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Dawn M. Christiansen Cuéllar for the degree of Master of Arts in

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Janet Lee

This qualitative study explores communication among twelve battered women's advocates. It highlights their experiences of communication at work. A disconnection existed between the agency's recommended communication style and the way participants experienced talking with coworkers and supervisors during staff meetings, specifically, and across agency sites, generally. Along with study participants, I found that organizational and administrative changes along with internal conflict strained staff relations that adversely affected their abilities to function optimally within the organization. In this instance, a feminist communication approach was difficult to maintain and to support in the bureaucratic nonprofit organizational structure in which A Place for Change operated.

Thoughts Of Talk At Work:

Communication In

A Feminist Battered Women's Shelter

by
Dawn M. Christiansen Cuéllar

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INTRODUCTION

Ethnographer Harry Wolcott (1999, p. 15) argues that "we are drawn to certain kinds of settings and certain kinds of people in them, are guided by certain prior experiences and suppositions, work in specific historical time frames, and recognize different problems." This is definitely true for me. I was drawn to work in a battered women's shelter because I wanted to work for change, particularly change in abused women's lives. Working to develop avenues for pursuing personal change is an important aspect for changing society. I was also attracted to learning more about women's communication at work because my own experiences of communication in the workplace have taken shape within a traditional, male-oriented corporate setting. My research, therefore, takes place in a female-centric, feminist, nonprofit social service agency: one that surprised me because it operated within a traditional corporate framework. It explores communication patterns among workers in a battered women's shelter and focuses on factors that affect communication and impact worker relations. In particular, I analyze worker experiences of change, organizational structure, and staff meetings, and their understanding of how these factors affect communication. Finally, I focus on worker perspectives of staff relations and communication effectiveness. Specifically, I examine influences on the ways women communicate with each other.

During 2001, I was granted permission by the executive director of A Place for Change (APFC) to look at the ways staff members talk with each other. I requested to do so because I wanted to learn more about how staff members viewed and experienced communication. Additionally, I have been intrigued by the day-to-day communicative interactions between staff members, and the agency's commitment to create an open, affirming work environment. However, upon becoming more closely involved in the organization, I discovered that the agency was not strictly operating within a feminist model. Of special interest were the ways staff members communicated with each other as they negotiated organizational change and internal strife. The views and experiences of women working at APFC were key to this paper.

Exploring emotional and intellectual aspects of staff members' communication trends illuminates hushed perspectives. It is common in organizations that the voices of

managers and owners are loudest and deemed most important. Ruth Behar's (1996) work in ethnography inspires me to integrate emotion and intellect into my research. To accomplish this, I worked closely with staff members in ways that allowed us to build trust and respect for one another. We have much in common, my coworkers and I. Many of us are survivors of violence. We come from places of pain and grief, pulling from our experiences and knowledge to serve women in similar situations. We are committed to ending violence against women through activism and education, knowing that we are working against an integrated system of social institutions that dominate and oppress women. Oftentimes we are discouraged, but we believe that working within a feminist framework, one that emphasizes collaboration, equity, and process, we can change the ways abused women are understood in U.S. culture, as well as change ourselves.

As a volunteer/researcher I did not spend as many waking hours at the agency as my full-time coworkers, nor did I have direct influence on agency operations like a full-time paid staff member. I was not required to attend numerous meetings while organizing and managing a particular agency program. I did not share the same leadership responsibilities as many of the women who talked with me. I had the luxury of time. I observed and took notes of emerging patterns rather than focused on meeting deadlines or carried out daily activities. Additionally, I did not have to work for pay like 75 percent of the women who participated in this research. Yet they volunteered their work time, which was authorized by management, to talk with me. Even in the midst of heavier workloads and high stress levels. In other words, my attention was not divided between supervisory, programmatic, financial, leadership, and/or professional development issues. It was, however, concerned with gathering information about working relationships of and communication among staff members.

This paper utilizes fieldwork I completed while volunteering with APFC, an anti-domestic violence battered women's shelter located in a Northwest urban city. Prior to my study, I worked four hours a week at the emergency services shelter (Shelter), one of the three agency locations. During the study, those hours increased to twenty to twenty-six hours per week between each agency location: Shelter, the administrative office

(Admin), Outreach, and the transitional services housing (Transition). I gathered information on communication in four ways. First, I recorded general interactions I observed first hand while working at each site. In addition to volunteer work, I participated in weekly staff meetings at Shelter and Transition as well as bi-monthly all-staff meetings. Second, I interviewed staff members, one-to-one, and facilitated two group interviews. Both interviewing approaches were designed to elicit the thoughts and experiences staff members had about agency communication patterns. Third, I asked each person participating in the study to complete a questionnaire that asked for demographic information. Finally, I reviewed relevant documents that outlined agency policy regarding communication with coworkers and clients.

A Place For Change, An Anti-Domestic Violence/Battered Women's Shelter

A Place For Change dedicates its resources to ending domestic violence between intimate partners. This is accomplished through its commitment to provide a violence-free environment in which participants can learn about oppression. Practically, women and children receive services from APFC that are designed to educate, empower, and promote access to resources. Administratively and physically, APFC is designed both to promote consciousness raising around the complex issues of domestic violence, and to ensure the safety of those who enter its programs. Not only does it provide a crisis line, it extends referrals to local and national services and support groups to community members experiencing oppressive behaviors of an intimate partner. Services are available to women battered by men or women. The locations of the two direct service facilities are confidential. Each facility is charged with carrying out their specific objectives to meet overarching agency goals and mission.

Admin is responsible for the fiduciary and supervisory functions. Staff employed at this site manage the internal operations of APFC as well as act as liaison to the board of directors. Additionally, Admin personnel secure and oversee funding sources supporting APFC. Outreach, housed at the same location as Admin, focuses on designing and presenting pertinent information to educate the community about the facts and effects of, domestic violence and resources available to combat it. Such

responsibilities are performed by a team of seven: the executive director, executive assistant, development coordinator, outreach coordinator, donations/maintenance coordinator, support group coordinator and sexual minorities coordinator. Paid staff members are required to attend the bi-monthly all staff meetings. Interested volunteers are invited to attend although it is yet to be determined whether or not on-call staff are encouraged to attend, because of limited budget monies.

Shelter provides direct services to women and their children who are in need of immediate, confidential, short-term housing. The domestic violence program is six weeks. Up to fifteen women and their children can be served at the site at one given time. Under the direction of the shelter coordinator, paid and unpaid staff manage the administrative and direct services. Such duties include advocacy, peer support, case management, answering the crisis line, household and personal security, distribution of personal consumables, and facilitating anti-oppression meetings with participants. The staff makes up a team of six paid and numerous unpaid people. Shelter staff meet once a week for two hours to discuss and highlight household and participant issues. Paid staff members currently working on site are comprised of the shelter coordinator, Latina program coordinator, women's advocate, youth coordinator, volunteer coordinator, bi-lingual night case manager, and night case manager. The remaining staff are made up of a corps of on-call staff and volunteers.

Transitional housing is also confidential, though located at a different site than Admin and the Shelter. Similar to Shelter, the transitional housing program is designed to provide housing and direct service to approximately eighteen women and their children. It is different from Shelter in the sense that it is long-term and participants can stay up to two years. The team providing such services includes seven paid staff members and a small pool of volunteers. Regular full-time positions include the transitional housing coordinator, women's advocate, bi-lingual women's advocate, housing coordinator, youth coordinator, youth advocate, and night security. Transitional housing staff also meet once a week to discuss and highlight participant progress, but do so for three hours.

Each site above supports and furthers the overarching agency goals and objectives in specific ways only lightly touched on here. However, due to APFC's non-profit status, such day-to-day activities are regulated by a board of directors. A complete board would consist of seventeen members; however, at the time of this study there were only four. Service on the board is voluntary. Board members are supervised by the volunteer coordinator. Board members meet once a month as an entire body and at differently scheduled times for individual committee meetings. Existing committees include personnel, fund raising, executive, finance and board development. Only the executive committee is authorized to conduct closed meetings. Closed meeting proceedings are confidential and meeting minutes are not shared with the other staff members. The executive director is the liaison between the board, administrative and direct service staff members. All staff members are encouraged to attend board meetings. Some staff members automatically attend due to the position they hold within APFC (i.e., volunteer coordinator, development coordinator). A single board member attends one bi-monthly all staff meeting.

A Place For Change was selected because it provided an opportunity to explore a conditioned pattern of mutual interest: communication. Such a selection was both a practical and a theoretically sound choice since I had volunteered with APFC for eight months, I had developed a working relationship with Shelter staff. Additionally, the agency was staffed predominantly by women. I was granted permission to conduct the communication patterns study among agency employees by the executive director. Although my volunteer work rested most directly with Shelter, I worked at all three sites. Tasks I performed included answering the crisis line, providing peer support and respite care for participating moms, and completing various administrative projects. I choose APFC as a site for fieldwork because I was interested in understanding how women working in a feminist organization interact with each other. I was also interested in how a feminist agency organized itself as it became increasingly constrained by funding issues, budget cuts, staff turnover, and leadership changes. In this way, such a study was beneficial for expanding knowledge concerning the everyday activities of, and the way in which communication was viewed, within a feminist organization.

A Place for Change is a complex organization representing a feminist approach to serving battered women and their children as well as changing how domestic violence is viewed in U.S. culture. It is among alternative social services agencies designed specifically to serve women and children escaping domestic violence. It is historically and socially linked to political events that call for the emancipation of women from patriarchal institutions when the women's and battered women's movements brought to the forefront of public debate a new way of talking about women's issues. As they framed women's social standing from women's perspectives, feminists and social activists introduced vocabulary that currently highlights women's autonomy and strength. For example, rather than labeled as victims—a word evoking derogatory and passive imagery—abused women are now referred to as *survivors* of physical, cultural ,or sexual oppression. These grassroots efforts helped to develop an alternative way of speaking with abused women that empowers and honors women's realities. This way of communicating continues to ground staff in their work at battered women's shelters more than three decades later.

A Place for Change is among those earlier agencies using assertive and open communication, and this approach is highly valued at APFC. It calls for intentional and conscious word choices. As trainees—both paid and volunteer—we learned, practiced, and were mindful of the ways we talked with each other and the women we served. APFC's dedication to our success in this endeavor began during its training program. Several hours of instruction were committed to introducing and practicing assertive and open communication. Assertive and open communication is characterized by several components. Active listening asks that we pay close attention to the person who is speaking without interruption. Empathy and genuine concern guide the way in which we are to interact with others. We are to acknowledge the person's healing process while letting them know they are valued and deserving of care. We consider options and avoid giving advice. Rather, we are to explore issues by asking clarification questions. Our own demeanor requires patience, calmness, and honesty. We are to offer warmth and acceptance. This approach imparts empathy, extends personal empowerment, and

supports self-accountability. It is humanitarian and foundational to treating women with respect and dignity.

Since communicating in such a way was oftentimes new to many of us, training facilitators encouraged and modeled the use of these communication techniques and concepts. I experienced similar guidance and encouragement from Shelter staff as I worked through my on-the-job training. I was amazed by our trainers' commitment. Not because I did not trust them to do so, but because I had not experienced such intentional focus on maintaining an atmosphere of open dialogue at work. As a legal assistant working with corporate lawyers responding to court and contractual deadlines, I was used to responding to commands and following instructions, not problem solving or receiving peer support. At APFC, this was common in our day-to-day activities. Even so, after four months of volunteering, I learned that a discrepancy exists between what I had experienced and the experiences of full-time, paid Shelter employees.

The impetus for this inquiry grew out of the realization that, regardless of the efforts and intentions of staff members to be forthright, honest, and respectful of each other, they had difficulties communicating with each other. My first indication of this presented itself as I called another staff member at a different site. "Caffeine" (all participants chose pseudonyms), who was sitting next to me, overheard my voice message requesting a call back and said something to the effect of "Good luck getting a response from her. She rarely returns telephone calls." The second incident spurring my curiosity happened as I retrieved a telephone call from a site coworker who asked to talk with the site coordinator. As I attempted to transfer the call, I found myself in the middle of an existing conversation that I had not been privy to. As the exchange played out, I realized I was relaying a series of coded messages between coworker and supervisor—who was standing in the same room with me. I became increasingly uncomfortable with the situation, but I did as I was told. I remained on the phone, mediating a call that the site coordinator refused to take herself. I was surprised, shaken, and began to feel like I should not have been involved in that conversation because it dealt with employee/employer issues. The third occurrence unfolded as four or five of us were talking about race relations within the agency. As we discussed the variances in

barriers and effects found among Anglo, Black and Latina abuse survivors seeking refuge, "Monkey," an agency staff member, expressed her frustration with "machismo" and Latino men. Her comment was interrupted—a technique wherein a prejudicial and/or discriminatory attitudes or behaviors are questioned—by a Latina coworker. Although the conversation concluded amicably, our Latina coworkers later confided that they did not feel they had been heard nor understood by their coworker. A similar, yet altogether separate situation focused on how agency policies tended to be white-centric—associated with dominant culture values and beliefs about language use at work. Specifically, the use of middle-class English during agency all-staff meetings. Even in light of the agency's call for staff members to be empathetic and accountable to each other, an atmosphere of indifference settled on staff interactions.

These communication problems presented a new and disturbing side of agency operations that I felt required further inquiry. Despite our enthusiasm and efforts to act and behave outside of oppressive ways, we found ourselves caught up in destructive patterns that created a sense of isolation, distrust, and anger. Yet, my research looks to present a broad picture of staff members' experiences.

This introduction is followed by a literature review that examines five overlapping areas—organizational communication, feminist organizations, women's language use, battered women's shelters, and communication within a battered women's shelter. Each is relevant to exploring women's experiences of communication at work in a feminist social service agency. Also within this same chapter I outline the perspective from which data interpretation occurs. The second chapter describes my use of feminist methodology. Chapter three explores study findings in relationship to external and internal influences on organizational communication. The final chapter summarizes my research, overviews conclusions, and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides definitions, comparisons of organizational communication models, explorations of what it means to be an employee, articulations of what constitutes a feminist organization, features of women's communication, reflections of the battered women's movement, and communication within a battered women's shelter. This review concludes with suggestions for future research and an outline of the theory used to explore women's views and experiences of communication at work.

Organizational Communication

In the early 1940s, two overarching disciplines—organizational theory and communication theory—merged to create the separately studied discipline of organizational communication theory. Organizational theory was concerned primarily with how institutions are arranged to maximize production and profits, their size, formality, environment, and the technology they use. Communication theory focused mainly on the function and structure of language use by managers in relationship to their subordinates. The blended version of these two theories, organizational communication theory, draws from classical schools of thought, focusing on the ways organizational structures emphasize power, control, and authority while optimizing functionality through prescribed methods of managing the organization and employee behavior (Fayol; 1949; Weber, 1946; Taylor, 1911). Communication within such organizations is task-oriented, hierarchical (traveling from top managers down to lower ranking middle management and finally to laborers), formal, and usually in written form (Miller, 2003). The limitations of classical theories are addressed by human relations approaches which include an analysis of how people view their contribution to the organization and what they hope to gain from it (Maslow, 1954; McGregor, 1957, 1960). Communication within these approaches is both task-oriented and social, flows down through the hierarchical structure and laterally across structure levels, is often face-to-face, and informal (Miller, 2003). While human resources models address earlier concerns with

organizational efficiency and effectiveness as dictated by management. However, they broaden both classical and human relations schools of thought in the sense that they recognize that people's feelings and their labor must be acknowledged simultaneously with striving to enhance both production and worker satisfaction (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Likert, 1967; Ouchi, 1981). Communication in these types of organizations is task-oriented, social and innovative while multidimensional, moving in all directions and team-based. Staff speak both formally and informally, with an emphasis on the latter, through written documents and in-person (Miller, 2003).

Organizational communication theory shares three major themes regarding communication in organizations: communication that highlights effective management, maximizes organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and ensures production profits. Communication within these types of organizations is a means to an end: a tool employed to get things done and a way for managers to motivate their employees. Relationships between employer, manager, and employee are maintained by an unequal distribution of power and authority wherein lower-ranking personnel are not thought to be as important as higher-ranking ones. Major differences between organizational models lie in the ways in which owners and managers view their employees. Classical schools of thought saw employees as disgruntled individuals who despised work and required constant monitoring; otherwise, they would not work. Human relations approaches thought that if managers regarded organizational functionality as a family in which they fulfilled the needs of workers and offered opportunities to succeed, then organizational efficiency would improve. Human resources theorists recognized people's feelings, ideas, and labor contributions as important aspects to be considered in the pursuit of meeting organizational goals. Although this school of thought was the most employee-focused, it primarily focused on increasing production output. Despite these developments, however, Katherine Miller (2003, p. 21) reports, "an examination of the vast majority of present-day organizations reveals the prevalence of classical management thought."

Historically, management has designed organizations in which communication travels along clearly marked avenues that make up a hierarchical organizational structure,

thus improving predictability. This guarantees that each employee receives a consistent message and ensures that managers control the transference of information. Additionally, setting up an organization hierarchically is meant to simplify oversight of tasks and make clear who talks with whom to reduce confusion. Such organizations, bureaucratic in nature, are characterized by legitimate and rational-legal authority, a strict division of labor, the importance of rules, and centralization of power (Weber, 1946). Power, control, and authority is unquestionably held by managers and owners.

Contemporary approaches to organizing introduce new ways of thinking about communication at work. Although several contemporary models have been developed, cultural theory is most relevant to my research topic. Cultural theorists, in particular, see communication as language use rather than information transfer, like their systems theorist counterparts who understand communication as an act of transferring, processing, and storing information (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Weick, 1979, 1995). Organizations are complex, socially constructed, ambiguous, divergent cultural sites (Miller, 2003). Culture, in this paper, refers to a group of people who share basic assumptions of the organization in which they work while they learn and interact with coworkers and negotiate internal and external demands (Schein, 1992). In other words, an organization is a place in which members interact and speak, thus creating and recreating a multiplicity of organizational aspects. Cultural approaches look to understand and/or explain "the qualities that make an organization 'what it is'" from the insider's perspective (Miller, 2003, p. 94).

Getting closer to the heart of an organization's culture, one must look at organizational communication as the basis from which the organization is constructed (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Pepper, 1995). Gerald Pepper (1995, p. 3) argues "to communicate is to organize . . . [and] the communication behaviors of organization members are what constitute the actual organization." Furthermore, he adds that communication is neither "a series of discrete events and parts with minimal relationship to each other" nor "a linear event" (p. 8). In other words, an organization is a series of conversations that occur between members who are constantly starting, stopping, challenging, and amending knowledge and information. Organizational

communication, therefore, in this paper, focuses on development of meaning as it emerges out of "the combination of communicative participants within a specific context. . . [and the] complex communicative process that includes words, intentions, contexts, histories, and attitudes" (Pepper, 1995, p. 9). Karl Weick (1979, 1995), seemingly Pepper's inspiration, casts this as an ongoing conversation, one considered in a specific cultural and historical period with a past, a present, and a future. He argues that interpreting what is happening within the organization, both physically and informationally, helps members to "reduce the unpredictability that is inherent in the information environment" (1995, p. 170). Additionally, interpreting organizational life can help members connect individual experiences with basic organizational assumptions, values, and behavior patterns. Assigning meaning is accomplished through a variety of ways (Pepper, 1995). These include gathering messages created by organizational members, observing members as they carry out their daily activities, and taking account of how members communicatively make sense of organizational procedures and their interactions with coworkers (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982).

Feminist Organizations

Feminism is a political theory that takes traditional, dominant perspectives of human interaction and communication and re-visions them to include women's experiences and viewpoints (hooks, 1984; Hill Collins, 1990). Feminists argue that making sense of communication within organizations must be considered in terms of gender. Although feminist organizational communication scholars have largely studied how communication maintains hierarchies that ranks less important organization members, alternate views and the ways language produces gendered relationships, their analysis of how women express and understand organizational experiences is particularly useful to my research (Schockley-Zalabak, 2002). As Schockley-Zalabak (2002) argues, organizational life has been historically a venue in which male ways of doing and knowing are privileged. Traditionally, a patriarchal culture values and structures institutions that a male-centered perspective defines which disadvantages women who work in organizations. Shockley-Zalabak (2002, p. 80-81) delineates those stereotypical

male traits that continue to be highly valued in organizations today: "self-assertion, separation, independence, control, competition, focused perception, rationality, analysis, clarity, discrimination, and activity." Alternatively, women are argued to "value interdependence, cooperation, receptivity, merging, acceptance, awareness of patterns, wholes, and synthesizing," particular characteristics that are not as important at work, especially while communicating with coworkers (2002, p. 81). Still, the assumption that "women" have similar experiences of oppression does not include the voices of women of color and working-class White women's experiences of organizational communication.

Standpoint feminists argue that people see things differently from different social locations. They point to women's diversity as a basis for examining multiple realities that can expose the complexity and richness of women's experiences (Field Belenky et al., 1986; Hartsock, 1987; Haraway, 1988). In other words, people associated with distinct groups have particular social, economic, and symbolic viewpoints that have not been highlighted in widely distributed historical accounts. The main concern with my research is to reveal "a set of alternative views that could uncover alternative meanings, processes, and outcomes" (Schockley-Zalabak, 2002, p. 79). People in control of producing social meanings and practices shape the world we see. They also define reality for the culture to create an official reality, one that reflects their ideological perspective. Ideology normalizes cultural beliefs, thus making them appear as truth. Ideology also clouds whatever resists it. Women, as a marginalized group, do not share a unitary view of the world, and they have been resisting dominant ideas about them for centuries. Women have many views stemming from interlocking social standpoints and many different ways of being privileged and disadvantaged (Hill Collins, 1990; Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1998). Each person expresses a situated viewpoint, one which is seen from her specific context. Although no standpoint is value-free and impartial, the views of obscured and oppressed peoples have a particular insight that sheds light on the multiplicity of a shared reality (Hartsock, 1987). Standpoint feminism endeavors to improve understanding and communication among groups to effect social action and organizational change.

Feminists, as they began creating their own organizations, viewed "hierarchical authority structures and specialized divisions of labor" as imbued with patriarchal ideas of organizing and communicating (Clemens, 1997, p. 1). Traditional organizations silenced people who did not hold power and authority; historically this included women, people of color, and working-class White men. In response to such traditional organizational structures, radical feminists, along with social activists, imagined women's organizations as safe havens for women: a place to rid themselves of male dominance. These organizations would embrace collectivist decision-making, empower their members, and have a political agenda that worked to end women's oppression (Marx Ferree & Yancey Martin, 1995). Politically active women and the women they organized emerged from consciousness raising groups energized with the idea to create an organization centered on women's issues and needs. Founded on the grounds that patriarchal formulations of organizations oppressed and/or subjugated women, radical feminists called for the rejection of male-centered workplaces by all women (Tong, 1989; Strobel, 1995). In addition to establishing women-only spaces, women were encouraged to create new ways of communicating.

In ideal feminist organizations all voices matter. Women's ideas, thoughts, and experiences are relevant, and women are encouraged to speak openly and honestly about them (Freeman, 1973). Feminist organizations, generally staffed by women, focus on process (Strobel, 1995). This act of talking through issues is unlike the focus of communication in traditional bureaucratic organizations, which emphasizes reaching the end-product quickly. Foundational to engaging in "process" is making decisions through consensus (Acker, 1995; Hult, 1995). A consensus model exemplifies women's ways of organizing: egalitarian, collaborative, open, and participatory (Baker, 1982). Such feminist organizations endeavor to provide space for everyone to speak and be heard. Since women have been silenced in many facets of society, using this method was, and continues to be, an approach that engages women in conversation while not reproducing dominant ideas of organizing and communicating (Field Belencky et al., 1986; Marshall, 1993). Additionally, through this approach, women have greater direct access to each other to share information freely. They are not encumbered with organizational

procedures that require them to make appointments with superiors and/or limit their conversations to task-based issues.

Despite these liberating organizational and communicative ideals, mainstream expectations and changing organizational structures still affect women's communicative practices within feminist organizations. Deborah Lynn Flick (1985), in her doctoral dissertation, identifies three main factors causing a shift from organizing as egalitarian, collectivist groups to either a modified or a strongly structured bureaucratic entity. First, newly forming feminist organizations could not be supported by structurelessness. As outlined by Jo Freeman (1974), structureless organizations were problematic because the format of consciousness-raising and the structureless "rap-group" were unable to decisively advance practical agendas. In other words, because these groups value each person's voice, they were unwilling to make decisions without consensus, whereas in a traditional hierarchical organization, decisions were made by majority vote or management. This may be seen by some (or by end-product driven people) as more effective and efficient than consensus decision making. Freeman (1974) argued that a structureless group simply did not exist because people work and organize themselves in a culture that is entrenched in structures, regardless if they are formal, and therefore recognized, or informal, and generally ignored or overlooked.

Second, in an effort to expand financial support, feminist organizers restructured their agencies to include components that would attract and maintain mainstream funding agencies. Many have adopted organizational structures that meld feminist and bureaucratic principles even though resistance to do so has been persistent (Iannello, 1992; Taylor, 1988). To appeal to the business side of private and public sources of income, feminist agencies formalized methods of conducting business internally, maintained statistics to produce monthly and annual reports, and hired professional and/or educated women. Additionally, due to political and economic pressures requiring accountability, feminist organizations, particularly battered women's shelters, had "to incorporate, add boards of directors, hire paid staff and expand" (Flick, 1985, p. 18; Riger, 1994). Hiring paid staff meant meeting governmental requirements regulating employer/employee confidentiality among other things. When problems arise with

coworkers, rather than sitting and discussing issues openly, they resolve them through a chain of command and document them fully. Creating hierarchies, specialized divisions of labor, accountability measures, and differential allotments of power and authority changed the ways staff talked with each other. No longer were the days of resolving matters cooperatively and collaboratively. It seems with organizational formalization and employee professionalization people became distanced from "process" and more focused on "product."

Finally, a new group of women with professional and/or academic credentials, and less "wholehearted commitment" were hired to replace organizational creators who had become "'burned out' or 'simply moved on'" (Flick, 1985, p. 19; Gaddis, 2001). Dell Hymes (1974, p. 53) would argue that communication differences exist among women educated in academia and/or trained in professional disciplines and women who come from an experiential perspective because "'stylistic' features" are generally associated with "a set of ways of speaking" they learn in their specific contexts. Women operating from personal experiences oftentimes remain silent or, in the alternative, say what they think and feel without hesitation which is often not well received by White, middle-class coworkers who are used to speaking in nuances (Lubrano, 2004; Field Belenky et al., 1986). Further, professional and/or academically educated women are trained to think, write, and speak in standardized English: the language of the powerful including professional and upper class as well as many people who work in corporate-style environments (Conklin & Lourie, 1983). Also, most closely associated with male forms of communication: standardized English favors analytical, emotionally distant, fact-based, linear, and rational ways of speaking. As time has demonstrated, many feminist organizations originally operating within a consensus model have not survived intact and the changes they have gone through undoubtedly altered the ways in which women experience communication in feminist organizations (Gaddis, 2001).

Women's Communication

Literature focusing on women's communication has a vast and rich foundation. Early work (1970s) of cultural anthropologists and feminist sociologists and historians

focused the majority of their analysis on women's language use in contrast to men's. Some scholars categorize much of this body of literature into three overarching representations (Coates, 1988; Cameron, 1995). First, linguist Robin Lakoff, in her 1975 classic analysis based on her personal experiences and observations of conversations with friends, framed women's language use in terms of a series of communication deficiencies. This publication sparked an inquiry into women's use of language. Lakoff concluded that women's language was deficient in relationship to men's. She determined that when women talk with men they hesitate when introducing new ideas, hedge as they expressed themselves, and/or remain silent when interrupted. These factors, along with others, made women seem incapable of making a clear, logical point. Lakoff attributed early sex-role socialization as the culprit to disadvantaging women speakers.

Fellow linguist Chris Kramarae (1981) argued that women were not necessarily deficient speakers, but were a muted group, less heard than men because society undervalues them as a group. Although groundbreaking in bringing attention to how society measures women and men's speech differently, this view did not take into account the context in which women and men use such speech patterns (Henley & Kramarae, 1991). The second representation view's language use by women and men as evidencing separate cultures. In their classic paper, "A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication," Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker (1982) argued that men and women, through socialization, learned different ways to understand friendly conversation and different rules for conversational engagement and interpretation. Society believed that men occupied public space. A space based on competitive and rational thought while women resided in the private realm of home in which their interactions were steeped in emotions and supporting others (Graddol & Swann, 1989).

Deborah Tannen (1990) identified these differences as communication subcultures governed by a person's sex–female and male–and gender–woman and man. Basing her conclusions on the dissimilar ways in which she and her husband approached and experienced the world, she attributed the ways women and men view the world as the basis for their living and communicating in separate and different sociolinguistic subcultures (1990). Gender specific communication patterns, those "reflecting and

maintaining gender-specific subcultures," get repeated in work environments in which men generate ideas in meetings while women support them administratively (Coates, 1993, p. 13). This final representation couches men and women's communication in terms of dominance. Theorists from this perspective concentrated on how women use language to negotiate a position of power within cross-sex interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1978; O'Barr & Atkins, 1980). In other words, male language has oppressed women because men interrupted women more and spoke for longer periods on topics that they initiated when they interrupted (Thorne & Henley, 1975; Delphy & Leonard, 1984; Moi, 1985; Spender, 1985, 1998; Zimmerman & West, 1975).

Although this focused primarily on communication between women and men, such socialization impacts the ways women talk with other women, particularly at work. In 1978, Sherry Suib Cohen (p. xii) argued that the

> "marketplace, its turbulence and jagged edges wore down
> the tender traits [of women] until women's power was
> rechanneled as a rough, tough thing. And, although women
> succeeded to a great extent, many harbored secret doubts
> about how good the new, cold power really felt. Many
> began to share their secrets, in the old connecting ways,
> and spoke of exhaustion, frustrations, and the growing
> knowledge that a dog-eat-dog business life and a harried,
> self-sacrificing personal life was very far from the dream
> they dreamed. Intimacy was out and amor was in."

The first chapter in her publication, Suib Cohen described women's "borrower voices" as a strategy used by women to express themselves and be accepted in male terms (p. 1). Terms that did not reveal the vulnerable side of women, but tough images that reflected male business values highlighting assertive control, professional accomplishments, undaunted nerve, and perseverance (p. 1). When addressing male colleagues, women must choose between appearing tough and ready or vulnerable and weak (Suib Cohen, 1978). Although not every working women found herself in a work setting that required her to speak like men to be successful, working women were socially trained in the art of obeying commands of their male supervisors.

Feminist philosopher Terry Winant (1987, p. 124) further argued women have no mother tongue because we "do not inherit a common idiom or voice." Women's voices

are not universal as earlier theorists argued, rather they are made up of "the contrast between the familiarity of the idiom of our marginal subcultures and the riskiness of the alienating establishment, with its dominant discourse we must reluctantly claim as ours" (1987, p. 129). A way of speaking that is relevant to dominant culture and allows us to "'pass,' more or less" as we attempt to escape marginalization and ostracism (p. 130).

Workplace gender dynamics professional and former college professor Rosemary Agonito (1993) broadened Suib Cohen and Winant's assessment of women's language use and communication when she argued that gender socialization and fear of consequences train women and men to act in particular ways, especially at work. Women, socialized to be nice, put other people's needs before their own and work to not hurt other people's feelings (Agonito, 1993). Additionally, Agonito argued women did not generally stand up for themselves when faced with oppressive language or behaviors because "passivity fits our lifelong conditioning as females" (p. 11). Since most women work jobs in male-oriented, patriarchal organizations during their lives, it seems plausible that we continue to talk and act in ways that identify more with our male counterparts than our female ones. It also seems likely that when women go to work at feminist organizations after they have lived and worked in predominantly male-oriented social institutions, they carry those learned communication patterns with them as they interact with other women with whom they work. Overall, women communicating has been structured by dominant, mainstream male-oriented ideas of talk at work.

Fewer, less publicly broadcasted research articles, highlight communication among all-women groups, although it exists peripherally to that of women-to-men communication inquiry. Jennifer Coates (1986), in Women, Men and Language: A Sociological Account of Sex Differences in Language, found after studying men-only and women-only discussion groups that when women talk to each other they reveal a lot about their personal lives. She found also that women discuss one topic for a long time, let each speaker finish their sentences, and encourage everyone to participate. Nancy Wyatt (1988) found similar patterns as she worked with predominantly all-female research teams. She argued that decisions among women were made collaboratively and offered "emotional support and constructive criticism" while handling negative feelings

openly, "and avoiding competitive behaviors that threatened what they called the 'sanctuary'" (p. 205). Cynthia M. Lont (1988) too, found in her study with Redwood record producers that while organizing to make money to pay for its social change agenda, that members felt it important and imperative to organizational survival to welcome and listen to multiple points of view.

These articles emphasize studies of the ways some women communicate with each other in relatively power-equal environments. As Anita Taylor (1988) described, however, a different scenario appeared in her study of women working in an organization that embraced feminist principles of organizing yet operated within a bureaucratic hierarchical structure. In her description of organizational members' communication regarding decision making processes, Taylor offered a view of feminist organizing in a commonly male-dominant industry, film making. She found that women working with Studio D, the National Film Board of Canada, allotted adequate time to discuss issues requiring decisions upon because they were "generally committed to collaborative processes rather than hierarchical authority structures [that had] not freed [them] from the organization's structures" but this did not erase conflict (p. 288). Although staff acknowledged the inevitability of conflict among them, they expressed a sense of guilt for their differences because it "seemed to challenge the basic feminist philosophy of the group" (p. 293). When decisions could not be made collaboratively, someone "in-charge" made final decisions (p. 289). Taylor attributed such existing tension between the combination of "feminist philosophy, a structure with central leadership by the executive director, and an environment where feminist insights and situational constraints frequently come into conflict" to the organization's existing bureaucratic structure and the organization's participation in the larger structure of film making, also historically hierarchical (p. 6). As Taylor reported, at times this situation "highlights the dissonance between the reality of Studio D and the feminist vision [which] is, a source of distress [among organizational members]" (p. 289). Overall, it seems that striking a balance between feminist organizing values and operating within a culture regulated by traditional bureaucratic procedures curbs the extent to which women can alter their organizational operations and communication.

Battered Women's Movement - A Brief Historical Overview

Social change throughout the 1960s laid the ground work for the emergence of the battered women's movement in the 1970s on both individual and institutional levels. Along with other social movements--civil rights, anti-war, gay pride, women's, women's health--the battered women's movement heightened awareness around issues previously considered unimportant, personal and/or private. Issues such as racial discrimination, sexual orientation, women's sexuality, reproductive rights, and the right to live free from violence became a part of national awareness.

During that time, women began to have more access to resources outside of the family and the few associated religious communities. Proponents of the battered women's movement argued that battering (1) is "an act of power and control," (2) encompasses multiple aspects of domestic violence, and (3) comprises a "socio-political nature of widespread battering" (NCADV Battered/Formerly Battered Women's Task Force, A Current Analysis, 1992, p. 4 of Excerpt). Further, battering was identified as a method used by men to silence women and keep them in their [domestic] places. Battered women, feminists, and social activists opened shelters designed to address the lack of services for women experiencing male violence. Several classic publications written during the 1970s account for this development. In 1974, Erin Pizzey published Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear in which she described her experiences working with Chiswick Women's Aid (the first modern-era women's shelter established in London, England) and the violence British women experienced in their homes by their male partners/husbands. Erin Pizzey, a battered woman and movement advocate herself--oftentimes referred to as the Founder of the battered women's movement--focused on how to set up and run a battered women's shelter. Two years later Del Martin (1976) echoed Pizzey's work as she looked at the institutional barriers abused women living in the United States of America (U.S.A.) faced as they attempted to publicize their experiences with male violence. She focused particularly on why people were not "righteously indignant" with woman battering. Lenore Walker (1979), in her work The Battered Woman, further explored how stereotypical myths prevented battered women from being seen as more than victims of male violence but also as victims of institutional

and cultural expectations. Susan Schechter (1982), in her classic publication Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement, provided an extensive and important overview of the movement's first 10 years. Although her work is largely based on interviews with staff and residents of three anti-domestic violence organizations, her focus was on documenting the early stages of the movement rather than directly and specifically on what staff members' were saying about their experiences of communication. Connie Guberman and Marie Wolfe's (1985) anthology, No Safe Place: Violence Against Women and Children, also provided a powerful testament to the horrors women and children face at the hands of violent men. Additional publications address similar issues brought forth in these classic studies, such as the effects of domestic violence on women and children, influences of sex-role socialization and domestic violence, issues of power and control, and interrelatedness of women, violence, and the legal system (Guberman & Wolfe, 1985; Freedman, 1985; Bart & Moran, 1993; Ptacek, 1999). These foundational publications brought an unbelievable crime, the assault and murder of women, to the forefront of national consciousness. Each work is important for making sense of domestic violence, yet, they do not specifically highlight perspectives of advocates for battered women.

More recent literature features advocates' direct accounts of their work experiences in the battered women's movement. Exploring current conversations occurring among advocates is helpful for building an understanding around issues important to them. Current trends include first-person accounts of social privilege, external funding and organizational structures, and professionalism (Timmins, 1995; McCarry, 2001; Gaddis, 2001).

Listening to the Thunder: Advocates Talk about the Battered Women's Movement is a collection of articles dedicated to the experiences of advocates and examining the challenges of the Movement (1995). Because White, middle-class, English-speaking women predominantly accounted for the movement's activities and dilemmas through historical writings, this anthology offers a glimpse of the experiences of women of color, survivors of violence, lesbians, differently-abled women, and working-class White women. It also highlights explorations into the complications

arising when "an issue . . . doesn't fit perfectly into the power and control paradigm we've developed to explain men's violence against their partners" (Timmins, 1995, p. 19). Merging voices of diverse groups of women into predominantly White historical accounts better represents the complexity of both the Movement and those who work and receive services within it. In doing so, a complex and transformational picture may be presented.

Jan Barnsley (1995) in "What Feminism Means for the Way We Work," thinks that remaining grounded in feminist principles of change, empowerment, and inclusivity is possible while responding to internal and external challenges. But in order to do this we must return to the basics of sharing power, supporting each other, advocating for the women we serve, and speaking out against inequality inside and outside shelters. She stresses listening to our co-advocates, particularly women who have not traditionally had voice: "First Nations women, immigrant women, women of colour, and women with disabilities" (p. 217). It is through advocates' stories that a conversation can begin to discuss and question existing racist and systemic barriers present in organizational practices, a practice that can eventually lead to fundamental change (1995).

However, as noted earlier, Flick (1985) found that organizational survival often deflects energy, time, and motivation away from daily activities, including challenging internal demands like dealing with internalized and learned oppressions. Internalized oppression are those attitudes, actions, and behaviors of "some oppressed people that reflect the negative, harmful, stereotypical beliefs of the dominant group directed at oppressed people" (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2001, p. 582). Whereas learned oppression are those attitudes, actions, and behaviors of dominant group people that reflect their own sense of superiority over other groups of people (APFC Training Manual, 2001). Accountability criteria set forth by private and public funders have led to the creation of hierarchical structures that support end results rather than "process" by which some organized groups manage philosophical quandaries. Many feminist organizations which have diverted time away from process-oriented values toward administrative duties that justify programmatic existence have suffered from internal strife because of it. Alternatively, it is also possible that women from diverse backgrounds may not talk in

ways that initially make sense to each other and subsequently erode potential common ground from which to talk through particularly frustrating and hurtful issues of privilege and cultural power.

This suggests that as adults in corporate-like settings, people with working-class roots may have difficulty voicing opinions, needs, hopes, and expectations at work because doing so may challenge people raised in authoritarian environments. People raised in such circumstances may not immediately respond to collaborative, consensus-based processes because they are waiting for someone to outline what needs to be done, to provide directions to complete the project, and to cue them to get started. Oftentimes, typical conversations at work reflect behavioral and communicative qualities most closely associated with male and middle-class communication patterns such as calmness, composure, and diplomacy. People from different racial and working-class backgrounds may find this process emotionally distant and sterile. I believe communicating in this way is oppressive and awkward to the point of creating apathy and frustrated silence. It seems that on occasion the only way to get attention on a particular issue traditionally subsumed into other topics and/or silenced, is through a display of emotion--a moment of drama--that draws attention to a particular viewpoint. People who learn to do what they are told by people in authority--parents, instructors, law enforcement agents, and bosses--learn obedience. Alfred Lubrano (2004) describes how miscommunication and misunderstanding between members of different socioeconomic groups can occur due to social patterning taught by families and work. In particular, he closely ties the ways in which we speak to the socioeconomic class from which we emerge as children. In his contrast between working-class and middle-class kids, Lubrano (2004) distinguishes between working-class kids who learn to read cues giving them permission to speak and middle-class kids who learn they have some say in their upbringing. Nancy Dean, as quoted by Lubrano (2004), supported Lubrano's assertion. As a child growing up in a working-class family, Dean explained that kids were expected to keep their mouths shut because no one cared what they had to say. Parents said what they needed to say directly without hesitation. Carrying such lessons into adulthood cannot help but influence the ways in which working-class adults communicate in corporate-like settings. However,

when work situations are not receptive to straight talk and/or alternative views, it may seem safer and more comfortable for working-class people to leave their jobs or remain silent rather than engage in double-talk (Profitt, 2000; Lubrano, 2004). Norma Jean Profitt (2000, p. 175) agrees as she extends this explanation beyond working-class people to include survivors of violence. She found that survivors working in organizations in which unacknowledged power differences among differently situated employees "obscure differences in social and decision-making power among members" were less likely to participate in process discussions (2000). These insights seem to translate into organizational conversations that go nowhere or remain awkwardly quiet.

Another article from the anthology discusses the effects of professionalization within the battered women's movement. In "Taking Back the Movement: Resisting Professionalism and Listening to Women," Ajax Quinby (1995) discusses her experiences with the challenges with professionalism within transition houses. Quinby argues that professionalism is yet another system of oppression that transition employees have to deal with. The way in which advocates do their work, Quinby (1995) challenges, can create an atmosphere of either acceptance and openness to or indifference and avoidance of difficult conversations about the ways in which programs are developed. She believes that normalizing and classifying movement work will do away with services and eventually return battered women back into the hands of psychologists. Quinby takes a close look at the connections between battered women and their hierarchical homes and the hierarchical, rule-based organizational structures of some transition houses. She argues that when feminists organize themselves in ways that do not invite disclosure and openness, we are not treating transition house residents as respected equals nor are we seen as equals by our peers and supervisors (1995). Sarah McCarry (1995) supports Quinby's argument as she argues that an increased focus on professionalization contributes to organizational changes experienced in many shelters because it redirects advocacy and program monies away from the women who require services, translating it instead to funding for professional development.

It seems that to some extent professionalizing movement service providers shifts the mind toward thinking of work as meeting someone's needs and away from the

concept of clients/women joining together on an emotionally traumatic and life-changing journey. Although embracing both ideas to accomplish the goal of transforming women's lives is not impossible, doing so challenges basic business practices. Additionally, it is possible that professional training and academic socialization orient administrative and executive staff toward a *business as usual* mentality while direct-service staff generally focus on getting abused women and children to safety. Assuming direct-service staff are primarily operating from an experiential viewpoint. Rather than finding and securing monies to ensure that shelters remain open long enough to (a) house the women and children seeking sanctuary and (b) employ those hired to help them, direct-service staff have in the forefront of their minds the creation of a space that provides immediate safety. Both perspectives have value and are viable. However, it seems in this age of downsizing and budget cuts, staff development and client retention issues are sacrificed to organizational functionality. Setting aside time to begin such a conversation is difficult, but a necessary step toward keeping Movement advocates who are not focused on the business of shelter operations from being "wounded and misunderstood by professional task masters, and non-profit board members... or unqualified executive directors [lacking knowledge about the domestic violence movement]... brought in from the mainstream to tell shelter staff and court advocates that they [are] not as important to the program as the licensed professionals" (Gaddis, 2001, p. 15). Heightening action that would boost professionalism seems to work contrary to reducing persistent tensions between employees holding varying views (e.g., lay, professional, and academic).

Communication within Battered Women's Shelters

Studies of women's communication in battered women's shelters are few, especially those focusing on staff. Less than ten publications addressing shelter advocates' accounts of communication at work emerged from a survey of existing literature, four of which were found in one anthology. The articles discussed here outline the current trends in understanding how some women make sense of their work within this movement. They speak from an experiential base securely grounded in both their

own cultural roots and feminism. They address issues of institutional and individual racism, organizational structures and personnel practices supporting racism, and emotional challenges women of color experience while negotiating this tense terrain.

Four articles, "White Racism: Power & Prejudice = Racism," "Reinventing the Experience," "You're Here Now, So What Are You Going To Do?," and "Wanted: Women of Color Encouraged to Apply," speak directly to how advocates experience communication within battered women's shelters. Each article explores some aspect of race, particularly ways White advocates and administrators alienate, isolate, and ignore issues raised by their coworkers who are women of color (Amrit, 1995; Gutierrez-Diez, 1995; C., 1995; Boyce, 1995). The first article, "White Racism: Power & Prejudice = Racism," expresses one woman of color's experience of professional and personal betrayal. Amrit (1995), the only women of color working at the agency and a support group co-facilitator, explored her experience with individual prejudices and racist actions and behaviors of White coworkers. Specifically, Amrit (1995) recounts an incident that ultimately severed her interest in working at the agency. During a support group meeting, rather than interrupt racist comments made by White support group members, Amrit's White coworker attempted to "'educate' them on their racist statements" while she was sitting in the room (p. 78). Although this may be a reasonable response for a White woman, it was considered injurious by Amrit.

After the meeting, Amrit requested to discuss the situation with her White co-worker who subsequently refused. Amrit's coworker told her that she had retreated to her office to allow Amrit "space" to process her feelings of anger. When Amrit approached the executive staff to discuss possible solutions to this situation, they chose to do nothing to hold their White co-worker accountable. This inability to resolve the issue openly and face-to-face left Amrit feeling betrayed and dismissed. Not only did Amrit go away from the situation feeling "silenced" by the "white wimmin" in the group, she was furious with her white co-workers who could not see their participation in the age-old divide-and-conquer strategy used by dominant groups to subordinate others (p. 79). Amrit further noted that the primary way white women grappled with tough race issues within the movement was by expecting women of color to be pleasant, agreeable,

and to appease White guilt rather than question the nature of White power and authority (p. 80). It seems contrary to feminist principles to shy away from confronting difficult issues head on; however, as bell hooks (1984, p. 3) argued, "white women who dominate feminist discourse today rarely question whether or not their perspective on women's reality is true to the lived experiences as a collective group." I sadly agree that dealing with painful topics at work, requires large concentrated amounts of time that are often unavailable. Even in feminist agencies that incorporate such a value into their foundational principles, time frequently translates into money (additional and/or overtime pay), which many budgets of feminist agencies do not have or can not spare.

In "Reinventing the Experience," Marilyn Maiza Gutierrez-Diez (1995) argued that classism and racism are prominent barriers to immigrant women and women of color. Like Amrit, Gutierrez-Diez (1995) attributed this to the reality that many women working in transition shelters are often not women of color, nor are they survivors of sexual and/or physical violence, but are White, middle-class, and English-speaking individuals who are ignorant about the barriers non-White women face. In relationship to communication with White, middle-class, often educated and professional coworkers, Gutierrez-Diez felt that the visible and obscure hierarchies of the organizations in which she worked reproduced social hierarchies of race and class. For example, after not knowing about resources that would help her escape her batterer of 15 years, Gutierrez-Diez (p. 55) felt that other immigrant women like her needed more helpful and relevant information. When she attempted to talk about this issue in a meeting with coworkers, she reported that "nobody was paying much attention to what [she] had to say." She identified this "ignorance" as another major reason for immigrants and women of color not accessing the services they required to leave violent relationships. Gutierrez-Diez, angered, hurt, and frustrated by the fact that most of the women she was talking about had limited English-speaking skills or did not speak English at all, felt betrayed by organizational rhetoric and dismissed by fellow advocates. Another incident, as Gutierrez-Diez shared her thoughts about exclusive organizational practices--particularly the use of English to conduct organizational operations--, she noted how coworkers subsumed them into other topics and eventually they would get lost in the rhetoric.

Overall, she felt isolated, silenced, and disappointed as she worked to create a viable space for battered immigrant women.

Gutierrez-Diez's experiences extended into advocacy efforts to work against racist prejudices. A resident of Canada for 21 years, she only felt like she "belonged" after she had left her batterer/husband 7 years earlier to join a support group for battered women. She stated she experienced a cohesiveness with group members but noticed from a variety of comments made by facilitators that they were not survivors. Because of this, she felt they could not identify with her. After finding and attending several sessions with a second support group, she sensed a better connection with facilitators and decided to ask to become a volunteer, one who could reach out to the Latino community in the area. They refused and told her she had not spent enough time on working through her issues and that it was "too soon" for her to become a volunteer. She was saddened because asking to volunteer was out of her comfort zone; as she explained, Chilean ideas of respect did not socialize her in a way that inspired self-motivation. In Chile, her country of origin, people at home and at work, "don't ask, [they] do as [they] are told" (1995, p. 56). However, Gutierrez-Diez contended that to act meek, passive, and/or timid was not well received by her White, Canadian coworkers and a mixed-message she found difficult to negotiate. Additionally, in Canada, Vancouver, British Columbia at least, "individuals are expected to take responsibility for their lives. . . . Self-motivation and initiative are highly valued" (p. 56), a social expectation often found in the U.S. also. This barrier, as Gutierrez-Diez notes, was prohibitive to Latino-American women who held similar ideas about getting information that could transform their lives. As Alfred Lubrano (2004) argued, working-class folks learn to follow orders and instructions from bosses and not to engage in extended conversation about unknowns and possibilities. I would extend his argument to include women who have been marginalized as a result of their sex, gender, race, and nationality.

The third article, "You're Here Now, So What Are You Going To Do?," written by "C" (1995), a women's advocate at a crisis center who described herself as a working-class woman/mother of color, outlined her own and a friend's ("P") experiences. After being hired into the same agency, C and P started to notice high levels of tension and

anger. A short time after they were both hired, they were fired without due cause or discussion. Both women expressed confusion around this issue because they worked in a feminist agency built on a consensus decision-making process. Nevertheless, they understood it as a White process managed by White rules, fueled by a White administration and board members. P was fired by agency leadership because they received an "anonymous letter stating [P] had breached ethics and should be fired" (p. 73). Similar to Amrit and Gutierrez-Diez, C identified and explained how systemic organizational procedures enforced by board members and administrators targeted women of color, particularly First Nations women. C (1995) reported it was the organizational structures and practices in addition to the organizational mind set that made it virtually impossible for women of color to actively challenge and work with White and middle-class staff. In the agency's effort to diversify, C pointed out, it did not expect to hire First Nations women who were outspoken, particularly about practices and procedures they found oppressive. Rather than being hired to provide services to similarly socially situated women, C and P (1995, p. 75) reported being hired as tokens to satisfy affirmative action requirements. They walked away from their jobs feeling "invited but not welcome." C concluded that to be able to keep a job in the women's movement, one must "keep [her] mouth shut," "follow the Big Agenda," and "don't say what you really think" (p. 75).

Sonya Boyce (1995), a black lesbian feminist, echoed the experiences and concerns of Amrit, Gutierrez-Diez, and C in the final article, "Wanted: Women of Colour Encouraged to Apply," explored in this section. Writing in a letter of application for a women's support position, Boyce (1995) outlined her experiences with White women's "wilfully ignorant" ways of communicating to women of color with whom they worked. Boyce connected everyday unaware racist actions and behaviors of White women with organizational procedures and practices that reinforce such activity. Her findings showed that not only could someone socially control another person through the use of words, but even "a cough, grimace, or cold stare" could reduce participation by women of color (p. 237). Additionally, Boyce (1995) pointed to how such nonverbal cues "inevitably [undermine] the confidence and credibility of women of colour" (p. 237). White women

may argue that these nonverbal cues were unintentional, possibly a dry throat or too much coffee, but not racist. In some instances, this could be their truth. Yet, it is possible that an environment of discrimination, to which we are all indoctrinated, may give rise to occasions when these actions are interpreted by women of color and working-class White women as an attempt to silence or an unwillingness to listen by White women. Gloria Yamato (2001, p. 557), for example, argues that unaware/unintentional racism is just that, a stealthy type of oppression that creeps into daily interactions propelled by guilt, "naïveté, and lack of awareness of privilege". I agree, these issues can cause additional problems for women of color and working-class White women particularly in an organizational atmosphere that does not welcome or validate its commitment to diversity. I think also that women who come to the agency with a personal desire to work for change ultimately become discouraged because some behaviors of their White coworkers and/or women of color in positions of power ignore their input and/or behave in ways that are crazy-making.

These four articles, coupled with research findings of the five other disciplines, serve as a springboard from which to explore my own research into the ways advocates view and experience talk at work in a feminist battered women's shelter. Personal accounts are a powerful way and an important component for making sense of the interplay between organizational life, structures, practices, and staff interaction and communication. Therefore, this research adds to this body of knowledge in order to expand and inspire future research.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I focus on feminist methodologies, describe the specific research methods used in this project, and address generalizations and limitations of the study.

Feminist Methodology

The conversation about how to ethically, accurately, and respectfully represent women's lives began more than twenty years ago (Oakley, 1981; Pettigrew, 1981; Mies, 1983). Feminist methodologists called into question "traditional" ways of obtaining data (such as observing objectively without considering the researcher's point of view, biases, and prejudices) used to substantiate scientifically-oriented hypotheses. Feminist research moves away from the scientific method's notion of objectivity into the murkiness of partial understandings: a multitude of truths (Harding, 1987). It has also refocused the research lens to incorporate voices from the margins. The experiences of women of color, poor, differently-abled, sexual minority, and immigrant women have taken root in the fields of literary criticism, sociology, and anthropology. Creating, re-orienting, and/or expanding existing "traditional" methods with feminist methodological and epistemological thought created space for feminist researchers to begin a new conversation built around the experiences and everyday lives of women.

Current feminist research reflects the conversation feminists have had in response to "traditional" scientific research methodology. Feminists have contemplated a set of their own methods within and growing out of such disciplines as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Guiding the conversation is the feminist perspective that advocates for more interactive approaches to learning about women's day-to-day realities. These are methods that recognize and highlight the complexity of women's lives, move away from a single truth toward validation of multiple realities, and incorporate the researcher's presence (Mies, 1983; Cook & Fonow, 1986; Harding, 1987; Lather, 1988; DeVault, 1990; Mancini Billson, 1991; Ward Gailey, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996;

Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Out of that conversation came new ways of considering appropriate, women-centered, respectful interchanges with research participants.

Choosing the appropriate methodology for my research is guided by feminist principles set forth in the article, "Knowledge and Women's Interests: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in Feminist Sociological Research" (Cook & Fonow, 1986). Particularly, Cook & Fonow (1986) assert that it is necessary to consciously underscore gender and then empower women to change patriarchal social institutions through research. Reflexivity asks researchers to actively and consciously insert themselves, and subsequently their social position, into the analysis of the research project. Social position refers to that place a person occupies symbolically when their class, race, age, ability, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and educational level are considered as a whole. Moreover, participants must be allowed voice in the process of telling their own story: they must have the freedom to ask questions of the interviewer (Oakley, 1981). To arrive at and create space for such principles, feminist research must include a number of methods that highlight the complexity of women's lives.

Additionally, it is imperative to define three terms that will be used throughout this paper: "method," "methodology," and "epistemology." The way in which researchers gather information, the approaches used such as focus groups, interviews, or ethnography makes up a "method." "Methodology" is the study of particular research practices that allow analysis of the information, thus emphasizing a particular "theoretical framework." Finally, "epistemology" refers to the "theory of knowledge" (Harding, 1987). Such distinctions have moved feminists to argue against the scientific method's single approach to gathering information. Instead, incorporation of multiple methods to one's research is advocated and, for feminist researchers, optimal (Mies, 1983; Harding, 1987, Ward Gailey, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Ethnography

Ethnographers strive to uncover the ordinary, everyday activities of a particular group of people and write about them from combined perspectives including both researcher and study participants. Merging these two perspectives is a relatively recent

phenomenon. However, doing so provides a unique way in which to explore women's lived experiences (Behar, 1996). Centralizing women's realities broadens societal understanding about the ways dominant cultural norms and social values influence women, feminist organizing, and transformational work. I draw upon the theoretical framework of feminist ethnography to portray the experiences and views of women working at a feminist social service agency that is experiencing administrative and leadership change, staff turnover, and budgetary cuts.

Ethnography, a particular discipline of cultural anthropology, sets out to expose the "nonnatural bases of differences" (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 18). The notion of women working together for social change in a feminist organization seems natural enough to feminists; however, within the body of feminism several perspectives examining women's oppression exist. Working in a feminist organization in which everyone is encouraged to be herself and openly discuss controversial topics might be standard business practice. Nevertheless, even among women, a variety of viewpoints arise. Though an organization is feminist and may be considered a safe environment in which advocates can examine systems of oppression, every employee, particularly those victimized and/or oppressed by racial, class, or gender violence, may not view it as safe. Ethnography is about vulnerability and representation with an eye toward the ways in which a researcher's presence and their line of questioning influences those who share their knowledge (Geertz, 1989; Behar, 1996).

Overlapping and merging these "ways of witnessing" allows for many thoughts and views to be considered at one given time (Behar, 1996, p. 26). Exploring the responses of several staff members together highlights often unvoiced insights that have to open up avenues for future conversations. Kamala Visweswaran\ (1994, p. 19) suggests "a feminist ethnography could focus on women's relationships to other women, and the power differentials between them." It is within the comments of the women whom I have observed, worked with, and interviewed, that I learn about communicative power differentials present in the organization. I also discover how these differences shape the ways staff members interact with each other as they carry out their day-to-day

work activities. It is through these shared views and experiences of communication and work that individuals' understanding of feminist ideals becomes evident.

Within the broad spectrum of feminist ethnography, I have chosen three specific research methodologies: participant-observation, interview techniques, and document review. Each method has its own benefits and disadvantages. Used together though, they strengthen research rather than diminish it because each acts as a point from which to cross-check data, thus ensuring accuracy and meaningfulness. Cross-referencing information, called triangulation, is both an ethnographic and a feminist tool used to "clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 1995, p. 97).

Participant-observation has long been a methodological technique used by anthropologists to gain a heightened understanding of the communities in which they wish to learn more about (Fasold, 1984; Briggs, 1986). Maria Mies (1983, p. 124) describes participant-observation as "active participation in actions, movements and struggles" and essential for feminist researchers to move beyond the objectivity insisted upon by pre-feminist, positivist scientists. As I attended meetings, volunteered time within each agency location, and struggled with coworkers around complex and intense issues, I gained insight into the operations of the agency and the practical everyday experiences of staff members.

Group and in-depth interviews coupled with a self-administered introductory questionnaire provide study participants with the opportunity to describe and explain in their own words those personal experiences related to agency communication (Oakley, 1981). Ann Oakley (1981) explains that feminist interviewing is committed to the illumination and substantiation of women's personal knowledge. It differs from "traditional" interviewing (methods often associated with the scientific method used to prove hypotheses in physical sciences) primarily because it provides space for participants to ask questions, encourages a reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant, and emphasizes the researcher's "own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981; Wolf, 1996). Interviewing continues to be an effective tool because it provides a place from which participants can give voice to issues of concern to them.

The group interview more specifically provides space for participants to meet "face-to-face" for a specific amount of time to discuss agency communication with each other (Reinharz, 1992). In-depth interviews and the introductory questionnaire allow participants to share what they feel is most important about agency communication--whether it is something that works well, sometimes works, or rarely works.

Reviewing organizational documents provides insight into both the way in which the organization is structured and the theoretical modes of communication used to transmit information (Stake, 1998). Organizational documents tell the story of the agency's history: its social and political development, philosophical underpinnings, organizational values and beliefs. I examine APFC documents to obtain a better understanding of the way it is set up administratively—both physically and philosophically—and how it guides staff members to interact with each other communicatively.

Specifically, I observed and participated at the agency in day-to-day activities throughout APFC for four and one-half weeks prior to conducting any interviews. I had established a working relationship with many employees at Shelter throughout my eight months of volunteer work, but I had to develop trust among those employees whom I did not know well. I had hoped I would do so while working with them at their individual site locations. I worked 20-25 hours a week volunteering on-site throughout the agency. During that time, I recorded field notes, out of sight of agency staff, for future reference. Each site mentioned earlier was represented. None of the board members were available to participate. Observing and participating in agency functions allowed me to get to know how each site location operated and the role they played in carrying out the agency's mission to serve battered women and their children. Additionally, I got to know fellow co-workers and the ways in which they communicated with each other.

Three interview techniques were used to elicit a wide range of information. Before I distributed any questionnaires or conducted any group interviews and individual interviews, each participant signed an informed consent (See Appendix A). An introductory questionnaire requesting demographic information was then issued (Appendix B). The questionnaire not only gathered demographic information, but also

asked about each person's general impression of the agency's overall health. This informal and non-confrontational tool assisted with getting study participants to start thinking about agency communication.

Two group interviews provided participants the space to discuss as openly as possible those communication issues with coworkers that concerned them the most. Although all participants indicated they would attend the first group interview, only two were in attendance. During the first group interview, occurring before any in-depth interviews were conducted, I posed a series of questions to the group to elicit thoughts about agency life, communication, and work (See Appendix C). I specifically asked about what their impressions were of past and current events that influence staff communication. Both participants indicated they wanted to review the group interview transcript once it was transcribed. Each provided me with written comments/corrections.

The second group interview, occurring at the close of the study, was scheduled in the same manner as the first. It entailed follow-up questions that required participants to reflect on personal experiences arising during the study (See Appendix D). It was also an opportunity for participants to address any questions that came up for them since we talked individually during the in-depth interview. I also invited them to express their hopes for future agency communications. Seven participants attended the second group interview. Like the first group interview, it was transcribed and participants were notified via memorandum (redacted to protect agency anonymity) that it was available for their review (see Appendix E). Some participants told me they did not want to review the transcript, while others did not contact me at all. A draft compilation of findings was presented at the close of the second group interview and participants were asked to review and discuss them. I incorporated their comments into the final findings document that was presented at the following all-staff meeting. Additionally, the final findings compilation was added to the next board of directors meeting informational packet.

The second interview method conducted was the in-depth interview. Individual in-depth interviews gave participants the opportunity to speak freely without censor or concern for how other staff members might react. I interviewed all twelve study participants. Each person was asked the same set of questions (Appendix F). Interviews

occurred at a place, date, and time of the participants' choosing and convenience. Each in-depth interview was then transcribed and a copy of the transcription was offered to the participant for review. All but two participants reviewed their interview transcriptions. Participants were informed that they were entitled to a copy of their interview transcript; they only needed to request it. One participant was unable to review her interview due to illness and her copy was not returned to me. Subsequently, I printed another copy for my files.

Finally, I reviewed agency documents to gain a broader understanding of how the agency set itself up administratively. The documents, although redacted to maintain anonymity, include APFC's (1) organizational chart (Appendix G), and (2) organizational philosophy, mission and goals (Appendix H). Examining such documents provided insight into APFC's administrative infrastructure. It also brought to light some potential philosophical and organizational contradictions that APFC staff members mentioned experiencing, particularly as they worked to balance the agency's commitment to function as a feminist organization while operating within an organizational structure that met funding agencies' criteria. The above listed documents were supplemented by agency materials gleaned from the agency's training manual as well as by any documents that were created as the study unfolded.

Study Participants

I sought out participants by presenting the proposed study at an agency all-staff meeting. To ensure all staff members received the information presented at the all-staff meeting, I circulated a detailed memorandum to reiterate my study. Additionally, the memorandum requested that all interested parties contact me at their earliest convenience via the provided telephone number and/or email address. The memorandum was routed to everyone working within APFC including board of directors via intra-agency mail. Within two weeks, everyone who could and would participate had contacted me. For those individuals who agreed to participate, I mailed a follow-up letter of introduction and "thank you" to them directly, again through intra-agency mail. Attached to the this

letter was a list of dates and times for participants to indicate their availability. Twelve staff members volunteered to participate in the study.

They study participants were a diverse group, ranging from 21 years to 49 years old (barring one participant who chose not to disclose her age). Although each participant identified as female, some were born within the socially prescribed category of male. Nevertheless, pronouns associated with females will be used throughout this paper. Participants came from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. One woman identified herself as "Black, African-American or North African, Non-Latino/Hispanic," two were "Latina/Hispanic-American," seven indicated they were "White, European-American," and two were of mixed heritage (marking more than one category to describe their racial/ethnic affiliation). Regarding socioeconomic standing, five participants marked lower middle-class, one under-class, one upper-class, one middle-class, one lower middle-class, two upper lower-class, one working class, and a single person who indicated she fluctuates between lower middle-class and middle-class. In terms of educational level, two participants have attended technical/vocational school and have one or two years of college, three attended some college, one earned an associate's degree, three completed a bachelor's degree program, two received high school diplomas, while one had not. One participant had a master's degree and completed most of a doctoral degree program before leaving it to aid an ailing family member. All study participants worked on site at one of the three agency sites. None of the board members were available to participate. In sum, participants represented a broad range of individual social identities.

Participant names have been altered. Participants choose pseudonyms not only to protect them from external scrutiny, but also to curb any potential internal conflict. Additionally, I requested the use of pseudonyms as a way to honor the voices of participants who have not felt comfortable with speaking out openly within the APFC community. Further, by default, all employees who I had contact with participated in the study as I observed them while volunteering. All staff members were made aware of this during the initial and subsequent all-staff meeting presentations. Participation

expectations were explained throughout the study via presentations at all-staff meetings and through memoranda updates.

Limitations of Study

Throughout this paper I look at instances of agency communication described by staff members. Even though overlapping themes arise from individual experiences, it would not be sensible to generalize them beyond the organization in which they occurred. Although existing and/or future research may demonstrate similar patterns shared by other feminist organizations, this research must not be relied upon as defining staff relations and their communication in every feminist organization. To do so would encourage a mythical ideal that all feminist organizations are designed and operate in the same manner, as well as buy into the notion that feminist organizations operated by women are inherently open, affirming, and without conflict—harmoniously working toward social change beyond the reach of external influences like the domestic economy, politics, and social mores. In addition, it would be inconsistent with the nature of investigating and depicting APFC, if findings were discussed in an either/or fashion (Reinharz, 1992; Stake, 1995).

As with any study, there are several factors constraining research. Potential and real limitations impact the outcome of study findings and their interpretation. For example, it is important to note that my own social location influences the way I come to understand the information that is shared. As described earlier, I am both connected to and separated from the women who worked with me on this study. My viewpoint, and subsequent approach to interpreting what I have been told, is guided by my experiences of authoritarian, hierarchical, corporate-run organizations. I also view work situations from a place of suspicion, generally wondering about the various strategies used to control employees rather than a place in which each person holds a piece of the puzzle making up the collaborative imagining of a consensus organization.

Second, although descriptions of study participants was offered earlier as to show their diversity, I will not be identifying study participants specifically in terms of the site location at which they worked, race, class, age, or other demographic detail. I do not

specifically identify them because the agency staffed a small number of employees, approximately 25 including board members. If I identify study participants explicitly, then I risk revealing their identities, and therefore, compromise their anonymity.

Third, it is important to state that the agency has been, and still is, in a state of administrative flux. APFC is working to address many of the issues mentioned by participating staff members. To act as if the process is fixed is to condemn the organization to a static reality that is simply not factual. The process is not linear nor flat; it is spiraling up, down, and around while moving forward, backward, and diagonally. The "right way" is a myth and what is deemed appropriate alternates among and between most people.

Fourth, it is important to acknowledge that reviewing agency documents poses some problems. Since agency documents are generally written by agency staff, controversial issues may be subverted due of confidentiality issues or matters of maintaining professionalism. The use of polite/professional language and limits such as nonverbal communication including gestures, facial expressions, and body language that cannot be conveyed in written documents also posed challenges to interpretation.

Finally, though interviewing can provide a wealth of information when working with a willing and trusting participant, it may be partial due to memory loss/reconstitution, lack authority because the participant holds little power within the organization, skewed by inconsistent involvement, or problematic because questions were framed in a way not participants could not readily understand.

The goal of using multiple methods in feminist research is to illuminate meaning, corroborate observation, and appropriately demonstrate the complexity of women's lives and experiences. The methods discussed above include participant/observation, document review, questionnaires, and interview techniques used to maximize insight into what communication looks like to some staff members. The views of both participants and myself as researcher were taken into consideration to minimize the possibility of privileging some ideas while subordinating others. Overall, multiple methods, as feminists argue, will not only solidify findings and conclusions, but also provide multiple opportunities for participants to give voice to their personal and collective experiences.

The next chapter, Results and Discussion, examines participant experiences with agency change, organizational structure, staff meetings, staff relations, and communicative effectiveness.

CHAPTER III
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This project looks at how staff members view communication within the agency. Specifically, what they attributed to the shift in and their experiences of communication practices during the nine months preceding my research. Interview responses indicated a pattern of discomfort with communication practices among staff. In order to adequately demonstrate the complexity of communication within the agency, the following discussion is arranged thematically. I describe two existing situations, changes in leadership and budgetary constraints, that set the tone for subsequent communicative practices within the agency. Then I explore how staff members experience APFC in terms of organizational change, organizational structure, staff meetings, staff relations, and communication effectiveness.

The following situations were recounted from both my own experience and those expressed by Shelter staff members. Together they form a general impression of what influenced communication within the organization. Our combined perspectives present a Shelter-centric viewpoint, one influenced by our direct service work within the community of APFC. We were not administrative staff members, although components of our roles and responsibilities were inherently administrative. We managed the agency's business line and were thus the public's first contact. We provided peer support and referred people calling in on the crisis line to community resources. We worked with and for clients to ensure that their stay was safe, healthy, and informative. We worked to balance communal, cohabitation interests with individual programmatic duties while working with staff at other agency sites. We assessed administrative and executive directives and procedures in terms of how they impacted the women we served.

Leadership Changes

Four months before I began volunteer training, APFC's executive director resigned her position. Her departure, although amicable, was a sad event for many staff members. She became executive director after working with the agency for six years in a

variety of successively higher ranking positions. She had been the executive director for more than three years. I continued to hear remarks, both positive and nostalgic, made about her. The most impressionable comment was that she would do whatever it took to ensure staff had what they needed to do their jobs to the best of their ability, and this commitment seemed to anchor her presence in agency memory. At the time of her departure, a permanent executive director had not been hired. Therefore, an interim executive director was appointed by the board of directors.

The interim executive director worked with the agency for six months and during that time two main concerns arose for Shelter staff. As I learned during my study, the interim executive director's appointment was made by the board of directors without input from the rest of the organization. Legally, as outlined in the Articles of Incorporation, the board had the authority to do this. However, since staff members relied on the agency's underlying feminist philosophy to guide agency procedures and practices, based on a consensus organizational model, the board's decision was a point of contention for some staff members. However, to my knowledge, it was not contended openly at meetings wherein all staff members were present. Concerns were expressed during small, corridor conversations between general staff members.

A second issue concerning Shelter staff came about when the interim executive director began her tenure. As an organization founded on woman-centric issues—respect for women, a collaborative work ethic, and consensus decision making—APFC staff members were familiar with agency protocol guiding employees to operate cooperatively. Rather than making decisions collaboratively, the interim executive director made decisions independent of agency staff and gave orders to subordinate employees through the change of command. The interim executive director, who came from a highly structured, public sector institution within the city, seemed more accustomed to operating in such a manner. Some Shelter staff members thought this approach conflicted with the agency's consensus decision making model. It was thought that the interim executive director viewed one's power and authority in the organizational structure as paramount to the agency's policy to work out issues and make decisions collaboratively. In other words, the approach experienced by Shelter staff was

authoritarian. For example, decisions affecting agency practices made by the interim executive director were unnegotiable, final. Subsequent changes arising from such decisions were expected to be carried out without rebuttal. One specific event illustrates this point. While listening to agency workers "Elise," "Bliss," and "Caffeine" talk about how the interim executive director had instructed staff members to curb unprofessional language use, I noticed the level of a hostility rise. We were asked to use more formal language with each other and program clients, as well as stop using profanity. Although I had not witnessed anyone using profanity with or in front of clients, an occasional swear word was used when staff were venting or describing an especially horrific situation. Yet, as I came from a service-oriented legal environment (a corporate law firm), I thought the requirement reasonable. However, as "Rama," another Shelter employee, explained, to take a more formal conversational approach with agency clients felt distant, possibly condescending and/or might alienate us from the women we served. Because the interim executive director was adamant about this change and that it be implemented immediately, some saw her as controlling, anti-affirming, and operating contrary to the agency's feminist-oriented practices.

Another change in leadership involved the departure of the outreach coordinator: a long-term, knowledgeable person. Although the details remained elusive, I came to understand her absence as a significant loss for the agency. Agency worker "Jonesy" thought this issue, coupled with others, fostered an unbearable working environment for key long-term employees who subsequently left their jobs. According to Jonesy, the resignation of the outreach coordinator was particularly devastating for APFC's knowledge base, primarily because she was an articulate speaker and enthusiastic activist within the regional anti-domestic violence movement. She had contacts throughout the city and had made connections with key community entities like local academic institutions, medical facilities, and governmental anti-domestic violence departments. Even though her successor would benefit from her work, it would take her time to develop rapport. I met this person three years earlier at a local university as she gave a presentation on the effects of and barriers to leaving domestic violence. She also

facilitated one of the training sessions I had attended just months earlier. I, too, felt a loss when she was no longer with the agency.

Two months after I completed volunteer training, a permanent executive director was hired. From what I saw, her arrival seemed a relief to some staff members because she had a broader understanding of APFC's philosophical viewpoint and way of operating. However, concern about her limited knowledge of the intricacies of domestic violence was noted by some staff. This was not necessarily viewed as a problem, but after the brief tenure of a corporate-oriented interim executive director, some staff members were expecting more of a "movement" ally taking up the agency's leadership position. As time progressed, the executive director's new vision emerged and with it more concerns among staff members arose. Although the curb on profanity use did not carry over, her vision called for an increasingly professional agency profile. A specific incident occurring three months later illustrates one effect of this shift. As I started my shift one afternoon, Bliss explained to me that we had a new policy regarding the way we answered the crisis and business telephone lines. We were to identify ourselves by name as we greeted people calling in. Shelter staff were particularly affected by this request because these main telephone lines rang directly into Shelter. This seemed like a contradictory request since we worked in a confidential location. More than that, it seemed odd because we instructed every person who stayed at Shelter *not* to give out their name or the names of their house mates when answering the client telephone line.

Bliss promptly stated that this request had generated concern among staff members and that it would be an agenda item at the next weekly staff meeting. During that meeting, the request to identify one's self was discussed. Staff talked intensely about the potential dangers for both the women who gain shelter with APFC and those who work at Shelter. The primary concern was more for staff members than agency clients. Abusers who were randomly calling publicly listed shelters to find staff members they wanted to control could potentially identify them. After much debate, Shelter staff decided to talk to the executive director about their concerns and ask her to reconsider her request. When they explained their concerns to the executive director, the request was withdrawn. The success of their efforts brought a sense of collaborativeness

back into Shelter relations with Administration. Yet, issues considering personal and professional security remained among Shelter staff members.

Two months before the executive director granted me permission to conduct a study of communication patterns and seven months of volunteer work with the agency, I started to notice a shift in the way Shelter staff interacted with each other. Since I was only at Shelter sixteen hours a month, I did not fully understand what was happening to make the work environment uneasy. However, as staff members began to recount their recent experiences of weekly staff meetings, it became clear that Shelter was not necessarily a emotionally safe place to work. According to six employees, their site coordinator, Elise, had become increasingly caustic and intimidating during their weekly staff meetings. Subsequently, the effects of Elise's behavior bubbled up in small, informal conversations. Overwhelmingly, Elise's actions generated fear, loss of confidence, and self-doubt. When Elise no longer worked at the agency, as some staff members told me, the opportunity to discuss the effects of her behavior openly was not forthcoming. Some believed they could not talk about their feelings and experiences because of some link between doing so and Elise's departure was protected by employer/employee confidentiality laws. The actual reasons remain concealed and to date Shelter staff members have not processed their experiences within the AFPC community. According to Bliss, Caffeine, Monkey, and Rama, not having an opportunity to express themselves was frustrating and painful. They felt that were they given the forum to discuss their experiences, they would have been able to dispel pent up emotions, personal doubt, and uncertainty. They also felt that doing so would have held true with the agency's commitment to debriefing intense situations: a value instilled in us throughout staff/volunteer training and on-the-job training.

Three weeks before the start of my study, when I contacted the board of directors' chairperson about board participation in my study, I learned via email exchanges that she was at the end of her tenure in that position. She informed me that a new chairperson had been selected and would take on her responsibilities at the start of the next fiscal year—within four weeks. She forwarded the synopsis I had provided her about the study, and she agreed to pass the information on to the other three board members. She

mentioned that the board members were busy and she did not know if they would be able to participate or not. However, she encouraged me to contact them anyhow. She also shared that of the seventeen board positions available, thirteen remained vacant.

These two situations were significant because changing board leadership alters to some extent, the manner in which the agency was viewed and guided. Additionally, the number of board members dramatically impacts the financial status of the agency's overall viability. These issues impacted staff communication both indirectly and directly. The connection lay in the roles and responsibilities of board members. Board members take on specific roles, either through officer positions—i.e. President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.—or as committee leaders—executive, fund raising, finance, etc.—or as strictly board members. Responsibilities vary according to a person's role, but common duties do exist. Each has "a fundamental role in raising money and resources" which is accomplished through "planning and solicitation activities" (Block, 2001, p. 18). Each must contribute financially and volunteer their time without monetary gain. Each takes on partial responsibility for recruiting additional board members. Additionally, "The collective wisdom of the board of directors can serve as a bank of skilled and knowledgeable resources to provide support, advice, and counsel" (Gies, Ott, & Shafritz, 2001, p. 16). At the time of this study, these roles and responsibilities were shared by four professional women.

Our four board members balanced personal demands of work and family responsibilities with managing the agency's legal and fiduciary responsibilities (Block, 2001). They were accountable to external funding sources that required the agency to meet and maintain specific criteria such as financial and programmatic compliance with their service standard. As they took on more commitments than they most likely agreed to when they first volunteered to act as board members due to their small number, limited time and resources stretched them. They committed many hours of time and labor to the agency. Nevertheless, it was an arduous task to rely on four individuals to broaden APFC's board membership, financial base, and operations resources. The depth and breath with which a seventeen-member board could have expanded solicitation of personal and professional contacts—thus boosting financial and political

support—significantly outweighs that of a four-member team. Increasing the number of people working to develop and maintain funding resources could have also benefitted agency programs suffering from a lack of staff and monies. As the agency's development coordinator explained, and I paraphrase, instead of relying predominantly on governmental resources for funding we also need to focus on securing private, independent funding to ensure our survival through future economic downturns such as the one we face now. It seemed a larger board could have come closer to accomplishing such a balance. Additionally, seventeen people could have both supported such an endeavor with greater energy and enthusiasm and arrived at several different ways in which to do so. The efforts of a few board members and the development coordinator were, no doubt, commendable, but their efforts did not alleviate the increasing workload of remaining staff. It also lessened board participation at the direct-service level, therefore hindering interaction with general staff members. Although efforts to increase board members were in process, there were no comments or conversation about how general staff were impacted by this diminished agency leadership.

In my opinion, when the board operated with less than one-quarter of its leadership potential, staff members suffered in several ways. They remained underpaid by industry standards and therefore four out of five Shelter staff participating in this research continued to live hand-to-mouth on a monthly basis. Those who had their programs downsized either through the loss of staff members or a decrease in funding for material resources, took on additional workloads with fewer resources at their disposal. Taking on additional work meant spending more time on paperwork than with the women and children they endeavored to serve. Devoting such time to paperwork, which substantiated their program's existence to funding agencies, also led them away from their own reasons for working with APFC in the first place. Many staff members expressed they wanted to make a difference in women's lives. They wanted to give back to women as had been given to them, and they wanted to work against oppression. They did not choose to get work with APFC because they knew they would be paid well. But their choice to work with an organization not favored in today's market economy—one that relies on the exchange of goods and services for money—left them subject to

funding fluctuations. Diversifying the agency's funding base coupled with increasing the number of board members could have partly controlled these fluctuations to include a variety of independent, private, and governmental funding sources.

Budgetary Constraints

Six months into 2001, the executive director announced there would have to be programmatic budget cuts to carry on the mission of APFC. This situation came about because of economic fluctuations and redirected budget monies at all levels of government. First, reductions in federal governmental spending on human and social services increased because revenues from income taxes were rolled back and redirected into military spending (Green Party website, 2004). Retrospectively, "The Bush/Cheney tax cuts of the last four years have cost most Americans dearly. America is now running record deficits, and budget cuts mean increased fees for working-class Americans. Meanwhile, the tax burden is now carried by the middle class. And it's all so that the top 1% of earners could pay an average of $59,292 a year less in taxes in 2004 than they did in 2000" (MoveOnPac.org website - 9/14/04). Additionally, the shift in financial responsibility for social service programs placed a heavier financial burden on state governments. Subsequently, states were required to reevaluate their discretionary allocations in order to fund those areas left deficient by federal budget cuts. Since most states did not seem to operate on a surplus of monies—monies drawn from citizens in the form of a state income tax, sales tax, or a combination of the two—many programs were downsized and/or eliminated completely. Another component to contend with included President George W. Bush's expansion of access to federal social service grant monies to religious groups that provided similar services to people in need as provided by existing governmental and social service entities, thus increasing competition.

Government funding, which made up sixty percent of the agency's 2000-2001 income source, heightened agency accountability while simultaneously reducing funds to social service agencies in the area, including APFC (APFC Annual Report, 2001). This was one result of state revenues dropping approximately one million dollars between the years 2001 and 2002 (Gais, Burke, & Corso, 2003). In an all-staff agency meeting, we

learned that APFC would operate on up to twenty percent less funding than it had during the previous fiscal year. The consequences of these budget changes impacted agency programs and personnel immediately. Part-time, on-call staff members had their weekly hours cut back, cost of living wage increases were incremental and nominal, and sometimes two jobs were collapsed into one, thus eliminating jobs while boosting the responsibilities and hours of others.

The second event involved non-governmental funding sources. Due to mismanagement of funds and a desire to better serve people in need, United Way, one of APFC's funding sources, restructured its funding criteria and method:

> In 2001, United Way changed its business model to more effectively meet pressing needs in our community, increase our accountability to our donors and show that an investment in United Way not only meets short-term needs in our community, but provides long-term solutions. Today, United Way has an action plan for change -- called the Changing Lives Agenda -- that includes long-term community goals, criteria for building collaborative partnerships, measuring performance on all programs funded, promoting individual and corporate commitment to volunteerism and philanthropy, and focusing resources in four priority areas: helping people to live independently and with dignity, getting people involved in their neighborhoods and communities, promoting health and safety, and helping kids succeed in school and life.

(United Way website, 2004)

These changes altered the ways agencies applied for and was awarded monies. APFC would now have to compete for funding rather than receive monies directly earmarked for it by private and corporate donors. APFC, like every other organization receiving monies from United Way, faced new pre-determined, external requirements to produce results in order to continue qualifying for funding year after year. Although United Way funding made up about five percent of APFC's operating budget, staff would have to comply with new programmatic and documentation requirements that increased their administrative paperwork. More paperwork, as mentioned earlier, meant less time spent with agency clients. Tied to these changes was an overall decline of corporate and private giving throughout the nation. United Way reported that, "corporate giving

declined by 36% between 1990 and 2001, both locally and nationally" (World wide web, 2004). These issues contributed to APFC's depleted budget. In addition to the five percent from United Way, APFC counted on nearly twenty percent of its operating budget from individual and group contributions. The agency was facing a financial short-fall for the coming fiscal year.

The stress of shrinking budgets affected everyone. The executive director was deeply troubled by the need to reduce agency expenditures to accommodate unprecedented funding reductions. Likewise, she told me she spent endless hours working on a new budget that would minimize program hour reductions, staff reductions, and job eliminations. However, such decisions did not directly impact her financially as it would staff members working in hourly wage positions. As a salaried employee the executive director earned a higher annual wage than those positions she had to trim, positions based on hourly wages. Her emotional turmoil would not face fluctuations of a volatile economy in the same way as low wage earners who struggled with making enough money to support basic needs. The threat of losing earning hours or being cut completely from a program noticeably magnified staff members' stress levels. They echoed concerns about keeping one's job in casual conversations. Resources began to disappear, such as a packet of Tri-Met bus tickets. Therefore, managing personal and family necessities like food, housing, and clothing become more difficult, particularly in light of the area's high unemployment rate and high cost of monthly housing and utilities. The news of budget cuts generated concern for some Shelter staff members, especially those who were reeling from the insecurity of being told they were performing below employment expectations by their previous site coordinator. Such budget cuts did not affect those of us who willingly volunteered. We did so generally because we had extra free time, energy and/or required no wages because we were ourselves financially stable. We, like our executive director, did not have to worry about losing income.

Each of these events seemed to change the way several employees talked with each other individually and agency-wide. These events, combined with my interest in the ways women communicate at work during times of organizational change and tension, sparked a number of questions for me. How were employees working through all of

these changes, both emotionally and professionally? How were they negotiating the organizational and procedural changes? What did staff members think about the events and their impact on agency communication? What did they see as the reasons behind current organizational communication issues? The following narrative is guided by these questions. Responses given by study participants shed light on what was experienced by some staff members as I conducted my research. Themes explored include an exploration of staff experiences of change, APFC's organizational structure, staff meetings, and staff relations. The final theme addresses how study participants view communication effectiveness.

Experiences of change

Constant, unpredictable changes within the agency in recent months have had a disruptive effect on staff interactions and organizational processes. Budget cuts, policy changes, and high staff turnover, particularly among positions of leadership, fostered an overarching sense of uneasiness and "turmoil" for study participants. Seven of the twelve staff members shared that organizational upheaval influenced the ways in which they communicated and functioned at work. For example, Monkey reported "constant change of staff members" and "being short of staff" made work at APFC "hard because [staff could not] really focus on what [they were] trying to do. Likewise, Bliss expressed a sense of frustration with newly hired staff spending more time "cleaning up" unresolved matters left over from previous employees rather than working on more immediate issues. Similarly, Caffeine felt that because there was an "influx of new staff and also changes in policy, . . . a lot of power . . . [had been] taken away" from individual staff members on all levels. She added that "things that we used to be able to do we [now had to] ask [for] permission." Like Caffeine, Rama also noticed a difference in the amount of power and authority each staff member held. Rama reported not seeing nor experiencing a hierarchical chain of command when she was first hired ten months earlier. Yet, "all of a sudden," she reported, "a hierarchy" came into existence. She expressed disappointment with this development when she told me, "[Before,] nobody knew more than anybody [else]. We just all had information and that's what we shared.

Now it seems more like an institutional thing. . . . it feels unpleasant working here because [I] have to be constantly watching [my] back." Agency worker "Nikola," too, had noticed that not everyone's voice counted equally as they had before new executive administrative staff were hired. Specifically, she thought that ideas presented by part-time, on-call, and volunteer staff did not receive as much consideration as full-time paid staff and/or board members.

Although not totally convinced that change was negative, some staff members expressed changes in the ways new employees functioned within the organization as sites of conflict. For example, "Korina," an administrative employee, felt that the support given to general staff by past agency leaders, particularly that extended to site coordinators by the executive director, had decreased dramatically. She felt this development caused "the people coming in to replace those [who had left]" were "judged" as not willing to work collaboratively "before they even got started." Another administrative employee, "Mania," acknowledged a "general resistance to change." She stated that to move forward with new leadership, staff members needed to be open to new and different ways of carrying out the business of serving battered women. Additionally, she reported that, "morale was a bit strange. . . . I thought people were extremely cautious. I didn't see a lot of optimism about things." Interestingly, these two people held positions higher on the organizational chart than people viewing agency changes as chaotic.

Experiences of organizational structure

The organizational structure of APFC was another aspect impacting staff communication. The interaction between APFC's nonprofit corporate business model and its feminist philosophical approach limited interactions and communication among staff members. The nonprofit corporate business aspect of APFC emphasized formalized structure, completion of tasks, transference of information, balanced budgets, and written reports. The feminist philosophical approach highlighted the *process* of work rather than the end product. It also stressed shared responsibility, collaborative teamwork, and open and honest discussions. Study participants did not experience the melding of these two

models positively nor did they feel the agency benefitted from being split up into three separate locations. Additionally, changes in agency policies, procedures, and practices left study participants feeling less empowered and not equals with higher ranked employees with more organizational authority.

"Mia," for example, saw practices of fellow agency staff as continually falling back into "linear, patriarchal, hierarchal models" of thinking, organizing, and working. She said she "see[s] that. . . a couple of people [hold] all the power and the rest. . . have very little." This "disparity," she surmised, was a result of fear, stating, "Everybody's so afraid to speak up." Jonesy agreed with her coworker's assessment as she reported, "Power is on top" and depending on where a person is situated in the organizational chart "[a person's] power or privilege, it goes up and down." Jonesy's reference to privilege indicated that she also looked at an individual's association with particular social groups like race, class, and particularly, whether or not a person identified as a survivor of violence. Korina further explained that "a lot of the direct service people don't have the power to do anything" and that there "seems to be this big weird power struggle [between people who]. . . either can't or won't, or don't have the authority to let go of their powers and can't accept that someone else might have a power that they don't have." Caffeine, too, thought, "[the organizational structure impacts communication]. . . as [I] go up [the organizational hierarchy] . . . it's hard for me to talk to board members because they don't have a social service background. At [least] most of them don't. Most [board members] are lawyers and my communications with them have been very difficult and challenging. . . . I find [it] difficult and intimidating [talking with the executive director] but that may be just her personality and how I feel with the vibe I get off of her." Likewise agency employee, "Shager" shared that:

> For many years even though there was clearly a board and
> clearly a director, and clearly program coordinators, there
> was a lot of equality. We all worked together to do the
> same thing. In the last few years that's changed so
> drastically that I [have to] remind myself over and over
> again that we're all working toward the same goal. That
> we all have a different way of working towards the same
> goal. That board members even though . . . their lives are
> very different than mine, even though they make choices

that I totally don't understand and do things that I have a
hard time supporting at times. I believe that their intent is
good. And I believe that their goal is basically the same as
mine. We just have very different ways of getting there.
The real difference is that there used to be real
cohesiveness and it wasn't a struggle to make that happen. .
. . [Now] the cohesiveness is corroded.

Contrary to those above, Nikola felt the organizational model worked because a series of
checks and balances allowed full-time paid staff members equal amounts of power and
authority. She argued it was the organizational structure combined with agency budget
shortfalls that disadvantaged part-time, on-call, and general volunteers. Because these
groups were unable, unwilling, or discouraged from attending meetings in which they
would have received operational information, Nikola thought that they could not do their
jobs well. As a result, Nikola sometimes felt out of the information loop.

Other staff members offered different accounts of their experiences with APFC's
organizational structure. Bliss thought that having "a structure [was] very important"
particularly because it would help develop a respect for "[the way] information [was to
be] passed down from [higher ranking staff]." However, she cautioned that "if there's
going to be a hierarchy then [the process in which] information is passed down needs to
be consistent." Creating a common strategy for disbursing information would ensure that
"we're going to get equal information from the people that either make the decisions or
the people that have all the information." Conversely, Rama indicated that "this type of
work environment [did not] need a hierarchy" because, "anybody can get the information
and within our organization we have a lot of people that have information to offer us that
we can learn [from]." Though Bliss and Rama had opposing thoughts about how the
organizational structure was or was not benefitting staff communication, both recognized
that the distribution of information was inconsistent and sporadic.

Besides getting information to help ease staff members' stress of an unpredictable
environment, fellow agency worker "Elizabeth" thought that executive and board agency
members needed a deeper understanding of the nature and sensitivity involved with
serving battered women. She reported that some administrative and board requests were

inconsistent and detrimental to the "inner workings of [the agency]." Elizabeth's reference goes back to the discussion outlined earlier regarding the request to identify ourselves when answering telephones at Shelter and another incident regarding following-up with agency clients. Specifically, she recalled a request put forth by the executive director to contact agency clients after they had left. Elizabeth reported that the executive director generated this request after she was requested by a funding agency to provide specific client statistics. Nevertheless, this request confused Elizabeth because it was an agency policy to avoid contacting former clients as a safety precaution. Former clients who may have returned to their abusers could be placed in dangerous situations should an informal conversation include a reference to the shelter. It was Elizabeth's opinion that the executive director's request was an uninformed one.

Three other study participants pointed to APFC's physical layout as a factor that hindered staff members from connecting with each other as coworkers. Rama, Korina, Mania along with fellow coworker "Toni" each felt that because the sites were physically separated made getting to know, support, and trust their coworkers difficult. Rama cited too much time passed between all-staff meetings and that [they] "only [saw] each other once a month" which, she reported, "played a big role in [the way staff members thought about each other]." Toni cited broader issues steeped in issues of racism and other oppressions as key factors keeping staff from trusting each other. Korina identified a lack of equally distributed support as another factor affecting communication between staff working at different agency locations. Mania expanded upon Rama and Korina's observations when she stated that:

> People have a tendency to live in their shelter world, or
> their transition world, or their administrative world. It's
> really difficult when you have sites kind of all over the
> place. It's hard to do that. And I think that if a person has
> a bad experience with part of that network, you know, say
> for instance shelter had a bad experience with somebody
> from the transition program that kind of becomes . . . that's
> who the transition program is. And it's kind of hard to get
> people to think past an event.

Monkey experienced a similar awareness. She stated she "doesn't feel like there's. . . much communication" between staff members working at different site locations,

because she observed that staff members at the same sites connected more readily with each other than staff between the sites.

Experiences of staff meetings

Staff and individual meetings were a major component of organizational operations. Staff meetings were intended to simplify the exchange of information and provide a place to process agency issues. Study participants' experiences with weekly direct-service and bi-monthly all-staff meetings were markedly different and reflected previously outlined tensions found between basic ideas underlying feminist and mainstream corporate organizing. Weekly direct-service meetings were predominantly small and informal, and people attending them were familiar with each other. The spaces in which Transition and Shelter staff gathered were close quarters, so staff sat in a circle on the few chairs that could fit in the room. Often staff sat on the night case manager's bed or on the radiator in front of the window or on the floor. Staff members took turns reporting programmatic information, asked for suggestions on difficult situations, and generally got along well. When conflict arose, staff did their best to talk through it. When the matter was unresolved, it was tabled for a later date. Alternatively, some staff members chose not to address their feelings of uncomfortableness with coworkers and engaged different strategies to reduce interaction and/or confrontation with them.

Bi-monthly all-staff meetings were large and formal. These meetings took place off-site in a conference room of a local hospital. The room was spacious and stocked with a dry-erase board and audiovisual equipment. Full-length tables were set end-to-end along three walls to form a horseshoe pattern. People sat on comfortable chairs on either the inside or outside area of the tables. Many staff members sat on the outside with their backs against the walls. People arriving late to the meeting were generally relegated to the inside of the horseshoe. Sitting in the interior meant having one's back to coworkers. The meeting agenda was pre-set, generally managed by a designated facilitator, task-oriented, yet time was set aside at the end for discussion and miscellaneous issues. High staff turnover made it difficult for staff at different site locations to get to know new employees and therefore, many of these meetings featured the introduction of unfamiliar

people. Study participants experienced tensions and contradictions between the two meeting styles.

Shager captured the essence of five of her coworkers' experiences when she points out that:

> . . . it feels like two different worlds. It feels like the work
> environment here [referring to a particular site] is good. . .
> that people are honest, open with each other. That [when]
> people make mistakes they own 'em, they move on.
> People have fun together, they work well together, and then
> I compare that environment to the all-staff meetings that
> feel like . . . drama queen stuff. What it would feel like, if
> . . . we're waiting to find out which one of us would be
> executed next. The tension and the coldness and intensity
> in the all-staff meetings is just like, "Can't we just put all
> this stuff in writing and circulate it through the agency?
> DO we all have to get together in this room like this?" You
> know. It's, it's very different. I don't at all dread direct
> service meetings here. And I really dread all-staff because
> it's just so incredibly intense. And being the . . . kind of
> person that I am, [one] that wants to make everything ok,
> everywhere. I'm like, "Ok, what can I do to make this
> different?" You know? But I don't know that I can do
> anything to make it different. And it's just in the whole
> agency when you get us all together, I think everyone's
> very guarded and closed down.

Shager's account reflected the coldness, intensity, and dread associated with all-staff meetings, but Caffeine and Mia would add more negatively perceived cues such as the "body language" that was "completely overwhelming" and ". . . looks [that were] exchanged. And comments [that were] made behind people's backs and notes [were] written, etc. And everything in between." Additionally, two other study participants who had been silenced by supervisors were instructed to sit next to their supervisors during meetings because they were observed as becoming too emotional and such displays could disturb other staff members.[1] A touch from their supervisors signaled

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[1]

These two study participants will remain unnamed because naming them would identify them to each other.

them to calm down when they became too animated. Both the request and the silencing behavior of their supervisors deeply disturbed both women.

Less emotionally charged was Toni's attempt to generate interaction among staff members; however, she discovered that despite her efforts "very little talk or discussion [occurred] even when I tried to elicit it." Mania also observed at the first meeting she attended, "Nobody really said very much [during] most of the meeting." Additionally, Bliss identified the difficulty of moving forward on issues that had not had time for discussion or had been tabled at previous all-staff meetings because "we get turnover and it's like [we] start all over again. I think we've introduced [someone new] at the all-staff [every meeting]. . . . There's always someone new."

Conversely, staff members who had milder experiences with both meetings cited they were more comfortable with the people they worked with directly at their individual sites. Furthermore, they cited that staff turnover most people attending all-staff meetings were new and they did not know them. For example, Rama reported that direct-service meetings were "more laid back" because "all we talk about is the participants and how their stay is going." Staff working together on a daily basis gave them more opportunities to get to know and trust their coworkers better than agency employees working at different sites. Additionally, coworkers at the same site could observe the consistency between talk, action, and behavior.

A particular behavior that surprised me included times when two Shelter staff members spoke through their site coordinator during two separate all-staff meetings. I was surprised because I had observed these same two employees speaking freely at weekly direct-service meetings. When I asked both the staff members and the site coordinator the reasons behind doing that, I was also surprised by their responses. First, I was told by the site coordinator that she was happy to relay questions from her staff to everyone else, even when the staff members were present at the meetings because she felt she was shielding them from both negative nonverbal behavior and verbal comments regarding their language usage. Second, both staff members independently felt they did not speak in a way that was well received by their coworkers. Monkey, specifically, felt she did not word her questions in a way that either made sense to coworkers or elicited

concrete responses. Elizabeth, too, explained that she felt like her way of imparting information, in the form story telling, was unacceptable in a formal meeting. She told me during her interview that she told stories to make her point and she thought that coworkers and executive staff did not view her as professional or serious. She thought this primarily because she did not hold a position of power or authority in the agency hierarchy. Both staff members thought their way of communicating was unacceptable at all-staff meetings and thus were sometimes unwilling to express their opinions openly. These perspectives indicate that speaking publicly was both a controlled and oftentimes uncomfortable event.

Experiences of Staff Relations

In addition to the difficulties staff members had with attending and speaking up at all-staff meetings, a disconnection existed between the agency's recommended communication style and the way participants experienced talking with coworkers and supervisors. As discussed earlier, APFC stresses open, honest communication among its staff members and between staff and agency clients. Agency personnel were trained and expected to use assertive communication with each other and shelter clients. Yet, many study participants experienced a lack of and/or negative communication between coworkers that generated high levels of anxiety, fear, and anger.

Mia reported, for example, "that most everyone who has survived over any cumulative portion of time, has become afraid to really speak up about how they feel . . . some times that I've spoken up . . . . I've been hushed or considered un-credible." Conversely, Monkey described her experience with staff at the site she specifically worked as a group of people who, "held through the changes and the problems," wherein "we've actually held together pretty well and we've been really supportive of each other." Yet Monkey's experiences were not this positive across each agency site. In a telephone conversation with a higher-ranking staff member at Transition, Monkey said, "[she] didn't feel comfortable talking [and] ended the conversation right there" because "it wasn't positive" and "when people show tension . . . . I shut down and I kind of distance myself."

As described by Caffeine, Jonesy, Rama, and Toni, feeling comfortable talking to coworkers involved feeling trusted and trusting them. To develop trust, Jonesy notes, it is important to know a person's privilege coupled with their power and authority within the organization. Jonesy further explained that being out about personal privileges and disadvantages, for example, publicly identifying with an oppressed group such as survivors of violence or the poverty class, could help create a more open work environment. She stated, "people aren't willing to look at" how being a survivor impacts a person's ability to assertively address oppressive language and/or behavior. She pointed to a particularly painful time when she thought she could talk directly with her supervisor and executive staff members about a problem with a coworker; however, rather than being a part of the conversation from the start, she was left out of the process to resolve the matter. To her, this felt reminiscent of what an abuser might do when working to divide people up to take control. It was clear to Jonesy that these actions did not encourage mutual trust nor show a willingness by higher-ranking staff members to work collaboratively with lower-ranking staff to reconcile issues.

Similarly, Shager felt that staff were not listening to each other and not treating each other with respect. Rather than getting caught up in ranking oppressions or feeling superior to fellow staff members with different experiences, Shager thought that embracing the inherent goodness of others was key to developing trust and opening up conversations. Caffeine, too, thought that, "to keep open communications, [we must feel] safe talking to those around [us]. If [a person] feel[s] that [their] business is going to [get] spread everywhere, which it more than likely is, then [they] tend not to talk or communicate with other staff." Gossip, too, was identified as a major factor hindering staff relations. Korina explained:

> . . . it's the most passive-aggressive environment on a large
> scale [that] I've ever been in my life, I think. And so
> frequently to me it will be a. . . there will either be no
> response, just a blank [look] or they're, "oh ok." . . . but
> then [I] hear from someone that told someone. I mean this
> whole gossip mill thing. . . "oh they're really mad because
> they have to do this." So very infrequently is it. . . am I
> given what I feel is the respect of "I don't like the way that
> you said that" or "you know, that seems like kind of an

> unreasonable deadline. Or instead it's just no
> communication, and instead [something like] "I will just
> ignore everything you said" and that's kind of how I think,
> feel it being perceived.

Mania echoed Korina's frustration as she reported being angry and discouraged by the "rumor mill" she had witnessed occurring between staff members, particularly incidents in which higher-ranking employees shared confidential information freely with lower-ranking staff members.

Elizabeth reported having more positive experiences with staff she worked with directly despite the agency site. She stated that the process of building a "personal relationship" with staff "that's more friendly, team[-oriented]" was present but still new and tentative because of "cross-cultural" issues. However, Elizabeth was not ready to say that staff relations throughout the agency were all well and good. She told me, "you must understand, we've always been [in] crisis mode. We're always on the verge of catastrophe." Bliss agreed with Elizabeth on this point when she stated that, "[The agency feels like] sometimes. . . it's like a roller coaster. It's so awful because it's almost like a cycle." She concluded this based partially on how she saw "a change in people that have been [at the agency for] a long time. I do see they're not as energetic. And even in myself, I see that. I'm not as energetic. I work myself to be optimistic sometimes."

Although Nikola would agree that surviving agency changes, distrusting coworkers, and spreading gossip impeded staff relations, she also mentioned the agency's inconsistency in providing adequate information to part-time, on-call, and volunteer staff members as detrimental. Specifically, she felt "the organization really assume[d] inappropriately that the only people who really need[ed] to see the big picture [were] the people [who were] salaried staff members" working forty hours a week. Failing to keep all employees informed of agency and site activities and issues placed staff at a disadvantage, and worked against maintaining open lines of communication.

Communicative Effectiveness

In my research I found that a feminist communication approach was difficult to maintain and support in the bureaucratic nonprofit corporate organizational structure in

which APFC operated. As a feminist-oriented organization, APFC encouraged and expected employees to talk assertively, openly, and honestly, yet, it operated within an organizational structure and culture that required confidentiality and diplomacy: an environment experiencing many changes before and during my research. Not that the two realities were mutually exclusive, but conflict between speaking one's mind, maintaining confidentiality, and negotiating uncertainty challenged many staff members. Study participants, overall, thought improvements in communication needed to occur because communication among staff members was ineffective.

Eight of the twelve study participants reported communication was "barely effective," "stilted," "not really productive," negative, and controlling. Several study participants attributed this situation to one of several issues. Bliss felt a "lack of understanding [about] what everyone [did] during the day" made making appropriate programmatic and administrative connections difficult. Jonesy identified how most conversations were task-based and focused on "scrambling for the basics . . . that [we were] not able to like look back and think of all the good things . . . that we did." Shager also mentioned how 'the climate in the agency [then]" did not promote trust, which she said, "inhibit[ed] communication for a lot of us." Mania, too, felt that communication between staff was rigidly formal. She thought this "because they're (staff members) not used [to] operating in a certain way." Furthermore, she noticed that when newer higher-ranking staff asked staff to function more in line with the new leadership approach, "people [got] vindictive. . . . very angry. . . . [and] that people's attitudes change[d]. [New leadership became] the bad guy." Toni simply told me that "the whole system sucks."

The four remaining study participants described a variety of different experiences with communication effectiveness. Caffeine indicated that the way she talked to coworkers and perceived being talked too was dependent on whether or not she knew the person. She stated, "If I'm talking to [two anonymous people with whom she worked], I'm far more laid back or I might let them tell stories. . . . But like, if I don't know the person very well, I'm far more professional and I watch my language. I watch every tone of [my] voice, everything until I know them." Caffeine also made a distinction between

her coworkers and other agency staff when she reported, "we do communicate differently than we do with other parts of the agency just because we're used to each other and how we know each other's personalities a lot more."

Monkey, Elizabeth, and Korina, talking about coworkers at the same site in which they worked, felt teamwork created a more "supportive" and freer environment. Specifically, Monkey shared that, "We've actually held together pretty well and we've been really supportive of each other. Even though we've had those ups and downs. But I still feel like we're. . . trying to work as a team and keep[ing] it together." Elizabeth agreed and added that even though, "I see a team, even with this crisis. . . people disagree and that's the nature of when we have a meeting. That's going to happen. But I see that in a positive light." Comparatively, Korina reported having "had really good interactions with the people that I work[ed] with on a daily basis and it's not very often that I feel disrespectful communication happening." Yet, she did mention that, "when the interim [executive director] was there. That was not the case at all."

Conclusion

Individual views of APFC's organizational life give rise to common experiences of emotional turmoil, particularly to the interrelatedness between organizational and administrative changes, budgetary constraints, and staff interactions. As I reviewed staff members' comments, I was not surprised by what they reported. Before my study, I was told stories about agency administrative and organizational issues that caused staff members difficulty and/or hardship. Most of the time, such stories were charged with emotions ranging between confusion, disbelief, frustration, and anger. Such emotions remained present throughout my study. I observed several occasions in which staff members felt they had not been understood and/or could not say what they needed to because they were afraid of the consequences. I was overwhelmed with concern as some staff members expressed self-doubt, dread, difficulty with oppressive behavior, and a loss of enthusiasm about their own contributions to the agency. At times, I took on their grief and projected it onto my own ability to contribute.

The nature of APFC's work was emotionally charged. One disturbing realiization was that throughout the time frame of my research--changes in leadership (e.g., board chair, board members, executive director, and site coordinators), budgetary cuts, professionalization, cross-cultural misunderstandings, staff turnover, and external funding pressures--agency matters were predominantly "managed" by upper level management with little or no discussion with general staff. Additionally, strained staff relations were unacknowledged publicly within the agency and many study participants suffered in silence. Without official recognition and time to debrief, these matters fostered a working environment of misunderstanding, mistrust, and fear. Yet, it is understandable that agency leadership would forge ahead in the face of internal strife and external scrutiny. APFC is one of four social service agencies in the area that provides emergency shelter and transitional housing services to battered women and their children. To shut APFC down to address internal agency problems would not only remove thirty-five beds from domestic violence refugees, it would jeopardize public and private funding as well as life-sustaining jobs for twenty people.

Although not directly discussed by all staff members as one might expect in a consensus decision-making environment, a subtle move away from operating as a consensus-based organization to a more hierarchically bureaucratic model occurred. This occurrence seemed to expand as new leadership ideas steeped in bureaucratic processes were enacted throughout the entire agency. This happened while other organizational changes such as high staff turnover, job insecurity, and struggle for inclusivity of voice and varying ideas were in full swing. Staff members reported feeling afraid to speak out because they had been directly silenced, intellectually dismissed, and/or professionally reprimanded. They reported also witnessing the departure of fellow coworkers without explanation. Others reported making a conscious change from openness and a willingness to engage in conversation to a more "careful" conservative approach. This saddened me because the ideas and concerns these staff members wanted to bring to the rest of the organization had the potential to enrich staff relations and benefit shelter clients.

Although APFC is one among many social service agencies that are more professional and hierarchical, it strives to stay remain loyal to cooperative and respectful social change. Advocates quoted in this chapter, all paid staff, depicted an organizational environment filled with emotional turmoil. Three main threads ran throughout the comments made by staff members who participate in this research. First, they described how organizational structure, rules, and procedures stifled communication among staff members. Specifically, their experiences suggested a discrepancy between the prescribed communication style and actual existing practices. Management expectations of employees to use respectful communication were occasionally reciprocated. Ultimately, the immediate needs of agency clients took priority over resolving communication issues among staff members. Second, they pointed to a shift in individual power, authority, and voice as detrimental to developing trust and an emotionally safe work environment. Staff negotiated the space between processing as a consensus-oriented group while operating in a bureaucratic organizational model by shutting down, being cautious, and/or remaining silent. Changes in the ways decisions were made gave staff the impression that everyone's viewpoint was no longer as valuable as staff thought it to be prior to the departure of the long-term, twice removed, executive director. Finally, they identified ways in which defense mechanisms—including using the power attributed to upper positions within a hierarchy—rose up to shield the intense and potentially professionally debilitating consequences of speaking out.

CONCLUSION

Summary/Conclusions

This paper explored the views and experiences of women communicating while working for a feminist battered women's shelter. Specifically, it is an exploration of the interrelated issues of employee participation in organizational practices and communicating with coworkers during times of organizational change and heightened stress. Emerging from the data were the struggles some staff members have had as they negotiated their emotionally turbulent work environment. I found that a feminist communication approach was difficult to maintain and support in the bureaucratic nonprofit corporate organizational structure in which APFC operated. Constant, unpredictable changes within the agency in recent months have had a disruptive effect on staff interactions and organizational processes. Such changes suggested that the interaction between APFC's nonprofit corporate business model and its feminist philosophical approach limited interactions and communication among staff members. Study participants' experiences with weekly direct-service and bi-monthly all-staff meetings were markedly different and reflected previously outlined tensions found between basic ideals underlying feminist and mainstream corporate organizing.

This finding suggests four main issues. First, organizational structure, policies, and procedures affected the ways employees could and choose to talk with each other. Contrary to mainstream ideas about maintaining strict lines of communication among differently-situated organizational members, APFC recommended and expected staff members to use an open and assertive communication approach. Generally, staff understood that to include speaking directly to individuals on any topic whether positive, indifferent, or negative. Most people working with APFC required time to learn and practice this new approach, and there seemed to be time to do so. However, several incidents suggested that some staff members either ignored the policy, required more time to develop this new skill, or were intolerant to mistakes. Additionally, stress, staff turnover, and policy and procedural changes caused staff who made communicative mistakes to worry about being reprimanded, monitored, and/or terminated. An

opportunity to learn from and work through mistakes did exist at APFC. However, staff members felt they could not go straight to the person they were having issues with because experience taught them that higher-ranking staff would not necessarily hear them. Rather than work issues out through collaborative discussion as agency staff trained us to do, the process for resolving matters turned into a highly structured event in which staff members had to go through the chain of command. This arrangement, although meant to be expedient, was not conducive to building trusting relationships among staff as the spirit of APFC strives to do. Additionally, staff members' comments indicated that the process was not practiced equally in staff-to-staff conversations, however conversations between staff and agency clients seemed more aligned with agency communicative ideals. This type of situation set up an adversarial system between differently-situated staff, particularly supervisors and those whom they supervised. Further, when management advocated that employees talk and behave like professionals—wherein rules and procedures guide communication—direct-service workers saw this as unsafe and detracted them from their work with agency clients. Although not impossible, it was also particularly difficult to remain constantly and consistently attentive to a prescribed communication approach because most of us were still in the process of learning it, and we were doing so in an emotionally charged environment. Not that we should not be accountable for oppressive comments, but we should not feel like we may lose or need to leave our jobs, as had happened to some of our coworkers.

Secondly, this finding suggests that as staff members coped with multiple changes—administrative, leadership, policy, personnel, and programmatic—they drew upon survival skills to shield against intense and potentially debilitating consequences of speaking out. Many study participants reported feeling fearful, angry, inarticulate, and/or silenced while other participants were discouraged by the lack of participation and openness during agency-wide meetings. Although the working environment was not physically violent, organizational turbulence, including a lack of opportunity to discuss disrespectful and frightening experiences with supervisors, and elevated levels of distrust and fear, seemed to create a level of emotional mayhem that moved people into defensive

posturing. Additionally, as some theorists suggest it may be possible that because many study participants were survivors of violence (75%) and members of lower middle-class and lower socioeconomic classes (75%), they may have resigned themselves to listening and taking orders from supervisors rather than troubling themselves with questions about projects or agency operations. Generally, both survivors of male violence and economic exploitation occupy a less privileged position within society. They are caught up in the cultural stereotypes that deem them inept and lazy. In our consumer and patriarchal culture, each group has been conditioned to believe they are less important than mainstream male-oriented ideals and individual wealth. Individual and institutional actions and behaviors have shown them through mainstream media imagery, religious doctrine, and law enforcement policies and practices that their social situation does not carry enough power or authority to preclude them from mishap and harassment. For these women particularly, language that they perceive indifferently, silencing and/or violent were often precursors to emotional and physical violence in previous life experiences. Choosing to remain quiet and detached instead of questioning unreasonable requests may be a conscious and/or unconscious way of protecting themselves from unintentional, unaware oppressive communication.

Third, this finding suggests that some study participants link their discomfort speaking publicly to how they view themselves--their power, authority, and individual importance--and their contribution to APFC, its clients, and the battered women's movement. At APFC, work was defined in terms of feminist principles such as collaboration, consensus, and teamwork. Yet, as an organization arranged in a traditional bureaucratic hierarchy as in mainstream society, these principles were modified to accommodate employer/employee confidentiality laws, funding sources' compliance requirements, and bureaucratic business practices. Women, as socialized by mainstream social institutions such as our families, religions, schools, and workplaces, may indeed borrow men's ways of communicating when attending formalized meetings. However, it may be likely that, even in organizations steeped in feminist philosophies, women default to talking in ways that are not conducive to openness and honesty because we perceive a vulnerability to which we are unwilling to expose ourselves. Not that learning to engage

in such ways is not attainable, but given the stress of high staff turnover and indifferent staff relations, doing so takes time. Unfortunately, this was time that seemed unavailable in the resource restricted, fast-paced, and emotionally-charged environment of APFC.

Additionally, cross-cultural influences on communication patterns may guide the ways we express ourselves, keeping us from feeling comfortable with speaking out about many issues whether they be benign, indifferent, challenging, or negative. Some study participants expressed their discomfort with speaking publicly in organizational structures fashioned after mainstream and traditional work environments because rules, regulations, and procedures seemed to outweigh and/or trump their experiences. Organizational components squelched opportunities to talk freely.

Finally, this finding suggests that communicative practices among staff members changed depending on the context in which they were participating. Most participants stated that during occasions when all agency staff gathered, they were uncomfortable, withdrawn, and/or felt dismissed when they did offer suggestions. Practices within the organization were "guarded" and "stilted," and making sense of organizational chaos occurred through informal processes. Not only were survival skills engaged but informal communicative techniques were also activated. One informal communicative technique was to ask coworkers, supervisors, and/or board members unofficial questions in unofficial contexts, such as corridors, community outreach booths, and during smoking breaks. Offering historical insight and gathering information helped ease stress and may have given insight into job security issues. Yet, as I observed and subsequently was told by two higher-ranking staff, member experienced and years of service in the movement were seemingly not valued as important by the new leadership, and that was reflected in part by the altered administrative procedures and group processes without agency-wide discussion. Lower-ranking staff were resistant to change and informally talked about the possible reasons for such change. They felt less a part of overall agency operations because they were excluded from processes that ultimately called for changes. As three staff members lamented, women working long term within the battered women, who do not hold advanced academic degrees or professional licenses, felt no one took them seriously or thought their input was credible/valuable.

Besides organizational practices, specific organizational policy and procedure changes also underwent alterations. In retrospect, these changes seemed to increase control of social behavior, professionalization, and corporatization. Subsequently, they seemingly weakened employees' sense of working for change in battered women's lives. Control of social behavior included instituting a policy that deterred hiring committees from employing relatives, friends, and/or intimate partners. Another policy change, one that restricted employees from dating coworkers, particularly supervisors, also worked to curb perceptions of favoritism and impropriety. Attempts to increase professionalization were enacted through behavior that discouraged emotional displays during meetings and/or to answer the telephone using a prescribed script. Corporatization efforts included increasing documentation of statistical information and programmatic reports for funding agencies. This also created tension between administrative and general staff as organization practices were set in motion by new leadership in an attempt to stabilize an already chaotic work environment. Changes such as these concerned general staff as they believed feminist principles and grassroots efforts were being forfeited for more formal, rules-based, ways of operating.

Implications

Women organizing within a feminist framework still confront patriarchal influences, because institutionalized organizations, particularly independent social service agencies, generally rely on external funding sources that require accountability and accessibility. It is difficult to create and maintain alternative organizations when we are socialized into a particular mind set of arranging work life. It seems inevitable in dominant U.S. culture that most women working for women's emancipation will compromise organizing and communicative principles; even in these progressive groups, deeply ingrained social training redirects individual and group energies towards maintaining patriarchal structures that require women to act, behave, and work within male-dominated terms. This is not to say women are comfortable with this dilemma or that they do not resist. We are not, and we do. Thus, it is important for feminists to continue research into women's internalized and learned oppressions. Additionally, the

interrelatedness between external funding sources' requirements and the ways feminist-based organizations alter their organizational structures to accommodate mainstream expectations must be explored.

Although APFC has alternative organizational components such as a consensus decision-making model and a caucus system, it relies on additive features that cause it to be more bureaucratic and thus patriarchal. First, in an attempt to bypass decision stagnation, staff members make decisions via consensus in the bureaucratic tradition of meeting management and etiquette as outlined by Roberts Rules of Order. Roberts Rules of Order ("RROO") are guidelines in which people follow to ensure a topic is examined thoroughly and equitably. However, RROO may not be widely or thoroughly known or understood by everyone working in the agency. I did not observe a time when RROO were explained to staff members. It seemed on occasions when a decision needed to be made and RROO were used, many staff members did not participate. I do not know the reason for their lack of participation, but it is possible that they felt they were uncomfortable with and/or lacked sufficient experience and knowledge about the rules to engage in the process. Often the consensus process seemed more like rule by majority. Most organizational decisions are difficult matters to resolve when members are actively engaged in a short amount of allotted time, especially if a consensus approach is employed. Time constraints inhibit attempts to break away from traditional decision making processes and by default, whether meaning to or not, a few people make decisions, if not solely executive staff.

Advocates for battered women have openly criticized domestic violence researchers in the past. They feel that researchers may not be sufficiently sensitive to the ethical and safety issues of battered women's advocates. Questions about domestic violence reactivate emotional trauma. Claims made by advocates that much of this research does not make sense to them creates a need for more participatory research. Researchers could also benefit from examining advocates' multiplicity of needs, wants, questions, and issues as a way to illustrate their frustration with organizational constraints while working with battered women. Although a series of obstacles exist when working with battered women's advocates—extensive safety checks, limited access to

organizational procedures, and staff and administrative priorities—their insights into their work broadens our understanding of the intricacies of anti-domestic violence advocacy.

Research findings suggest that people from working-class backgrounds may find the process of talking through issues calmly as emotionally distant and sterile. It seems that creating a formal environment, in this case agency-wide meetings, focuses too much on being proper and polite rather than being open to a variety of forms of expression including displays of emotion, moments of drama, or gasps of indignation. Some may feel this "polite conversation" mimics times when families and/or individuals were required to keep ugly family secrets of abuse and violence hidden and present a calm, happy, composed face when in public.

The available research on the connections among feminist organizing, communication, and battered women's advocates clearly shows that women's interests and needs are complex and highly variable. Just as domestic violence organizations are suspicious of outsiders, advocates are suspicious of organizational structures that reproduce policy and procedural hoops that they must jump through to prove their credibility and accountability to employers and funders. Additionally, a need exists to develop and support an advocacy agenda that respects the integrity and autonomy of each advocate as well as highlight the interrelatedness between a person's lived experiences and building relationships as allies (Schechter, 1999). We must acknowledge, affirm, and make changes in our own systems to improve communication among and between shelter advocates, administrators, and volunteers. Finally, a demand for further research that investigates how women's age, sexual identities, ethnicity, ability/disability, and/or immigration status affect their experiences and decisions within feminist working environments to assist with transforming a White-centric view of advocacy. Research that continues to broaden opportunities for women to describe their experiences with communication practices in organizations and with coworkers can benefit all who work through the effects of internalized and learned oppressions.

Future Research and Directions

Although my research adds to existing literature regarding communication among battered women's advocates and communication within a feminist/bureaucratic social service agency, advocacy viewpoints still require systematic inquiry. Particularly, research regarding advocates' views and experiences of organizational and communication dilemmas in feminist agencies remains limited. Another aspect requiring incorporation into research about the battered women's movement are issues of race, class, age, and sexual and gender identities. Specifically, further examination of social relationships of unequal power dynamics (e.g., race, class, sexual identities, and age) within organizational structures of feminist social change agencies is needed. More research regarding participation of women of color in predominantly White feminist organizations would also provide valuable insight into the nuances of unseemingly oppressive language and behavior embedded in our cultural socialization. It is also important to explore alternative methods of organizing within feminist, or any, organizations that does not want to maintain dominant, patriarchal power structures. Finally, further research investigating the impact of the changing nature of shelters on battered women's advocates' perceptions of their work could assist agencies looking into incorporating policies safeguarding collaborative processes of conflict resolution.

Limitations of my research also guide directions for future research. Specifically my inabilities to identify participants outright because of potential conflicts or concern for personal retaliation, suggest that further research into the issue of power differentials present in feminist organizations is essential. Although taking on pseudonyms is a requisite practice for research, it does not necessarily facilitate open resolution of problems generated through unaware, unintentional oppression. For example, in my research ,even the use of pseudonyms could not totally hide a person's identity. Furthermore, simply the explanation of some instances could potentially give away a person's identity because the agency has a small number of employees. Broadening the study of women's communication across battered women's shelters would help to minimize the possibility of participant identification. Production of collections composing of letters, journal entries, and first person narratives, such as those found in

<u>Listening to the thunder</u>, could provide a non-confrontational approach to learning more about the ways women of various social realities view and experience their work within the feminist and battered women's movements.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

A Place for Change: Study of Communication Patterns

Principle Investigator: Janet Lee, Ph.D., Co-Director, College of Liberal Arts/Women's Studies Program

Student Investigator: Dawn M.C. Cuéllar, graduate student in Women's Studies, Women's Studies, and Anthropology at Oregon State University

Purpose: The goal for this research is to examine communication patterns within a feminist social justice/change agency. Additionally, this research is conducted to determine how employees of A Place for Change view communication as a tool to facilitate, impede, or challenge cultural barriers to the administration of direct services within the domestic violence movement. Employees' experiences with information and knowledge in such areas will be explored.

- I agree to participate in two (2) taped focus groups which will take between 45 minutes and 1 and ½ hours each at a mutually agreed-upon location. One focus group will occur prior to the questionnaire and interview processes. The second focus group will occur approximately four (4) weeks following the completion of the questionnaire and interview processes.
- I agree to fill out a questionnaire estimated to take between 20 minutes and 30 minutes at my own accordance prior to scheduling an interview with Student Researcher. I agree to submit it at the time of the interview. If I have any questions, I may contact Student Researcher at the telephone number provided for clarification.
- I agree to participate in an interview estimated to take between 45 minutes and 2 hours about my experiences with employment at A Place for Change. I will participate under the following conditions:
- I will allow the interview to be tape recorded. I understand that it is being taped so nothing is missed and so my words are not misunderstood. I can turn off the recorder at any time during the interview, and I can end the interview at any time with no negative consequences or penalties.
- I agree to allow Dawn M.C. Cuéllar to use the information from the interview and the questionnaire in the research project, report, and any publications that might arise. I understand, however, that my privacy and confidentiality will be protected by disguising names and any other identifying information. Dawn M.C. Cuéllar alone will transcribe the interview tapes; no outside party will have access to them. Any documents linking my name to the tape will be destroyed as soon

as transcripts are completed. Interview tapes will be destroyed or erased as soon as Dawn's thesis has been accepted by her graduate advisors and the Graduate School at OSU for completion of her degree.

- I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.
- I understand that I have a right to receive and review a written transcript and/or analysis of the interview. After reviewing and discussing these with Dawn M.C. Cuéllar, I can suggest modifications for interpretation, accuracy, clarity, or new information. A negotiated consensus will be reached here, and I have the right to withdraw my interview and/or questionnaire from the project at any time.
- I understand information will be kept confidential to the full extent of the law.
- I understand that any questions I have about the research study or specific procedures should be directed to Dawn M.C. Cuéllar, 4827 NE 41st Avenue, Portland, OR, 97211, (503) 249-8613 or to Janet Lee, Women Studies, 200 Social Science Hall, OSU, Corvallis, OR, 97331, (541) 737-2826. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the IRB Coordinator, OSU Research Office, (541) 737-3437.

My signature below indicates that I have read and that I understand the procedures described above and give my informed and voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
Signature   Interviewer Signature

_____   _____
Date   Date

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONNAIRE
(All information is confidential and voluntary)

Please answer the following questions by either entering, circling and or marking the appropriate information/option that best describes you.

Pseudonym_____ (you choose)

This section requests information describing your work within the social justice movement.

Which best characterizes your role at A Place for Change:

_____   **Direct Service Provider** (Paid or Unpaid Staff/Volunteer): Your responsibilities lie primarily with the daily operations of providing clients with services.

_____   **Administrator**: You participate in board meetings, oversee daily operations of Bradley-Angle House properties, services, operations, etc.

_____   **Program Coordinator**: You share equal work, responsibilities, and decision making on all aspects of a specific program at BAH.

_____   **Other**. Please specify_____

Which best describes your position at Bradley-Angle House?

_____   **Direct Service Provider**:

_____   **Administrator (Director, Board Member, etc.)**:

_____   **Program Coordinator**:

_____   **Other**. Please specify_____

Years with Bradley-Angle House: _____

Years spent within social justice movement? _____

What do you consider your profession to be?_____

What other careers have you pursued outside of social justice movement?

_____

This section requests demographic information. You may choose to answer all or part of the questions set forth below. Please either insert or check the appropriate information. Providing this information is VOLUNTARY/ OPTIONAL.

Age _____

Sex _____

Gender:_____

Which best describes your racial/ethnic identity? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ Native American/First Peoples or Alaskan Native (circle one)
_____ Latina/Hispanic-American
_____ Pacific Islander
_____ Black, African-American or North African, Non-Latino/Hispanic (circle one)
_____ Middle-Eastern American or Middle-Eastern (circle one)
_____ Asian-American or Asian (circle one)
_____ White, European-American, Non-Latino/Hispanic
_____ Decline to Respond
_____ If none of the above choices apply to you, please use your own description: _____

How would you characterize your class standing or that of your family's?

_____ Under class (no income or income derived from informal economy)
_____ Working class (income requires supplement through government assistance)
_____ Upper lower class (above poverty level, unable to receive government assistance)
_____ Lower middle class (living from check-to-check, yet steady employment)
_____ Middle class (steady employment with extra money for other purposes aside from basic necessities)
_____ Upper middle class (steady employment, income level between $50,000/yr and $75,000/yr)
_____ Upper class (steady, long-term employment, income level above $75,000/yr)
_____ Other. Please specify_____

Have you graduated from a technical or vocational school

_____   No.

_____   Yes. What was your main field of vocational training? (Circle all that apply.)

           1.   Business, Office work

           2.   Nursing, other health fields

           3.   Trades or Crafts (mechanic, beautician, etc.)

           4.   Engineer or science technician; drafter; computer programmer, etc.

           5.   Other. Please specify _____

What degree or degrees have you received? (Please check all that apply.)

_____   Less than high school

_____   High school diploma or equivalency

_____   Associate, two-year, junior college degree. Area(s) of concentration

_____   Bachelor's degree. Area(s)of concentration

_____   Master's degree. Area(s) of concentration

_____   Doctorate. Area(s) of concentration

_____   Professional (MD, JD, DDS, etc.). Please specify

_____   Other. Please specify_____

Indicate the highest level of education attained by your father, mother, and spouse/partner by putting a check mark on the line that corresponds to the education level of all three.

	Mother	Father	Partner
Less than high school	___	___	___
High school diploma or equivalency	___	___	___
Associate, two-year, junior college degree	___	___	___
Technical/vocational training degree	___	___	___
Bachelor's degree	___	___	___
Master's degree	___	___	___
Doctorate	___	___	___
Professional (MD, JD, DDS, etc.)	___	___	___
Not sure/Not applicable	___	___	___

Rate the physical environment in which you work.

_____ Excellent
_____ Above-Average
_____ Average
_____ Below-Average
_____ Unacceptable

Has the physical working environment impacted your overall job performance (from your perspective)?

_____ No
_____ Yes, How? _____

_____
_____
_____

What characterizes your overall health? (Please check one.)

_____ Chronic medical issues
_____ Some medical concerns
_____ Good
_____ Above-Average
_____ Excellent

Have your health care needs changed since you started working with A Place for Change?

_____ No
_____ Yes, In what way? _____

_____

Which one below characterizes your marital status? (Please check one.)

_____ Single
_____ Partnership
_____ Married
_____ Divorced
_____ Separated
_____ Widowed

If you have a live-in partner or are married, is s/he employed in the social justice movement?

_____ No
_____ Yes

What language(s) did you first learn with your family of origin? _____

What language(s) do you speak now on a daily basis? _____

What language(s) are you expected to use while working at A Place for Change?

_____

What language(s) are used during formal A Place for Change staff/board meetings?

_____

APPENDIX C

INITIAL GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Given that A Place for Change has experienced tremendous change during the past year and generally speaking, talk about what your have noticed taking place in terms of communication throughout the community of APFC?

2. How do you feel about those past situations?

3. How have such experiences informed the way in which your share information now?

4. Currently, how would you described the overall climate, the morale, of employees at APFC?

5. How do you perceive the exchange of information among staff members at APFC, specifically the site you work with directly?

6. What have you noticed happening, in terms of communication, among staff members between the three separate entities of the A Place for Change community?

7. Do you feel people get the information they need from other staff members in a timely fashion to do their job in the most efficient manner possible?

8. What factors, if any, do you think influence how we talk to another person?

9. Do you or would you like to consider your co-workers friends?

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Since you have had time to reflect on the questions that I asked you all in your individual interviews, were there any questions that came up for you regarding the study that you would like to address at this time?

2. Given the agency was founded on feminist principles and still incorporates many of them in its operation, how do you negotiate its need for hierarchy to satisfy funding requirements?

3. What do you hope will and expect to be the next step once the preliminary findings have been read through by all participants as well as shared with non-participating staff?

4. Who do you think is responsible for taking the next step?

APPENDIX E

MEMORANDUM

To: A Place for Change Community
From: Dawn Cuéllar, Student Researcher, Oregon State University
              Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Candidate
Date: [Redacted to maintain anonymity] 2001
Subject: Communication Patterns Study/APFC

Hello. Thank you for your attention on the following outline of the study parameters. My focus of study is women of diverse backgrounds and inter-cultural communication working within a feminist organization. I have completed my course work and am now in the field work piece of my degree program. I look forward to working with all who participate in this study.

The goal of this research is to examine communication patterns within a feminist social justice/change agency, more specifically, the APFC community. Therefore, gaining an understanding of how employees (both paid and unpaid) of diverse backgrounds view communication is key to this study. Two main issues supporting the goal of this study include:

1.   understanding how our individual perspectives and communication styles influence the way we talk with each other; and
2.   finding out how current communication patterns affect the organization's objectives ability to provide services to survivors of domestic violence.

I ask employees' to share voluntarily their experiences with information and knowledge in such areas.

Possible benefits arising from this study: (1) an opportunity for employees to discuss communication issues, (2) determine what, if anything, requires change, and (3) an opportunity to develop an action plan to address overarching issues/concerns.

This study consists of five (5) components. They include two (2) focus groups, a questionnaire, an interview (two, if additional information needs to be added or I require clarification on particular issues), and a review of the information you provide plus my analysis. The total amount of time each person can anticipate dedicating to this study ranges between 8 and 20 hours over the course of two months (July and August). One additional component entails observation, on my part, of activities occurring at APFC sites. Observation may occur while I volunteer on site, attend meetings, and during four of those components listed above (I may not be present when you fill out the questionnaire. The choice is yours).

Once you agree to participate, I will distribute and explain fully the informed consent document. Please ask any questions about the informed consent document before you sign it. We must sign the informed consent before the first focus group session. Information will be kept confidential to the full extent of the law. You alone may choose to self-disclose your identity. However, I will need written consent to disclose any information you wish to make public.

Otherwise, I will maintain confidentiality by use of a pseudonym, which you will provide, so that you have control over the representation of your voice. Only pseudonyms will be used to identify voices on interview tapes. Only I will transcribe the interview tapes. I will store the record of each person's real identity in a locked file stored separately from the interview tapes. I will store interview tapes and transcripts in a locked file, as well. I will destroy or erase the tapes when my thesis has been accepted by my graduate committee and the Graduate School for completion of my degree.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. You have the right to receive and review a written transcript and/or analysis of the interview (Any changes will be negotiated and a consensus will be reached). You have the right to withdraw your interview and/or questionnaire from the project at any time.

Once the Graduate School accepts my thesis, they will publish it and copies will be housed at each of the following sites: (1) Oregon State University – Corvallis, Valley Library, (2) Oregon State University, Women Studies Program, Social Science 200, and (3) my personal library. Also, copies will be made available to each entity of A Place for Change upon request.

To participate, or ask follow-up questions about this study, please contact me at your convenience between [Redacted to maintain anonymity] and [Redacted to maintain anonymity] 2001. You can reach me at (503) 249-8613, cue19@teleport.com, or through inter-agency mail at APFC Emergency Shelter.

cc (via email): Janet Lee, Ph.D.
Principle Investigator
Co-Director, Women Studies Program
Oregon State University

APPENDIX F

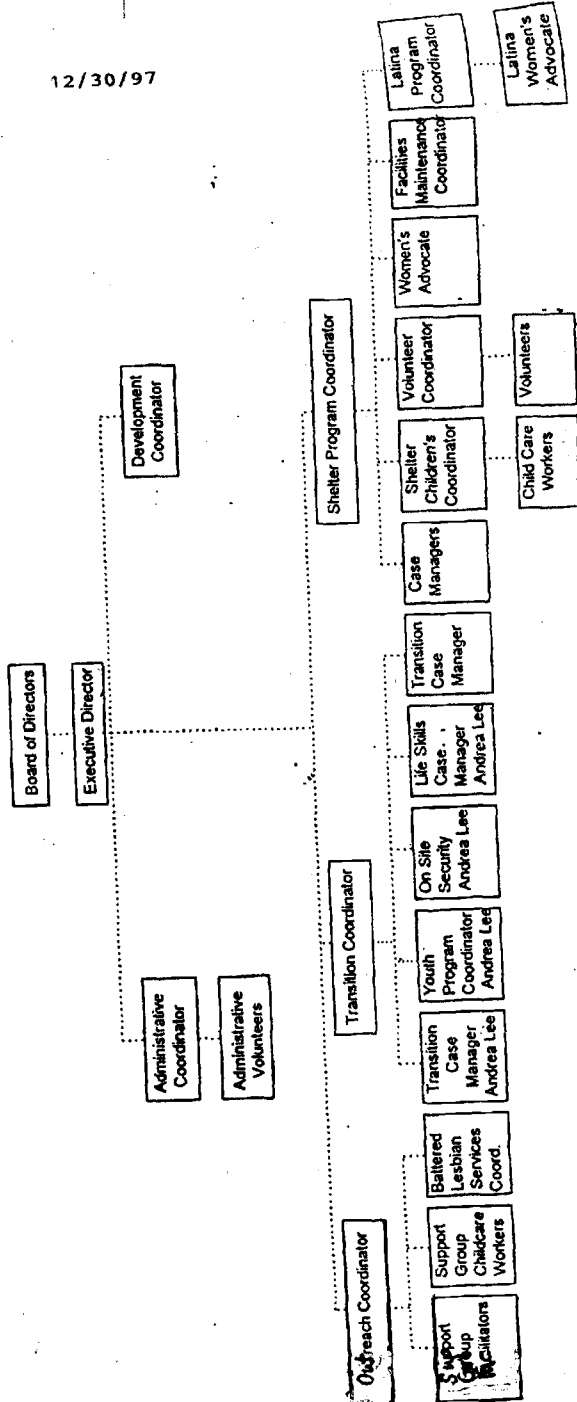## INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Think back to when you were an adolescent and describe an everyday, typical day at your family's home.

2. In what ways might such experiences influence how you talk with people as an adult?

3. What aspects of your work and life experiences brought you to work with APFC?

4. If I were to shadow you during a typical work day, what might I experience?

5. Describe how APFC is organized administratively and physically.

6. In your opinion, how might this affect the way people share information?

7. In your opinion, how do times of administrative change impact both overarching organizational and specific program goals?

8. Describe your experience of a typical all-staff meeting.

9. Describe your experience of a typical staff meeting at your office.

10. Describe what I might see when you are having a typical conversation with a coworker from ...
    - Admin?
    - Outreach?
    - Andrea Lee?
    - a Board member?   (Adapt)

11. What do you think works best in terms of distributing information between each entity of APFC? ... works sometimes? ... isn't effective?

12. How do you prefer to interact with your coworkers? (What is your communication style?).

13. What mode of communication do you prefer to use? Tele, fax, memo, face-to-face? Formal or informal?

14. How does this differ from what is expected of you in your current position?

15. Do you think the present way people share information is effective in carrying out the mission statement and goals of APFC?

16. How do you perceive the role, in terms of the upholding the mission and meeting the goals of APFC, of the following positions? For example...
   (a) executive director;
   (b) board of directors;
   ©) emergency shelter coordinator;
   (d) transitional housing coordinator;
   (e) development coordinator;
   (f) program coordinators;
   (g) staff members; and
   (h) volunteer staff.

17. How might the diversity of APFC's employee base influence how each person talks to and interacts with one another?

18. What, in your opinion, influences the way a person communicates?

19. What do you think one's plays a part in how people talk with each other?

20. What do you think is paramount to establishing and maintaining open communication?

21. Do you think people who come to work for APFC need to be a survivor of intimate partner domestic violence to do their work effectively?

22. Describe your ideal work environment.

23. Is there anything you would suggest to those in administration to alter current communication patterns among APFC entities?

APPENDIX G

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

12/30/97

Board of Directors

Executive Director

Development Coordinator

Administrative Coordinator

Administrative Volunteers

Outreach Coordinator

Transition Coordinator

Shelter Program Coordinator

Support Group Facilitators

Support Group Childcare Workers

Battered Lesbian Services Coord.

Transition Case Manager Andrea Lee

Youth Program Coordinator Andrea Lee

On Site Security Andrea Lee

Life Skills Case Manager Andrea Lee

Transition Case Manager

Case Managers

Shelter Children's Coordinator

Volunteer Coordinator

Women's Advocate

Facilities Maintenance Coordinator

Latina Program Coordinator

Child Care Workers

Volunteers

Latina Women's Advocate

APPENDIX H

11/20/97

PHILOSOPHY

A Place for Change asserts that all adults and children have the right to be safe from the threat or use of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. As long as society glorifies violence, believes men are superior to women, and judges people on the basis of race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation or physical condition, abuse will be prevalent. We support the right of individuals to exercise free, informed choice regarding the direction of their lives, without discrimination.

MISSION

In all its activities, *A Place for Change* will address the special concerns and needs of women and children affected by domestic violence. We will provide the opportunity for women to achieve self-empowerment, a vital step in ensuring their safety and the safety of their children. Through community education, we will encourage active community participation in reforming the conditions and perceptions that perpetuate domestic violence.

GOALS

In a non-judgmental, supportive atmosphere, *A Place for Change* will:

Provide emergency shelter, advocacy and resources for exploration of safe alternatives to violence.

Provide out-of-shelter support through outreach programs such as our crisis line, support groups, and transitional services.

Provide support and advocacy for children of the families we serve.

Encourage the community to help prevent domestic violence through education that makes dear the prevalence and seriousness of domestic violence.

Improve skills of professionals working with domestic violence victims through seminars and on-site training.