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Work as feminist activism: A qualitative case study

by

Nicole Sue Guard

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Major: Education

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of
Nicole Sue Guard
has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

As a child, I felt I could do anything. Being a girl made my determination important because it was obvious that society didn't always agree with me. I was born in 1974, the youngest in a family of five. My oldest brother and my mother are just as committed to social and environmental justice issues as I am. Despite these ideals, stereotypical gender roles were a part of our everyday life growing up. While my mother might say that she just really enjoyed my company in the kitchen, I knew it was because I was a girl that I had to cook and set the table. During my teenage years when I started to navigate my gendered environment I tried quite a few different responses to sexism. I protested doing the dishes and setting the table at family dinners. Then I realized that this meant I was just leaving more work for my mom to do. What was freedom for me was extra burden for my mom because now she did dishes by herself. The attitudes of my family were what had to change, not just my actions. Barbara Findlen (1995), in the book Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation, notes the importance of these acts for women of my generation:

A trivial matter? Perhaps, in the scheme of things. But the possibility of achieving redress, even if it starts on a small scale, is self-perpetuating. The more justice you think you can achieve, the more you try to achieve...if it had been 1955 instead of 1975, we wouldn't have questioned the unfairness, even if we resented it...but because...there was a feminist movement creating awareness everywhere about sexism, we could not only identify an injustice in our world, we could right the wrong. (p. xii)

Today I can honestly say my family is much better at sharing the jobs that maintain a household. We have found that when we are together activities like cooking can be a time for conversation and shared creativity. It can be a time to discuss politics and the latest book we are reading. What started as everyday acts formed the basis for understanding the progression of feminist acts in my personal and public life, which were intimately connected. Protesting dishes in my family led to my refusal to serve a customer in a restaurant I worked at after he yelled across the restaurant to serve him, calling me girl, instead of my name. I quit that job shortly after the incident, telling my parents I'd rather be poor.

When I got to upper grade school, middle school and high school I was given the gift of a word. That word was feminism. My world was opened up to a movement that had been going on for a long time, and I began to seek out role models like Gloria Steinem, to watch what she said and did, and to understand why.

During my junior year in high school I had a teacher who started a women's group in response to the sexual harassment and gender discrimination that was happening in male dominated classrooms. We called our group "Women's Empowerment." Signs were posted and Women's E began to meet. No one could have ever predicted what happened next in the group. I recall having some sort of reading for the first meeting, which was supposed to last about an hour or two. After three hours, this group of approximately ten high school women had disclosed issues that would take years of women's studies classes to understand the social and cultural implications for what was happening to my friends. Each week a meeting was held and more topics came up to talk about: date rape, molestation, abuse, family violence, and the sexual harassment and discrimination that was taking place within our schools. I was horrified. Women's Empowerment was painful. We were naming our lives.

The group eventually dissolved. At this point in my life I understand that the reasons, although hurtful at the time, are very understandable. The overwhelming nature of disclosure from members of the group led to broken trust, a trust that was falsely assumed and destructive to individual lives because of small town gossip. The group also experienced a backlash from our male peers who were excluded and perhaps for the first time, experienced a threat to their power. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) note this tendency of events that make the personal political, "It has sometimes been used to restrict women, rather than to free us" (p. 19). The exposure of our lives as women could have been used to create a political atmosphere in our community that rallied support behind women and their experiences. Instead, it was used to silence by convincing individuals in the group that the personal should be left out of the public realm. Good girls don't draw attention to themselves in this way.

The importance of this event in my life was that I could see that my generation had *potential* for powerful coalitions. From that time on, I called myself a feminist. I would continue to grow to understand what that word meant, and how it could heal my friends and myself and provide pathways to elimination of all forms of discrimination. Feminism had grown large enough to reach into the life of a white, middle-class girl from Iowa. I now know that testimony and feelings, if left as they are, will be analyzed by the language of patriarchy to reinforce systems of domination and oppression. However, "testimony is where feminism starts. Historically, women's personal stories have been the evidence of where the movement needs to go politically and, furthermore that there is a need to move forward" (ibid., p. 20).

In the fall semester of 1997 I was a student teacher. I took knowledge from my elementary education classes and combined it with a desire to create a multicultural non-sexist classroom. I was pushed and pulled by my cooperating teachers and supervisor to conform to traditional ways of teaching. The power dynamics that forced me to choose a grade or a way of existing caused great distress. I had the feminist background to know what a patriarchal style of classroom looked and acted like: sex segregation, accepting male dominance in activities, being color blind to both the lack of diversity in the curriculum and the multitude of identities (class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and gender) of students who sat in their desks each day. I had experienced the role of schooling as perpetuating dominant culture in my own educational upbringing. My own love of education had the undeniable responsibility of teaching in a way I knew to be liberatory. I did not want to perpetuate dominant discourse. My cooperating teacher wanted me to teach science as if it was free of bias and values. I needed more than statistics on how schools weren't measuring up to anti-racist and feminist models of education to help me through. I needed detailed stories of what it meant to be an activist in education, or in any job.

Feminism provides a way of interpreting and challenging existing ideologies in a patriarchal society. The goal of feminism is to socially, politically, and economically empower women and men. Jennifer Baumgardner, in an essay for Ms, puts it this way, "Even though feminism has this history of not being conscious enough about race or class, it is still the most diverse, race-sensitive, and class-sensitive movement I have ever observed" (Aronson, 2001, p. 52). Third Wave feminists such as myself continue to confront the challenges that feminists have always encountered. Now, as we continue to expand feminist

theory and activism in the twenty-first century, we are experiencing new challenges along with the ones we have inherited from previous generations.

We are challenged by commerce and media that have information exchanging at an incredible speed. The United States and other "developed" (*overdeveloped*) countries have the most access to the media, the Internet and other forms of technology, enabling communication with each other and organization on a global scale. Understanding how to build relationships with cultures that are different from our own, and what it means to be an ally are issues we are dealing with. For feminists, this can be an exciting way to build a global movement, by having more efficient ways of contacting each other on such a large scale. We can receive news, often the kind that makes us rally for justice when women are wronged on the other side of the world. Unfortunately, this technology can also be used by the powerful to control less powerful peoples on a global scale. For example, my generation has grown up in a world experiencing epidemics of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The medical sciences have made us hopeful for having full lives with the chronic condition, yet deny these comforts to other countries, making sure they cannot afford access to our medicines. There are infinite examples to illustrate the point that feminists have plenty of work to do, but also a multitude of means to get the work done.

This thesis focuses on one solution to the work we have before us. That is to structure our work and school environments in a feminist manner. Redefining why and how we work will enable us to stop serving patriarchy in more areas of our lives. My research was a process of looking for indicators that illustrated a feminist work environment. This meant, for example, that the daily activities of employees were gender fair and had some sort

of ethical support. My first thought was to look at teachers who carried this out in their classrooms.

My original research question was, "What does it mean to be a feminist teacher?" As I read and structured my proposal for research, I expanded my questions to examine not only what it means to be a feminist teacher, but also what it means to be a feminist in any job, and how we can transform the environments in which we work. The more I read and talked with people, the more I was fascinated with women who were using their *private* and *public lives* to break down patriarchy. They are changing the definition of traditional women's jobs in education and the community, and the areas are connected in vital ways. Oftentimes the bottom line seems to be that women in communities have more freedom than women in school systems. Thus, community groups appear to be making more progress with feminist goals. But we should never doubt that feminist teachers make a definite impact on their students, colleagues, and communities just the same.

Women using their jobs for activism may see their work as a personal extension of purpose in their lives. They may define their daily roles as a vocation, or a profession as opposed to solely a means for economic subsistence. It is because their job holds meaning and fulfillment in ways that push them into personal growth and new understandings of their place in society. When someone claims to be in a vocation, it means that there is a conscious intention to act on an ethical system of thought (Hansen, 1995). In education, especially in a teacher's domain, this is key to the development of an active response to the way schooling is constructed and carried out on a daily basis. Through critical theory, a teacher is able to understand her part in the construction or dismantling of dominant thought systems, and patterns of oppression. The status quo of the educational system that is an extension of a

society that is slow to change is not acceptable. A teacher who is an activist for social justice is part of the solution to racism, sexism, and classism that socialize children to develop hierarchical systems of power and control. The understanding of how the social world is structured translates into how and why we work when we allow the theory to provide a framework for our daily activities. Then, as we reflect upon what we have done we can document new theory, and support current philosophies.

The research that I have done focuses on a woman whom is very closely tied to the educational system in the United States. Some of her many roles include teacher, school board member, and parent. Through her current job in a community organization, she continues to prioritize education in the programs constructed, and in the coalitions she builds. Her life, while taking many different paths, has always been one of activism to eradicate forms of oppression. For the purpose of this project she has named herself Olga. Although she laughs at the idea of anonymity in her high-visibility job, the process of naming herself is a key example of how her life and activism are distinctly feminist. I will go into the details of the naming process in greater detail in chapter three. However, it is important to mention here in the introduction because the process of naming herself is an example of feminist activism, and the analysis of the event is one of the joys of writing qualitative research. Feminist qualitative analysis involves paying attention to what may appear at first notice to be small events, but when placed in the larger picture of theory become relevant to a fascinating analysis of our social lives. Women's lives are full of interesting stories and multiple meanings.

I choose to do research in qualitative feminist methodology because I want to speak of feminist activists, and allow my writing to be my form of feminist activism. Patricia Hill

Collins (1998) states, "Although reclaiming and celebrating the past remains useful, current challenges lie in developing critical social theory responsive to current social conditions" (p. 10). In this way, theory is not just a vision dreamed. The woman's life I have researched contains new dynamics that are not created, but are identified, named, and documented as a response to current conditions.

The immediate benefits of doing feminist qualitative methodology that I have personally found are threefold. The effects are even greater as theory travels out beyond researcher and respondent. First of all, it has changed me as a researcher because I have formed a relationship with someone who is teaching me lessons about feminist activism. Kathleen Weiler (1988) says, "before women researchers can understand the experiences and consciousness of other women we must come to understand ourselves and the ways in which we know" (p.59). Secondly, the relationship that we have formed during the course of the research has changed my respondent. Olga has said to me many times that it is an interesting experience to view herself through someone else's eyes, especially when they are doing this kind of feminist interpretation. I think it is fair to say that as I was changed by examining her life, she was changed. Thirdly, through my writing I am able to take readers on the path of discovery that I took to understand a woman's life, all the while helping people understand that not only is my research respondent a complex a multifaceted being, but so am I, the researcher analyzing the information. This is important, because, as bell hooks (1994) says, "When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice" (p.61). The process of this research is as crucial as the literature that is the outcome.

The Importance of Feminist Qualitative Research Methodology

Feminist theory always has a starting point of experience, struggle, and testimony. As human beings, we all theorize based on what we know and would hope for our futures. Feminist qualitative methodology is about understanding personal theory making and applying it to a more formal theoretical construction. Consciously and unconsciously we continually take in information, process, and form biases. Ely, et al. (1997) express that theory may mean two different things. It can be synonymous with an opinion that explains an everyday occurrence in people's lives. Theory "is also used to mean a formal and carefully articulated system of thought designed to explain universal principles, as do the phrases 'Marxist theory' or 'Freudian theory'" (p. 226). Either way it is "the way people make sense of the world" (p. 226).

Qualitative research "is a deeply interpretive endeavor...analytical processes are at work in every step of the crafting of the document" (Ely, et al., 1997). Therefore, a researcher draws from a basic set of beliefs to form questions about these ideas. Then, the questions are examined in very specific ways based on a history of qualitative methods and research techniques. For my own research I have learned to interpret the stories of people's lives from a feminist perspective. This means that I interpret through a paradigm that considers race, class, and gender.

In Under the Sign of Hope, Leslie Bloom discusses a feminist research methodology. She writes, "feminist methodology promises a more interpersonal and reciprocal relationship between researchers and those whose lives are the focus of the research" (1998, p. 1). There is a relationship that takes shape with a respondent that is discussed in the research process.

The analysis is also held accountable to the respondent. Member checks allow the participant to read, evaluate and negotiate the material as part of the research relationship.

Feminist research methodology is politically committed. As researchers we recognize that we have commitments to changing the social order. Weiler (1988) states, "For feminists, the ultimate test of knowledge is not whether it is 'true' according to an abstract criterion, but whether or not it leads to progressive change" (p. 63). For example, in the case study I conducted, I was seeking to understand the life of a feminist activist. The result was that I re-examined my own commitments to social change as well as establishing a vision for action. This kind of research is important to the feminist agenda.

For this thesis research consisted of one case study of a woman who works in a social justice organization. My initial research questions were: How do women view themselves as feminist activists? How does labeling activism feminist contribute to the work? And, what lessons can we take into our own feminist activist work?

The research was conducted in feminist qualitative methodology, and interpreted through a feminist lens, taking into account race, class, and gender, among other aspects of personhood. Feminist qualitative methodology involves "free interaction between researcher and interviewee...the participant is invited to tell her life story in her own way...and oftentimes [digressions are] more important than the core information" (Strawn, 2000, p. 12).

The methods of collection and analysis that I used during the spring of 2000 were interviews, observations, and member checks. The three interviews lasted between one and two hours and consisted of open-ended questions. Bloom (1998) comments on the nature of this style of interview:

Feminist methodology should break down the one-way hierarchical framework of traditional interviewing techniques. Feminist interviews should be engaged, interactive, and open-ended. Feminist interviews should strive for intimacy from which long-lasting relationships may develop. Feminist interviews are dialogic in that both the researcher and respondent reveal themselves and reflect on these disclosures. (pp. 17-18)

The conversations were recorded and then transcribed, coded, and analyzed using relevant research and theory from literature.

Observations were more frequent as a result of our interview conversations. Often stemming from the interviews, my respondent would invite me to participate in an event sponsored by her organization. In these instances, I had the privilege of watching my respondent do her work. She would introduce me to those she works with and fill me in on the background of the function. In the next interview, she would reflect on her participation in the event. We would also discuss how we both felt the interviews were going.

During the time that data was being collected, there was a process of reading literature to inform my study. I was doing my own personal reflections on the research process being recorded in journals. In addition, there were weekly meetings with a group of researchers to discuss possible directions of the research and the construction of theory. Towards the end, Olga received a copy of what I had written about our time in interviews and observing her work. We discussed how I used her words as well how she felt about my portrayal of her as a subject. The member checks are an invaluable component of feminist research because they are a final negotiation of the information. It is a time to gain

perspective on the goals of giving voice to women's experiences and reflect on the research relationship.

Summary

If we can come to a clear understanding of how sexism manifests itself and why it is perpetuated in contemporary society, we may have a chance to find solutions to the destructive system that is sexism as we move into the twenty-first century. (Ronai, Zsembik, and Feagin, 1997, p. 10)

The jobs we choose to do and the way our workplaces are structured provide a framework for the rest of our lives. For our jobs to be an expression of our passion for justice, equality, and personal growth, it is useful to understand the feminist workplace structure. *Why* we work will then correlate with *how* we work.

The topics examined in this thesis involve a feminist woman integrating the personal and political through her job. The notion of activist is expanded from a possibly more extreme, risk-taking position on the margins of society to include seeing all means for economic subsistence as an extension of our feminist selves, thereby contributing full-time to a mass-based feminist movement. This includes intentionally structuring our workplaces to eliminate hierarchical systems of power and control. I examine feminist women who are exemplifying means to empower self, co-workers, and the communities in which they live.

The case study analyzes a woman's job in a community service organization as feminist work. Feminist theories that inform the analysis are outlined, as well as the importance of using feminist qualitative methodology in case studies that make women's stories central to the vision of a more just society. After an introduction to the entire thesis in

chapter one, chapter two specifically focuses on the literature informing the research and highlights other works done on feminist women and their work lives, especially in the area of education. Chapter three tells the story of Olga, who works in a community organization. Portions of interviews and observations are used to form theory on work as activism, based on her life history. This includes her work in teaching and other organizations that have social justice as their mission. The methodological reflection is communicated in chapter four and gives insight into the process of feminist qualitative methodology. This chapter provides a discussion of my personal bias and how I processed information from the study. Finally, in chapter five implications for the study are communicated. Understanding this case study has importance in how we reflect on our own situations and determine how we will continue to expand our activism.

Transforming our work environments to be structured from feminist theory enables us to act in ways that are liberatory. The potential for restructuring our work environments has importance in our school systems as well, for this is where children in the United States learn how our culture functions. Work as activism has importance for creating equality for our entire beings including our ethnicity, “race”, class, and gender. Only when all aspects of our lives strive for economic, social, and political equality can our communities, locally and globally, understand our full capacity to relate to each other and our environments. The next chapter will be a literary review on work and feminist activism.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: WORK AND FEMINIST ACTIVISM

In the Zen tradition of Buddhism there is a story of a smart and eager university professor who comes to an old Zen master for teachings. The Zen master offers him tea and upon the man's acceptance he pours the tea into the cup until it overflows. As the professor politely expresses his dismay at the overflowing cup, the Zen master keeps on pouring.

"A mind that is already full cannot take in anything new," the master explains, "like this cup, you are full of opinions and preconceptions." In order to find happiness, he teaches his disciple, he must first empty his cup. (Epstein, 1998, xv)

In this story, the Zen master was overflowing the cup to teach the student to examine how one uses preconceived notions to judge experience. The lesson is that we must be willing to open our minds and continually incorporate new thinking and ideas. Relaxing our mental boundaries aids us in seeing our selves and our world in new and exciting ways. We experience a new self with our knowledge, and are better equipped to act according to our goals.

My goal is to understand feminist theory so that I can build frameworks for feminist action. Every part of the learning process is important: what I read and how I evaluate material, the way I experience the theories, my learning communities, and the way I communicate to others what I have assimilated. This experience is not unique to myself in a university setting. It is experienced by all human beings, in all circumstances. Thus, it is vital that I can dialogue feminist ideas with people outside the university. Carolyn G. Heilbrun (1988), in Writing a Woman's Life emphasizes that stories of women begin in

talking to one another and bringing our stories out into the community (p. 46). This is the first step in developing more women's narratives. We must tell one another our stories and continue to think of our lives outside of the perspective of men. Heilbrun (1988) writes, "We know we are without a text, and must discover one" (p. 44). In the book Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, bell hooks stresses the importance of being able to dialogue in multiple settings:

The ability to "translate" ideas to an audience that varies in age, sex, ethnicity, and degree of literacy is a skill feminist educators need to develop. Concentration of feminist educators in universities encourages habitual use of an academic style that may make it impossible for teachers to communicate effectively with individuals who are not familiar with either academic style or jargon. (hooks, 2000, p. 112)

This thesis focuses on feminist theory and practice. Feminist theory is not reserved for the privileged. However, I am fully aware that I write this thesis from a privileged position being White, middle class, and educated. I also assess carefully how multiple aspects of identity interact and form a relationship between myself and my respondent. My responsibility is to continually empty the cup of my preconceptions, to incorporate new understandings of the human experience and use this knowledge outside of the academic environment. Collins (1994) in Fighting Words: Black Women & the Search for Justice puts the challenge for her work in this way:

If you have been able to read this introduction, you are privileged...However, perhaps my efforts to make the ideas in this volume accessible will encourage many of you to use whatever positions you occupy...to make theoretical ideas in general, and perhaps

those in this volume in particular, more comprehensible and therefore more important to more people than just a select few. (p. xxiii)

I have been transformed as I have researched, read, and written the work you now read. Altheide and Johnson (1994), in discussing qualitative work, emphasize that the goal is "not so much objective truth of what is being stated as it is the *process* or *way of knowing*" (p. 496). I will share with you literature that has been key to my understanding of theory and activism.

The review will focus on three themes that inform the case study and its analysis. I will begin with a discussion on what has been called the Second and Third Waves of feminism and how these categories/time periods can be viewed and utilized. Then, I will present material on feminist theory that has been particularly influential to my ideas on work as feminist activism. Finally, the review will turn to works on activism and the environments that are affected by feminist activists. Specifically, I use a qualitative research study that aids in the analysis of women in work that, as Munro (1998) says in the title of her book, involves cultural politics of resistance.

The Second Wave of Feminism

It may be helpful to understand feminism in terms of the historical and cultural context in which the political movement has taken on very distinct characteristics. The First Wave's agenda was to gain women the vote, and later to push for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). For feminism in the United States, an important shift began to emerge during the 1960's. Learning important lessons and strategies from a number of other civil and labor rights movements, the women's movement began to critique the gender roles that

society seemed to have accepted as natural and right. The theories that drove the movement began to more intensely examine the intersectionalities in women's identities including race, class, sexuality, and gender. This questioning not only took place in university settings and within radical groups, but also was very much front and center within the political atmosphere of the time period. Linda Nicholson (1997) states the importance of this particular time period for the women's movement, "The consequence has been a major restructuring of institutions worldwide. Something happened in the 1960's that continues to shape public and private life" (p. 1).

The First Wave's battle for the ERA continued as part of the Second Wave's agenda. Only now that women had the vote, the goal was to get women to the polls to exercise untapped political powers. In addition to carrying on First Wave goals, Second Wave feminists began to examine how the personal is political. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) note, "To be sure, 'the personal is political' is the most used--and abused--motto to come out of the Second Wave" (p. 18). Members of New York Radical Women first conceptualized the phrase, which was then put onto paper by Carol Hanisch, a member of the group (ibid., p.19). Feminist theorists, writers, and activists saw the phrase "the personal is political" to be an important mantra for women's lives. The statement was the beginning of opening and prioritizing women's experience and declaring that the world could not ignore issues that women shared. No longer could women be the bearers of shame, guilt, abuse, and criminalization for who they were and the way they individually chose to live their life, even if it did not fit into what society deemed as proper. The privileged male, white, heterosexual, Western "norm" was falling under scrutiny and protest.

Male dominance was integrated into all aspects of life, and therefore should be challenged. However, as might be expected, a backlash began for women who used the phrase "the personal is political" to take on and act against inequities in their lives. The process of women gaining voice in a patriarchal society is not an easy one, as Baumgardner and Richards (2000) discuss, "Almost immediately, this phrase was misinterpreted to mean that what an individual *does* in her personal life...undermines her feminist credibility and can be levied against her, like a fine (p. 19). McCormick (1994) also writes about the growth of power for the women's movement from 1965 to 1979, and then following this an "ultraconservative backlash against feminism and women's rights and against civil rights in general" (p.17) happening during the Reagan and Bush administrations. While the effects of this societal shift served to produce new questions and challenges to the movement, it was also hope that there was change and growth in the feminist conscience of a nation, although not surprisingly, uncomfortable for many.

In the current year, 2001, we have just seen the transfer of presidential power back to the conservative side with the election of George Bush II. This is a critical time in history to continue pushing the feminist agenda toward the center. Marcia Gillespie (April/May 2001), the current editor of Ms. states:

I have no illusions about what life with Mr. "can't we all be civil" in the White House is going to be like. While he rhapsodizes about compassionate conservatism in carefully crafted speeches in Hallmark-cute settings, his administration will be eviscerating environmental and worker-related rights and protections; stroking mega-businesses; undermining *Roe v. Wade* and the remains of affirmative action; ignoring

calls for racial, gender, and economic justice; packing the courts; and widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots. (p. 1)

Part of the push toward the center of society from the margins is the development of feminist theory. For feminists from the Second Wave, this meant (and continues to be about) answering questions about where oppression for women originates and deconstructing social and biological theories about gender and sex categories. The oppressions that have existed for so long needed to be analyzed for the diverse experiences. Then, theorists took on the question of how oppression could be transformed into liberation. hooks (2000) remarks about the development of feminist theory during the 1960's and 70's and how it's initial intention "was to provide a blueprint for the movement" (p. xi). In order for the movement to be meaningful, its theories expanded to include the voices from a larger group of individual women's experience, not only those of white women. This is important because "looking at the interlocking nature of gender, race, and class was the perspective that changed the direction of feminist thought" (ibid., p. xii). One of the greatest strengths of feminism is its ability to continually grow to understand the intricate web of systems of domination and set a course for social transformation. Feminist theory throughout history, referred to here as First, Second, and Third Waves, has and continues to "always challenge, shake us up, provoke, shift our paradigms, change the way we think, turn us around...that's what revolution does" (ibid., p. xiv-xv).

For my case study, the idea of the Second and Third Waves is important for three reasons. First, from these time periods are the people (teachers, friends, writers and activists) who have served as my feminist mentors and guides in a world that challenges us to unravel the threads that weave layers of patriarchal systems. Next, theories that have shaped the

formation of my feminist identity have come from a long line of intellectuals and activists, but I reside in what may be called The Third Wave of feminism. This is due to the time period in which I was born, and because of the historical point at which I propose new theory. The elaboration on my cultural and historical place is essential because it frames the interpretation of my research. Lastly, the Second and Third Waves denote historical time markers that my respondent and myself have negotiated from different places in history. My respondent is from a different generation than myself, grew up in a different location geographically and socially as well. It is important to understand how we view our worlds through the lens of feminism, so my interpretation of another's life history can be held accountable. It must also be noted here that my respondent does not necessarily identify with the label "Second Wave", but she does identify with the issues and historical happenings for the feminist movement during this time.

One of the Second Wave theories that give insight into the world of women and work is Linda Alcoff's (1997) idea of positionality, a theory she discusses in her work entitled, Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory. She argues that the category *woman* has been problematic for philosophers and scientists in general, but perhaps even more perplexing to feminists who seek to understand the implications for sex and/or gender identity. She says that philosophies of cultural feminism and post-modernist (also called post-structuralist and post-essentialist) feminism, while they have unique theoretical values, come up incomplete when determining the negotiation of women's identities and emancipation from sexism. Alcoff highlights theory that pushes feminist theory into a discussion of women's subjectivity that neither assumes nor erases identity. Then, she proposes her own concept of positionality, which highlights how women

negotiate and view their locale within a fluid context of history, environment, and biology, and constantly act upon the creation of a self within these circumstances.

Cultural feminists like Mary Daly and Adrienne Rich have taken the perspective that the essence of being a female is not what is problematic, but rather the undervalue of characteristics traditionally labeled as feminine (Alcoff, 1997). This reclaiming of women's true nature can then serve to build stronger coalitions with other women and slowly change dominant thought patterns about the spiritual and biological female traits. Alcoff (1997) says, "Daly, identifies a female essence, defines patriarchy as the subjugation and colonization of this essence out of male envy and need, and then promotes a solution that revolves around rediscovering our essence and bonding with other women" (p. 333). This cultural feminist viewpoint is often referred to as essentialism.

The call for respecting and appreciating the abilities of women has definite feminist appeal. Instead of the abuse and victimization of women for certain characteristics, it would seem as though the status of women could be raised if society began to understand how vital these characteristics are to a peaceful, sustainable environment. However, as Alcoff points out, the theory becomes problematic when it starts to account for the many differences between women. Essentialism tends to make broad statements about who women are globally. A world of women cannot be universalized for who they are, let alone how they can be liberated. The same patterns of generalization that have deemed feminine characteristics weak, abnormal, and deviant from male attributes may now be valued, but this thought system continues to lend itself to the problematic overgeneralizations of women as a group exhibiting simple and unitary subjectivities. Alcoff (1997) notes:

For many feminists, the problem with the cultural feminist response to sexism is that it does not criticize the fundamental mechanism of oppressive power used to perpetuate sexism and in fact reinvokes that mechanism in its supposed solution...On this view, essentialist formulations of womanhood, even when made by feminists, "tie" the individual to her identity as a woman and thus cannot represent a solution to sexism. (p. 336)

The outcome of cultural feminism must be examined in order to see if it can be part of a mass-based movement for women. Does the valuing of a woman who works a full-time job and comes home to do most of the child and home care work mean a more equal society? Or, is a woman who chooses not to have a family, therefore not in the sphere of recognition for nurturing qualities, get labeled as less of a woman? These are the questions and problems of an essentialist approach to liberation.

Post-modernist feminism takes on the idea that the imprints of culture have in fact prevented us from ever constructing the identities of women, whether through biology or societal influence. In contrast to essentialist feminism, post-modernist feminism declares that the question of "what is woman?" can never really be determined because the individual exists in and through the presence of multiple factors, including culture.

Alcoff (1997) says of the post-modernist viewpoint, "they say we cannot understand society as the conglomerate of individual intentions but, rather, must understand individual intentions as constructed within a social reality" (p. 337). The appeal of this viewpoint is that it leaves the individual free from predetermination of femininity or masculinity by biology. Rather, it acknowledges a social reality where the identity develops. However, Alcoff disagrees with this theory's inability to recognize agency within the stamp of the specific

time and place a being evolves and changes. Her argument is that post-structuralists, "deny the subject's ability to reflect on the social discourse and challenge its determinations" (Alcoff, p. 338). Margery Wolf (1992) notes of the seemingly contradictory relationship between post-modernist theories and feminism when doing anthropological research:

There is a curious postmodernist politics that condemns us for our individual colonialist attitudes but remains aloof from the often bloody results of oppressive governments, of the left and the right. Feminist anthropologists, on the other hand, often find themselves caught between their own commitment to improving the lives of women everywhere and their discipline's concern about interference in local politics. (p. 6)

The theorists that Alcoff turns to for critique and expansion of the ideas of essentialism and post-modernism are Teresa de Lauretis and Denise Riley. Lauretis conceives of a subjectivity that takes into account the continual interaction of the self with the immediate body and the navigating of a culture. Humans, specifically women, are not generic beings who are only a product of biology (the limited assumption of being either male or female), nor is a woman molded and shaped haphazardly by the environment acting upon her. Women think about and analyze who they are in relation to their culture, thus transforming and creating new ways of inhabiting their environments. Alcoff says, "The key component of Lauretis's formulation is the dynamic she poses at the heart of subjectivity: a fluid interaction in constant motion and open to alteration by self-analyzing practice" (p. 343). Thinking about who we are and the locale in which we inhabit leads the individual to form new theory and a plan to carry on with their life. This is precisely what is done in the privileged world of academia, but Alcoff emphasizes that the way we think about our lives

and react is a universal endeavor that is not limited to such things as theoretical papers in academic journals. Alcoff continues, "Subjectivity may thus become imbued with race, class, and gender without being subjected to an overdetermination that erases agency" (p. 343).

The last theorist that Linda Alcoff (1997) uses to inform her concept of positionality is Denise Riley. Riley problematizes the overdetermination of biological and cultural theories and the importance of understanding how historically, this has determined so-called "women's needs". Riley determines that there must be an examination of how social programs and policies address the needs of women, and also their children who are often under their sole care. Then, the theoretical and political agendas must seek to meet the needs of women and their children, while not enforcing the belief in concepts such as an essentialized motherhood. Therefore, it is true that women have immediate needs due to various situations including childcare and health insurance. Nevertheless, it must be understood that the attitudes towards these situations are often the outcome of how society views women, the history influencing public policy, and the individual ways women view and react to their own lives.

The political and ethical agenda to resist and create new alternatives for ourselves and other women in society must take into consideration that women do indeed have needs, but they cannot be assumed by science or the culture they live in. The concept of positionality put forth by Alcoff posits that we have complex layers of identity such as woman, white, mother, middle class, etc., but that these labels can serve not as the end of the story, but as the beginning to a greater understanding of self and others. We reflect on our historical, cultural, and biological places to understand who we are and what our next progression will

be. She says, "thus we can say at one and the same time that gender is not natural, biological, universal, ahistorical, or essential and yet still claim that gender is relevant because we are taking gender as a position from which to act politically" (Alcoff, p. 349).

The concept of positionality is of importance to the feminist analysis of qualitative research because a case study will include the framework that allows a woman to reflect on her own identity. At the same time, a researcher must acknowledge that the respondent's place in the social network is not ultimately final due to being biologically female or because the respondent lives in a patriarchal society. The position from which a woman speaks can be utilized by the woman and by the researcher to reflect and develop a plan of action. We interpret ourselves as we interpret each other. A researcher will always have an impact on the site in which she or he participates because the dynamics of a context are uncongealed, and always subject to change. Alcoff says, "From the perspective of that fairly determinate though fluid and mutable position, women can themselves articulate a set of interests and ground a feminist politics" (p. 350). As women we are constantly altering the context in which we exist. As feminists we can set the course for a political plan that understands and responds to sexist discourse along with racism, colonialism, and other forms of discrimination. This means that there is not one truth but many, and many ways to respond and be liberated.

The Third Wave of Feminism

Baumgardner and Richards (2000) give a definition for the Third Wave as follows:

Third Wave (noun) ...Third Wave means the core mass of the current women's movement in their late teens through their thirties, roughly speaking--the ones who

grew up with Judy Blume books, *Free to Be... You and Me* and *Sesame Street*.

Another way of looking at the Third Wave is as the "daughters," both real and metaphorical, of the Second Wave, the women who read *Ms.* magazine, *Our Bodies, Our Selves*, and lobbied for *Roe v. Wade* and the ERA. (p. 402)

In the December 2000 issue of the Utne Reader is an article titled "5 Signs of the Coming Revolution" about why in the next fifty years America is going to be a very different place, and maybe even better than we think. The article contains five essays, all excerpts from the book Imagine: What America Could be in the 21st Century, edited by Marianne Williamson. One of the most inspiring essays is by Paul Hawken, who speaks to the resurgence of citizens' movements. In the United States that number totals more than 30,000, and worldwide the number exceeds 100,000 (p. 73). Hawken comments on how the groups address a number of issues, including feminist ones. They are following Gandhian philosophies of non-violent activism and resistance. He says that while "the groups tend to be local, marginal, poorly funded, and overworked" (p. 73), they are part of a larger pattern that is emerging. He says, "If you ask these groups for their principles, frameworks, conventions, models, or declarations, you will find that they do not conflict. Never before in history has this happened...it is not centralized, based on power, or led by charismatic white males" (p. 73). These statements hold a lot of possibility. My generation has grown up hearing about the horrors that we have inherited including environmental destruction and a world diseased and at war. What appears to be a big mess left to my generation and the ones to follow has a large amount of hope. Coalitions are forming on a global scale and women are an integral part of these large peaceful groups that are finding their way into politics. I believe that while my generation has been criticized for its disunity, I can see that indeed it

does have a political consciousness. I see that every time I take a women's studies class, or when I talk to my fellow volunteers at the women's shelter. While the top five executives for the Fortune 500 companies number less than one hundred women last I heard, I still don't believe that secretarial jobs are our destiny (unless of course one *wants* to be a secretary). The Third Wave is starting to put its experiences into the cultural atmosphere. Despite what the media may tell you about the twenty and thirty-somethings, we are learning from our Second Wave mentors how to use our experiences as a base for the authority to act. Combine that with our ability to stay connected, demand access to independent media, and commitment to feminist goals, and you have all the strength you need to continue with the massive responsibility of a global feminist agenda. Findlen (1995) states, "What may appear to be a splintering in this generation often comes from an honest assessment of our differences as each of us defines her place and role in feminism" (p. xiii). One of the ways we can make a difference is in changing the way we work.

Women Working in a Man's World

Second wave feminists have challenged the societal expectation and practice that in the public arena, there is a designation for individual jobs and a workplace structure that is gendered. Typical women's jobs have traditionally, and continue to consist of jobs such as teaching, nursing, and secretarial positions. Even when women have assumed roles in places such as local and national government, corporations, and small businesses, they have witnessed gender barriers that prescribe the attributes they will bring to their jobs because they are women, and consequently prevent mobility and promotion within those jobs. In addition, while many women successfully navigate through typically male-dominated work

environments, racism and homophobia continue to be obstacles to economic independence. Women from minority groups have worked outside the home for a long time, and have not necessarily seen the economic liberation that feminism has claimed will be a benefit from holding income-generating jobs (see hooks, 2000). This is because "capitalism is a system that depends on the exploitation of underclass groups for its survival" (ibid., p. 102). How and why we work must be re-examined and reformed.

Women and Work: Teaching

Part of understanding solutions to economic and psychological exploitations of women in work requires examining the multiple dimensions of what it means for a woman to work. One of the books that has been pivotal to my understanding are Petra Munro's (1998) Subject to Fiction: Women Teacher' Life History Narrative and the Cultural Politics of Resistance. I have included an extensive discussion of this qualitative case study. Munro's book is an excellent example of what it means to be an activist in a traditionally women's occupation, and she illustrates how women's identities and environments are impacted by feminism. This is important literature for understanding my case study of a woman who identifies herself as an activist, and her job as a vocation.

Book Analysis: Subject to Fiction

Women's participation in the stereotypically female profession such as teaching requires openness to the many dimensions that exist within a position that is extremely unique. While a teacher's students may look to her for guidance and knowledge, the attitude of those who are not her students is generally different. Women teachers live in a world that

contradicts itself. Women teachers have an agenda set forth by their culture to raise the nation's children in a way that is compatible with the dominant views. A woman's personal and professional decisions to go into teaching may be comprised of an entirely different agenda, one that seeks to challenge status quo, and bring about social change. This conflict is examined in Petra Munro's book, Subject to Fiction. The ideas about how social activism is a pivotal part of the decision to go into teaching expand under her guidance. The teachers she chose to study are examples who exhibit the qualities of a progressive philosophy. Munro finds that there is much more to their story.

Beginning with theory, then going into life stories of three women teachers, weaving in theory, then critiquing the process, Munro digs deep into the identity construction of women teachers. Munro is seeking to go beyond popular notions of teacher as caregiver and nurturer, and that it is somehow *natural* for a woman to step into this role with the desire to be a pseudo mother. This book provides an intense examination of the levels of power that teachers find themselves within, and without simultaneously. My specific focus of this section is the examination of Munro's perspective on how women teachers use forms of quiet resistance, as opposed to easily categorized and visible activism. By quiet resistance, I mean the ways in which the women resist being erased as a subject, while not being used to entertain assumptions that they are stereotypically passive. In addition, I will discuss Munro's process of interpreting these actions given her personal ideals about motivation to enter the field of teaching. The type of resistance Munro initially sought did not materialize and exhibit itself in the conscious, blatant type of decision Munro favored. Many of the decisions that the women made to take positions of power were done privately and personally, yet the response sets a model and standard for feminist educators. The analyses I

would like to highlight are how Munro interprets the women's use of power from positions of teacher and administrator to change the system, and how Munro formulates new theory about this particular kind of activism and identification of self.

Munro begins the book with the rationale of her work and the theory that is supporting and encouraging her inquiry. She cites Valerie Walkerdine (1990) when speaking of the complexity of the teacher capacity, "being a woman teacher is an impossible fiction....to be a woman is to lack authority, knowledge and power. To be a teacher is to have authority, knowledge and power" (p. 1). This is an indication that the theory presented in this book came from an arduous journey to find a relevant method for studying these lives. Munro desired theories that could serve with lack of distortion, showing where points of resistance occur in action, and the personal reflections that the women gave in the interviews. Accuracy in life history research is a process of examining a spectrum of possibilities in interpretation, as I will discuss more in depth later, when talking about Munro's theorizing process.

When the question of constructing an identity within the setting of a patriarchal culture is examined, not only can the narratives have multiple interpretations, but also the interpretations are under the light of scrutiny. Assumptions aren't always on target when trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle of human lives. It's as if Munro is guiding a walk to demonstrate the many paths that women in teaching take and how they come to decide which way to go. Only the description of the path is not simple, for we are all blindfolded by patriarchy. Then, she has to take us, the readers and scholars, with her in words to understand the situation. Munro can make no presumption about the women's actions. Instead, she puts on her hip waders through all the possibilities she can summon. The background of theory

that once appeared to be applicable to women's lives is exposed as having pliable boundaries. For example, Munro's initial ideas about resistance, upon closer examination, have roots in a masculinist framework. She says about theorizing Cleo's gender construction, "it was seductive to construct a female heroine. Yet, this unitary reading of Cleo as rebel, threatened not only to reproduce a male master narrative but to produce as single, stable unitary self" (p. 87). Her feminist lens demanded she tell things differently, and dismantle the expectations of a unitary subject in the formation of a gender identity.

The dissection of how the three teachers' formation of an identity within the field, using many areas of theory, serves in making the field of questions larger when investigating complex human lives. Munro shows how power ebbs and flows in their verbal and non-verbal forms of resistance. At the same time, she evaluates how much power she has to provide a truthful interpretation of their resistance from her position in a society of patriarchal cultural norms. She notes, "My original desire to conduct collaborative, reflexive research which would acknowledge the intersubjective process of meaning making was in reality quite a different story" (p.126). Forms of resistance were complex and personally tailored to each teacher's situation and life philosophy. The book is a process by which a feminist educational thinker examines a society where teachers have contradictory power, by trying to find a methodology and framework for interpretation, only to turn and deconstruct the entire process.

The chapters are set up in a way that brings the reader through the same process that the researcher went through when seeing how teacher's roles fit into subject positions (or one who is a knowledge generator) and object positions (or one who is only a facilitator of knowledge). Munro frames a question for her study, she wants to find out, "how women

negotiate a self within and against cultural norms" (p. 1), then puts forth theories that could aid in the interpretation. She makes some conclusions that she hopes to bring forth, that is, to "seek simultaneously to create and disrupt the notion of the subject" (p.1).

We are introduced to the life history narratives of three women: Agnes, Cleo, and Bonnie. Munro breaks down and rebuilds many possibilities for interpretation of these life stories. Munro admits there are many ways to relate to their lives. She says, "writing a life history is not about 'getting the story right'....I can, however, interpret the complex ways in which she negotiated her life as a form of self-representational agency" (p. 62). The collection of theories that manifest themselves as tools for analysis come from postmodernism, feminism, neo-Marxism, resistance theory, ethnographical theory, critical theory, and sociological theory. These, and the application that Munro provides, gives the reader of Subject to Fiction insight into how women, particularly in teaching roles, negotiate their subjectivity. Following Munro's model, the text is flexible for us to relate our own situations and incorporate and dissect notions of living in a gendered society:

Thus I turn to what I consider the aspects of poststructuralist theory that enable feminists to rethink notions of subjectivity and, subsequently, power, agency and resistance....women are not merely victims of patriarchy, but are also agents, although their acts of resistance need not conform to acts of agency inscribed in primarily patriarchal discourses. This opens up spaces in which to envision the woman teacher as simultaneously rejecting dominant discourses as well as accommodating them. (p. 35)

Each woman's story had areas that challenged Munro to use the theory to determine how the stories fit into subject positions, and how the women negotiated their own agency, albeit not always in the way the Munro longed for.

With the narrative of Agnes, Munro struggled with the interpretation of how Agnes represented herself as a teacher and administrator. Agnes claimed that teaching was not something that she originally desired to do, but rather fell into as a result of the historical time period. Munro questions how this perspective serves to resist dominant ideologies. She identifies with Agnes' internal conflict over taking up a profession that is not valued because it is mainly women who do it. Munro has the same inner conflict as she notes in her opening sentence, "I did not want to become a teacher" (p. 1). Munro then sees that they (Agnes and herself) have the same resistance to the idea of this powerless profession, yet Agnes' response is to go into teaching, saying that was the option women had. Her teaching style changed with the transformation of the educational structure, not necessarily out of some hidden agenda for activism. Agnes feels this is in response to what her choices were at different points in history. Munro does not analyze this as a form of passivity. Instead, she rethinks the idea of resistance, and concludes that resistance may also embody a representation of a subjective self within a profession that one sees as externally chosen.

Cleo's story echoes the same irony. Munro is struck by her narrative of a rebellious self, guided by a vision of a strong grandmother figure. Yet, again in this story, teaching appears not to be the first choice for profession, but nonetheless a site for resisting cultural norms. Munro notes, "I was taken aback that someone who had committed more than thirty years of her life to teaching, administration and social studies curriculum reform could so easily have 'lived another life'. Where was the committed social activist I sought who took

up teaching as an act of social change? This was not the resistance I was seeking" (p. 74). Munro wants this progressive teacher to actively resist, as Munro seeks to do in her own life, and for this resistance to serve as inspiration for feminist educators such as her. Munro "sought to recover the stories of women teachers who identified themselves as political subversives" (p. 109). She then realized that the act of telling their stories involved not just fitting their lives into 'resistance theories', but determining how the limited definitions of resistance are problematic.

For Bonnie's story, the development of identity and forms of resistance comes when she tells about how as a professional she self-analyzes and defines her own successes. She actually displayed a lot of the activism that Munro was going after initially. Munro says, "Bonnie asserts a public, authoritative voice" (p. 103) and is met with forms of control. Bonnie is aware of the sexism that exists in a situation where a school administrator did not want the women to wear sandals. Bonnie sees this instance, as showing how "superficial" and "trivial" (p.102) her first principal could be. Many times the control began with the body. From a feminist perspective, this is a unique aspect in what Munro includes and analyzes about Bonnie's story. This adds complexity to theorizing about women's negotiation of a subjective, gendered self because the control is mental and physical. Munro notes, "In the end, it was not the challenge of fitting these women's stories into the dominant theoretical constructs that proved profound, but the stories themselves, which embodied the agency of self representation" (p. 111).

In the end of the book, Munro examines her intention and actual outcome of her study. She admits that there are more questions on this new level of understanding of women's lives and the methods used in research. In her quest for understanding this

collaborative process she says, "It has led me to a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and how these are deeply embedded in the relational acts of the research process. My understanding of the multiple ways we create, negotiate and make sense of the power relationships in our lives has been enlarged" (p.133). As a reader and scholar, my understandings of power, too, have been enlarged.

What makes the qualitative process of this study so exciting and interesting is the deep level of interpretation, of equally complex lives. Agnes, Cleo and Bonnie have life stories that cannot be dissected into tidy categories. Munro sought to provide a research study that gave voice to women's resistance in a culture that seeks to limit women as characters. Munro notes, "How we speak our world is a political act" (p.108). While she constantly questioned and reconstructed her analysis of women teachers, she achieved the goals of her study beyond what she could have conceived in the beginning. The post-modernist and feminist theories that allowed her to grasp the possibility of multiple perspectives also required her to struggle with creating ways in which these women's stories could be told, and not confined to notions of 'truth'. The delicate work of telling these stories confirms that personal bias makes analysis difficult, yet its presence needs to always be considered and incorporated into qualitative research work. Munro has indeed answered the question of how women negotiate their sense of identity within teaching. The activism she sought to give voice is present in the stories, but the language in which she originally spoke of this resistance changed. She notes, "as I learned from Agnes, Cleo, and Bonnie, resistance is not an 'act' but a movement, a continual displacement of others' attempts to name our realities" (p. 125). The level of telling the story of the movement that is attained by Munro can be considered a source of strength for the revolution she seeks.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined literature that informs the ideas of work as feminist activism. The First and Second Waves were presented as time markers for understanding the feminist movement. These categories also present the distinct ways in which generations differ from each other in the feminist movement. There is radicalness that is to be honored in both, and coalitions with other movements that continue to be vital to the future of feminism.

The selections of literature presented in this review were chosen for their focus on three important concepts integral to the understanding of work as feminist activism. First, the idea of Second and Third Wave feminist activism was examined. Secondly, the specific feminist theory of positionality illustrated how women are a part of their patriarchal environment and how they negotiate it. Thirdly, Munro's work highlighted women who resist society's interpretations of their lives and work in favor of their own inherently political understandings of knowledge and power. Munro's study also provide a model for qualitative methodology. This model contributed to the methodology I used to form my case study and analysis, which will be presented in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER THREE. CASE STUDY AND ANALYSIS

In the book In the Time of the Butterflies, by Julia Alvarez, the story is told about four sisters and their role as revolutionaries. They are such key roles in the movement toward liberation that they became icons of the revolution that sought to overthrow Trujillo and his oppressive regime. It appears from the story that Alvarez presents that all of the sisters, or *Las Mariposas* as they are called, are each born with a call to action for social justice. One character in particular, Minerva, the craving for freedom takes on the role of liberator from a very early age. As a child in 1938 she says:

Sometimes, watching rabbits in their pens, I'd think, I'm no different from you, poor things. One time, I opened a cage to set a half-grown doe free. I even gave her a slap to get her going. But she wouldn't budge! She was used to her little pen...I was the one hurting her, insisting she be free. Silly bunny, I thought, you're nothing like me. (Alvarez, 1985, p. 11)

The sisters and the people seeking liberation of the Dominican Republic eventually take their cues from Minerva and her courage to strive for social justice that has been evident her entire life.

The story of *The Butterflies* is historical fiction. The Mirabal family really did exist and are key characters in the history of the Dominican Republic. However, true to her ability and license as a novelist, Alvarez has developed a multi-layered account that presents these characters not as how they were, but as she says, "true to the spirit of the real Mirabals...Obviously, these sisters, who fought one tyrant, have served as models for women fighting against injustices of all kinds" (1995, p. 324).

When we do qualitative research on women's lives we have the privilege of allowing women to speak for themselves. Our job is to take what they give us (their reality) and compare and contrast their experience what we know (our reality). The challenge is self-evident: while we seek to develop new theory on the human condition, we also must remain true to the spirit of our respondents. Alvarez notes the same task in her fiction writing, "I realized, too, that such deification was dangerous, the same god-making impulse that had created our tyrant [Trujillo]. And ironically, by making them myth we lost the challenge of their courage as impossible for us, ordinary men and women" (p.324).

This project seeks to allow the story to be told accurately from personal account, and also analyzed through a feminist lens as a perspective on the formation of her identity that has brought her to this position. The position of executive director is an extension of who she already is, and provides agency for her goals.

My intention is threefold. First, it is to allow a look inside the life of a woman activist and see parallels to our own lives. Second, it is to understand how the work of one can extend into a community and its people. Third, it is a study that provides the chance to apply the lessons into our own social activism, especially for those who have access to social justice curriculum and are educators on this subject.

Petra Munro states, "Listening to and interpreting women's lives has been central to the feminist reconstruction of the world....I paradoxically seek simultaneously to create and disrupt the notion of the subject" (1998, p. 1). What Munro speaks of is one of the challenges of qualitative research. It is the ability to write women's lives in a way that gives enough attention to who they are at the exact moments when the words are spoken, while not underestimating the complexity that goes beyond that moment.

Thinking about and analyzing activism in someone's life can be inspiring and extremely challenging. If we acknowledge that the person is a non-unitary being, meaning that we are complex souls, we open doors to deeper understandings. We still may make judgements on the consistency of actions and words, but we must acknowledge that we can never predict all components of someone's identity. I have found that I analyze deeper the composition of the person, listen more intensely, and focus on the connections that the respondent is communicating if I remember to seek the layers of personality that give someone their identity. I would also argue that only in this way, by intense listening and eventual dialogue with the intention of open understanding, can there be a relationship of learning from each other.

Leslie Bloom (1998) affirms the importance of acknowledging non-unitary subjectivity when she says:

By understanding the potential of non-unitary subjectivity, feminists can read it not as a weakness, but as a strength and as an alternative feminist discourse. It is a strength because giving up the myth of unified subjectivity allows respect for the complexity of subjectivity and the validation of conflict as a source through which women become strong and learn to speak their own experiences. (p. 93)

In the case of a woman activist, the growth and development of her activism philosophies relies on experiences where conflict arises and she allows herself to see agency, either in her own physical reaction or a shift in mode of thinking. Thus, it is in the essence of a non-unitary subject that the seeds of change sprout and take form. This study looks at three areas of a woman's life where activism exists as part of her identity: her current workplace, her

volunteer projects including international partnerships with women in Slovakia, and family life. The personal and political are interwoven in the fabric of activism.

The story I will tell is of a woman activist in the year 2000. She is the executive director of a non-profit organization. She is intimately tied to the neighborhood where her office is located, but her projects are for the entire community. I first met my respondent in the fall of 1999 at a noon discussion group held on campus. After the group met, we talked about her work and what I was studying on at the University. She encouraged me to come by her office and look at the different programs they offered, which I did. The next semester, the spring of 2000, I was beginning this research project. The local school system declined my request to interview one of their more progressive feminist teachers, so I began to contemplate a more expanded view of who would qualify as a feminist educator. I was very excited when Olga was eager to participate in my research project. In our first informal meeting I discovered that she had a long history of involvement in public schools as well as community service. She shared with me that she was anxious for the chance to reflect on her own life and to read my interpretations. She also said that she was intrigued by qualitative research and trusted the process because the professor who was teaching the research methods course has a very good reputation. We then set up our first meeting, which would be an observation of her work environment. After that we continued to meet on a regular basis, usually in her office for conversation on a wide variety of subjects ranging from her years teaching in the public schools and serving on the local school board to how a budget works in a non-profit organization. We wrapped up the research project toward the end of that semester, allowing for ample time to finish writing. We continue to see each other at campus functions as well as spontaneous meetings for coffee or visits to each other's offices.

Making a Name For One's Self

Allow me to introduce you to Olga. Or, at least that is what my respondent is choosing to be called for this study. The process of her naming herself exemplifies a lot about her character. It was at the last interview, after the tape recorder had been shut off for the day, and one of the women who work in the office had come in to ask Olga a question. She stayed to talk about some other events that had happened over the weekend, a common occurrence in the kind of work environment that values individual experience. As I was collecting my things, I remembered that qualitative research required a certain degree of anonymity, and that included a pseudonym for a real name. I asked her to think about what kind of a name she would like to have, and we joked that this was her opportunity to choose the name she had always dreamed of. After going through a number of names, she deferred to her college-aged colleague for input. A brief brainstorm ensued and a name was jokingly chosen: Olga. She laughed, "Olga it is!" she said. It had a certain Norwegian ring to it, and that made it appealing to her. It was never a name she would choose for herself, but she was willing to go with it.

I thought about the process of naming afterwards. Frankly, I wasn't really excited about the name Olga, and I knew she wasn't either. I even thought about asking her to reconsider, to pick something more appropriate. By appropriate, I meant something that wasn't a joke. But, as I thought beyond the name to how it was chosen, I began to see the significance to my respondent. The people that she works with in the organization's office are very important to her, and more important than the phonetics of the name was the process in which it was chosen. It was a shared decision, even in the apparent joking manner. It

provided a moment of laughter in the community that began in the office. Olga had exemplified shared leadership, even in such a small task. It was now the name that would be used for identifying herself. bell hooks (2000) cites M. Scott Peck who says that individuals who are in community "delight in each other, and make other's conditions our own" (p. 129). It was settled then in a very simple, yet characteristic form of shared leadership. From this point on she would be known as Olga, named by an important member of her community.

Empowering Women and Girls and Eliminating Racism

Olga works for a national organization that has had a long history in the United States and the world. Their mission is to empower women and girls and eliminate racism. When I asked her about how she sees herself as a feminist she said,

I remember not getting a job on campus a number of years ago before I came to the [organization]. I was interviewed and I was asked this very question, "Do you see yourself as a feminist?" My answer was, "No, I see myself as a humanist. I believe that women and men each have special skills and everybody has the right to do the things that they can do." And it wasn't because I thought feminist had a connotation that would make a difference -- it was more my sense of equality. However, if you ask me today if I'm a feminist I'd say, "Yes, I am."

This shift in perception for Olga is important to the discussion of her activism. While it is apparent that she had the basic philosophy of equality, the perception of the patriarchal power structures specifically enables her to be an advocate for women.

The same crucial shift in perception of oppression and liberation can be shown in tracing the development of a social movement and philosophy called ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism has ties to many other theoretical paradigms such as those found in ecology and peace studies. However, ecofeminists found that, as Bystydzienski (1994) states, "their analysis had to go 'deeper than deep ecology'....in their focus on patriarchy...they point out that values and attitudes traditionally associated with men in patriarchal societies foster and maintain systems of control" (p. 496). Therefore, the attention to gender provided by a feminist framework gives way for an analysis of the systems of domination. The result is a more comprehensive vision for liberation. Olga affirms this:

Feminism has a new definition for me today that I didn't have when I first answered that question. I think what crystallized it for me was a sign I saw one time that said "Feminism is the Radical Notion That Women are People" in the sense that until we overcome this sense of second class citizenship towards women, we have to be in the forefront pushing for women to have equality. And so it's more of an activist word. Humanist is still how I view the world. But feminist is the way I can be proactive for women and girls.

Olga sees herself as someone who has sought to empower all groups of people. Now, from a new definition of what it means to be a feminist, she has a new way to think about being an activist for women's equality. Before this shift in definition she was active in the same organization she works for now in the city where she grew up, as well as the League of Women Voters, worked for seven years at the Department of Human Services distributing governmental surplus for low-income families, especially those with single-mothers, and served two terms on the city school board. However, this moment that revealed to her what feminism was allowed her to identify with a movement that shares her vision of equality and justice.

Olga explained that one area of her life where identifying herself as feminist can be problematic is in her marriage. Even though her husband is personally very supportive of the pro-woman work that she does, she feels she plays a role of explaining to him what feminism is:

I think in my marriage, it probably is the way to articulate to a male person the notions of feminism and why it's not a negative word. And that's a lot of work. It doesn't come easily because a lot of people still see this as the "F" word. It's the radical women ripping their clothes off and marching down the street...so it seems to me that I have to continually dialogue about feminist issues, about feminism and about people who are active feminists and try to explain or try to put into context some of those issues to a male who just doesn't get it. The interesting thing is that this male absolutely believes in equality, but he sees being an activist feminist as being too radical.

Understanding what feminism is, one might assume that because of all that Olga has been involved with that naturally she is a feminist. But, in the moment that *she* begins to interpret her actions as such is how she empowers herself. Bloom (1998) notes how important this expression of identity is, "to interpret fragmented subjectivity as a weakness or flaw would mean being blind to the energy that such fragmenting can engender in an individual...who, upon reflection, learns to grow as a result of it" (p. 93).

Although Olga does not identify herself as a radical feminist, she understands and encourages this kind of activism:

The feminist movement I remember were the women walking down the street loud and powerful. They made a tremendous impact. It was that "in your face" kind of

struggle...and it was very exciting...and it was a good swing in that pendulum.

Sometimes you have to go way over in one direction in order to have some balance because you were too far over in the other direction. And that's what the feminist movement did, like the civil rights movement, to wake us up.

She also identifies women who are considered by many to be radical feminists as personal influences:

I have heard Gloria Steinem recently. She still impresses me as a dynamic, articulate, talented woman. Ms. Magazine has probably made one of the biggest impacts on the women of America with its leadership and articles that would probably not be seen in mainstream press. Issues of sexual orientation for example--they have done a fabulous job. Issues of women around the world. It's not just myopic; it just doesn't look at America

Maya Angelou is another feminist she admires:

[she] is probably another one that I've really been in awe of. I remember when I first read I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings and how touched I was...how much more I became aware of child abuse and incest...hearing her for the first time and hearing her read her poetry just sent goose pimples all over me because she had such a marvelous voice! I would go anywhere just to hear her voice and feel that power that she has!

In our discussion on role models it was evident that these feminist women provided inspiration for her work. But, the women with whom she most identifies are the public figures who retain a certain air of domesticity while accomplishing pro-woman goals:

The first person that jumps to my mind is Roslyn Carter. She came to Iowa when Jimmy was running the first time. She, as a candidate's spouse, was so impressive as a committed human being to changing the world. I guess I was as amazed by her as I was her husband, who I had a lot of respect for. There was just something about her. She was very personable, very warm, but not very intrusive, very quiet. A Southern Lady.

Marian Anderson is another one of her influences in the area of activism. It's interesting to note the qualities that she admires in each of the women that she describes. I believe people admire qualities in others that we strive for in ourselves, and on the flip side of that, we are disappointed in others by tendencies that we view as our own weaknesses. This is why people seek out those who possess admirable qualities. In each of the narratives about women role models, it is evident that Olga admires qualities of commitment, warmth, and a contagious energy. I can see those things in Olga, and how it serves to make her successful at the job of executive director. One particular discussion on Marian Anderson, the African American singer who was not allowed to sing in Carnegie Hall because of her race is one that I read over, and listened to the way Olga said it, multiple times, "Her quiet contesting racism in the U.S....how many people she moved by the way she sang at the Lincoln Memorial, like 'In your face Carnegie Hall!'" In this description Olga makes note of both the quiet contesting and the power she displayed when Anderson took her talent to a different venue, ironically of a President known for the Emancipation Proclamation. Olga values and seeks the combination of traditional femininity and feminist protest.

Working for women on a global scale has been a project for Olga. She and her

husband have had an ongoing relationship with the country of Slovakia in Eastern Europe. In 1999 she took her knowledge gained through the League of Women Voters and represented the organization she now works for in a week-long training for women mayors in this post-communist country. Her husband, who works for the University, had a project he was also working on in Slovakia that enabled them to travel there together. She fondly recalls this trip where interests in her marriage and her vocation crossed to form a unique partnership, "We were able to talk business because our marriage is as inclusive as my work." All areas of her life intersect with activism, providing for unique opportunities such as this international trip.

Matynia (1995) documents the Slovakian women's movement where the transition from communism to democracy has been particularly hard on women. This is the first time that the people are specifically dealing with the woman question, including the role of gender in their society. The four countries experiencing this transition of government forms (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary) share a similar culture, history and geographical location. They are also sharing the effects on women after the overthrow of communist government. Women during communist rule did not see the need to organize into a specific movement for their rights because governmental programs met their basic needs of employment, childcare, and health care. While these services were not of the highest quality, they did provide avenues of agency for women to maintain care for their families and have a sense of purpose from a job. Now that services such as childcare have gone private, the women are feeling the burden of cost and quality for such services, and prefer to stay at home.

Women's participation in government has also changed. Under communist rule there was a quota system for how many women were seated in Parliament. They were usually

uneducated, and considered fillers who didn't have any real pull in the system, but gave the illusion of balance.

Women's activism is now being redefined in these countries. Mobilization at a grassroots level is beginning to gain support and voice. They are examining what it means to be overemancipated, or the phenomenon of the double and triple shifts that women on a global level face. Women are doing what men are, but men are not doing what women are, so the balance becomes even more problematic.

Specific issues of social services are being raised and women are seeking a voice through the use of progressive literature, such as journals. Women's issues are being considered in ways that have historically not been found prior to the change in governments. It is an exciting and difficult time for women in postcommunist democracies, and one that is not only in a governmental transition but also a mentality shift regarding attention to gender issues.

Olga's relationship with Slovakian women is another avenue where her public and private goals overlap, and indeed are feminist. She is responding to a need for women from the West to come to a country in a governmental transition. The country has deep patriarchal roots, and women in the governmental positions are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Olga observed:

The Slovak women are very strong feminists. They have a sense of getting things done. They really believe that they have the skills, abilities, and knowledge to do what needs to be done. Their frustration is that the men in their society don't see it that way. And so, with the women mayors I worked with, their biggest frustration

was how to get the men in their community to work with them, to go along with their ideas.

Men also outnumber the women in an even wider gap now that there is no quota to be filled for women such as in the parliamentary system. Governmental procedures and organizing strategies are crucial to the success of local and national governments. The woman question is more obvious now that there are legitimate participants in the transition to democracy who are indeed capable and educated on processes and procedures of government, and are in the leadership positions.

Matynia (1995) notes, "the very word *feminism* is perceived as a pejorative one, and it is considered political suicide for a woman active in political life to identify herself primarily with women's issues" (p. 376). Olga is a feminist who identifies herself as such, and while Slovakia may not be receptive to such ideas, they will nonetheless be empowering to the women mayors. Olga has had an ongoing relationship with the women mayors in Slovakia, and she has not only been a resource for them about ideas and strategies for organizing, but has also had discussions about gender and culture that have built important coalitions:

To try to communicate how you're a feminist, you have to change your language over there because it's even more unacceptable than it is here to be "in your face". You really have to be very subtle. It was fun to watch their faces when we talked about those things. First of all, they didn't expect that American women had to deal with that at all...they were shocked when they heard that! Just like Slovakia!

It is exciting to see where Olga fits into the analyzation of a women's movement for Central Europe, specifically Slovakia. She is using her work with the organization and her personal commitment to empowering women, girls, and eliminating racism on a global scale of

activism. Forming coalitions that contain both a sharing of resources and the realization of shared experience are grounds for a revolution of the feminist kind.

In her relationship with the Slovakian mayors, Olga could understand the challenges presented by gendered prescriptions for job placement.

Olga has had a history of jobs and volunteer positions that could be deemed specific to a stereotypical gender role. Teaching was her first career, followed by volunteering for a number of organizations including League of Women Voters and the city school board. Then she took a part time job at the Department of Human Services as volunteer coordinator, which included food distribution for low-income families, while also being a primary care giver to her two children.

Her professional career as a teacher in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Maine is one that is traditionally seen as a woman's job, but with responsibilities that involve assisting children in education and becoming an active member of society. Munro (1998) discusses this simultaneous power in position and lack of power because of gender in her book about women teachers. The same phenomenon occurs in multiple jobs that are traditionally filled by women, such as caregiver, secretary, and nurse. These are jobs where women are often responsible for the influence and desired outcome in another's life.

According to Acker (1991), hierarchical structures within organizations are gender ordered. She discusses how jobs, without the critique feminism provides, may be viewed as neutral, only to be filled by someone of the appropriate skill level. Denzin (1998) says that these cultural norms in the form of performances are consequences of a society that makes assumptions about male and female abilities. Munro (1998) provides further discussion to aid in the analysis of how Olga and the women she worked with are affected by such

gendered environments. The life history narratives Munro includes in her book, "suggest that women are not determined solely by these discourses but are active agents in negotiating them. This negotiation of the gendered norms embedded in dominant discourses suggests that the subject is always in production" (p. 4). While I agree that Olga's position in the organization may be seen as traditionally a woman's position, embodying the feminine qualities of nurturer, sustainer, encourager, and sympathizer, I posit that her job can in fact be used to provide the sphere of influence that creates models for gender equality in the world, as in the case of Slovakia, and in the form of a feminist workplace. The example to her own two children and grandchild is a sphere that feminist women have unlimited influence. Therefore, while it is true that the hierarchical structures of female/male roles are one of inequality, with the addition of feminist discourse, can have a genuine positive impact. Hartsock (1998) speaks to the importance of the development of a feminist workplace as part of changing the dominant structures of inequality. She says, "Specific questions about how to restructure the labor process can be grouped under the two general headings of problems of power and problems about the division between mental and manual labor" (p. 51). The guidelines that Hartsock (1998) proposes for such an environment are a reality in the personal and political environments where Olga has influence:

1. Breaking down workplace hierarchies that promote dominance of the few over the rest.
2. Allowing workers to have control over their time and activity.
3. The majority of the work is cooperative rather than competitive and isolated.
4. Providing opportunities that "recognize the importance of enabling people to become fully developed rather than one-sided" (p.51).

5. Making sure women are enabled and empowered through knowledge and skill acquisition to innovate and improvements on existing programs.
6. Space and opportunities are provided to expand interests.
7. There is a continuum of types of jobs, including mental and manual labor that contribute to the completion of the work goal.
8. Finally, Hartsock (1998) emphasizes "the importance of responsibility as a source of power (energy) for individual members of feminist organizations" (p. 52).

Discussion

The implications are exciting in that Olga's life and work may serve as models of the ever-changing feminist work environment. The examples in Olga's work and home environments are endless. Communication has been an area that she has talked about quite a few times. This is one of the main pillars in her leadership style. The balance of power in the office is very important, and she seeks to make sure everyone knows what is going on so they too can serve the public in the highest capacity. This type of management style not only contributes to the overall functioning of the office, but allows Olga to serve in the fullest capacity for her job. Because the knowledge of what it takes to make a program successful is shared with the entire staff, the programs and the workers assume their highest potential.

When a staff member comes into the office, Olga immediately greets them and *sees them first*. She meets the needs of the person by acknowledging the basic human need of being valued. For example, many times the conversation is an extension, or follow up of an ongoing story that was obviously expressed before. When the conversation turns work-related, Olga asks them what they are going to do that day and how long they think they will

be in the office. She touches base on current projects that are already going on and asks if they need anything from her.

Chocolate is a symbol of this feminist work environment. Whenever something goes wrong or right, chocolate is the reward. The meaning of chocolate, a food that has become stereotypically gendered as a woman's food, is negotiated to become a symbol of their shared work environment. Olga says that the staff always lets her know when the chocolate is running low. The candy is often of starting point or ending point of a conversation. Someone may come into the office, grab some chocolate and talk about why they need the candy. Or, after a conversation, Olga might say, "Did you get yourself a piece of chocolate?" Often times, they already have. Chocolate is a way of celebrating the relationship they have and the communication that takes place, as well as being a defining agent for those who work in the office. It is a ritual of empowerment. Carnes & Craig (1998) say that the importance of ritual for the empowerment of women (and men) cannot be underestimated, "the word *ritual* is actually derived from the Sanskrit word *rtu*, which means any act of magic toward a purpose...if rituals are undertaken with positive intent and are conducted mindfully, learning and growth can occur" (p. 95).

Just as Olga has women she identifies as role models who have personal ways of dealing with sexism, racism, classism, and other -isms, so too does Olga possess qualities that push forth the feminist agenda, in a quiet, yet strong way. The association that Olga works for recently celebrated its 110th birthday. It is taken for granted that this powerful organization is part of everyday community life in this college town. Along with its existence comes the full-time commitment to the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of racism by any means necessary. That is the kind of radicalness that causes a

pendulum swing for social justice. Additionally, Olga's personal identification with feminism aids in the mission. Her feminism strengthens the service to women in a gendered work role:

In terms of my work, one of the things that I'm trying to help young women understand is that if you think all the work is done, you're crazy...it's really never going to change until the hearts of people are changed. And that's a one by one by one process.

It's not exactly "women ripping their clothes off and marching down the street" feminism, but it is counteracting the patriarchal hegemony in a way that produces change...one by one.

A Model Program

Part of the community outreach the works specifically with seventh grade girls. It aims at trying to help young women retain the self-esteem that has been documented to radically drop in the middle school years. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) put out a report in 1992 entitled How Schools Shortchange Girls. It addresses how the educational system is failing to meet girl's (of all races) educational needs in a variety of ways. The result is lowered self-esteem and decline in academic achievement. The program for the seventh grade girls is response to this identified need in the community. Olga explains:

The program started out with one of our board members who had a teenage daughter in high school, and who was African American. Her daughter had a really hard time at the high school. Actually, it may have started when she was in middle school. She came to the board saying we have to do something for these young girls because they

lose their self-esteem and if they don't find their niche, they are really at risk for all kinds of things... Then [the woman on the board] got the ball rolling in conversation and people started to talk about the AAUW studies on how girls are short-changed by school and how girls lose their self-esteem. We talked about it and said we ought to do something; we ought to have a program.

This is how the program initiative began as an idea between a board member and Olga, the executive director in attendance. After the initial idea was conceived, the process of tailoring the program to fit the needs and desires of the middle school girls began. The process that is exemplified in the formation of the girls program has the distinct feminist methodology and structure that Hartsock (1998) discusses.

There was a feasibility study that organized focus groups to see if there was a need in the community for a girls program, then specific needs were identified, a committee talked it through, and finally a pilot program was started. It is still a young program, but has been well received by the girls and their mentors who volunteer for the program. Olga also noted that the structure and format is constantly growing and changing to make it a high quality program. The process of shared leadership is illustrated in the process of study, consensus, then action. This three-stage process is circular, not linear, in style. The process evolves, then overlaps again on itself to promote the best possible outcome. It is a technique that Olga learned in the League of Women Voters. She says it is a process that, "is really a good one because you don't know what you are going to have until you are finished."

After many people had input suggestions, including the girls who the program was for, the graduate student who was working with the program put together the structure that would include (1) community service (2) social (3) fundraising (4) career exploration and (5)

leadership development. Olga notes of the process of taking it to the girls in the middle school:

The girls planned their own programs....of course you don't develop leaders if you make it up for them....the girls named themselves....part of empowerment, part of leadership is to create your own name.

There are a lot of layers of feminist activism and leadership going on in this narrative. First, there are the dynamics of a student-directed program that is commonplace in Olga's work environment. Secondly, the consultation of the director, Olga, made sure that all aspects remain true to the mission of empowerment and anti-racism (making sure that because there were no girls of color in the group, the mentors included women of color.) Thirdly, there is the community (in the form of a committee, college students who work for the association, the AAUW, school faculty and staff, and parents) contributing guidance. Lastly, and most importantly, the girls who are involved in the program are getting their taste of the shared leadership context.

I would like to believe that the desire to do social activism is an inherent quality in humans. The advocacy for social justice has never just come from Olga's job, but from within her. Likewise, it is important to recognize that everything we do on a daily basis involves intentions that either enrich the human experience or degrade it. To state this may appear simplistic in nature. However, while the consequences of our actions are multi-faceted, there is never a time that we can claim a neutral stance. Just the act of claiming "my hands are washed clean of the situation" is a decision that has effects on whatever the person claims non-involvement in.

Richmond (1999), in Work as a Spiritual Practice: A Practical Approach to Inner Growth and Satisfaction on the Job, writes about the effect of our world view when we bring it into the workplace:

The workplace reflects the values and priorities of the larger society. Our system of free-market capitalism creates jobs and defines their purpose, which is to produce wealth and generate profit. And even in the nonprofit sector-in education, in healthcare and social services, even in government-the mentality of for-profit is increasingly the norm...at the personal entrepreneurial level, capitalism looks like a good thing. But it suffers from a number of shortcomings, including the lack of a moral compass. (p. 247)

The personal narratives of Olga provide the moral compass for developing a feminist work and home environment. Some of my favorite stories that came out in the time I spent doing these interviews with Olga in the office were the ones that related to her family. I couldn't conclude this study without discussing the influence that she has had on those she is most intimately involved with. A story about her son and daughter at play as children (now adults) sums up her influence best on the future of feminist activism and the example she sets. I'll let Olga tell the story:

I remember watching them play. Jenny was probably about seven and Garth would have been about five. They were playing and Jenny picked up a purse and said to Garth, "Now, you will take care of the children, I am going to the school board meeting!"

hooks (2000) writes, "We learn about love in childhood. Whether our homes are happy or troubled, our families functional or dysfunctional, it's the original school of love" (p. 17).

Olga has been a daughter, mother, and grandmother, both in the traditional sense of the word, and in the symbolic. Many consider her a sister and mother because of the important roles that she plays in the lives that she touches. We cannot underestimate the power that we have to negotiate the systems of hierarchies that exist in our societies from the very roles it appears we are assigned.

Women are powerful agents of change. Olga's life is a model for social and political action. She is influencing the way that school boards operate, children are raised and educated, college students mature, and chocolate is consumed.

Munro (1998) heads the final section of her book, "No conclusion," and explains, "The dilemmas discussed here present no easy resolutions, if, in fact, there are solutions at all. The questions of representation, self-reflexivity, and subjectivity in the collaborative process are ongoing" (pp. 132-133).

I began this chapter with the story of the Mirabal sisters and their role in the revolution to overthrow Trujillo's regime. Olga and I discussed my inclusion of this narrative, and she was concerned that the story might give the impression that she takes risks that are anywhere close to women in political and social revolution. My intention in including this story is to show the strength that women appear to be born with and continue to develop. Their ideas aid us in remaining committed to critical social change. It is from these women that the lessons of all kinds of revolutions appear. Olga is giving us the gift of her personal alignment to the mission of her formal work. Bystydzienski (1994) reminds us, "It is to such women-centered endeavors that... activists need to turn to for fruitful ideas regarding change" (p.497). It's all part of a revolution.

CHAPTER FOUR. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

One of the foundations of Olga's social action is the constant building of relationships. When I phoned her to set up our third interview, it was a Monday morning after the organization's 110th birthday celebration. I asked her how she was doing after such a big event, and she said she was still beaming. The satisfaction Olga gets from her vocation is immeasurable. The relationships she forms are part of her feminist social action work. As the person that is recording a small excerpt of her life history narrative, I feel personally empowered by her example.

Petra Munro (1998) notes in her referral to the teachers she worked with in her study, "The selection of the 'life historians' working with me in this project was as much arbitrary and serendipitous at the time as it now seems logical" (p.141). When I began the process of qualitative research, the search for a respondent appeared to be possibly one of the greatest challenges. I had in my mind someone who could appreciate the process as much as I did, and feel they had gained an enriched sense of self. In the beginning I don't know if any researcher could convince a respondent that this would be the reward. However, someone who is open to serendipity becomes just that for a researcher. Olga was open to serendipity.

The relinquishment of power and control in a research relationship is definitely a balancing act. From our initial expectations of who we want to interview, to the theory developed from the process we constantly must step outside and look in at what is going on. There have been countless moments I have felt this is a key lesson of social justice research. The acknowledgement and navigation of the many forms of power in relationships set the highest form of example. Envisioning a world where it is commonplace to evaluate our egos,

relinquish control of outcomes, and focus on the process of egalitarian relationships ripens the possibility that this can happen. As researchers we learn to actively listen, jot down notes, and rely on our intuition to take our questioning smoothly to the next level. Sherryl Kleinman (1991) says this about the balancing act of quality research, "examine your emotional reactions to the setting, the study, and the participants. If you do not, your feelings will still shape the research process, but you will not know how" (pp. 184-185). Our emotional reactions have a lot to do with power, and feeling that we are somehow not in control. For me, issues of power came when I wanted Olga to say certain things about how she viewed her job. When she would discuss topics that I didn't know how to place in the study, I would think, "Oh, no, I have to transcribe all this stuff that isn't falling neatly into my topic of study." The relinquishment of the control allowed the serendipity to take place. One instance that comes to mind was a time when Olga continuously talked about how a non-profit organization controls funding and does record keeping. I realized that she was doing this because she felt she was giving me a gift for use in my future. Olga knows that her job as executive director is very appealing to me. The feminist activism narratives I was seeking in words, was being done through her actions.

I think the research project holds lessons for many who seek to infuse their work with feminist activism. I see myself doing a job where feminist activism is the essence of the job, and I wanted Olga to teach me how to do that, not keep record books. Kathryn Anderson, in Anderson and Jack (1991), notes the same desire in her interviewing, "I can see how I listened with at least part of my attention focused on producing potential material" (p. 13). I was doing the same thing, particularly in the second interview. I didn't want to talk about

how to keep a ledger or what programs worked best to track funds in a non-profit organization. Or did I?

I was determined to let Olga direct the conversation about her life and work, and this included the frustration that she was feeling as a result of trying to learn how to do accounting. She was expressing her feminist values on communication and the mission of the association to empower by not just telling me about how she communicates and empowers. She was communicating and empowering me, the researcher, who is also very interested in learning how to be successful in a job that is based on feminist principles. I was experiencing feminist theory first hand, not just being told about it. Olga was empowering women and girls and eliminating racism by any means necessary--including bringing to light issues that could help a colleague be successful in a similar job in the future.

Anderson and Jack (1991) note, "In order to learn to listen, we need to attend more to the narrator than to our own agendas" (p. 12). This can only be achieved by giving up power that we use control the situation. This is how I first realized that Olga's life was filled with instances where her personal and professional principles fused into action. Communication is an asset she holds to when forming a feminist work environment. It is also a major component of her relationship with her husband. She tells me that they have a great relationship because he has always been the reason she has been able to do volunteer work with the League of Women Voters, the school board, and hold paid jobs with Story Country Human Services and her current position. He makes enough money that she is able to not be concerned with a monetary pay off to meet basic survival needs. In addition to this, she also told me that their relationship at home was extremely old fashioned and traditional. The cooking and cleaning were her job, and his were, well, I'm not sure really, possibly taking out

the garbage, mowing the lawn, and so on. She just said it was very traditional. They are often involved in projects together, such as building a deck, but for the most part she does stereotypical women's work.

This was definitely not what I wanted to hear. I wanted to see her feminist principles encompassing her marriage. Then I remembered Petra Munro's concern when recording the life histories of teachers. She says, "my second concern is with the potential of narrative research to romanticize the individual and thus reify notions of a unitary subject/hero" (p. 12). In my mind, if Olga was truly living the life of a feminist, then not only would her life and work reflect feminist principles, but so would her marriage. To me, a marriage is the ultimate environment to apply feminist principles because it is an area where one of the highest forms of relationship can occur. This was my desire and definition, not Olga's. Not only do I want to have this kind of marriage, but I want examples of such relationships to teach me the lessons in a world that does not rally behind such relationships.

Munro's book helped me identify this expectation immediately, so I was well aware of the tendency for a researcher to desire a life history that followed a hero story line. It was really no shock when I discovered Olga would not fall into a unitary subject position. Truthfully, when I heard her begin to describe her marriage I even said to myself, "Aha, non-unitary subjectivity! Now, what do I do with THAT?" I thought a lot about what it means to live a feminist life and slowly a common thread did begin to emerge from all that appeared to be misarranged (according to my expectations) in this narrative. For Olga, she accepted this incongruity in her life because it was only a small battle. Even in my saying that it is an incongruity, I am still speaking from my point of view. To Olga, her marriage is not out of line with her principles of shared leadership, shared housework maybe, but not leadership.

They had other projects where the balance was more evident. It was up to me to figure out how she viewed her life, and how I present her as a whole person. I determined that if this was what she was comfortable with. In order to empower women, girls, and eliminate racism in any way possible, than it was a small consideration in the bigger picture. It also encouraged me to examine how traditional women's work can be part of the feminist agenda.

In my own reflection on the situation, I continually remind myself that as humans, we do what we know to the best of our ability at any given time. As the researcher, I might not agree or desire the same in my own life, but at this moment in time, this is what functions for Olga and enables her to do what she feels passionately about. It also maintains peace in her marriage. As a feminist I can analyze for all the elements of hegemony and small battles to be won in the fight for women, but it is Olga who ultimately has to decide what works for her to fulfill her life's purpose. This was a lesson and yet another relinquishment of power for me. It was also a moment of serendipity to see Olga in yet another role that uses the feminine to fight for the feminist.

Anderson and Jack (1991) highlight the process of theory formation when they talk about analyzing a depression study. They found that the women they were interviewing gave them a new understanding for what they had previously known about women and dependency. They were finding more layers in the analysis based on how the respondents explained dependency. In my work with Olga, the same instance came when I began to understand that traditional femininity was a source of agency from her viewpoint. I never had to be critical in these instances, I just had to dig a little deeper into the context of the social situation and ask myself, "What purpose could this serve for Olga, knowing what I know about her so far?" This question could be answered in many ways, each one providing

the lift to the next tier of theoretical foundation. The examination of Olga's words and actions depended on the theory that was chosen to examine it. It was my responsibility to provide multiple considerations to make it strong theory.

Borland (1991) refers to the process of analyzing our respondent's examination of her own thoughts and actions as a second level narrative. "Like the original narrator, we simultaneously look inward toward our own experience of the performance (our interpretive shaping of it as listeners) and outward to our audience (to whom we must display a degree of scholarly competence)" (pp. 63-64). This posed two sources of concern for me. First, I was constantly aware that my respondent was going to read what I was writing. If my goal was to empower, did that involve highlighting areas where hegemony was a strong possibility, or was there a higher path to take?

To be more specific, I take the case of Olga and domesticity. Oppression is often sugar-coated in the culture I have known. As I noted before, I found myself wanting her to say certain things about her life that would make for a complete ideal feminist. Then I realized that the reason we do qualitative research is not to find what could happen, but what is happening. That is why we are ever-conscious of the time and place that an interview or observation is taking place. The feminist being is a superhero I long to know, but is somewhat fantasy. The woman who understands who own agency is the one I am commissioned to respond to. It is important to understand the difference, and accept the place for each in theory.

In looking at Olga's agency I was affirming the notion that women are not passive, but active in the creation and negotiation of their gendered selves. This is the reason that I wanted to use the historical fiction novel In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

(1995). In a class I took that examined international perspectives on women's movements, a consistent theme was the use of traditional women's roles as the sphere of strongest influence. The central women characters in the novel, the Mirabal sisters, consistently were carrying out typical women's activities in the culture of the Dominican Republic, and at the same time working to fight an oppressive government.

Ruether (1996), in her work entitled Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion illustrates a very important theory to use when looking at feminism on a global scale. Ecofeminism, the theory she is using, provides unification for women's movements internationally. However, depending on the culture, there are distinct differences in issues and views that women consider. The two frameworks when looking at how different cultures analyze systems of domination and oppression are cultural-symbolic and socio-economic (p. 2). In most cases, "first-world" countries think *first* of ecofeminism in terms of connections and the symbolic oppressions between women and nature. "Third-world" countries think *first* in terms of how women and the earth are exploited by methods of colonialism and imperialism (p. 2-3). The reason that Ruether's work is important to what I am doing is because it reminds me to think twice about my initial hunches. While the way that women think about the relationships they have to their environment and patriarchy may differ, the reason that ecofeminism has such a great potential to unify women globally is because when we begin to seek the *second* analysis we are granted the holistic vision of patriarchal oppression, and means for liberation. When I came to understand Olga's story from a variety of vantage points I could sort through the kinds of evidence and compile them in a way that made the narrative and my analysis more complete. The question is consistently, "How can I think of this in another way?"

This is also the way that I am changed in the research. Munro says that the purpose of qualitative research is not to go after the "truth" of the subject, but rather to understand our "ways of knowing" (1995, p. 141). This involves looking at our relationship with our research respondent. Earlier I spoke about the importance of relinquishing the power of what I wanted to see happen in our interviews. In the case of Olga, I could tell that she viewed this collaboration as another form of work. It is the kind of work that she loves to do; it was a project of sorts. I kept feeling like I was imposing my crazy schedule on her. She was so giving over the course of the project, insisting she too was getting a lot out of this. I kept wondering if she was just being polite. I feared that I would disappoint her with what I was theorizing. Munro notes the same occurrence in her work, "the fear that I would in some way misrepresent or take advantage of them seemed to persist" (p. 144).

It wasn't until our final two meetings that I felt like we were beginning to understand each other. We were both feminists, but of a different style. We didn't have to live the same life or have the same goals. But, if we are feminists, I determined we must trust each other enough that we want the highest good for each other. Just as I knew I needed to relinquish the control over what she was saying in the interviews, I needed to identify and do away with unrealistic expectations of the relationship. (Ok, so it also helped that that she loved my paper, and wanted a copy to send to her daughter.) We had affirmed each other--I, with my story about her and she with the acceptance of my analyzation.

A second issue raised by Borland (1991) that was a factor in my theory generation was usefulness of my work to an audience. Was it faithful to whatever they were considering scholarly? This case study was done in an introductory course on qualitative methodology. Who had given me the license to do this kind of work? My graduate school classes gave me

a solid foundation, but I still had age and experience to come to terms with. My foundation in feminist, critical, and sociological theory was propelling me into the scholarly side of the analysis. Ely, et al. (1997) defines bias as "the distortions, blind spots, and limitations that are contribute to our various stances" (p. 346). I didn't want to fall prey to the positivist notion that I can know some sort of truth that is out there for me to go get, but I did want to claim the ideas developed during the master's program. During the last month of the research project I picked up bell hooks' book, All About Love: New Visions after I heard her speak at a conference I attended. Originally it was a book that I was reading for personal reasons, not thinking that it would become part of a research project. Almost immediately I began to see how the information she was including on how to think about love was not only rich in feminist theory, but the structure of her book opened my mind to the use of scholarly work to dismantle patriarchal modes of thought. This included incorporating more holistic visions of my respondent by acknowledging her spiritual self. hooks (2000) says,

The spiritual awakening that is slowly taking place counterculturally will become more of a daily norm as we all willingly break mainstream cultural taboos that silence our passion for spiritual practice....Among progressive thinkers and scholars it was much more hip, cool, and acceptable to express atheistic sentiments than to desire passionate devotion to divine spirit. (p. 82)

I believe that by my consistent acknowledgement of the power and influence of love in Olga's life, I was able to utilize the feminist lens of analysis.

Patricia Hill Collins (1998) includes an analysis of Black women's spirituality in her book, Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice. She says:

Black women often approach this search for meaning by expressing a deep-seated concern with the issue of justice, not just because they either think justice is logical or see pragmatic reasons for pursuing it, but because they *believe* that achieving it is the right thing to do. (p. 244)

Olga had mentioned to me early on in the interviews that her experience in a church committed to social justice had a large influence on how she views the world and acts in response. Historically, social justice movements have had spiritual components (Collins, 1998).

The process of doing qualitative research is a path. We begin with an idea, our bias you might say, and we press on from there. For me, the path has taken the form of understanding power dynamics, negotiating that power, and seeking a methodology that reflects the same feminist principles that I desired to show in my respondent. I am changed by my work. Change is a part of the revolution I seek.

For the final chapter of this thesis, I will focus on implications for this research and the methodology used to understand and document work as feminist activism.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS

Audre Lorde (1984) wrote, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 11). The future of the women's movement depends on listening to the wisdom of each other's lives, and ideas about living. We must respect and embrace differences in communities, nations, and the world. When we seek liberation for ourselves there must be an understanding that all forms of oppression and emancipation are intimately tied to each other, and no one is liberated until all are liberated. Lorde states,

Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (p. 10)

Our work is a place where we connect to other people. There are choices we make when seeking how to fill our daily lives with passionate endeavors. The choices begin with the selection of a job. A job that allows us to express who we are, that we can call a vocation, has the potential to be a place where we are a powerful force. This vocation may be being a mother, a teacher, a civil rights leader, or a construction worker. How we inhabit that space will determine how we contribute to the work of feminism.

The implications for this study encourage the conscious choice of a vocation, making our workplace reflect feminist structures and the continual examination of feminist theory to bring about genuine change in our communities. In addition, when we listen to each other and evaluate the support systems of our communities, we can bring about radical change.

Change will continue to happen as we develop new theories on the foundation of past theories and take risks in the pursuit of creating a free society. Living in a free society means that people value difference (not merely tolerate it) and conflict and pain are addressed in ways that strengthen interdependence. These must be done using new tools to build new structures for communities, as hooks (2000) says:

Reforms can be a vital part of the movement towards revolution, but what is important are the types of reforms that are initiated. Feminist focus on reforms to improve the social status of women within the existing social structure allowed women and men to lose sight of the need for total transformation of society. (p. 160)

Work and school environments are two places that people, especially in the United States, spend a large portion of their days. Following are some implications for this study based on the idea of a feminist transformation of work and school.

Transforming Environments: Work

The vision for action that comes from this qualitative case study is of a feminist organizational structure that is present in all jobs. Work environments such as Olga's lend themselves to being more progressive and equitable by the nature of the organizational goals. Non-profit organizations, activist groups, and alternative school situations are the places to start the approach of shared power and responsibility. As shown by this case study, it is already occurring. As feminist theory continues to address the liberation of the public and private spheres of our lives, we persist in gaining new frameworks for structuring our lives in more holistic ways. In addition to Hartsock's (1997) recommendations for a feminist workplace structure, Kathryn G. Welsh (2001) gives the following tips for creating a feminist

organization in an article in Ms. entitled, “Cancel All Power Trips: How to Revolt from Within”:

- Involve your entire group in writing a mission statement. Amend it as your project develops.
- Hold structured meetings with a rotating facilitator.
- Set a time limit for meetings and discussion sessions.
- Always let someone who has not spoken talk before someone who has.
- For major decisions, vote using a consensus model that requires everyone to agree on an outcome that is best for the project. And remember that smaller decisions can be left to individuals.
- Test the impact of tough decisions with trial periods.
- Let each person choose her own role and title. Then regroup and collectively agree upon who should do what and expectations for each role.
- Rotate leadership positions.
- Keep stirring the pot: cosponsor projects with communities you don't already attract. And broaden your issues to diversify your following.
- We all have something to teach, as well as something to learn, so provide equal access to skills and knowledge.
- Do away with office politics and celebrate together: birthdays, holidays, whatever.

(p. 36)

Reconceptualizing the way we work can have an enormous impact on how we spend our days and develop our personhoods. In the past, women in the work world have been there to

provide economic subsistence for themselves, and for their families. In the book Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, bell hooks (2000) states, “When women see that their economic concerns are a central agenda for the feminist movement, they will be more inclined to examine feminist ideology...women are exploited economically in jobs, but they are also exploited psychologically” (p. 103). Women need to examine *why* they work. This goes beyond the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. It goes beyond the materialist, overconsuming culture that is known as the United States. Women should be allowed and encouraged to live their passions and see that the work they do is shaping a society. This includes work at home, paid work, and volunteer work. The work women do and the way they do it can uncover their personal and collective powers. Work must be made more liberating so that women of all races and classes are no longer demoralized by work. This means that women do not have to continue inhabiting the low-paying service jobs that patriarchal capitalism encourages. It means that as a society we must continually understand the historical and cultural implications of our forms of government and the economy. As we continue to negotiate and transform the system we live in, I am confident that we can eradicate multiple forms of discrimination. The feminist models for achieving this can be applied to home, work, and school.

Transforming Environments: School

Outside of the home, the place in the community where children learn how the world functions, and what their place is, is the school. How can feminist theory about the workplace contribute to the development of students who will eventually choose a vocation?

The answer lies in structuring school environments that lend to personal fulfillment and public service. This sets the standard for future endeavors.

Multicultural education and other forms of critical educational theory have been addressing issues of school curriculum and equitable environments. I posit that the hierarchy in the school faculty, staff, and students contributes its own hidden curriculum to enforce oppression. School is not just about classrooms where obvious lessons in English, math and science are taking place. Schools are a place of employment for faculty and staff that serves as the first model for a workplace environment. The way a school is structured currently lends itself to the same hierarchical structure that encourages systems of domination. As discussed earlier, Munro (1988) analyzes how women teachers live in a world where they simultaneously have power interpersonally and as a classroom authority, and at the same time know that they are in a position without power in society and in their schools as an institution. Students make this connection and they come to understand this as the way things operate. Feminist theory seeks to dismantle all forms of domination and control to develop new frameworks for interaction and personal growth. With more progressive philosophies, we can put in place systems that confirm our ability to make choices with political impact. As Weiler (1988) confirms in her research, "Schools are highly political institutions" (p. 66).

Students see this system, and know (consciously or unconsciously) that they are a part of it. From the bottom of the power structure they learn how to negotiate learning environments and social communities by the precedents set by models in their schools. I propose that the same feminist solutions for the workplace be applied to schools. It is vital that entire communities are involved in challenging unfair systems of power.

Final Thoughts: The Future of the Revolution

Envisioning a feminist future requires a plan of action based on feminist theory. After going through the process of this feminist qualitative project, I am committed to the idea that feminist qualitative methodology provides undeniable promise for validating women's lives. The realities of women's lives are complex and it is a privilege to be able to participate in a research practice where I have expanded my understanding of another, the society in which I live, and myself. I identify with Munro (1995) when she says, "My quest for understanding the collaborative process...has led me to a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and how these are deeply embedded in the relational acts of the research process" (p. 149). The powerful act of shaping research has been a catalyst for my hopeful vision of the future of feminism. The feminist theory that I have become aware of through the literature I have read and discussions I have had in the course of this project, of which this thesis only contains a portion, has proved to me that feminism is alive and well, and becoming delightfully more diverse. The research that I have done is part of an ongoing feminist dialogue documenting solutions to sexism. Women such as Olga act in constructive ways that are powerful examples of creating socially, economically, and politically equal environments. I look forward to additional research that focuses on lessons from the lives of women who are powerful examples of using work as feminist activism.

APPENDIX A. HUMAN SUBJECTS FORM

OFFICE USE ONLY

Project ID# 01-420

Oracle ID# _____

76

Project Category: _____

IRB Approval Date: _____

IRB Expiration Date: _____

Iowa State University
Human Subjects Review Form

(Please type and use the attached instructions for completing this form)

IRB

FEB 21 2001

1. Title of Project: Work as Feminist Activism

2. I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to insure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are protected. I will report any adverse reactions to the committee. Additions to or changes in research procedures after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review. I agree that all key personnel involved in conducting human subjects research will receive training in the protection of human subjects. I agree to request renewal of approval for any project continuing more than one year.

Nicole Guard
Typed name of principal investigator

2/6/01
Date

Nicole Guard
Signature of principal investigator

Curriculum and Instruction
Department

2224 SSB Suite 2080
Campus Address

294-4606 (ofc), nguard@iastate.edu
Phone number and email

2a. Principal investigator
 Faculty Staff Postdoctoral Graduate Student Undergraduate Student

3. Typed name of co-principal investigator(s) Date Signature of co-principal investigator(s)

3a. Co-Principal investigator(s) (check all that apply)
 Faculty Staff Postdoctoral Graduate Student Undergraduate Student

3b. Typed name of major professor or supervisor (if not a co-principal investigator) Date Signature of major professor or supervising faculty member

Dr. Carlie Tartakov

2/6/01

Carlie C. Tartakov

4. Typed names of other key personnel who will directly interact with human subjects.

5. Project (check all that apply)
 Research Thesis or dissertation Class project Independent Study (490, 590, Honors project)

6. Number of subjects (complete all that apply)
1 # adults, non-students 0 # ISU students 0 # minors under 14 0 # other (explain)
0 # minors 14-17

7. Status of project submission through Office of Sponsored Programs Administration (check one)
 Has been submitted Will be submitted Will not be submitted

7a. Funding Source: Self

8. Brief description of proposed research involving human subjects: (See instructions, item 8. Use an additional page if needed.) (Include one copy of the complete proposal if submitting to a Federal sponsor.)

(A) The problem being examined is how work can be a form of feminist activism and part of a mass-based feminist movement. The method of gathering data is interviews, observations, and member checks after the data has been gathered and analyzed. The nature of the data to be gathered will be personal life history narratives. (B) A respondent was chosen on the characteristic of her job as active in social justice work.

9. Informed Consent: Signed informed consent will be obtained. (Attach a copy of your form.)
 Modified informed consent will be obtained. (See instructions, item 9.)
10. Confidentiality of Data: Describe below the methods you will use to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained. (See instructions, item 10.)

The name and identity of the subject will be made confidential by a pseudonym and the removal of other identifiers such as name and location of work agency. The respondent has the right to withdraw from the study, for any reason, and data will be returned to the respondent upon request. The information obtained during the project will be used to write a case study which will be read by respondent before the final draft, and will have a final copy after the completion of the study.

11. Will subjects in the research be placed at risk or incur discomfort? Describe any risks to the subjects and precautions that will be taken to minimize them. (The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to subjects' dignity and self-respect as well as psychological or emotional risk. See instructions, item 11.)

As a qualitative researcher, I am aware that the subject of the study is taking a personal risk in discussing her life and work with me, and allowing an interpretation of meanings and implications for her activism. The respondent will be observed and interviewed, and member checks will allow her to read drafts of the study.

12. **CHECK ALL** of the following that apply to your research:
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A. Medical clearance necessary before subjects can participate | <input type="checkbox"/> H. Deception of subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B. Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> I. Subjects under 14 years of age and/or
<input type="checkbox"/> Subjects 14-17 years of age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> J. Subjects in institutions (nursing homes, mental health facilities, prisons, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D. Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> K. Pregnant women |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E. Administration of infectious agents or recombinant DNA | <input type="checkbox"/> L. Research must be approved by another institution or agency (attach letters of approval) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> F. Application of external stimuli | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G. Application of noxious or potentially noxious stimuli | |

If you checked any of the items in 12, please complete the following in the space below (include any attachments):

Items A-G Describe the procedures and note the proposed safety precautions.

Items D-E The principal investigator should send a copy of this form to Environmental Health and Safety, 118 Agronomy Lab for review.

Item H Describe how subjects will be deceived; justify the deception; indicate the debriefing procedure, including the timing and information to be presented to subjects.

Item I For subjects under the age of 14, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from parents or legally authorized representatives as well as from subjects.

Items J-K Explain what actions would be taken to insure minimal risk.

Item L Specify the agency or institution that must approve the project. If subjects in any outside agency or institution are involved, approval must be obtained prior to beginning the research, and the letter of approval should be filed.

APPENDIX B. PERMISSION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Researcher: Nicole Guard
2318 Ferndale Avenue
Ames, IA 50010
(515) 233-8526

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this case study. The purposes of this project are:

1. To satisfy the thesis requirement for the master's program at Iowa State University.
2. To gain an understanding of your experiences as being a feminist activist through your work.

As a participant in this study, you will be both interviewed and observed. The information gained from the interviews and observations will be used in the written report of the case study. The following are the terms of participating in the case study:

1. The information obtained during this project will be used to write a case study which may be read by the public after thesis publication.
2. Real names will not be used during data collection nor in the written case study.
3. The respondent has the right to withdraw at any time from the study, for any reason, and the data will be returned to the respondent upon request.
4. The respondent will receive a copy of the case study before the final draft is written and negotiate changes with the researcher.
5. The respondent will receive a copy of the final case study soon after completion.

If you agree to participate in this case study project according to the preceding terms, please sign below:

Researcher _____ Respondent _____

I (do/do not) grant permission to be quoted directly in the case study report.

Respondent _____

APPENDIX C. SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Sample Questions

1. What do you do in your personal life that helps you with your professional life?
2. Do you write political letters?
3. How else do you serve in your community?
4. What have you learned about working in a non-profit organization?
5. How do you view the boards that you serve on?
6. How does money effect your work?
7. How do you decide what programs to do?
8. What are some of your favorite programs?
9. How do you see leadership in your organization?
10. How is the work environment set up?
11. How do you relate personally and politically with your staff?
12. How do you think being a woman affects how people see you in a leadership role?
13. Describe your sense of community.
14. Do you see your self as a feminist? Why/why not?
15. How do you define feminism?
16. How do you see your work and home life connected or disconnected?
17. How do you see the second and third waves of feminism and how do you fit in?
18. Who are your role models?
19. Do you think role models are important?
20. Describe your family.
21. Who provides you with the most support?
22. Describe your parenting philosophy.
23. Describe your workplace/boss philosophy.
24. What projects are you most proud/excited about?
25. Describe important moments in your life.

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