, political and economic structures.[77]

Feminists involved in developing women's centres wanted to create organizations with visions, mandates and structures that reflected women's ways of thinking about and understanding the world. They wanted to use different rules and principles than those of the traditionally structured organizations in which many women had been schooled and which they saw as imposing oppressive patriarchal structures and practices. Feminist process was made visible and was as much a focus of the work as were the initiatives of the centres. Spending time on, learning about and creating feminist process was seen as a legitimate use of energy and resources in feminist organizations.[78] Feminist process involved women in reflecting together upon what they had learned from their experiences

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[76] Danielle Lamoureux speaking at the first conference of R des Centres de femmes au Québec. The quote is cited in the R des Centres report, "Les centres de femmes parlent argent/The Financial Situation of Women's Centres", November 1986.

[77] Women's Centre interview # 2.

[78] Feree, Marx and Martin, 1995.

as women and with women, in creating a politics and an ethic for action based in valuing shared power, empowerment, diversity, nurturance, interconnectedness and solidarity, and in developing strategies for transforming systems of oppression and subjugation.[79] Caring, sharing and nurturing values that reflect the roles and tasks assigned to women within the family and community underlie and instruct feminist process. Through these assigned roles women have developed more cooperative, mutually supportive ways of working together for the common benefit of family and community.[80]

In creating new models of working together, feminists questioned the value of structuring power inequities into their organizational models. For the most part, women's movement organizations eschewed the idea of hierarchical power and embraced the ideal of shared, collective, cooperative power – an ideal based on alternative organizational and governance structures and practices created in the 1960s and 1970s and which came to be identified with radical feminism and as feminist practice.[81]

Some women's centres in Nova Scotia, including A Woman's Place - Forrest House and the Pictou County Women's Centre, adopted collective models in which women were to share equally all tasks, responsibilities and decision-making. Other women's centres

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[79] Sen, Gita and Caren Grown. Development Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987.

[80] Miles, 1996.

[81] Feminists in Nova Scotia ,as elsewhere, generally accepted that the principles of the "ideal" feminist organization would be those of the radical feminist, empowerment model that included the adoption of a collective structure and consensus decision-making, where all members would take equal responsibility for all tasks, and women's lived experience would be valued as knowledge and expertise equitably with women's academic knowledge. Harper, Lucille, 2001. "Building an Understanding of Current Feminist Practice in Nova Scotia" paper. Pg. 5.

created feminist hybrid organizational structures by selecting practices from both traditional, hierarchical, institutional models as well as from radical feminist, collective, consensus models. In fact, most women's centres adopted modified versions of a more traditional structure, creating cooperative, task-sharing, consensus decision-making models that had boards of directors, and general memberships, and that had specified, delineated roles and responsibilities for staff. Over the years the structures and practices of women's centres have continued to evolve, partly in response to pressure from government funders and partly in response to the changing workload and additional staff required for projects and increased service delivery.

The Pictou County Women's Centre (PCWC) provides a clear example of the necessity of adapting governance practice to meet the demands of a changing workload and funding base. In their early years, when PCWC was maintained largely through project funding, the focus of their work was research, community education and social action. Collective members were expected to be involved in all aspects of the centre. Project staff participated in the collective as collective members and, while working in the centre, shared responsibility for direct service. However, as the work of PCWC increased and provincial core funding was secured for the direct service work, a new structure began to develop. Core funding allowed the centre to hire a permanent staff person. As the responsibilities for administration, supervision, programming and project development, and participation on local, regional and provincial committees increasingly fell to the permanent staff member, PCWC formalized her role as Director. While still using a

collective model, PCWC established separate staff and collective member roles and responsibilities. As noted by a key informant in an earlier interview:

> ... there needs to be somebody to take on that leadership role...So it just makes sense having one person - even though we have a collective - represent the Women's Centre and we use the term now of Director which is a change for us. We tried to live in this bubble of the perfect world where we are all equal and we can all share responsibility but the more complicated our work gets and the more pressure that gets put on a Women's Centre like ourselves, then the more we fall into a structure.[82]

When women's centres and other women's movement organizations take on and/or create new structures, and incorporate elements that they and others identify as traditional or hierarchal, they often feel they are moving away from an ideal or pure form of feminist practice or feminist philosophy, that they are compromising their principles and are moving into a less feminist practice. A challenge for feminists who are creating alternative governance structures and practices is to consciously construct, name, defend and demonstrate those structures as feminist while at the same time, identifying and critiquing the limitations of those structures and practices. This is particularly important for women's centres in their struggle to balance service delivery with social advocacy. A board of directors with an executive director governance structure may serve well a service delivery model that is acceptable to government funders but it does not serve well, necessarily, a social change inclusion model.

For example, the governance structure of a board of directors with an executive director adopted by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and used by many

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[82] Pictou County Women's Centre interview in Harper, Lucille. "Building an Understanding of Current Feminist Practice in Nova Scotia" paper, 2001. Pg. 10.

women's centres and women's alternative services limits the ways in which women can participate as active members. It defines roles and distinguishes those with structured decision-making positions from the general membership and other women in the community. By and large, the direction of the organization's work is determined by the board of directors, the executive director and paid staff rather than by the general membership. The board governance structure creates a decision-making inside circle which serves to relegate the role of the general membership to one of support where they act as audience or participants rather than as core group decision-makers and directors. Outside of structured events to which the membership is invited, there is no regular forum for members to come together to look at issues impacting women or for women to be together as women, to affirm each other and "build community and consciousness."[83]

Bringing women together and providing spaces for women to come together is essential to developing feminist consciousness and analysis, to building women's sense of personal and collective political power, and to shifting power in communities. This needs to be done consciously and is difficult to achieve using a model that excludes women from participating fully in decision-making. Because women's centres are under increasing pressure to adopt service delivery models acceptable to their state funders, it has become increasingly important for them to question consciously the ways in which the models they are adopting can accommodate and encourage their social change work and the ways in which they are acting as a barrier to it. As recognized by feminists in the 1960s and 70s, continuing to develop and refine feminist alternative models and practices

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[83] Women's Centre interview # 2.

is a necessary form of resistance to patriarchy and to patriarchal practices that maintain power imbalances that have created and enforced the subjugation, marginalization and exclusion of women.

While there is pressure from funders and, to some extent, from the community to institutionalize, professionalize and to adopt mainstream governance structures and practices, it is encouraging that there is also counter pressure from within women's centres. Women's centres have been able to resist such pressures by holding on to their feminist principles and practices while engaging with the state. They provide services that are feminist, work from a feminist perspective with local, regional and provincial committees and organizations on issues and initiatives that impact women, and initiate actions that are committed to social justice, positive social change for women, and social transformation. Women's centres across Nova Scotia provide programs and services determined by and specific to the needs of their individual communities, using an approach and philosophy that is in line with that of women's centres across Canada. As an intrinsic part of their feminist praxis, they encourage women to change their own situation, and to get involved in changing the situation of other women. The author of a 1987 report of the first meeting of women's centres in Canada summarized what she saw as common feminist praxis among women's centres:

> The meeting permitted us to see that despite cultural differences, Centres everywhere play the same role: to make tools available to all women enabling them to seek independence and equality by action which brings together

assistance and support, sensitization and consciousness-raising, reflection and action.[84]

As sites of social change practice, women's centres have been and are more than services. Women's centres are actively involved in their communities in ways that reflect their multi-issue mandates and feminist orientation. They understand the connections among issues facing women. They know that, for women, violence, poverty, food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, poor mental and physical health, lack of educational opportunities, economic dependence, lack of childcare, and misogynist justice systems are linked to sexism, racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and ageism. They are products of patriarchy and tools for maintaining patriarchal structures and practices. In their communities, through their social action work, through their participation on committees, and through their community development initiatives, women's centres take on the role of making those links apparent. Over the years, women's centres have identified and addressed specific community needs by establishing services for vulnerable and marginalized women and their families. They have undertaken a wide range of community-based, participatory action research initiatives that have resulted in documenting the impacts of systemic barriers, raising the awareness of their community about particular issues and influencing public policy and institutional change. This is not to say that women's centres have adequately addressed inclusion and diversity in governance, membership, staffing, or programming. They know much work remains to be done before women's centres in Nova Scotia can claim to reflect the full diversity of

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[84]L'R des Centres des femmes du Québec. First Meeting of Women's Centres in Canada: Report of the meeting. Montreal, 1987.

their communities – particularly the inclusion of visible minority women and women with disabilities.

Women's centres describe themselves as feminist social advocacy organizations and are identified as such by the general public as well as by government officials, agencies and institutions. Members of the general public as well as other community organizations and agencies look to women's centres to take on a much needed social advocacy role, a role that is often controversial within the community, and one that various members of the community at times support, fear, or denounce. In part, women's centres are looked to for social advocacy because they are identified as 'other', as outside of mainstream community life and therefore as less vulnerable to community sanction. In part, it is because they are seen as independent from but as having influence with policy-makers. In part, it is because they provide a feminist voice and perspective with which many women identify.

Hesitancy on the part of individuals and/or agencies in a community to step forward and take a public stand on a controversial issue is often the case in small communities where 'everybody' knows and is connected in some way to 'everybody else'. They call upon their local women's centre to take action. This was the case in Antigonish in 1989 when a local judge pleaded guilty to assaulting his wife. Women in the community were outraged and called the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre by the dozens asking the centre to take action to get the judge removed from the bench. However, when asked to sign a petition circulated by the centre calling for his removal from the bench, many of the same women refused to do so. Women did not feel safe in challenging a prominent local

figure with whom they and their families interacted on a daily basis in the community: a figure who held a position of status and authority that could potentially impact their lives. The women's centre did advocate for the judge's removal from the bench and when it looked as though he would be removed, the judge offered his resignation. Similarly, another women's centre was approached by front-line Department of Community Services workers to advocate for changes to the social assistance policy that the workers identified as a barrier to women, but did not feel they could effectively or safely raise themselves.

As sites of service provision to women, women's centres not only help individual women, but by establishing the importance of those services for women in the community, they build the capacity of women's centres to do social advocacy that is focussed not only on government policy change but also, and perhaps more importantly, on "changing the way people think and what they think is important."[85] Women's centres bring women in and involve women in feminism and feminist social change work in which they can begin to address issues negatively impacting their own lives as well as those of other women. As women are accessing support, they are learning about systems of oppression and are beginning to develop a world view that they, as women, matter.

In working on issues related to women's oppression and exclusion, women's centres have had a visible impact on their communities. They contribute to the collective empowerment of women and the enhancement of society, are recognized by other agencies as part of their community service network, and are valued by the women who

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[85] Women's Centre interview # 2.

use them. However, while they garner respect and support among some, they are marginalized, discounted and excluded by others. In fact, women's centres are not accorded the status given by the general public and by government to transition houses, sexual assault centres, women's housing services and other organizations providing services to women. In part, this is because the anti-oppression, multi-issue focus of women's centres and their multi-faceted mandate to undertake feminist social advocacy, community development and research as well as to provide services, is difficult for the general public to grasp. In part, it because the analysis developed by women's centres as multi-issue, women's movement organizations and the concomitant connecting of the issues that informs their broader goal of social transformation makes them threatening to the state as well as to community bodies and individuals that are unwilling to change or to challenge the status quo. Because women's centres challenge the status quo not everyone agrees with their work, and public opinion varies on the value of that work. Patriarchal institutions that exclude women or minimize the contributions of women and the issues facing women generally do not support policies and initiatives that seek to change the status quo.[86] Government is wary of the social change orientation of women's centres and funders are resistant to recognizing and funding their full mandate.[87]

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[86]Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003. "Feminism: Our Basis of Unity". St. John's, Newfoundland. www.pacsw.com.

[87] No one government department is willing to fund the full mandate of women's centres. For example, the Department of Community Services is willing to fund core services only. Other funding bodies such as the Status of Women Canada Women's Program will fund research and public policy-related social action but not service delivery. Human Resources Development Canada will fund short-term, service-related programs but will not fund ongoing work or core services.

Although some degree of marginalization, undervaluing and exclusion is a common experience for most women's alternative services, and is reflective of the general undervaluing, marginalization and exclusion of women, it is particularly acute for women's centres.[88] The undervaluing of women's centres is clearly demonstrated by their chronic underfunding despite applying unrelenting pressure to government.[89] Nevertheless, in the face of marginalization and exclusion, women's centres have insisted on maintaining feminist organizational structures and practices, developing feminist theory, and presenting themselves as feminist organizations. In doing so, they provide sites for ongoing learning about feminism, for engaging with women in creating and applying feminist theories and analyses, for challenging themselves and each other around feminist practice, and for engaging in women's movement work in and across communities.

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[88] When the Nova Scotia government reduced funding for and threatened the amalgamation/elimination of women's centres, transition houses and men's intervention programs in the April 2002 budget, communities rallied in support of their women's centres as they did for the transition houses and men's intervention programs. However, neither the major opposition party nor the media recognized the import of the cuts to women's centres and focussed their attention almost exclusively on the cuts to the transition houses. Only through the concerted efforts of women's centres to educate the political parties and the media about women's centres, and to differentiate for them the services provided by women's centres and transition houses, was the situation of women's centres acknowledged.

[89] Women's centres struggle to secure adequate state funding has been significantly protracted and challenging. The experience of women's centres in Nova Scotia as the "poor relations" among alternative services for women is echoed in the experiences of women's centres in Québec and across Canada. See R des Centres de femmes as Québec. Le centres de femmes parlent argent/The Financial Situation of Women's Centres, 1986. Pg. 10.

Women's Centres in Nova Scotia: The Challenge of Maintaining Political Spaces and Providing Feminist Services

As community activist organizations that are sites of women's movement work, women's centres in Nova Scotia provide insight into the complexities and increasing challenges of balancing the provision of state funded services with maintaining feminist, activist, social movement organizations. Responsive to the needs of the communities in which they are situated, each women's centre has its own history and set of experiences. Although all women's centres in Nova Scotia currently have both social change advocacy mandates as well as service delivery mandates, the emphasis placed on each varies among centres. Depending upon the vision and politics of the organizing group, when and under what circumstances a centre was established, and on the type of funding available when they were established, some women centres identified service delivery as a primary function from the beginning while, in others, service delivery grew out of the need to provide services and programs for women who got involved with their centre through the centre's participatory action research, community development and social change initiatives.

Operational funding for service delivery has impacted women's centres significantly: not only has it made the provision of individual support services to women a primary activity, but it has involved women's centres in social advocacy that is primarily public policy focussed. Women centres have increasingly focussed on and been involved with the state and its agencies because of the requirement to provide accountability for core funding in a manner amenable to government, the need to present core services in a way that fits the funding department's mandate in order to secure adequate, core funding,

and the necessity of advocating for public policy improvements and changes. Women's centres have seen their work increasingly compartmentalized and the time and resources they are able to devote to systemic social transformation efforts reduced.

At the time of writing this thesis, there are eight recognized women's centres in Nova Scotia; most are located in rural areas of the province.[90] The first women's centre, the Brenton Street Women's Centre in Halifax, opened in Nova Scotia in 1974 closing after only a brief period of operation. The Pictou County Women's Centre, New Glasgow, opened in 1976, and A Woman's Place - Forrest House, Halifax, in 1977. A Woman's Place closed a couple of years later and Halifax, the largest urban centre in Nova Scotia, has been without a women's centre since that time. In the 1980s another six women's centres were established - namely, Second Story Women Centre, Bridgewater, and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Antigonish, both in 1983; LEA Place, Sheet Harbour, and Colchester Women's Resource Centre, Truro, in 1985; and Women Aware Resource Centre, Port Hawkesbury, in 1989. Lack of funding caused the Colchester Women's Resource Centre to close in 1989 and Women Aware to close in the early 1990s. The Women's Place, Lawrencetown, opened in 1991; Every Woman's Centre, Sydney, in 1992; Central Nova Women's Resource Centre, Truro, in 1999; and the Tri-County Women's Centre, Yarmouth, in 2002.

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[90] Women's Centres Connect!, the Nova Scotia Association of Women's Centres, was formed in 1988 to support and profile the work of women's centres, and to lobby for secure and adequate provincial funding for women's centres. Women's centres must become members of Connect! to be eligible to receive core funding from the Department of Community Services. To become a member of Connect!, a women's centre must adhere to Connect's definition of a women's centre as a feminist organization as well as to its philosophy and principles. This provides some protection for established women's centres in that a non-feminist organization cannot call itself a women's centre and access government funding as such.

Evolution from Social Advocacy to Service Delivery

The Pictou County Women's Centre, Every Woman's Centre and LEA Place all provide examples of women's centres established by women's movement organizations and specifically mandated to carry out social change work that involved feminist social advocacy, public policy advocacy, community-based participatory action research and community mobilization. While each centre has its own story, in all three, social advocacy led to service delivery and service delivery inevitably became the dominant activity.

Pictou County Women's Centre

The Pictou County Women's Centre (PCWC) was created by a group of women who were participants in a consciousness-raising group in the early 1970s. The group included both women 'from away' living in rural areas of the county and 'local' women living in the towns that formed the county centre. PCWC was created with a deliberate feminist social change mandate, a collective structure, a feminist decision-making process, and a feminist alternative model of practice. Educating the larger community about women's issues and undertaking community-based research were the primary activities of the Centre in its early years.[91] The PCWC was maintained through project grants which had specific objectives, work plans and time frames. Small grants from the Secretary of State Women's Program and other funding bodies enabled the PCWC to maintain a physical space and to carry out projects that addressed such issues as women's

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[91] Little, Linda. The Pictou County Women's Centre, 1976 - 92: a history. 1992.

health, sexuality, poverty, and violence against women. Staff were hired because of their project related research, facilitation and organizational skills. However, as project workers reached out to and connected with more women in the community, women began to turn to the centre for information, personal advocacy and support and, of necessity, staff began to provide individual peer support counselling and advocacy services. The key informant from PCWC explained it this way:

> If we were doing a project on sexual assault and reaching women who had been sexually violated, what they wanted was help. There was no help (in the community) and nobody was willing to do programs for them and work with them one on one. The project was not about assisting them with recovery. The project was about how do we make the system better and safer for women. Of course, we were not going to refuse women service so we did as much as possible - we offered them that support and (personal) advocacy that was not the intention of the work. So the more projects we wrote in terms of health, sexual violence, poverty - to name a few - the more the direct service grew out of those projects. The expectation was that we offered service.[92]

In the early years, direct service was an add on to the social change work of the Pictou County Women's Centre. According to the interviewee for PCWC, "It (PCWC) wasn't a service first. It was a place for social change first."[93] There was no funding to provide direct services to women and no staff were hired with a sole or primary service delivery job description. The direct services that were provided by project workers were not promoted to the community. However, as community expectations of direct service continued to increase, direct service became a secondary function that, by 1984, was incorporated officially into the PCWC mandate. Over the years, the social change work

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[92] Pictou County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

[93] Pictou County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

of PCWC became increasingly tied to and informed by their direct service. Just as the lived experiences of women in the community informed and directed the social change work and kept it based in the reality of women's lives, the social change work in turn brought women into the women's centre and introduced them to a feminist model of social change practice. As the interviewee for PCWC noted:

> If it (the work of the PCWC) was just about social change without the experiences of women in the community, then it would be just a poor academic exercise. It wouldn't be based in reality. It wouldn't be based on what was going on in our community. So by having women who were actually affected by the issues and by the poor public policy, then we were able to challenge it based on their experience. It was having the first voice within the women's centre that responded to the need for social change.[94]

The Pictou County Women's Centre identifies as a feminist organization and makes clear in their literature and presentations that they are feminist. Being feminist means they have a feminist analysis, politic and approach to their work. In practice this means they support women according to each woman's self-defined needs. Each woman defines her own problems and the path she wants to take to resolve them; the women's centre provides her with the information she requires to make an informed decision and supports her in carrying it out. Should a woman want to proceed in challenging a disrespectful worker or harmful policy, the women's centre will provide personal advocacy and advocate with her, or on her behalf, with community agencies. The personal advocacy undertaken with and on behalf of individual women then informs the larger social advocacy and public policy advocacy PCWC does at the community and provincial levels. The key informant for PCWC described the way in which the social advocacy efforts of

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[94] Pictou County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

PCWC are informed and directed by the lived experiences of women who come to the centre as follows:

> We're very clear here (PCWC) that our service is not just about covering up a wound. We will often uncover the wound and look at what's wrong. So we do a tremendous amount of stuff with Community Services and some of their policies in terms of income support and the rules and regulations pertaining to it. We do a tremendous amount of work in telling women about their rights because they've not been told their rights through their workers. So then, we go with the women back to Community Services so that they can say to the worker what they understand their rights are and then proceed to ensure their rights are met. We do that in a very gentle way but then, on the other hand, we will also be taking that stuff and trying to explain it to the powers that be in Halifax as well as the local Department of Community Services. We're trying to empower women through that direct service but we also take that huge problem of not being informed of their rights and see it as something that needs to be changed. If we weren't feminists, if we didn't have a politics then all we would be doing is going with that woman and making sure that she's able to get that mattress covered under special needs, get her health card and so forth. But, we take that information and we go another step.[95]

Women who come into the Pictou County Women's Centre come into a politically radicalized culture that exposes them to and encourages them to see the world from a feminist, women-centred perspective. Women's personal experiences with and situations of poverty, disparity and discrimination are discussed within a social and political context that serves to broaden women's understanding of the issues women face and the systemic barriers to women's equality and self-determination. As noted by the key informant for PCWC:

> She might not be a feminist or even think about things with much of an analysis but when she comes to the women's centre - I've heard this so many times - once you walk in through the door of the women's centre, not as a user but as a woman who wants to get involved with the women's centre, you change. You see the world differently. Suddenly you kind of wake up to what

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[95] Pictou County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

> the reality is for so many women. ... We often relate it (the issue at hand) to something that is going on in that person's life so that when people get involved here they broaden their understanding of the issue of poverty or the issue of whatever it is - the justice system.[96]

Every Woman's Centre

When the Every Woman's Centre was established by Women Unlimited in 1992 in Sydney some sixteen years after the Pictou County Women's Centre, it too was established with a primary mandate of advancing women's lives through social advocacy and social change actions. Women Unlimited had been active in the Sydney area and through provincial women's organizations since the late 1970s. Over the years they had identified the need for specific services and started both the Cape Breton Transition House (1981) and the Anne Terry Project (1996), a federally funded women's employment centre. Knowing well that funder imposed restrictions and structures can limit or direct the activities of organizations that depend upon government funding, Women Unlimited chose to open Every Woman's Centre without government funding using start-up monies raised through private contributions. According to the key informant for Every Woman's Centre:

> It was and has always been the feeling – I'm not sure that's changed today to be honest with you - that let's do it on our own and then nobody has control over you - that you're able to do what you want to do. By accepting government funding, it looked as though you'd have to do or provide services that they wanted you to and somehow or other it would curtail you. ... I think that the feeling was that somehow or other it would just change things with government funding. And it did.[97]

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[96] Pictou County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

[97] Every Woman's Centre interview, July 2002.

Although when the women's centre opened it was to provide some services, it was considered by the founding women to be more of a feminist "think tank". They saw service provision as a necessity but it was secondary to their social change mandate. However, in order to sustain the Centre, the board was forced to recognize that they would require government funding. At that time, women's centres in the province had been lobbying for and had recently received small operational grants from the Department of Community Services to enable them to provide what women's centres had defined as their core services. Every Woman's Centre applied for and was granted provincial core funding. With high numbers of women living in poverty in Sydney, a high unemployment rate, and changing employment and demographic patterns, large numbers of women began coming to the Centre looking for information and support. The demand for service delivery soon consumed most of their paid staff time and drastically reduced the time they could devote to social change work.

Although the balance between service delivery and social advocacy has changed, Every Woman's Centre continues to assert that both service delivery and social advocacy are necessary involvements for women's centres, and that, while it is necessary to provide individual support, it is equally necessary for women's centres to work together to advocate for policy changes that will improve the lives of all women. The key informant for Every Woman's Centre notes both the importance of providing women with individual support as well as the importance of working collaboratively with other women's movement organizations for social change when she says:

> It's kind of a personal response. It's not that we are able to solve a lot of problems, but we're there and it makes a difference for females whatever their

> age when they can sit and say what they need to say and they are taken seriously.[98]
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> I see how women become the product of something they have so little control over and can hardly even identify it let alone fight against it. ... I'd like to see something at some point changed that is going to be lasting and meaningful across the province and I think it's difficult to do that as an individual. You have to do it as a group.[99]

As with the Pictou County Women's Centre, at Every Woman's Centre service delivery, public policy advocacy and social change activism are connected and inform each other as well as their feminist vision for social transformation. Every Woman's Centre sees the service delivery component as essential to improving the lives of individual women, and sees that the issues impacting women's lives will not be addressed without working for transformative, feminist social change. Interestingly, the service delivery work of Every Woman's Centre in some ways makes their social change work easier in that it presents a positive image of feminism to the larger community. The community sees the women's centre as providing essential services to people in need, as helping people solve problems and holds it in high regard. Because they see the work of the women's centre as valuable and assume it is a feminist organization, they see 'being feminist' as acceptable. This in turn makes the feminist social advocacy work of Every Woman's Centre acceptable as well.

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[98] Every Woman's Centre interview, July 2002.

[99] Every Woman's Centre interview, July 2002.

LEA Place

LEA Place, situated in Sheet Harbour, is arguably the most rural women's centre in Nova Scotia. Sheet Harbour is a small, longstanding community which provides a sense of safety and security for some women while, for others, engenders a sense of vulnerability and a lack of anonymity. LEA Place has faced a number of challenges over the years in establishing itself as a credible service delivery organization in the eyes of the community. It was established as an initiative of Eastern Shore Learning Opportunities for Women (ESLOW). This rural network of women was formed in 1982 to address issues of isolation, poverty, housing, education/training needs and violence through social action[100] and many of the women involved in the early years were single mothers and/or women living in poverty. LEA Place was given a mandate was to address issues facing women through public education and social and public policy advocacy. Although service delivery was not part of their original mandate, LEA Place did provide information, support, personal advocacy, and social programs for women. However, because services generally were not available in the Sheet Harbour area, women did not see them as places to turn for help and, at first, did not get involved with LEA Place in large numbers.

In its early years, discriminatory sexist and classist attitudes and the pervasive victim blaming of the dominant culture were extended to the women's centre. LEA Place faced resistance to its naming poverty and violence as issues in the community. In part,

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[100] Chittick, Cathy, Susan Foote, and Irene Baker, April 1989 and Manning, Roxanne, 2001. A Place to Grow - ESLOW and LEA Place Herstory.

this was because these were not issues people in the community wanted to identify as impacting the lives of women in their area. In part, it was because the women involved with LEA Place were perceived to be both women 'without status' in the community and 'strong feminists.' Women in the community by and large come from rural traditions that uphold traditional roles and mores and are wary of feminism. The women involved with LEA Place were scrutinized by the community and accepted or rejected according to their social standing within it. The social status of the director as well as of the board members influenced how the centre was perceived by women in the community, determined women's willingness to use the services and otherwise get involved and, in this way, also determined the legitimacy of the services, programs and social advocacy initiatives in the eyes of the community. Thus, it was not feminism alone that deterred the community in the early years, but rather who they saw as the feminists involved with the centre. As the key informant for LEA Place noted:

> No matter what you say, social status is where it is here. If you don't have it, then you're nothing but a trouble-maker.[101]

She goes on to say:

> When people look at the Women's Centre, they look at who is working there.[102]

The early years for LEA Place were tumultuous. Funded with short term project grants primarily from the Secretary of State Women's Program, LEA Place operated six to nine months at a time, largely with unpaid staff. It was not until they accessed core

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[101] LEA Place interview, August 2002.

[102] LEA Place interview, August 2002.

provincial funding from the Department of Community Services in 1994 that they were able to establish some program stability and to maintain a consistent presence in the community.[103] By maintaining a consistent presence, LEA Place has established working relationships with the schools, the hospital and service agencies; it has become a recognized and trusted centre where people turn for support and services; and it has gained widespread respect from the community. As the key informant for LEA Place points out:

> Now, even though we're feminists, the community is not as scared of us anymore. It's more accepting of what we're doing. I guess it's because a different generation is doing it.[104]

Today calls from the local community for services for women and to sponsor other community-based, service programs have increased to the point where service delivery consumes most of the centre's time and resources. Although LEA Place was established as a women's movement organization primarily to undertake social change work, and although it retains a social advocacy mandate, it has evolved into a service organization in which personal advocacy on behalf of individual women has replaced broader social change efforts as a primary organizational focus.

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[103] Chittick et al, April 1989 and Manning, 2001. A Place to Grow - ESLOW and LEA Place Herstory.

[104] LEA Place interview, August 2002,

Starting with Dual Service Delivery and Social Advocacy Mandates

In some communities women's movement organizations established women's centres with service delivery mandates that were deemed to be as important as and as political as their social change mandates. Both Second Story Women's Centre and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre were established specifically to be physical spaces where women could go for information and support as well as political spaces from which women could strategize and organize for social change.

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

Started as a project of the Antigonish Women's Association (AWA), the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre provided a physical space from which AWA members could organize social change actions. It employed staff to provide support services and to deliver programs to women in the community. However, although establishing a service delivery focussed women's centre was not contested by the AWA founding members who all recognized the need for services for vulnerable women and supported those AWA members who wanted a women's centre, establishing a women's centre as one of the first endeavours of the AWA was not part of the vision of those who saw the need to build first a strong feminist base in the community. The interviewee for the AWRC explained her hesitation to involve the AWA in establishing and maintaining a women's centre and its attendant infrastructure this way:

> I wouldn't have gone for a Centre so quickly and I wouldn't have got into having to raise funds and doing all that stuff so quickly. My expectation or thought would have been to be a group and be learning together and doing politics together and taking on some of these issues and doing some feminist

> development together before we got into having to raise funds, have a board, hire people, carry on the whole infrastructure and responsibilities of the Centre.[105]

Not all saw a women's centre as essential to engaging women in working for social change, as the way to shift power within the community or to change the dominant hegemony. In fact, an ongoing tension at Antigonish Women's Resource Centre board meetings continues to be the requirement for board and staff to commit significant amounts of time to securing funding to maintain the centre and to attend to issues related to its operation. This has tended to dominate the agenda of monthly board meetings, to limit time available for discussions that increase knowledge about current issues and deepen analyses, and to reduce time and energy that is required for strategizing and organizing social change efforts at the local level.

Prior to 1994 when women's centres secured core provincial funding for service delivery, both Second Story Women's Centre and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre had an advantage over other women's centres in the province in that they were the only two women's centres receiving core funding from the federal Secretary of State Women's Program. Although Women's Program funding ostensibly was provided to centres for social change work that addressed the status of women, until it was eliminated in 1998, it also provided the centres with annual funding that enabled them to develop and provide services to women, build core programs and maintain staff. It provided the centres with a stability that enabled them to deliver services while undertaking social change work in their communities. In their grant applications and annual reports to the

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[105] Women's Centre interview # 2.

Women's Program, the centres highlighted and emphasized their social change work and did not identify the full extent of their service delivery. This served to keep their social change mandate prominent within their organizations as well as within the larger community and, in crucial ways, protected their ability to maintain a social movement connection and self-definition. However, in obscuring their growing service delivery function to their federal funders, they were not able to promote or to support adequately the delivery of services in their communities.

Provincial Core Funding

As women's centres across the province established longevity in their communities and as the service delivery component of their work grew, project funding was no longer an adequate means of support. They required operational funding that would allow them to provide support services and programs. Since responsibility for the types of services they were providing fell under provincial jurisdiction, women's centres turned to the province for operational funding. At the same time, women's centres formed Women's Centres Connect!, a provincial organization of women's centres. Connect! provided women's centres with a forum for sharing information resources, for learning about and from each other, for developing a common philosophy and principles to ensure all member centres were operating from a feminist perspective and practice, and for jointly lobbying the provincial government for core funding. Connect! provided a space for women's centres to deepen their feminist analyses of issues, to work together for social change, and to strategize for the survival of women's centres.

After the federal government eliminated Secretary of State Women's Program core funding for women's centres, national women's organizations and women's periodicals in 1990[106], the lobby for provincial funding intensified. In 1994 after four years of concerted lobbying, Premier Donald Cameron in the dying days of his Conservative government granted three women's centres – the Pictou County Women's Centre, Second Story Women's Centre and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre – a very small amount of operational funding for service delivery. It was enough to legitimize women's centres call for provincial funding for all women's centres in the province and to allow them to identify openly the extent of the services they were providing. Unfortunately in the time it took to secure provincial core funding, both the Colchester Women's Resource Centre in Truro and the Women Aware Women's Centre in Port Hawkesbury closed due to lack of funding. LEA Place was able to hang on, having survived a period of tumult created, in part, by funding insecurity.

Although provincial core funding remains inadequate and insecure, it has changed the way in which women's centres present and think about themselves. It has necessitated that they re-frame the way they present their work to their provincial core funder, the Department of Community Services, to emphasize and document their provision of

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[106] Secretary of State Women's Program 1990 budget cuts in operational funding to women's organizations resulted in protests by women across the country. Many of the protests took the form of 'Weiner roasts" meant to target then Minister of State, Gerry Weiner. Two months later, the government announced it would restore $1.2 million in funding to 74 women's centres, but that it would not restore operational funding to national women's organizations nor to the communications budgets for women's and native groups. See Phillips, Susan D. "How Ottawa Blends: Shifting Government Relationships with Interest Groups" in Abele, Frances, ed., How Ottawa Spends: The Politics of Fragmentation 1991-92. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991. Pgs. 214-215.

services and programs, and to minimize their social advocacy and social change work.[107] It has also changed how some women's centres are perceived within their communities as they present themselves as services to the public and to other agencies in their communities. Increasingly, they are thought of and think of themselves in terms of service delivery.

Not surprisingly, Central Nova Women's Resource Centre and the Tri-County Women's Centre, the two women's centres that have been established in the province after women's centres had secured operational funding from the Department of Community Services, were established with primary service delivery mandates. Interestingly, both women's centres were established as a result of community economic development activities and both looked to the mandates and governance models used by established centres.

Central Nova Women's Resource Centre

The Central Nova Women's Resource Centre was established in 1999 with Human Resources Development Canada project funding after a group of women taking a community economic development certificate program at the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro conducted a needs assessment and concluded that a women's centre was needed and wanted by women and service providers in the area. The women who started the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre wanted a community-based service that

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[107] Some centres refer to their social advocacy work as community development, a term broad and nebulous enough to include women's movement social change activities. However, in minimizing and obscuring their social advocacy work, women's centres risk de-politicizing that work.

would provide information resources and programs for women. Not all founding members saw it as 'an agent of social change' or even, necessarily, as feminist.[108] However, when the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre became a member of Connect! they agreed to be guided by the feminist philosophy and principles Connect! has established for member centres. The personal feminism of their staff further ensured that the approach to working with the women who access the women's centre's services and programs was from a feminist perspective. The key informant for the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre describes the approach of staff this way:

> I see us as an agent of social change whereas I don't know if somebody who wasn't a feminist, I don't know if they would necessarily see that. I think it informs everything you do - from the way you greet people to the way you define problems.[109]

Although centre staff identify as feminist, connecting feminist theory with practice when carrying out programs remains a work in progress. The key informant expresses her concerns as follows:

> We do say we're feminists - but I'm not so sure. There seems to be trouble making the connections between the ideology and the actual program delivery - like how that's actually playing itself out - how do we do that? How do we do feminism in the way that we should be when we deliver services?[110]

As a new centre and one established primarily to provide services, Central Nova faces the challenge of establishing a feminist praxis that guides their service delivery

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[108] Central Nova Women's Resource Centre interview, August 2002.

[109] Central Nova Women's Resource Centre interview, August 2002, pg. 6.

[110] Central Nova Women's Resource Centre interview, August 2002, pg. 2.

while finding a way to frame and situate their service delivery within women's movement social advocacy and social change work.

Tri-County Women's Centre

The Tri-County Women's Centre, the most recent women's centre to open in Nova Scotia, is situated in Yarmouth, a politically conservative area, isolated from the economic centre of the province. It was established by Women for Community Economic Development - Southwest Nova. Similar to the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre, it has a primary service delivery mandate and is a result of a community economic development initiative – the "Counting Women In" project, a provincial initiative of Women for Economic Equality (WEE). Women for Community Economic Development - Southwest Nova were introduced to the concept of women's centres by two of their members who were familiar with the work of women's centres in the province and had been involved themselves for many years with women's movement social activist organizations in Nova Scotia. It was important to them as well as to some of the other key organizers of the Tri-County Women's Centre that the centre be a feminist organization and that the board understand and be committed to maintaining a feminist philosophy and praxis. For the Tri-County Women's Centre key informant, a feminist philosophy meant "making sure that everything that we do is inclusive of women and their lives and trying to bring about some type of equality, whether that be through economic security or through self-esteem or whatever it takes. It's about being equal."[111]

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[111] Tri-County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

However, there were some challenges presented in bringing their board to this understanding. Establishing the women's centre meant first building with the women involved an understanding of feminism, feminist analysis and feminist process and creating spaces for them to begin to identify themselves as feminists. Once they understood feminism and began to see themselves as feminists, women felt empowered by it and by naming themselves as feminist. As the key informant for the Tri-County Women's centre noted:

> I think here it was kind of like some of the women were feeling like they were born again by using it (the term feminist). It empowered them once they got it, once they really got it and they sat around in a group and could say it and felt comfortable with it - it's like lesbian, it's like one of those words. They kind of took it onto themselves, started calling themselves feminists.[112]

The development of the Tri-County Women's Centre was facilitated by the participation of some of their key founding members in Connect! meetings and other women's movement organizations at the provincial level. Their involvement provided them with an opportunity to exchange information, learn from the experiences of other women's centres and to identify supportive individuals and organizations. While the board of directors of the Tri-County Women's Centre were clear and in agreement that they wanted their women's centre to provide services and programs to women, and although many of the women were themselves involved individually in doing social advocacy/social change work, as a group they were not in agreement about the level of involvement they wanted the centre to have in social advocacy activities – particularly where those activities might be critical of governments of the day. The key informant

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[112] Tri-County Women's Centre interview, July 2002.

identified the struggle to agree on a profile and mandate for the women's centre when she said:

> So it's kind of that dichotomy - they want change and they'll do the work themselves privately or Women for Community Economic Development will take on an issue and go to the media and stuff. .... But they wanted the Women's Centre perhaps to have a different profile than somebody who is a dedicated social activist. So we're trying to find a comfortable place.[113]

In part, this was because service provision to women was perceived to be a needed and, therefore, non-controversial activity that would be widely supported by the community, whereas social advocacy challenged the status quo, could make it more difficult for the women's centre to secure operational funding, and was seen as threatening by some members of the community. In part, there was a reticence to take on a social advocacy mandate because some of the women involved in establishing the Tri-County Women's Centre had ties to political parties and the public perception was that women's centres in other parts of the province were taking the political party of the day to task – albeit on policies and issues that were problematic for or harmful to women. The key informant described the hesitancy on the part of some women for the women's centre to take on what they saw as a potentially controversial and adversarial public role in their community when she noted:

> It's taken a long long time for the concept or even the words 'Women's Centre' to have a safe place to be here. I think that even just saying that we wanted a Women's Centre was intimidating.[114]

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[113] Tri-County Women's Centre interview.

[114] Tri-County Women's Centre interview.

> I think partly that it was as well because other Women's Centres throughout the province often took on advocacy roles and were in the general media about some issue or another and were perceived to be – probably within either the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party – to be rabble rousers.[115]

In their struggle to secure operational funding from the Department of Community Services to provide services to women, the Tri-County Women's Centre met with challenges from the regional office of the department which, even though they provided no funding to the centre at the time, contested the centre's hiring processes and decisions. This reinforced the hesitancy of some of the board members of Tri-County to take on a public social advocacy role that could potentially alienate funders.

At the time that both the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre and the Tri-County Women's Centre were lobbying the province for operational funding, women's centres, transition houses and men's intervention programs were in an enforced 'planning' process with the Department of Community Services for the redesign of government designated family violence programs. Although both women's centres had been led by their MLAs to believe that operational funding for their centres would be included in the April 2002 provincial budget, funding was not included. After intensive lobbying, interim funding was provided to the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre in May 2002 to prevent their closure and to allow them to participate in the redesign planning process. Although the Tri-County Women's Centre was allowed to participate in the redesign planning process, it was not until June 2003, only weeks prior to the August 5, 2003 provincial election, that operational funding for the Tri-County Women's

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[115] Tri-County Women's Centre interview.

Centre was assured. Approval for the funding of both centres was dependent upon their ability to demonstrate they were providing government recognized and sanctioned services, that they were supported widely by their communities, and that not funding them could have political repercussions for their MLAs.

In spite of the inclusion of women's centres within the Department of Community Services' funding envelope, the senior departmental staff responsible for women's centres have not demonstrated a strong interest in or commitment to ensuring women's centres are adequately funded or that there are enough women's centres to be able to provide services throughout the province. Similar to all decisions made in the past with respect to establishing and increasing operational funding for women's centres in the province, the decisions to fund both the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre and the Tri-County Women's Centre were made at the Cabinet level. The bureaucrats were left to accommodate political funding decisions at the departmental level.

Women's centres in Nova Scotia have operational funding and have survived and grown in numbers because they have support from their communities, they are connected with and supported by sister women's movement organizations, they have been able to convince their elected representatives of the value of their services to their communities, and because they have been able to garner support from each of the three political parties at critical times during their history. However, the ongoing survival of women's centres as they are currently constructed depends upon their ability to resist the imposition of a state agenda which would limit their mandates to service delivery, redefine their core

services and enforce the adoption of state approved governance structures, processes and practices. Connect! provides a key space for strategizing, organizing and reinforcing women's centres' resistance. A challenge for women's centres is to work through Connect! to present a united front in their interactions with government while at the same time maintaining their autonomy as individual organizations responding to the specific needs of their different communities. A further challenge is to maintain and to balance their service delivery mandate with their social change mandate, to continue to work towards feminist transformative change in their communities, and to participate in women's movement work taking place at the provincial level, while neither alienating their funders nor being curtailed by their reliance on state funding.

Chapter Five

Women's Alternative Services: Beginning with Service Delivery and Moving to Social Advocacy

As noted earlier, most women's alternative services are issue-specific and have developed an in-depth knowledge about the issue they are addressing. In Nova Scotia, women's alternative services have contributed significantly to the development of feminist street theories in their particular fields of work and have contributed to building the knowledge of the women's community, government and community agencies and institutions, as well as the general public about the issues they are addressing.[116] They reinforce the experience of women's centres that working from a feminist social change perspective and analysis not only informs service delivery theory and practice, it ensures that service delivery in turn informs social advocacy strategies and actions. Yet, women's alternative services have a different history of development and have faced different sets of constraints from those facing women's centres. Women's alternative services were established specifically to provide services to women. Through that service provision

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[116] Over the years women's alternative services have undertaken community-based research that has contributed to significantly to women's understanding of violence towards women, women's poverty, and women's health concerns. For example, THANS's study on the experiences of abused women in mediation provided women in Nova Scotia with an analysis and documentation to press for changes in the ways in which women leaving relationships and going through the court system are screened for abuse. See Rubin, Pam. Abused Women in Family Mediation. THANS. January 2000. The Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre collaborated on a research project that studied the impact of sibling abuse on the child and the family. See Van de Sande, Alicia. Sibling Violence: A Family Secret. Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. December 2000. The three women's centres in Northeastern Nova Scotia recently conducted research on the implementation of the Employment Support and Income Assistance policy that came into effect in Nova Scotia in August 2001. The study used a women-centred approach that involved the participants in undertaking a critical analysis of poverty and social assistance policy and in developing recommendations for policy change. See MacDougall, Maria. Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women? Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Antigonish, Every Woman's Centre, Sydney, and Pictou County Women's Centre, New Glasgow. January 2003.

many, if not all, have to greater or lesser degrees become politicized and involved with social advocacy endeavours. However, similar to women's centres, feminist women's alternative services are at a period in their history when they are facing increased pressures to de-politicize and to return their focus exclusively to the provision of services. Transition houses in particular are facing pressure to redesign their services and to restructure their organizations.

Although many women's alternative services in Nova Scotia were developed by feminist, community-led, women's movement organizations to address specific issues facing women and/or identified gaps in service, some were developed by organizations that did not identify as feminist and were not women's movement organizations. While I do not intend to provide a comprehensive overview of the development of women's alternative services, I do want to reflect upon the three services that were selected as sites for this study and their development as women's movement, issue-specific, services that have evolved a feminist practice and praxis. I chose these services - the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, Chrysalis House and Tearmann House - because they are long established, well respected, issue-specific, feminist-identified services that also are involved with public policy and social change advocacy. They demonstrate on the ground that social advocacy is a key component of feminist praxis.

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre provides some insight into the evolution of an issue-specific organization that was established without a feminist perspective into a women's movement organization which is actively involved in both public policy advocacy and in broad social change work. Insight into the connection between service

delivery and social advocacy in issue-specific organizations is provided as well by looking at the experiences of Chrysalis House and Tearmann House, transition houses which provide services for women experiencing intimate partner abuse. In Nova Scotia transition house services were developed, by and large, by community groups that wanted to provide shelter and supports to women and their children experiencing intimate male partner abuse.[117] Bryony House, established in Halifax in 1979, was the first transition house to open in the province. It was followed by the Cape Breton Transition House which opened in Sydney in 1981. Most of the other houses and services were established in the mid 80s and early 90s.[118] Although there were some differences in the specifics of their mandates, generally they were set up to provide shelter, in-house programs and support, information, counselling, advocacy, referral, crisis line support, and outreach services specific to the issue of family violence. Some of the houses and services were developed from a feminist perspective; others were not. Some were developed by women's organizations; others were not.

Chrysalis House and Tearmann House provide examples of transition houses that integrate social advocacy into their service delivery mandate and in which service delivery informs and directs their social advocacy work. Social advocacy has involved Chrysalis

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[117] Transition houses in Nova Scotia have an interesting and varied story of development - one which requires its own thesis. I do not pretend to know the full history of the transition houses and have had only a peripheral view into the complexities of the issues and challenges they face in responding to, resisting and accommodating pressures to conform to government defined standards of practice. They have contributed significantly to public policy debates around woman abuse.

[118] Specifically, Juniper House, Yarmouth, Tearmann House, New Glasgow, and the Naomi Society, Antigonish, were established in 1984, Harbour House, Bridgewater, and Chrysalis House, Kentville, in 1985, Third Place, Truro, in 1989, Autumn House, Amherst, in 1990, Leeside, Port Hawkesbury, and CASA (Citizens Against Spousal Assault), Digby, in 1992.

House in working on issues related to violence against women and to becoming involved with a number of anti-poverty initiatives and larger social and economic justice issues. However, not all transition houses have chosen to work as broadly as Chrysalis House. Tearmann House, for example, has remained more focussed on justice issues most directly and immediately impacting women experiencing intimate partner abuse. In part this is because they have a women's centre in their community that is working on women's poverty and other social and economic justice issues.

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre was established in 1983 as Services for Sexual Assault Victims or SSAV. In response to a sexual assault at Dalhousie University and several other assaults close to the campus area, students in a Community Psychology class given by professor Ed Renner at Dalhousie University took on a class project where they identified what services and supports were available to women who had experienced sexual assault. When the project identified the need for a sexual assault crisis service, Renner in partnership with the Helpline applied for funding through a Canada Community Development Grant and established SSAV. SSAV's original mandate was to deliver crisis support for immediate/recent sexual assaults through a 24 hour staffed crisis line, to provide public education about sexual assault and SSAV services, and to develop

institutional policies and protocols with the police and local hospitals that would better meet the needs of women who experience sexual assault.[119]

SSAV intentionally was not developed as a feminist service or from a feminist perspective. The rationale was that sexual assault centres across North America had closed, in part, due to "internal conflict over the necessity of a feminist organizational structure". Further, Renner and his colleague Ann Keith expressed concern that a feminist social change process would not be fully inclusive of men in addressing issues of sexual assault. They proceeded with establishing SSAV and overriding the stated concerns from women in the community who had been working "to publicize the needs of rape victims" that Renner's students were not working from a feminist analysis of sexual assault. Renner and Keith contended that their focus was not oppositional to a feminist interpretation of sexual assault and proceeded to develop SSAV from a 'victim perspective' based on 'crisis theory' rather than feminist theory.[120] They state:

> The focus on crisis theory and a victim perspective in no way detracts from the feminist interpretation of the nature of sexual assault (i.e., one form of male violence against women), but rather provides a social change process that can be effective by being inclusive, rather than exclusive, of individuals.[121]

Although it did not start as a feminist organization, SSAV did have a women-centred approach. After 1995, under the direction of a new Executive Director, SSAV, renamed the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, adopted a feminist, women-centred profile

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[119] Renner, Edward , Ann Keith, information reprinted from "The Establishment of a Crisis Intervention Service for Victims of Sexual Assault", the Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, Spring 1985.

[120] Renner, Keith, 1985. Pgs. 3, 8.

[121] Renner, Keith, 1985, pg. 8

and practice. Services were restructured to respond to calls for services for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Avalon developed a continuum of programs based on a feminist counselling model and a feminist community education model and began to concentrate on delivering a more professional therapeutic model of service that took precedence over the volunteer-delivered crisis line support. Providing individual counselling services and advocacy to women led Avalon to identify institutional problems, research the policies and procedures of the police, crown and justice agencies, and to make recommendations for policy revision, additional training and so on. The key informant for Avalon makes the link between providing individual support to women and social advocacy as follows:

> Social advocacy comes from listening to women who are struggling with systems, listening to some of the bureaucracy and [identifying] the policies that are in place to serve the bureaucrats within those institutions, not to serve the women that need the service.[122]

Further, Avalon understood that responding effectively to the experiences of women who have been sexually assaulted and that eliminating sexual assault necessitated the transformation of the political and social systems and structures that oppress women. Thus, the individual advocacy provided to women by SSAV grew through Avalon to become public policy advocacy aimed at institutional and policy change and to become broad social change advocacy. As the key informant for Avalon noted, "You can't do this work without being political."[123]

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[122] Avalon Sexual Assault Centre interview.

[123] Avalon Sexual Assault Centre interview.

The strength of the connection between their provision of direct service and their social advocacy is such that the Avalon contends that although direct service is the largest component of their work (75%), social advocacy is equally as important. Although Avalon has focussed much of their social advocacy towards influencing changes in the policies, programs and practices of justice and health agencies and institutions, it has taken as well a leadership role in working with other women's movement organizations and services for systemic social change.[124]

Chrysalis House

Violence against women was an issue identified in 1981 by the Kings South NDP Women's Rights Committee. Understanding the traditional, conservative ideology of the area and aware that addressing violence against women as an NDP initiative would not be effective, key organizers brought together prominent women from the other political parties, formed a working committee and then a board of directors mandated to develop a transition house. Together they broadened the base of support in the community and overcame considerable resistance to the issue of woman abuse that was coming from parts of the more affluent community as well as from some municipal councillors. Working together, it took four years to establish Chrysalis House. At the time, there was some

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[124] The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre acted as the catalyst for women's organizations to critically review and call for changes to the restorative justice program introduced by the provincial government in 1998. This has resulted not only in a moratorium on referring cases of sexual assault and intimate partner assault to restorative justice processes, it also engaged women's organizations in participating in action research that analyses and points to the need for changes that radically transform systems of oppression and discrimination towards women. See Rubin Pamela. Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia: Women's Experience and Recommendations for Positive Policy Development and Implementation: Report and Recommendations. March 2003.

recognition at the provincial level that services for women experiencing violence were necessary and core funding for service delivery was approved almost immediately by the Department of Community Services. When Chrysalis House opened in Sheffield Mills in 1985 (it subsequently moved to Kentville in 1991), its mandate was to provide services only to women who had been physically abused. It took a further two years to convince funders to accept emotional abuse as criterion for admission - that emotional and psychological abuse were as serious as physical abuse and equally endangered the lives and well-being of women and children.[125]

Although Chrysalis House started as a feminist organization with the board working from a "social democratic feminist perspective," most of the staff did not see themselves as feminists, including several of the early executive directors.[126] After the founding board members moved on to other involvements, subsequent board members reflected the more conservative ideology of the community, were less likely to be feminist, and were less likely to work from a feminist analysis of violence against women or from a feminist perspective with respect to service delivery.

It was not until 1989 when Chrysalis House hired an avowedly feminist executive director that it began to reclaim its early feminist roots and vision. There was a period of tension and learning within the organization as the new executive director educated board members and staff about the connections between front line service delivery work and social advocacy and began to call for public policy change at the community and

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[125] Chrysalis House interview, July 2002.

[126] Chrysalis House interview, July 2002.

provincial levels. For example, in her early days at Chrysalis House, this executive director challenged the municipality on its refusal to recognize the seriousness of emotional abuse as a form of violence against women, and on its refusal to provide per diems for women who experienced types of violence other than severe physical abuse. Since that time, social advocacy has become a key component of the work of Chrysalis House. The key informant for Chrysalis House underscores the necessity for social advocacy when she says:

> To provide shelter, support, individual counseling for a six week period for women and children who are residents and for a longer period on an outreach basis, to confine that strictly in terms of that woman's particular life and to not put it into the larger context, I think is almost futile in terms of affecting any overall change. While it's obviously of paramount importance that individual women's and children's lives are made safer, etc., we can keep on doing that but it's like putting out a forest fire tree by tree. It's not going to happen. The fire is just going to rage on and on.[127]

In a similar way to women's centres and the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, the social advocacy issues on which Chrysalis House takes action are those identified from the individual stories that women bring to them. The key informant puts it this way:

> Of course that's (women's stories) where the impetus comes from and that's what I noticed initially. It wasn't going from the outside in, it was seeing what individual women were struggling with and then figuring out - what's the problem here, why is this happening and inevitably it takes you to a system or a part of a system. And then you say okay what is wrong with this picture and what do you have to do to make it right?[128]

As a feminist organization 'making it right' meant engaging in social advocacy efforts directed towards policy and program change, institutional change, and legislative

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[127] Chrysalis House interview, July 2002.

[128] Chrysalis House interview, July 2002.

change that furthered a feminist vision of broad social, political, and economic transformative change.

Tearmann House

Tearmann House was established as a result of project work undertaken by the Pictou County Women's Centre. Concerned about issues of violence against women, PCWC had applied to the Secretary of State Women's Program to fund a series of community-development oriented initiatives in which they set up an information service for 'battered' women, undertook public education through the Battered Women's Education Project and developed an outreach program through the Battered Women's Outreach Project. As more women accessed the service, project staff and the PCWC saw the need for a women's shelter. A funding proposal to open a transition house was submitted to the Department of Community Services, and Tearmann House opened in October 1984 as an organization separate and independent from the women's centre and with a mandate to provide sheltered services to abused women and their children in Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. They were mandated as well to research issues related to abused women, to educate the public about woman abuse, and to undertake social change work addressing the 'equality, safety and common good of all women'.[129]

Tearmann House defines itself as a feminist service that works from a feminist analysis of violence against women and of women's oppression. Their feminist practice

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[129] Memorandum of Association - The Tearmann Society for Abused Women , September 6, 1983

means that they are committed to supporting women's choices. That is, they do not try to direct a woman's choice but to provide her with the information she needs to make an informed choice and then support her in that choice whether or not they agree with it. Their feminist self-definition and the fact that social change is a stated part of their mandate reflects their early beginnings with the Pictou County Women's Centre which, at that time, was primarily a women's movement social change organization. Tearmann House brought that social change orientation to their work on violence against women.

Although Tearmann House has had a considerable degree of success in advocating at the local level as well as provincially with THANS for policy change (for example, with the Department of Justice in convincing them to institute mandatory charging policies[130]), the Tearmann House key informant expressed concern that much of the social advocacy with which Tearmann House and, indeed, THANS is involved is largely reactive, and government focused. She is looking for a more proactive social advocacy approach that would result in broad systemic change. Consequently she questions whether or not she considers government focused public policy advocacy that involves women's organizations largely in implementing government designed policies and programs to be social advocacy. She notes:

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[130] Mandatory charging policies were implemented in Nova Scotia in 1996 after the Framework for Action on Family Violence made it obligatory for the police, when responding to a call on family violence, to lay charges against the offender. This removed the responsibility for laying charges from the person being abused which in the vast majority cases was the woman. Prior to the implementation of the policy, many women were hesitant to lay charges for fear of repercussions from their abuser. The mandatory charging policy insisted the police take woman abuse seriously. Unfortunately, because the policy is 'gender neutral' and often is enforced by police and crowns without a feminist analysis, counter-charging women who resist abuse or fight back has become a common occurrence and has resulted in criminalizing women who are victims of assault.

> For many years we did that [social advocacy] but it's always in reaction to something that they [the government or other policy decision makers] come up with. To me it seems like when do you ever get a chance to come up with some new ideas instead of reacting to other people's ideas? And I feel like I haven't gotten to do that since the new idea of starting a transition house. Even the advocacy program was their idea for us to submit a proposal.[131]

This reflects, in part, her understanding that feminist social advocacy is a tool for community change and is not limited to government focussed, public policy and institutional change. Her vision of feminist social change is broad, transformative and inclusive, leading her to question whether some of the advocacy positions adopted by Tearmann and other transition houses that primarily serve "white women" and hire mostly "white staff" would be different if more of the service users and providers were women from the black and First Nations communities. She reflected in particular on the mandatory charging policy and its implications for the African Canadian and First Nations communities who face a justice system permeated with racism and, therefore, that treats African Canadian and First Nations people in conflict with the law more harshly than those of European descent. She sees the need for transition houses and women's centres to work towards meeting the needs of and including in their organizations more women from African Canadian and First Nations communities. For the Tearmann House key informant working from a feminist social change perspective means working from a feminist anti-racism analysis. It means working to influence public policy and institutional change while working for feminist political, economic and social transformation.

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[131] Tearmann House interview, August 2002.

A strength of women's alternative services and of women's centres is that while they fiercely maintain their autonomy as independent, community-led, organizations, at the same time they work collaboratively with each other, with sister women's movement organizations and with groups with similar objectives to effect change and to resist government policies, programs, legislation and initiatives that marginalize, exclude, disadvantage and harm women. Just as their autonomy contributes to ensuring a multi-voiced, multi-centred women's movement, their collaboration provides spaces for developing a feminist analysis that makes the links among the issues they are addressing, resists prioritizing and hierarchizing women's issues, and provides them with analytic tools for developing strategies and for both resistance and change. The ability of women's alternative services and of women's centres to survive with their feminist structures and practices intact is in part dependent upon their ability to maintain a commitment to their feminist transformative visions at a time when they are being pitted against each other for funding by the provincial government.

Chapter Six

Relationship between Women's Centres and Transition House Organizations[132]

Women's centres and transition house organizations in Nova Scotia have had both a parallel history of development and a longstanding working relationship. Many of them have their beginnings in women's movement social activism. Some were established as feminist responses to women's need for alternative, woman-positive services, some as spaces for creating feminist alternative social change politics, and some as both. However, others began with a professional service delivery model – some of these grew into feminism while others continued to resist it. While women's centres and transition houses support each other, have experienced a generally high level of cooperation over the years, and present well a united front to their communities and to the state and its agencies, there have been ongoing tensions in their relationship. This is not unique to Nova Scotia, and has been noted as well by women's centres in other provinces.[133] This tension is less apparent between individual centres and houses – especially those located in the same communities – than it is when women's centres and transition house organizations are meeting as their umbrella associations. Some of the tensions arise because of the different ways in which they provide services and undertake social

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[132] Throughout this section I use the term transition house organization to refer to all THANS member organizations. Although THANS refers to their individual members as 'member organizations' in recognition of the fact that not all are residential facilities, I use the term 'transition house organization' generically as a way to refer to the services as individual organizations rather than as members of their umbrella group. In a similar way I refer to women's centres to reflect their individuality and autonomy rather than to Connect! member centres.

[133] L'R des Centres des femmes du Québec. First Meeting of Women's Centres in Canada: Report of the meeting. Montreal, 1987. Pg. 16.

advocacy; some because of the different status accorded to them by government funders; and some because of their ongoing struggles for survival in a neo-liberal political era that is downsizing, privatizing and eliminating social programs. While I do not pretend to understand all of the factors contributing to this tension or the subtleties with which it plays out in different communities, it does bear acknowledgement and some exploration in that it has the potential to impede women's centres and transition house organizations success as they negotiate their futures with the province in the 'family violence' services redesign planning process.

The development of women's centres as social change organizations that provide multi-issue entry point services to women, and the development of transition house organizations as issue-specific services that are involved in public policy advocacy, informs to some extent their different status with core funders, the difference in their abilities to secure operational funding, as well as the different approaches they take to working within their communities and with each other at the provincial level. As noted earlier and shown in Figure 1, almost half of the women's centres and transition house organizations in Nova Scotia were developed in the 1980s at a time when feminists across Canada were establishing alternative services for women and when supporting women's services was part of a government agenda. In fact, the willingness of the province to provide operational funding to transition house organizations has been a significant factor in their longevity. The lack of operational funding for all but two women's centres by either the federal or provincial government prior to 1994 has contributed to a number of them closing. Of the three women's centres that were established in the 1970s, only one

remains operational. By the end of the 1980s, only four of the eight women's centres that had been established remained in operation, while all of the eight transition house organizations that had been established (one in 1978 and seven in the 1980s) remained open. Gaining provincial operational funding in 1994 has meant that the four women's centres established post 1990 remain in operation as do the five transition house organizations established post 1990 all remain in operation.

Figure 1: Time Line of Development of Women's Centres and Transition House Organizations in Nova Scotia

Year	Women's Centre	Transition House
1974-75	• Brenton Street Women's Centre, Halifax (closed)	
1976	• Pictou County Women's Centre, New Glasgow	
1977-79	• A Woman's Place - Forrest House, Halifax (closed)	
1978		Bryony House, Halifax
1981		• Cape Breton Transition House, Sydney
1983	• Second Story Women's Centre, Bridgewater • Antigonish Women's Resource Centre	
1984		• Naomi Society, Antigonish • Tearmann House, New Glasgow
1985-89 1985	• Colchester Women's Resource Centre, Truro (closed) • LEA Place, Sheet Harbour	• Juniper House, Yarmouth • Chrysalis House, Sheffield Mills (moved to Kentville in 1991)
1989-94 1989	• Women Aware Women's Centre, Port Hawkesbury (closed)	• Third Place Transition House, Truro
1987		• Harbour House, Bridgewater

1990		• Cumberland County Transition House, Amherst
1991	• The Women's Place, Lawrencetown	
1992	• Every Woman's Centre, Sydney	• Citizens Against Spousal Assault, Digby • Leeside Transition House, Port Hawkesbury
1993		• Mi'kmaq Family Treatment Centre, Waycobah
1994		• Mi'kmaq Family Treatment Centre, Millbrook
2000	• Central Nova Women's Resource Centre, Truro	
2002	• Tri-County Women's Centre, Yarmouth	

Note: Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) was established in 1987. Women's Centres Connect! was established in 1988.

Most women's centres and transition house organizations are located in small town/rural areas of the province and many co-exist in the same communities. In fact, six of the fifteen communities in which women's centres and transition house organizations are located currently have both women's centres and transition house organizations. Five communities established women's centres prior to opening transition house organizations. In three of these communities the women's centres subsequently closed, although in one of them a new women's centre has recently opened. In one community a women's centre and a service for abused women were established more or less at the same time. In two communities transition house organizations were established prior to women's centres opening. In three instances, the same groups or women's organizations developed both the women's centre and the transition house in their communities. (See Figure 2.) Clearly the communities saw the need for both women's centres and for transition house

organizations, did not see a duplication of services between the two, and supported both.[134] Often women in their respective communities sat on the boards of both organizations at the same or different times and sometimes this was formalized to the extent that a seat on a board was reserved for a member of the other organization. Where both a women's centre and a transition house exist in a community there is a referral relationship between the organizations, and there are generally high levels of cooperation that have included the partnering and co-sponsorship of research, public education workshops and social advocacy initiatives.

Figure 2: Location of Women's Centres and Transition House Organizations, 2002-2003

Location	**Women's Centre**	**Transition House**
Sydney	Every Woman's Centre*, 92	Cape Breton Transition House*, 81
Waycobah		Mi'kmaq Family Treatment Centre, 93
Port Hawkesbury		Leeside Transition House, 92
Antigonish	Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, 83	Naomi Society, 84
New Glasgow	Pictou County Women's Centre**, 76	Tearmann House**, 84
Truro	Central Nova Women's Resource Centre, 00	Third Place, 89

[134] When looking at the location of women's centres and transition house organizations according to Department of Community Services' regions, there is a greater concentration of services (15 of the 21 total services) in the Northern and Western Regions with three women's centres and five transition house organizations in the Northern Region and three women's centres and four transition house organizations in the Western Region. In the Central Region there is one women's centre and one transition house; in the Eastern Region there is one women's centre and three transition house organizations. In part this is reflective of the fact that the Northern and Western Regions are large, predominantly rural areas with multiple small town centres serving local and surrounding area populations. However, while transition house organizations and women's centres have been established by their communities according to community awareness of service need and are distributed across the province more or less equitably according to population centres, for the purposes of Department of Community Services, they are more heavily concentrated in two regional administration areas. As the Department of Community Services and other government departments continue to regionalize their program administration, transition house organizations, because they have regionally defined catchment areas, perceive their organizations as particularly vulnerable to funding cuts and the imposition of mandate restrictions.

Millbrook		Mi'kmaq Family Treatment Centre, 94
Amherst		Autumn House, 90
Sheet Harbour	LEA Place, 85	
Halifax		Bryony House, 78
Bridgewater	Second Story Women's Centre*, 83	Harbour House*, 87
Kentville		Chrysalis House, 85
Lawrencetown	The Women's Place, 91	
Digby		Citizens Against Spousal Assault, 92
Yarmouth	Tri-County Women's Centre, 02	Juniper House, 85

* Both the women's centre and the transition houses were established by the same organization.

** The transition house was established by the women's centre.

Note: There are no First Nation's women's centres.

As discussed earlier, most women's centres in the province were developed by feminist women's movement organizations and mandated to initiate and promote social, political and economic institutional reform and systemic change as well as to provide information and support services to individual women on a full range of issues. Most of the women's centres – especially the early ones – saw themselves and were recognized within their communities as initiators of and as sites for feminist social activism. As such, they named issues that some within their communities would rather not acknowledge; they named women's oppression; and they presented an analysis of oppression that challenged the status quo. As a result, they were often a source of controversy within their communities and bore the stigma accorded by some to feminists.[135] As multi-issue organizations that did more than provide services, they had

[135] There are several anecdotal examples I could provide from my own experience in working with the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. For example, in the early 1990s the AWRC brought togther a committee of individuals and local community groups to plan a "poverty awareness day". Both the Town

difficulty establishing a public profile that was easy for the general public, the media and government to grasp.

Transition houses were established with specific, readily identifiable mandates to provide emergency shelter and support services to women and their children experiencing male violence in intimate relationships. While some were developed by feminist organizations and worked from a feminist perspective and feminist analysis of woman abuse, others were established by community-led groups and operated from a professional service delivery model. Those employing a professional service delivery model did not see necessarily the group or the service as feminist even though some of the organizing group members may have identified as feminists. In fact, some wanted to dis-associate themselves from feminism and thought that they would be better able to establish acceptance in the community for their service if it was not seen as feminist.[136]

Different histories of funding and consequent relationships with primary funders have contributed as well to the differences between women's centres and transition

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and County Councils were asked to proclaim a day in March as Poverty Awareness Day. The County Council took exception based on the grounds that by declaring such a day, people would think there was poverty in the community. Over the years the AWRC has made a concerted effort to bring a feminist analysis of poverty to committees they work with in the community. Today both the Town and County Councils participate on the Antigonish Affordable Housing Association, an organization established and led by the AWRC and dedicated to creating affordable community housing solutions.

[136]This was the situation in a small town, predominantly Catholic community. Established within a few months of each other, the transition house organization and the women's centre had an early history of working closely together. Although the transition house organization did not have a feminist board, it did have a feminist executive director and staff. Both organizations were viewed with some antipathy by the more conservative members of the community and the organizations were often confused with each other. In the late 1980s under the direction of a different executive director, the transition house organization chose to distinguish and distance itself from the women's centre by claiming that the women's centre was a radical feminist organization while it was a mainstream, professionally modelled organization. While in the mid 1990s a new executive director at the transition house organization re-established a close working relationship with the women's centre staff, the transition house organization Board of Directors has maintained a practice of distancing itself publicly from the women's centre.

houses. In the early 1980s the provincial government, recognizing that transition houses provided services that were needed by women and that were not available through existing government funded agencies, provided transition houses with core, operational funding from the Department of Community Services. Since that time, in consultation and collaboration with the Department of Community Services, transition house organizations have determined appropriate catchment areas for their houses, developed methodologies for collecting statistics, established salary scales, developed standards of practice, and so on. Transition houses, by the very fact that they are residential facilities, fit into an institutional model familiar to government that is not substantially dissimilar from group homes and other residential services managed or funded by them. Although not without their struggles, generally, transition house organizations have experienced their relationship with the department as positive and supportive.

Women's centres, on the other hand, have never seen themselves or, in turn, been seen as an easy fit by and within the Department of Community Services. Unlike transition houses, women's centres are community-focussed and do not have defined regional catchment areas. They provide information and support on the range of issues facing women, and while each women's centre provides similar core services, the programs they offer differ according to the needs of their communities. Different centres emphasize different issues and develop different profiles in their communities. For example, some centres were developed by groups interested in community economic

development and maintain a community economic development focus[137]; others have worked extensively on poverty related issues and projects; and still others have focussed on sexual violence and developed programs and initiatives that address the needs of survivors.

Women's centres began lobbying the provincial government for core operational funding in the late 1980s. It was not until 1994 that they received any funding from the province and, according to a senior level bureaucrat, the funding they first received was pre-election "hush money," a way for the Premier to "get out of a meeting graciously"and to say he is "committed to women." This first funding to women's centres was not an indication of the government's long-term commitment to fund women's centres, or of their intention to build women's centres into subsequent budgets. In the succeeding Liberal government, although the Premier, John Savage, personally supported the concept of women's centres, the government's priority was to establish more day care seats in the province and to maintain existing transition house and sexual assault centre services. At the time, the Deputy Minister of Justice who had "no interest in women's programs" and "saw social advocacy equated with all kinds of political evils", was pressuring the government to give priority to resources for the courts, prosecutions and maintenance enforcement as a way of addressing violence against women. Women's centres were not seen as 'real services' by much of the Cabinet or senior staff, and government members

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[137] As mentioned earlier, although many of the early women's centres were funded by Status of Women Canada to undertake women's equality social change initiatives, three women's centres – The Women's Place, along with Central Nova Women's Resource Centre and Tri-County Women's Centre, the two most recently developed women's centres – came out of groups with a community economic development interest and were funded initially by Human Resources Development Canada.

did not distinguish among women's issues or perceive more women's services to be necessary. In the eyes of some government members and senior staff, women's centres were viewed as a "social club", while for others they were equated with feminism and, therefore, with radicalism and socialism. They were seen as "socialist", social advocacy organizations that were often publicly critical of incumbent governments.[138] According to a former senior government staff member:

> There was very little support [for funding women's centres] around the table for the Premier [John Savage] who was a consensual Premier most of the time. .... And, by the time we got to the funding, I would say it took a good year and a half to get [the need for women's centres] understood enough around the table so when it went forward the Minister of Finance didn't shoot it down out of hand. The Premier had to do a bit of an education effort with some of his Cabinet colleagues about why this was important, why this needed to be done. And that took a while because it wasn't a service in the eyes of many people. I could go to a transition house at midnight. I could go to SSAV. It didn't matter that we only had one service for sexual assault victims in the whole province. There were places. And besides if we were going to do something, wouldn't we fund men's treatment programs? There were many people who were taking that view. Why would you just continue to throw money at an amorphous women's service that was probably – how shall I put this delicately? – probably filled with people who weren't necessarily friends of incumbent governments – both the Tories to a very open degree and some of the Liberals felt that way – some didn't, but some did.[139]

Not only were women's centres not well understood or supported at the Cabinet table by government members, but the multi-issue mandate of women's centres was problematic for the Department of Community Services. Many of the services provided by women's centres fell under the mandate of other provincial departments including the

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[138] Former senior government staff member interview.

[139] Former senior government staff member interview.

Departments of Health, Education, Justice and Economic Development.[140] Further, some of the services that fell within the Department of Community Services would fit better under the Employment Support and Income Assistance side of the department rather than the Family and Children's Services side where they currently are co-located with transition house organizations. Family and Children's Services, as their name implies, is geared towards services for families and children. Many of the women who use women's centres are single women or women who do not have dependent children and/or whose issues are not related to the mandate of the department. Almost since they first funded women's centres, the Department of Community Services has been making the argument that other departments should be funding them as well. Thus, Department of Community Services funding for women's centres has been consistently minimal, inadequate and insecure. While this reflects the value placed on the work of women's centres by the Department of Community Services in particular, and the government, in general, it also reflects the siloed, hierarchical structure of government departments and the difficulty they have in working across departments or from an integrative approach that would respond in a more holistic way to the realities of women's lives and therefore to multi-issue entry point services.

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[140] According to a survey of women who access the programs and services of women's centres 21% would have issues related to mental health, 14% related to justice/legal issues, 12% related to poverty, 10% relate to health, 10% related to employment, 8% related to parenting and protection, 6% related to education, 4% related to sexual violence, and 15% related to other concerns. Many of these concerns are inter-connected and overlapping issues in women's lives. See Province of Nova Scotia/Women's Centres Connect! Joint Planning Committee. "Nova Scotia Women's Centres Profile of Users" in Report and Recommendations. November 2000. Pg. 22.

Further, funding allocated to women centres through the Department of Community Services has remained at the discretional grant level and has never been a committed line in the department's budget. This has kept women's centres in a marginalized position – a position which on the one hand has allowed them to continue to undertake social advocacy as a primary activity with minimal interference from the department, while on the other hand has left them without status within the department and their funding vulnerable to reductions or elimination.

Whereas transition houses were seen by many in the provincial government as providing legitimate, professional, standardized services, women's centres were seen as providing ambiguous, non-standardized, 'soft' services. Further while both transition house organizations and women's centres criticized government policies that were harmful to women, it was women's centres that were viewed as a threat to government or ignored by government. Transition houses were more likely to be invited to policy consultation and development tables. The difference in status accorded to women's centres and transition house organizations by government and its agencies has contributed to creating tensions between the two groups. Tensions arising from differences in philosophy, practice and status have been exacerbated further by pressures from the government calling upon both women's centres and transition house organizations to prove their legitimacy and to demonstrate they are not duplicating services.

Prior to the tabling of the April 2002 provincial budget, women's centres and transition house organizations recognized that they had mutual interests as well as challenges and could benefit from meeting with each other. Through their umbrella

associations, Connect! and THANS, they organized formal opportunities to meet together on two occasions. The first meeting took place in 1991. It provided an opportunity for women's centres and transition house organizations to develop a better understanding of the services each provided and to strategize about how they could present their services as separate, distinct and essential.[141] At that time women's centres were lobbying the province for operational funding and beginning to define their service delivery.[142] Neither women's centres or transition house organizations contested the fact that they were both undertaking social and public policy advocacy on violence against women and both were providing services to women who identified violence as an issue in their lives. Tensions arose in part because they recognized that women were not a priority for the government of the day and it was generally felt that there were only limited dollars for women's services. Women's centres were perceived by some members of THANS as competing with them for provincial funding. Both Connect! and THANS were concerned that the government would fund only one group in each community or would find a way to justify funding neither by charging there was a duplication of services with each other or with other services in the community. Although sorting through the different concerns was difficult, the initial meeting in 1991 laid down the beginnings of a provincial working relationship. Both groups wanted to find ways to work together to ensure both women's centres and transition house organizations would survive.

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[141] Mahon, Peggy. Linkages...Women's Centres...Transition Houses: A Discussion Paper (draft). Extension Department, St. Francis Xavier University, 1991.

[142] Senior staff in the Department of Community Services were trying to figure out where women's centres fit within their mandate and whether they would take dollars away from child-focussed programs that were the priority of senior staff.

The second meeting took place in October 1996. Again it was an opportunity for women's centres and transition house organizations to discuss together their commonalities and differences, the strengths of and the challenges facing their organizations, and the political, social and economic changes affecting their organizations. It was an opportunity to look at ways they could work together both as individual organizations and as umbrella associations to support each other in their work and in their advocacy efforts. At the meeting the women's centres and transition house organizations present clearly identified different entry points for women coming to their services, noting the issue specificity of "partner violence and family relationships" for THANS member organizations and the multi-issue entry point for women's centres – "could be anything any reason." However, again they did not contest that both were addressing issues of violence towards women. They noted that while transition houses provided shorter term services for women, women's centres and non-residential THANS member organizations provided longer term support services to women. They challenged the government's 'charge of duplication' of services by asserting they were all developed out of "community development" efforts "because of the women's needs in our communities" and that they "work with government funding, not because of government funding." They recognized the need to protect their services and determined to create a collective vision for their services, to develop a joint strategy for lobbying at the political level, and to participate in and to elicit the support of the Women's Action Coalition of

Nova Scotia.[143] While both the 1991 and 1996 meetings served to create a clearer understanding of the services each was offering, and to establish a greater familiarity with and support for the individual services, neither meeting alleviated over the long term, the underlying tensions between the organizations.

A third meeting, scheduled for May 2002 to look together at the implications contracting for services held for women's centres and transition house organizations, did not take place. It was preempted when the province tabled its April 2002 budget announcing funding cuts that would impact women's centres, transition house organizations and men's intervention programs and the subsequent tabling of the Department of Community Services' Family Violence Programming Redesign Plan. The program redesign planned to close several transition houses in the province, amalgamate or co-locate 'family violence' services, address duplications of service, and produce 'cost efficiencies' for the Department.

Including women's centres under Family Violence Programming provided further evidence that senior staff neither understood nor valued women's centre services and that they were looking for a way to reduce their commitment to funding them. As well, the proposal to close a number of transition houses demonstrated their lack of commitment to maintaining transition house services and to providing staffed, secure, accessible shelter to women and children experiencing violence. While neither women's centres nor transition house organizations were expecting the extent of the cuts or the proposed

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[143] Minutes/Report. THANS Member Organizations and Women's Centres Meeting. Wolfville, Nova Scotia, October 7-8, 1996.

elimination of their services, the transition houses felt a stronger sense of betrayal by the Department of Community Services. This reflected, in part, the level of funding security and service legitimization that transition house organizations had experienced over the years. Women's centres were less surprised. They were aware they were a marginalized service in the eyes of the government and had felt their funding to be perennially insecure.

The proposed budget cuts served to tie together the survival of women's centres and transition house organizations and made it necessary for them to act quickly and, in a time of crisis, form a coalition to oppose the cuts and the redesign plan. Both women's centres and transition house organizations pulled together to ensure that they were maintained as distinct and separate services and that their operational funding was secured.

This relationship has been a challenging one. The collaboration forced on women's centres, transition house organizations, and men's intervention programs served to intensify underlying tensions, apprehensions and levels of distrust between and among their organizations and to exacerbate the fear, insecurity and uncertainty generated by the Department of Community Services' redesign plan. As well, the differences in the ways the provincial associations, Connect! and THANS, work also became abundantly clear and reflective of different philosophies, structures, goals, practices, approaches to their work, and histories of engagement with government. Despite these challenges, feminism and a commitment to working as, with and on behalf of women remained a constant that enabled individual women from the transition house organizations and women's centres to work across their differences, to maintain a sometimes teetering solidarity and to begin to build a better understanding of their differences and commonalities.

Chapter Seven

Multiple State Pressures to Depoliticize

Pressures on women's centres and on women's alternative services to redefine their organizations and to re-structure their services to fit government program priorities and bureaucratically-approved practices and models of service provision have increased over the past number of years.[144] Using their power to withdraw or to threaten to withhold funding support, the state has attempted to impose and enforce its definitions and has pressured, if not coerced, women's centres and women's alternative services into complying to greater or lesser degrees with state imposed practices and accountability structures. Nevertheless, women's centres and women's alternative services not only are resisting state pressures to change their mandates, they are continuing to oppose policies and programs that harm or disadvantage women and to call for women-positive political, economic and social change.

In this chapter, I want to identify the various ways in which controls and pressures to de-politicize are exerted by the state and its agencies on women's centres and women's alternative services. Cumulatively, these multiple state controls and pressures have the potential to change significantly the ways in which women's centres and women's alternative services carry out their work, to foment tensions and to create a sense of disunity among women's movement organizations in Nova Scotia. They have the potential to weaken substantially the work of women's movement organizations in local

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[144] Both the Family Violence System Redesign Model and the provincial contracts for services provide examples of these pressures.

communities and across Nova Scotia. Naming these controls and pressures to de-politicize and understanding how they are applied is a necessary step to taking effective political action to resist them. State mechanisms for control that are not named or that are characterized as "other" than control, aid in the forming, entrenchment and reinforcement of that control. An equally necessary step is framing as women's politics the structures women's organizations have created that enable their resistance, the strategies and actions of resistance undertaken by the organizations most directly impacted, and the strategies undertaken by supportive sister women's movement organizations.

When I use the term de-politicize, I am referring to, among other things, both the overt and covert pressures exerted on women's services by 'the state' – federal and provincial governments and their various agencies and levels of bureaucracy – to drop or de-emphasize their social advocacy mandates, to concentrate solely on providing services, and to provide those services in a way that is consistent with a bureaucratically organized state and congruent with a government agenda. Pressures to de-politicize are experienced in several ways by women's centres and women's alternative services. They are experienced as pressure to institutionalize, to adopt state-sanctioned bureaucratic structures and systems and to abandon feminist, alternative ones; to adopt administrative models in which primary accountability for services is directed to the state; to construct and use standardized, quantitative measuring systems; to professionalize service delivery by using a social work model and hiring staff with professional credentials over women with grounded, experience-based knowledge and skills; to implement government determined policies and programs rather than participating with government in defining

and creating policies that would place women's experience, knowledge, safety and well-being at their centre; to replace feminist policy and program frameworks and language with those that are ostensibly gender neutral. Moreover, the state has exerted control by co-opting women's analysis and claiming and re-defining women's issues. In this way, it has minimized and made less visible feminist contributions to naming and defining women's marginalization and oppression as well as women's contributions to progressive policy and legislative changes.

Each of these forms of pressure and control along with the context in which they are applied or experienced has implications for feminist women's service organizations in Nova Scotia. Each is being exerted at a time in which the ideology and practice of the state is changing from that of a social welfare state operating within a liberal, democratic, capitalist framework to that of a neo-liberal state that is dismantling social programs while further entrenching patriarchal structures and capitalist ideology.

Impact of Neo-Liberal State Ideology and Practice

Although it is not my intention to theorize the state nor to explore through this thesis feminist theories of the state, it is useful to note that 'the state' with which women's alternative services and women's centres engage is experienced as an embodied state rather than as a 'coherent unity' with clear intentionality that exercises power and legal authority.[145] Although the neo-liberal ideology of the state directs the policy and program

[145] Ng (1990), Walker (1990), Brodie (1996), Allen (1990), Watson (1990) and others have written extensively about the state as a set of social relations and functions which impact upon the lives of women. They maintain that it is with the state as a set of functions and as a set of social relations that women are most likely to directly interact and that it is more productive for feminists involved in social change work to

implementation of the state in a way that allows it to be identified and articulated as intentional and coherent, 'the state' towards which women's centres and women's alternative services direct their actions and petitions for change is the embodied, personned complexity of functions, bureaucracies, and institutions that create and enforce laws, policies, and programs. Thus it is with the people who represent, create and enforce the functions, bureaucracies, institutions and policies of the state that they interact. And, although the functions, bureaucracies, and institutions of the state are structured patriarchally in a way that relegates women and women's services to the margins, in order to influence social change, it is necessary for women's centres and women's alternative services to work from those margins, both within and outside of the various manifestations and apparatuses of the state, and from a number of identities and positions – at funding tables, policy tables, community tables, women's movement organization tables, and in the street, as providers of feminist services, as advocates for public policy change, and as women's movement social activists working for social, economic and political transformation.

It is working with and within the embodied state that presents a multiplicity of contradictions and sites of conflict for women's movement organizations who advocate for positive social change for women. As advocates for social change, feminists working in women's centres and women's alternative services are not always clear about their locality of participation. As women's movement organizations, they are opposing the

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resist considering the state as a coherent unity and, instead, to focus on the functions and bureaucracies that actualize it.

imposition of a neo-liberal agenda and the dismantling of the social welfare state as well as advocating for the transformation of the state at the same time that they are funded by the state, and providing state sanctioned services and programs for women in their local communities. Thus, many are working simultaneously from localities both 'outside' and 'inside' the state and from positions that cannot be identified clearly as either 'outside' or 'inside' the state. Described by Sophie Watson as working 'in and against the state' this situation presents challenges to feminist organizations when resisting government pressures to define, control and limit their services, to silence their voices, and to co-opt their work as well as opportunities to transform the state by creating alternative policies, programs and practices.[146] It has been largely through engaging with the state at some and, often, at many levels that women have made gains, albeit "fragile and highly contested" gains, in women's legal, sexual and reproductive rights and in improving women's education, health and economic conditions.[147]

Historically, women as citizens have not been assigned equal status within society and its various constructs;[148] their concerns have not been accorded equal merit; and they have not had equal opportunity to participate in decision-making.[149] The social, political

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[146] Watson, Sophie, 1990. "The State of Play: An Introduction" in Watson, Sophie, ed. Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions. North Sydney: Allen and Unwin.. Pg. 4.

[147] Feminists for a Gift Economy. "Feminists for a Gift Economy – Position Statement for a Peaceful World" in Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme – Women, Globalization and International Trade, Volumes 21/22, Numbers 4/1. York University. Pg. 227.

[148] Citizen status and merit are differentiated according to gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexual orientation and so on.

[149] Carole Pateman, a feminist political philosopher, has written extensively about the state, exploring and explaining the construction of western, liberal, capitalist democracy, the political jurisdiction of men over women, and the exclusion of women as women from participation in the public world of the

and economic ideologies, structures, policies and programs of the state that represent, advantage and make central the interests of the dominant white, middle class, capitalist, male hegemony marginalize women and non-dominant groups and exploit their paid and unpaid labour.[150] Further, as marginalised individuals, women are categorized by the state and its representatives as 'other' than, or outside of the citizen 'norm,' and they are assigned responsibility for their own marginalization. Ascribed the status of 'other,' women are seen as asking for special privileges when they attempt to participate as 'full citizens' in the state. Marginalized groups ascribed the status of 'other' become defined by neo-liberal state ideologies and proponents as 'special interest groups' and their 'problems' may or may not be assigned legitimacy by the state according to whether and how they fit within the state agenda. As governments move further away from the principles and ideology of a social welfare state and closer to the ideology and practice of a capitalist, neo-liberal state, 'special interest' groups that support a social welfare agenda are increasingly marginalized.[151]

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economy and the state. Pateman makes the case that the patriarchal state developed by the social contract theorists is based on a 'fraternal' social contract concept in which "liberty, equality, fraternity" define the values inherent in liberal and socialist democracies and literally mean the 'brothers' to the exclusion of the sisters. Pateman uses the term 'patriarchy' to capture "the specificities of the subjugation and oppression of women" as distinguished from other forms of domination. See Pateman, Carole. The Sexual Contract. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988a. Pateman makes the case that the controversy about the welfare state has "revolved around and continues to revolve around the question of the respective social places and tasks of women and men." She maintains that the attack on the welfare state is an attempt to restabilise patriarchy by strengthening the patriarchal structure of the state. See Pateman, Carole. "The Patriarchal Welfare State", 1988b, in Gutman, Amy, ed. Democracy and the Welfare State. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988b. Pg . 23.

[150] Pateman, 1988.

[151] Brodie, 1996.

Women are not only marginalized as a special interest group, but in each marginalising classification they are accorded consistently less status than their male counterparts and their concerns are accorded less merit than those of their male counterparts. While this has been reflected historically through the policies, programs and operations of the Canadian social welfare state, it has become increasingly apparent as governments with a neo-liberal agenda dismantle social programs and adopt budgeting priorities that further marginalize, exclude, disadvantage and negatively impact women. Within the social welfare state, women historically have been assigned low-status, de-valued, gendered caregiving roles. These values and practices are entrenched further within the neo-liberal state where women bear the social and economic brunt of downsizing and restructuring. Through adoption of a fiscal restraint priority approach, governments at all levels have been provided with a rationale for cutting social programs and dismantling the social safety net. The first programs cut and those that have been cut the most drastically are those benefiting primarily women and children. The women and children most affected by these cuts were those most marginalized and excluded – women of colour, women living in poverty, and women with disabilities among others. Thus, in Nova Scotia, recent social assistance program restructuring has resulted in already inadequate benefits to single mothers being further reduced. Within the health sector, the salaries of physicians have been protected while those of nurses and female dominated health care sector workers have been allowed to fall significantly behind. Across Canada, state funding provided to women's centres and transition houses has been chronically

minimal and insecure and in recent years, funding to their services has been reduced, eliminated or threatened with elimination in Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

Understanding that the social welfare state is profoundly patriarchal in structure is key to understanding the resistance of the state to acknowledging women's concerns in any significant way or to taking action to change the structures that maintain women's oppression and subordination.[152] As social welfare state provisions breakdown and social programs are reduced in scope or are dismantled altogether, the state assigns more and more of the caring functions to 'the family' and 'the community.'[153] Since holding the family together and holding the community together fall within the gendered caregiving, nurturing roles assigned primarily to women under the hegemony of patriarchy, it is women in the family and in the community who are expected to assume responsibility for taking on this work for the state. Further they are expected to take on this role either as a family member or in a community 'volunteer' capacity as well as to contribute to the well-being of the family by working in paid employment outside the home. The assumption by and expectation of the state as well as of society at large that women will do this critical, yet devalued, work out of their sense of responsibility for and duty to family and community underpins the general devaluing of women's community-based

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[152] Sue Findlay notes that many of the recommendations for reform of state policies, programs and structures that have emerged from both feminists and the state itself have been contained by a liberal democratic definition of politics that is premised on the belief in the neutrality of the state and its capacity to represent, protect and negotiate the interests of "the people". Viewing the state as neutral is as much a trap for women as it is for all marginalized groups. See Findlay, 1988, pg.9.

[153] Walker, Gillian. "Reproducing Community: the Historical Development of Local and Extra-Local Relations" in Ng, Roxana, Gillian Walker, Jacob Muller, eds., Community Organization and the Canadian State. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990.

services. The work of women's services, whether mainstream or alternative, is devalued and taken for granted, while the services themselves are, for the most part, invisible and irrelevant to government decision-makers.

Despite their marginalization, because they work from localities both 'inside' and 'outside' the state, women's centres and women's alternative services are well placed to articulate the concerns of women to government, to place specific concerns on the government agenda, to develop working relationships with bureaucrats and government representatives who can actualize legislative and policy change, and to make visible women's marginalization by the state and its agencies and institutions. Having said this, I do not want to imply this is easy or straightforward or that the state is receptive. I only want to note that it is an opportunity.

Institutionalization

Women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia require state funding to carry out their work and their longevity is attributable in part to their access to and their ability to secure and maintain state funding. However, while state funding has made their work possible, at the same time, their reliance on state funding has complicated it.

Although most feminists would agree that the longevity of organizations almost inevitably results in some degree of institutionalization, they define institutionalization differently and view its import for women's alternative services from different perspectives. Maria Marx Feree and Patricia Yancey Martin define institutionalization as

simply establishing longevity and formal and informal relations with other services in a community.[154] Alicia Schreader ties institutionalization to co-optation and asserts that although the fact that the state funds feminist organizations and services is an indicator of the women's movement success, it is also an indicator of their co-optation. The 'essence' of co-optation for Schreader is "progressive groups being induced to buy into a state defined agenda with the illusion of having secured power."[155] While for women's movement organizations in Nova Scotia, there is little illusion of 'securing power' by 'buying into' a state defined agenda, there is a recognition that 'working with' the state and its agencies is necessary for maintaining funding as well as for influencing changes in government policies and programs.

Jan Barnsley asserts that a way for the state to exert its control over an issue is to institutionalize feminist issues brought to the attention of the state through social action. Barnsley maintains that institutionalization is "what happens to women's issues when the women's movement succeeds in getting the state and its various institutions to respond". Often after significant pressure from women's organizations to address an issue, the state through its institutions and bureaucracies claims and then re-defines the issue in a way that excludes feminism and, often, women. In this way the issue can be accommodated without having to address the fundamental challenge it presents and without radically

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[154] Feree, Myra Marx & Patricia Yancey Martin, 1995. "Doing the Work of the Movement: Feminist Organizations" in Feree & Martin, eds. 1995. 6-7.

[155] Schreader, Alicia. "The State Funded Women's Movement: A Case of Two Political Agendas" in Ng, Roxana, Gillian Walker, Jacob Muller, eds. Community Organization and the Canadian State. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990.

altering the dominant hegemony or making significant change to the status quo, the existing political system and its structures.[156] Barnsley asserts:

> The apparent reason for institutional response to women's issues is to enable the institution and the state to take control of the issue, to redefine and compromise it so it can be accommodated without significant change in the status quo.[157]

Ng and Randall make the point that it is in a similar way that the state attempts to claim, contain, re-define and accommodate the women's services it funds within existing systems.[158] Services that fit more closely with government ideology are more likely to be maintained while those that refuse to accept state defined practices and procedures are more likely to lose credibility with government and to risk the reduction and/or loss of their funding. Thus, as government ideology moves to the right, there is more pressure on state funded services to narrow their mandates and to adopt institutional practices congruent with the state.

For many women's centres and women's alternative services, the charge of institutionalization implies and resonates with their fear of being co-opted by the state to deliver state-defined services that fulfil a government mandate at the expense of the women they serve. Institutionalization implies the compliance of women's organizations with state pressures to conform to bureaucratically approved models of practice and

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[156] Barnsley, Jan. "Feminist Action, Institutional Reaction" in Resources for Feminist Research. RFR/DFR Volume 17 No. 3. 1988. Pg 18.

[157] Barnsley, 1988. Pg 19.

[158] Ng, 1990. Randall, 1998.
An example is provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice which eliminated funding to transition houses for advocacy programs provided to abused women and their children, claiming those advocacy services could be provided through police-based victim services programs.

accountability and to adopt a government defined mandate. It implies an abandonment or a profound compromising of feminist principles and praxis. Jill Vickers et al reject interpretations of institutionalization as co-optation and make the point that achieving the goal of women's equality requires sustained effort over a number of generations, and, therefore, women's movements must establish institutions in order to be successful. They note that, "Women need structures to maintain their projects over time" and in order to bring women into women's movement work, "it is necessary to appropriate the concept of 'institution' and reconceptualize it to interpret women's political practice."[159] Thus one measure of a movement's success is its ability to create stable institutions.

While Barnsley, Ng and Randall make valid points about the ways in which the state attempts to control women's issues and women's services through institutionalization, it is unfortunate that when Schreader and others apply the terms institutionalization or co-optation to feminist-organized women's services, they apply them in a way that diminishes the feminism of those services. It would be more useful to women's movement organizations to provide insight into the way in which feminism has ensured the longevity of women's alternative services and has informed their resistance and praxis as well as the ways in which feminism and feminist analyses have evolved within feminist-organized women's services. What bears further exploration and documentation are the successful efforts of feminist organizations to establish and sustain alternative social change models of feminist service delivery and praxis. Such documentation would provide an alternative analysis to what Stephanie Riger identifies as the classic analysis of

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[159] Vickers et al, 1993. Pg. 4.

social movement organizations; it has been put forward by Weber (1946) and Michels (1962) that, as a means of maintaining themselves with longevity and community acceptance, movement organizations "inevitably become more bureaucratic and develop more conservative goals." Similarly Piven and Cloward (1977) assert that in order to attain resources, movement organizations abandon their oppositional stance.[160] Riger argues that while it is true that feminist-organized women's services face ongoing pressures to de-politicize and to move in a conservative direction, their commitment to feminism and their identity with women's social movement work serves as a counter to that pressure.[161]

Survival has required substantial and sustained effort on the part of women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia and elsewhere across Canada. Resisting institutionalization and co-optation, and struggling with marginalization are realities. It is an ongoing challenge to create positive working relationships with government bureaucrats, policy- and decision-makers while resisting co-optation. Further it is a challenge to advocate for social change and to oppose state policies and programs that disadvantage or harm women without 'disengaging' from the state.[162] Moreover, during

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[160] Riger, Stephanie."Vehicles for Empowerment: the Case of Feminist Movement Organizations" in Rappaport, Julian and Carolyn Swift Robert Hess, eds. Studies in Empowerment: Steps Toward Understanding and Action. New York: Haworth Press Inc., 1984. Pg. 101.

[161] Riger, 1984.

[162] Some of the contradictions posed for feminist services are discussed by Linda Briskin who identifies as 'the strategic dilemma for feminist practice' the risk of co-optation faced by organizations who seek broader public support and who engage in a more cooperative way with the state as well as the risk of marginalization faced by organizations that 'disengage' from the state. She contends that feminist organizations must have a clear orientation to and understanding of the state that at once relates to and confronts its institutions - exposes and challenges its power to limit change while at the same time creating political space for change to occur. See Briskin, Linda. "Feminist Practice: A New Approach to Evaluating

the past ten years, women's movement services have worked in a climate that Katherine Scott refers to as "advocacy chill" that threatens to further compromise their social change work. In cobbling together survival funding through various government departments and projects, advocacy carries risks for women's movement services who, "despite the justice of the cause", are seen as 'outspoken' and therefore not attractive to government or private funders.[163]

In many ways, it is remarkable that in Nova Scotia, women's centres and women's alternative services have not only managed to survive and to maintain state funding, they have survived while continuing to maintain an oppositional stance to state policies and programs that disadvantage women. Although advocating with the state and its agencies for positive change for women has often placed them in opposition to the state, it also has helped them develop alliances with feminists working inside various bureaucracies and agencies and to develop a familiarity with elected government representatives that has proved helpful both in advocating for policy and program changes as well as in calling for secure and adequate funding. Nonetheless, their survival as independent, autonomous, community-led organizations is not assured; it is an ongoing process that necessitates balancing resistance with adaptation.

It is not only external pressures that threaten women's social movement organizations: internal pressures also challenge their ability to maintain their feminist

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Feminist Strategy" in Wine, Jeri Dawn, Janice Ristock, eds.. Women and Social Change: Feminist Activism in Canada. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1991.

[163] Scott, Katherine. Funding Matters: the Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations. Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003. Pg. xv.

integrity. This is most apparent in service organizations that face multiple pressures from funders, pressures from communities to meet sometimes overwhelming demands for services, and pressures from within to conform to an 'ideal' of feminist ideology and practice. Feminists often judge themselves, the feminism of an organization, and the feminist practice of the members of an organization by how closely they espouse or adhere to the radical feminist model developed in the 1960s-70s. As noted earlier, they have accepted, at some level, that this is the only true model and that any deviation can be challenged as less feminist, not feminist, or not feminist enough. They expect , as Riger observes, that as feminist movement organizations they must be "exemplars of feminist organizational functioning".[164] This ideology leaves feminists working in and with feminist organizations in a problematic situation. It makes it difficult to identify and name as 'feminist', current practices within their organizations that do not adhere to the 1970s radical feminist model, to create and name as feminist new practices and processes, and to present and argue for feminist practices and processes that better serve their organizations than the mainstream, bureaucratic models government would like to impose.

Charges that feminist-identified women's services are being co-opted by the state, and that they are 'professionalizing' and losing touch with "their radical roots" and transformation politics were articulated well in an article in a recent Herizons magazine (2003). The author, Amber Richelle Dean, reflects upon her experiences working at a sexual assault centre, a women's shelter and various community justice organizations that

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[164] Riger, 1984. Pg. 103.

serve women. She wonders "how a movement that began with such radical roots could possibly have developed the service-oriented, often apolitical institutions that many women's service organizations are today." As do others, she equates women's services with the women's movement and is disappointed to find that their dominant focus is providing and maintaining services for women rather than creating a social movement that would change the world. Dean states:

> I came to these organizations as a young, radical feminist seeking ways of contributing to the feminist movement and searching for a community of like-minded feminists. What I found was a service environment where politics was discouraged because of the threat they might pose to the organization's funding.[165]

Dean goes on to make a number of points that relate to the pressures the state puts on feminist services to professionalize, focus on service delivery and to move away from oppositional politics. While her points have validity and identify ongoing areas of struggle for feminist-organized women's services that are committed to working for social change as well as to providing services to women, her analysis is too simplistic. She falls into the trap of romanticizing what she sees as the "ultra-radical, grassroots" feminism of the 1970s and fails to see that feminist women's services have evolved into structures and practices that remain feminist yet are different from the collective, concensus models of the 70s. Although she acknowledges that today's shelters and sexual assault centres "probably do a better job" of providing "essential assistance to abused women than they did 20 years ago" she fails to acknowledge that through working with government on the

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[165] Dean, Amber Richelle. "Chasing Dollars Instead of Change" in Herizons, Winter 2003. Vol. 16 No.3. Pg. 47.

"inside" as well as maintaining an oppositional stance, they have influenced some improvement in the programs, policies and systems that impact women's lives.

In fact, as sites of feminist activism, feminist organized women's services remain primary political spaces for debates about the extent of state co-optation at the same time that they hold out some possibility of influencing positive change in state programs and policies.[166] In looking to find the women's movement situated within feminist women's services, Dean and others fail to see that those services are spaces for women's movement work, that they contribute to the women's movement but are not the women's movement. Further they fail to give import to the fact that most women's services are chronically underfunded for the service delivery they provide, often are facing increased demands for services and programs, and are not funded to undertake social change activities.

Feminists organizing against, around and within the state would benefit collectively from analyzing their experiences of working for social change and from situating feminist service provision within the work of the women's movement rather than outside it. Seeing the politics of feminist organizing for change as complex, often contradictory and fluid moves feminism forward in that it challenges feminist social activists and service providers to theorize their practice and to identify the ways in which their activism informs and connects their service delivery with their social change work.

Most long-standing, state-funded women's centres and women's alternative services in Nova Scotia acknowledge that the price of their longevity has been institutionalization and a degree of co-optation by the state. For example, all have adopted governance

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[166] Ng, 1990. Randall, 1998. Watson, 1990.

structures that allow them to register as Societies under the Societies Act and many have developed or modified their by-laws to allow them to acquire charitable status. However, this does not mean they have abandoned their feminist principles or praxis. Rather, as the nature and scope of their work changes, their feminist ideology has continued to influence the evolution of feminist governance structures and practices. As well, feminist ideology and praxis has informed their resistance and enabled them to respond to areas of conflict with their primary funder that have included the definition of catchment areas, government imposed funding formulas, staffing qualification requirements, standards of practice and definition of services. It has helped them to resist co-optation and to insist upon maintaining feminist practices and program approaches. The ability of women's centres and women's alternative services to articulate a feminist politics and vision is fundamental to the success of their efforts to resist pressures to change their mandates, structures, practices and/or services. From that politics and vision they can then articulate to themselves and to their communities a standard of practice that is feminist and to evolve and defend that practice as feminist to those who would criticize and oppose them.

Equally essential to their ability to resist has been their connections with and active participation in women's movement organizations working for change at various levels. Such women's movement organizations include service umbrella groups such as Connect! and THANS through which women's organizations with similar mandates develop feminist analyses, strategies for resistance and change, and present a united voice to government on issues impacting their organizations and the women who use their services. They include provincial coalitions such as FemJEPP and the Nova Scotia

Coalition of Women for Justice through which a diversity of individual feminists and women's movement organizations come together to share their analyses, build connections among the various issues the different organizations address, work on issues of common concern, and collaboratively challenge government policies and legislation from their different perspectives and experiences. Resistance is strengthened as well through local and provincial participation in global actions such as the World March of Women 2000 whereby women connect their work and social change actions with the actions of feminists around the world who are working for change at community and state levels and articulating together global visions for feminist transformative change.

Government Funding Pressures: Mandate Restrictions and Service Limitations

Clearly, since the time they first received funding from the state, government funding restrictions and inadequacies have influenced the programs and services provided by Nova Scotia women's centres and women's alternative services to greater or lesser degrees. Funding is a primary way in which the state at the provincial level has exerted pressure on women's centres and women's alternative services to restrict their mandates to service delivery, to define core services and limit their service provision, and to comply with state imposed accountability practices. Stephanie Riger makes the point that it is "the availability of resources with which to sustain the organization" that pushes women's movement services towards a "conservative direction".[167]

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[167] Riger, 1984. Pg. 108

Until 1998 transition houses in Nova Scotia were funded by the Department of Community Services together with their local municipalities using a 75/25 formula with 75% of the budget coming from the province in a quarterly grant from the Department of Community Services and the remaining 25% billed to the municipalities by the transition houses at a per diem rate for each woman and child. Because each Municipal Social Services Department had a lot of latitude in establishing their own social policy, there was a patchwork of social policy and of municipal social assistance rates across the province. This resulted in each transition house having different restrictions imposed by the various municipalities within their catchment areas. In some areas, municipalities would cover the per diem only for women who could demonstrate physical abuse. Some recognized only legally married women. Some insisted on interviewing the women seeking services to ascertain for themselves whether they were 'truly' abused. One key informant described the problem this way:

> So when a woman came to us we had to report her. We would call Social Services, give her name, her age, her circumstances. We had to fill out one of those big - I don't know if you remember those awful green forms, great big long, it was an application for Municipal Social Assistance, even though they weren't applying for Social Assistance at the time. This is the way it was seen because [the transition house] was then being paid on the per diem basis. They would then send out one of their caseworkers to interview the woman to ascertain for themselves whether she was indeed truly abused. And more often than not they would deny her. I could not believe this.[168]

Transition houses that refused to deny services to women and provided services to women who were not covered by the municipal per diem were left, at times, without full funding.

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[168] Alternative women's service interview #3.

One key informant pointed out the dilemma transition houses faced when they refused to deny services to women:

> So that was a bit of a problem in terms of funding because first of all we never called the municipality without her [the woman seeking services] permission and sometimes she didn't want us to, so we wouldn't. And that would lead us into a deficit for the year. Other times she would give us permission and sometimes the worker wouldn't deem her appropriate and so, again, we'd have a deficit because we wouldn't turn women away because of the municipalities.[169]

Providing services to women who were not covered by the municipal per diem not only left those transition houses without full funding, it impacted the rate of funding set for each house by the province in 1998 when, after years of lobbying by the transition houses, the Department of Community Services took responsibility for the municipal portion as well as the provincial portion of the funding, basing the amount on the revenue from all sources that a particular house had received in the previous year.

Women's centres dependent upon short term project grants to sustain their organizations in their early years of operation experienced considerable pressures both to work on specific, fundable issues and to do that work in ways that met the mandate of the funding agency. Women's centres were not readily granted provincial, operational funding. Since 1990 they have been engaged in a time-consuming, ongoing struggle to establish secure, adequate provincial funding. Although they were granted a small amount of operational funding in 1994 and have received an annual discretionary grant for service delivery since then, it has not alleviated the necessity of pursuing project funding. Project funding enables women's centres to undertake research and social advocacy

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[169] Alternative women's service interview #2.

initiatives and to provide specific programs (workplace re-entry programs, youth-oriented programs, etc.) for women in their communities that they cannot provide with operational funding. Project funding builds the capacity of women's centres to do social advocacy work and supports their maintenance of a dual service delivery and social change mandate. Project funding is used to supplement operational funding and to support service delivery. The lack of adequate core/operational funding has meant that, in most women's centres, project workers are required to help meet the demands of the core funded service delivery mandate by doing direct service work that is not part of their project. However, securing project funding adds to the workload of women's centres in that directors are required to take on more proposal writing and project related administrative responsibilities and, at times, projects need to be supplemented with scarce operational monies that must be taken from service delivery. Further, women's centres' reliance on project funding leaves them vulnerable to what Katherine Scott describes as (1) 'volatility' wherein swings in revenue undermines their stability and capacity to provide consistent programs and services and to retain experienced staff; (2) 'mission drift' whereby organizations are pulled away from their primary mission which is their long-term purpose and source of credibility in the community; (3) 'loss of infrastructure' due to project restrictions on administrative costs; (4) 'reporting overload' due to the requirements to produce multiple reports for multiple project funders; (5) 'house of cards' problem where when organizations are required to establish multiple funding partners, if one contract is lost, the whole inter-locking structure can collapse; (6) 'advocacy chill' whereby 'outspoken' organizations may be less desirable to funding

partners; and (7) 'human resource fatigue' where people involved with the organization stretch themselves to the limit to maintain their core services and programs while taking on new projects.[170]

Although provincial operational funding for service delivery has always been and remains inadequate, it has provided women's centres with a stability that has allowed them to increase in number across the province. As well, it has changed their public profile and created heightened expectations from community professionals and service providers as well as from individual women that they will be able to provide a broad range of programs and supports. Since provincial funding for service delivery has been provided, the numbers of women coming to women's centres for support has increased dramatically as has the complexity of the issues for which they are seeking support.[171] In part, this has been a result of government reductions in funding to other more expensive health, mental health, and legal services and the consequent reductions in services by those agencies and institutions. The refusal of the provincial government to adequately fund women's centres has left them in the untenable position of trying to respond to increasing numbers of women looking for services without the resources to do so. The lack of adequate, provincial core funding has been a primary way in which women's centres have felt pressure to de-politicize. Chronic underfunding has forced women's centres to commit much staff time to securing funding, to presenting their case that they

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[170] Scott, Katherine. Funding Matters: the Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations. Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003. Pg. xiv-xv.

[171] The Coalition of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, the Association of Men's Intervention Programs, and Women's Centres Connect! Enhancing and Strengthening Women's Services in Nova Scotia - the Coalition Response, May 2003

are key services providers in their communities, and to documenting in detail the services and programs they provide and the numbers of women using those services. Thus at the same time that provincial funding has enabled them to expand, its inadequacy has made it difficult to sustain programs and to hold on to experienced staff.[172] It has increased pressure on the directors to find other sources of funding and to continue allotting considerable time and resources to lobbying the province for adequate funding. Further, provincial core funding has pressured women's centres to re-frame their mandates and programs to suit the service provision criteria of the funding body and, in doing so, to de-emphasize to the funder, the community and to themselves their role as women's movement social change organizations.

When asked to identify the primary challenges facing their organizations, each woman I interviewed talked about their lack of adequate financial resources to meet the demand for services from women in their communities, the lack of recognition on the part of the funders for the importance of the services they provide and the value of their work, the tension between service delivery mandates and social action and social advocacy agendas (including the lack of agreement within organizations about the importance of social advocacy and how much time and resources should be devoted to it, and the linkages between social advocacy and focussed service delivery). As one key informant observed:

> So you've got more and more people out there in need of service and less and less services available for them and it is very difficult when you've got

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[172] The response of the Department of Community Services to women's centres looking for funding to maintain crisis support staff has been to advise women's centres to reduce the services they offer to women and to cut staff.

> somebody on the other end of the line and we're saying but there is no place for me to send you. And I don't think we are the only ones that are experiencing that. I think there a lot of agencies that experiencing more and more people in crises and less and less resources and services out there to support them.[173]

Another noted:

> I think the biggest challenge is the conflict between jumping through the hoops that [women's services] need to jump through to get funding and then the conflict between that and what they would actually do if they didn't have to do that. If we could set our own agenda and we could actually do things that create change for women, then I think that is the biggest challenge having to balance that. It's almost real conflict of interest and how do you do that?[174]

Reliance on state funding presents complications and contradictions for women's centres and women's alternative services, and, indeed, for all women's movement organizations. Beyond pressures to comply with state imposed practices and accountability structures, government funding makes it more likely that women's movement organizations will choose to work on government sanctioned, government funded issues than on others. In this way, the state not only legitimizes some issues while de-legitimizing others but steers the work of women's movement organizations towards government priorities. In the process of funding feminist work on some issues while ignoring others, the state takes a role in actively constructing the issues as well as the response of women's movement social activists.[175] Further, government funding provides the state with leverage to decide which organizations will be working on which issues, in what manner and for what period of time. Choosing to oppose government policies and

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[173] Women's alternative service interview # 1.

[174] Women's centre interview # 5.

[175] Watson, 1990, pg.8.

to work on issues that are not sanctioned by government carries some degree of risk for organizations that rely on government funding to support their services.[176]

However, having said this, it is important to note that it is the organizational stability that core funding provides to women's centres and women's alternative services that enables them to oppose government policies, to resist pressures to de-politicize, and to engage more fully in social change work through their service umbrella groups and collaboratively with sister women's movement organizations through coalition efforts. In fact, the very funding that limits women's organizations ability to speak out individually has strengthened their ability to work collaboratively and strategically with like-minded groups and individuals across the province and to develop a multi-centred, strengthened resistance and critical voice.

The challenge for women's movement services is "to strike a balance between survival needs and the mission of the organization."[177] The balance women's centres and women's alternative services must maintain as they present their plans for the delivery of their services to the Department of Community Services and prepare to negotiate contracts for the delivery of their services is that of accepting state funding and its parameters and limitations while, at the same time, maintaining their feminist praxis, autonomy and, at times, oppositional stances. Working cooperatively and collaboratively

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[176] The refusal of the federal government to continue to provide core funding or to provide sustained and timely project funding to NAC and the subsequent decline of NAC provides a clear example of the risks women's organizations face when opposing the state. Although NAC's decline was due to more factors than simply the loss of state funding, the loss did have a huge impact on NAC's ability to maintain a pan-Canadian presence and infrastructure. As the ability of organizations such as NAC to shape public priorities with respect to women's issues diminished, other governments as well became increasingly less willing to listen to or to engage with women's movement organizations on issues of concern to women.

[177] Riger, 1984. Pg. 115.

with sister women's movement organizations to call for a full range of state funded alternative services for women will be critical to their success.

'Creeping Credentialism' and Service Territorialism

Women's alternative services and women's centres established in the Nova Scotia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, adopted feminist empowerment models of service delivery that recognized all women were vulnerable to poverty, abuse, and other forms of oppression and marginalization, that women were the experts on their own lives, and that, provided with full and accurate information and support, women would make their own best decisions about how to move forward in any given situation. For the most part, women's centres and women's alternative services hired staff for their knowledge, understanding and analysis of women's issues. Often their knowledge and skills were acquired through lived experience. Salaries were low and women seeking positions were apt to be doing so because they wanted to support women and were aligned with the cause of addressing women's inequality. While 'professional' credentials may have been considered an asset, they were not the primary credential sought or considered when hiring staff. In fact, women's centres, carrying out research and social change project work often were looking for women with social advocacy and community development skills and experience rather than women with specific counselling skills.

With longevity, women's alternative services and women's centres began to look for ways to increase the wages of their staff. In 1992, in response to pressure from the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) to increase funding for transition

houses, the Department of Community Services suggested using their civil service classification system to set salary scales for transition house workers.[178] The transition houses developed and submitted job descriptions which the department revised to fall in line with those of government employees and to which they added minimum qualifications. The qualifications included an undergraduate degree for the front line workers and an M.S.W. qualification for the Executive Directors. When THANS objected strenuously to the requirement of degrees and argued the validity and necessity of experience, the minimum qualifications were changed to an undergraduate degree and/or equivalent experience for front line workers and a M.S.W. or equivalent experience for the Executive Directors. There was an understanding that all of the workers that were working within transition house organizations at that point in time would be considered as having the necessary requirements.

At the end of the salary scaling process, some THANS member organizations felt that the Department of Community Services had rated transition house workers inaccurately and left them with unfairly low wages in comparison to others rated on the civil service scale in jobs with comparable responsibilities. One woman I interviewed felt that conceding to job descriptions and minimum qualifications for transition house staff

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[178] Not all THANS member organizations agreed with lobbying for improved salaries for transition house workers, arguing that most of the women accessing their transition houses were living in poverty and that increased salaries for workers would create too much of an income discrepancy between the lives of the workers and the women using their services. This was not an uncommon discussion in women's services where women felt it was important to eliminate power differences. Some women's centres tried to address wage discrepancies among staff by establishing equal salary scales for all staff in their organizations regardless of position or length of employment. Others had separate salary scales where they paid staff as much as a particular grant budget would allow which meant staff had varied salaries not necessarily dependent upon how long they had been working for the organization or their knowledge and skill level. In some women's centres, this created situations where Directors who had worked in their women's centres for a number of years were paid at a lower rate than the short-term project staff they were supervising.

as set out by the Department of Community Services compromised the feminist practices of transition houses and further reduced their autonomy and independence. However, she felt that asking women to continue to work for low wages was even more unacceptable. She felt caught between holding onto what she saw as feminist principles, what she saw as fair employer practices, and the demands of the funder to meet a state-defined service criteria. For her it was "our big trade-off to get more money."[179] As do many women, she felt she was not a radical (uncompromising) feminist because she had conceded. She explains her personal struggle with her feminist principles this way:

> A. And that's why I'd have to say that I don't feel like I'm a radical. I've compromised to get more stuff.
> B: So compromising means not being radical?
> A: I guess so, in my mind, or else I would have told them to just shove it [government imposed staff qualifications]. ... but I just felt like I couldn't do that - I couldn't ask people to work at those terrible wages. I was pretty sick of it myself. So I guess in my mind compromise does - and that's why I don't think of myself as radical because I have compromised for the sake of getting more from them. ... I guess it bothers me that I've done that.[180]

Although transition house workers secured a substantial salary increase, the process began what one person referred to as "the thin edge of creeping credentialism."[181] 'Creeping credentialism' is one method of service territorialism practiced by bureaucracies and agencies on behalf of the state. As the state takes jurisdiction over an issue, it creates a larger role for itself in defining and addressing it, and its bureaucracies and agencies develop a proprietary approach to it that includes a sense of ownership of the

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[179] Alternative women's service interview # 2.

[180] Alternative women's service interview # 2.

[181] Alternative women's service interview # 3.

services they fund to address it. Service territorialism, in some cases, has exerted pressures on community-led, women's alternative services to conform to government-defined service models. In others, it has led to the elimination of funding for the delivery of services through community-led organizations and to their replacement with government-delivered services.[182]

The territorialism and proprietary claims that government extends to issues and the services they fund to address them has led to an increased level of involvement with and subsequent interference in the operations of women's alternative services. The move to bring THANS member organizations in line with government agencies by requiring staff to hold professional credentials provided one example of service territorialism and 'creeping credentialism'. Two other examples of governmental attempts to limit, define and professionalize women's alternative services are (1) the imposition of service contracts and (2) the Family Violence System Redesign Model.

In 2000, the Nova Scotia government began to undertake a process for developing service contracts with state funded, community-led services beginning with those funded at more than $150,000 per year. The proposed service contract required adherence to what is essentially a bureaucratic model of service. In the contract, the government reserved the right for the Minister to have "full access to all records" including the right to

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[182] For instance, the Nova Scotia Department of Justice provides an example of a senior bureaucracy that expresses the paternalistic view that they can address sufficiently the issues stemming from violence against women. They claim they have trained, professional staff, victim services and programs, and the ability to put forward legislation and policies that adequately address women's safety. Not only do they see their programs as reducing the need for transition houses and women's advocacy organizations, they have acted by eliminating funding for transition house-based advocacy programs for women experiencing violence at the hands of intimate partners, and attached woman abuse advocacy programs to their police-based victims' services programs.

review "client files".[183] The contract outlined requirements for hiring 'qualified' staff and compensating them accordingly, for complying with provincial standards for occupational health and safety, for staff training, for accountability procedures, and so on. However, at the same time that the government clearly laid out contract requirements, they made it difficult, if not impossible, for organizations to comply with such requirements as ensuring staff have appropriate 'professional' credentials by refusing to provide services with adequate funding to cover 'professional' salaries. In fact, without an increase in funding, the terms of the contract compromise the ability of organizations to continue to provide services at their current level. The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre provides an example of the bind in which women's alternative services and women's centres find themselves. Avalon has not had a funding increase since 1991 and is not able to pay market salaries to staff, most of whom have masters level degrees. The Department of Community Services has refused to classify staff positions and support staff salaries according to civil service scales and Avalon is concerned, that should staff leave, they will not be able to hire new staff with equivalent skills and qualifications at the same salary level. In fact, in the past five years Avalon has had nine staff members leave for higher paying jobs.[184] As a key informant for Avalon noted:

> I have had women who have said, "I cannot afford to work here" and they've had to leave because they literally could not afford to work here - good women, good people that wanted to do this work, did not want to leave this organization, that have said this is a great place to work. "I love the work. I love the commitment to trying

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[183] Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. 'Service Agreement Contract'. 2nd draft. April 2002.

[184] Avalon Sexual Assault Centre. Is This What the Conservative Government Means by "Nova Scotia: Let's Keep Growing?". Facts and statistics sheet. April 2003.

to make social change, but I can't afford to work here. I want to be part of this but I can't afford to be."[185]

Again, in the April 2002 Family Violence Programming Redesign Plan, the Department of Community Services not only claimed the right to significantly re-define services, they once more stipulated that "professional degrees are required for the delivery of counselling services for women and children."[186] This stipulation shows a lack of understanding of and support for the feminist approaches, practices and services provided by women's centres and most transition house organizations where counselling means providing problem-solving, crisis and ongoing support to women rather than psychotherapy.[187] Further, the department has refused to consider requests to increase salaries to allow women's centres and transition house organizations to compensate staff at market salary rates or to enable women's centres, in some cases, even to maintain their existing levels of crisis support staff.[188]

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[185] Avalon Sexual Assault Centre interview, July 2002.

[186] Department of Community Services, The Model: Family Violence System Redesign (Draft), March 2002, pg. 5.

[187] Over the years, the counselling services provided by most women's centres and transition house organizations have evolved from a 'peer counselling' model to a 'support counselling' model. Both use a feminist, empowerment approach. The descriptor 'peer' has been dropped because it does not reflect necessarily either the relationship between the staff person and the woman using the service, nor does it allow for the acquired skills and knowledge of the counsellor. The term 'support' as a descriptor does not assume 'peer' status and it allows for the acknowledgement of differences in age, culture, ethnicity, class, lived experiences, role and so on. 'Support' counselling language resists both structuring a power imbalance into the relationship between the staff person and the person coming for support and it resists professionalizing and setting apart as 'other' the counsellor/staff person. It recognizes that at a particular time in her life, a woman needs information and support. It also recognizes her agency, competency and autonomy to make decisions about how she wants to proceed to address a given situation.

[188] At the time of writing this thesis, transition houses workers at Autumn House are on strike. The board of directors is saying they are in a deficit position and they do not have enough funding to maintain previously negotiated staff benefit packages. To date the Department of Community Services has refused to address their funding shortfall. (CBC Radio News broadcast, August 11, 2003)

Service territorialism exerted through the professionalization of services has been happening at a time when social workers with formal social work degrees have been resisting the grandparenting in, and accrediting as Registered Social Workers, of women who were running transition house organizations.[189] Currently, there is some discussion, contention and resistance within the membership of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers as to whether the credentials of registered social workers without BSWs can be considered equivalent to those with BSWs. Moreover, this insistence on professional credentials by the Department of Community Services, in many ways, runs counter to what is happening in other departments and areas of government. For example, it is happening at a time when health services are being de-professionalized under the guise of health reform and handed down to the community and to volunteers to deliver. As one key informant observed:

> It's this professionalization of service and it's really interesting when you think about constructs working in healthcare systems in which top quality professional services can be de-professionalized. And, there are a lot of services that if they can't be fully de-professionalized they can be racheted down. It doesn't have to be Masters of Nursing or an MD or whoever who can do this. It can be somebody at a different level in the system. Think about that as the language that is driving a whole bunch of the language around health reform. And then what you're seeing in these community services is you're seeing, if anything, a professionalization or a re-professionalization or re-bureaucratization of them. And it seems to me it's paradoxical.[190]

Notwithstanding the pressure from provincial funders to hire staff with working experience and recognized academic credentials, the increased demand for services experienced by women's centres and women's alternative services along with the

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[189] Former senior government staff member interview.

[190] Former senior government staff member interview.

expansion of their services into areas that require specific skills has created internal pressure as well to hire qualified staff that require minimal on the job training. One key informant noted:

> There is very little learning curve time right now at least in our women's centre. Women need to have solid skills and a solid knowledge base going into the Centre. They have to be able to do the work and they have to know what they are doing. Further, they have to work from feminist principles, philosophy and ethics. At the busier women's centres when they are hiring a crisis support worker, they are looking for someone with experience and qualifications. That doesn't necessarily mean they have to have a degree or certificate. It can be that they have gained that experience through working in another organization but they would be in competition with someone who has a related university degree and/or a community college community services worker certificate.[191]

In some instances community board members have insisted their organizations hire staff with credentials they believe will bring legitimacy to a program. This was the situation with one women's centre where some members of the board insisted upon hiring a registered nurse to deliver their Planned Parenthood program.[192]

Although women's centres and women's alternative services have consistently resisted pressures from provincial funders to set staffing credentials and qualifications, they are hiring, nonetheless, staff with more training and experience than they have in the past. While this could be interpreted as accommodating the demands of funders or as moving away from a feminist principle that recognizes the value of women's lived experience, a more accurate interpretation is that women's services are ensuring they are able to provide a level of service that is feminist, that values women's learning (from

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[191] Women's Centre interview #2.

[192] Women's centre interview # 4.

experience and from study), that meets the needs of women using those services, and that does not put either in a compromised situation.

State Imposed Definitions of Services and Standards of Practice

Unless women's centres and women's alternative services are able to identify the multiple ways in which pressures to conform to a state approved, service limited mandate are applied and unless they are able to articulate and consciously assert a feminist vision and practice, they will find it increasingly difficult to resist those pressures. Women's centres and women's alternative services have experienced pressures from the province to provide services that meet a state defined agenda and approved standard of practice somewhat differently. Transition house organizations have experienced these pressures as a call for increased accountability while women's centres have experienced them as pressures to prove their legitimacy as service providers.[193] Through the exertion of these pressures the government has had some success in containing the social advocacy work of women's services, defining their services and influencing their standards of practice. They have diverted the work of services by imposing bureaucratic mandated systems of record-keeping and report writing as well as through committee work and meetings with

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[193] Transition house organizations already have been accorded legitimacy by the government. However, as the state increasingly claims 'family violence' as their issue, government staff charged with responsibility for transition house organizations have imposed bureaucratic standards of practice and service delivery on transition house organizations and expected transition house organizations to comply with those standards and to demonstrate their accountability accordingly. Women's centres, on the other hand, have not been accorded legitimacy as services and their challenge has been to prove to government funders that the services they provide are valid and meet the mandate of the funding department. In part, because most women's centres were established with federal project monies, the provincial government has resisted seeing them as their responsibility even though the services provided by women's centres clearly fall under provincial jurisdiction.

government. They have imposed service definitions that have contributed to the sense of separation, tension, and turf protection that has existed between and among transition house organizations and women's centres.

Since the early 1980s when the Department of Community Services began providing them with operational funding, transition houses have had a long and generally productive working relationship with the Department. However, over that time there have been periods of disagreement with respect to practices and procedures that have left transition houses with the sense that "[the Department] would control what we do, how we do it and for whom."[194] One way the Department exerted their control was by imposing a standardized statistics collection process. Using the rationale they wanted it to be compatible with the government's computer system, they asked transition house organizations to use a clinical model that counted new, open and closed files, that identified the different types of abuse a woman experienced, indicated the number of women who had gone through the court system and provided some demographics for the women and children using the services. As one informant stated:

> They have the different types of abuse broken down into ridiculous ways like you've got a list of about, I'll say 20 different behaviours. You have slapping/grabbing - that would be one. So how many women were victims of slaps. Slapping/grabbing, punching/ kicking, punching/hitting, yelling and shouting - they're 2 different ones. I swear what's the difference between a yell and a shout? Instead of saying physical abuse you could even rank that in terms of levels - was it on the low end of physical abuse or the high end which would be severe assault resulting in broken bones and lacerations etc. That could be done very easily. And emotional abuse and again ranking threats and

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[194] Alternative women's service interview #3.

> stuff. But no, they've got it all broken down and I don't think anybody ever looks at this stuff in any kind of an informed perspective.[195]

The requirement to identify the client base of transition house organizations by designating and counting files as open or closed has been contested within THANS and, through THANS, with the department. One woman I interviewed noted the importance of keeping women's files accessible to them when she said:

> Again this all comes down to this bureaucratic approach to the work that we do. My position is that there is never a closed file where abused women are concerned. ... Women who used our services even back in 85 or 86 will still come back and need to access their files if they're going through yet another custody matter or maybe something has happened with their grown children.[196]

THANS member organizations did not feel that the system proposed by the Department captured the breadth of the work of the transition house organizations. They wanted to use a system that would do more than just capture a narrow 'head on the bed count' and describe and delineate incidences of abuse. The system proposed by the Department did not count and, therefore, did not legitimate, the hours spent on crisis calls, public education and prevention work or on social advocacy. The Department of Community Services's definition of service reflected a narrow intervention approach that in its emphasis on counting individual clients and incidences of abuse runs counter to the integrated intervention and prevention practice and philosophy of the transition house organizations.[197]

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[195] Alternative women's service interview #3.

[196] Alternative women's service interview #3.

[197] According to agreement #6 in the 2nd draft of the service agreements that the Department of Community Services proposes for women's movement services, and that will be negotiated with women's centres and transition houses organizations once the family violence services planning process is completed,

The transition house organizations also held a different perspective from the Department of Community Services on the ownership of women's personal files. In line with their feminist philosophy, the transition house organizations maintained that the women who use their services own their files, and the transition house is merely the keeper of those files.[198] The Department of Community Services, however, maintained the files belong to the transition house organizations – a position which gave cause for concern among some THANS members that the department may extend the ownership of women's files to the Department of Community Services itself.[199] The department viewed the women who used transition house services through a social work model lens that defines them as clients and their records as service delivery outputs; the transition house organizations viewed the women as autonomous individuals to whom they provided support, and their records as the private property of the women.

As community-led organizations with independent boards of directors, transition houses developed individual house standards for service delivery. In the early and mid 1980s when a number of the transition houses were established, operational guidelines provided by the Department of Community Services were minimal and dealt only with

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services will be required to provided "all statistical information as required by the Department of Community Services ... in the specific format required by the Department of Community Services." See Department of Community Services Service Contract, 2nd draft, April 2002.

[198] There has been much debate within women's movement services about whether and how to keep case files. This debate intensified when courts began requesting that sexual assault centres and transition houses provide client files for criminal defence purposes. While some services chose to protect women by not keeping individual case files at all, others responded by keeping minimal files containing factual information only.

[199] Alternative women's service interview # 3.

basic operational concerns such as annual fire inspections.[200] Since that time, however, a detailed standards manual for transition house operations and service delivery has been developed and is adhered to by all THANS members. The standards manual was an initiative of the executive directors of four transition houses who wanted to ensure transition house organizations were providing uniform services to women across the province. It made sense to them to involve senior staff from the Department of Community Services and three THANS member executive directors worked with two staff from the Department of Community Services to develop it. Although the idea of developing a standards manual came from transition house organizations and the process was initiated by them, the department wanted substantial input and became intensively involved in the standards development process. Throughout the process the department contested language and terminology, the forms to be used by transition house organizations, the type of intake interviews to be done with women, the information to be kept in a woman's file, and so on. However, for the most part, THANS members, by developing and maintaining unified positions with respect to their standards of practice, were able to retain control over the process and to institute standards that reflected their practices. The Standards Manual eventually was approved and signed off by the Department in May 2002.[201]

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[200] Alternative women's service interview # 2.

[201] The ability of THANS to maintain primary control of their standards development process speaks to the strength of the members as well as their commitment to maintaining a feminist approach. In a recent conversation, a member of the Association of Men's Intervention Programs noted that the Department of Community Services initiated, led, and considerably influenced the standards of practice developed for the men's intervention programs.

The development of the Standards Manual not only defined transition house services and standards of practice, it further legitimated to the Department of Community Services, and in turn to government, the services provided and the service model used, and it designated THANS members as service providers for women and children experiencing 'family violence'. However this legitimacy did not ensure the security of their services as demonstrated by the proposed elimination of some transition houses in the Family Violence System Redesign Model. Interestingly, although the department was willing to disband some of the services that created the THANS standards manual, they wanted to appropriate the standards for the delivery of the redesigned transition house services.[202] Notwithstanding the fact that the standards were developed in large part by THANS member organizations, they were claimed by government as standards for service delivery. Under the proposed redesign model, the Department of Community Services planned to reconfigure transition house services and to re-establish them as government defined services adhering to government standards for service delivery modelled on the THANS Standards Manual.

With hindsight women's centres and women's alternative services realized that the government's intention to take control over and to rationalize women's services was foretold with their interference in and move to control and redirect the strategic planning process initiated by THANS member services in the Northern Region. After the Progressive Conservative government was elected in 1999, the Executive Director of a transition house in the Northern Region, felt that because the Northern Region had more

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[202] Department of Community Services, March 2002, pg. 2.

THANS member organizations than other regions in the province and because some of the houses had a low occupancy rate, they were vulnerable to service cuts. She felt that a strategic plan would strengthen the ability of the Northern Region THANS members to defend and justify their services. Upon learning about the strategic planning effort through their quarterly reports, the Director of Community Outreach for the Department of Community Services became interested in the process. Subsequently, the department offered to fund a facilitator for the planning process and the Regional Administrator for the Northern Region, as well as the Director of Community Outreach began attending the planning sessions. As the process unfolded, and department staff indicated they wanted the transition house organizations to have a mandate to provide services to 'all' women - a mandate that would encompass both transition house and women's centre services, one transition house in particular became alarmed that the Department was visioning a single service for women. When the THANS members subsequently disagreed with the proposed mandate for their services and refused to participate further in the planning process, department staff were clearly upset with them and indicated they were jeopardizing their services.[203]

What was not clear to women's centres and transition house organizations at the time was the extent of the government's plan to redefine services provided by women's centres and transition house organizations. Their intention to amalgamate or co-locate transition house organizations and women's centres continued with the introduction of the Family Violence System Redesign Model. The underlying message put forward by the

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[203] Alternative women's service interview #2.

Department of Community Services to convince the public of the legitimacy of the cuts and the necessity to redesign services, was that there was duplication of services among transition house organizations and between transition house organizations and women's centres, and that services were being provided by staff without appropriate training.

The redesign proposal, however, was not a part of a comprehensive strategic plan for women's services and not all senior staff in the Department of Community Services supported the proposal. As noted by a former senior government staff member, it was an attempt on the part of the government to "put a vision around something that was a political decision made for a political reason," that is, it was a decision made at the Cabinet level rather than a decision that came out of a strategic plan.[204] Nonetheless, in spite of the objections of some departmental staff and their offers to find monies within their budgets to maintain the full complement of transition houses, they were told to proceed with the cuts. As a former senior government staff person noted:

> The Department was given its marching orders I think just before Christmas [2001] on this issue [to reduce the number of transition houses in the province]. There was very strong representation from the Department. One of the Regional Administrators offered to find the money right out of its own region and put it back into the Department because he felt it was such a terrible thing to happen. The Deputy offered to find the money. One of the divisions offered to find the money and they were all told, "No. This is the process that we use. We are going to deal with duplication."[205]

Some transition houses interpreted the April 2002 provincial budget cuts to their services as a "massive attack" on their services that was not about government cost-saving but rather was a response to some of the social advocacy initiatives of transition houses

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[204] Former senior government staff member interview.

[205] Former senior government staff member interview.

that were critical of the Departments of Justice and Community Services. They felt that the voices of feminist, community-led women's organizations raising issues and challenging public policies that negatively affect women, were not welcomed by bureaucrats or politicians at government tables. Criticism of government responses to and lack of action on violence against women was brought to the attention of the public in 1995 with the publication of three reports. The Nova Scotia Family Violence Tracking Project,[206] the Law Reform Commission Report,[207] the Intimate Partner Homicide Report[208] all indicted the government. Many of the transition house organizations had participated in the studies, voiced concerns, supported the recommendations, and had

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[206] The Nova Scotia Family Violence Tracking Project was a broad study of family violence. It tracked 1,157 cases of family violence in Nova Scotia during a six-month period, described the progress of the cases through the criminal justice system, and made recommendations for changes in the criminal justice system. Key recommendations included a call for the justice system to make the safety and protection of women a first priority, for police to lay charges where evidence warrants, and for a training program on family violence for criminal justice system personnel. See Marshall, Carolyn. The Response of the Justice System to Family Violence in Nova Scotia: A report of the Nova Scotia Family Violence Tracking Project. February 1995.

[207] The Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia report examines ways in which the law and legal system in Nova Scotia could be reformed to be more effective in combatting and responding to family violence. The Law Commission concluded that while some legislative changes were required, the central problem was a failure on the part of those in the criminal justice system to enforce existing laws. The Commission recommended that the Nova Scotia government identify the eradication of violence as a priority issue, that the law, in addition to protecting women, make clear that family violence is socially unacceptable, and that accountability measures be put in place for individuals implementing protocols for handling family violence cases. See Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia. Final Report – From Rhetoric to Reality: Ending Domestic Violence in Nova Scotia. February 1995.

[208] The *A Case Study of Intimate Partner Homicides in Nova Scotia* report studied seventeen cases of intimate partner homicide that occurred in a five year period. The study identified factors influencing the dynamics that led to intimate partner homicides and made recommendations for improved government and community responses to family violence. The report made recommendations for crisis intervention, long term support, and prevention. The recommendations were extensive and addressed both policy development and procedures and practices within agencies. As do the reports from the Nova Scotia Family Violence Tracking Project and the Law Reform Commission, the Intimate Partner Homicides report recognizes that family violence is a gendered crime and that providing for women's safety is paramount. See Mahon, Peggy. Changing Perspectives: A Case Study of Intimate Partner Homicides in Nova Scotia. February 1995.

been vocal in meetings with the Departments of Justice and Community Services in pushing for recommendations coming from the reports to go forward. One key informant provided the following perspective:

> I guess what I'm trying to say is that we never really had our wrists slapped very badly or very publicly although I always had the sense that it was going to happen as soon as there was an opportunity. And I do believe with my entire heart and soul and being that's what the [April 2002 provincial] budget was about. That it's not about the money but it's about control. ... So if [the issues are] not going to go away at least make those big mouth women go away and we'll control this. ... I don't believe it's about government wanting to do the right thing. I believe that it's about government wanting to control and to silence feminists, push them away, to drive them away and to de-politicize what is a very political movement - to make it about service delivery rather than about a social movement.[209]

Transition house organizations saw the redesign proposal as an attempt on the part of government to both curtail and define the activities of their organizations. This analysis was supported by a former senior level bureaucrat. As government took increasing control of the issue of 'family violence', there was increasing support within government for the charge that there was duplication between government and community organizations providing services. With the introduction of the redesign document, government clearly identified that they saw themselves rather than the community as the

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[209] Alternative women's service interview #3.

provider of services and, as such, they would determine the services to be provided.[210] One key informant noted:

> [What] I see as a major threat that runs through that reform document quote unquote of a couple of months ago like a toxic river is that the transition houses have gone way beyond their mandate and we'll use this report to get them back to their mandate. ... They [the government] moved a huge, huge way - 180 degrees back from the community as first provider.[211]

Although prior to the introduction of the Family Violence System Redesign Model, women's alternative services and women's centres had had a number of experiences with attempts on the part of government to impose an agenda and to limit their mandates, it was the introduction of service contract agreements that first made the government agenda indisputably clear. Some transition houses viewed the service agreements as an indicator of the state's absolute determination to control them, to systematize their delivery of services, and to bring them in line with government services.[212] The women's centres agreed that the move to contracting for services would mean that the government would fund only selected programs and services rather than their full mandate and would

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[210] As noted earlier, while the government is moving to regionalize and de-professionalize many services in health and other sectors as shown with the move towards legislating Community Health Boards and downloading to citizens as well as to community volunteer-based organizations responsibilities for homecare and other services, they are exerting increased control over and professionalizing women's alternative services. This is demonstrated as well by the Department of Community Services where the Employment Support and Income Assistance side of the Department is looking for ways to include the voices of women's advocates and women with lived experience in improving public policy through their Social Inclusion Initiative (2003), while the Family and Children's Services side of the Department has been cutting and planning to eliminate services for women offered through women's centres and transition house organizations.

[211] Former senior government staff member interview, August 2002.

[212] Alternative women's service interview # 3.

exclude their social change work. This was made particularly clear by a key informant who said:

> Certainly how much more political we can be as we become more institutional and how much are we just going to be delivering something that the government thinks is necessary for their agenda. Their agenda is not about social change. ... I think probably the writing is on the wall that they will define our core services as four or five different things and start to limit what we can do.[213]

Although all women's centres and women's alternative services were facing pressures to re-define their services to fit a government service model and delivery agenda, women's centres experience was somewhat different. As discussed earlier, most women's centres came out of initiatives of women who were involved with women's movement activism and women's movement organizations and were developed with strong social advocacy mandates. Although, when arguing for provincial funding, women's centres emphasized their service delivery and de-emphasized their equality work, they were never embraced by the province as legitimate, necessary services in the way that transition houses and other women's alternative services were. The multi-issue mandate of women's centres was not well understood and the services they provided were viewed as 'soft.' Further, the provincial government saw their equality/social advocacy work as political and as presenting some threat to the government of the day. In their attempt to secure provincial funding for the services they delivered, women's centres, through their provincial organization, Connect!, responded to the government's lack of

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[213] Women's centre interview # 3.

regard for their services by developing a common profile that would be acceptable to and, therefore, fundable by the Department of Community Services.

As part of their development process, and in an effort to protect the feminist philosophy, principles and practices of women's centres, Connect! developed a common philosophy and set of principles to which all members of Connect! are required to comply. To ensure that non-feminist organizations could not claim they are women's centres and, thereby, claim eligibility for provincial operational funding as women's centres, Connect! developed an understanding with the Department of Community Services that the department will fund only women's centres that are members of Connect!. Although women's centres fiercely maintain their right to autonomy, in their efforts to secure adequate provincial funding, they have put pressure on each other to adopt some common standards of practice, to define common core services, and to develop a standardized system for keeping statistics.[214] As well, they have adopted language that they felt would make their services more acceptable to the department. For example, social advocacy was not identified as a core service. It is understood by women's centres to be an activity that can fall under core services such as community development and public education or can be identified as a project funded activity.

The ongoing struggle to secure adequate operational funding has left women's centres feeling vulnerable to Department of Community Services' demands. At least two women's centres in the province had to close their doors because of lack of funding, and a

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[214] A methodology for statistics has remained an unresolved contentious issue for Connect! and speaks to the different ways that the centres provide services and prioritize their work.

number of women's centres currently are critically underfunded and struggling to provide the level of service needed by their communities. As one women's centre reflected, provincial operational funding "simply allows you to exist."[215] At the same time that their lack of adequate funding creates a sense of vulnerability in some women's centres, because the department has never embraced the concept of women's centres as services, their resulting lack of status with the department has freed them from some of the intense scrutiny applied to transition houses and has allowed them to maintain considerable autonomy in defining their services and standards of practice. Thus, each centre has developed its own survival strategy. Some offer minimal programming and concentrate on providing services to individual women. Others involve women as volunteers in helping to run their centre, even though they recognize that it puts a lot of responsibility on volunteers, raises questions about the ethics of not paying women for their labour, and increases their liability.[216] Others apply for projects and do considerable fundraising to support their core operations.

Currently, each women's centre receives the same level of operational funding regardless of their level of service delivery.[217] Although, operational funding for women's

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[215] Women's centre interview # 1.

[216] Women's centre interview # 1.

[217] Funding parity for women's centres has been a source of tension within Connect!. When women's centres first received operational funding from the province, only three of then seven centres were funded - Second Story, Pictou County Women's Centre and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre - and, although the other four centres – LEA Place, Every Woman's Centre, The Women's Place, and Women Aware – received funding the following year, until 1998 those four centres remained at a lower level of funding than the initial three funded centres. At the time, Connect! had a three year, three level process through which women's centres' funding would increase until they reached full funding. The government did not adhere to the Connect! process and maintained a level of funding discrepancy that created 'have' and 'have-not' centres. Equitable funding became a primary goal for the lesser funded

centres was increased for the 1999-2000 fiscal year, it was increased to a lesser amount than the budget women's centres had submitted, and it failed to cover the full operational costs of some centres. However, because the budget increase came more than half way through the fiscal year, it provided some centres with surplus funding. For one centre, the increase in funding led to government expectations as well as to increased community expectations that, as the only core funded, not-for-profit organization in their community, they should expand the services they provided to women to encompass services for families and children. They felt pressure to change their services as well as the face of the women's centre, to take on programs that the Department of Community Services wanted delivered in the community, and to expand their mandate beyond the provision of services for women. The key informant for that centre noted:

> I think they [Department of Community Services] would like to change us. I don't think they like us just working with women. They would like to see us become a catchall for anything that they would like to throw at us - that included men and women and children.... I don't think they see the benefit in just working with women.... I don't think they understand that.[218]

Because services in the community were limited, they felt pressure as well from the community to sponsor other government programs and, knowing that if they refused to do so, it would be "would be detrimental to the community" and that the women who are the primary caregivers to the children would lose out, they agreed. Consequently, this

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centres, while adequate and equitable funding remained a goal for the initial three centres. Although women's centres eventually agreed that each centre could submit a budget that reflected their actual program and services needs rather than a pre-determined budget amount equal to all other centres, the legacy of inequitable funding has been to foment resistance on the part of some centres to others asking for a budget increase.

[218] Women's centre interview # 4.

women's centre currently is administrating programs and projects that do not fit directly within the mandate of their organization. Increasingly they have found themselves delivering government programs and, as a result, they have found it more difficult to maintain their focus on women. The key informant articulated the dilemma of the women's centre when she said:

> The expectation that [our women's centre] can address every issue becomes very difficult .... We can't be everything to everybody. It becomes very difficult because those same people are the ones that you built a rapport with and saying no is not so receptive. Because then you're not seen as working within the community....We're so happy to get more funding but that is what has happened to us - we're expected to fill every void in the community.[219]

However, because the Department of Community Services had not identified a clearly defined role for women's centres within their vision of services, women's centres, for the most part, had been free from direct departmental interference with program delivery until the introduction of the Family Violence System Redesign Model. Their provincial operational funding has not been tied to the delivery of a negotiated set of programs and services and, although, ostensibly, they are required to submit annual program funding proposals, to provide quarterly and annual activity and financial reports to government and, in this way, to justify and account for their funding, over the past three years, the Department of Community Services has not asked officially for reports or for funding applications. This is both indicative of the fact that women's centres were not a priority service for the department and also that, during this time period, women's centres fell further outside the government priority services box.

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[219] Women's centre interview # 4.

Although the Department of Community Services had not been engaged in working directly with women's centres to support their delivery of services to women, prior to the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 1999, the Department had been working with them on trying to find other departments to fund them. To this end, the Department had brought together, in a joint planning process, women's centres and senior staff members from provincial departments that related to the programs and services provided by women's centres - ie., the Departments of Justice, Health, Education, Economic Development and Community Services.[220] The goal of the joint planning process was to secure adequate, sustained operational funding for women's centres by establishing a multi-departmental funding body and mechanism and by assessing the potential of women's centres to secure private sector funding. The two year joint planning process resulted in a report that detailed the service delivery work of women's centres, included a profile of the women who use them, and identified them as essential services for women in their communities. Throughout the process, women's centres worked to maintain a feminist, holistic, vision for their services, insisted their core services be funded by government and resisted the imposition of private sector funding as an alternative to government funding. Participating in the Joint Planning Committee was a time and resource consuming effort that diverted individual women's centres as well as

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[220] The Joint Planning Committee was an initiative of the Liberal government that, according to a senior level government staff person, demonstrated their commitment to women's centres and to securing women's centre services in the province. The Hamm Conservative government was not committed to maintaining let alone expanding women's services in the province and moved forward with contracting for services. As pressures on Department of Community Services to decrease funding for women's services increased, the original idea of developing contracts for services "got perverted into a way of doing budget rationalization." Former senior government staff interview.

Connect! from engaging fully in social change work and from service provision. After two years of work, the government changed, the report was shelved, the Joint Planning Committee was disbanded, and women's centres were left once again with inadequate, insecure, discretional grant-based operational funding.

When the government moved to implementing a service contract system for funding community-based services, women's centres could see ever more clearly that the services they would be funded to deliver would have to be negotiated with government and would have to meet government priorities. As organizations that sought to empower women and transform the state and its institutions, they faced the added difficulty of striking a balance between their survival needs and the social advocacy goals of their centres while working in an environment that was hostile to their mission.[221] Thus, undertaking social advocacy initiatives that were critical of government policies and programs made women's centres feel increasingly vulnerable with respect to securing ongoing operational funding. Two of the key informants noted:

> And the other [reason there is less emphasis on social advocacy] is that underlying feeling of do we want to jump out and be terribly critical and then find out that our funding has been cut. So even though that has never been put on the table, there's some sort of inference that we've drawn that that may be.[222]

> It is quite possible based on our social advocacy and what we do and how we challenge government thinking and government policy - how much more they are going to support that? I think probably the writing is on the wall that they

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[221] Riger, 1984. Pd. 115.

[222] Women's centre interview #1.

> will define our core services as four or five different things and start to limit what we can do.[223]

However, women's centres were not a priority group for the first round of service contract negotiations. With the introduction of the service contract development process, the Department of Community Services stopped meeting quarterly with women's centres and met with them only at the request of women's centres. This change in their relationship with the Department of Community Services both increased the insecurity women's centres felt with respect to their core funding and gave them time to begin a strategic planning process for defining, defending, and building support for their work with and within government, as well as within their local communities. The introduction of the Family Violence System Redesign Model provided further evidence of their lack of status as a priority program for the Department of Community Services, and reinforced the insecurity women's centres felt. In the subsequent extended 'redesign' planning process, defining and presenting their services in a way that would be acceptable to and, therefore, fundable by government became the priority task for the women's centres. While social advocacy remained an important activity for individual women's centres, it was seen to be more of a liability in securing provincial funding and was not a focus at the Connect! planning table or in the Connect! planning document. The climate of funding uncertainty, the necessity of preparing a plan acceptable to the government for the delivery of their services, and the expectation that eventually they will be negotiating

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[223] Women's centre interview # 3.

contracts for the delivery of their services, has pressured women's centres to define services and programs in a way that they believe government will support.

The Family Violence System Redesign Model clearly demonstrated the government's general lack of commitment to maintaining any independent, autonomous, community-led women's centres and transition house services.[224] In their intention to amalgamate women's centres, transition house organizations and men's intervention programs, and in their failure to distinguish the differences between women's centres and transition house organizations with respect to their models of practice, the populations they serve, their particular mandates, the different issues women present as their reasons for using a particular service, and the need for a continuum of alternative community-based and community-led services for women, the government demonstrated their complete disregard for the autonomy, authority and legal responsibilities of community-based boards of directors for women's alternative services. In doing so they clearly demonstrated their attitude of proprietary right and service territorialism. The ability of women's centres and women's alternative services to continue to define their services in the wake of the redesign process and again at service contract negotiation tables remains to be seen. Their ability to maintain their autonomy, independence and feminist practice will depend in large part upon their ability to articulate their issues, analyses and practices in a way that interlinks them those of sister women's movement organizations, to

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[224] In the Family Violence System Redesign proposal, the government proposed closing all women's centres, transition house organizations and men's intervention programs by the end of June 2002 (affected services were not made aware of the proposal until April 2002) with a start-up date for "the new system" of September 1, 2002. Department of Community Services, March 2002, pg. 2.

engender the support of people in their communities and across the province, and to translate that support to government.

Forced Issue Separation

Forced issue separation is another way in which the state exerts control over women's services. The state, mirroring its own hierarchical, siloed structure and reformist approach to issues determines which organizations it will fund to address a particular issue and subsequently charges any other organizations that are addressing that issue with duplicating services. The state allocates issues to specific government departments such that responsibility for addressing violence is assigned to the Department of Justice, poverty to the Department of Community Services, education and re-training to the Department of Education and so on. In the same way it allocates funding to transition house organizations to provide services to 'victims' of family violence, to sexual assault centres to provide services to women who have experienced sexual assault, to housing services for women who are homeless and so on. Forced issue separation allows the state to maintain a resistant stance to a feminist analysis that links issues such as violence and poverty. It also allows it to dismiss an integrative feminist transformative approach to addressing issues that negatively impact women's lives and to changing the dominant hegemony that underlies them. Further, it enables the state to use a top-down approach to addressing women's issues; it excludes women's organizations from policy and decision-making tables; and it both isolates and marginalizes women's issues and women's services within government departments.

Forced issue separation artificially compartmentalizes women's issues and does not recognize that issues overlap and are inter-linked. The approach is antithetical to feminism, to the philosophy and transformation politics of feminist women's movement organizations and, therefore, to the way in which feminist-organized services approach and integrate their service delivery and their social change work. Although women's alternative services are mandated to address specific issues, feminist-organized issue-specific services recognize the ways in which issues are inter-linked and the need to address them in a holistic way. It is this recognition of the interconnectedness of issues that has led to many collaborative social advocacy actions in which feminist organizations have supported each other in their call for government response to women's concerns and for accountability to women. Recent examples would include the research conducted and action taken to oppose referrals of cases of sexual assault and intimate male partner abuse to restorative justice fora by the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre working in collaboration with THANS member organizations, women's centres, Elizabeth Fry Societies and Nova Scotia Association of Women and the Law[225], as well as the Women in Transition (WIT) Project initiated by women's centres and carried out in collaboration with FemJEPP.

Because women's issues are multiple and inter-linked, it makes sense that women's centres and women's alternative services address them through service delivery and social

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[225] Women's alternative services participated in a policy forum in which they reviewed the initial findings of the Women's Restorative Justice Project research, provided insights from their particular experiences and perspectives and developed recommendations for the management committee to consider in its report. As well, they presented their reflections on the findings to the Minister of Justice, the Minister Responsible for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and Justice Department personnel who attended the Listening Day portion of the forum. See Rubin, Pamela. Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia: Women's Experience and Recommendations for Positive Policy Development and Implementation: Report and Recommendations. March 2003.

advocacy in a way that recognizes their inter-connection. For example, women's poverty and violence against women – manifestations of patriarchy and capitalism and other oppressive social systems – are connected issues that are pervasive in women's lives. Many women leaving abusive relationships are faced with poverty. Often women find it difficult to leave abusive relationships because they are or would be living in poverty and are limited by poverty in their options and, therefore, in their ability to re-establish themselves outside of their current abusive situation. Thus, transition house organizations cannot help women address violence without also addressing their poverty and cannot work effectively on violence prevention without working to address the causes of women's poverty. Similarly, many women accessing women's centres have a history of trauma and abuse. It is not possible to address their presenting issues without also addressing violence against women. Women who access services for sexual violence (particularly childhood sexual abuse) almost always have other complicating issues they need to sort through, and sexual violence is often an underlying issue for women accessing services of transition houses, women's centres, addictions services, and housing support centres. In effect, in forcing women's services to separate and compartmentalize issues, the state is forcing women to compartmentalize their lives and impeding them in moving forward. Similarly, the ability of women's centres and women's alternative services to provide a continuum of services to women and to collaboratively address violence, poverty and the many other connected issues women face within a holistic framework is impeded by the pressure they face from government to maintain specific issue focuses and services.

Forced issue separation is divisive in that it encourages women's centres and women's alternative services to identify as 'other,' to claim and draw lines around issues and to separate them into 'your issue,' 'my issue.' Further, it makes the connections among issues less apparent and it contributes to the factionalization of women's services ('your issue is not my issue,' 'my issue is not your issue') as well as to the fragmentation of women's movement work by engendering within service organizations a sense separateness from a broader, social movement. Forced issue separation allows the government to challenge feminist holistic service delivery models and practices by charging duplication of services. It allows the government to insist that because transition house organizations and women's centres both address violence against women there is a duplication of services – a charge that has increased tension between women's centres and transition house organizations and with government.

Unfortunately the way in which women's centres and transition house organizations have chosen to address the charge of duplication of services has reinforced the notion rather than challenged it. That women's centres provide services to women who have experienced violence is not contested by either women's centres or by transition house organizations. Historically, the difference in their role was clear; transition houses provided residential shelter services for women in immediate crisis, while women's centres provided ongoing, day-to-day problem-solving support to women who may have decided against going to a transition house or who required services that fell outside the mandate of a transition house. In areas where there were no transition house organizations, women's centres provided more comprehensive services to women leaving

abusive situations just as in areas where there were no women's centres, transition house organizations provided more support for poverty, housing and mental health-related issues. However, in the face of provincial government charges of duplication of services, the way women's centres and transition house organizations present and talk about their services has changed. Rather than argue a feminist analysis that women's issues are inter-linked and inseparable and therefore can be addressed in different ways by any number of feminist, holistic women's services, they chose to defend themselves against the charge of duplication by claiming they provided services for different issues. This has resulted in both women's centres and transition house organizations claiming issue territory and in claiming service delivery rights for specific groups of women. Transition house organizations claim the issue of woman abuse which is translated as family violence to and by the government. Women's centres identify a range of issues but are careful to maintain that much of their work is poverty-related and that they refer women whose presenting issue is intimate partner abuse to family violence services. For transition house organizations this has meant not publicly acknowledging the work they do with women who access their services for reasons other than intimate partner abuse. For women's centres it has meant moving away from a holistic model that links and addresses with women all their issues and towards a more issue-specific, institutional model. It has forced transition houses and women's centres to emphasize the differences in their services – issue-specific, residential shelter, protected premises, short-term stay 24 hour/7 day per week model, versus a multi-issue, open door, information, crisis and long-term support service. This has had the effect of dis-connecting them from each other

rather than connecting them in their work with women and, at times, has forced them into taking oppositional, territorial and competitive stances.

Buying into the separation of women's issues does not serve the needs of women living the issues. Once services are lured into arguing they are not duplicating services, they are claiming turf, are easily pitted against each other, and are forced into compartmentalizing issues and women's lives. The assumption that clearly distinguishing their services will protect their funding has fomented further the sense of unease between women's centres and transition house organizations, and fostered a public and inter-organizational silencing whereby they have become increasingly cautious not to appear to be working on/speaking about the 'other's issue' or working within each 'other's territory.' This has made it more difficult for women's centres and women's alternative services to work together to oppose the state's plan to increase its control over them by imposing state sanctioned mandates and setting limits to their work. One impact of the April 2002 provincial budget cuts and the Family Violence System Redesign Model has been to entrench issue separation, issue protectionism and geographic service area territorialism among women's centres and transition house organizations. The government's plan to eliminate some services and to co-locate others seeded fear among women's services that each organization would act in their own best interest to the detriment of the others making it difficult for them to establish the level of trust required to work together to support all their services.

However, it also acted as the catalyst for the resulting coalition of women's centres, transition house organizations and men's intervention programs and for the united front

presented by women and women's movement organizations in opposing the government plan. To their credit, in the face of government pressures that have forced them to compete for limited funding, women's alternative services and women's centres have worked hard to foster and maintain feminist solidarity and to work with each other for social change and on social advocacy initiatives across differences in needs, perspectives and praxis.

Nonetheless, effectively responding to state imposed issue separation will require women's movement services to challenge the terminology of duplication of services and to argue that women require a range of services and have the right to choose services that best suit their needs. It will require them to assert the need for and the value and effectiveness of providing holistic services that address – albeit in different ways and through different contexts – some of the same issues in women's lives.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Writing this thesis has provided me with an opportunity to explore and to document the development of women's centres and women's alternative services as women's movement organizations that create, evolve and put into practice feminist street theory; and that through their feminist praxis continue to add to knowledge centred in and utilized by community-led feminist organizations. Consistent with the tradition of feminist street theory, it has provided me with an opportunity, personally and in discourse with feminist social activists involved with women's movement services, to reflect upon and to theorize the current multi-state pressures on women's services to de-politicize, and the response of women's movement services to those pressures. It has provided an opportunity to use street theory as an analytic lens through which to identify and reflect upon the specific resistance strategies employed by women's movement organizations in the face of the April 2002 threatened elimination of and proposed reconfiguration of services provided by women's centres and transition house organizations in Nova Scotia. In returning this thesis to the women's community it is my hope that it will enrich the analyses of women's movement services in Nova Scotia, will incite further development of their analyses, and will inform and strengthen their resistance efforts.

In writing this thesis, I recognize that in an effort to present an overview of the development of women's movement services, I touch only the surface of the many issues, challenges and dilemmas facing the women's movement organizations and that there is much that community-based feminists and women's studies scholars can add. It is my

hope that reading the thesis will raise questions that others will pursue and that, in this way, it will contribute to as well as excite further academic study, street theorizing, and feminist social activism. Feminist study that takes a more in-depth look at the subject areas addressed in the different chapters would be useful to women's movement organizations and would help build a women's studies literature supportive of feminist social change. Such studies could include research into the way in which feminism has ensured the longevity of women's alternative services; how feminist praxis has informed the resistance of state funded women's movement services to state imposed agendas; the ways in which feminism and feminist analyses have evolved within feminist-organized women's services; the different structures feminist organizations have created in order to establish and sustain alternative social change models of feminist service delivery and praxis.

Feminist Politics: Key to Resistance

Current attempts by the state to redesign women's movement services in Nova Scotia are happening within a larger political agenda informed by a neo-liberal ideology of privatization and corporate globalization. They are happening in a climate that is hostile to women's alternative services and resistant to addressing women's issues - poverty, violence, equity and others. I would argus that resisting the imposition of a neo-liberal agenda is a task of primary importance for women's movement organizations. I would argue as well that women's movement organizations will only be able to resist the imposition of a neo-liberal state agenda if they are working from a feminist analysis, if

they maintain a strong connection with each other, and if they have a sense of participation in a larger, global, historical women's movement. It is important for feminists working for social change to take heed of Jill Vickers' plea to look beyond an analysis that "makes too sharp a distinction between first and second wave women's movement politics" and recognize the importance of identifying and building continuities between early and later periods of mobilization.[226] Developing, evolving, articulating and defending a feminist politics and practice has been key to strengthening women's centres and women's alternative services and to sustaining their resistance to government pressure to de-politicize. This has meant actively engaging in de-mystifying and resisting neo-liberal state imposed concepts that encourage individualism and competitiveness while discouraging collective social responsibility, that marginalize and exclude women, make women's lives invisible and women's experiences irrelevant, and that serve to contain and limit women's social change work by severing service delivery from social advocacy. The women who wrote the Porto Allegre Call for Mobilization note the importance of strengthening women's social movement as an act of resistance and transformation. They state:

> At the same time that we strengthen our movements, we resist the global elite and work for equity, social justice, democracy and security for everyone without distinction. Our methodology and alternatives stand in stark contrast to the destructive policies of neo-liberalism.[227]

It has meant arguing for feminist analyses that keep women's lives and concerns in all their diversity central; resisting gender analyses that too often are used against women in

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[226] Vickers et al, 1993, pg. 5.

[227] Excerpt from the Porto Allegre Call for Mobilization. January 2001.

the courts and when developing and interpreting policies, programs and legislation; arguing for women's specificity when the state is presenting 'inclusion' as a rationale for cutting women's services and replacing them with 'family' services.[228] It has meant resisting attempts to 'restructure', 'regionalize', 'rationalize', 'professionalize', and seek 'efficiencies' that essentially transform community-led, women's alternative empowerment model services into state-defined and controlled clinical model services. It has meant identifying the erosion of democracy that is at work when the state cuts funding for and exerts increased control over community-led, women's movement services at the same time that the community is calling upon the government to maintain and adequately fund those services.

Resisting the erosion of democracy, a neo-liberal, corporate globalization agenda, the institutionalization and state control of women's alternative services and organizations, and the implementation of anti-woman policies, programs and legislation requires feminists to work at many levels and from many vantage points. Resistance requires an understanding that our work individually and collectively is connected with

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[228] Women's concerns, for the most part, are not acknowledged by the state unless it is in a context within which women are identified in relation to men and children, most often as spouse or as mother/care provider to their children where providing for the welfare of the children is a priority for the state. As a result 'child poverty' and programs that benefit children have become the government priority while women's poverty has been kept invisible and women have been left largely without necessary supports, marginalized and vulnerable. (It is important to note that child poverty has not been addressed in any serious way by the state because it is not possible to address children's needs separately from those of their primary caregivers - ie., their mothers.) In situations of violence against women or when women are divorcing and seeking custody, gender neutral legislation applied without a feminist analysis has worked to the detriment of women. Women who resist violence from male partners and hit back are counter charged with assault. Divorce courts invariably interpret 'the best interests of the child' as maximum access to the male parent whether or not he is abusive towards the child's mother. Because they do not apply a feminist analysis, courts allow fathers to use the legal system to continue their access to and control over their ex-partner.

and is contributing to that of a larger, multi-issue, multi-sited, multi-voiced, political women's movement. Resistance involves individual and collective action, self and public education, energy and determination. One woman I interviewed underscored the necessity to be doing women's movement work together when she said:

> If we as individuals don't have the courage and the energy and the focus to keep resisting then we're not going to have a movement that's resisting. But it's not enough for us as individuals from where we live to be resisting, we need to be doing it together. That is where the efficacy and the joy comes in because I know that it's solidarity, it's collective strategy. We get our strength from each other.[229]

Moreover, feminist resistance means working from a diversity of locations and levels to actively promote and advance feminist social, economic and political change.

Resisting the Family Violence System Redesign Model

For the women's movement services (specifically, women's centres and the provincially funded THANS member organizations) directly impacted by the April 2002 provincial budget cuts and by the Family Violence System Redesign Model, there have been several factors that have contributed to their ability to resist the cuts and the imposition of the redesign plan.[230] Identifying these factors is necessary to providing feminist social activists and scholars with some insights into the individual and

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[229] Women's alternative service interview #3.

[230] It is important to note that the struggle to maintain women's centres and THANS member organizations is far from over. However, at the time of writing this thesis, women's centre and transition house organizations have been effective in resisting the imposition of the budget cuts that were proposed in the April 2002 provincial budget, in resisting the closure of a number of transition houses as proposed in the Family Violence System Redesign Model, in resisting the co-location or amalgamation of transition house and women's centre services, and in maintaining a united front among the services impacted.

collaborative resistance strategies and actions employed. As noted earlier, women's centres and THANS member organizations were not expecting the cuts. There was not time for extended deliberation about strategies within their individual organizations, their respective umbrella groups or with each other. They had to respond quickly to the initial budget announcement of cuts; they had to respond quickly when they learned about the redesign proposal and as subsequent events unfolded. Key to their ability to organize quickly and to sustain their resistance was the feminist ideology, vision and commitment to their organizations held by the majority of their executive directors or coordinators, by much of their staff and by many of the board members within their respective organizations.[231] This not only influenced board decisions at the organizational level, it enabled organizations to work together at the provincial level, to resist state attempts to divide them, and to overcome internal divisions seeded in fear and funding uncertainty. Also key to their ability to organize effective resistance was their long-term working relationship with each other and with sister women's movement organizations which supported the resistance efforts organized by the women's centres and THANS member organizations affected and which initiated, as well, separate support actions. Other factors key to their successful resistance were the credibility they had developed in their communities as organizations committed to helping women, which enabled them to elicit the support of their individual communities and of women across the province; their ability to present their situation to the media, to engage media sympathies and to use the

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[231] Stephanie Riger makes the point that Executive Directors and staff of feminist identified, women's alternative services generally demonstrate a high level of commitment to their work and that, often, they are seeking work settings where they are involved in social change. See Riger, 1984, pg. 104.

media effectively; and to engage the two opposition parties in working together to support their cause inside the legislature and outside of it.

The groundwork for the joint action taken by women's centres and THANS member organizations to resist the April 2002 budget cuts was laid through prior joint meetings (1991, 1996) of their two umbrella associations – THANS and Connect!. Over the years THANS and Connect!, as umbrella associations, have played significant roles in developing profiles for their member organizations, in providing fora for their members to develop analyses and to coordinate strategies, in presenting a unified voice for their member organizations to their funders and to government departments and agencies with which they are involved, and in developing among their members with a sense of shared strength. Feminism has been key to the solidarity among organizations within both Connect! and THANS.

Since 1988 the Connect! table has brought women's centres together to lobby for funding, to define a common philosophy and set of operating principles for women's centres and for the delivery of their services, and to work with government funders to ensure the provision of women's centres services. Connect!, as a body, facilitates an environment where the perspectives and positions of the different women's centres can be articulated and it facilitates a collective voice for women's centres. Connect!'s power and authority when speaking to issues of concern to women's centres lies as much in the autonomy, strength, and feminist praxis of each individual women's centre as it does in their ability to work together. However, the Connect! table is not without its challenges. Because women's centres feel their funding is precarious, and that their services are not

well understood or valued by government, they feel particularly vulnerable to internal dissension whether within one centre or among centres and the potential of such dissension to negatively impact all women's centres. One key informant expressed her concerns this way:

> I think whenever there is dissension within one women's centre, its pretty scary for the other women's centres. I just look at when everybody is having their own personal centre downs and troubles within board structure, I think that can be pretty scary for the organization of Connect! because you have eight different organizations and we each have our own boards, we have our own staff and we're all supposed to have the same philosophy but sometimes we are very different. ... What if someone decides to drop out of Connect!? How will that look? ... You just let them work it out themselves and hope to hell they don't bring us all down. That's scary.[232]

A danger for women's centres and for Connect! is that the fear of dissension among the women's centres could begin to pressure centres to compromise their autonomy and to take on programs or to adopt practices that do not fit with their organization's goals and/or with their community's needs. This would not only make women's centres less able to respond to the needs of women in their different communities, it would have the potential of making them less relevant to women in their communities. Further, it would add a self-imposed layer of institutionalization and change the role of Connect! from one of facilitating discussion and collective action among women's centres to one of imposing authority over them. The collectivity of women's centres as autonomous feminist organizations is key to their strength and to their ability to resist the state.

Since 1987 THANS has performed a similar function in providing a mechanism to bring together its member organizations, and feminism has been a uniting factor among

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[232] Women's centre interview # 4.

THANS member organizations as well. In fact, one THANS member attributes the politicization of the transition houses in Nova Scotia to the feminist ideology and vision that the majority of current executive directors bring to their work and have been able to maintain in their organizations. She noted:

> Although there are different definitions and approaches to feminist principles and practice, the fact that we do still see ourselves and operate as feminists and as a feminist organization always gives us that touchstone. ... We've got that set of values and beliefs that no matter what else is going on, no matter what kind of tizzy we might get ourselves into individually and collectively we can come back to that and it's very powerful.[233]

The politicization of THANS as a body, as well as of the individual member organizations, has deepened as a result of the frustration their members have felt over the past number of years when sitting at various government tables and witnessing the resistance of government to respond to the concerns they have raised and recommendations they have made about various policies and programs. It is the collectivity and politicization of THANS members as well as the autonomy that individual members bring to THANS that has enabled its members to resist government imposition of bureaucratic policies and practices.[234]

In no small part, it was the feminist, collective structures and practices of THANS and Connect! along with the depth of knowledge and experience that individual members brought to their umbrella association tables as well as to the coalition table that enabled women's centres and THANS member organizations to work intensively together under

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[233] Women's alternative service interview # 3.

[234] Women's alternative service interview # 3.

extreme pressures to resist the funding cuts and the Family Violence System Redesign Model. Both women's centres and THANS member organizations saw the power of their joint action and understood that neither could have resisted successfully alone. They saw that they could only succeed if they worked together and if they protected both women's centres and transition house organization services. Their resistance required solidarity as well as shared feminist visions, values and beliefs and an articulated commitment to improving the lives of women. Several times during their year long involvement, it was the articulation of their feminism and their commitment to women that helped them to overcome differences in structures, practices and procedures, to work beyond fears and divisions, and to present a united front to government and to the public.

Also key to their successful resistance was what Charlotte Bunch describes as 'facilitative leadership' – the ability to act and to get something done.[235] The extensive experience that women's movement services have in taking action on issues enabled them to develop strategies quickly, to mobilize allies within their communities and among sister women's movement organizations, political parties and the civil service, and to engage the media. Thus, part of their resistance strategy was educating the public, elected representatives and civil servants about issues of concern to women, about women's services, and about the short- and long-term social benefits of maintaining independent, community-led women's services. As one key informant said:

> I think the strategy here is to show the incredible benefit our services have to society - to women generally - but to society as a whole. But that's not going to matter to somebody unless they have a concern about women. If they don't

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[235] Riger, 1984. Pg. 103.

> have that base line concern, then it just falls on deaf ears. But if they can see the big picture and see the impact we can have on individual women that will be stepping stones to self-sufficiency and self-esteem and how its going to impact so many different parts of a woman's life and different parts of society. And, that our only chance is to do a selling job. And if they can't hear it, then we're just going to be delivering something government thinks is important.[236]

Presenting a United Front

When the April 4, 2002 provincial budget was tabled, women's centres and transition houses present at the budget lock-up saw immediately the necessity of presenting a united front when responding to the $890,000 cuts slated for their services. Women's centres and transition house organizations met with each other and began, at once, organizing demonstrations of support within their communities and setting up meetings with the opposition parties. It was at a meeting with the NDP on April 8, 2002, the Monday following the budget cut announcement, that women's centres and transition house organizations learned about the existence of a government redesign planning document. Following the meeting, women's centres and transition house organizations held the first of many joint strategy planning sessions. They agreed that all of their services were essential for women and children in Nova Scotia. Recognizing the government's intention to pit services against each other and that they would be stronger standing together, they agreed to work "shoulder to shoulder"[237] to oppose cuts to any of their services. Their first joint action was to write a press release and sign a written

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[236] Women's centre interview # 3.

[237] "Shoulder to shoulder" was a phrase used by the suffragettes and adopted at the April 8, 2002, meeting to describe the approach women's centres and THANS organization members would take in calling for government support for their services.

statement to the government refuting the contention of the Minister of Community Services that he had consulted with transition house organizations and women's centres about funding cuts and that they had agreed to the cuts. That same Monday, together with women from sister women's movement organizations, they gathered at Province House and handed out the statement to MLAs as they entered the Legislature for the afternoon session. With the media present, they confronted and called upon Peter Christie, the Minister of Community Services, to restore their funding, to provide them immediately with a copy of the department's planning document, and to meet within the week with the services affected by the cuts to discuss their concerns. This began what became a year long engagement with the government.

Connect!, THANS and the Association of Men's Intervention Programs (AMIP) began to refer to themselves as a coalition and to their joint action as 'coalition' work. They agreed their primary modus operandi would be to present a united front in their negotiations with government and to insist upon joint meetings with the Department of Community Services to discuss the redesign proposal. In a subsequent meeting between the coalition partners, the Minister of Community Services and senior department staff, the Minister agreed that the department would maintain funding for 'family violence' services for the duration of the 'redesign' process, that creating a plan for the delivery of their services would be accomplished through provincial meetings with the coalition partners, and that through these meetings, core services would be identified.[238] By

[238] At this meeting, both the Chair and the Acting Director of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women who were present at the invitation of the Minister of Community Services, played important support roles for women's services by asking pointed questions to the Department of Community Services spokespersons about the intentions of the Department with respect to the delivery of those services.

presenting a united front, women's centres, THANS member organizations and men's intervention programs were able to resist the immediate implementation of the cuts and the redesign plan. Moreover, working together collaboratively enabled them to substantially influence the ensuing planning process.

Working as a united front enabled a strengthened, more visible resistance on the part of women's centres, THANS organization members and men's intervention programs[239]. However, in a climate of fear and uncertainty some organizations adopted a fear-based mind-set that contributed to creating an environment of tension and mistrust in which some coalition participants attempted to set parameters that would restrict the freedom of each umbrella group and their member organizations to act independently. The attempt to compromise the autonomy of the individual organizations as well as the umbrella groups created serious tensions within the coalition and complicated its work unnecessarily.[240] When the coalition formed, it was strong because it was multi-centred and multi-voiced, and acknowledged the autonomy of the individual organizations. Working as a united

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[239] Although men's intervention programs were included in the Family Violence Systems Redesign proposal, they did not participate as fully in the resistance strategy planning meetings as did women's centres and THANS organization members. In fact, throughout the planning process, the Association of Men's Intervention Programs was represented by a member who was also an executive director of a transition house and, therefore, was representing both interests at the table. At several meetings only one other AMIP representative was present.

[240] There was considerable tension within the coalition around issues relating to goals, processes and overall approaches to the work it was undertaking to develop what was to be a joint plan for services. Interestingly, some six months into discussions with the Department of Community Services about the redesign process, the department decided to turn the task of developing a plan for the delivery of 'family violence' services over to the coalition. They were to develop a joint plan that would identify core services and provide for their delivery. The Department of Community Services was clear there would be no increase in funding to services and that the plan should indicate ways in which the separate organizations could cooperate in delivering services.

front was possible and empowering; challenging the autonomy of either the individual organizations or their umbrella associations by attempting to impose a single voice created dissension and disunity that came close to tearing the coalition apart. In the end, the autonomy of women's centres, THANS member organizations and men's intervention programs prevailed and what was to be a joint plan for their services was developed as three separate plans with some joint overarching principles and recommendations.[241] Maintaining their autonomy enabled the umbrella associations to preserve the united front approach such that the three separate plans were presented together in May 2003 in a joint meeting with the Department of Community Services.

Government 'Enforeed' Collaboration and Definitions

The collaborative resistance effort adopted by transition house organizations, men's intervention programs and women's centres was employed as a strategy and in direct response to the Family Violence System Redesign Model within which they were jointly defined by the provincial government as family violence services, and under which they were required to develop joint regional plans for amalgamating, co-locating, linking or otherwise 'downsizing' their services. In effect, it was the government that defined the services which would participate in the coalition. The coalition would not have existed without the imposition of the restructuring measures. It was formed as a pragmatic survival strategy; as a response to a government agenda to reduce women's movement

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[241] The Coalition of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, the Association of Men's Intervention Programs, and Women's Centres Connect! Enhancing and Strengthening Women's Services in Nova Scotia - the Coalition Response, May 2003

services rather than an as organization pro-actively constructed to move a common agenda forward. Nonetheless, the coalition strategy was successful in opposing the proposed budget cuts and in blocking government attempts 'to divide and conquer' the individual associations or association members.

Although the coalition was successful in working as and presenting a united front, it also presented a means through which the government could further enforce its definition of services and impose a government mandate. By designating the three associations as 'family violence' services and framing them within a 'family violence' service model, the government framed the issue, determined the parameters of the services and claimed the right to determine who would be delivering those services. Although the coalition tried to expand the frame and re-name it as women's services, the government refused to move beyond the 'family violence' definition. Their refusal to expand the family violence service framework or to redefine it as women's services in order to better represent the services provided by women's centres and to include other women's services, allowed the government to maintain its charge of duplication of services among the three umbrella association member organizations and to continue to insist that they look for ways to 'link' their service delivery. The family violence language and framework served to keep the focus on services provided by transition house organizations and men's intervention programs and to keep the work of women's centres, if not altogether invisible, then marginalized within the Department of Community Services.

Moreover, within the coalition, the 'family violence' designation served to strengthen the common agenda of and the allegiance between the transition house

organizations and the men's intervention programs which both delivered core family violence services while leaving the women's centres in the contradictory situation of working inside a coalition mandated by government to address family violence services at the same time the coalition was maintaining it was not the mandate of women's centres to deliver those services as part of their core program. Both through working with the coalition under the mantle of government identified 'family violence' services and through having to respond to charges of duplication of services, women's centres, in particular, were forced into a compromised position in which they had to minimize, if not deny altogether, that they work with abused women. It left them in the position of continually struggling to change the family violence frame, to establish their separate identity from transition house organizations, to demonstrate their value as services for women, and to prove that they work with women in crisis (crises that are different from and as serious as family violence crises). In effect, the family violence service designation served to entrench women's centres within the family violence program framework and bureaucracy while re-enforcing their second-class status within the department.

The coalition evolved out of an initial united front strategy for resistance and became a way for the organizations designated as family violence services to facilitate a working relationship and to describe their collaborative approach. However, it was never formalized by the organizations involved and, as a result, there was not a common understanding among the participants of its parameters and limitations. For some association members the coalition was a time-limited, pragmatic forum for protecting

services from cuts and for presenting a united front to government. Others however, saw the coalition as a forum for ongoing collaboration among the associations and for their negotiations with government. Whether or not the coalition continues, it has been useful in building a better understanding of each other's services among the participating umbrella association members, in demonstrating to government that there is a solidarity among women's organizations, and in creating effective strategies for resisting government imposed definitions and limitations.

However, had this coalition not been forced by the government redesign proposal and subsequently enforced by the redesign planning process, a coalition created by women's movement services mandated to create a vision and model for strengthening and enhancing women's services would have looked, in all probability, quite different. It would have included a broader group of women's movement services and women's social change organizations, supported and emphasized the autonomy of the participating groups, and distinguished their different mandates, voices and perspectives on issues in a way that would build the credibility of the coalition as a multi-issue, multi-voiced, multi-sited, feminist advocate for women's services and for woman-positive social change.

Multi-Issue Approach and Social Change Activism as Strategies for Resistance

Women's movement services were, for the most part, born out of women's movement social activism. Although many of those services are issue-specific in mandate, adhering to feminist praxis they are involved in social advocacy, they make the connections among the issues women face, and they work, for the most part, from a

multi-issue perspective in their social change activism. Feminist social change activism involves women's movement services in working from locations both 'inside' and 'outside' the state and in working with sister women's movement organizations across issues and locations. The support provided to women's centres and transition house organizations by sister women's movement organizations during the 'redesign' process expanded the centre of resistance beyond their specific organizations. It strengthened the effort of women's movement services in negotiating with the state by creating pressures from organizations outside the negotiating table to address women's issues.

Thus, in a discussion at the FemJEPP table about the redesign plan and its potential to reduce and to substantially reconfigure women's movement services, FemJEPP decided to take a proactive role in organizing women to take action. Subsequently, FemJEPP took a lead role in organizing "From Desperation to Inspiration: A Women's Political Forum for Social and Economic Justice" which was held in November 2002. The forum was co-hosted by the Women's Studies Program, Saint Mary's University, and held in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the YWCA Halifax, and several unions in the province.[242] The forum provided a space for women coming from across the province – representatives from women's movement organizations, feminist social activists, students, and women in unions – to discuss together issues impacting women and to identify actions to bring these issues to the attention of government decision-makers and the general public. Knowing a provincial

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[242] The unions which collaborated with FemJEPP were the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Women's Committee of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union, the Halifax, Dartmouth and District Labour Council, and the Truro and District Labour Council.

election was pending, women at the forum determined to put women's issues on the agenda of each political party. FemJEPP took the lead in setting up a provincial advisory committee with representatives from unions and women's movement organizations to organize the Women Matter! Women Vote! campaign, a campaign that brought women's issues to the foreground in communities across Nova Scotia.[243]

Although resisting the redesign process in which women's centres and THANS member organizations were involved was not 'the' focus of the campaign, encouraging women to make women's social and economic concerns a priority during the election helped put women's issues back on the public agenda and, in so doing, created a political climate that strengthened the ability of the coalition to resist the redesign plan, and made it less likely for any political party or candidate to call for the downsizing or elimination of women's movement services. Thus, through the initiatives taken by FemJEPP in concert with the resistance efforts of the coalition organizations, the Family Violence System Redesign Model that set out to eliminate some women's services and to drastically reduce others, instead strengthened those services, strengthened their collaborative efforts, and increased women's voices within the province.

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[243] The Women Matter! Women Vote! campaign was launched on International Women's Day. The advisory committee in collaboration with FemJEPP produced an information pamphlet on women's issues that women could use to question their candidates during the election campaign. The pamphlet was released during a press conference held at Province House and was distributed throughout the province through women's movement organizations and unions. During the election, FemJEPP together with the provincial campaign advisory committee sponsored an "All Party Forum" on women's issues where a candidate from each party spoke to the positions of their parties. Women's movement organizations held candidates forums and events in their own communities as part fo the provincial campaign.

Resisting the Application of 'Volunteer' as an Organizational Identity

As organizations with strong social movement roots and as organizations that undertake social advocacy and social change initiatives, women's centres and women's alternative services see themselves as social activist organizations. Although, most women's movement services have women that act in a 'volunteer' capacity within their organizations, historically most of the women who got involved at decision-making levels did so because they wanted to make social changes that would improve the lives of women. As discussed earlier, many readily identified as social activists and saw their involvement with the organization as a venue for their activism. They had a feminist political analysis that inspired their involvement and informed their work. They did not necessarily identify as volunteers. 'Volunteer', largely, was a term applied by the state and by mega-charities to refer to activities carried out without pay in communities. While women working with women's movement services may have accepted the application of the term 'volunteer' to their position in that, within the organization, it differentiated them from paid staff, it did not describe well their political commitment to social change. The continued application of the term 'volunteer' to women's activist-motivated involvement has implications for women's movement organizations. While it is true that many women want to volunteer in women's alternative services because they are motivated by a desire to 'help' other women,[244] it has been the experience of women's movement services that women who enter as volunteers often are politicized through their

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[244] Mailloux, Louise, Heather Horak and Colette Godin. Motivation at the Margins: Gender Issues in the Canadian Voluntary Sector. The Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat, March 31, 2002. Pg. 5.

involvement and begin to see themselves as social activists and their volunteer work as social activism.

It is important for women's movement organizations to resist the application of the term 'volunteer' to their work. The term is problematic not only in that it de-politicizes the work of women's alternative services by making their social change work, their social activism, and the larger women's movement less visible; it also creates an expectation in the minds of the state and the general public that the services are additional to state provided services and, consequently, are optional, non-essential, 'non-professional', and provided largely by unpaid workers. It advances the state's argument for further professionalizing women's alternative services as a means of ensuring their services are safe, legitimate and accountable. Further, it provides the state with a way to justify low funding levels. Consequent lack of adequate government funding has not only kept staff salaries and benefits low and infrastructure support minimal, it has limited the ability of services to engage fully in social advocacy.[245]

Maintaining their definition as political, social change organizations encourages women who get involved to see themselves as social activists, to connect their work with that of a broader 'women's movement', and to see their work as contributing to social change. Further it maintains a women's movement presence in their communities that models and encourages social activism. Although social advocacy remains a contentious activity with state funders, maintaining a political social activist definition supports women's movement services in their efforts to resist a state imposed agenda and in their

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[245] Mailloux, Horak and Godin. March 31, 2002.

ongoing development of a feminist analysis of issues that maintains the centrality of women to the issues at the same time that it challenges the state to positively address women's concerns.

Working at the Political and the Bureaucratic Levels

As discussed earlier, working for positive social change for women and working to maintain women's movement services has involved feminists in working from positions 'inside', 'outside' and 'around' the state – at times, simultaneously. Individual women's movement organizations have worked strategically from different locations according to the different responses they have received from the state with respect to their efforts to get the state to respond to their concerns and to adequately fund their services. This has certainly been the situation for women's centres and transition house organizations. While transition house organizations have been effective in working at the bureaucratic level to secure and advance their services, women's centres have been more effective in working at the political level with elected government representatives.[246]

The resistance of the bureaucracy as well as of elected political representatives to understanding that women's equality issues are rooted in patriarchy and that they will not

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[246] Increases in provincial operational funding for women's centres have always been a result of political interest rather than departmental interest. Provincial operational funding was first granted to women's centres as a gesture by Premier Donald Cameron in the last days of his government. It was increased by the John Savage government because of the personal commitment of John Savage to the work of women's centres. After concerted lobbying by women's centres funding was increased again by Premier Russell MacLellan shortly before an election was called. Premier John Hamm, as per his campaign promise to women's centres, maintained the MacLellan commitment to the funding increase as tabled in the defeated MacLellan government budget. Recently the Central Nova Women's Resource Centre was funded after the petitioning of Cabinet by their MLA Jamie Muir and the Tri-County Women's Centre just prior to the 2003 election after the petitioning of Cabinet by their MLA Richard Hurlburt. Hurlburt had made the funding of the women's centre a campaign plank in the 1999 election.

be addressed without rethinking and profoundly changing current social structures, values and practices is reflected in their attitudes towards and lack of willingness to support women's movement services. At the elected representative level as well as the public service level, there is more likely to be support for services for women perceived to be 'victims' (as long as they are 'good' victims and not 'bad' victims who bring their troubles upon themselves by challenging the boundaries patriarchy sets for women). There is little support for services that have a political definition and that challenge the status quo. Therefore, it has been easier for the provincial government to include services such as transition house organizations, sexual assault centres and women's housing services within their definition of 'worthy' service organizations, and to provide them with operational funding than it has been to provide funding to women's centres.

As noted earlier, transition houses, in particular, present a recognizably institutional, residential model and, as a single-issue entry point service, they fit neatly within the Family and Children's Services Division of the Department of Community Services. This has made it easy for the bureaucracy to understand where and how they fit within their department's mandate and to support the services they provide. Because they are providing services that the bureaucracy understands and widely supports, transition house organizations have had some support within the bureaucracy for their critiques of government policies and legislation, and they have been invited to participate at government policy tables more often than women's centres have been invited. The recent vulnerability experienced by transition house organizations has been less the state

challenging their mandate than challenging them to restructure their services to fit what the state sees as a changing demographic, social and legal context.[247]

Women's centres on the other hand, as multi-issue entry point services with a social change mandate, have not been well understood or accepted by the bureaucrats within the Family and Children's Services Division of the Department of Community Services. Women's centres have had to redefine themselves and to argue their legitimacy as services in order to access funding, and, in doing so, to downplay their social change agenda and social advocacy mandate. Interestingly, they have had more success in convincing their MLAs of their legitimacy and value than they have had in convincing the bureaucrats in the departments that fund them. In part this is because the MLAs see 'on the ground' the work women's centres do in their individual communities. In part it is because the multi-facetedness of the work of women's centres and the inter-connection among issues facing women finds some resonance with politicians who move from department to department and, who, at the Cabinet table, discuss and make decisions on a multitude of inter-connecting issues. Bureaucrats, on the other hand, are more likely to be boxed into departmental as well as issue silos where they are not able to work on issues across departments or even internally across department divisions in an inter-connected way. Bureaucratic lenses separate and segment issues and the services that respond to them. Women's centres do not fit neatly within the departmental bureaucratic

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[247] Due to the hard work of transition houses, public awareness about woman abuse has increased and resulting legislative changes have made it possible for women experiencing abuse to access services without moving into a transition house. Ironically, this has led to the situation where government feels justified in calling for the redesign of family violence services and the elimination of some transition houses.

structure and are not well supported within or by it. It makes sense, therefore, that the strategies used by transition house organizations and by the women's centres over the years to maintain their services and to move their issues onto a public and government agenda have been different, and have reflected their status within government and their ability to put forward their positions outside government. What they need to recognize is that working from these individual places of influence and strength has increased their joint power when acting as a united front.

Lessons Learned

In their response to the April 2002 budget, women's movement services demonstrated the effectiveness of building and sustaining solidarity among their organizations while respecting the autonomy of each individual organization. They demonstrated as well the effectiveness of strategizing as individual organizations at the community level, linking their resistance through their umbrella organizations, working collaboratively at the provincial level, and connecting their strategies with those of sister women's movement groups. Working collaboratively and at different levels and locations to develop and carry out resistance efforts enabled them to maintain and strengthen their positions with government and to continue to provide services within their communities. It is no surprise therefore that key informants to this study are of one accord that working together through cooperative feminist endeavours, coalitions and various joint initiatives has been key to maintaining the strength of their own organizations, to furthering the development of feminist analyses and practices, to

influencing public policy, and to making a difference in the lives of women in their communities and across the province. Neither is it surprising that they agree that this work takes "grit and determination." As one key informant noted:

> I think the challenge is keeping a united voice. ... Those [FemJEPP and other collaborative initiatives] are opportunities that are a real challenge - huge challenge. But they are so important in keeping feminism alive. Because feminism is about having the analysis and it's really hard to do that in isolation. And even if you have the analysis, it's really hard to do anything about it if you're one women's organization. It's absolutely imperative it be done with other organizations.[248]

Women in Nova Scotia have a long history of participating in social movements and of creating fora for women to share information and to develop political analyses and strategies for social change. Through social movement and women's movement organizations women have worked hard at learning how to work together, at how to put feminist theory into practice, and at how to maintain and defend feminist, state-funded women's movement services. We have not however, documented adequately our feminist praxis and our progress. We need to articulate as community-based feminist social activists and as women's movement scholars, the contributions women's movement services and feminist activist organizations have made to feminist theory, practice and transformational social change.

Our ability to maintain women's movement, social change, activist organizations and to sustain state-funded women's movement services relies on our ability to situate ourselves as feminists and the work of our organizations within the work of the women's movement rather than outside it, to articulate to ourselves and to other women alternative,

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[248] Women's centre interview # 3.

woman-centred, life- and planet-affirming visions for transforming society. We need to measure our success according to our visions and to affirm our acts of opposition, resistance and transformation as women's movement activism. Collectively analyzing our experiences of working for social change and continuing to develop, expand and theorize alternative feminist models and practices is necessary to opposing, resisting and transforming patriarchy and patriarchal practices that maintain the oppression of women and the plunder of the planet. Women's organizations working in isolation from each other and from feminist-sympathetic social movement organizations cannot successfully sustain an oppositional stance to the state. Our struggles, our success and our hope are inter-meshed and our paths lead us to connecting with each other, connecting broadly with women in our communities and with women working for social justice and social change around the world.

After Word

In writing this thesis I have been deliberate in reflecting the tradition of feminist activism and the assumptions of feminist activism. The thesis is grounded in the lived experiences of women including myself and it is written in accessible language. It asserts that a women's politics is possible, that women can work together from their particular locations and issues. It holds feminist street – critical theory development – and feminist praxis to be key to the work of women's social movement organizations. It recognizes women's studies as a field of study coming out of the women's movement and bringing feminist street theory into the academy. It notes the importance of feminist street theory

as the basis of feminist praxis in many women's movement organizations. It values feminist theory that is autonomous, grounded in the lived experiences of women, and that is not replicating, based in, or constrained by male patricentric theorizing, as theory that has much to offer feminist social change activists and women's studies scholars. It honours the early roots of women's studies programs in which women's studies scholars built upon feminist street theories and sought to identify and understand from a feminist perspective structured social, economic, and political systems that create and enforce the oppression, subjugation and marginalization of women. It contributes to the spirit of women's studies, supports the contention of women's movement activists – activists working for social change at the community-level, in universities, unions, workplaces, churches, and government – that women's studies is necessary. Just as Margrit Eichler contends, women's studies remain dependent upon an ongoing women's movement "to provide the political pressure that ensures administrative support."[249]

It has been important to me as a feminist community-based activist to articulate street theory and to assert its relevance and importance for feminist scholars and for feminist activists situated in the academy. Just as feminists working with state funded women's movement services and organizations face pressures to de-politicize their work and to deliver a state-defined mandate, so too do feminists working within universities and other patriarchal institutes of 'higher' learning face pressures to accept and conform to practices and theories that reinforce rather than challenge a misogynist/women negating hegemony. Working in isolation from the community does not move the cause

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[249] Eichler, 1992. Pg. 134.

of feminist social transformation forward; it leaves feminist academics vulnerable to pressures to abandon to feminist community-based activists the challenges, sweat, tears, connections, insights, and joys involved in women's movement social transformation work and to rationalize their disengagement by creating and arguing an esoteric, elitist, anti-women's movement position.

Feminist activists in women's studies and other departments can, do and must continue to contribute to the work of the women's movement by undertaking research that informs the work of activists, by working for change within academic institutions, and by introducing students to women's movement work. Similarly, feminist community-based activists undertaking research and developing grounded feminist theories that must share their work with women's studies scholars so that it can be used to inform women's studies programs and curricula.. This way women's studies will better reflect women's lived experiences and remain relevant to women.

Social transformation is a daunting task that requires feminist activists to work from many locations, on many issues, on many levels, and through many voices. It requires feminists working for transformative social change – working from inside and outside the academy – to establish and maintain a close two-way connection between women's studies and the women's movement. It requires feminist women's studies scholars and activists to acknowledge, to validate, and to integrate the contributions of community-based feminists within their program. Doing so will strengthen women's studies, broaden interest in and support for it both inside and outside the academy, and ensure it

remains relevant to women. In turn, it will strengthen women's movement social activism and the global women's movement.

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Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Subjects

This is to certify that the Research Ethics Board has examined the research proposal or other type of study submitted by:

Principal Investigator:	Lucille Harper
Name of Research Project:	Women's Social Activism in Nova Scotia: The Impact of Pressure to Depoliticize
REB File Number:	2002-047

and concludes that in all respects the proposed project meets appropriate standards of ethical acceptability and is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Conduct of Research Involving Humans. Please note that approval is only effective for one year from the date approved. (If your research project takes longer than one year to complete, submit form #3 to the REB at the end of the year and request an extension.)

Date: June 6, 2002

Signature of REB Chair:

Dr. John E. MacKinnon