

Power, Praxis, Positioning and Subjectivities¹

Jo-Anne Lee

ABSTRACT

This essay examines feminist praxis by raising questions of identity, positioning and self-positioning in relations of power. It draws on the author's experiences with an immigrant women's organization to reveal shortcomings in existing theoretical and conceptual frameworks of feminist praxis.

RÉSUMÉ

Mon essai étudie la praxis féministe en soulevant les questions d'identité, de situation et de situation personnelle par rapport au pouvoir. Il se fonde sur les expériences de l'auteur avec une organisation d'immigrantes pour révéler les défauts des cadres actuels théoriques et conceptuels de la praxis féministe.

As multiply constructed and positioned researcher/activist subjects, relations of power mediate our actions, subjectivities, and the contexts of action. My objective in this essay is to raise questions concerning feminist praxis, identity, positioning and self-positioning in the context of relations of power. Through the metaphor of border crossing, the essay analyzes how power relations constrain the positioning of subject identities and the possibilities for praxis. The term praxis is used to describe the simultaneous linking of research, as a form of knowledge production, with activism for positive social change.

Analyses of feminist praxis tend to be framed in terms of "choosing," or "adopting a stance" (see Fine, 1992). Many feminist writers depict the relationship between theory and practice, or research and activism, as dichotomous, oppositional and mutually exclusive, but ultimately transcendable. For

example, in discussing three possible "stances"--ventriloquy, voices and activism--that are available to feminist researchers, Fine (1992: 205) suggests that "feminist researchers have little choice and much responsibility to shape our research through an activist stance, in collaboration with community-based political women." Similarly, in her discussion of multi-vocality, Reinharz (1988: 15-16) states that it is sometimes necessary to accept violation of self, one's expectations and interests, in uncovering "other" voices. These writers echo Sandra Harding's (1991) call to identify with the position of the "Other" even if that means taking up "traitorous" identities. Mies (this collection) accepts as given "the sterile divide between practice and theory" and, although she acknowledges the existence of a "doubled consciousness," she is referring to another dichotomy that is assumed to exist between the categories "women" and scholars/students (p.

XXX). Although inspirational, what remains unexamined in these “calls to action” are the everyday institutionalized dynamics of power that constrain our ability to take up more integrated identities of researcher activist.

For example, Michelle Fine (1992:205) falls into the trap of unproblematically using the categories “researchers” and “community-based political women” as though they were mutually exclusive by suggesting that feminist scholars can “[choose] to shape *our* research agendas in *collaboration* with community-based political women” [my emphasis]. Furthermore, there is a tendency to romanticize activism, reify “community,” and hold out the possibility for a seamless integration between researcher and activist identities. The message has been that only if “we,” as truly engaged feminist scholars, tried harder and were more committed, we could achieve more effective feminist praxis and ultimately, greater equality for all women.

Emphasizing “choices” and “stances” reveals an underlying liberalism that is troublesome because it obscures the operations of power. Assertion of the need to “choose” a stance does not, in itself, help to dismantle those barriers that delimit the fields of possible action. These institutional barriers are constructed and reconstructed by people through their actions related to everyday discourses and practices (Smith, 1989). Similarly, reference to “*our*” research agendas, that is, the agendas of those working in academic sites, places these agendas outside of and different from the interests of “community-based political women.” While undoubtedly true in most cases, the question that needs to be more deeply interrogated is: how does this bifurcation become naturalized

and taken for granted? Against the tendency to “naturalize” the separation of researcher and activist, questions need to be asked about how institutional practices work to keep these identities apart. For example, why is it difficult to identify situations where community-based activists are included as part of “us” and “our” research agenda? Why is it so easy to discuss research and activism as though they are separate activities, and researcher and activist as though they are mutually exclusive identity positions? What kinds of identities are included in “our” research agenda and what kinds of identities are excluded? How does this process of selective inclusion and exclusion take effect?

In posing these questions, the problem of bridging the gulf between research and activism is clearly more difficult than the existential liberal act of “choosing.” Rather than merely calling for their integration, which I support, greater attention must be paid to identifying the actual mechanisms of division and the strategies and tactics that women use to resist these dividing practices. Presenting the problem of lack of integration as one of individual “choice” transfers determining responsibility onto the individual and away from institutional power dynamics. Moreover, this approach does not make problematic the question of who is the speaking subject in the possessive pronouns, “we,” “us” and “ours.” I submit that the research and activist division is perceived as a lack of integration because the speaking subject usually stands outside the category “community-based, politically active women” who are seen as “Other.” But once the “Othered” enters into an academic or other exclusionary institutional site as a speaking subject, then the researcher/activism gulf can

no longer be seen as bridgeable simply by choosing to align or not to align oneself with community activists, or by choosing "research topics" of interest to women outside academe. Once those previously excluded become the speaking subject, our understanding of the research/activism divide must necessarily be made more complex and problematic.

The poststructuralist view of subjectivities as continually shifting, mobile, and multiple has yet to be integrated into our understanding of questions concerning feminist praxis, and identities of researcher and activist. Power has also been inadequately analyzed. Traditional Marxian understanding of power as oppression and domination has led to viewing power as an instrument, capacity or resource to be wielded by individuals from dominant classes or groups. Such an Hegelian conception of power limits our understanding of power dynamics which mediate possibilities for feminist praxis. Feminist poststructuralist theories (Weedon, 1987) along with a Foucaultian understanding of power as relational, productive, mobile, shifting, dispersed and animated through social relations provide conceptual tools for a more complex understanding. Such a framework restores agency to feminist actors without falling into the pitfalls of individual liberalism or reified categories as an explanatory framework that consistently erases power even while speaking to it. Questions of researcher/activist identities need to be brought closer to the productive aspects of power in constituting subjectivities and identity positions. Our existing problematization of feminist praxis is inadequate because we fail to include the effects of power in constituting the

subjectivities of the speaking subject.

Individuals are not totally shaped by dominant forces that structure inequality around gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion and so on. There is also the psychic field where, at the level of individual consciousness, opposition, reversal and resistance are always possible. Racialized feminists such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, among others, have drawn attention to the need to recognize "solitary critical reflection" as a form of resistance against those forces that shape our identities (Collins, 1991: 139-161; hooks, 1994: 59-75). Praxis includes this realm of private struggle that is often a prelude to visible, concrete actions involving others. For those who are most oppressed, retaining an independent critical consciousness in the face of power--for example, hiding inward defiance while outwardly displaying compliance--often requires tremendous effort, guile and courage.

Poststructuralist theories may help to explain the transformation of critical consciousness into strategic action. As multiply constructed, acting subjects and feminists, we are constituted as social agents through relations of power that permit certain identity positions to emerge while suppressing others (Foucault, 1980:117). Hence the separation between researcher and activist identities can be seen as socially constructed through power dynamics working through everyday actions and discourses. Even when racialized women enter into domains of knowledge production from which they have been traditionally excluded, it cannot be assumed that they have automatically transcended the research/activist division. They may be unable to occupy particular identity positions and undertake certain actions

because of boundary-maintaining practices that continue their exclusion. Yet the debates referenced earlier fail to recognize this as a problem.

To describe some of the issues in maneuvering around the separation between research and activist identities, I use the metaphor, border crossing. Border crossing implies movement across boundaries and spaces that contain and delimit possibilities for oppositional consciousness and action. Border crossing gives a name to the agency exhibited by previously excluded subjects who enter into privileged domains of knowledge production or research.

THE PRODUCTIVE USE OF POWER IN CONSTITUTING SUBJECTIVITIES

Foucault (1981) has pointed out that knowledge production is a central means for the operation of power. The search for knowledge and claims of "truth" do not stand outside systems of domination such as capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, and colonialism. "Truth," Foucault (1981: 131) states, "is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power." These power effects also infuse feminists' searches for "truth" or useful knowledge through feminist praxis. What are considered to be valid objects for research/activism, who gets to do research or community practice, and how research or practice is undertaken, are all mediated through a power/knowledge nexus. Feminist epistemologies, methodologies, practices and telos are all affected (see Collins, 1991: 139-161). Thus, it is insufficient to objectify race, class, gender and sexuality as topics for

research and analysis, nor should they be restricted to our explanatory frameworks. They are also present, at the level of subjectivity, in the positioning of women as researcher activists.

Power as a productive force shapes representations of researcher/activist identities and roles. As an example, we can take the relative absence of racialized women in academic sites generally and in women studies particularly, as a case in point. What dynamics are at work to exclude particular kinds of women from particular sites? Racialized women are not able to take up activist and researcher identities simultaneously and equally in all social locations. Clearly, if the presentation and positioning of subject identities are already shaped by relations of power operating in society, we are not equally "free" to "choose" to take up particular social identities. Hence recommending "choice" as a solution to the so-called separation between theory and practice, or between researcher and activist, seems to be overly romantic, idealistic and not very useful.

Moreover, feminist activism is not restricted to one monolithic social location commonly referred to as "the community" situated outside of academic sites just as knowledge production is not restricted to universities and institutions of higher learning. Theory is also, as hooks (1994) claims, "liberatory practice." Yet many writers appear to privilege and romanticize community-based activism over activism in other social locations such as the marketplace, places of employment, the state and its bureaucracies, or educational and cultural locations. Or they collapse all of these

locations into the term, "community" as a catch-all category. Consequently, universalizing the term "community" in this way reproduces the masculinist privileging of academia as the only site where "legitimate" research occurs and, by definition, where "activism" does not, must not occur. Objectivity and positivism, identified in feminist epistemology as specific mechanisms that deny women's experiences as valid and legitimate, creep back in, ironically, in those very discussions that seek their dismantling. By using the term "community" as a non-specific, objective category, these writers fail to contribute to an understanding of the boundary forming processes that separate research and activism.

Activism in community-based groups also produces knowledge just as feminist knowledge production in academe requires activism. By not revising conceptual and theoretical frameworks to account for the ways in which some feminist scholars/activists who are located in multiple institutional sites refuse and resist exclusionary practices, we obscure and exclude these experiences. Consequently, the concept of resistance has not been sufficiently expanded to account for the multitude of ways that feminist praxis already takes place. Feminist praxis is possible, I argue, wherever and whenever a feminist oppositional consciousness is present in acting subjects.

To explicate this argument, it is necessary to draw the linkage between resistance, oppositional consciousness and self-positioning. Although power works in everyday institutional practices to limit and delimit possibilities for praxis, people do resist these practices. We need to attend more

closely to those strategies and tactics of resistance that are themselves examples of situated praxis (after Collins, 1991). Feminist praxis may be less about "choosing" to integrate two categories of identities assumed to be mutually exclusive, and more about maneuvering through, in and around institutional borders and boundaries that circumscribe fields of action. Perhaps we should think of feminist praxis as the struggle to be full, wholly constituted, complex acting agents for change in any and all social locations against those forces that seek to restrict and limit categories of action and identity.

SUBJECT IDENTITIES, POWER AND INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Understanding feminist praxis as an outcome of struggles in the context of specific power relations grounds this discussion of research/activist identities. The important question for analysis is not which one or two identity positions an individual is able to take up, but under what conditions individuals are able to present themselves and to act as full and complexly constituted and constituting subjects. To illustrate the need for a more complex understanding of subject positioning as well as possibilities for "resistances" to institutional power, I draw on my own experiences as a racialized feminist researcher/activist.

I moved from an urban, cosmopolitan, neighbourhood to a quiet, suburban neighbourhood in a university town on the Prairies. Not only were the winter temperatures chilly, I also felt a "social" chill in a community where to be non-white was to be an anomaly. I felt alienated and alone in a

strange town with a new baby and no support networks. Given these circumstances, I met no one who shared my interest in political action. I decided, in my late thirties, to return to graduate school. But my life as a mature female graduate student was also very alienating. As a result, I decided to volunteer in a community-based immigrant women's organization.² These background details show how analyses of identity positions in "praxis" need to be much more complex and open. Although politicized identities are often assumed, mere participation in a community-based women's organization does not automatically reflect a politically motivated or engaged identity position. The popular feminist mantra, "the personal is political," glosses over the long, difficult process of coming to critical consciousness as well as the often confusing and shaky steps taken towards transformative action. Personal issues do not become political issues without mediation and a politicized consciousness does not simply present itself fully formed. For example, my original reasons for joining a community-based organization were not consciously political. A politicized consciousness which then led to a politicized self-identity was itself an outcome of praxis--a dialectic of theory and practice.

I discovered that the immigrant women's organization was undergoing political conflicts and organizational difficulties. Although the organization may have appeared to an outsider to be a politically active women's organization, this representation was, on the one hand, deliberately manufactured, and on the other, historically contingent and emergent. As an indication of the organization's instability, in the previous six months, there had been

several resignations from the Board including two changeovers in Presidency. As a result of this turnover, I was immediately appointed to fill a vacancy on the Board and was asked to join committees around training and policy issues. As a new board member, I kept a low profile even though different groups tried to convince me to take sides. Board meetings seemed tense, but lacking a history and a context with the group, I didn't understand the roots of this tension. Board members accused each other of racism, elitism, theft, corruption and favoritism as they verbally abused one another. The tensions escalated into screaming and shouting and some meetings erupted into violence when chairs were thrown across the room. Not surprisingly, many meetings would end in tears, with members storming out of the room in anger and frustration. In short, the board was having a very difficult time functioning. Little actual business was being accomplished. The organization was in desperate financial difficulties, morale was low and it was in danger of self-destructing.

Four months after I joined, we began planning the annual elections. At the annual meeting, which was attended by about two dozen women, I was elected President primarily because I spoke out against the kind of behavior exhibited by other board members. I accepted this challenge because I believed that an organizational "voice" for immigrant women was too important to lose in this mainly "white" city. In hindsight, I recognize this moment as the beginning of a long process of coming to politicized consciousness about feminist praxis. As President I had to find a way of working with what I saw as a "dysfunctional" board. How was it possible to rebuild an organizational "voice" for

immigrant women when there was only a shell of an organization and limited capacity for political action? Together with a small number of other women, we began to ask questions about the roots of these dynamics. We had to find some way of forging a cooperative, cohesive group with women who actually shared very little except for their common insertion into a category called "immigrant" women.

When members explained why they thought the situation had developed as it had, their replies surprised me. They laid the blame entirely at the interpersonal level and constructed each other as "bad," "crazy," "uneducated," prejudiced, and "hungry for power." Women felt safe releasing the pain of racism, sexism, linguicism and classism they experienced in the larger community inside the organization. But in taking their frustrations out on each other, they paradoxically made the organization unsafe. The anger and frustration experienced in the wider society were layered upon already existing differences of caste, class, language, ethnicity, race and religion within the group. Yet we had denied differences existed among us. We believed the myth of immigrant women as a homogenous, preexisting category to which we belonged. We operated as though we were unified under this label. Over time, as a result of our growing understanding, we began to analyze the roots of our conflicts. We began to talk about our organization's name as an effect of internalizing racism and sexism. Our intervention was met with hostility from some, confusion and skepticism from others. Our organization's name now meant much more. We changed our constitution to make dynamics of racialization more central to our

mission. We also became much more explicitly "feminist" in philosophy and practice. We also decided to take our conflicts seriously and to stop sweeping them under the carpet. Unfortunately, my/our early failure to confront those boundary producing discourses and practices had negative consequences.³ My/our inability to understand the reasons for the level of hostility and anger within the immigrant women's organization resulted in many women being emotionally hurt and dropping out of the organization. Thus, their leadership, energy and talents were lost. Considerable time, energy and resources that could have been used to advance the status of immigrant and racialized women were consumed by the infighting and conflict within the board. When we, as a group, began to understand the roots of our conflict, the rebuilding took a long time.⁴

Meanwhile, as a graduate student studying sociology, feminism, racism, political economy and the state, my life revolved around attending lectures, reading, writing papers, developing a dissertation proposal, preparing for my comprehensives, and writing abstracts and conference papers. It seemed as though my academic life was a different world. Later, as I reflected on the reasons for this separation, I began to question how my identities as researcher and volunteer activist were kept separate when I actually embodied both. I realized that I had intentionally tried to keep these identities apart. My bifurcated identities were not solely determined by institutional practices, discourses and structure. I participated by taking up already constituted identity positions and making them my own. With the benefit of hindsight and critical reflection, I now realize that my ability

to move out of these preconstituted categories only came about when I had undergone the necessary and difficult process of coming to critical consciousness. I then used this awareness to examine my own self-positioning and discovered that institutional practices and discourses delimited not only the range of my actions but also my subjectivities. I recall that this coming to voice was not an epiphany as it might now seem in this retelling. When I first openly questioned the naming of our organization and linked this questioning to the roots of the conflict within our organization, I was attacked by some members who believed and had benefitted from the dominant, liberal discourse around the “rights” of immigrant women.

Until I was compelled to analyze the inner dynamics of the organization in my role as President, I did not make the necessary connections between my volunteer and research work. I did not challenge the program of scientism and positivism that came from within academia and formed my view of what constituted “legitimate” research. There were strong boundary regulating forces within the community and academe that kept my researcher and volunteer-activist identities separate. Within my department there were serious risks to identifying myself too closely with the immigrant women's organization. I was working in a department dominated by minority males where there were few female faculty and no minority women faculty. A supportive climate where it would have been safe to make these issues the object of my research did not exist. I knew my male professors had a hard time seeing me in anything other than traditional female roles. I wanted to be seen as a “serious” student, and

to make this organization an object of research appeared to me to be self-defeating and doomed to failure and ridicule. As a vulnerable graduate student reacting to the “formal” and “informal” discourse of this academic setting, I did not want to expose myself to more risk. Even more ironic, the topic of my doctoral research was a study of multiculturalism, using what I would now characterize as a very masculinist framework with emphasis on macro-structural political economic forces. The micro-politics of an immigrant women's organization just didn't seem “important” enough to do what it had to do—demonstrate my “seriousness” which, at the time, I had been “programmed” to see as a macro-structural analysis of state policy—what Dorothy Smith (1989) would have characterized as the “main business” of sociology. My unwillingness to integrate my activism into my research identity was unquestionably linked to the formation of a researcher identity that did not “permit” activism. I used “lack of objectivity” to justify not making the organizational dynamics an “object” of academic research. I felt I was too close, too involved, and unable to distance myself sufficiently to permit a clear analysis. Moreover, I didn't want to feed the impression that immigrant women lacked the ability to organize. The masculinist, “hidden” curriculum prevented me from applying my research skills to the problems I encountered in the immigrant women's organization.

At the community level, there were other dynamics operating to structure my actions and subjectivities. An unwritten moral code of silence in many non-profit, community-based groups shaped my response. As the saying goes, “We don't wash our dirty

laundry in public.” There are material reasons for this silence. With limited government monies available, community groups must compete for funding. Many groups go to great lengths to protect their “public” face. Often considerable internal “control” is exercised over what can be said to whom about what, and who can speak on behalf of the group. These controls can be “formal,” codified through policies and regulations, or “informal,” drawing on unstated codes of group solidarity and loyalty. In the case of this immigrant women's organization, there was also a long history of struggle against racist, classist and sexist representations and biases expressed by the larger male dominated ethnic and multicultural organizations, and by mainstream women's organizations. It would have been seen as an act of betrayal to publicly discuss the internal conflicts occurring in our organization. Consequently, a self-editing of subjectivities within an identity position occurs.

Our praxis consisted of knowledge production in a local setting linked to action which helped to produce “useful” knowledge leading to racialized women's greater empowerment. By bringing a critical analysis to understanding why and how the organization itself and the category “immigrant women,” was a social construction of governmental women's and multicultural funding programs, we began to bring about empowering change. We were able to see our internal conflicts not as a result of our “lack”, but a result of racist, ethnicist, sexist biases projected onto us which we, in turn, internalized. Personally, by using my experiences within the immigrant women's organization to critique the existing body of

literature on community development, I was able to cross borders and bridge previously separated identity positions. I was able to identify Eurocentrism, androcentrism, racism and classism as well as the absence of any acknowledgment of the experiences of immigrant and racial minority women in the body of literature on community development. I have since had other racialized minority women tell me that the article I wrote about my findings was useful to them in making sense of their own experiences within their immigrant women's organizations. It also contributes to opening up a new field of research—the internal dynamics of multi-ethnic, lingual, racial women's groups.

BORDER CROSSING AS TRANSGRESSION AND RESISTANCE

In the case presented here, forces operated and influenced me from many sides: the academy, the community and my own internalized self-regulation. The borders we try to cross as researchers/activists include those constructed by institutional discourses and practices that are meant to confine actions, knowledge and meanings to particular institutional sites, to particular kinds of bodies marked by class, gender, ethnicity, race, language, etc. and to particular identity positions. In other words, it is the interaction of both structural dynamics and inner subjective positionings that results in an identity position being taken up unreflexively, refused or modified in some way.

As a conscious, strategic and tactical act, self-positioning of identity positions within/against institutional boundaries can be an effective micro-practice of hidden resistance. To reposition one's identity position

by crossing over institutional boundaries is to transgress borders. Thus transgression not only means to cross over figuratively, it also implies contravening a moral code of right and wrong. It is the fear of transgression, of breaking the moral code, that so often immobilizes us and prevents us from acting. Yet it is imperative that we act through tactical repositioning of identity positions to reverse the circuits of power. It is in this way that I see tactical repositioning of identity positions as an act of resistance.

It is necessary to examine the forces that position us within certain borders, including those we imagine that prevent us from acting, thinking and feeling in truly integrative ways. The challenge of integrating “academic” research and “community” practice is not simply a matter of choice or free will. Feminist praxis includes the possibility of reconciling different demands, academic respectability and community accountability. What is at stake in feminist research/activism debates is not only a matter of the “will to choose” but a dismantling of larger historical systems of power that restrict all women's oppositional consciousness and ability to take action. Transcendence of the “gulf” separating research and activism may be an impossible dream since as socially engaged and locatable actors, we emerge out of and are part of systemic and historically embedded practices. Rather than conceptualizing the telos of feminist praxis as working for a single moment of “transcendence” when all systems of oppression, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, nationalism, colonialism, cultural imperialism and so on, are dismantled thereby “freeing” all women, it may be more realistic to think of tactical maneuvers of subversion, of working

simultaneously from within multiple sites of power to erode and to push out limits to equality at the level of everyday life. By making “small” but immediate changes, everywhere, constantly and relentlessly, women might transform the micro-paths of time and space upon which a new history of the future might be written.

ENDNOTES

1. I would like to acknowledge the support of a Social Science and Humanities Research Council Post Doctoral Fellowship. I would also like to thank an anonymous reviewer and the editors of this journal for their helpful comments.
2. I use the term, “community-based” to refer to a specific type of grassroots, non-formal organization. I use this term to distinguish it from the catch-all phrase, “community,” which is often used in opposition to the term “academic”.
3. I take responsibility for this failure because I now realize that I possessed the intellectual tools to bring about a critical understanding of our situation but institutionalized boundary-making practices and ideologies kept me from applying this knowledge to our organization.
4. Ultimately, the organization found and developed new leadership, developed a broader and more critical understanding of its situation,

and was able to recommit to a common set of goals. Of course this is an ongoing process and there are no guarantees. Although it is now a strong, viable and politically active organization, it remains dependent upon government funding. Social conflicts over race, class, caste, language and religion still occur among members, but these conflicts are no longer as likely to be personalized because a framework and a knowledge base now exists from which members are able to develop an analysis that situates their conflicts within a larger arena. A wide range of specific steps were taken to rebuild the organization, more than can be described here, but some are worth mentioning. Throughout, it was necessary to continually question our assumptions of who we thought we were and who we thought we were representing. Some women found it difficult to give up old ways of thinking because they had found ways of using existing structures and discourses for their own empowerment. At the time, membership had fallen off since the infighting had destroyed the credibility of the organization. To rebuild trust, we found that we had to put our words into action. We held workshops, public meetings, drop-ins, open houses and employed one-on-one outreach. Many of our activities were organized in the evenings around food and cultural celebrations. We consciously changed to a bilingual policy and revived our newsletter. We used English and the home languages of our multi-lingual

members in meetings, asking volunteers to translate for small groups. Using only English for our meetings had created barriers to participation and had led to a two-tiered structure, those who could speak English and those who could not. One of the challenges that continues to face the organization is the high mobility rate of racialized women out of the community due to lack of economic opportunities, harsh weather and a chilly social climate. This has an important impact on the everyday life of the group since critical analyses as a form of labor cannot be assumed to be continuously available. There is a limited pool of racialized women who have the tools for analysis and the skills to translate analyses into transformative action. When individuals with these skills depart, a gap remains which stalls momentum for change. The kind of critical knowledge that we need is not readily available on bookshelves. It is knowledge that we have to produce ourselves. We also reclaimed our history of accomplishments in order to counteract the negative public representation of our organization as passive victims who were incapable of taking action. Due to the amount of energy spent on infighting, the financial and administrative infrastructure was very weak. In addition to membership and leadership development, we had to focus on strengthening and

broadening our financial base. At the same time, members told us they needed help in getting jobs. We realized that it was not enough to do analysis, but this analysis had to be translated into concrete actions that would result in material benefits to our members. Ongoing analysis must be grounded in the lives and issues of our members.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Collins, Patricia H. (1991) "Rethinking black women's activism" in Patricia Collins, Black feminist thought. New York: Routledge.

Fine, Michelle (1992). Disruptive Voices: The possibilities of feminist research. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Harding, Sandra (1991) Whose science? Whose knowledge? Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

hooks, bell (1994). "Theory as liberatory practice", in b. hooks, Teaching to transgress. New York: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel (1980) Knowledge/power. New York: Pantheon.

Lee, Jo-Anne (1993). "Community organizing with immigrant women: a critique of community development in adult education," Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education 17, 19-42.

Reinharz, Shulamit (1992) Feminist methods in social research. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Dorothy E. (1987). The everyday world as problematic. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Weedon, Chris (1987). Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.